

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way-- in short, the period was so far the finest that the human race ever saw, that the most advanced of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the name of science, only.

There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever.

It was the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. Spiritually speaking, it was the worst period, as at this. Mrs. Southcott had recently attained that position of whom a prophetic private in the Life Guards had heralded the sublime appearance and disappearance. War had been made for the swallowing up of London and Westminster. Even the Cock-lane ghost had been doing his worst for a dozen of years, after rapping out its messages, as the spirits of this very year (and of the originality) rapped out theirs. Mere messages in the earthly order of events had I never seen, from a congress of British subjects in America: which, strange to relate, had been the first of the kind in human race than any communications yet received through any of the chickens of the West.

France, less favoured on the whole as to matters spiritual than her sister of the East, was exceeding smoothness down hill, making paper money and spending it. Under the name of Liberty she entertained herself, besides, with such humane achievements as sentencing to death a man whose tongue was torn out with pincers, and his body burned alive, because he had not kneeled before the Emperor; and a dirty procession of monks which passed within his view, at a distance of some fifty paces, which he had marked by the Woodman, Fate, to come down and be sawn into boards, to make a coffin, and a sack and a knife in it, terrible in history. It is likely enough that in the rough outhouses adjacent to Paris, there were sheltered from the weather that very day, rude carts snuffed about by pigs, and roosted in by poultry, which the Farmer, Death, had alluded to in the Revolution. But that Woodman and that Farmer, though they work unceasingly as they went about with muffled tread: the rather, forasmuch as to entertain any other idea would be atheistical and traitorous.

In England, there was scarcely an amount of order and protection to justify much more than highway robberies, took place in the capital itself every night; to go out of town without removing their furniture to upholsterers' warehouses for safety was a City tradesman in the light, and, being recognised and challenged by his fellow-tradesman whom he stopped in his character of "the Captain," was head and rode away; the mail was waylaid by seven robbers, and the guard shot down by the other four, "in consequence of the failure of his ammunition:" after that magnificent potentate, the Lord Mayor of London, was made to stand and deliver up his person to a highwayman, who despoiled the illustrious creature in sight of all his retinue; prisoners with their turnkeys, and the majesty of the law fired blunderbusses in among the thieves snipped off diamond crosses from the necks of noble lords at Court draw Giles's, to search for contraband goods, and the mob fired on the musketeers, a