Among the many important works which have lately been published on the Continent, reconstructing the history of France during the struggle of the Revolution and during the periods that immediately preceded and followed it, scarcely any have been so comprehensive, and not many have been so valuable, as 'The History of the Life and Times of Madame de Staël,' by Lady Blennerhassett. The author—a Bavarian lady who was an intimate friend and favourite pupil of Dr. Döllinger—has brought to her task a knowledge, which is scarcely rivalled in its completeness, of the French, German, English, and Italian literatures relating to the period; and she has produced a work of which it is in one sense the merit, but in another the defect, that it sweeps over a far wider field than might be expected from its title. It is seldom, I think, a judicious thing to confuse the provinces of history and biography by turning the life of an individual into an elaborate history of his time; and in the few cases in which this method has been successfully pursued, the biographer has selected as his subject some man like Cromwell, or Frederick the Great, or Napoleon, who was indisputably the chief mover of his age. When figures of less prominence are chosen, both the history and the biography are apt to suffer. The true perspective, or relative magnitude, of events is impaired, and the book is almost sure to lose something of its artistic charm and of its popularity. Mr. Masson, as it seems to me, committed a mistake of this kind in his 'Life of Milton,' when he grouped around the great Puritan poet—who, however illustrious, was certainly not the central figure of his time—a full and valuable history of the Commonwealth, and of large sections of the reigns of Charles I. and Charles II.

In like manner, a great part of the work of Lady Blennerhassett is not biography, but history, and history of a very high order. Madame de Staël was so closely connected in her own person, and still more through her father, with the early events of the French Revolution, that we accept with gratitude the admirable sketch of that period which Lady Blennerhassett has given us; but we should scarcely expect to find in a work primarily devoted to Madame de Staël full and masterly accounts of the Ministry of Turgot, of the rise and teaching of the Economists, of the rival influence of the writings of Montesquieu and Rousseau on the French political character, of the effect of English influence and American example in preparing the Revolution, and of the part played by Germans and Swedes in French politics. At the same time, the pictures of the social and intellectual life prevailing in the different countries with which Madame de Staël was connected, and the full accounts given of a crowd of persons with whom she came into casual contact, though in themselves both interesting and valuable, often tend to divert the reader from the main subject of the book. In truth, Lady Blennerhassett has not been able to resist the temptation of a very full mind to pour out all its knowledge, and, while possessing many rare and brilliant literary gifts, she appears to me to want that restraining sense of literary perspective which gives biography its true proportion and symmetry. This defect has, I fear, diminished the popularity of a most valuable book. In the original German, and in an excellent French translation which was revised by the author and which I especially commend to my readers, the work consists of three very substantial volumes.
moral, and intellectual history of a momentous period, and have exhibited at once so many kinds of talent and so wide a range of sympathies and knowledge. The complete competence, the firm, sober, and--if I may use the expression--masculine judgment with which Lady Blennerhassett has grasped the great political problems of the period of the Revolution, is not less conspicuous than the truly feminine delicacy of observation and touch with which she has delineated social life in many different countries, and painted the finer shades of many widely dissimilar characters.

Anne Louise Germaine Necker was born in Paris on April 22, 1766. Her father was at that time known only as a Swiss banker of high character and reputation, who had amassed a vast fortune and had come to Paris for his private affairs; but about two years after the birth of his daughter he was appointed to represent the interests of Geneva at Paris, and when she was ten years old he rose, for the first time, to a leading place in the Ministry of France. Her mother had been the Mademoiselle Curchod whose charms and accomplishments had captivated Gibbon when he was a young man at Lausanne. Every reader of his autobiography will remember the famous passage in which he describes his engagement, the opposition of his father, and the resignation with which he 'sighed as a lover, but obeyed as a son.' M. d'Haussonville has published from the archives at Coppet some melancholy letters which show clearly that Gibbon exhibited more heartlessness and inflicted more suffering than might be gathered from his own stately narrative. But no lasting scar remained. After a few years of poverty and hardship, during which she was obliged to earn a livelihood as a schoolmistress, Mademoiselle Curchod found in Necker a husband who realised her fondest wishes; and when, soon after, she became the centre of a brilliant salon at Paris, her former lover, then in the zenith of his fame, was often among her guests. Madame Necker did not always abstain from slightly veiled allusions to the past, but it is pleasant to see that a warm and solid friendship seems to have grown up between Gibbon and both his host and hostess. A pretty anecdote is related of how, on one occasion, after he had left the house, they agreed in expressing the deep regret with which they looked forward to his approaching departure for England; when their little daughter, who was then just ten years old, gravely offered to prevent the catastrophe by marrying the illustrious, but by no means prepossessing, historian.

It was a saying of Talleyrand that he who had not lived before 1789 had never known the full charm of life. Germaine Necker grew up in the last bright flush of a society which had, perhaps, as many fascinations as any that the world has known. Her mother, however, though she occupied a prominent position in this brilliant world, was never altogether of it. She shared fully, indeed, its intellectual tastes, and had herself won some small place in literature. She threw herself ardently into its philanthropic movements, and especially into that for the reform of the hospitals. She formed a warm and true friendship with Buffon and Thomas. She corresponded with Voltaire, and attracted to her house most of the best writers of the age. But to the last she remained eminently and characteristically Swiss, and she never acquired the light touch, or the easy, pliant grace, of the true Parisian. She was a little cold, a little prim, a little pedantic, a little self-conscious. Neither her reserved manners nor her strong domestic tastes, nor the vein of Puritanism that ran through her opinions, harmonised with the lux and sceptical society around her, and it was no sacrifice to her to exchange the splendours and the gaieties of Paris for her peaceful retreat on the Lake of Geneva.

In this, as in most respects, her daughter was very different. In her the Swiss element had altogether disappeared, and, as is often the case with the eminent child of eminent parents, her character shot out in directions wholly unlike both that of her father and that of her mother. She was not beautiful, though her dark and eminently lustrous eyes, beaming with intelligence, and her rich brown tint, gave some charm to her large and rather coarse features; while her massive shoulders, arms, and breast, her full lips and the firm grasp of her vigorous hand, indicated a strong, frank, ruling, and passionate nature, overflowing with life and with many forms of energy. Her education was somewhat fitfully conducted, but she threw herself eagerly into literary enthusiasms. At fifteen we find her annotating Montesquieu. Raynal and Richardson were among her idols, but, like most of the more ardent spirits of her generation, her ideas and character were moulded chiefly by the genius of Rousseau. Her first work of importance was an exposition of his doctrines, and his influence left deep traces on both 'Corinne' and 'Delphine.' Her strong sane judgment, however, her genuine humanity, and the moderating influence of her father, saved her from being swept away, like Madame Roland and most of the disciples of Rousseau, by the sanguinary torrent of revolutionary enthusiasm; and in times of wild passion and exaggeration she usually exhibited a singular soundness and sobriety of political judgment. She was sometimes mistaken, but on the whole it may well be doubted whether there is any other French writer or politician of
the period of the Revolution whose contemporary judgments of men and events have been more frequently ratified by posterity.

In this respect she was not of the school of Rousseau. In another and less admirable way she was curiously untouched by his spirit, for few superior intellects have been so openly, so utterly, insensible to the charms of nature. She once spoke of 'the infernal peace' of her Swiss home, and she candidly acknowledged that if it were not for respect for the opinions of others she would not open her window to look for the first time on the Bay of Naples, though she would gladly travel five hundred leagues to make the acquaintance of a man of talent. On the borders of the Lake of Geneva, with one of the fairest scenes on earth expanding before her, she was incessantly pining for 'le ruisseau de la Rue du Bac'--for the interest and the excitement of a society which had become the passion of her life.

Her gifts of conversation were very wonderful, and she had a wide range of sympathies, keen insight into character, and great power of describing it by a few vivid words. She had, however, no reticence or reserve, she made many enemies by her unbounded frankness, and she often fatigued or overwhelmed by her exuberant animal spirits and by the torrent of her words. At the same time, unlike most great talkers, she possessed to a very eminent degree the gifts of learning from others, of grasping the characteristic features of their teaching, of awakening sympathies, of dispelling bashfulness, and of kindling latent intellect into a flame. Few women combined so remarkably a sound and moderate judgment with extreme vividness and impetuosity of emotion. She admired deeply, and she generally admired wisely; her first judgments and impulses were almost always generous; and, although she was subject to violent gusts of passion, she could be very patient with those she loved. Through her whole life she was the warmest and most self-sacrificing of friends, and her few antipathies were singularly devoid of rancour. One of those who knew her best pronounced her to be 'absolutely incapable of hatred.'

She soon became the most attractive figure in the salon of Madame Necker, and as the health of her mother declined she became its central figure. Her rare accomplishments and her position as a great heiress naturally would have drawn many suitors around her, but in that age the determined Protestantism of her family was a formidable barrier. It appears from something that she wrote late in life to a German correspondent that, when a mere girl, she had come under the spell of Louis de Narbonne, who asked her hand, and with whom, in after years, she had relations which caused much scandal and which greatly coloured her political life. The story that her parents at one time contemplated a marriage between her and William Pitt, on the occasion of his visit to France in 1783, was discredited by Lord Stanhope; but M. d'Haussonville pronounces it to be quite true, though there is no clear evidence that Pitt was apprised of the wish of the Neckers. She was then only seventeen, and her vehement protest against an English marriage nipped the project in the bud. In 1786, however, a marriage was negotiated for her with the Swedish ambassador, the Baron de Staël, who was at that time a special favourite of Gustavus III. It was a marriage into which but little affection entered, and twelve years later it ended in a separation. There was afterward, it is true, a partial reconciliation, and she was present with her husband when he died, in 1802, on the way from Paris to Coppet.

Her marriage gave her an independent position, and she mixed much in the politics of the early days of the Revolution. She corresponded regularly with the Swedish King, and formed intimate friendships with great numbers of the guiding politicians. The proudest moment of her life was in August 1788, when, amid a transport of transient enthusiasm and extravagant hopefulness, her father was for the second time called to the helm. Her devotion to him amounted almost to adoration, and she would never acknowledge, what the rest of the world soon perceived, that, though excellently adapted to be Minister in quiet, regular times, he had neither the daring nor the insight, nor the commanding power, that was needed to guide the bark of State through the fierce storms of the Revolution. She fully shared the enthusiasm with which the opening of the States General was received. She mentions that on that occasion she was watching the procession from a window with Madame de Montmorin, wife of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and that as she expressed her delight, her companion said: 'You are wrong in rejoicing; great calamities will follow from this to France and to us.' The words were truly prophetic. Madame de Montmorin perished on the scaffold with one of her sons; the other was drowned. Her husband was murdered in prison during the massacre of the second of September. Her eldest daughter died in the prison hospital. Her youngest daughter withered away when not yet thirty, broken-hearted by the calamities of her family.
Madame de Staël, too, soon discovered that no millennium was at hand. She was an eye-witness of the terrible scenes of the fifth and sixth of October, when Versailles was invaded by a half-famished mob, when the guards were cut down and beheaded, and when the royal family were brought captive to Paris. She clearly saw that all power was passing from the Government to the clubs, and that the mob violence which reigned was either instigated or deliberately connived at by the very men whose first duty was to repress it. 'These gentlemen,' she once said, 'are like the rainbow; they always appear when the storm is over.' Under her influence the Swedish Embassy became the chief centre in which the 'Constitutional Party' was organised. Narbonne and Talleyrand were then completely devoted to her. Séguir, Choiseul, the Prince de Broglie, and other members of the party were constantly at her house; and at what were called her 'coalition dinners' she brought them in contact with leading men of other groups. She had a conspicuous talent for inspiring, encouraging, conciliating, and organising a party; and for some months she exercised a very real political influence. Her aim was a constitutional monarchy of the English type; but she came gradually to believe that a republic, or at least a change of Sovereigns, had become inevitable. She never wavered in her devotion to liberty, order, and justice; but on minor questions she always exhibited a spirit of compromise which was very rare in her age and in her country. 'The true line of conduct in politics,' she once said, 'is always to be ready to rally to the least obnoxious party among your adversaries, even though it is far from representing exactly your own point of view.' At the end of 1791 she had a moment of delicious triumph, when her favourite Narbonne became Minister of War. Marie Antoinette, who disliked her, clearly recognised her hand. 'Count Louis de Narbonne,' she wrote to Fersen, 'has been Minister of War since yesterday. What a glory for Madame de Staël and what a pleasure for her to have the whole army at her disposal!'

The triumphs of Madame de Staël, however, were very fleeting. Her father had fallen irretrievably, and in September 1790 he passed almost unnoticed out of the country where, but little more than a year before, he had been welcomed with such enthusiasm. The Ministry of Narbonne, to which she had attached her most ardent hopes, ended in four months, and before its conclusion her husband, whose views on French politics had been for some time diverging from those of his Sovereign, was recalled. He was not, however, replaced, and Madame de Staël remained alone in Paris till September 1792. Her position there was an extremely dangerous one. She had long been an object of incessant abuse in the Royalist press, and now the red waves of Jacobinism were rising higher and higher, surging fiercely around those to whom she was most attached. Nothing in her life is so admirable as the courage with which, in this period of the Revolution, she devoted herself to saving the lives of the proscribed. Her purse was always open, and she often risked not only her fortune, but her life. The royal family had always disliked her; but she was filled with horror at the fate that was impending over them, and she herself organised a plan for their escape, in which, if it had been accepted, she would have borne a leading part, at the imminent risk of her head; and she afterward wrote an earnest and eloquent pamphlet in the hope of saving the life of the Queen. Sometimes by interceding with those in power, sometimes by concealing fugitives in the Swedish Embassy, very often by large and timely gifts of money, she saved many. Her own life, at the time of the September massacres, was in extreme danger, and she at last fled to Switzerland. Coppet then became a great centre of refugees, and many of them owed their lives to her help. Among others, Narbonne appears to have owed his escape, in part at least, to her assistance, and she chiefly managed the escape of his daughter. She was for a long time completely under his charm; but he is said to have been irritated by her often tactless impetuosity, and especially by the manner in which public opinion regarded him as her creature, and he seems to have treated her with much ingratitude. There was no violent breach, but there was a separation, and a wound which was long and bitterly felt. Many years later, Madame de Staël, when praising the Prince de Ligne, said of him: 'He had the manners of Monsieur de Narbonne—and a heart.'

A short visit to England, in 1793, the death of her mother in May 1794, and the publication of her first purely political work, 'Reflections on Peace, addressed to Mr. Pitt and to the French,' were the chief events of her life during the next few months. In this work she dwelt with much force on the absurdity of supposing that any foreign intervention could restore what the Revolution had destroyed, and she predicted that the inevitable effect of the prolongation or extension of the war would be to strengthen that militant Jacobinism which was now the greatest danger to Europe. In this year, too, she first came in contact with Benjamin Constant, and her acquaintance soon developed into a connection which gave her a new and powerful instrument for acting on French politics, but which also brought with it much suffering, many reproaches, and long and lasting discredit. In May 1795 we find her again in Paris, with her husband, who had once more been sent on a mission to France; again eagerly engaged in French politics; again largely occupied in
defending the interests of her proscribed friends. Among others, Talleyrand appears to have owed his recall to her influence. As usual, she excited many antipathies, she was denounced in the Convention by Legendre for her political intrigues and especially for her efforts in favour of the emigrants, and she was obliged to leave Paris for about eighteen months. Her pen was at this time very active, and to this period belong her 'Essay on Novels' and her 'Treatise on the Passions.'

The star of Bonaparte was now rapidly rising, and it profoundly affected the last years of her life. The pages in her 'Considerations on the French Revolution' in which she describes her first interview with him, after the peace of Campo Formio, are among the most graphic she ever wrote, though something of the shadow of the picture was, no doubt, drawn from later experience and antipathy. She was at first dazzled; she was at all times profoundly impressed by his genius, but she soon came to perceive that his nature was wholly unlike that of other men. She had seen, she said, men worthy of all respect, and she had seen men noted for their ferocity; but the impression produced on her by Bonaparte was generically different from that produced by either of these classes. She found that such epithets as 'good,' 'violent,' 'gentle,' and 'cruel' could not be applied to him in their ordinary senses. He was in truth a being who stood self-centred, and apart from the sympathies, passions, and enthusiasms of his kind, habitually regarding men, not as fellow-creatures, but as mere counters in a game; a will of colossal strength; an intellect of clear, cold, transcendent power, solely governed by the imperturbable calculation of the strictest egotism, and never drawn aside by love or hatred, by pity or religion, or by attachment to any cause. It was impossible, she found, to exaggerate his contempt for human nature and his disbelief in the reality of human virtue. A perfectly honest man was the only kind of man he never could understand. Such a man perplexed and baffled his calculations, acting on them as the sign of the cross acts on the machinations of a demon. The superiority which so clearly shone in his conversation was not that of a mind cultivated by study and by society; it was the supreme insight into the circumstances of life possessed by a mighty hunter of men. There was something in him, she said, like a cold and trenchant sword, which at the same moment could wound and chill.

Such was the estimate she formed of the man who, nearly at the same time, was presented by Talleyrand to the Directory as 'the pacificator of Europe,' as a hero 'who despised luxury and pomp--the wretched ambition of common souls--and who loved the poems of Ossian, especially because they detach men from the earth!' That two such different natures should come into collision was very natural. Bonaparte always hated superior women, and especially women who meddled in politics. He well knew that the circle of Madame de Staël was the centre of ideas about freedom and constitutional government irreconcilably opposed to his ambition, and that the world of good society and good taste, of independent thought and independent characters, in which she played so great a part, remained unsubdued and undazzled by his power. Benjamin Constant had been placed in 'the Tribunate,' and in the beginning of 1800 he made a speech there, indicating a desire to establish in that body an opposition like the opposition in the English Parliament. Bonaparte was furious at his attitude, and at once ascribed it to the inspiration of Madame de Staël. A year later the last work of her father appeared, and it contained an earnest warning against growing despotism in France and a strong argument for the establishment of a republican constitution. The sayings of Madame de Staël that were repeated from lip to lip, and the atmosphere of thought that grew up around her, irritated and disquieted Bonaparte. 'She is moving the minds of men,' he said, 'in a direction that does not suit me.' 'They pretend that she does not speak of politics or of me, but somehow it always happens that those who have been with her become less attached to me.' Soon her salon was emptied by an emphatic intimation that those who entered it would incur the displeasure of the First Consul. Official scribes were busily employed in depreciating her, and these measures were speedily followed by the long exile which darkened the later years of her life.

It is impossible for me in this article to relate, even in outline, the story of this exile, and of her travels in England, Italy, Austria, Russia, and, above all, in Germany. Madame de Staël has herself described this period of her life in her 'Ten Years of Exile,' and all the details have been collected by Lady Blennerhassett with an industry that leaves nothing to be desired. A woman of a more heroic type would have borne with less repining an exclusion from Paris life which was mitigated by wealth, and fame, and abundant occupation, and a family that adored her, and troops of admiring friends. A woman who was less essentially noble would have assuredly accepted the overtures that were more than once made to her, and would have purchased her peace with Napoleon by burning a few grains of literary incense on his altar. But
though, in a life of more than common vicissitude and temptation, Madame de Staël was betrayed into great weaknesses and into some serious faults, she never lost her sense of the dignity and integrity of literature, and her works are singularly free from unworthy flattery as well as from unworthy resentments and jealousies. The homage which Napoleon desired was never received, and in her great work on Italy and her still greater one on Germany there was no trace of his victories, influence, or animosities. 'In France,' he once said, 'there is a small literature and a great literature; the small literature is on my side, but the great literature is not for me.'

The disfavour which thrust Madame de Staël out of political influence, and then drove her into exile, proved a blessing in disguise, for it turned her mind decisively from political intrigues to those forms of literature in which she was most fitted to excel. Her treatise on 'Literature,' which was published in 1800, was conceived upon a scale too large for her own knowledge, and though she herself attributed to it the great and general favour that she enjoyed for a time in Paris society, it has not taken an enduring place in French literature. 'Delphine,' the most personal, and also the most censured, of her novels, had a still wider success, and made a deeper and more lasting impression. It appeared in 1802, and it was followed by a long interval, during which she appears to have published nothing except a short but admirable notice of her father, who died in the spring of 1804; but in 1807 'Corinne' burst upon the world, and at once obtained a European fame equalled by that of no French novel since 'La Nouvelle Héloïse.' In this great work of imagination she embodied, in a highly poetic form, the impressions she had derived from her journeys in England and Italy, and its immense and instantaneous success placed her on the very pinnacle of fame. It is worthy of notice that a bitter attack upon 'Corinne' appeared in 'Le Moniteur,' based chiefly upon the fact that its hero was an Englishman; and there is good reason to believe that this attack was from the pen of Napoleon himself.

A book of larger scope and of more serious influence soon followed. Germany at this time presented the singular spectacle of a people who had been reduced to the lowest depths of political depression, but who, at the same time, could boast of a contemporary literature that was the first in the world. In France a translation of 'Werther' had attained great popularity; some of the plays of Schiller, the idylls of Gessner, and a few other German works were well known; but scarcely any Frenchman had a conception of the magnitude and importance of the intellectual activity which was growing up beyond the Rhine, or of the vast place which Goethe, Schiller, and Kant were destined to take in European thought. It was one of the chief pleasures and occupations of Madame de Staël, during her exile, to explore this almost unknown field. It would scarcely have been thought that she was well fitted for the task. She learned the language late in life, and her characteristically French mind seemed very little in harmony with either the strength or the weakness of the Teutonic intellect. There was nothing very profound, or very subtle, or very poetical in her nature, and she had all that instinctive dislike to the vague, the disproportioned, the exaggerated, and the ambiguous, to fantastic and far-fetched conjecture, and to imposing edifices of speculation based upon scanty or shadowy materials, that pre-eminently distinguishes the best French thought. Very wisely, however, she placed herself in direct communication with the great writers of Germany, and a wholly new world of thought and sentiment gradually opened upon her mind. It is not too much to say that it was her pen that first revealed to the Latin world the intellectual greatness of Germany. In England, Coleridge had already laboured in the same field, and his admirable translation of 'Wallenstein' had appeared as early as 1800; but it had been completely still-born, and in England also it was reserved for the great Frenchwoman to give the first considerable impulse to the study of German literature. For the history, the merits, and the defects of her work on Germany, I cannot do better than to refer to the admirable pages which Lady Blennerhassett has devoted to the subject. With the doubtful exception of 'Le Génie du Christianisme,' it was by far the most important French work which appeared during the reign of Napoleon. It is a characteristic fact that the whole of the first edition was confiscated by order of his Government. Happily the manuscript was saved, and about three years later it was printed in England.

After some discreditable scenes, on which a recently published correspondence has thrown a painful though somewhat doubtful light, the connection of Madame de Staël with Benjamin Constant was broken. The two continued occasionally to correspond, and as late as 1815 we find her lending him a large sum of money; but their relations were never again what they had been, and on the side of Constant there appears to have been a large amount of positive malevolence. 'O Benjamin,' she wrote to him in one of her later letters, 'you have destroyed my life! For ten years not a day has passed that my heart has not suffered for you--and yet I loved you so much!' A strong affection, such as she had not found in her marriage with the Baron de Staël, was an imperious necessity of her existence, and after her breach w
ith Constant she soon found an object in a young officer from Geneva named Rocca, who had returned to his native town badly wounded after brilliant service in Spain. When they first met, in 1810, Madame de Staël was forty-four and Rocca about twenty-three; but a genuine and honourable affection seems to have grown up on both sides, and in the following year they were married. Madame de Staël, however, either clinging to her name or dreading the ridicule of such a strangely assorted marriage, insisted upon its concealment, and Rocca generally passed in society as her lover. A child was born in 1812, but it was only after the death of Madame de Staël that the legitimacy of the connection was established. It proved much more productive of happiness than might have been expected, and greatly brightened her closing years. Nearly at the same time an important change passed over her religious views, and the vague deism of her youth deepened into a positive, definite, and earnest Christianity, but without mysticism and without intolerance. Some beautiful lines that are cited by Lady Blennerhassett very faithfully express the spirit of her belief: 'Il faut avoir soin, si l'on peut, que le déclin de cette vie soit la jeunesse de l'autre. Se désintéresser de soi, sans cesser de s'intéresser aux autres, met quelque chose de divin dans l'àme.'

She lived to see the downfall of perhaps the only man she really hated, his return from Elba, his final defeat at Waterloo, and the restoration of the Bourbons. But, though she detested Napoleon and his system, these things gave her no pleasure. The spectacle of an invaded and a dismembered France aroused her strongest feelings of patriotism, and she loved liberty too truly and too ardently to rejoice in the influences that triumphed in 1815. Her last years were chiefly spent in the composition of her 'Considerations on the French Revolution,' in which she sums up the convictions of her life. It is one of her most valuable and most lasting books. The disproportioned prominence which is naturally assigned in it to Necker, and the manifest personal element in her antipathy to Napoleon, impair its weight, indeed, as a history; but few writers have criticised with more justice the successive stages of the Revolution, and few books of its generation are so rich in political wisdom. The concluding chapters, in which, in a strain of noble eloquence, she pleads the cause of moderate and constitutional freedom, show how steadily and how strongly, in an age of many disenchantments, she clung to the belief of her youth.

The 'Considerations on the French Revolution' had a vast and an immediate success, and in a few days sixty thousand copies were sold. Madame de Staël, however, did not live to witness her triumph. In February 1817 she was struck down by a paralytic illness, and on July 14, after a long period of complete prostration, she passed away tranquilly in her sleep. It was a peaceful ending to an agitated and chequered career. She had enjoyed much and suffered much. She had committed grave faults, and had met with her full share of disappointment and ingratitude; but few women have left such an enduring monument behind them, or have touched human life on so many sides and with so many sympathies.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) There is also an English, and somewhat abridged, translation.

(The end)
Edward Hartpole Lecky’s essay: Madame De Stael

By Edward Hartpole Lecky