

# **A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF FRANCE**

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**A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF FRANCE  
(1695)**

**PART ONE**  
**(“On the Decline of National Wealth”)**

## Chapter I:

Of all the countries in the world whose people are not entirely barbaric, there is almost none whose wealth or poverty is not the result of their natural circumstances, participating in both states depending on whether their climate and soil are more or less suited to producing the necessities of life, or those with which they can be obtained. Only Spain and Holland deviate completely from this general rule in very opposite ways: the latter, producing almost no necessities, has them in abundance and at a lower cost than in the places where they grow, as do the richest peoples on earth; and the former, with excellent soil and a favorable climate, cannot subsist without foreign aid.

Although France is the richest kingdom in the world, it can nevertheless be said that it is not entirely free from the disorders of Spain, and that it does not respond as fully as it could to the advantages that nature seems to have bestowed upon it; since, without speaking of what might be, but only of what has been, it is maintained that its annual revenues, both in capital and industry, are now 500 or 600 million less than they were thirty years ago; that the decline is increasing daily, because the same causes persist and are even exacerbated, without any blame being placed on the king's revenues, which have never risen so little as they have since 1660, increasing by only about a third, whereas for two hundred years they had always doubled every thirty years.

This fact will be established in the first part of these Memoirs, as well as the present decline in France's wealth. In the second part, the causes of this disorder will be discovered; and in the third, the ease of the remedy will be established by providing the King with a large amount of cash and increasing his ordinary revenues. The same will be done for his subjects, who are the source of this disorder, by having them redeem the cause of the decline in their wealth. This will produce all these effects with regard to His Majesty and his people, and this without any extraordinary movement that could disturb the certainty of the present for an uncertain future. It will simply restore things to their natural state, which is the state in which they were formerly, and in which they would still be, if an almost continuous miscalculation, caused by indirect interests, had not derailed them, constantly causing surprises to the Prime Ministers who had only good intentions.

## Chapter II:

However surprising France's efforts may be in this present war, the astonishment will be even greater to see, from these Memoirs, that she produces all these marvels with half her forces, the other half being held back by a superior power, which indirectly restrains causes that would otherwise seem destined to go too far.

Her power stems from the fact that, producing all kinds of things necessary for life in considerable abundance, not only to feed the large number of inhabitants she contains, but also to share them with those who lack them, she finds herself at the same time surrounded by neighbors who, not having the same advantage, exhaust their lands to find something suitable for luxury and excess, in order to exchange what is necessary with her; And this not being sufficient for their needs, they find themselves compelled to become his porters, and to go and fetch for him, in the most distant lands, this same surplus in order to obtain the same necessities.

Just as the four elements are the principles of all beings, and it is from them that all beings are formed, so too, the entire foundation and cause of all the wealth of Europe is wheat, wine, salt, and linen, which abound in France; and other things are only obtained in proportion to the amount of these that one has more than one needs. And thus, all the goods of France being divided into two categories, landed goods and income-producing goods, the latter, which employs three times as many people as the former, rises or falls in proportion to the former. So that the growth of the fruits of the earth provides work for lawyers, doctors, theaters, and the humblest artisans, whatever their craft, so that we see very few of these kinds of people in barren countries, whereas they abound in others.

### **Chapter III:**

From all that has just been said about France, it would be difficult to understand how its revenues could be reduced by such a large sum as 500 million per year, both those from land and those from industry, given that the same land, the same climate, and the same (almost) same inhabitants still exist, and there is no lawyer, doctor, or craftsman who is not willing to earn just as much as he did thirty years ago. However, not all of this is even half known, and its decline, which began around 1660, continues daily with an increase, because the cause is the same: the decrease in the income from land, which, one thing leading to another, is not even half what it was at that time. And if some have not suffered such a drastic decline, it is because, belonging to people of high standing, wealthy tax collectors leased them out at a loss, in order to somehow acquire protection intended for other uses.

Other funds, moreover, have declined much more, several of them not even reaching a quarter of what they once were. Thus, those who had 1,000 livres of income in funds, now only having 500, employ workers for only half the amount they used to, who in turn treat those from whom they obtained their necessities in the same way, through a natural cycle whereby, once funds begin to circulate, the money they generate to pay for the goods they produce must pass through countless hands before, its circuit completed, it returns to them. so that by making these passages only, insofar as it came out the first time, one can say that a reduction of 500 pounds per year in pure loss in a fund produces one of more than 3,000 pounds per year to the body of the republic, and consequently greatly prejudices the king, who can never draw as much tax from poor subjects as from rich ones.

## Chapter IV:

If the decrease in the income from capital, which caused the decrease in the income from industry, is so certain that no one doubts it, the cause is no less so, even though it is not considered, and is attributed to the increase in the king's revenue, which is not at all the effect.

Capital has decreased by at least half, because the price of all commodities is half what it was thirty years ago; and commodities suffer this decrease because much less is consumed. For example, butcher shops are producing much less; the town fairs where beverages were sold are not a quarter of what they used to be, and the price is much lower. Thus, the capital that produced them must suffer a similar decrease, resulting not only from the decrease in the price of commodities, but also from their growth. because there are no fruits of the earth that do not require expenditure for cultivation, which produce more or less than one makes advances to put things in their perfection, which are always the same regardless of the flow that one will have of them, this flow coming not to correspond to what one has put in, makes one neglect these same advances in the future, and reduces the product not only to half of what it was, but even to nothing, there being lands entirely abandoned, which were formerly of great value, which is a loss which spreads over the whole body of the State: so that such a fate befalling a village near Cherbourg makes its effects felt as far as Bayonne, by an imperceptible, but very real, link that all parts of a State have with each other.

## Chapter V:

Since the loss of half of France's overall wealth remains constant, for the reasons just discussed, although reducing or estimating this loss to a fixed price is indifferent in itself, it has nevertheless been calculated in order to derive two advantages: first, to make it more tangible, and second, to demonstrate clearly the interest the King has, independently of that of the public, in changing the situation. For, if it is true, as will be shown, that there is 500 million less revenue than there was thirty years ago, it is certain that, having been restored (which is very easy), His Majesty will make one of the greatest conquests he can ever make, not only without shedding blood or leaving his own territory, but even enriching everyone, of which he will necessarily receive his share.

It is therefore maintained that the reduction is 500 million per year, because it is half of the kingdom's assets, and that these same assets only in terms of funds, both real, such as lands, and incidental, such as charges, registries, tolls and mills, formerly amounted to 700 million per year: thus these same assets, even if they were only doubled by industrial assets, would amount to more than 1,400 million per year; so that, everything being reduced by half, if there is any error in this calculation, it is in not carrying the loss far enough.

## Chapter VI:

It remains to be shown that this loss is not the result of the increase in the king's revenues over the past thirty years, since they have never seen such a small increase in such a long period, and that for about two centuries, the revenues of the people, instead of decreasing as they have, had on the contrary doubled in the same period, which was the cause of the increase in the king's revenues; and both were caused by the abundance of gold and silver coins, which the discovery of the New World had made and continues to make more common every day. All of this is simply a matter of fact, which we will establish, beginning with the death of Charles VII in 1461.

Philippe de Commines, considered the most reliable author of the last century, and who speaks only of things he witnessed, states that the king's entire revenue at the time of this monarch's death amounted to only 1,800,000 livres per year, and that when Louis XI died in 1483, France produced 4,700,000 livres for the king.

The minority of Charles VIII, who succeeded him, eased the situation somewhat; and Louis XII, known as the father of the people, who followed him, continued in much the same vein. But when Francis I ascended the throne in 1515, the wars he had to wage forced him to bring the state of affairs back to the level of Louis XI's reign. By 1525, his revenue had reached nearly 9,000,000 livres, double what it had been thirty-five years earlier. This continued roughly until the death of Henry II, and during the minority of his children, the crown's revenues had risen to 16,000,000 livres, meaning they had similarly doubled in the same period.

Finally, under Henry III, in 1582, these same revenues reached 32 million livres, as can be seen in the history of Mézeray. Then came the civil wars, which disrupted this state of affairs. Henry IV was beginning to restore them when his unexpected death left a minority ill-suited to boost the kingdom's affairs, so that the crown's revenues amounted to only 35,000,000 when Cardinal Richelieu took office, and at his death he left them at 70,000,000, thus doubling in every respect. And it seems they would have continued this upward trend, since in 1660, the year in which private wealth, both capital and industry, reached its highest point ever (and from which time it has steadily declined), the king's revenues had still increased, despite the wars abroad and quite frequently at home. Since then, the king's revenues have increased by no more than about a third, even including the king's conquests, which represent a tenth of the entire kingdom; and those of the people have decreased by at least half.

## Chapter VII.

Although France is more awash in money than ever before, and its magnificence and abundance are extreme, since this wealth resides only in a few individuals, and the greater part of the population is in abject poverty, it cannot compensate for the losses suffered by the State for the vast majority. Or rather, to speak more precisely, since the wealth of a kingdom consists of its land and its commerce, it can be said that both have never been in such a state of disarray—that is to say, the land so poorly cultivated and the goods so poorly sold—because consumption has been entirely destroyed with regard to foreigners, and greatly diminished domestically by personal interests, which have led to the ministers being caught off guard by obtaining edicts equally detrimental to the king and the people, as will be shown in the second part of these Memoirs.

But, in order not to anticipate anything and to finish this first point of the present decrease in the wealth of France, it will be said that, although His Majesty's revenues, as to the sum, are at the highest point they have ever been, however there are two indisputable things to note: the first, that it is far from being, as has been said, that this increase is proportionate to that of the gold and silver coins, and to the rise which it brings every day to the price of all things, in Europe and in other parts of the world; And the second point is that, when France yielded 32,000,000 to the king in 1582, he was much richer than he is today, because, as there was a one-tenth increase in the French domain, this amounted to 35,000,000, which, considering the prices of things then and now, corresponds to 175,000,000 today; given that, since gold and silver are not and never have been wealth in themselves, their value lies only in relation to others, and insofar as they can procure the necessities of life, for which they serve merely as security and valuation, it is irrelevant whether one has more or less of them, provided they can produce the same effects.

Thus, as in 1250, we find from old records that a worker in Paris, who today earns 40 or 50 sous a day, earned at that time only 4 deniers, that is to say, one-hundredth of what he makes now; however, he lived just as comfortably, because everything was proportionate: he met his needs with his 4 deniers as those in the same trade do today with their 50 sous. And it follows that a man who had a thousand livres of income in that century was richer than one who has a hundred thousand now. Now, although under Henry III things were not in this state and the prices of goods had risen considerably, this was not to such an extent that the king, with his revenues of that time, could not procure much more than he would today. Indeed, since Henry III's thirty-five million francs represented about a third of the crown's revenues at that time, foodstuffs were only a fifth of their present price; and the measure of wheat, which sets the price for everything, and which is now worth 40 sous, was worth only 8 at that time, as evidenced by the surviving valuations. This undeniably shows that the crown's revenues were on the basis of 175,000,000 francs today; however, France was not as ruined as it is now, all its lands being cultivated as well as possible and its foodstuffs at the highest possible price, without becoming useless as they are now, while its neighbors would be only too happy to buy and consume them.

Individuals could ruin themselves, either through excessive spending or through other ordinary causes; but the body of the State did not suffer from it, and the lands, which are the principle of all goods, both real and industrial, changing masters, did so without any diminution of their just and first value; because there was none, neither in the quantity of the goods they produce, nor in the price, nor in the ease of sale. So that it can be said that, although the king drew from France on the basis of 175,000,000, and that these same revenues are scarcely more than 112 or 115,000,000 at present, however he raised much less from the people than is done, because all of France contributed to the payment of taxes as much as it was in its power, whereas at present only half is useful, the other half being entirely either abandoned, or much less cultivated than it could be, or rather than it has been, by causes which are nothing less than the effect of chance, as will be shown.

**PART TWO**  
**(“Causes of the Decline in National Wealth”)**

## **Chapter I:**

Although the cause of the decline in France's wealth must be as constant as the decline itself, however, while everyone agrees on the former, the same cannot be said of the latter. The commissioners of the first order sent throughout the kingdom to find ways to restore what was defective were a sure sign that no one was convinced that everything was in perfect order; and since this attempt was unsuccessful, it is believed that the cause of the problem, and consequently the remedy, could not be readily agreed upon. Some claimed that it was due to a lack of trade; but this was to attribute the disorder itself to disorder. Others asserted that there was no longer any money; but we have just seen, in the exchange rate, how wrong they were. And the others, finally, cited the increase in the king's revenues, not to mention taxes, which would have eliminated any hope of change, since it is difficult to diminish something whose causes demand increase and never decrease. The lack of foundation for such reasoning has been sufficiently demonstrated in the first part of these Memoirs; therefore, it will not be discussed further, and we will move on to the true causes of these disorders.

## Chapter II:

The decline in all of France's revenues has been demonstrated by the decrease in the yield of investments, both in the selling price of goods and in the rate of their growth. Both were the result of a lack of consumption, which was similarly halved, since all goods in the world are useless unless consumed. Thus, to find the causes of France's ruin, one need only discover those of the ruin of consumption. There are two essential causes, which, far from being the result of any public interest, are instead produced solely by a few private interests, very easy to extinguish or alter, with almost no loss on their part.

Consumption has ceased because it has become absolutely forbidden and absolutely impossible. It is defended by the uncertainty of the Taille, which, being entirely arbitrary, has no more certain rate than to be paid higher the poorer one is, and the more one exploits funds belonging to undefended persons; and lower the richer one is, and the more considerable one's revenues, which carry with them the power to make the unfortunate pay their Taille, because one holds the lands at a higher price, to buy in a way this license, by the protection of those to whom they belong: so that it is not extraordinary to see, in the same parish, a revenue of 3 or 4,000 livres of rent contribute only ten or twelve écus to the Taille, while another, who holds only 300 to 400 livres of rent, will pay one hundred for his share; And since neither has any right to suffer or create this disorder, they are kept in it only by an infinite number of circumstances, which will be discussed later, infinitely more damaging to the entire body of the State than the Taille itself. Finally, consumption has become impossible due to the Aides and Customs duties on the exits and passages from the kingdom, which have brought all foodstuffs to such a point that not only are they no longer transported abroad at a quarter of what they once were, but they even perish in the places where they grow, while in other nearby places they fetch exorbitant prices; this ruins both regions equally, because any country that does not sell its own produce does not benefit from that of others: this will be addressed in detail, after discussing the Taille.

### **Chapter III:**

The taille, which only became commonplace in France after the Church (under the pretext of devotions and pious foundations) so greatly surprised the kings and princes that it generally obtained all their domains, which were so considerable that they easily did without raising any taxes from their people except on extraordinary occasions, has always doubled every thirty years (as has been stated) from its institution, which dates to around the reign of Charles VII, until 1651. And although it has steadily decreased since then, it has nevertheless ruined the world a hundred times more than it had done before. For, although it is only 36 million per year, and was seen at 48 million in 1650 and 1651, it can nevertheless be said that poverty is three times greater in the countryside than it has ever been. And, despite all this, it is argued, as will be shown here, that it could be doubled, not only without inconveniencing anyone, but even without preventing everyone from becoming richer. Indeed, it can be said that not a third of France contributes to it, only the weakest and most wretched, and those with the least capital. So, being too harsh on them, it utterly ruins them; and after they have become useless to public contributions, it will ruin others in turn: besides the fact that a ruined person no longer consumes anything, the goods of those who have exempted themselves become useless to them by this means, they are far more ruined than if they had paid three times the taille of those who are burdened only by their own credit, or by that of their masters; and this will be much better understood from the description that will be given of how the taille is distributed. firstly by election and by parishes, by the Commissioners appointed in the generalities; secondly the way in which the collectors who are elected by the parishes levy them on each individual, the means which they use to get paid, and the others to defend themselves against them; and finally, the various interests of the receivers, judges and sergeants, and how the whole is done in a ruinous manner: so that it will be agreed that a continual war would be much less of a burden on the people than a tax demanded in such a way.

## Chapter IV:

The taille, which was initially levied by the elected officials, then by the Treasurers of France, and finally by the Commissioners sent by the Council, did not at first produce any of the pernicious effects that we see today. On the contrary, tradition holds that, since the highest taille was a mark of wealth and distinction, individuals prided themselves on paying more than their neighbors, in order to be preferred in honors, much like the practice of church stipends, where the rich seek to distinguish themselves above the poor. But today, it is precisely the opposite, and when the sum at which a generality is fixed has come from the Council, everyone curries favor with the intendants, so that their parishes will be treated favorably, regardless of their power to pay more or less taille. Thus, it is not extraordinary to see a parish of one hundred households, comprising 1,500 arpents of land, pay much less than a parish containing only half that amount.

But the one who causes this relief, which one might call ruin, receives as his reward the exemption of his tenant farmers or tax collectors, who are taxed at nothing or very little, but who, by a kind of counter-exchange, pay him the taille (land tax): and if other tenant farmers or holders of leasehold lands take the land at eight livres per arpent, those of the lords take it at ten and eleven livres. Although some well-intentioned intendants wanted to stop this disorder, however, since it was impossible for it to be done in a general way, and in a way that would eliminate all jealousy, because very great lords were involved in this matter, one could not begin with them, as would have been necessary to set an example, they all abandoned this project from the outset; And this practice has passed, and continues to pass, imperceptibly from one social class to another, even to those who might seem the least privileged, because it has never been clear at what point one should begin to address such a great evil.

Consequently, one of the most agreeable functions of the provincial intendants today is this distribution; because, since it is not customary for justice alone to decide, every means is employed to gain respect, a man being respected in the country in proportion to the favorable treatment his parishes receive from the intendants. This bad example in the parish department somehow authorizes similar conduct in the particular assessment of taxpayers in each place, in a surprising way, in which the other collectors or assessors, besides the natural tendency to follow bad examples, find themselves wonderfully aided, or rather forced, by indirect interests of the tax collectors, both general and particular, as will be justified later.

## Chapter V:

The departments being sent to each parish, the state immediately elects individuals to assess and collect the tax, commonly known as tax collectors. It should be noted in passing, or rather in advance, that this single function, from which not a penny accrues to the king, costs the people, and consequently the state, more than the taille itself.

The collectors, elected in varying numbers depending on the parish's tax burden (up to seven in sizable areas), then curry favor with their fellow citizens to levy the tax. But this is the kind of behavior only people who believe that poverty justifies anything can achieve; that is to say, they begin by taking revenge on those they believe they have wronged in a similar situation, a practice that continues for up to three generations. After that, they tend to their relatives and friends, rich or poor, which is of little consequence. Add also that the lowest tax collectors (because they come in all ranks) have a stronger interest than all of them, which is the relief of their poverty, to which this commission grants some relief only to exacerbate it even more drastically. For since the tax is based on a majority vote, they take money from the rich to sell them their votes; and the least corruption is receiving meals in return. So, these collectors sometimes struggle to reach an agreement, spending three months assembling every day without deciding anything; which is so much wasted time for people for whom it constitutes their main income, in addition to other expenses, since all the meetings usually take place only in taverns. Moreover, since the collection of taxes is delayed, and consequently the receipt of funds is delayed, the tax collectors, who have made bailiffs' fees and the enforcement measures they impose on parishioners for non-payment within the prescribed timeframes into their regular income streams, are certainly playing their part. Thus, in the old days, in the larger towns, where the collectors began, it was a matter of taking out a loan in their own private name, a single loan for the entire amount, to pay the first quarter of the tax, with the understanding that the remaining balance would be settled at the end of the tax year. But since most of them now rely solely on the poor, as has been said, and as we will discuss further, there is an enormous amount of bad money, and recourse to the parish being a matter of excessive lengthy discussion, from which one can never recover even a third of what is invested and advanced to achieve it, they prefer to lose what is owed to them, and several have been condemned for these kinds of debts.

But, to continue with the matter of assessment, after having done what has just been said, the farmers of the lord of the parish are spared or considered (which is the word in use), in proportion to the extent that it is believed he himself has worked with the intendants to have the parish considered; The same consideration is given to gentlemen of some standing, to those belonging to the judiciary, even to prosecutors and sergeants. Thus, the entire burden falls upon artisans or merchants whose only capital is their industry, in proportion to what is believed to be the value of their work. Consequently, it is these kinds of people, who constitute the entire wealth of a state, who must be as well-protected as possible; and indeed, since they prefer to abandon everything rather than be exposed as prey to their enemies or envious rivals, they either withdraw with whatever wealth they may have accumulated to free

markets, where, not being accustomed to the country's commerce, they have no other resources than to live by saving and reducing all their consumption. instead of, if they had remained in the places of their birth, they would have continued to enrich themselves and others, which are inseparable from one another; or else, finally, they retire to foreign countries. It was not fifty years ago that in the town of Fécamp, on the coast of Normandy, there were fifty Newfoundland fishing vessels, that is to say, vessels that went to fish for cod in Newfoundland, and consequently each made seven to eight thousand pounds worth of consumption there: they had no other occupation than a simple house for their wives and children, and for themselves when they were not at sea; However, they were so thoroughly burdened by exorbitant taxes, which made them pay as much as if they had earned ten thousand pounds, without any protection, that they all withdrew, and not three remained before the start of the war: some left commerce altogether; some settled elsewhere; and the greater part being of the new religion, They went to Holland, where they acquired immense wealth.

The role having finally been completed in the manner just described, the collection must take place; and this is where the disorder is no less than on the plate.

## Chapter VI:

Since this collection is one of the most unpleasant tasks imaginable, the collectors, however numerous they may be, will only do it together, marching through the streets in unison. Thus, in places where there are seven collectors, one sees seven people, instead of standing up, marching continuously through the streets; and since the tax is not collected in a year or so, one sees the collectors of the current year marching, or rather plundering, on one side, while those of the previous year do the same on the other; and when there is some stage or some utensil to collect, as new collectors are needed, this forms a new brigade modeled on the others, which, joined together, not to mention the salt collection, which is done in the same way in several places, make up a kind of army which, for an entire year, wastes its time pounding the pavement, receiving almost nothing but a thousand insults and a thousand curses. And this is because, as with the assessment, the interest of taxable individuals, who do not count on any protection, is to hide any kind of display of wealth by a complete cessation of trade and consumption; similarly, during the collection, they have another interest, which is to pay only penny for penny, after a thousand constraints and a thousand executions, either to take revenge on the collectors for having imposed on them too high a sum, thereby delaying their contribution to revenue, and making them suffer from bailiffs' trips, or to discourage those of the following year from putting them in such a sum, by the difficulties of payments; — so that after having walked for a whole week, they often bring back only curses, while on the other hand they are overwhelmed with expenses by the tax collectors, who have erected these kinds of constraints upon returning from their duties. And if it happens that parishes, with the help of a few people who can lend them money, pay on the appointed day without suffering any delays, they are assured of an increase the following year; because in the departments the tax collectors are quite the masters, under the pretext that they are guarantors of collection. Thus, all the collectors must be on duty every day, all year round; and some have them summoned to their house a hundred times to collect their *taille* (land tax), because they have money hidden away. And, since it has been undertaken to show that the collection costs the people more than what the *taille* brings to the king, given the way things are done, we will continue with the details just mentioned.

When, after the insults and imprecations with which the taxpayers have vented some of their bile and anger, payment finally becomes necessary, this is how things are handled: the collectors would not dare push the taxpayers too hard, for fear of suffering similar treatment in turn. Thus, although they can themselves seize the property and remove it for lack of payment, they must nevertheless have suffered considerable pressure from the receivers before resorting to such extremes; that is to say, several trips by bailiffs and sergeants, who, upon arrival, must first be entertained in taverns so that they only perform a simple errand and not an execution, and given money separate from what they need for their errand, of which they have only the smallest share; — all this, however, at the beginning, for in the end it is all executions.

Then the livestock of the parish is brought in in general, without any inquiry as to whether those to whom they specifically belong have fully paid their taxes or not, which is quite irrelevant. The bailiff also needs money so that he doesn't take the seized animals too far away and have them sold without delay; and then, as the year draws to a close, there is no longer any question of raids or executions, but rather of imprisonment; and the bailiffs still need money so that, instead of taking the tax collectors to the prisons, which are often far away, they place them in a nearby inn, where they live at the expense of their colleagues. If the jailer demands them, or has earned the receiver's favor through his skill, they must be taken to prison, where it costs three sous or four deniers per person each day to sleep on straw. And their wives or children, sometimes three or four leagues away, must bring them food; and since this is often in cold weather, and the rural prisons are poorly maintained, they almost always return sick from exhaustion and destitution. Furthermore, each time the tax collectors go to collect the tax, they must not forget to give the tax collector a gift of local produce, whatever its cost; otherwise, whatever hardship one suffers, it will be even worse. Finally, considering the way the Taille (tax) is levied, imposed, and paid, and how the vengeance for the excess one believes one has been subjected to is perpetuated from father to son; it must be agreed that it is equally the ruin of property, body, and soul.

One more point was overlooked, namely the lawsuits it causes: there have been parishes where, in the first month of the Taille, as many as one hundred lawsuits were filed; that is to say that two hundred people had been occupied in going to plead against each other in distant places, leaving their work and their business out of pure animosity, their interest in the end not being most often a single crown, for which they lose more than fifty.

Thus, all these things taken together, it is repeated that the least inconvenience the tax brings to the people lies in the sums that accrue to the king; and the worst part is that both those burdened by the injustice of their taxes and those who exempt their lands are equally ruined; because, besides the general reason that those who can help bear the burden of the tax are ruined at every turn for lack of protection, and especially by the collection itself when it falls to them, the number of those liable for the tax decreases daily; so that today one must pay thirty what one used to pay sixty. Moreover, the tax is not being spent, both because those who would consume it are being ruined, and also because those who would have the power would not dare, due to the consequences and the envy that this would arouse in them regarding the distribution. So that all property is reduced by half for this reason alone and not by the amount of the tax, those who exempt themselves have lost far more than others, since there are countless large revenues, such as 20,000 to 30,000 livres per year, which are reduced by half without the Taille being blamed, for which they have never paid anything. However, these people, who would not have wanted to contribute one-twentieth to a general tax, the institution of which is to be borne equally by everyone in proportion to their means, do not reflect at all that they are being punished for their injustice by the loss of more than half of the very property they wanted to exempt entirely: far from it, this does not prevent them from persisting in the same conduct, reasoning that unless the opposite is general, it would have no effect on them; Therefore, it will be a great service to them to compel them to have their tax collectors collect their true share of the Taille. And there is no doubt that, with

the sole cause of the decrease removed, their lands will regain their former value; they would thus gain fourfold, and the king and the people likewise, as will be shown in the third part of these Memoirs.

## Chapter VII:

Although the preceding chapter has all too clearly demonstrated the disastrous effects of the arbitrary tax, and of the power each individual possesses to ruin their enemy or the one they envy when they are defenseless, it is nonetheless worthwhile to point out a few more which, though secondary, are no less deplorable.

First, all rural inhabitants subject to the tax were no longer permitted to own any land, since all those who possessed such property sold it in 1648 and the following years. Because the tax had doubled, the wealthy began to practice injustice in its distribution, shifting almost the entire burden onto the poor, thus forcing them to sell all their possessions. Although the increase in the Taille had a very just cause, which was that of the value of both land and industry, which had doubled the price they had thirty years before, many country people were then seen wanting to pay as much Taille as they had income, and restricting themselves to their simple industry to live on themselves and their families, without being able to be heard, which is still practiced today when the opportunity arises: — So that there is no other recourse for these people than to sell their property at a low price, most often to the lord of the parish, who, combining it with his other properties in the same place, and covering it with the common mantle of his protection, prevents his receivers from paying any more Taille, for this new increase, which they had previously made; and this returns to a pure loss for the whole parish, and in turn for the lord, for the reasons that have been said so many times. Thus, since small lands can no longer be bought or owned by taxable individuals, they are given away for nothing, for lack of merchants, which is a loss to the State which is communicated imperceptibly to the large lands, which around Paris as elsewhere are only sold for half of what they used to be: from which follows the ruin of an infinite number of people, because mortgages contracted on the old price, like partitions and other similar things, which were easily paid in the first value of the lands, can no longer be paid because of the loss, it is necessary to resort to auctions where, the reduction, and the costs of justice and loss, carrying everything away, the creditors and the debtors are equally ruined. — The other pernicious effect is that an individual who owns a small plot of land devotes much more care and effort to its improvement, whether by planting or fertilizing the soil, than when that same plot is included in a large estate, where it is scarcely valued at half its worth, and nothing at all with regard to the taille (land tax). And this is so true that a plot of four or six arpents will easily be leased for 50 livres and will pay 20 livres in taille; and when, by common fortune, it comes into the hands of the lord or some powerful person, it is only valued at half its value, and it does not increase the tax collector's taille. — And finally, the third and last effect of this uncertainty of taxation is that, as one must avoid any display of wealth for the reasons discussed above; And since the soul of agriculture and farming is the fertilization of the land, which cannot be obtained without livestock, one would almost hesitate to acquire the necessary quantity even if one could, for fear of paying double due to the envy of neighbors. Thus, it is common to see parishes where there were once 1,000 or 1,200 sheep now have less than a quarter of that number; which forces the abandonment of some land whose soil is not naturally very good, because, needing improvement, one cannot or would not dare to make it;

this is a general loss for the State, which has no other assets than the cultivation of these same lands.

## Chapter VIII:

Such great disorder would have ceased long ago if no one had an interest in maintaining it. But, since the tax collectors, both general and local, find themselves in this situation, they have always indirectly opposed the remedy that has been sought; for if this uncertainty is the root of all the evil, it is precisely this uncertainty that constitutes part of their income and that makes them act in this way, in which they are supported by the Elected Officials and the Courts of Aids. — Indeed, the local tax collectors, in addition to the interest in expenses and bailiffs' fees and executions mentioned above, of which they receive a portion, and the gifts that this brings them, have yet another, which they share with the general tax collectors, namely the remission that the king grants them for the collection of the tax, which is currently 9 deniers per pound, and which was formerly much more considerable, having been as high as 6 sous per pound. The principle, the reason for this remission, is the difficulty of collecting the Taille (land tax) within the time frame required for its delivery to His Majesty. It is therefore assumed that this gratuity is granted to them to compensate them for the sums they are obliged to advance from their own funds, which they certainly do not do at present; but, when individuals liable for the taille are unable to pay, the collectors do so for them, or they would have to perish in prison. — Thus, formerly, when the Taille was easily and readily paid by the people, the receivers, both general and individual, had only their salaries, which are very considerable. But later, injustice arose with the increase in the distribution of the taille, when the poor were burdened to relieve the rich, this created difficulties in payments and the occasion for the receivers to request remissions to compensate them for their advances. Thus, it is in their interest that the taille always have a degree of difficulty in payment, which would not be the case if it were justly distributed; for far from ruining anyone, in that case, it would then be much lower than it could be, without causing the slightest hardship. — No other indication is needed than the taxable places, such as small towns, which have obtained from the king the power to set their taille as a tariff, that is to say, instead of a very unjust poll tax such as has been described above, the right to levy it on goods consumed locally, thereby avoiding all injustice. For although this method doubles the previous price, because, besides the fact that the one who leases this right must profit from it, and that it costs him expenses to carry out this collection, which takes place at the gates and requires clerks, this permission, which is very difficult to obtain, is granted only under onerous conditions, such as undertaking some considerable work, in addition to the price of the tax, as was the case in Honfleur and Pont-Audemer, which only obtained the tariff on the condition that each build a port. However, with all this, no sooner was this concession granted than these very wretched places, where houses had been left to fall into disrepair, suddenly regained wealth and abundance, and more was rebuilt and repaired in four years than had been done in the previous thirty.

This is easy to believe, since although double the amount paid to the king was regularly raised, the people, by putting an end to all the aforementioned disorder, gain twenty to one. But the same cannot be said of the tax collectors or the judges of the taille (land tax).

Indeed, although a general principle states that the countryside is only worth as much as the towns produce and consume, and that those who leave the countryside to live there do so to increase their consumption, it is still stipulated in the tariff agreements that no one from the countryside may move to the areas subject to the *taille*, not even those who, having originated there, had only left a year before; and this is supposedly in the interest of the countryside, because, it is said, the tariffs are ruining it. But those who speak in this way know very well the opposite, and to agree on this point, one need only compare the places near those subject to the tariff with those far from it. However, the lack of good faith on this matter, among those concerned, has gone so far that officers of the Court of Aids have been seen reporting to their colleagues that, among other good deals they had made for the good of the company, they had prevented several places requesting this concession from obtaining it, even though they made very advantageous offers to His Majesty, offers which they had had rejected by the ministers, always citing the interests of the countryside. What is appalling about this conduct is that these people, by acting in this way, cause the people a thousand times more harm than they do themselves, and this harm ultimately falls back on them if they possess inherited estates, as is easily seen by reflecting on the contents of these Memoirs. Thus, places where a very large trade would be carried on, were it not absolutely forbidden by the arbitrary tax, are forced to remain in abject poverty and cannot obtain a reprieve that seems to be a natural right: that every debtor should be able to discharge their debt in the most convenient way for them, without harming anyone. This will be discussed more fully later when addressing the ease of remedies for disorder.

We conclude the article on the *Taille*, in which we believe we have sufficiently demonstrated our initial assertion that consumption was annihilated because it was utterly prohibited by the manner in which the *Taille* was imposed and collected. It remains to be shown that while consumption is prohibited, it is no less impossible, for the reasons we will now explain. One might think that the disorders just described would be unprecedented and more than sufficient to reduce matters to their current state—that is, to a loss of half of all property, without anyone having benefited—were the following, in these Memoirs, not even more surprising and ruinous, being in some way the cause of the former and the principle that compelled the people to act unjustly in the distribution of the *taille*.

## **Chapter IX:**

The best soil in the world is no different from the worst when it is not cultivated, as is the case in Spain; but it can also be said that, however rich and cultivated it may be, when the produce it yields is not consumed, it is not only no more useful to the owner than if nothing were grown there, but it even puts him in a worse position, because since there is no cultivation that does not require expense, these expenses are wasted along with the produce when it is not consumed. This is the state to which the taxes and customs duties on the exits and passages from the kingdom have reduced the best regions of France, to such an extent that it is not hesitated to say that they have done and continue to do twenty times more harm to property in general than the king receives. This will be perfectly justified by a detailed description of the collection of these two duties, and will only leave one astonishment that the harm is not even greater, given such pernicious causes. But, before proceeding further, it is established as a principle that consumption and revenue are one and the same; and that the ruin of consumption is the ruin of revenue; so that, therefore, when it is subsequently stated that a certain tax, bringing the king only 100,000 livres, reduces consumption by two million in terms of price or quantity, this will truly and effectively mean a two million reduction in revenue. We will speak first of the Aids, and then of the Customs Duties on exports.

## Chapter X:

What is called the Aides is a tax levied on both wine sold retail and wine entering enclosed spaces. It is very ancient and succeeded the vingtième, which was taken on all kinds of goods sold by the owner after he had taken his provision; and this vingtième had succeeded the royal tithe on all the fruits of the land, which formerly constituted the entire income of princes, having always been the most certain royalty, for Holy Scripture and Roman history both mention that the kings collected it.

This Aides tax has not always been uniform, but has sometimes been levied in one country at the rate of 16th, 12th, and 8th, and sometimes in another at the rate of 4th of the retail sale of liquors, as in Normandy, where it is everywhere at this rate. To which, if we add a few new duties, such as the quarter surcharge and the gauging duty, this amounts to almost a third; and since the main sale takes place in towns and enclosed areas, the entry duties for the king, for hospitals, and for the towns themselves because of public charges, make up sums which, combined with all these sales duties, amount to a capital far exceeding the price of the merchandise, especially in the case of small vintages. Indeed, there have been years when the duties were twenty times higher at the retail level than the wholesale price of the commodity, which so severely decimates consumption that poor workers are forced to drink water, as liquors are exorbitantly priced in stores; or that they sell their manufactured goods at much higher prices, which destroys foreign trade, because foreigners, finding the goods too expensive, have established factories in other kingdoms where workers have traveled and continue to travel daily, a situation that could be justified by countless examples.

Thus, as a necessary consequence, the fruits of the land become worthless, and their cultivation is completely abandoned. There are countless acres of vineyards, once sold for a thousand pounds, which are now left fallow, which, after having ruined the owners and their creditors, then ruins, by the reasoning discussed in the first part, all industrial revenues, which only exist and function insofar as they receive income in kind, so that such a decrease is multiplied tenfold across the entire body of the state. up to this point, although in Normandy the nature of the country makes pleading the last thing susceptible to the effects of poverty, however, in places whose main wealth consisted of wines and drinks, all the judicial offices and their dependencies are not at a sixth of what they were formerly; which, further diminishing the part that the king takes in these kinds of functions, such as stamped paper, fines and controls of writs, leads to saying that he buys back threefold the increase that was claimed to procure for him in that of the rights of Aides, which are almost the sole cause of the general ruin.

## Chapter XI:

The Aides, formerly collected like the Tailles and by the Receivers General, were not levied in installments, and the first general lease on record dates from 1604, for 510,000 livres. Although it was for ten years, after only two or three, the farmer obtained a temporary increase, with an extension of three to four years. This practice continued in the same manner, because those who held them found in this way a means of concealing their profits. In less than fifteen years, the tax farm rose to 1,400,000 livres; and it increased so significantly by this same method that the Aides are at 19 million, or thereabouts, today.

This detail was provided to establish two things, namely: that, from 1604 to 1619, the farmers of these taxes earned exorbitant sums; And that from that time until 1670, there was almost no one who did not profit considerably, which is the cause of all the trouble, because the rent increases were invariably accompanied by the addition of some new taxes, even though those already established were already causing a great decrease in consumption, and consequently in France's revenue. The amount of wealth this generated (with the indispensable help of high-ranking patrons) eliminated any hope that the problem could ever be remedied. And what is most astonishing is that, while on the one hand the Taille (a tax on land) was being reduced, the amount of which was in no way the cause of the people's misery, the Aides (another form of levy) were being raised, which caused all the disorder. This is because the Taille is not a source of great wealth for those who collect it, and the Aides, on the contrary, have always produced the astonishing increases we have seen until now. Indeed, the twelve million reduction in the Tailles since the year 1651 is precisely what the Aides have suffered from an increase since that same time; and what is unfortunate is that when the produce of the farms could not enrich the farmers in a direct way through ordinary consumption which could be done, they resorted to indirect means which one could not believe if one did not see them every day with one's own eyes.

## Chapter XII:

Since the exorbitant tax rates had been set, one of two things had to be done: either abandon the retail trade of liquors altogether, or deceive the tax farmers about the volume of sales. Both were done to some extent, meaning that this type of consumption was reduced to a quarter of what it had been previously, which is already an inestimable loss for the State; and that, for the small amount that could not be avoided, it was necessary to resort to fraud, which is done by means of unknown cellars in which liquors are stored under assumed names, and from which, at night, what was taken out during the day is drawn to fill the casks that have been declared for sale, more or less, otherwise the tavern keeper would lose considerably on the merchandise, even if his efforts were in vain.

And, as it was impossible for the tax farmers to prevent this disorder by ordinary means, by verifying the fraud by witnesses, they obtained edicts and declarations, which stipulate that the minutes of their clerks, whoever they may be, shall be true in all their statements; and as no inquiry is made into their life and morals upon their reception, and as they also have as a particular profit a third of the fines and confiscations pronounced as a consequence of their minutes, they are absolutely judge and party, and have at their disposal the property of all the innkeepers in their districts; and if they do not destroy them all at the start of their lease, it is because it is in their interest to do so only at the end. But they employ another method to manage their profits, equally detrimental to the state. Since, by means of their official reports, they control all the innkeepers' assets, they only sell to whomever they please—that is, to those who buy liquors from them alone, at whatever price they set. All the clerks are also involved in the sale, something formerly forbidden by law. Furthermore, since they set exorbitant prices for these liquors, selling them at three times their cost, it is necessary, in order for the innkeepers to sell them in a proportionate manner—which would not be possible if everyone were able to either sell or stock up—that they take great care to prevent both by the means just mentioned, and to which others will be added.

Since they could not easily have clerks in all the remote places to keep an eye out for fraud in the sale, by visiting the cellars three or four times a day to see how much the casks have been reduced, which would consume all the farm's produce, they are accustomed to destroying as many inns or taverns in remote places as are built, which has so thoroughly banished this kind of consumption in the countryside that unless one is on a main road, one travels seven or eight leagues without finding anywhere to quench one's thirst; so that all the taverns being in the towns and large places, the clerks are masters of all retail consumption, from which they cannot derive any benefit in their own lives except by reducing it to a sixth of what it was formerly, as one can say it is today, not only with regard to hotel owners, but even with regard to individuals.

Indeed, since it is most often necessary to fetch wine by cart from the places where it is harvested, there are edicts stipulating that declarations must be made before entering the enclosed areas of the crossing and that certain tolls must be paid, while others only require

showing the permits to pass obtained from the first office; and since it is almost always the same farmers who collect the tolls, the clerks' interest being that no one but themselves should trade in wine, and that as few people as possible should stock up on it, thus reducing the need to go to the tavern, they do things in such a way that once one has made this journey, one has no desire to return. For, firstly, before setting out, one must go and make one's declaration at the next office, and obtain a certificate of the quantity of wine one is transporting; And if one is far from the office, one loses a day waiting for the clerk's convenience, which is never the time for the carriers to arrive: thus, they must either fast or go eat at the tavern. Then, having set out, one must stop at the first enclosed place, to similarly submit one's declaration and see if it is correct, and if the barrels are of the declared gauge. The clerk is often not at home, or does not want to be, nor is the gauger either, during which time the horses must be exposed to the wind and rain, as there is no innkeeper bold enough to give them shelter until everything is done. And if the gaugers do not return, as can happen, there is nothing less than the confiscation of the merchandise and the horses; Or else one must redeem oneself through an honesty towards the clerk that exceeds three times the profit one can make on one's carriage. Furthermore, if the horses have lost their shoes along the way, and the declaration point was reached only a little late, it is said that no one is accepted after sunset; thus, it is necessary to spend once more days to make the journey than it would otherwise take. And since inns are terribly expensive because of the exorbitant price of drinks, the innkeepers declare that no matter what price they set for wine, they still lose money due to the high duties, and that they must therefore make up for it on other goods, selling them at four times their usual price; it follows that just one more night spent outside negates all the profit, even if all the aforementioned inconveniences were not present.

Furthermore, since there are duties to be paid in advance, whether the wine being transported keeps or spoils, as often happens, this greatly delays this type of trade and disrupts what could be done by bartering goods, given the need for cash. Moreover, the duties are levied on the entire contents of the cask without any deduction for the lees, and these duties are the most expensive part, since they far exceed what the owner can recoup. To partially salvage the wine, the liquors are drawn off, so that, no longer nourished by their lees, especially ciders in Normandy, they easily turn sour and cause illness to those who are forced to drink them, as all the poor do; besides, this further reduces consumption of this type of wine.

### Chapter XIII:

However evident everything said in the preceding chapter may seem, for anyone with even a passing familiarity with the world, it would nonetheless be worthwhile to reinforce it with some new evidence, in order to show the extent to which the taxes have pushed this interest in ruining consumption, and consequently the country, for a particular benefit that does not amount to a thousandth of a part of the harm they do to the body of the State, which is the general source from which the king derives all his revenues.

Although Normandy, generally speaking, is not a wine-producing region, its proximity to the North Sea, where wine is completely unknown, means that what little grows there, or used to grow there (three-quarters of the vines having been uprooted in the last thirty years), sold perfectly well; And it was in this same canton that acres of vineyards were sold for a thousand pounds (as has been said), and since then entirely abandoned, the soil, usually stony, being good for nothing after the vines are uprooted. This is the whole canton stretching from Mantes to Pont-de-l'Arche, which once comprised about 20,000 acres of vineyards alone. Although it was a very small production, compared to the wines of Champagne, and even those from above Mantes, it was nevertheless a very reliable income for the owners, who took great care in tending their vines, with the difference between well-maintained and neglected vineyards being more than half the yield. But since the tax of seven francs per muid was imposed on wines of all kinds that would pass the rivers of Eure, Seine, Andelle and Iton, to go to the provinces of Normandy and Picardy where it does not grow, this establishment, which (according to tradition) for thirty years had only a principle of particular interest, such as to promote some cantons of Champagne, by putting Picardy in the obligation to supply itself with wines only from this province, has cost, since that time, more than 15 million per year to the provinces of Picardy, Normandy and Île-de-France; and with regard to the king, for 80,000 livres that this brings him, which we are quite sure he would not want to have at this price, even if his interest were not contrary to it, we have been obliged to reduce the Tailles by 150,000 livres on the single election of Mantes; And what remains is paid with far more difficulty than the total amount was formerly, for no other reason than the creation of this right.

Indeed, since that time, the vines have become worthless; and it has been a very good thing in many places to uproot them, since after having incurred the costs of cultivation and harvesting, and having gone into debt for this purpose, there was the misfortune of seeing the wine spoil in the cellars without being able to sell it, for the reasons discussed above.

Thus, one can find cases in which barrel merchants, having sold them on credit before the harvest, refused to take back the barrels along with the wine they contained, even though no payment was required for the wine, even though that same wine fetched an exorbitant price ten or twelve leagues away. But, given the circumstances discussed above, there is less to lose in terms of wine than in risking carts and horses by attempting to transport it; and the great harm such a provision does to the state is that these same regions where wine is so expensive,

because it is neither harvested nor transported there, can no longer rid themselves of the goods they used to give in exchange, such as salt and oats, equally scarce in wine-growing regions, which were transported by the same carts that brought the wine, thus creating a very considerable trade and enriching both parties. Instead, most of the land in wine-growing regions must remain uncultivated; oats are scarce because they are very expensive; and coastal areas are entirely lost because grain is too heavy relative to the price, which can no longer cover the costs of overland transport, inns being as expensive as they are, and it being impossible to bring back wine as was done in the past. Thus, each region perishes, unable to exchange the goods it harvests for those it does not produce, which clearly proves that consumption has become impossible.

## Chapter XIV.:

Although this disorder of the taxes is not so widespread throughout France, nevertheless, besides the fact that there are few regions entirely exempt from it, it can be said that a considerable decrease in the price of any commodity whatsoever is enough to spread this problem to all goods, through a necessary sharing of the high or low prices that all merchandise of the same kind experience in relation to one another with respect to the merchant's price, especially within the same state. Thus, for example, it is enough for two sacks of wheat to be found more than are needed for ordinary consumption, and for the merchant to be forced to sell at any price whatsoever, to bring about an extreme decrease in the price of wheat in a market; and if the same thing happens in subsequent markets, this problem continues to worsen; and after spreading to the region, it reaches the most distant countries. The wine, which was formerly consumed by the transport that was made to the countries where it was lacking, and the other goods that were brought back in exchange, to at least make the return carriage worthwhile, no longer being able to pass, for the reasons discussed above, not only become a pure loss to their respective owners, but also become the cause of the ruin of other owners (who could have consumed them on the spot), because the price being debased by this great abundance, it cannot even suffice for the costs of the processes, which are always the same, like the days of workers, wages of servants, which never decrease when they have once earned a certain price, given that there is a kind of tacit pact among these kinds of people, to prefer to beg or fast, than to reduce anything from their ordinary price; This proud presumption, which abundance so readily sustains, stems from the fact that the debasement of goods allows them to earn in a day or two their entire week's sustenance, and they take advantage of this to force their masters not to reduce their income, given the latter's necessity of abandoning everything or having their work done at any cost. Hence, therefore, the ruin of the farmers, which leads to that of their masters and creditors, in a gradation that extends to infinity, and which owes its entire origin to the cessation of consumption; so that the lands, being sold off at auction, are given away almost for nothing, a situation that spreads to other provinces and results in Brittany, where this disorder of taxes and levies is unknown, lands nonetheless being reduced by half their former value, due to the contagion of proximity to Normandy. And the same is true, all the more so, of the other provinces which do not enjoy such great privileges as Brittany. However, it is such a great coup d'état not to let the price fall once contracted by goods, that the Dutch, to whom practice has taught everything that can be said about trade, far from debasing them for an entire State, out of private interest, take care, on the contrary, when there is an excess of them, such as pepper, because the year has been too abundant, or because consumption has not met, to throw these goods into the sea: — by this first principle, that, in order to preserve the harmony of a State, it is necessary that all its parts contribute to its wealth; which is impossible when the proportions are disturbed, and which is what happens in the situation just mentioned.

## Chapter XV:

It remains to discuss the Customs duties levied on goods leaving the kingdom, which cause almost the same effects as the Excise Duties, with this difference: the resulting disorder is all the more deplorable because, whereas the greatest harm from the Excise Duties falls upon the interior of the kingdom—a situation easily remedied if one chooses not to sacrifice the general interest to that of a few individuals—the disorder of the Customs duties, on the contrary, by drastically reducing the king's revenue, has driven foreigners from our ports and forced them to seek, at lower prices, in other countries the goods they formerly came to buy from us. And this, in order to enrich the clerks and directors of these duties, with the principal tax farmers losing out as much as the king. Thus, such a small interest has caused all the disorder suffered by a state that can no longer find a market for its goods.

Customs is commonly called the duty levied on goods taken outside the kingdom, or brought from abroad, or even on those merely passing from one province to another, although often the distance they travel is very short. As long as these duties were moderate, they caused no disruption; but as soon as they were set at exorbitant prices, they were equally detrimental to both the king and the state, since they banished all foreign trade. Foreigners were forced to learn our manufacturing methods by attracting our workers and to seek our natural resources, such as our wheat and wine, more cheaply in other countries that had grown rich at our expense and had learned to be efficient stewards since we had ceased to be so. And yet it seems that this disorder should have been avoided even more than all the others, after what had happened in the time of Henry IV concerning the Customs, the account of which, found in a contemporary historian, proves more than anything that could be reported on this subject. — At the Peace of Vervins, although one of the articles of the treaty stipulated that the duties on the entry and exit of goods in the States of the Kings of France and Spain would remain in the situation in which they had always been, without being able to be raised reciprocally; However, Philip III, newly arrived at the crown, perhaps being dissatisfied with the peace, wanted to undermine it by some infraction: he raised extremely high all entry and exit duties in his ports, and France having done the same, as if in retaliation, although the price of the farm had not been increased, the farmers went completely bankrupt, and could not satisfy their lease, because of the great decrease that this brought to consumption and trade. And not long ago, the same thing happened in a French town, where the tax on the removal of brandy for England being excessive, the one who had sublet the city's excise offices (as sometimes happens) received no revenue from this commodity in the first year of his lease, because of the exorbitant price. This was because foreigners adopted another method, which was to send very small boats to the bottom of the coastal cliffs, to the top of which poor people carried barrels of brandy at night, and then lowered them into these boats with ropes, so that the tax farmer received nothing at all. To remedy this problem, he announced the following year that he would be content with half the tax allowed by his lease, which brought him a considerable profit and restored abundance to the country, since trade is never the same when conducted in secret as when carried out openly.

But to get to the root causes of the disorder, we must examine the details. — All the edicts concerning Customs and transits stipulate, in general terms, the obligation to declare, before the opening of the bales, the quality, quantity, weight, measure, and variety of the goods one wishes to transport, or which are arriving, under penalty of confiscation and heavy fines. If, after opening, the verification carried out does not conform to the declaration that was made in writing, item by item, everything is confiscated, without permission to leave the merchandise for inspection to pay whatever duties one wishes to demand; And these confiscations are divided into three parts, namely: one-third to the lowest clerks acting in custody, one-third to the director or receiver, and the final third to the tax farmer, with this difference: the latter is at the director's discretion, who cares little for him, provided he makes his fortune, which is inevitable since customs duties are so exorbitant that all consumption and trade are ruined. For, while what is paid on goods is an easy thing that does not interrupt trade, and consequently the wealth of the country, the king certainly derives much more from it; but the director will never make a fortune, nor will any of those employed in collecting this tax. This will be demonstrated by facts so certain and so consistent that it will be impossible not to agree with this truth. But first, it should be said that these positions of receivers or directors are the highest commissions that princes do not disdain to request for their protégés, so that these are people of high protection; and when the hand from which they hold their positions is not publicly visible, it is a sign that they are merely lending their office to other powerful people who derive the most benefit from it. It is also worth noting that those who appoint under these conditions, to emphasize the obligation they wish to be shown, say something quite extravagant, if everyone were not witnessing it: that this position will yield 5,000 or 6,000 livres in annual income, although the salary is often only 1,200 livres; from which must be paid the office, correspondence, and other minor expenses. This is how those of these clerks who have some conscience save their scruple, by pretending to receive thereby a tacit permission to deceive the king, the public and their masters.

## Chapter XVI:

Customs duties, especially on goods leaving the kingdom, once set at exorbitant levels, and after the trade in goods transported there is greatly diminished, the remaining portion can only survive in the following way: either by completely evading customs through secret shipments at night, or by colluding with the customs officers to deceive the masters. In either case, the former profit handsomely; for if one risks attempting to evade customs (as it is impossible not to be caught at times), one-third of the confiscation rightfully belongs to the customs officers.

But often they do not reveal the matter and instead negotiate on behalf of their masters, the merchant still gaining enough, even if he were to lose everything, to salvage the other consequences of a confiscation. The other method is at least as advantageous to them, which is to address them first and negotiate in good faith the remission they wish to make, in exchange for an honest concession to their benefit regarding the duties owed to their masters, and consequently to the king, in which they show themselves to be honest people and of good disposition. — Thus, one way or another, the duties must be high; this is what their protectors are careful to ensure, and would rather see an entire country perish than allow customs duties to be so high that the goods could bear them without resorting to one of these two expedients. And, fearing that excessive duties might not be enough to achieve their ends, they have obtained edicts from the lords. The ministers, who place the merchant's property at their discretion, since, although by all the laws of the world it is the claimant who must establish their claim, in Customs it is quite the opposite, as was shown in the previous chapter. The merchant must instruct the customs officers what they need, item by item, and everything that a party who has an interest in a misunderstanding must put in writing. If this happens by mistake, it being almost impossible for it to be otherwise, they say, as justification for such an unjust procedure, that if they were mistaken, they would not be corrected. — But to show that this is a trap they intend to set, by creating a lawsuit in which they are both judge and party, it is enough to point out that it is up to them to know their edicts and their powers, and consequently what belongs to them, and not to the merchant, who can learn nothing about it except from them. Secondly, if they were so afraid of making a mistake, they only have to do as all sellers do: ask for much more than necessary. Surely, the merchant will correct them, or they won't lose anything. But to try to force the defendant, who should be less aware of it, to establish a reduction, under penalty of losing everything if he is mistaken, when the plaintiff's error would be of very little consequence, even supposing there were any; this is the ultimate injustice, paralleled only by the Spanish Inquisition, which is considered the most violent tribunal in the world.

We pass over in silence the other ways they use to harass merchants, sometimes leaving them without time to receive their goods for six or seven days, either to extract a commission for their diligence, or even, despite already being paid, to delay transport. However things are done, no justice can be expected, because, having strong protections, they do not recognize any of the ordinary judges, but have private ones whom they appoint themselves: it is in this

way that the directors of Customs have enriched themselves, as trade, both within and outside the kingdom, has declined; the same disorders are practiced in the transport of goods both from one province to another, and outside the kingdom.

## Chapter XVII:

Formerly, a quantity of wheat was taken from France, especially from Normandy, for the benefit of regions lacking it; and since France produces more (being well cultivated) than it can consume, it is ruined as soon as transport ceases. This is what happened with the tax of 66 livres on each muid (a unit of measure) leaving the kingdom: so that foreigners went to Danzig and Hamburg to obtain it; and the excessive quantity that remained in the country caused the cultivation of the poorer lands to cease, and the best lands to be neglected in many places; and by this means brought about a famine of money, no less detrimental to the state than that which befalls the wheat. For, as when this happens, it is because the proportion between what one wants to have, which is wheat, and what one gives in exchange, which is money, is removed, yet all commerce remains; the same disorder is encountered when, wheat being cheap, much more is needed to obtain money: — which produces the same effect with regard to the republic, which, being unable to sustain itself except through continuous commerce and circulation, where proportions are absolutely necessary, everything ceases at the same time as they no longer exist, whatever the cause may be. So that, as in Peru one dies of hunger amidst money, one is very miserable in France in the abundance of all the things necessary for life. And what is more deplorable is that these misfortunes, which often occur elsewhere out of necessity, are found in France only through a great misunderstanding, or rather through indirect interests, from which nothing accrues to the king; Besides the fact that barren years cannot be compensated by abundant ones, which are no longer of the usual proportions, we have seen, for the last thirty years, wheat prices exorbitant, causing the poor to perish; or sold at rock-bottom prices, ruining both rich and poor: the former unable to provide work for the latter, who nevertheless can only subsist on this single income. It should therefore not be argued that this obligation to leave grain in a country is a sure remedy against famine, since, besides the fact that experience has shown the contrary, wheat has been excessively expensive four times in the last thirty years, whereas in the space of a hundred years prior the same thing had not occurred; The reason is that a barren year is never really helped except by the previous one, or at most by the one before that, since wheat in France is not generally kept any longer, and the surplus is consumed cheaply by fertilizers, or by the impatience of landowners who want to be paid by their tenants, or because there is no suitable place to keep it and turn it often as needed; and far from a tax that has caused such general ruin having brought any benefit to the king, it is quite the opposite, since, having never received a penny from it, he has lost the import duties on the goods that foreigners brought when they came to get our wheat.

There was once a very good manufacture of fine hats in Normandy, which was worth a very large sum to the king, both for import duties on raw materials brought in from abroad and for export duties once they were finished. These duties were doubled, and immediately the workers moved to foreign countries, where, having established factories producing fine hats, previously unknown to them, the king's duties were reduced to one-sixth of what they had been.

Playing cards were manufactured in France, especially in Rouen, for all of Europe, and even for the entire Spanish New World. A negligible tax, which served only as an opportunity for tax collectors to harass merchants, similarly caused this manufacture to be relocated to countless places. Paper was likewise sold in very large quantities, and it suffered the same fate for the same reasons. Tobacco pipes, which were manufactured in quantity, followed the same path for similar reasons.

For a long time, whalebone used for clothing was prepared exclusively in Rouen for the entire world where it was used; and since customs duties on the import of this material were constantly rising, to avoid these duties, this type of merchandise was transported 400 or 500 leagues inland more than necessary, in order to circumvent the Rouen customs posts. But finally, the cunning of the directors, by offering advice designed to ruin everything in order to enrich themselves, triumphed over that of the merchants, so that they intercepted so many edicts from the ministers that they forced this trade to take other routes; and it should be added, in favor of those who gave them their protection, that it is widely believed they were far from fully aware of the true cost to the king and the people.

Wines were also sold in large quantities at the Rouen fairs to foreign countries, which provided the king with considerable sums for the export of even the smallest vintages. The tax was raised, and these same foreigners went to buy their wines elsewhere.

Indeed, given that the export of even the smallest wines costs 25 livres per cask, and they are not often sold for 20 livres in a place a day or two away, it is not surprising that such a tax completely destroyed the trade. And what is marvelous is that, while all these duties were being raised, which ruined both the king and private individuals equally, without the discovery of the error in one being able to change conduct towards the others, the Tailles were being reduced by three times more than these taxes were, although it was not the quantity of the Tailles that inconvenienced the people, as has been said, and which will be further noted when the remedies are discussed.

## Chapter XVIII:

We are convinced that the mere narration of all these facts will have amply satisfied the obligation undertaken at the beginning of these Memoirs: to discover the cause of the great decrease in France's revenues, without the increase in the king's own revenues having any part in it, nor can it be blamed on the lack of gold and silver coins, which are in far greater abundance in the kingdom than when revenues were more substantial. And, although this truth is quite constant, as it might seem paradoxical to those who are accustomed to saying, when they see opulence diminishing in a country, that there is no more money; it is appropriate, for the sake of clarity in these Memoirs, to say a word about the nature and qualities of gold and silver, both coined and in their pure form, and to explain the place of silver in the world.

It is very certain that it is not a good in itself, and that quantity does nothing for the opulence of a country in general, provided that there is enough to support the prices contracted by the foodstuffs necessary for life; so that it cannot prevent the places from which it is taken from being very miserable, and that a man who has two écus, in those countries, to spend a day, spends his life with more difficulty than another who, being in Languedoc, has only six sous for his maintenance: and even one can say that the richer a country is, the more it is able to do without money, since then there are more people for whom it can be represented by a piece of paper under the name of notes of exchange.

Money is therefore an incorruptible pledge which all men have agreed to give to one another, and to take from each other reciprocally on a current basis, in order to procure as much as they need; because he who receives the money is certain that it will produce the same effect, with regard to him, for the things which he needs; no one in the world receives it to consume it or to store it, unless it is to expect a greater quantity of it, and to produce a greater effect at the same time. So that if all the necessities of life had, like money, a fixed price, and if time did not alter them, or if the various degrees of perfection that each possesses individually did not obscure their true value, so that they had a current price every time one needed to use them, one could say that gold and silver would be no more sought after than all the other most common metals, and would even be less so, being less suited to other uses of life; because the exchange would take place immediately as it did at the beginning of the world, and as it still does with respect to some commodities in bulk after they have been valued.

From these principles it follows that, in wealth, which is nothing other than the power to procure the comfortable sustenance of life, both for necessities and luxuries (it being indifferent at the end of the year, for someone who has lived in abundance, to consider whether they procured their comforts with little or much money), money is merely the means and the vehicle, whereas the goods necessary for life are the end and the goal; and thus a country can be rich without much money, and one that has only money, very poor, if it can only exchange it with difficulty for those same goods. So much so that no sooner do the Spanish fleets arrive in Europe than almost all the money has to be transported to the

countries from which the goods were obtained, in order to transport it to the countries where the mines are located. And this money, having arrived there, produces through a continuous cycle the same effects it produced at its inception, making more or less turns and returns, changing hands more or less frequently, that is to say, more or less trade or consumption takes place. But countries like France, which produce the necessities of life, have this advantage over those from which money is extracted: exchange occurs in a very advantageous manner, since money, not being consumed by use, produces boundless and endless benefits for the countries where it is brought; whereas the goods given in exchange are only useful once, perishing through use. And while money has the quality of being unaltered by time and accidents, it also has the quality of not increasing in value through safekeeping, like other commodities; and when it produces utility, it is not in the chest, but by keeping it as little as possible; and since it is consumption, of which it is only the slave, that directs its course, from the moment it ceases, it stops immediately, and remains as if immobile in the hands where it is found when disorder begins to be felt.

Thus, if a merchant's worst situation, when business is booming, is to have his money sitting idle in his coffers, because it yields him nothing, it is to his advantage, when business is slow, that he is not out in the open, since if he gains nothing, he loses nothing; what he would risk would be through bankruptcies, inseparable from the cessation of trade. — And what is said of the merchant is equally true of all those who live off their annuities, whether in land or fixed annuities, who, receiving rent payments, cannot replenish them for lack of security, because the most common investments being in land, the yield diminishes daily before their very eyes due to the annihilation of consumption: therefore, they prefer to lose the interest rather than risk the capital, reducing themselves to spending less, which is an additional harm to the body of the republic. So that all industrial revenues cease entirely, and money, which generates as much income as it moves, not leaving the hands of the powerful, completely halts its normal flow; this paralyzes the country in all its branches, and makes a state miserable amidst an abundance of all kinds of goods. These are effects that the poor feel first, but which then spread imperceptibly to all other members of the state, even the most prominent, as has been shown in these Memoirs; which should certainly interest them in the means of stopping such great disorder, in which the king undoubtedly participates in proportion to his rank in the state.

## Chapter XIX:

It is easy to see, from all that has just been said, that to generate a large income in a country rich in resources, it is not necessary for there to be a large amount of money, but only a large amount of consumption. One million has a greater effect in this way than ten million when there is no consumption; because this million is renewed a thousand times, and will generate the same amount of income at every step, whereas ten million left in a coffer are no more useful to a state than if they were stones. And what does the most harm to the body of France is that it is the common people on whom the disorder of the *taille* (land tax) and the excessive price of liquors at retail have the greatest impact, because they are the least defensive and the least stockpiled, and yet they are at the same time the ones who consume the most, because they are the most numerous. — Indeed, no sooner has a day laborer received his day's pay than he goes to drink a pint of wine, being at a reasonable price; the innkeeper, by selling his wine, buys some back from the farmer or the winegrower; the winegrower pays his master, who makes the worker work, and satisfies his passion either to build, or to buy offices, or to consume in whatever way it may be, in proportion to the amount he is paid by those who make his funds profitable. If that same wine, which was worth 4 sous a measure, suddenly comes to be worth 10 sous due to an increase in tax, as we have seen happen in our time, the day laborer, seeing that what would remain of his day would not be enough to feed his wife and children, is reduced to drinking water, as almost all do in considerable cities, and thereby stops the circulation that his day provided him, and is reduced to alms, not without harming the interests of the king, who had his share at every step of this annihilated circulation.

The same applies to other commodities; there is none whose consumption, caused by the aforementioned disruptions, does not first bring to a halt ten or twelve kinds of trades, all of which relied on this primary principle, and then have a knock-on effect on both the king and all the other professions within the state apparatus. Thus, although money remains, it ceases, for lack of circulation, to generate any revenue and is as if it were dead to the country. Consequently, if there is 500 million less income in France than there was thirty years ago, it is not because there is less money, but because, with far fewer commodities produced, sold, and consumed, this has spread the same harm to all other kinds of goods that derive their existence from the fruits of the earth. Therefore, we should not blame the lack of money, but rather the fact that it is not trading at its normal rate; and the silverware reduced to coins in recent days has brought no more remedy to this problem than a fleet from Peru has done to the poverty of Spain, which, since receiving such currency, has not become any richer, because the silver merely passes through, and Spain only sees it in its initial form. Thus, the value of the silverware, after its initial exchange rate, has reached the levels just mentioned, from which it is impossible to extract it. And it would have been a hundred times more advantageous for France to repeal some of these edicts that ruin consumption to the tune of millions a year, even though the revenue for the king is quite meager, and to defer the tax revenue, so that His Majesty would lose nothing—which would not have amounted to a penny per pound—than to converting tableware into currency, the benefit that came to His Majesty from this being easily compensated elsewhere.

Finally, the body of France suffers when money is not in continuous motion, which can only be so as long as it is movable and in the hands of the people, but as soon as it becomes immovable, it cannot cease to be so, because no security can be found in reconstituting it on land, or in lending it to buy an office which can be suppressed or annihilated by the creation of similar ones which will remove it from commerce, or finally in rejecting this same money in traffic, for the reasons just mentioned, it can be said that all is lost. Now, even if all the money were in the hands of the common people, where it remains movable, it must immediately return to the hands of the powerful, who then re-immovable it for the most part, because the harmony of the republic, which a superior power governs invisibly, subsists on the mixture of good and bad stewards. All things, both movable and immovable, are in a state of continual revolution, and the rich become poor so that the poor may become rich. Indeed, a spendthrift of his funds and his immovable money, such as the redemption of an annuity and the price of land, makes it movable by consuming it in his daily expenses, which should only be drawn from the income of those same funds; whereas a good steward, by not consuming his ordinary income, whether from land or industry, forms it into immovable money, that is to say, money from which he intends to create immovable property, such as land, a house, or a portion of an annuity. Since this cannot be done as just described, this money no longer returns to the people, passing instead through the hands of the spendthrift who turns it into movable property. Thus, the body of the State suffers a very great loss, because it is the common people who provide it with the most revenue; a crown travels more far, and consequently is consumed more, in a single day among the poor than in three months among the rich, who, only conducting large transactions, wait a long time for their sum to be made available, even in the best of times, before spending their money, which is always detrimental to a State. So much so that Philippe de Commines observes that, although King Louis XI tripled his income in fifteen years, no one was ruined, because he spent everything he received as quickly as possible; which clearly demonstrates the benefit a country has in ensuring its inhabitants are not forced to spend less money than they receive.

## **Chapter XX:**

No more certain proof of all that has just been said is needed than the example of the women selling small goods in Paris, who grow rich by borrowing money at five sous of interest per week for one écu, that is to say, at more than 400 percent per year, the yield exceeding four times the capital; for, although such conduct, even if the interest were infinitely lower than that, would ruin the richest man in the world, nevertheless it enriches and sustains these poor people; and the way in which this is done is easy to understand. It is because this woman, having sold four or five écus worth of merchandise in a day, on which she has sometimes made a profit of half, returns the next morning at daybreak to buy more, and, doing this five or six times a week, it is easy for her to find both a living and enough to satisfy those who have lent her money; and this kind of trade only ceases when the poor day laborers, who obtain their supplies solely from her, stop doing so, because they can no longer find their day's work, which is destroyed in Paris as elsewhere by causes dealt with an infinite number of times.

## Chapter XXI:

Although we have sufficiently demonstrated the king's interest in the ruin of consumption, which brings about all the pernicious consequences just mentioned, we will now present this same interest in a new light, to make it even more evident to those who might doubt it. — It is certain that the king maintains his armies and his ordinary expenses, not with money in the strict sense, but with wheat, meat, linen, clothing, and finally with all the other things necessary for the maintenance of life, which, growing in his states, are consumed for the most part by his subjects, and a portion is given to him as a tribute; and if not immediately, it is the same thing, because the ten écus that a hatter gives to the king for his tax, after having taken them from the profit he has made on a thousand hats that he has made and sold, the food and maintenance of his family taken from them, is an obligation and a pledge that he gives to the king to provide him with ten hats for himself or at his command, in which case his pledge will be returned to him, as infallibly happens; — for His Majesty has not as soon received this pledge, that he gives it back to a captain of light horse, who returns it with the same diligence to the hatter to take the ten hats from it, who then makes the ten écus go through the same circulation again, unless the channel is interrupted, that is to say, unless the hatter's shop is dismantled because the hats can no longer be sold, as we have seen happen, for the reasons discussed above; and so on with all other goods for which the same reasoning can be applied: — which obviously shows the great harm that the king receives from the ruin of consumption, and that it is surprising to say that it is being ruined in order to enrich him.

And, to conclude the second part of these Memoirs, we need only compare what is happening among our neighbors with what is happening in France with regard to taxes. We already showed in the first part that, although there has never been such a decrease in wealth, the king now levies less on his subjects than many of his ancestors. We will now say, and maintain, that there is no prince in Europe who does not collect a much greater proportionate tax, and yet where it costs his people so much; and although this may seem paradoxical, it is nonetheless a constant truth. Indeed, a vine uprooted because it cannot bear the tax levied on it (as happens every day) does not benefit the king, and it ruins the owner no less; and since this miscalculation has been found in countless commodities, as we have shown, we can draw the same conclusions. In all other states, taxes are proportionate to the things on which they are levied; and in this way, both the prince and the people find their share equally. Thus, to go into more detail, it is certain that England is not worth a quarter of France, either in terms of the size of its population, which is essential to the country's prosperity, because consumption cannot occur without it; or in terms of the fertility of its soil (and if the conquest of Gaul took Julius Caesar eight years, that of all England was achieved in a single campaign). However, for the past three or four years, England has brought in nearly eighty million francs a year to the Prince of Orange, and this without reducing the people to beggary or forcing them to abandon farming. And if the war had not interrupted its trade, the situation would have been entirely different. Consider, too, all the princes of Germany, down to the least; Consider their states, which are not a tiny speck compared to France, and yet what they derive from them

amounts to a thirtieth or thereabouts, and even more. Savoy, in its entirety, without Piedmont, is not worth the least of the thirty-two districts of Normandy.

Its land, very poor and barren, can only feed a portion of its inhabitants, and even then, very miserably; there are neither rivers nor sizable towns where any manufacturing takes place; however, it yielded 500,000 écus to its prince annually before the war; and this, because things were done as in England, Germany, and all the countries of the world, that is to say, they made the land produce everything that its climate and soil, aided by human labor, could yield. everything that could be consumed was consumed there, and everything that could be sold was sold there, which is a situation that should be sacred to the ministers of all the princes of the world, allowing them to push the rights of their masters to such a point as they can go, as long as they do not harm those two pillars of the whole republic, agriculture and commerce.

But to believe that one serves a monarch better by contrary conduct, as cannot be denied is currently happening in France, is so strongly refuted by the simple narration of events reported in these Memoirs that nothing more will be said. However, this same doctrine can be established, without going abroad, by what is happening in France in places where the *taille* (land tax) is not arbitrary and subject to the pernicious effects mentioned, and where similarly, the *aides* (taxes) and tolls on passages have not yet been levied: the difference between these regions and others will be evident. — The generality of Montauban is not worth a sixth of the generality of Rouen, either because of its location, which has neither sea nor river as neighbors; whereas the generality of Rouen has Paris on one side and the sea on the other, which is the most advantageous location in the world; its land has no equal in fertility; The towns and villages there are countless, and populated accordingly; and yet, with all these advantages, it brings the king only a third more than Montauban, which, in the *taille* alone, the real tax, yields 3,400,000 livres; while all that the king has ever drawn from the generality of Rouen, in ordinary revenues, has never exceeded six to seven million livres, all included. But the difference with regard to the people is even greater: in the generality of Montauban, it is impossible to find a single piece of land from which one cannot derive all its potential income; there is no man, however poor, who is not clothed in a decent woolen garment; who does not eat bread and drink as much as he needs; and almost all eat meat, all have tiled houses, and they are repaired when necessary. But in the generality of Rouen, lands that are not of the highest quality are abandoned, or so poorly cultivated that they cause more loss than profit to their owners; meat is a commodity unknown in the countryside, as is any kind of liquor for the common people; most of the houses are almost in total ruin, without anyone bothering to repair them, although they are built cheaply, since they are made only of thatch and earth; and with all this, the people would consider themselves fortunate if they could have bread and water that were more or less sufficient for their needs, which is almost never seen; And all these disorders are occurring while the country could not only provide perfectly well for its inhabitants in a very fortunate manner, but even help its neighbors, as it used to do, if the absolutely necessary proportions for such harmony were not ruined by indirect interests, which also fall on His Majesty, since it is as impossible for uncultivated lands and starving people to be of any use to him as it is difficult for the opposite situation

not to be highly advantageous to him. But since those who provide the reports to the ministers do not have the same interests, indeed they have completely opposing ones, it should not be surprising that they sacrifice those of both the king and the people to their own personal advantages; And although they do not personally profit even a fiftieth from the harm they do to the body of the State, their interest, however small it may be compared to this harm, prevails over the public good, which is now considered a common practice, filled with people of the highest standing. Thus, although the disorder is blatant, and the king has a very great interest, not to mention that of the people, in putting an end to it, no one has yet been bold enough to declare war on them, or rather, on their actions.

It is on these principles, however, that we will proceed to the third part of these Memoirs, which will deal with the remedies for these disorders. We will establish their ease and usefulness so consistently that only those who depend on them or owe their fortune to them could offer opposition through their actions or words. Their principal objection will be the delay they will request, or the supposed upheaval of affairs they will cite; but both are ridiculous, given that it is the people themselves who speak in these Memoirs, numbering fifteen million, against three hundred at most, who are enriching themselves from the ruin of the king and the people, who ask only for the simple publication of two edicts so that within two hours they will be able to cultivate their fallow lands and sell their lost produce, which would immediately double both the income from their lands and that of the king. However, one cannot, without abandoning reason, tell people who offer to pay that it is impossible for them to do so, especially when one is as suspect as these three hundred dissenters must be.

**PART THREE**  
**(“Means of Restoring National Wealth”)**

## Chapter I:

To address the remedies for such great disorder, it must first be said that there is nothing so easy on the part of the matter itself, and nothing so difficult on the part of those to whom indifference is far from being the issue. Indeed, it would seem that the only people who should have an interest in the taxes being levied, as well as in all other debts, are the king and his people: His Majesty to receive them, and his people to pay them. Consequently, one should be certain of the acceptance of a proposal that would allow His Majesty to receive double the amount, while it would cost his people no more than a third. However, although there is nothing in all this that is not very real and very evident in everything that is happening both abroad and in France itself, one cannot help but have only a slight hope of success. Whatever may happen, it will be said that no disturbance is desired to disrupt the existing arrangement for such a great benefit; that it is unnecessary to dismiss either farmers or tax collectors; that the utmost respect will be shown to His Majesty's actions, although it cannot be said that this has always been the case, because it is absolutely essential not to ruin trade between the king and his people by unilaterally rescinding acts that were believed to have been performed in good faith. For such conduct means that, in private transactions, a newly created bond, or pledges or annuities based on His Majesty's actions, are bought and sold only at half the price of another instrument of similar income, guaranteed by a private individual. Thus, there is no objection on that point: if His Majesty is charged more and his people less, it is because all kinds of payments, and especially taxes, derive their qualities, or their degrees of excess or justice, from the power or incapacity of those who pay them. It is clear that an individual who paid 100 francs in *taille* (land tax) on a farm worth 1,000 livres will be much less burdened by paying 200 francs, if the farm can be valued at 2,000 livres, since he will receive 800 francs for his own benefit, and he will be entirely relieved of his tax on those first thousand livres. Now, his farm will regain its original value when he is permitted to plow it, cultivate it, and sell the produce that grows there; because the reasons for the prohibitions and the impossibility of doing these things will be removed, as is very easy to demonstrate.

## Chapter II:

To begin to remove the obstacles to consumption, highlighted in the first part of these Memoirs, namely the uncertainty of the arbitrary tax, which in turn leads to disorder in collection, both resulting in a waste of over 150 million francs per year, without a single penny accruing to the king; it is not necessary to effect the slightest upheaval, either with regard to persons or property, but only to eliminate the injustice of the distribution, and to enforce all ordinances, both ancient and modern, which stipulate nothing less than what is currently practiced. And since this injustice is now so widespread—that the more powerful a man is, the less tax his tenants must pay, which is his ruin, as well as that of the rest of the state—it is fitting that His Majesty should be so kind as to explain himself to all the persons of his court that, for their own benefit, they should treat him in this way, so that the relationship may be reciprocal, as he treats them, and as they treat everyone else, and especially the Church.

It is certain that the higher a man is in dignity and birth, the more His Majesty shows him distinction in the distribution of both benefices and court offices. It is likewise certain that the higher these same people are, the more they wish to distinguish themselves in the gifts they give to the Church, in entertainment, and indeed on all other occasions, with the exception of the king's rights. And although virtuous people, even those of this profession, have long agreed that true piety has neither a share nor an obligation in the good done to the Church, nevertheless, its ministers have had the skill to set things in the way we see them today. So much so that a nobleman, after spending immense sums on the burial of either his father or his wife, will support his tax collector or farmer in thirty lawsuits he brings to avoid paying a pistole, to which he will have been charged more than the previous year, even though his tax is not even one-thirtieth of what it should be if the distribution were just; because there is such a great abuse that it is considered a kind of infamy to pay this just proportion. Thus, these disorders persist due to a twofold interest, which is not, strictly speaking, a true interest, but rather a general ruin, truly and in fact, through a continual contravention of divine and human laws; and no other proof is needed than the very terms of the ordinance of Charles VII, from the year 1445, when the *taille* (land tax) began to be levied regularly; it bears these words: "We wish equality to be maintained among our subjects in the burdens and charges they must bear, without one bearing or being forced to bear the burdens and charges of another, under the guise of privilege and clerical status, or otherwise: and we wish the royal instructions and ordinances to be observed according to their form and content."

It can be said that the wealth or decline of France has been in proportion to the observance of these ordinances, just as in all countries of the world, as can be seen from the example of Holland, which, being governed by a people who do not suffer injustice in the distribution of taxes, remains the richest state in Europe, considering its location. And although the taxes there are excessive, so much so that it is not hesitated to say that it contributes six times more to public expenses than France does proportionally to His Majesty, nevertheless there is not a single poor person to be found in the entire state: and it is this important maxim that led

Maecenas to say, speaking to Augustus, that "no persons, not even wards of the state, should be exempt from taxes and public levies; especially," he said, "since the utility of the things for which they are intended also benefits and preserves those who pay them." »And when God commanded that tribute be paid to princes, he intended to speak to everyone, and not only to the wretched and defenseless, who could not exempt themselves from it; or else this precept would have been useless, since it would have only taken place with regard to those who could not do otherwise, which cannot be said without impiety.

### Chapter III:

Assuming, then, that the King wishes and intends that the Taille (land tax) be henceforth distributed justly—that is to say, that the rich pay as rich and the poor as poor—both for the benefit of His Majesty and for that of those who were exempt, there is nothing easier than its execution. It is only necessary to order that, approximately three or four months before the tax year begins, all individuals, both exempt and non-exempt, living in taxable areas, submit to the clerk of their local court a detailed declaration of all their land, whether as owners or tenants; the price they receive for it, along with copies of their leases, which they must sign as true copies, under penalty of confiscation; and also the potential value of any land or property not leased but cultivated by them, taking into account neighboring properties and lands.

It will be stipulated that the treasurers or churchwardens of the parish will likewise provide a list of all those who, not producing any property, live by their manual labor, and have only a simple dwelling; they will indicate their occupation, their age, the number of children living with them, their ages as well, and the amount of the taille (land tax) they are subject to. — All of this, once submitted to the clerk's office, will be bound by parish, and will be noted at the bottom of all leases how much each tenant farmer pays in taille; and all of this will be initialed next to each entry in the tax roll for the year, a copy of which is always kept in the clerk's office of each Election. — This done, the officers of the Election, beginning with the president and ending with the King's prosecutor, will divide the parishes of their said Election among themselves, each taking twenty or thirty, in proportion to their number. The last to receive will make the divisions, and the others will choose them according to their rank and status. It will be necessary that, in each person's lot, no parish falls where the person to whom it falls has property, or their relatives in the first degree; and in that case, it would have to be exchanged for another parish in another lot. — Each officer thus having his department, he will make an estimate, firstly, of everything that the occupants of the non-privileged lands cultivate, whether as farmers or as owners, without any distinction; and after having determined how much this amounts to on the lands per pound, whether it is one and a half sous, two sous or more per pound, without yet deciding anything, they will all confer together on the same Election, to see if things are on the same footing in each lot; And if this is not the case, they will make a second assessment to determine how much one lot should contribute to offsetting the other in order to equalize the situation. They will likewise draw up a decree at the bottom of each tax roll, on which they will allocate the tax for each taxpayer occupying land, based on the entire district, and mark it on each side of the same roll. They will proceed in the same manner with regard to those subject to the taille (a direct tax) solely on the basis of their industry, with the exception of those located in taxable towns or large market villages, because, as in simple villages there are few substantial merchants, simple industry is not subject to high taxes. But this is not the case in large towns, which necessitates a different approach. Firstly, we have seen, from what has been said about the taxable areas that have obtained permission to set their tax at a fixed rate, the advantage this brings them, as well as His Majesty: this is why he would greatly benefit from granting it to all who request it; and

although this concession appears to be in accordance with international law, there seems to be nothing so just as allowing a debtor to settle their debt in the manner most convenient to them, they will nevertheless provide a good sum of money for this concession. But until this is done, since there are few of these large taxable areas that do not have surrounding countryside and arable land, in addition to the inhabitants within their walls, the same treatment will be observed with regard to the farmers and those who cultivate these lands as in simple villages; and for the tradespeople who earn their living from their art, or their manual labor, they will be divided into classes, according to their degree and rank, which is quite known to everyone, or even according to the classes which have just been made in the distribution of the contribution of the arts and trades, and next to each side of the roll will be placed what will fall to each of their share of the Taille, distributing it equally among those of the same profession, of which they would be equally liable, in the towns and villages only. The same procedure will be followed for those who are simple day laborers in the countryside, setting them at a fixed sum, which cannot be less than one écu, nor more than six livres, according to and in proportion to the quality of their work and their age, if they are over seventy, in addition to two sous per livre for their occupation, even for simple lodging, whether in the fields or in towns and villages, so as to allow complete freedom to take on whatever farms they deem appropriate with their manual labor, without causing any confusion. — Once these matters have been settled by each elected official in his district, he will report to the Commissioner appointed for the Department of Taxes, who will simply have to confirm in the assessment of each parish what has been done by the elected officials, adjusting the amount per marc per livre, according to the same distribution, for any increase or decrease in the district, or rather in the Generality. The tax rolls thus finalized would be sent to the parishes, the assessment having been completed, which would save considerable time and effort from the outset. The former tax collectors would be instructed to place with the treasurers or churchwardens a list, in order, of all those who would be tax collectors year by year, beginning with the present one, which would remain there for a month; during which time all those liable for the tax could go and see the amount to which they were being taxed, and if there was an error in the facts, such as if they received more than one mark per pound of their income, in proportion to the rest of the parish, they would make their protest next to their tax bill, simply by placing the word of protest written in their own hand or that of another, with their mark, to hold the elected official accountable, or those who had provided false declarations, without this nevertheless preventing them from paying the year, because they would be provided with a reward later. In the same month, all those who did not wish to be tax collectors in the future, nor guarantors of bad debts, would declare, alongside their tax return, that they agreed to deliver their entire year's income within that month to the tax collector, who would then be obliged to keep larger registers to leave more space for each parish, and to ensure that each individual's name would be recorded. The following month, the first person who had not submitted their declaration to deliver their tax within the month would be obligated to collect it, guaranteed only by those like them who had not submitted their declaration, and would receive the 2 sous per pound, because they could not claim any reimbursement for expenses and expenses. But it is certain that there would be no such reimbursement, and that all the farmers and those with some means would settle their accounts within the month, in order to avoid guaranteeing the collection and the 2 sous per

pound. And with regard to laborers, besides the need to decree that the tax due in the following year should be taken before all debts and expenses, even house rents, there would be none who could not borrow a small sum to cover their tax, especially since, with consumption restored, there would be none of these people who could not earn a full day's wage, the lack of which was what ruined them, and not 30 sous, more or less, of tax, which amounts to only one penny a day, that is to say, nothing. Finally, as the greatest problems with the tax have almost never been in its quantity, as has been shown, but in its unfortunate consequences, such as its uncertainty and collection, it is undeniable that the benefit resulting from these regulations would be infinitely greater than any objection that could be raised; And since the tax is fairly distributed, only beggars would be unable to pay it easily. — And, as money is much more productive than imagination, there is no doubt that such an incident could occur in a particular case where a Declaration modeled on these Memoirs would not have provided for it; but on such occasions, either the elected officials or the appointed commissioners would easily remedy the situation, following the same approach. All the work of assessing the tax falls on the elected officials, and the specific collection on the tax collectors, it would be just to divide the 6 deniers per pound that is usually levied for this purpose equally between them, the paper and writing costs being provided by the clerks of the newly created tax rolls.

We are convinced that, in this way, consumption will become permitted, that the king and private individuals will find it extremely advantageous, and that by consulting the most prominent and reasonable people, they will be made to agree that such a provision would procure as much blessing and peace as the contrary situation, which is that of today, attracts misery and unrest, in addition to the implacable hatred that causes the loss of souls, which is perpetuated until the third generation. — This first cause of the diminution of France's wealth, namely the prohibition of consumption, being lifted by a Declaration of two or three pages, which will in no way disturb the present situation, we must move on to the second cause of this same diminution, which is the impossibility of consumption, which we will show, in the following chapter, to be just as easy to abolish, without producing any more movement; with the reservation that, for all the rest of the leases of the rights of Aids, Passages and Exits of the kingdom, the receivers of the Tailles shall be given as clerks to the general and particular farmers, after all the places subject to the said rights have been subscribed in a very fair manner according to the price of the lease, which is a method which the same farmers practice on all occasions, when they can easily do so, thereby saving the costs of the offices, clerks and collections, and the people redeeming themselves from a frightful vexation.

## Chapter IV:

It can be said, in general, that the taxes the king collects from France are far below his means, because the aforementioned causes diminish his resources by more than half. Indeed, is there anything more astonishing than to see vineyard estates, once of great value, entirely abandoned? It is this disorder that we wish to put an end to; and to achieve this, we must assess what the king's share of the causes of this disorder is due, and see if we cannot find another way to allocate these kinds of revenues. — All the taxes, entry and exit fees for major cities, passages and crossings, including a portion of the Crown lands, currently amount to only 31 million francs per year, from which we must raise approximately six to seven million for the Crown lands, which are not being touched: thus, twenty-four million remain, from which we also collect the Bordeaux convoy, which brings in nearly five million: thus, nineteen million remain. No changes are being made to the import duties into the kingdom, reserving the right to introduce some regulation that will make matters less burdensome for merchants, which amounts to over two million. Thus, seventeen remain, which cause all the aforementioned problems and must be rebalanced. It is certain that by reinstating twelve million in the Taille (a tax), we will only restore things to how they were forty years ago, when all land was worth twice as much as it is today, and industrial revenues were in the same situation, as an inevitable consequence. Therefore, we must conclude with certainty that this tax change will be received with a thousand thanks from the people, as something that revitalizes them by restoring the value of their assets. So far we cannot say that there should be no movement in the State for such a great good, nor that the ordinary revenues of the king are at any risk, on the uncertainty that will never fail to be objected to in the successes that are promised, nor that we should wait for the end of the war, which has nothing in common with what is happening in the middle of the kingdom.

Thus, the only remaining question is where to reinvest the five million francs that remain of the seventeen francs, whose exchange rates are being changed because, by their nature, and not by their quantity, they are the cause of the impossibility of consumption—that is to say, a reduction of more than 250 million francs per year, a pure loss, within the state treasury. To reinvest these five million francs, then, there remain all the free cities that do not pay taxes, such as Paris, Rouen, and others; which, being subject to appalling taxes, as has been noted, and which have caused the complete ruin of many, will be relieved of them in the future. There remains the clergy, nobles, and privileged citizens of the countryside and the Pays d'Aides, who do not contribute to the redemption, do not pay the taille (a direct tax), where the greater part would be rejected, and yet are no less subject to it. They will readily and justly agree to purchase such a large property at the price of something of their own. There is no reason to condemn either group to the uncertainty of a personal tax, subject to the disorder that has been discussed and which has been so vehemently criticized. It is therefore more just to levy it on houses in both towns and the countryside, assuming two infallible consequences: first, that a man is a man who eats and drinks; and second, that the richer a man is, the more retinue he has; that the more retinue he has, the larger the house he lives in; and finally, that the larger the house, the more chimneys it has. So that this tariff, which has been that of all

nations where the people have chosen the most convenient type of tax, is certainly the fairest, and the one in which it is least possible to abuse without being immediately noticed. And when in Paris a tax was levied on mud, night lights, and the poor, it was imposed on houses; and this did not cause the slightest disorder or any lawsuit, although it is claimed that it amounts to 800,000 livres. But since this type of tax makes the money pass immediately from the hand of the one who pays to that of the one who receives, without it being possible for one hundred million of such a tax to make anyone's fortune, this is the greatest obstacle it will encounter in its implementation. However, it is maintained that by putting all the chimneys in the city and suburbs of Paris at one pistole each, and those in the free towns at half a pistole each; those of all the Nobles and privileged landowners in the countryside, possessing funds, at half a pistole likewise, and those of the walled towns where, although subject to the *taille* (land tax), there were entry fees, at 40 sous each, and those of the market towns where fees were similarly charged, at 20 sous each; the taxpayers would not pay half of what they did before, in addition to all the disorders from which they would be relieved; and the king would receive much more, since it is believed that for the five million this would amount to more than twelve. — Each elected official, in his district, would use it as has been indicated with regard to the *taille*; He would make a list of the number of houses and chimneys: the tax would be levied as a privilege before the rents, and it would be payable to the tax office by each taxpayer who, by paying it in the first month, would be relieved of the two sous per pound to which they would otherwise be subject, and which would then go to the person who collected it, and who would be appointed by the taxpayers, or by the elected official in their absence; but it is quite certain that everyone would fulfill this obligation. Thus, His Majesty, in addition to the increase in his revenues and those of the people, and the peace of mind of their property and consciences, would receive in one month, and in advance, what he usually receives over fifteen months' worth. It has been omitted to mention that the tax collectors and the elected officials would receive the same remuneration, each in half, of the six deniers per pound, which is pointless.

## Chapter V:

To understand the ease of collecting both the Tailles (taxes) augmented by this supplement for the Aides (taxes), and this excess levied on houses and chimneys, as previously mentioned, one must not examine matters in general, which is always subject to confusion, but rather delve into the specifics. What is concluded from a single taxpayer subject to this tax, in the manner in which it is established, will prove the case for all the rest. All the king's revenues, whatever their amount, being merely an assemblage of several sums paid by various individuals, all of whom share the same interest of promoting their respective professions as fully as possible, what is proven for one will be a certainty for all the others. There are four types of people interested in the proposed arrangement: farmers, artisans or those who live by their trade, the bourgeois of the free towns, and finally, the nobles and privileged landowners of the countryside in the Pays d'Aides. It is undeniable that all four will find it equally advantageous, and that those who contradict the provisions proposed in these Memoranda certainly have no authority from them to stipulate their own interests. For, beginning with the farmers, as the largest group, one can consider all the farms at 1,000 livres, one supporting the other, the difference being irrelevant in this instance, since the total will be proportional to the value of the assets. It is clear that they all consist of plowing to harvest grain, cultivating vines or plants for beverages, and producing feed and fertilizer for livestock. Now, there can be no doubt, and this has been sufficiently demonstrated in the first part of these Memoirs, that all these things are half what they were thirty years ago, both in price and quantity; so that a farm leased today for 1,000 livres, and for which one is often poorly paid, forcing the tenant to declare bankruptcy, was formerly worth 2,000 livres. Now, this is the cause of such great hardship, as described in the second part of this work, that the land is being put up for sale to this tenant and to his landlord at the same time, and at what price? At 30 or 40 francs at most, since, based on the Taille tax of two sous per livre, the addition of approximately one-third for the redemption or consolidation of the Aides and Customs duties on exports and passages, at the Taille tax, amounts to only this price; and for such a small sum paid in advance, he will make double the price of the sale of his goods. and as in order to make 1,000 pounds of rent for the benefit of the master the plowman must make more than 2,000 pounds, both to provide for his maintenance and that of his family as well as for the costs of the ploughing, it will be more than 2,000 pounds of increase on this same farm, of which the king will not fail to have his share, when his revenues have as their principle of increase the increase of the fortune of his subjects, as they had from King Charles VII until the year 1660.

This is not enough to show, as has been said, that those who will oppose the situation proposed by these Memoirs certainly have other interests to protect than those of landowners and farmers. — As regards the laborers, since it is the most wretched who should set the rule for the others, everyone knows that besides the fact that their interests are the same as those of the landowners and the farmers, who give them their day, or rather their life, to earn, being almost all, one carrying the other, at one hundred sous or six pounds of Taille, their ruin came from the fact that, not finding work, for the reasons that have been indicated, they could not

also have drink except at an excessive price, and often did not even find any, because of the decline of the taverns, these kinds of people not making provisions: now, this disorder will likewise cease, with regard to them, for forty or fifty sous a year, that is to say something more than a penny a day, and all of it will be easily advanced to them by those who are accustomed to putting them to work. — For the bourgeois of the large cities, it cannot be said that they are being taxed: on the contrary, they will be redeemed for at least half of the sum they paid by the most dreadful servitude that ever existed, not to mention the interest that the inhabitants of the cities have in the value of the lands of the countryside, as they own almost all of them, and that therefore they should not refuse to contribute something to restore them.

However, it is maintained that, regardless of this reason, they will earn twice as much. Indeed, if one considers a merchant in Paris owning a house worth 700 to 800 livres, he will only occupy about four rooms, with four fireplaces. Nevertheless, his family usually consists of eight or nine people, including children and shop boys; putting all this together at five sous per person, and half a muid of wine per year, which is not two half-setiers per day, he will pay 80 francs in taxes, with a thousand kinds of inconveniences, perils, and lost days at the offices and gates, if he brings them from whatever property he owns in the countryside. And by reducing the tax by fireplaces, as has been and still is done in all countries of the world, it will cost him only 40 francs in a convenient manner, and the king will be paid in advance. — There remain the gentlemen and privileged people of the countryside in the Pays d'Aides, for whom the same reasoning can be applied as for the Tailles, since the ruin of consumption is equally detrimental to them, being all owners of funds; but, independently of this general reason, they will still gain double, considering the money that came out of their purses, since there is none of them who did not buy or sell drinks, it is impossible that, in one case or the other, it did not cost them 40 or 50 francs per year; whereas, by the reduction by chimneys, putting things on the basis of a consumption that would attract such a sum for the rights of Aides, this would only amount to 25 or 30 francs. — Thus, it is easy to see from every point that those who contradict these proposals have no authority whatsoever from the interested parties, namely those who pay, to speak in such terms, nor to say that we must wait for peace, which is certainly a defeat for failing to achieve something that, while bringing about the general happiness of the people and the wealth of the king, would not produce nearly the same effect for a few other people, whose number, not being a thousandth of those it would enrich, should not, however, be taken into consideration in preventing such a great benefit; besides the king's interest, which is twice as strong in the former case as in the latter. For it is quite indifferent to a farmer ruined by the uncertainty of the Taille and by the disorder of the Aides and Customs, whether there is peace or war, to redeem himself, at a very meager price, from the causes of his ruin; And when some innkeepers asked the tax farmers to subscribe, or to contract for a fixed sum per year, in exchange for which they would be exempt from having clerks harassing them daily in their cellars, these farmers never considered, before granting it, whether there was peace or war; they could not even have done so without making themselves ridiculous; and what is concluded on this point is equally concluded on the other. — There is yet another objection that can be raised, which is the error that may have occurred in the reduction of the sums that are the cause of the ruin, so that the rejection is perhaps stronger than has been indicated. But it is replied that, since the causes of public

misery do not consist in the size of the sums paid to the king, but rather in the manner of collecting these sums, even if there were five to six million in error in this calculation, the king would still profit from it in the first year; Since it is claimed that, having no error, there would be six or seven more. And it is easy to support this argument on the same footing, by the example of a single farm or a single individual, since, in the first case, the owner of a property formerly yielding 2,000 livres of rent, and currently receiving half that amount in arrears, instead of paying 140 livres, to restore it to its former prosperity, will pay 145 or 150 at most; and so on for all the others, and even for individuals who do not cultivate anything.

For His Majesty, it is inconceivable what benefit he would derive from this, since the greater part of his revenues being attached, quite literally, to those of his subjects, the increase in some necessarily means that the same will happen to others; and the king will have 200 million in rent, because the lands which were leased at 1,000 pounds will be leased at 2,000; and they will suffer this increase, because they will be made to bear, sparing nothing for cultivation, all that they will be capable of producing, given that the consumption of what grew there, becoming permitted and possible, nothing will become useless, but will turn to the advantage of the king and the public; which was not done before by much, and which is the only cause of the ruin of peoples, and not taxes, there being no prince on earth who levies less on his States, than he who produces the greatest effects.

## Chapter VI:

It can be said that the main point to summarize from these Memoirs is that, however essential the qualities of climate and soil may be to the good or bad disposition of a country, the example of Spain and Holland clearly shows that the skill or incompetence of those who govern contributes at least as much as nature. Indeed, since everything in fertile lands depends on the growth of crops, their production depends on an infinite number of circumstances, among which it is absolutely necessary to maintain harmony; so that, if even one of these circumstances is lacking, their mutual connection destroys the entire structure. Thus, in Germany, the silver mines, which supplied the world before the discovery of India, were seen to annihilate themselves once this metal became more common and could no longer bear the costs incurred in Europe for extracting it from the earth's depths. But what necessity did in Germany, miscalculation produced in France with regard to the goods it supplied to foreigners, and even those consumed domestically, as has been all too clearly shown in these Memoirs. This decrease of 500 to 600 million francs per year in its revenues, both in capital and industry, is merely the result of such conduct; so that if one sees land, once well cultivated, entirely fallow, it is because the produce could not bear any new tax, it was necessary to abandon its cultivation, thereby destroying all those who depended on its produce for their livelihood, since there is no profession in the republic that does not depend on the fruits of the land for its maintenance and sustenance.

So that, when one of these new taxes arrives, which often amount to very little in relation to the king, if all the professions of the world understood their own interest, they would contribute per capita to buy back this novelty, and would gain a hundredfold, and the king the same. — But to follow the consequences of this proportional ruin in the economy of commerce, it is maintained that Provence has goods which are hardly gathered from the ground on the spot, which are sold at a very high price in Paris, in Normandy, and other distant regions; However, goods are only brought in when absolutely necessary, and the reason is obvious:

This journey, which is 200 leagues long, requires passing through countless towns and fortified places. Carriers are obliged to make the stops mentioned earlier in the articles on Customs and Excise, which takes so much time and complicates matters that it takes three and a half months to complete the trip, which would take no more than a month or five weeks without these obstacles. Since the goods cannot be transported due to the costs associated with such a long journey, the trade is abandoned, and consequently, so is the return trip. Normandy similarly has goods, such as linen, which are very rare and very expensive in Provence, and the certainty of such a fate prevents them from embarking on this journey. However, one would hardly dare consider the consequences of such a measure, since this cessation affects not only the two regions from which the goods originate and arrive, but also all those through which they pass, due to the inseparable consumption of vehicles; and since, subsequently impacting all professions in the world, as has just been mentioned, the entire republic suffers inestimable damage from a cause from which (even if all its other ordinary

revenues were not affected) the king derives very little, which, if distributed through another channel among all the peoples concerned, would not amount to a penny per person, whereas it often costs them their complete ruin. — Thus, it is in vain that the land and the climate; Aided by the industry of the people, these resources are suited to the most necessary and sought-after products of nature, since a lack of proportion in an edict, driven by an indirect interest coupled with a recommendation that one wishes to believe is innocently misguided, destroys more property in an hour than all these causes could produce in several years. Thus, this lack of proportion leads to lands being entirely abandoned for lack of people to cultivate them, and to people perishing from hunger, for want of the goods that would grow on these lands if they were allowed to cultivate them, even though these people and these lands each have enough to compensate for the benefits they would derive from one another.

Indeed, these men would pay with their manual labor for the grain they received from these lands to feed themselves, and these lands would yield this grain for the effort these men put into cultivating it; and so it was with all the other professions in the republic, which, through a mutual chain, are necessary to one another. The same can be said of barren and bountiful years, which should be in perpetual trade, supplying each other with what they have in excess, in order to obtain what they lack and what is necessary for them. But, since this trade has been interrupted, the proportions in the price of foodstuffs have been completely ruined, and for the last thirty years we have seen an extraordinary high price for wheat and other foodstuffs necessary for life, which were considered worthless a few years before, or a price similar to that of silver, so that it could only be obtained with far more goods than usual; This, placing the State in a state of perpetual illness, should not surprise it that it has lost half its strength, as is maintained to have done since that time. And all this lack of correspondence occurs, both between these barren and bountiful years, and between these uncultivated lands and these idle men and others like them, only because the two movements for exchange do not occur instantaneously, but rather with the convergence of an infinite number of intermediate circumstances. The disorder that befalls a single one, due to the causes indicated above, completely prevents its progression, as with that from Provence to Normandy. Indeed, since the fruits of the earth no longer fetch a price that can support the obligations incurred for their cultivation, as has been said, the landowner no longer employs the necessary laborers to cultivate his land, and the land, being less cultivated in bountiful years, is less able to sustain the barren years. — Besides this lack of proportion, there is another one which is no less essential, namely the fair distribution of taxes, which, by deviating almost continually, as is done in France, become ruinous to the State, not by their quantity, but by their inequality, as has been shown in the article on Taxes; And we wouldn't be discussing it further were it not for the large number of new offices created, in which, after the king and the people—who are one and the same, however far custom may have been based on a completely contrary principle—have been established at a very high interest rate (some of which have generated revenues that nearly equaled the purchase price in the very first year), a general provision is disregarded, one that has always been included in each new office: exemption from guardianship, curatorship, collection, quartering of soldiers, and other public duties, and often even exemption from the *taille* (land tax), all these things being passed on to the rest of the people, as if they were an enemy country. And since it is all the wealthiest who

buy these offices, it follows that the entire burden falls on the poor. Thus, this disproportionate ruin, between people who must contribute equally to public expenses, has the same effect in a state as a carriage weighing 100,000 pounds, which could be carried by forty horses from Paris to Lyon, but which would be loaded entirely onto only three: if, after these had succumbed on the first day, they were successively replaced by three others, it is certain that all would perish halfway there, without it being possible to blame the excess of the burden on the forty horses, but only the disproportion in sharing it among these beasts of burden according to their number.

## Chapter VII:

The other general maxim to be drawn from these Memoirs is that the first and principal cause of the decline of France's wealth stems from the fact that, in the means, both ordinary and extraordinary, employed to raise money for the king, France is considered, in the eyes of the prince, as an enemy country, or one that will never be seen again, in which it is not considered extraordinary to demolish and ruin a house worth ten thousand écus in order to sell it for twenty or thirty pistoles worth of lead or wood. Since this annihilation, a hundred times greater than the profit made, only concerns a country where no interest is taken, this course of action, which, without this circumstance, would be considered utter extravagance, is a stroke of genius.

But, in a peaceful kingdom entirely devoted to the service of its prince, it is far from necessary to do anything of the sort. Since the people can only support him with what grows on their lands, and in proportion to that growth, he should not consider his states any differently than if all the land belonged to him outright, as in Turkey, and his subjects were merely tenant farmers. However, besides the reason just stated—that he can only be paid with what grows in the country—it is clear that in many provinces he derives far more than the landowner in several places. To show how much this deviates from a principle that would be so advantageous to him, one need only consider how things are actually done. If the lands were truly and effectively his, the same treatment would be given to tenant farmers as it is given to landowners. Let us begin with ordinary taxes, such as the Taille, the Aides, and the Customs Duties, and then we will discuss extraordinary taxes.

If the whole generality of Rouen belonged to the king personally, as was formerly the case for a very large part of it, from which were formed those great abbeys founded by the ancient dukes, and if, leasing it by contract to several individuals, he did not ask them for any fixed price, but said to them: — When you want a muid of wine, you will have to pay seventeen duties at seven or eight separate offices which are only open at certain times and on certain days; and if you fail to pay at the least of these offices, even though you found it closed on your arrival, and you cannot delay without great expense, your merchandise, cart and horses, will be entirely confiscated for the benefit of the masters of the office, whose deposition will be proof against you when you do not agree to the contravention. When traveling through different countries to deliver your merchandise, you will likewise have to make declarations at every closed establishment you pass through, and delay there as long as the clerks deem necessary to keep you waiting to receive them, when you should be spending four times as much time there as would be required for such a journey. Furthermore, when you wish to sell your merchandise to foreigners, who would be only too happy to buy it at a reasonable price, I will be permitted to impose such an exorbitant tax that they will be forced to seek it elsewhere. Thus, although I will receive absolutely nothing, your goods will remain a complete loss, along with all the expenses you incurred to acquire them; you may even often see them spoil, especially your liquors, as you will be unable to find a penny for them, even though they are worth an exorbitant price just a day's journey from your home. But the thing

is, if you were to risk taking it there, you could lose your trouble and your merchandise, because I have leased certain rights to be taken on the passage, for which there are many formalities which are very difficult to observe, and in which the interested parties are both judge and party; and if one fails to do so, all is lost; and although I do not receive a tenth part of the damage that this does to you and your merchandise, however, I am made to understand that it is in my interest that things go this way.

Furthermore, I must pay a certain sum or amount of money annually, which will not be proportional to the land you hold from me. Thus, you will often pay double, holding only five arpents, what another in the same parish pays while cultivating thirty. But you must buy the protection of those who make the allocations, both generally and individually, who are entirely free to exercise no justice in this matter. Besides this, you must be careful not to pay me regularly on time, for that would be a way to ruin you, since those to whom I entrust these sorts of responsibilities have an interest in incurring expenses to collect payments. So, although these kinds of expenses are a bad thing, they are nevertheless less so than being subject every year to an increase in the farm's price, which is inseparable from the ease of payment. It is still necessary to keep yourselves secluded and sheltered, and, if you have money, to hide or bury it, instead of trading it, for fear of falling into the inconveniences of increased rent; and even it is necessary not to put livestock on your land that could fatten it. The same must be done with regard to consumption; that is to say, in spending, both on food and clothing for yourself and your family, you must feign great poverty. Finally, as this rent is very poorly distributed and even more poorly paid, both out of necessity and out of principle, you must collect it every four or five years, in which, if you are not completely ruined (as happens in countless similar cases), you will be greatly inconvenienced; for neither you nor your colleagues are free from the burden by abandoning the farm and all that you may have worth, and often you have to perish in prison for not being able to pay a rent four times too high, while you have neighbors who do not pay the twentieth part of what they should bear.

Whatever obligations an infinite number of people quite well-known in the world may have to the present situation, it is nevertheless necessary that in order to defend it they do one of two things: either they deny that this is the state of affairs today, or they say that it is the best way to make the most of a sovereign's assets, and that it is perfectly understanding his interests to use them in this way. But since, to speak seriously, it is impossible to maintain either of these two positions, unless one undertakes to overturn common sense, or to impose upon public faith, we will continue this description of the present state a little longer, and add that a prince who made his States profitable in this way would certainly be very poorly served, and that his subjects could rightly say to him: "Sire, although you only want to be paid, and to receive as much money as possible, the way in which you use it seems to be designed to ruin us and yourself as well; For, since all our wealth and yours can only come from the sale of the goods that will grow on your land, what you propose would destroy everything. But let Your Majesty count what would come to you in whatever way you see fit, and we will double it, provided you leave us the freedom to sell and consume whatever we please; which will be very easy for us, since we will sell three times more of this kind than the other." — However ridiculous this description may be, it is nevertheless true that this is

precisely the present state of affairs; and that, although extremely damaging to the king and the people, this course is preferred every day to the other, for reasons that are only too well known: and what is appalling is that there is not even the smallest commodity that is not subjected to the same fate, of having its consumption completely ruined; so that this painting has not been pushed as far as the original, by a considerable margin. And to add to the disorder, the king and the prime ministers, who are the first to be surprised, are led to believe that it is by such a maneuver that His Majesty's revenues are increased, supposing an impossible fact, that to enrich a prince one must ruin the people, causing them twenty times as much loss as is transferred in profit into the prince's coffers, which is the state of things today, as can be seen from everything that has been said previously. The waste that the king's way of raising revenues causes to the people, not going to the benefit of anyone (otherwise such a strong war would not be declared against him, since, if the prince or those who are involved in raising his revenues, passed entirely on his head or on their own the reduction that they cause, the State would not suffer any loss, being indifferent to it, as well as to the king, by whom and how the goods are possessed, provided that they exist, given that in this case he could always make use of them in pressing occasions such as today's), it is therefore not a question of performing a miracle to make the king a hundred million more annuity than he has, by restoring to his subjects double their goods, as they had them formerly; It is simply necessary to let nature take its course by ceasing to subject it to perpetual violence through indirect interests, which, cloaked in continual confusion, obscure the perspective of the cause of misery and block all avenues to remedies with lofty protections. Thus, although the ills are constant, and it is even permissible to deplore them, it is no less criminal to try to trace them back to their source and to speak of them than it is in Turkey to debate the country's religion. So much for ordinary revenues. — And as for extraordinary ones, it can be said that the conduct is still the opposite of what would be observed if all of France belonged to the king. Indeed, it has happened that for a very modest sum received, the purchaser of a new office has been allowed to take interest from the people, who are the king's own property, at a rate of four or five percent.

Now, it is certain that since the people are the king's fund, it is the same error as if the owner of an estate assigned a rent of four percent to his tenant farmer, believing that he owed nothing: it is clear that he would gain much more by taking the constitution upon himself at eighteen percent.

Moreover, since a new office cannot be created without diminishing the old ones, the body of the State, which is composed only of the individuals who hold them, suffers greatly. Thus, for every 10,000 écus that the king receives from a new creation, which entails three things—namely: the rights to be levied on the people, the relief of public taxes from the rest of the people due to the privileges attached to all the new offices, and finally, the harm this does to the old offices— It so happens, I say, that for the 10,000 écus the king thus receives, the kingdom suffers a reduction of over one hundred thousand écus in its entirety. For example, the collection of the *taille* (land tax) being a burden of the magnitude described, a new office of the lowest value, acquired by a rich man, shifts this servitude, by virtue of its privilege, onto a poor man whom it utterly ruins. Now, poverty is like diamonds; there are

certain degrees where every new increase doubles and triples its effect, both for the one who suffers it and for the State. Indeed, a farmer who has only one hundred crowns to buy livestock, to charge his land a thousand-pound rent, cannot be deprived of it without ruining himself, his landlord, his creditors, and their creditors ad infinitum, because all the produce of a field depends on fertilizer, and the moment that fertilizer ceases, the costs are lost.

So, taking those one hundred crowns from this poor farmer for the costs of a tax collection causes a loss of five or six thousand pounds to the state; and this not only for one year, but for several years in succession, since neglected land takes a long time to recover, even if these problems were to cease, far from increasing, as they do every day; whereas one hundred crowns paid by a rich man do not cause the slightest stir in the state. However, the maxim of today, by the creation of new Charges, makes disproportion reign in taxes so well, that one can conclude that it is certain that in all the money that the king receives, both ordinary and extraordinary, the people or the State, which is the king's own property, is constituted in as much revenue, and often more, as the king receives of capital, the waste or surplus going to the benefit of no one, but being entirely annihilated, as has been shown.

## Chapter VIII:

Finally, all these Memoirs conclude with the most important point, which is to provide the king, immediately and without delay, with all the money necessary to end a war that his envy of his glory alone has brought upon him, and which is being waged with such obstinacy by his enemies only because the reports they have of what is happening in the details of the kingdom's affairs inform them that the funds from which the extraordinary means to sustain it are being drawn cannot last much longer. Indeed, if we consider the interest the king accrues, the interest the people have incurred due to the reduction in the old taxes resulting from the creation of new burdens, and the disorder of their exemptions, which has shifted all taxes onto the poor and, consequently, by disrupting the balance of power, has destroyed far more wealth than the king could receive, as has been shown in the preceding chapters, we will find that His Majesty, being one with his state, has not received a single penny that has not accrued as much interest on him or on the people, or even entirely destroyed, as the principal he has received. And even if such a miscalculation were only a quarter of what it actually is, it is impossible for it to be lasting.

To return, then, to the methods of providing the king with cash, it is maintained that the execution of the project discussed in these Memoirs is a very reliable means.

Indeed, what quicker way to be paid by one's debtor than to bring him goods or to help him settle a complicated estate? And it should not be said that this requires any delay, nor that, however beneficial it may be to the people from the moral certainty of the Tailles (land taxes) and the complete freedom of the roads—which would be achieved by combining a portion of the Aides and Douanes (customs taxes) as they were only thirty-five years ago, and the remainder as in all other kingdoms of the world—the effects would not be seen before a year at the earliest. For it is formally maintained that only twenty-four hours are needed, and that the edict which would stipulate that each elected official would take a certain number of parishes to levy the tax according to the occupation of each, whether farmer or owner, with regard to the sum distributed over the whole election, without any consideration of quality, and that whoever brought the sum to the tax office in the first month would be exempt from collection, would have the same effect as if it were announced to various very poor individuals that they had just inherited a very opulent estate: for although no rent would be due until a year later, they would nevertheless feel the effects of it from the same moment, because everyone would lend to them very willingly, seeing the certainty of being repaid, both the capital and the interest, at the latest after the year had passed. Nevertheless, with the fear of being exposed to his enemies or envious by any display of wealth—which is, however, inseparable from both commerce and farming—being dispelled by this edict, one would see a farmer borrowing from all sides to stock his farm with livestock, which would be readily lent to him, seeing that he could no longer be subject to the tax levied on his neighbors, nor his own tax increased exorbitantly simply because he was cultivating his land. Moreover, since this would produce fertilizer, which is always followed by a good harvest, he would be in a position to share the profits with those who had helped him. The craftsman who

dares not reveal himself would immediately put a horse on foot to do his business, half on credit, as they all do, and half otherwise, without fearing that this would overwhelm him with the Taille, as is the custom, nor that he would be forced every four years to see himself ruined by the collection, which would take away from him, by the loss of his time and the other miseries attached to this employment, all that he could have earned in previous years; and both, having made some profit, would no longer fear to feed and clothe themselves according to their means, because it is a very natural thing; which, by making the merchant and craftsman of the cities earn, would enable them to consume the produce from the arable land, and would thereby restore that circulation which sustains states whose land is fertile, but of a fertility which is quite useless when it is impossible or forbidden to cultivate it, as is argued to be the case today in more than half of France; which causes its misery, and not the taxes, which are proportionally less (as has been said) than in any other state in Europe. — And the other edict which would join the Customs on exits, and the Aids to the Taille, that is to say which would order that he who paid six pounds of Taille would pay eight or nine, and that the plowman who paid 100 pounds would be at 140, which would exempt him from all the circumstances and all the effects of these two taxes, which have been talked about enough, which cost each of them twenty times, or even thirty times more, would immediately bring out all the winegrowers and all the other artisans of the dependence of wines from the depths of their dens, to restore the vines; in which they would be helped by everyone, both masters and others, who would be assured of being reimbursed by the harvest, the roads having become free to be able to carry the wines where it does not grow, and where it was not consumed, only a twentieth part of what would have been possible there if the approaches had not been absolutely forbidden; and the owners would start again to count in their property each acre of vineyard for 1,000 pounds, as they did formerly, and not for nothing, as they do presently, and would contract on this basis, both in selling and in buying; more than one hundred thousand taverns would appear in less than eight days, two or three times as many having been destroyed in the last thirty years; And since there is no tavern that doesn't support ten or twelve trades, like the butcher, the baker, and others, this single item would set more than a million families in motion, and consequently lift them out of poverty; and so on with all the other inheritances in proportion, and the trades that depend on them for their livelihood. Thus, everyone is rich in twenty-four hours, and all the money is in motion. The only remaining question is to demonstrate how the king can participate with such diligence, which is the easiest thing in the world, because it is so natural, and a necessary consequence of this initial movement.

In France, people have always cried out against taxes, and the rich much more than the poor, because of this unfortunate custom that has crept in, of having no justice in the distribution of public burdens; This puts things into perspective, and let anyone who can deny it do so: the more powerful a man is, the less he pays, because he is better able to avoid it. And since noise and complaints are among the most significant means used to obtain this privilege, they are heard much more clearly by the rich than by the poor, which means the latter are always burdened; this, in turn, falls back on the rich (as has been shown), ultimately ruining both. A prime minister should therefore not worry too much if people shout, but only if there is cause for shouting.

Now, it is a certainty that when all the property of a man is taken away, as can be said to have been done in recent years, when, either by suppressions or by taxes, all the valor of an officer has been taken away by depriving him of a position which he had bought in good faith, and without there being any particular case which distinguished him from all the other persons invested with much more considerable dignities, from whom nothing or little was asked; it is a certainty, I say, that this man has very great cause to deplore his misfortune, the needs of the State requiring that the people help with their property and their persons, but never that some contribute with all their valor, while it costs much less to others; This, being a monstrosity in distributive justice, absolutely ruins a state for the reasons outlined above: — to which one can further add that this conduct, establishing as a principle that there is no certain rule for the contribution of offices, renders them all susceptible at any moment to complete annihilation; which, throwing them into a just fear of this fate, greatly diminishes their value, without the king, or anyone else, profiting from it. When Cardinal Richelieu had doubled all the revenues of the crown in ten years, there was a great outcry against him; but these complaints were made with the utmost injustice, for this increase was the result of that of all the kingdom's assets, which had more than doubled in the same way: during his ministry, offices were sold for ten times what they had cost the very people who held them. There is much complaining at present, and nothing is so common on the lips of the people, both rich and poor, as to speak of the misfortunes of the times; But this is well-founded, since for thirty years it has been precisely the opposite of what happened under Cardinal Richelieu, with offices, not to mention lands, which are not a tenth of what they were in 1660. This being established, it is a great advance for His Majesty that his people are rich, to draw on this for assistance, as is maintained that they can be in twenty-four hours, by the simple publication of two or three edicts which, without dismissing either farmers or receivers, will only make the roads free and the taxes justly distributed; which, being of divine and natural right, is observed in all nations, even the most barbaric, except in France, the most civilized kingdom in the world, and there alone has caused all the misfortunes of which we complain.

As regards the means of obtaining all this aid, when there would be no others than those which have been used until now, such as creating charges and other similar things, which are supported and have been shown to be very contrary to the interests of the State, it can be assured that it would be a great deal of progress to put the people in a position to buy them, since, restoring these same people to possession of their goods which can be said to be destroyed, the consequences are natural, namely the purchase of things which give pleasure, among which dignities hold the first place. Now, since vanity plays a greater role than anything else, it is only satisfied to the extent that one is able to do so; that is to say, the income and value of the land, which give existence to all other assets, enable one to do so. This is why taxes have risen and fallen since the creation of the Paulette tax made them real property, in accordance with all other assets.

But these are not the means that are intended to be used; no means are to be employed that are not inherently useful to the State, so that the people, after paying what is demanded of them, will find themselves in a more advantageous situation than before. And this will

continue until ordinary revenues have increased to a level sufficient to cover all of today's extraordinary expenses, which is expected to happen within two or three years, because these ordinary revenues, being brought in line with those of the people, will rise with them as they had for the past two hundred years until 1660.

But to return to these extraordinary measures of today, among the causes that have produced this great decrease in the wealth of all France, besides those mentioned in the uncertainty of the Taille (land tax) and the burden of the Aides (taxes) and Douanes (customs duties), which will be levied in the manner described, there are specific ones which, while causing no less harm, would be redeemed with almost no effort by the people, in cash, most readily; so that they would not have given a pistole for two or three pistoles to be brought in, without the need for imprisonment and violence for such recoveries, as has been seen with all the others. For example, in the tax-tax towns, since it is necessary for industry to bear a portion of the burden, and since it has no other arbitration than the whim or vengeance of those who levy the tax, terrible disorders arise: this conduct, ruining everything one after another, there is nothing they will not give to redeem themselves from this vexation, by obtaining permission to plow for a fixed sum taken from another tax base, and those who were able to obtain it through bids, far exceeding their tax, for public works, have completely recovered from their misery. We would only need to listen to those who wish to be included in the Tariff, and the offers they would make to obtain it: we are certain that a large number would come forward, provided that the courts of Aids and the tax collectors were not heeded, because of the end this would put to all the aforementioned vexations, of which they received about one percent of the harm done to the people. This article would produce more than a million, which is nothing, as is admitted, for present needs, but which would put these places, by the abundance it would bring, in a position to provide other aid immediately; so that this is not cited for the sum, but only as an example, and to show that it is possible to put the people, after giving money, in a better situation than they were before, by drawing this improvement from the treasures of the earth, where they were annihilated by the errors that have been so much talked about, which have gone so far, that these annihilations have often been put up for sale at one percent, as we are obliged to admit.

Now, since France has seen a decrease of 500 million or more in its revenues over the past forty years due to similar causes, this article of the Taille tax is far from being the sole basis for such a reduction; thus, there are considerable sums to be received by the king to form the capital for such a substantial and beneficial redemption for the people. Furthermore, there are countless taxes from which the king derives almost no revenue, which cause extraordinary harm to commerce, and from which merchants could redeem exemptions at a very high price and still profit. It will be indicated that more than 40 million will be payable in less than six months, provided that the creation of new offices, which is driving all families to the brink of despair, is stopped. For since offices have a considerable impact on the State, being drawn from commerce by the creation of new ones, this ruins all those who hold them when they are forced to sell them, as well as their creditors, ad infinitum.

And finally, besides all these resources, why shouldn't the king use them for his needs like everyone else? Let him take out an annuity at the lowest possible rate. The two edicts that have been so much discussed, once published, would ensure that everyone would hasten to give them to him. Because, besides the fact that it would be a necessary consequence of the people's considerable increase in wealth, the certain increase in the king's assets would reassure the people of both the capital and the arrears. And supposing that he needed 50 million francs a year in extraordinary funds until the end of the war, and that he were obliged to take everything in annuities—which is not agreed upon—even if the war were to last another four years, he would only have incurred a debt of 10 million francs in annuities, and the people or the State nothing at all, not to mention the restoration of their wealth. Now, it is asked whether, for the four years since the war began, this is the situation. It is quite certain that it costs the king or the State more than one hundred million francs in annuities.

The day after the publication of these edicts, commodities, resuming their former prices, will restore the revenues from which the capital of the annuities is derived; and the creation of the new Charges, which will cease, will eliminate on the one hand the trade in silver at ten-penny, the traders valuing it on this basis (the entire loss of the ordinary price falling on the king), and on the other hand, restore all charges to the ordinary circulation, this will re-establish things in the old order, which is to encourage the people to invest in the king. But it is necessary, in order to maintain this trade, to preserve good faith in it, for the very interest of His Majesty, without the sovereign authority being able to introduce any singular jurisprudence during the settlement, as has been seen in the past, which was not agreed upon between two private individuals, just as in the armies it is absolutely necessary to pay for provisions at the current rate, if they are to be able to subsist; for although there was nothing so easy as to have them for nothing the first time, since in this way the suppliers would not come back again, it would cause everything to perish.

It would also be necessary to establish a special office for the repurchase of these kinds of annuities by the king himself, with the owners forfeiting three months' interest. This would be a way to bring in all the deposits of France, as well as miners' money, since one would be assured of receiving the interest and withdrawing the capital without any risk whenever desired. It would also be advisable that these kinds of annuities could never be seized for the debt of the transferors, retaining neither lien nor mortgage, nor even the money itself; so that any payment made and endorsed on the first instrument would be good and valid, whether for the capital or the interest, except in cases of fraud or theft, when there had been prior notification. It is certain that more would be brought in than desired. And the king, from the first year, by means of the aforementioned edicts, would have more than enough revenue to pay the interest on 50 million; in the second, to pay the interest on more than 100 million; and in the third, his ordinary revenues would rise to more than 150 million; this increase continuing until they had doubled, even in times of war.

And all this because consumption, duly permitted and made possible by the freedom of the roads and the certainty and fair distribution of the Taille (land tax), means that a farm worth 1,000 livres, which this year will pay His Majesty only 100 livres in Taille and 40 livres for

its share of the redemption of the Aides (taxes) and Douanes (customs duties) on exits and passages, will regain its former value of 2,000 livres. Thus, on the same tax basis, it will be 280 livres, without the owner being able to complain about this increase, which will only reflect the increase in his wealth. This item alone will see an increase of more than 50 million livres per year, and the Gabelle (salt tax) and Domaines (domain tax), which increase in line with the country's wealth, will receive a similar increase, since food expenditure being one of the first effects of affluence, especially among the poor, who make the greatest contribution to the Gabelle, it is necessary that they feel the effects of this change in circumstances.

For the Domains, given the essential role of formulary and control, they will increase in proportion to the funds that will be contested in court, as the occasion arises, according to their value; whereas most, far from giving rise to lawsuits over property, were almost abandoned. And when the king has 100 million more in income than he had before, it will be because his subjects will have 500 million more than they currently have, and than they once had, which they were deprived of, without anyone having benefited, only because the customary methods of collecting the prince's dues in all the states of the world, both ancient and modern, were abandoned in favor of entirely peculiar methods unknown to the whole world, the description of which is horrifying, as are the effects, which are nothing other than causing a very hardworking people to perish from hunger and misery, in the most fertile country in the world, and under the best prince who ever lived; And what is most surprising is that these unfortunate effects are produced by very skillful and very honest ministers.

But the fact is that governing a state, with regard to finances, is nothing other than managing commerce, both within and outside the kingdom, as well as agriculture, in order to derive the prince's rights from it. This can only be done through a perfect knowledge of detail and an infinite number of circumstances that they cannot possibly know on their own. Thus, all the measures they can take depend entirely on specific facts, and if these facts arrive in their country only in a highly corrupted state, it is a situation from which all the consequences can be drawn. And since this evil began long ago, having easily taken root because its effects were not nearly so pernicious in their origin, which made it more readily accepted, it has become so deeply entrenched and created so many of its corrupt elements that everyone is constantly lobbying a prime minister to increase them and to oppose their cessation. Indeed, it is maintained that taxes were established, and this has been amply demonstrated, which did four times more harm to the king than they benefited him, and a hundred times more loss to the people in general than any benefit accrued to the entrepreneurs. However, it is almost impossible that such widespread ruin was not the consequence of such insignificant interests; And this is because private interest is always much more sensitive and better protected than the general interest, so all sorts of means are employed to support it, and the people have no one to make themselves heard. The skill lies in concealing the point of view that can clearly reveal that the profit being made is precisely what is ruining the king and the people. Thus, this is the unfortunate situation of a prime minister: to see the whole world in motion and all favor in action, not only to deceive him, but to force him to sacrifice both his prince and the people to private interests, being applauded by all those who claim to form the world alone only in proportion to the surprise he gives; and he could not even undertake to take the

slightest step backward without attracting all those just mentioned to his arms! For, by following the established paths, whatever disturbances they may be accompanied by, he is not responsible for anything, and the advantages which accompany the position which he occupies, to which it is very natural to be sensitive, do not run any risk for him or for his family, whatever disorders may occur; whereas in the slightest novelty, having all those we have just spoken of unleashed against him, he would take all accidents on his account, and it is very difficult that he could either foresee or avert them, because, not being able to take a step on this occasion without a perfect knowledge of the details of the whole kingdom, he could not have it without the practice of all states and all conditions, which has never been seen in any minister; so that, not having it by himself, he is likewise obliged not to rely on anyone, for the reasons we have just said.

What gives hope for the success of these Memoirs is that they sincerely reveal this detail, the perfect knowledge of which is so advantageous to the king and the public, and which was taken so much trouble to hide from those who could stop the disorder—the first step of the remedy of which is to make known, as is being done, that there is no need for extraordinary action, nor to leave anything to chance, but only to allow the people to be rich, to plow and to trade, by informing the king—without it being necessary to do anything else than to stop those who had an interest in ruining everything, and to oblige His Majesty's farmers to receive in a single payment, without any costs, from the tax collectors, the price of their farms, with such profit as the king would be pleased to give them, and for which, after having burdened the people, they were often forced to go bankrupt themselves. Or rather, since not all farms are now subject to fixed rates, due to the reductions claimed by the farmers, no action is necessary to change the nature of the taxes that comprise them. This also serves as an answer to the objection of those who claim that these changes must be made after peace.

Thus, to provide the king with all the necessary funds for both ordinary and extraordinary expenses, it is only necessary to conjure up, for the benefit of his people, all the assets destroyed over the past thirty years. And since it has been maintained since that time that for every pistole of increase the king receives, nineteen cost the people a pure loss, it is these nineteen pistoles that they want to revive in twenty-four hours. And if, when His Majesty creates either annuities on the Paris City Hall or offices that generate income, he has no doubt that he will receive money from those who wish to possess them, how much more reason should he have to hope, by granting more than 500 million in annuities to his people, to receive much more, with the further difference that, in the first case, the fund is always formed in its current state from the people themselves, and even often with the misconception discussed above, that is to say, the very demand for money brings with it a reduction of the funds, whereas in the case being proposed, it is precisely the opposite; — and that, as before, the more money the people paid in extraordinary expenses, the more they increased their ruin, in a way buying their destruction;

On this occasion, for every sum the king receives in the future in the manner proposed by these Memoirs, there will be a corresponding reduction in poverty; — because as the cause of poverty was increased in one instance, it will be eliminated in the other. — And with regard

to the recovery of advances that may be made to the king from such funds, instead of causing widespread desolation, as before, because the sums demanded entailed the impossibility of payment, thus destroying the very principles from which money is generated among the people; quite the contrary, the money that will be requested will reopen the source, which had dried up among those same people. And for the advance of ordinary revenues, it is all the easier than it was previously, as it is all the easier for a farmer or owner of land worth 1,000 pounds, whose furniture, fruits or levies being on the land, are ordinarily worth 3,000 or 4,000 pounds, to advance about 100 pounds eight months before he owed them, than for a Contractor to advance several times more than he has worth.

To conclude and summarize these Memoirs, we agree that it is ridiculous to suggest that the king could collect double what he currently does, given the existing situation; but it is equally untrue to deny that the owner of an acre of vineyard, formerly worth 100 livres of rent, and now abandoned, would not be willing or able to give a pistole, or even two, to His Majesty, once the cause of its destruction is addressed, in which case he would receive far more benefit than His Majesty himself. Thus, to refute what is contained in these reflections, namely, that France's revenues have been reduced by more than half in the last thirty years, without anyone having benefited; that, far from the king's increased revenues being the cause, they have risen much less since 1660 than they had in the previous two hundred years; that even this increase costs the people ten times what it brings to the king, which has never been seen before; that there is no prince on earth who does not take much more in proportion to his subjects, and that there is likewise no people to whom it costs a quarter in proportion, for the subsidies of the prince, what it costs the prince of France; and that finally the king can, in fifteen days, put himself and his people on the footing of all his neighbors, that is to say, double his revenues by doubling those of his subjects; to deny, I say, all these things or rather all these facts, it must be maintained that France is as cultivated and valuable, with regard to commerce and agriculture, as it can be or has ever been; or that, even if it were more so, the people would not be any richer, and consequently His Majesty. Now, one cannot be maintained without imposing itself before the eyes of the whole world, and the other without abandoning reason. Regarding the delay, which is where the defenders, or rather the favorites of the present situation—so detrimental to the king and the people—take refuge, claiming that the time is not right, one must likewise abandon common sense to say that a man who sees his cellars full of wine perishing for lack of a buyer needs peace to be made so he can transport it twelve or fifteen leagues from his home, where that wine fetches an exorbitant price, and bring back in exchange the goods of that place, the lack of which caused the people of that other region to suffer the same fate. And regarding the Taille (a tax), it is simply a matter of enforcing the ordinances, that is to say, preventing malfeasance. However, it has never been said that peace had to be made in order to be able to render justice: thus these kinds of reasons can only be alleged by parties interested in maintaining this disorder.

## Chapter IX:

I. Sweden and Denmark, united as they were one hundred and fifty years ago, are much larger than France; however, their output, both for the prince and the people, is not even one-tenth that of France.

II. The reason for this difference is that the soil of France is excellent for producing the necessities of life, while that of Denmark and Sweden is worthless.

III. However good a piece of land may be, when it is not cultivated, it is the same to the owner and the prince as if it were worthless.

IV. It is an undeniable fact that more than half of France is either fallow or poorly cultivated, that is to say, much less than it could be, and even less than it once was. This is even more ruinous than if the land were entirely abandoned, because the produce cannot cover the costs of cultivation.

V. It is certain that this decrease has a fixed estimate and price, like all incomes in the world, since there is nothing that cannot be estimated.

VI. After careful investigation, it is found that this decrease amounts to more than 500 million per year, which is no further proof enough that not all properties are, one after the other, worth half of what they once were.

VII. It is still certain that such great disorder, unprecedented since the creation of the world, that a wealthy kingdom should lose half its riches in thirty or forty years, and this without plague, earthquake, civil or foreign war, or any of those other great calamities that ruin monarchies; it is certain, I say, that this has a cause, and that it is not the effect of chance.

VIII. It is indubitable that whoever could discover this cause and present it for sale to the people, there is no market in the world where the king and his subjects would gain more.

IX. Whatever they give, provided it is merchandise that cannot bear fruit, they have put things on a footing where it is not consumed even a quarter of what it was thirty or forty years ago; and it is not surprising to see an entire country drinking only water, while vines and trees are being uprooted in a neighboring country; and far from increasing the king's rights, this has prevented them from doubling since 1660, as they had done every thirty years, from 1447 until the said year 1660.

XV. The remedy for all this is easy, provided one considers only the interests of the king and the people, in matters of subsidies: it is necessary to see if there is not one which, by transferring the money directly from the hands of the people to those of the king, has such a certain rule and level of proportion to each station that the poor pay as poor, and the rich as

rich, and this without the intervention of a judge or authority, to which one cannot resort without incurring costs and wasting time even more than necessary to satisfy the tax.

XVI. In the Edict of the Poll Tax, the intention was to remedy all these disorders, but it can be said that only one point was addressed, which is to transfer the money directly into the hands of the king without the intervention of tax collectors. But firstly, the cause of land abandonment is not eliminated; Secondly, far from the rule of proportionality that makes each individual pay according to their means being universally observed, there are classes where a man holding an office worth 100,000 écus, and property commensurate with it, pays the same as another whose position costs only 500 livres. Thus, since it was necessary to lower the salary of the powerful to bring them to the same level, and it being impossible to raise the other's salary, it turns out that the king does not, by much, receive from one of his subjects the assistance proportionate to his means, while the other is perhaps burdened with it; which is why the outcome of this new discovery does not live up to expectations.

XVII. To return, then, to the first article of these Memoirs, and to satisfy all the needs of the State and restore all peoples to their former prosperity, it is not necessary to perform miracles, but only to cease doing continual violence to nature by imitating both our neighbors and our ancestors, who knew only two forms of taxation: the hearth tax, that is, the tax on fireplaces, and the tithe on land, which was the primary due of the kings of France until, through the donations they were weak enough to make to the Church, they allowed themselves to be deprived of it.

XVIII. In this way, everything lacking in the poll tax is satisfied: there are as many classes as there are degrees of wealth, without this giving rise to the slightest dispute; commerce and consumption suffer no harm whatsoever; And wherever people have been able to choose the most convenient type of tax, they have stuck to those.

XIX. Instead of the tithe, in order to cause less disruption, it should simply be decreed that the taille (land tax) will be assessed according to occupation, and that a man whose only income is his industry will only be able to pay between 3 and 6 pounds: in this way, at 2 sous per pound, it will generate more revenue than it does today, because the towns subject to the taille, where industry pays the greater part of the tax, will be placed under the tariff, which they all eagerly request.

And with regard to the Excise Duties, Customs Duties, and other transit taxes, which ruin consumption, by reimbursing the Taille (land tax) up to a third of its former value, and the remainder on chimneys, it will be found that the people will not pay a sixth of what they pay today, and that the king will receive double his current revenues, because the Taille, combined with a portion of the Excise Duties, having as its tariff the value of inheritances, will revert to their former price, which was double that of today, and consequently the Taille will likewise double, without the landowner being able to complain, since the increase in the king's revenues will simply be a consequence of the increase in his wealth.

XX. It is not accurate to say that this requires time, since between the permission to sell one's merchandise, when there are people able to buy it, and the sale itself, there are only twenty-four hours; and between having sold it and being richer than one was, there is no interval; and between being richer than one was and spending more, either on buying land or cultivating it better, there is likewise no interval;

and between making these transactions and distributing money among the people, there is also no interval. And as soon as the people have money, they consume the fruits they produce through their labor and are able to pay the king accordingly. Thus, everything depends on the cultivation of the land, which cannot work as long as farmers are deprived of the power to make the advances that this cultivation requires, and to sell the produce that grows on its land.

XXI. And to say a word about the serious error that occurred in the creation of the new offices, it is argued that there has never been a way that has so severely ruined agriculture; because, since almost all of them carried with them an exemption from public taxes, and since they were acquired by powerful people, they shifted the burden of their taxes onto countless unfortunate people, rendering them completely unable to work the land. Furthermore, these new creations, by destroying countless old offices purchased in good faith, which constituted almost all the wealth of families, established the principle that none should be considered a sure thing in the future, because, being liable to annihilation at any moment, there was a perpetual danger of losing their money for all those who bought them or lent funds for that purpose. Thus, the king has destroyed ten times more wealth than he has received in aid from these new creations, and has made it impossible for money to pass from hand to hand as it once did, because no acquisition can be said to be secure, since there is nothing so pernicious as taking the capital of a private individual's property for the prince's needs. And since several of the taxes imposed on officials were far beyond their means, the tax collectors, having resorted to enforcement, were completely ruined, although the king received nothing from them.

XXII. It should not be expected that the tax collectors will ever propose any further deals, because their intention being to obtain substantial discounts, they can only hope for difficult, and consequently ruinous, recoveries, which are advantageous to them to the extent that they are detrimental to the people. because the costs of the executions, where they are necessary, are shared among them, the bailiffs and the bailiffs, who grant them substantial discounts on what is levied on them.

XXIII. All these truths, which will be denied by the tax collectors and by those who protect them, who are far more numerous than one might think, will be attested to by all the people in the provinces who are of any standing, whether in office or in commerce: what does it matter, however, if only those who have an interest in ruining everything are listened to, while no audience is given to those who would like to save everything, but who could not even request it too forcefully without risking their own safety?

XXIV. These Memoirs have been reduced to articles, in order to make the bad faith of those who would deny their consequence more evident, because, since they cannot contest any of them individually without revealing their lack of knowledge or good faith, they must agree, despite their own doubts, that the king can enrich himself and his people in fifteen days, when he no longer wants to allow a few individuals to make their fortune by ruining him and his subjects; and consequently recover all the money necessary for this present war, without putting his people in despair, as one might say of a man who sees himself executed and his property sold for sums ten times greater than he has worth, which puts him and his family on alms, without giving a penny to the king, as happens every day. — All this without any greater movement than to execute the orders of the Taille, which state that it will be assessed according to the means of each, and to add to it a part of the Aides, as is done the Étapes, and as was done thirty years ago, which requires four times less movement than the Capitation.

XXV. In this way, it is maintained that the people would have two hundred million in revenue within fifteen days, more than they had, by this release of their previously seized property. And since the king needs sixty million a year in extraordinary funds, there are a thousand ways to obtain them from those to whom four times as much would have been restored, in addition to the future, which would double again within two or three years, which would be necessary to remit the funds.

## Chapter X:

The state to which France is currently reduced, being unable to provide the king with the necessary sums except through imprisonment and the complete sale of property, does not stem from their excesses, but from the fact that all the people's property has been seized for thirty years, and they have no control over it.

Indeed, the arbitrary taille (land tax) forces a merchant to hide his money and a farmer to leave his land fallow; because if one wished to trade and the other to farm, they would both be burdened with the taille by powerful individuals who are able to pay little or nothing.

And the aides (taxes), customs duties, and taxes on passages and exits from the kingdom, four times higher than the merchandise can bear, cause a man to see his cellars full of wine perish while wine is very expensive in his neighborhood, resulting in a reduction of more than 500 million francs in the kingdom's revenue.

If the king would be willing to put up for sale the cause of this loss, which is always increasing, since it is maintained that he does not receive a pistole without costing his Kingdom ten in pure loss, he will have one hundred thousand merchants in twenty-four hours, who will not have paid him as soon as they are richer than they were; because contrary causes produce contrary effects; that is to say, if the king would be willing to resell to his people the enjoyment of their goods, without it being necessary to dismiss either farmers or contractors.

**SUPPLEMENT  
TO THE DETAIL OF FRANCE  
(1703)**

It is surprising that, given the great need the State currently has for extraordinary relief, nations are offering to provide it immediately, through a few accommodations which, without causing any disruption, require only a simple act of will from those in power, and will enable these same nations at once to fulfill their obligations profitably. It is astonishing, I say, that these offers are only to be accepted after the conclusion of peace, even though this is the only way to secure a highly advantageous peace. Thus, by a hitherto unheard-of twist of fate, those responsible for payment agree to do so without requesting any delay, while those whose sole function should be to receive demand a term and a delay, highly uncertain, before accepting it. Besides this monstrous situation, it can be asserted that foreign war costs the kingdom ten to twenty times less than the internal disorder caused by the methods used to recover the funds necessary to sustain it; so much so that, since it is setting fire to all parts of France, it is more expedient to stop it than the external war, the advantageous conclusion of which, once again, will depend entirely on this internal peace, which can be achieved in less than a month; and the claim that foreign war is an obstacle to the restoration of general happiness is the same error as if, with a fire in all four corners of a house, one were to maintain that it should not be extinguished until a lawsuit concerning property in a distant court had been decided; and this will be best seen by a brief, item-by-item account of this internal war, or this conflagration of the kingdom.

Must we wait for peace to cultivate the land in all the provinces, where most remain fallow due to the low price of wheat, which cannot bear the costs, and where the fertilizer of all the others is similarly neglected, which causes a loss of more than 500,000 muids of wheat per year to France, and 500 million in loss in the income of the people, by the cessation of the circulation of this first product, which brings with it all the industrial professions, which live and die with it?

Must we wait for peace for another article, which is a continuation of the previous one, namely: to make the landowners pay the rents from those who cultivate the land, from whom no landowner receives anything, or makes no purchases in the shops, or fails to meet the aforementioned credit requirements, forcing the merchants to declare bankruptcy?

Must we wait for peace to stop the uprooting of vineyards, as is done daily, while three-quarters of the population drinks only water because of the exorbitant taxes on liquors, which exceed the price of the merchandise by four or five times? And when the produce that gives rise to such destruction is offered to be paid double to the king in another way by the people, which would be a fourfold profit for them, cannot they be listened to, and must we postpone their request, arguing that we must wait until all the vineyards are uprooted before granting the people permission to cultivate them? Which would be entirely pointless, and no better than calling a doctor to cure a dead man?

Must we wait for peace to order that taxes be fairly distributed throughout the kingdom, and that large sums of money not be squandered on nothing or very little, while a wretch who has only his own strength to support himself and his entire family, sees, after the sale of his meager furniture or tools by which he earns his living, the doors and bedsprings of his house

removed—just as is done with utensils whose value is based on the tax—to satisfy the additional burden of a tax exceeding four times his means? Monsieur de Sully, who restored France, finding it in the state it is in today, was not convinced that war had anything to do with these regulations, since he issued an ordinance in 1597 to regulate the fair distribution of the *taille* (a direct tax), as well as all other disorders, which he brought to a halt in the midst of two wars, one civil and the other foreign, which were devastating the kingdom both internally and externally in a far more cruel way than the current situation can be; and everything was executed so punctually that the king and the people became very wealthy, from being in very dire straits.

Must we wait for peace to save the lives of two or three hundred thousand people who perish at least every year in misery, especially in childhood, with not half of them reaching the age to earn a living because their mothers lack milk, food, or are overworked; while in later years, having only bread and water, without beds, clothing, or any remedies for their illnesses, and lacking the strength for work, which is their only income, they die before even reaching middle age?

Must we wait for peace to grant it to real estate, which can be done in an instant, the king declaring that he will henceforth be content with regulated subsidies proportionate to the means of each taxpayer, as is currently done in England, Holland, and all countries of the world, and as was done even in France for eleven hundred years? And that nothing will be bombed anymore, especially property, as has happened to countless people; which, by taking everything from a man's strength, reduces him to alms, and, putting all other owners of similar goods in expectation of a similar fate, ruins them almost equally without the king receiving anything? Is this not, in effect, depriving them of all credit, since credit depends solely on the solvency of the person who uses it, and this solvency is annihilated by the destruction of the value of the funds he possesses; just as in a city threatened with bombing, although the houses currently feel no harm, they lose nine out of ten parts of their ordinary value, which they regain as soon as this fear has passed. Thus, by establishing internal peace, one can instantly double or triple the price of all real estate, and consequently credit, which, again, represents half of the people's income. Must we wait for peace to enable the king to pay his officers on time, so that they can recruit at convenient times and early?

Must we wait for peace to provide the king with sufficient aid so that, through a substantial commitment, soldiers can be made into volunteers, rather than convicts bound and gagged in the army, as is done in the galleys and even to the gallows? This latter practice, according to M. de Sully in his *Memoirs*, only serves to discourage others, discredit the profession and the nation, because they all desert at the first opportunity or die of grief.

Must we wait for peace to cease constituting the State in the king's name, so that after the war ends, the interest payments on the money taken out as annuities will cost the people more than maintaining the war, thus forcing them to endure a perpetual one?

Must we wait for peace to purge the state of banknotes which, by the disruption they cause to commerce, cost four times more per year than the total value of all the sums for which they were created—that is to say, four times more than foreign war? Let the kingdom replenish its coffers with them through a just distribution from individuals and communities. The endorsement they will affix, payable over four years in four separate installments, with interest, will allow them to circulate in trade without any loss to the carrier; and the restoration of consumption, possible in three hours simply by ceasing this very serious violence done to nature, will compensate all these endorsers fourfold for this supposed new burden, as well as for the increase or rise in the supply of the king's needs.

Must we finally wait for peace to cease selling buildings every day, especially offices, with the promise that we will enjoy them peacefully, and that those who lent their money for this purchase will have a special privilege, and then, some time later, resell this new asset to another, without any compensation to the first purchaser or to the lender; which, removing the trust, which is the soul of trade, breaks all commerce between the prince and his subjects, makes money alone, being able to be safe from such storms, considered the only good, and as such locked away in the darkest hiding places that can be found, with a complete cessation of all kinds of consumption, of which this money is solely the very humble servant? It is utter nonsense to seek any other cause for the scarcity we see prevailing than this very destruction of consumption, just as it is to deny that by restoring it, as might be possible in a moment, we will see it as common as ever; although for a very long time the only cause has been sought in the destruction of the sole cause that makes it function, namely, once again, the ruin of consumption.

The most limited and darkest mind that ever existed could not be so blinded as to produce such arguments: only the heart can; for, according to Holy Scripture, once corrupted, a saint returning expressly from the other world would not change it. Therefore, although it will be shown that it is as certain as the people can be by three hours of work by Messrs. the ministers, and a month of execution on their part, without disconcerting anything, or putting any previous establishment at risk, that they can, I say, provide one hundred million in increase to the king for his present needs, with four times the profit on their part, and that this proof be made with as much certainty as if an angel came to bring it from heaven; one does not claim, however, to convert one of these corrupt hearts, that is to say those in whom public destruction is the principle of high fortune: one addresses only those minds which could be spoiled by the contagion of depraved subjects, and consequently suspect on such a matter.

Here is how this proof is established: what is consistently true would be no more certain even if all the saints in heaven came to attest to it, and it is as surely as indubitable that the Seine flows through Paris as if angels came to bear witness to it.

There is a second indisputable fact, namely, that all facts on which many agree without any prior agreement among them are as certain as if our own eyes bore witness to them. All reasonable men who have never been to Rome would bet all their wealth against a thirty-cent piece that there exists in the world a city of that name, because too many people have said

and written it without having conspired to lie for it not to be true; and even if someone wanted to contradict this fact, they would be called a madman and an eccentric.

However, it is maintained that the establishment of a hundred million increase on the part of the people, with a quadruple profit on their part, possible in three hours of work and one month of execution, has the same degree of certainty as this example of Rome, given that all the unsuspecting peoples are ready to sign the proposal under the stated conditions; and it is maintained at the same time that if the king ordered someone to put in writing reasons that showed the impossibility of such a recovery, besides the fact that he would not know where to begin or where to end, he would be in horror to both God and men. And the request for a delay until after peace is a clear and simple admission that the matter is very easy, or that contradiction is impossible, since foreign peace or war has no bearing whatsoever on what is happening within the kingdom with regard to tribute. It is therefore a crude demonstration that, unable to deny that the methods employed are setting fire to every corner of France, the only wish is to postpone extinguishing the flames until peace is achieved; not, again, that peace has any connection whatsoever with these disturbances, but because one hopes thereby to obtain a delay, and that the conflagration will continue, since one benefits from it, and one is among the arsonists who are well paid for such services.

Such cruel provisions and similar pronouncements should not surprise us on the part of the Tax Collectors, since it is with the help of such a policy that they procure these immense fortunes which are ruining the State, and since 1689 they have been given 200 million for their share, not counting the nothingness which, growing under their feet, exceeds by ten to twenty times what both the king and they receive through such a fatal channel; and even such objections would not have been equally surprising in the mouths of the ministers before 1661, because either they were Tax Collectors themselves, or they took part in all parties, as was verified contradictorily in the chamber of justice; — which was the same thing when M. de Sully arrived at the ministry, who told King Henry IV that the Traitors, who are the ruin of a State, had only been invented by the ministers to prevaricate, it being impossible for them to take anything from the regular tributes passing straight from the hands of the people into those of the prince, as is practiced in all the countries of the world; whereas through the Partisans they are the absolute masters of the goods of everyone, putting a rich man on the floor, and the last of the miserable in opulence when it pleases them, and are only deprived for their own particulars of receiving any sums whatsoever, as much as they wish to refuse them, there being no other limits than those that can be expected from their moderation; — as, I say, this was the situation of the ministers before 1661, the request for a delay to change such deplorable ways would not have been surprising, because it would have been regarded as letters of state from them to maintain themselves in such a pleasant situation with regard to them, although so disastrous to the king and the people; — but today, and since 1661, when integrity has suddenly and without any middle ground succeeded extreme prevarication in the ministry, one can only be surprised to have seen three times a quadrupling of Partisans and deplorable ways, as well as the current demand for a delay to extinguish the fire which is in the four corners of the kingdom, with a refusal to receive from the people all the needs of the king, at a time when they are absolutely necessary for the monarchy, because one dares to call

a reversal of State the cessation of the greatest upheaval that ever was, which does very great violence to nature, and which can be stopped in a moment with much less disturbance than there was during the poll tax established in 1695, in the middle of the war.

And if, as for this poll tax, which had promised the cessation of extraordinary affairs, it had no other result, thanks to those who deceived the ministers in the distribution, than to make the tax ridiculous, and consequently insufficient to meet the king's needs, there is no fear that the same will happen with the one that is proposed, since it will amount to more than one hundred million with a fourfold profit for those who pay six times their previous amount, and this by the simple attention to these four items, namely: grain and liquor, the fair distribution of the taille, and the cessation of extraordinary affairs; which requires only a simple act of will from the king and the ministers. The ministers, in conclusion, are committing a very great act of violence against nature, although the neglect of this responsibility has, all things considered, cost the kingdom over fifteen hundred million francs in losses annually since 1661. Integrity resides in the ministry, as previous misdeeds have produced nothing so disastrous; quite the contrary, in fact, and all assets, including those of the king, have doubled in value by 1661 compared to their worth thirty years prior.

If the figure of 1,500 million is surprising, it can be interpreted differently. It is maintained that out of the forty thousand towns, cities, and villages in the kingdom, there is not one, one carrying the other, that has not lost fifty thousand livres in revenue, both in capital and in industry, or rather ten to twenty times more than what the king collects from all sorts of taxes. This can be verified in any location the opposing party chooses, without any lack of currency being blamed. Today, if we accurately count what has come in and gone out compared to what existed in 1661, the fifteen hundred million in revenue still existed. But this is because money has become paralytic, whereas it had the opposite of its former strength, which is the sole basis of the wealth of nations, and consequently of providing for the king's needs. For tributes, like all kinds of dues, derive their quality of excess or modesty not from the absolute quantity of the sums demanded, but from the value of the funds from which they are required, and the strength of these funds is only in proportion to the sale of the goods they produce; from which it follows that this production can be doubled in a moment, it would take no more to restore to the exchange rate the same rapidity that the lifting of the dam that held it back on the edge of a slope imparts to the water of a torrent; and the same absurdity that would be found in the objection that this water could not flow in the valley, after the removal of the dam, until a foreign war was over, is also found in the allegation of those who claim that one must wait for the end of this same war to see consumption proceed, although the violent causes that stop it can be removed in a moment, at any time whatsoever.

When we say a hundred million increase in the king's revenues in an instant, it is not 100 million of newly manufactured goods, as in Peru, it is one hundred million of bread, wine, meat, or other foodstuffs, which being the sole support of life, are likewise the armies, which will be supplied by means of only ten million, and even less, which making ten trips and ten returns from the hands of the people to those of the prince, will produce this delivery of foodstuffs of which ten times more is lost every day, both produced and to be produced; while

on the other hand these ten million, which never move except by the order of consumption, reside for whole years in retreats from which all the machines in the world cannot draw them out: far from it, all the measures that are taken only serve to sink them further into them, whereas in an instant they can be put, as well as everything else, into motion; What is offered as a guarantee to the people, which is far superior to that of the tax farmers, is that there is no one, not having a vested interest in the cause of the unrest, who would not gladly and profitably give two sous per pound of their income to be paid the remainder promptly—something that is not nearly the case at present, and which is guaranteed by the proposed system, much more suitable for supporting the war than all the practices employed to date.

# FACTUM OF FRANCE

(1706)

**“Or, Very Easy Means of Obtaining Eighty Millions for the King in Addition to the Poll Tax, Feasible by Two Hours of Work from the Ministers and One Month of Implementation by the People, Without Dismissing Any Tax Farmer General or Private Tax Collector, or Any Other Action, Than to Restore Four or Five Times More Revenue to France, That Is to Say, More Than Five Hundred Millions Out of More Than Five Hundred Millions Lost Since 1661, Because It Is Clearly Shown, at the Same Time, That No Objection Can Be Made Against This Proposal, Whether in Relation to the Times and Circumstances, as Not Conducive to Any Change, or to the Supposed Peril, Risk, or Whatever Other Cause It May Be, Without Renouncing Reason and Common Sense; So That It Is Maintained That There Is No Man on Earth Who Dares to Put Such a Contradiction on Paper, and Subscribe to It with His Name, Without Losing His Honor; and that at the same time we demonstrate the impossibility of getting out of the current situation any other way.”)**

## Chapter I:

Ten years ago, as much by chance as by premeditated design, at least as far as the public was concerned, a Memoir or Treatise entitled "The Detail of France" appeared. Although it demonstrated the king's ease in raising all the necessary sums in the prevailing circumstances, without causing any disruption, and even providing for the benefit of his people, it met with no success whatsoever, and received not even the slightest attention.

The author had not hoped for more, and he had made this explicit. The reason for this was that there was still, so to speak, oil in the lamp: the motive or causes of France's ruin, through the surprises played on the ministers, still had enough on hand to amply pay the contractors, just as they themselves had enough profit to buy protection. But now that everything has come to an end for lack of substance, we must presume a less fraught success, because there will be less incentive to contradict past proposals, or rather, an absolute necessity to accept them.

This is why the people are offering, without fear of being disavowed, all the needs of the kingdom, whatever the sum, both on land and at sea, to force its enemies to expect peace only from the justice and moderation of Louis the Great, as in the past.

It is reiterated that if it requires only 80 million francs per year in addition to the ordinary taxes, and even more, not counting the poll tax as it currently stands, the matter will soon be accomplished, without any disruption or breach of any treaty the King has made with anyone, and with far less movement than there was at the time of the initial establishment of the poll tax.

This proposal is spoken of with all the more boldness and certainty, given all the circumstances surrounding it, because these 80 million francs will be merely the result of more than 500 million francs that His Majesty will have restored to his people through two hours of attention from his ministers and fifteen days of implementation among the people, as has been stated, under the agreed conditions.

Let us suspend for a moment the notion of ridicule and extravagance that such a proposition might inspire in the minds of countless people. Consider that the great Saint Augustine and Lactantius, celebrated authors, did not gain much honor by calling a bishop named Virgil, who came from their century to proclaim the antipodes, a madman and a fool. Christopher Columbus received the same treatment in almost every court of Europe before being listened to and aided by some private citizen in Spain. Copernicus, of the last century, was threatened with burning by the entire theological establishment for expounding his system, though it is today the most universally accepted.

The author of the 80 million is in a far more fortunate position than all those great men: not only is he not alone in his opinion like them, but he maintains that he is merely the advocate of all the farmers and merchants in the kingdom, that is to say, of all those who are the source and principle of all the wealth of the State, both with regard to the king and the people.

Therefore, to temper the strong tendency to dismiss these pronouncements as visionary, and even to deflect a large part of the blame from the outset onto the dissenters, the debate will revolve around the farmers and merchants, from whom alone all kinds of payments originate, both to the prince and to the landowners, and those whose sole function is to receive.

The former openly declare and publicly state that they are ready to pay the sums stipulated in this Memorandum, under the stated conditions, which are entirely arbitrary, since it is merely a matter of will on the part of individuals well known to be in a position to do as they please. The opposing parties, on the other hand, are those from whom nothing is asked but to accept payment, yet who claim, and even believe they are thereby demonstrating their wisdom and understanding, that such payments are impossible.

Now, we can see which of these two figures should bear the brunt of the ridicule by examining the example of bills of exchange.

Could a person carrying such a document, worth a thousand pounds, outright with a wealthy merchant, without causing an uproar, have the merchant formally protest the payment after the other party had stated their readiness to pay and even demanded payment?

These are the laws and the legal point upon which the matter hinges. The author of these Memoirs wishes to be seen as nothing but a complete eccentric, should he be mistaken; and if his proposals are not accepted by all the people, he consents to incur this penalty, and even to be placed in the places where the insane are confined, in the event that he fails to find justice. And to convince him of this, he does not require strong arguments, nor arguments that have almost as much merit as his own; but he declares first of all that may be objected to against his proposals, or rather those of the people, whether by absolute impossibility, or by the time constraints, as being unsuitable for any change, or by the danger, or by the disconcerting effect; in case, I say, that these objections are not a complete extravagance, being put in writing, to horrify heaven and earth, and that they might find someone to sign them, of being himself treated in the manner in which he has just consented, which he will reiterate almost on every page of this work, for fear that it will be forgotten.

Since the word "extravagance" will be frequently used in this Memoir, although it is not an expression that politeness and civility ordinarily tolerate in either speech or writing among respectable people, we are obliged, before proceeding, to make a brief digression to explain the necessity of its use on this occasion and also to dispel any notion of insult one might assume it carries with those against whom it may be used.

Firstly, since France is currently suffering from gangrene, or, if you prefer, kidney stones, a cure requires incisions to the quick and very violent operations on the most vital parts of the body, as ordinary remedies are no longer effective and are far inferior to the severity of the illness.

Now, since any other expression might leave the impression, if not of a vision, at least of a problem, in what the author of these Memoirs proposes, with regard to all who are not farmers or merchants—that is to say, high society—it would be difficult for anyone of that sort to embark on penetrating his reasons and making a certain judgment, in order to put such illustrious prejudices and such supposedly great men on trial, thinking that after much trouble and work one would find only obscurity, which is more than enough to call the author a visionary. — It is on such occasions that one takes pleasure in believing that the most obvious facts are falsehoods, or one closes one's eyes to them; And after having, in a way, burned them, one contradicts the most certain consequences that follow from them, in order to persuade oneself, and to make others believe, that it is not to be presumed that people so enlightened and so zealous for the service of the king and the public could have committed such grave errors; that they had reasons known only to themselves; that if these reasons were known, they would not be slandered in this way; that it is just not to condemn people without hearing them, especially when they are dead, which renders them incapable of defending their interests and learning the particular motives of their conduct. — The present situation, or rather the disorder in France, has provided such defenders; this is why this language, however depraved it may be, will not lack subjects who will use it in the present situation; they would not even convert if a dead person came from the other world to attest to the truth of these Memoirs; And this is in accordance with Holy Scripture, because the heart is swayed; which being the case, neither the mind, nor honor, nor conscience has any say in the matter.

But when one speaks of extravagance, and maintains, as will be done in these Memoirs, that such and such a matter could not have been accomplished without one of two things: either the authors had completely lost their minds, which is certainly not, nor even presumable, or they had erred so greatly in fact that they produced as many extravagances as if their brains had been entirely dismantled, one must absolutely take a stand, and there is no way to resort to subterfuge, nor to plead ignorance on such matters. — Everyone, in order to possess common sense, is a competent judge and cannot refrain from pronouncing an opinion in good faith under the pretext of their lack of knowledge.

It is by such reasoning, or similar principles, that one maintains that France can be restored in two hours, and one makes a point of repeating what has already been said, namely that the author of this proposition is quite willing to be considered an eccentric himself, and the greatest who ever lived, if any objection can be raised against him, whether for the brevity of the time, the peril, or any other reason whatsoever, that has the slightest appearance of such a thing, and that is not a complete extravagance, provided it is put in writing; for this is what always happens with all the facts that are affirmed and then contradicted. The error is such that one of the two is certainly committing the same extravagance as if he had lost his mind.

— And no one should be offended by having fallen into this weakness: all the greatest men and the most celebrated authors have been caught in it; there is no absurdity that they have not uttered and written based on bad memoirs, in otherwise very fine works that have made them very famous. — Saint Augustine and Lactantius, as has been noted, called the former author of the *Antipodes* extravagant; subsequent events showed them that the extravagance was on their side. — Thus, the author of this discourse should be permitted to use, in defending the truth and the interests of the king and the people, the same terms that such great men have not hesitated to employ to oppose it.

Having laid out this preamble, deemed necessary to avoid any criticism of the author regarding the form of a work whose content is unassailable, we will now proceed to the matter at hand, declaring that we have the utmost respect for the individuals we are about to show to have consistently erred in fact—which in no way prejudices their integrity, of which we are quite convinced—and that we would even have used gentler expressions had we believed it possible to do so without betraying the cause of the king and the people, which we have undertaken to defend.

Justice itself compels us to say that, far from the ministers being reprehensible for having so greatly erred in fact, they could not, without a miracle, have acted otherwise, succeeding subjects who had set them very poor examples and charted very flawed paths. And far from being able to turn away from it, it can be said that everyone conspired to keep them there, having more fortune to be made in deceiving a minister in France, ruining the king and the people, than in conquering an entire kingdom for the monarch, in any country whatsoever.

## Chapter II:

They promise eighty million and more on top of ordinary taxes, even the poll tax, for two hours of work and fifteen days of execution; they also promise to pay all the debts of the king and the state within ten years of peace, and finally, they promise a doubling of the king's revenues by abolishing the poll tax within four or five years; all this without risking anything, causing any consternation, or using absolute power. — This is the greatest extravagance that could ever enter the mind, nor be proposed, if the author fails to find the right answer in every single point. But let one suspend judgment until the entire work has been read, and let the idea of ridicule, once again, which violently confronts the mind, temper its ardor somewhat, and one will see irresistibly that this is the same trial that the great men mentioned earlier faced concerning the antipodes.

No one doubts that the principle and basis of the income of all the princes of the world is that of their subjects, who are properly speaking only their farmers, the sovereigns being in no position to receive more or less than in proportion to the fact that those who work the land are able, by the product they derive from it, to pay them tribute. This maxim, which is also practiced by all states, had been in use in France until the death of King Francis I, having been only slightly deviated from since then, until 1660. But it can be said that since that year the opposite approach has been taken, and it has been believed that it is impossible to make the monarch receive money more usefully and more diligently, especially in extraordinary needs, than, not by increasing the income and property of the people, but by diminishing them everywhere, and destroying them in several places almost entirely, at a certain rate, one leading to the other, namely: twenty of loss by pure annihilation with regard to the owner for one of profit to the king, shared even with the contractor and his protectors, who made a princely fortune for such a deplorable service. — Since this is the central figure of the play, and since everything hinges on this foundation, we maintain this undeniable fact, as public as it is undeniable, that the Seine flows through Paris: so that anyone who would deny it would make themselves as ridiculous as anyone who refused to acknowledge a similar truth. — The loss of half of France's assets, both in capital and industry, which necessarily follow the fate of the former, has as many witnesses as there are people in the kingdom, not to mention the registers, leases, and contracts that provide written proof, just as people have witnesses. — It is further maintained that this decline since 1660 amounts to more than fifteen hundred million per year: let the phrase "hundreds of millions" not astonish or surprise anyone! Just as we calculate the income of a house, a farm, and a village, both in terms of decreases and increases, it is easy for anyone versed in these matters to calculate that of an entire kingdom. We have calculated that of England, which is not worth a quarter of that of France, taking it in all its forms, when these two states are governed by the same principles, and it is claimed that it amounts to nearly 700 million per year. — And for France, those who take offense at these expressions or calculations may well find it acceptable, if they so choose, that we count in several hundred million the revenues of a state which often provides its prince, in some

years, with more than one hundred and fifty million, and the Church usually with more than three hundred million, both in capital income and in casual payments, which far surpasses the former, in religion as elsewhere. — In the single Election of Mantes, the income from the vineyards, both through the complete abandonment of the greater part, although formerly of very high yield to the owners, and through the reduction of those which still remain, amounts to a loss of two million four hundred thousand livres, according to a fair and certain calculation, verified on site; And since the revenues from land, although leading those from industry, do not constitute a quarter of the total, the latter far exceeding them, this represents a loss of over ten million livres in pure annihilation in a single election; and far from the king gaining anything from this fine arrangement, he lost over five hundred thousand livres on the *taille* (land tax), which had to be reduced, both in this election and in the surrounding districts, because of the loss of property; and the increase in the *aides* (taxes) is far from compensating for this loss on the *taille*; they did not even reach a tenth of this damage. And since this fate befell the election of Mantes due to a cause general to the entire kingdom, the same conclusions can be drawn, and the same loss certainly assumed for all of France.

Let us therefore begin to go full steam ahead, by presuming to clothe the author of these Memoirs with the idea of *ex-travagance*, on this reduction of fifteen hundred million in rent which has come to the kingdom since 1660; especially since, although the *Aides* constantly hold the principal person in such a disaster, including the *Exit*, *Passage* and *Customs Rights* of the kingdom, which are neither less criminal, nor less outrageous to reason and common sense, than these same *Aides*, cause of so many misfortunes; However, these supposed rights of the prince have, in addition, two accomplices in the destruction of his people who have very well assisted them, if not equaled them, in the annihilation of this fifteen hundred million in revenue, namely, injustice and uncertainty in the distribution of the *Taille*, another point where, although there was only negligence and lack of attention on the part of those who governed, or at most a bad personal example, with regard to their own funds, the disaster was nevertheless so terrible in the ruin of consumption, and consequently of revenue, that one can be sure that if the demons had held council to devise a way to damn and destroy all the peoples of the kingdom, they could not have established anything more suited to achieving such an end. — A more detailed account will be given later, when its cessation is discussed; which certainly does not require half an hour of attention from Messrs. the ministers, and fifteen days of execution in the provinces, when this commission is given to subjects versed in such matters, and especially of the country as in former times, the elected officials being nothing more in their institution than distributors appointed by the people.

The other contributing factor to the ruin of France is something even more pitiful: not only is it not the effect of an indirect interest, as in the case of the *Aides*, which blinded the contractors to procure benefits at the expense of public ruin, nor the fault of a lack of attention to the general good, as in the distribution of the *Tailles*; But on the contrary, it is a production of very wise and pious reflections, as one might imagine, namely: the support of the debasement of grains, which it was thought necessary to establish and maintain, by continual efforts of a supposedly very fine policy, to be at a loss to the farmer, the price not being able to cover the costs of cultivation in a number of places, far from satisfying the

payment of the owner and the taxes; which has attracted, in addition to more than 500 million in reduction of rent in the kingdom, as is the case today, the abandonment of an infinite number of lands of difficult exploitation, and the prodigality of grains to foreign uses, as food for livestock and the making of manufactures; which threatens nothing less than an extraordinary high cost at the first sterility. — In short, it was believed that in order for everyone to be comfortable, grain prices had to be so low that farmers could give nothing to their masters, and the latter no work to the laborers; since this was their entire income, the resulting deprivation exceeded ten times the supposedly low price of bread. — And it was similarly thought that to avoid the horrors of extraordinary high prices, it was advantageous to abandon the cultivation of countless plots of land, and the fertilization of almost all of them in general, since the price of the harvest could not bear the costs, and that the grain should also be lavished on those foreign uses just mentioned. — However horrifying such conduct may be, a conduct born of speculation, which can only ever produce monsters in the arts, which are learned only through practice, even in the art of making a shoe, which the greatest genius in the world could not construct from a plan drawn up by the most skilled craftsman without exhibiting a ridiculous object; it is nonetheless true that this conduct was deemed worthy of applause, and that its authors thought they should be called the Josephs of their country. — There is an entire chapter at the end of this work, and indeed, if one is curious, one will find a small volume where it is shown, as clear as day, and without any fear of retort that would be a complete extravagance, that the more grain is cheap, the more miserable the poor become, and especially the workers; and, at the same time, the more wheat is produced in France, the more one can be assured of extraordinary high prices in barren years.

### **Chapter III:**

Here is the first act of the play, and we must pause here to begin arguing, according to the established premise, that France's revenues have decreased by fifteen hundred million since 1660, and that the three causes just mentioned have produced this unfortunate effect; and that, while the author accepts being treated as a fool if he is not entirely correct, he maintains at the same time that he cannot be contradicted on either of these two points without utter absurdity.

Now, to return to the first purpose of this work, one cannot dispute on the principles established at the beginning, which are those of all the States of the earth, that, the revenues of the prince having no other source than those of the people, whoever could restore in an instant the fifteen hundred million of rent which the people enjoyed until 1660, would prove that all that has been proposed for the king, namely, the eighty million increase in the present conjuncture, and the payment of all the debts of the State in his name, as well as the doubling of all his revenues, instead of being an extravagance, is a very natural and very easy thing; since, far from being the effect of vision or violence, it would only be a consequence, or rather a very small part of a general opulence spread in some way freely; and that is how it is understood, as we shall soon see, after we have shown in a chapter what wealth is according to the laws of nature, for the false idea that has been formed of it in recent times having produced all the disorder, the simple recognition of the cause of the evil will make it cease, and will restore opulence.

## Chapter IV:

Wealth, at the beginning of the world, by the design of nature and the order of the Creator, was nothing other than the ample enjoyment of life's necessities. Since these were limited solely to simple food and the clothing necessary to protect oneself from the harsh weather, everything essentially boiled down to two types of occupations: the farmer and the shepherd. Before the Flood, flocks had no other use than to clothe humankind with their hides. And these were the two professions shared by the two children of Adam after the creation of the universe. Following their example, those who came after them were for a long time masters and servants, and the very architects of their own needs. Selling was merely barter or exchange, conducted directly from hand to hand, without any intermediary of money, which was only known much later. — But since then, corruption, violence, and lust have entered the picture, and after basic needs, the desire for luxury and extravagance has grown. This has multiplied the number of trades, from the two they initially were, step by step, to the more than two hundred they are today in France, making this immediate exchange impossible. — Since the seller of a commodity almost never trades with someone who already possesses the commodity he intended to acquire by parting with his own, and can only recover it after a long journey and countless sales and resales, through the two hundred hands or professions that today constitute the harmony of civilized and magnificent states, a guarantee and a kind of power of attorney, so to speak, from this first buyer was necessary, that the seller's intention would be fulfilled by the recovery of the commodity he wanted to obtain by relinquishing his own. — This is why the use of money became necessary, by a general convention and consent of all people, so that in any country whatsoever, barring some great distance or violence that disrupts things, whoever carries money is assured of obtaining as much of the commodity he needs as he has parted with his own, and certain that the object of his desire will be delivered to him with as much diligence and precision as if the exchange or barter had taken place immediately and directly from hand to hand, as at the beginning of the world. — There is one point to be noted here, which is that money, despite the corruption that has made it an idol, cannot provide for any of life's necessities when reduced to currency, but is only a guarantee that the seller of a commodity will not lose it, and that the commodity he needs in exchange for his own will be delivered to him, not being found with his buyer. — We must consider one further point: this function is so little unique to money, whatever the prevailing idea, that it doesn't even constitute a tenth, or even a fiftieth in times of opulence, which is nothing other than great consumption, that is to say, very great wealth. — Paper, parchment, and even speech, again, constitute fifty times more than money: thus, it is a great mistake, in times of hardship, to blame money for the disorder and to pitifully claim that most of it has gone to foreign countries. Why not say that paper and parchment have gone there as well, and that it is for lack of material that trade has ceased, and that buying and selling have stopped? — It is not said, because it is well known that it would be ridiculous. Now, to make the same argument about money is equally absurd, since, even if this disappearance of the species were true, or not, one could only impute to it its penny per pound of the cessation of

trade, in which, having only one-fiftieth of the functions, one could not make it criminal to a higher degree. Now, everything having diminished by more than half since 1660, one sees the error of this pitiful reason, the lack of money. — These allegations would be true in Peru if the mines were to dry up, because being solely the product of the country, the people there would have to starve if they did not export a very large quantity of it every year, to exchange it for the foodstuffs necessary for subsistence. — Not to mention the Maldives, where, by unanimous agreement, certain shells serve the function of coinage; Nor those of America, where the European colonists who inhabited them lacked nothing necessary for their needs, hardly ever seeing a penny of silver, because tobacco alone, both wholesale and retail, replaced all its functions; and if one wanted a penny's worth of bread, or even less, one gave a penny's worth of tobacco, and so on, those who received it being assured of deriving the same benefit in procuring their necessities; without citing all these examples, I say, the fairs of Lyon in France, which constitute an annual trade of more than 80 million, have never known or seen a penny of silver in this commerce: everything is done by immediate exchange of goods, or by promissory notes, which, after countless hands, return to the first issuer, where only compensation is due. — Money, therefore, is nothing less than a principle of wealth in countries where it is not a product of the land: it is merely the bond of commerce and the pledge of future exchanges when delivery is not made immediately to one of the contracting parties; and it even shares this function with so many other things, such as a simple word, paper, parchment, and even the goods themselves, that it is exempt from most of the role that is falsely assumed to be unique to it. It is even indifferent, insofar as its remaining use in this practice is only ever required when one of the contracting parties lacks sufficient solvency to rely on their word, paper, or parchment; It is irrelevant, I say, whether there are few or many in a country to provide it with opulence, that is to say, complete enjoyment, not only of the necessities of life, but even of everything the human mind has been able to invent for pleasure. There is only one indispensable condition, namely that, while it is irrelevant whether things are expensive or cheap, it is absolutely necessary that everything be reciprocal: otherwise, greater proportion, and consequently more commerce; and thus, greater wealth, or rather, much misery, which is the current situation in France. — A man who received a thousand francs a year under King Francis I was just as rich, and lived his life just as comfortably and magnificently, as one who today receives fifteen thousand francs every year, because wheat was worth only twenty sous a setier in Paris, which must be worth fifteen or sixteen francs today, in an average year, and shoes didn't sell for more than five sous, according to the valuation printed in the ordinances, as can be seen there. The farmer who sold his wheat for only twenty sous, and the shoemaker for his shoes for only five sous, both found it worthwhile, because the proportions were the same. — But if, as today, wheat had been worth fifteen francs, the shoemaker would have starved to death with his shoes sold for five sous: just as, conversely, the farmer would have given up everything if, selling his wheat for twenty sous, he or his master had been forced to buy shoes for four francs.

It is therefore proportions that make all the wealth, because it is only through them that exchanges, and consequently commerce, can take place: it would be ridiculous to make a difference between two equally good meals, because one had cost a lot and the other much

less, by claiming to establish a higher degree of happiness in the one for which one had spent more.

And it is through the disruption of this harmony that the 1,500 million in rent, eclipsed in France since 1660, vanished. — As this justice, which must exist between two merchants who trade only with each other, must extend to the more than two hundred professions that France contains today, and as they all have a joint interest in maintaining it, because it is only from it that they can obtain their subsistence and their maintenance, it must not be disrupted in the least of its parts, that is to say, the most insignificant worker must not sell at a loss: otherwise its destruction, like a contagious leaven, immediately corrupts the whole mass. This must be done not only from man to man, but also from country to country, province to province, kingdom to kingdom, and even year to year, by helping and supplying each other with what they have in excess, and receiving in return what they lack. — However, through a dreadful corruption of the heart, there is no individual, even though he should expect his happiness only from the maintenance of this harmony, who does not work from morning till night and do everything in his power to destroy it. There is no worker who does not try, with all his might, to sell his wares for three times their worth, and to obtain his neighbor's for three times less than it costs to produce. — It is only at the point of the sword that justice is maintained in these situations: this, nevertheless, is what nature or Providence has entrusted to itself. And, just as nature has provided refuge and resources for weak animals so that they do not all become prey to those who, being strong and born in some way armed, live by carnage, so too, in the commerce of life, nature has established such order that, provided it is left to its own devices, it is not within the power of the most powerful, in buying the goods of a wretch, to prevent that sale from providing sustenance for the latter, thus maintaining affluence, to which both are equally indebted for subsistence proportionate to their station. It has been said, provided that nature is left to its own devices, that is to say, that it is given its freedom, and that no one interferes in this commerce except to provide protection for all and prevent violence. — This is precisely what was done to the contrary, since there were no means, however appalling, that were not considered not only legitimate, but even deemed the epitome of the finest policy, to ruin this harmony by attacking or overwhelming all commodities, one after the other, through the use of partisans. When one type of property had been destroyed, so that there was nothing left to do for the entrepreneurs who caused this devastation under the pretext of bringing money to the king, even though he did not receive a hundredth part of the harm it caused, the same measures were applied to other types of property that had not yet been destroyed, always taking the ministers by surprise; so that the one who ruined the most countries, and consequently the king, was the one who managed his affairs best.

The substantial profits attached to such enterprises, which allowed for sharing with first-degree protectors—whom one would like to believe were also being deceived, but who nevertheless served as prime ministers until 1661, as will be explained—led to considerable ingenuity in maintaining and expanding this scheme, while simultaneously preventing any remedies or obstacles that the people might have raised. Yet, it is still believed that since that time, there has been nothing but surprise, even though these practices have increased sixfold,

and even buildings that had always seemed sacred have been seized. Moreover, this is too public to be considered slander or called into question: the 1,500 million in revenue constantly eclipsed, the lands left fallow, more than half the kingdom's vineyards uprooted, while three-quarters of the population drinks only water, thwarts any strong inclination those concerned might have to deny such certain facts, for which they alone are responsible; and this is how it happened.

It is due, through the tax collectors, to too little attention being paid to the distribution of taxes, and too much attention to the trade in grain and liquors, the management of which should absolutely have been left to nature, as everywhere else. — It is necessary to briefly detail these three causes, and it will be seen that it is not without reason that it is maintained that they have caused more destruction in France than ever before, even the greatest enemies, and indeed all the scourges of God in their greatest violence; the devastation of these ways having regained, by their duration, since 1660, what might seem most violent in these extraordinary marks of the wrath of Heaven.

## Chapter V:

To begin with the Tailles (taxes), about which we will say only a little, because they have already been discussed at length in the book entitled *\*The Detail of France\**, to which those curious to learn its intricacies may refer, and of which what follows will be only an abridged version, there is, before discussing them, a point to make, which will also serve as a basis for this article and the other two.

All the revenues, or rather all the wealth in the world, both of a prince and of his subjects, consist solely in consumption; all the most exquisite fruits of the earth and the most precious foodstuffs are nothing but manure as long as they are not consumed. This means that the most fertile countries, uninhabited and consequently uncultivated, are, due to the small population, almost entirely useless to their prince. — Now, since, although these regions are abundant with people capable of exploiting nature's bounty, it is in their interest not to consume anything, and they are even prevented from doing so, neither the country nor the prince is any richer than if there were no one or very few people. The land then becomes like a pasture of the greatest productivity, yielding nothing to its owner when the animals placed upon it are confined and prevented from grazing by this violence, which completely ruins both the pasture and the owners of the animals, who die from this overwhelming force, far from growing fat.

This is a brief portrait of the Taille in the provinces where it is arbitrary, that is to say, in almost three-quarters of the kingdom, without there being in any way the slightest difference. And this, by means of three circumstances which accompany it, and never leave it for a moment: — the first, its uncertainty, both in the assessment of the parishes and on the heads of all individuals; — the second, its injustice of being high and violent, not in relation to the means of the taxpayers, which is nevertheless the spirit of its institution, as in all countries of the earth, even the most barbaric and crude, but only with regard to the more or less protection and elevation that a man can have to defend himself or his farmers against it; — and the third finally, the collection of this tax, of which, because of the bad distribution, a large part remains a loss for those who are charged with this unfortunate collection; and as everyone takes their turn, it falls to everyone, consequently, to be ruined in turn.

To address each point, and to show that there were never greater executioners of consumerism: First, uncertainty, which sets the dance in motion, compels all those exposed to it to abstain from all kinds of expenditure, and even from any noisy activity: only a simple diet of bread and water can sustain a man without him becoming the victim of his neighbor, should he see him buy a piece of meat or a new garment; if he happens to have money, he must keep it hidden, because, should anyone even hear of it, he is ruined. — By injustice, which is the second point, it is quite natural and common to see a large business not contribute a single penny per pound, while an unfortunate man who has only his labor to live

on, he and his entire family, is taxed at a rate that exceeds all his worth; So, after the sale of a few meager furnishings, such as straw mattresses, blankets, and utensils suitable only for manual labor, they proceed to sell the doors, bed frames, and the timbers of the houses.

This ruins this supposedly privileged landowner, and consequently the king, far more than if this almost exempt estate had paid six times the tax on which it is levied, and had completely relieved this unfortunate man of it; because, as has been said, all land only yields produce in proportion to the amount of produce that grows on it, and those crops that could be consumed are prevented by these practices, so these crops fall into pure loss, and the landowners do not recoup the costs of cultivation. And to demonstrate this without fear of rebuttal, one need only look at countless large estates belonging to people of the highest standing. They will be found diminished since 1660, when attention was entirely abandoned to the fair distribution of the *taille* (land tax), without renewing or enforcing the old ordinances, which spoke of nothing but constant vigilance. One will see, I say, that these lands have been reduced by half, one after the other, and some even more, to compensate for the others so that the whole remains at the same level. Without falsely accusing them of excessive *taille*, for which these lands have almost never paid anything, it will be a great service to their owners to ensure they receive their just share, thus relieving the poor, since by this means, the cause of the ruin of these estates being removed, they will immediately regain their former value. And those with some knowledge of the details agree on this. But they also indicate that the matter must be general, otherwise any particular justice that could be applied would only produce an increase in payment, without any individual benefit. — And the collection, finally, coming as an additional burden on subjects already overwhelmed, and making them in a way guarantors and sureties of payments, some of which can never be recovered, completes their ruin and adds to their desolation, or rather their despair; which, not to mention the imprisonments, the number of which is such that countless tax collectors spend more time in jail than in their own homes, is the final stage of destruction of consumption, through the loss of their time, which is their entire income, as well as that of the king and the kingdom. — This disorder, which costs France more than 500 million in losses per year, and the lives of so many unfortunate people who perish, both in health and in disease, for lack of food and assistance, as well as buildings that can protect them from the ravages of time, having been for the most part destroyed by this fine economy of the *Taille*; this disorder, I say, however great and however frightful it may be, can be stopped in half an hour of work and fifteen days of execution, since it is only a question of a simple act of the will of the king and the ministers, as will be explained better and more particularly in the chapter on the remedy.

We must now turn to the second cause of the destruction of 1,500 million in revenue, namely grain. Regarding this, we must recall what was said earlier: that wealth is nothing other than the complete enjoyment not only of all the necessities of life, but also of everything that constitutes delight and magnificence. For this, one must deal with more than two hundred professions, which today comprise civilized and opulent states. To this end, it is necessary that all two hundred trades engage in continuous exchange among themselves, mutually helping each other with what they have in excess, and receiving in return what they lack; and this not only from person to person, but even from country to country and from kingdom to

kingdom. Otherwise, one person perishes from an abundance or scarcity of a commodity, while another person, or another region, suffers the same misery in entirely opposite ways. This disparity creates widespread poverty, whereas the reciprocal trade that could have existed would have created two perfections from two very great defects.

There is one further point to consider: this disorder will last forever if this trade, or exchange, however necessary and useful, is not conducted with mutual benefit for all parties, that is, for both sellers and buyers, whether the trade is carried out through money or by bartering goods. Anyone who attempts to do otherwise not only ruins their counterpart but also destroys themselves. If the first farmer, trading only with the shepherd, had refused to give him enough wheat to feed himself, while demanding all his necessary clothing from him, taken from the skins of animals, he would not only have let him die of hunger, but he himself would have subsequently perished from the cold, destroying the only source of this pressing need: clothing. And this harmony, so indispensable then between these two men, is of the same necessity between the more than two hundred professions that today constitute the maintenance of France. The good and the bad that befall each of them individually are interdependent on all the others, just as the slightest ailment affecting one part of the human body soon attacks all the others, and consequently causes the individual to die, if it is not immediately addressed.

The decline that befalls one of these two hundred professions is not initially as noticeable as that which might have occurred between the first and only two agricultural workers; but over time, and increasing visibly, it produces the same effect as the other would have. The seller is therefore merely the buyer's agent, just as the buyer is empowered to buy by the seller, who must do the same with the first buyer's produce, either immediately or through a longer process of exchange via money, always under the agreed conditions—that is to say, with the perpetual benefit of all those who play a part in this process, that is to say, of all people in the world.

This preamble was written because the deviation from this rule with regard to grain has cost France, since 1660, nearly three to four hundred million in revenue. Since this commodity leads all the others, which follow it almost step by step, the miscalculation that occurs in it does not create any credit, and immediately embracing all professions, it sinks them completely on the spot.

If the farmer, who is their agent for their livelihood, sells his wheat at too high a price, a price disproportionate to the value of the labor of these two hundred trades, a famine ensues, killing countless people, as we have all too often experienced. Conversely, with wheat being as cheap as it is today, unable to cover not only the landowner's payment but even the costs of cultivation, the necessary channel for getting this bounty to the workers, whose only income is their labor, is severed—namely, the master, who goes unpaid. And so all two hundred trades are left without income; their labor becomes fruitless, just as the grain is lost to the farmer, rendering him unable not only to pay his landlord but even to continue cultivating the land.

This results in a large quantity of land lying fallow, neglecting the fertilizers of the best crops, and squandering grain on unrelated uses, such as animal feed, especially for horses, and manufactured goods like beer and starch; which, in the first barren year, inevitably leads to extraordinary high prices; whereby these two hundred professions experience the same misery through a completely opposite extreme, while the compensation for these two problems would have yielded two great benefits, as already mentioned, if misguided zeal had not brought about this degradation of grain, which alone gives rise to the other extreme, namely, the exorbitant price. The remedy is easy, and within the grasp of the ministers; But since the lack of light has led to this disorder, the crudest and most imperfect understanding of which can only be acquired through the practice of farming, it is far from being the kind of people who have involved themselves in this direction since 1660. They believed that this manna cost as little to collect and bring in as that which God sent to the Israelites in the desert, or at most that it was like mushrooms or truffles; that its entire content increased purely for the farmer's benefit, and that however low the price, he earned less but could never lose; and that therefore a higher authority had to prevent the poor from becoming the victims of its greed. It is nonetheless this authority that has spoiled everything, having equally ruined both rich and poor, in both extremes of high prices and the degradation of grain, which have been and continue to be mutually reinforcing, as will be seen more particularly in the chapter at the end of this work.

Thus, these two issues—the disorder of the Taille (land tax) and the grain tax—account for half of the 1,500 million francs in losses incurred by the kingdom since 1660, losses all the easier to recoup since they were not the result of any particular interest, but simply a lack of attention in the former, and the consequence of excessive attention in the latter, namely, the grain tax. It would have been enough to let nature take its course, as everywhere else, and liberty, which is the steward of this same nature, would not have failed to provide a favorable compensation, creating a great good from two great miseries. The surplus of the 1,500 million waste, amounting to approximately 800 million, is solely the work of the Treators, both ordinary and extraordinary. But, although recovery is much easier on the part of nature, it is much more difficult on the part of those interested in maintaining this evil, however dreadful it may be; and it is as with diseases of the human body, which are all the more dangerous when they attack the most vital parts.

It is now such a public matter, although it was once a crime to participate in and receive gratuities from businessmen, that no one hides it anymore; and although a learned theologian printed thirty years ago that becoming a Partisan risks one's damnation, things have changed so drastically since then that even the most pious people today have no scruples whatsoever, not only about taking part in this trade, but even about admitting it publicly.

Apparently, their ignorance of the harm that such a channel of the prince's revenues inflicts on the king and the kingdom maintains their complacency. This would not be the case if they knew that the sovereign does not receive a single penny through such means, that nineteen out of twenty of these costs the people nothing but pure waste, through the ruin of

consumption, and consequently of their property, as well as the lives of countless wretches who perish for lack of basic necessities.

Let one look at a desolate region, such as the Election of Mantes, since it has been mentioned; this proves the same for the rest of the kingdom, given that it is due to a general cause: it has lost 2,400,000 livres on vineyards alone, which amounts to more than ten million in damages per year to property, both in land and in industry, as a consequence; and let one ask the reason even of children who have just left the breast, they will not stammer to say that it is the work of the tax farmers, thus learning to speak of their parents. However, the high level of protection these gentlemen enjoy, and which they know how to secure, commands such respect that, for their contribution—for their share of the proceeds from the cessation of their ministry—to the restoration in two hours of 500 million francs, in the destruction of which, and even much more, they played such a significant role, no one wants to dismiss a single one of them, nor pluck a hair from their heads, as if they were the most essential people in society to the State, far from being its greatest enemies, according to the testimony of M. de Sully speaking to Henry IV. This does not prevent it from being shown, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, that crime established and maintained them until 1660, since which time, although their numbers have quadrupled and sextupled, it has only been by surprise with regard to these gentlemen. the ministers, who had only good intentions, although the misfortunes caused by the crime of their predecessors received the same increase as their number and functions.

## Chapter VI:

The richest princes and the least burdened peoples are those among whom taxes pass directly from the hands of the taxpayers to those of the monarch, and where there are the fewest types of tribute, and consequently the fewest persons employed in their collection; or rather, all the nations of the world, both ancient and modern, have never known any other methods, as was France, likewise, until the reign of Francis I.

The Romans had no sooner conquered a country than they imposed a tribute upon it. What was this tribute? It was either a sum per hearth, that is to say, per chimney, or a tenth of the income, which was collected by receivers or quaestors, without any other expense than the salaries paid to those who collected it; and this tax on chimneys and the tenth was for a long time the only tax in France, as well as in the other provinces that were annexed to it. This is still in England and would still be in France, if it did not enrich only the prince and the people.

Thus, there is no disruption in commerce, no hindrance in the traffic of nations, and consequently, no judges or ordinances on this subject, of which not the slightest trace is found in all the writers who have left us the history of these masters of the world. — The Ottoman monarch today administers a dominion of twelve hundred leagues, encompassing almost all sides, in the same manner. Seventy tax collectors spread throughout the various regions that make up this empire collect all the revenue, and report it every three months to a general tax collector residing in the capital, who then reports to the ministers, without this taking more than an hour or two a week of all the time of either of them.

All the taxes of this great empire are of only two kinds: a small poll tax, payable from infancy to old age, and customs duties on goods entering and leaving the prince's states. These duties have a fixed rate, namely, three, five, or ten percent, the latter being the highest. Thus, no judges or ordinances are required, because there are no lawsuits on such matters, just as in the Roman Empire, or indeed in any other state in the world. The Mughal has 68 million in revenue, administered in the same way, which allows for a complete understanding of it. This customs duty, I say, is leased for 68 million by a two-line lease, meaning that everything entering and leaving owes a tenth in cash or in kind, at the merchant's choice, so that likewise, neither judges nor ordinances are needed for the taxes, because there can be no lawsuits. — In England, at present, the people, known to be the least compliant on earth, calmly pay one-fifth of all their revenues, the assessment of which is made by the inhabitants of each parish, and the collection by the ministers or priests, who record the amount as receipts, without expense or legal proceedings. However, this people, so jealous of their liberty, readily contributes such high sums, not to defend their country, which some would invade, but out of pure jealousy and envy of the glory of the first prince of the world, because heaven showers him and his royal family with blessings. — In Holland, the people's contribution, for a war with the same objective, amounts to one-third of the revenues. However, there, as in England, one sees no poor, although these countries are much less

well-endowed by nature than France. That is to say, that whoever there asks for alms as an official right, and there is no subject, however destitute he may be, who, far from being reduced to bread and water, does not use meat and liquor, or equivalent food, is not dressed in cloth and shod in shoes, wooden shoes being completely unknown there.

However, this fifth in England, and even more, and this third in Holland, of all revenues, is demanded and collected not only without trial or questioning, but even without coercion, executions, or imprisonments; although in both of these states this level of taxation amounts to more than 100 million per year, that is to say, to the extent of more than 300 million in France, in relation to the difference in the natural wealth of these countries with that of the latter kingdom. And this is also, moreover, what it paid, as long as it was administered according to the same principles as England and Holland, that is to say, when the number of taxes was reduced to three or four kinds, when they were justly distributed, and passed directly from the hands of the people into those of the prince.

Let this discourse neither surprise nor stir up minds; The proof and verification of this will be made by discussing the reign of Francis I. But, to anticipate it in some way, it can be said that this is easy to suppose in a system where there were only three or four kinds of taxes, and at most one hundred or sixty people paid by the prince to collect them, and no judges, because there were no lawsuits, no fallow land, nor any goods lost to the merchant. Whereas now there are no fewer than ten thousand kinds of taxes, more than one hundred and fifty of them relating to the administration of justice alone, all of which have arisen since 1660; at least ten thousand judges, whose sole function is to decide cases, inseparable from such practices, and one hundred thousand men employed in tax collection or the prosecutions it entails, almost all paying themselves with the well-known liberality, meaning that the humblest man believes he can legitimately, and usually does, amass a princely fortune. All this without even mentioning the share of nothingness which, as already mentioned, arises from the work of such entrepreneurs, absorbing nineteen out of twenty shares, and leaving only this twentieth share to the king, on which they still need the marked pre-emption rights, so that more than half the kingdom is useless to both the prince and his people. Let no one ever lose sight of the vineyards of Mantes, for they are truly the measure by which to assess the disasters of the entire kingdom; And those who find themselves shocked by such a statement will have no other option than profound silence; otherwise, they will attract more than just suspicion of having participated in such disorder simply by being caught off guard.

But, returning to the administration and government of France for eleven hundred years, it can be asserted that, from its establishment until the death of Francis I in 1547, it was governed like England and Holland, or rather, like all the states of the world. The kings lived and subsisted magnificently on their domains alone, except in extraordinary circumstances, such as wars, which their subjects provided all the necessary support through the aforementioned tithes or taxes. — But Religion, through some well-known surprises, got itself given the greater part of these domains (which completely ruined it, according to Gerson), because at that time ignorance was so great that almost no other piety was known than to give one's lands and funds to the Church, until the latter was seen to grant absolution

to the dying for having stolen and forcibly taken them from the legitimate owners, when a part of them was given to its ministers. Besides the fact that these facts are attested by original writings, Mézeray, a famous author, makes ample mention of them with even more dreadful circumstances, so that it was thought nothing extraordinary to do in mentioning a few words about them, to force attention to the acquisitions that the mortmains make every day with applause in France, although they are forbidden in all other Christian states, and that the Prince of the Netherlands swears, upon taking possession, that the Church will acquire nothing from his reign, and that the Republic of Venice once believed it could and should undertake a war against Rome, even to the point of being excommunicated for this reason.

These methods, which led to the banishment of the Catholic religion from Sweden in past centuries, in order to seize almost all the kingdom's assets and reunite them with the Crown, whose upkeep they almost entirely provide today, compelled the kings of France to first impose the Taille (a tax levied on the people). These taxes were collected by the people themselves, without any foreign intervention; they were not perpetual, but levied according to circumstances. Later, the Aides (a tax levied on free towns) were added to serve as a Taille. These were also collected by the people, almost exclusively from taverns, with all nobles and privileged individuals being exempt, as there were no entry or passage fees, only some exit fees from the kingdom, a practice common throughout the country. —The salt tax, or gabelle, came next. This meant that the kings bought all this commodity from the owners who had it manufactured and then resold it in warehouses, with the obligation for the people not to take it elsewhere. And although it was at a very moderate price, four times less than today's, the prince derived much more from it, proportionally and compared to the prevailing market rates at that time.

Thus, everything was reduced to these four types of revenue, administered almost entirely by the people themselves. There were neither ministers nor a council of finance: the Court of Aids in Paris consisted of only four officers; the Treasurers of France of two, and the Election of France of the same size, who were more like directors than judges of trials, which could never be established.

And the prince's ministers had no other function than the dispensation of the tax, without having any related to its collection, although now, even if the days were six times longer for them than for other men, they would not have half the time necessary to suffice for this latter task, despite the large number of other people whom they call and associate with every day for this purpose: far from being overwhelmed then and succumbing almost as today under the burden, it was indifferent whether they were in the kingdom for this subject, or absent two or three hundred leagues away. The collection of the prince's revenues, which was solely the responsibility of the people, was not delayed in the slightest. Witness Brissonnet and Devers, the two chief finance ministers of King Charles VIII, who were able to accompany the prince on his conquest of the Kingdom of Naples for twenty-two months without the slightest inconvenience to the revenue collection. This is how affairs were administered, that is to say, without any work or activity on the part of those who governed for the collection of funds.

We must now examine the results, and whether, given that things have truly changed completely in France since that time, it can be maintained, without abandoning reason, that this has been to the advantage of the kingdom, both in terms of the amount the prince receives and the ease with which the people can provide him with his dues and necessities, both in ordinary circumstances and in important situations, such as the one we are facing today. — King Francis I, whose reign was the last in which this happy situation was not affected, namely in which the people alone were involved in the taxes, which were reduced to three or four kinds, as has been said, and not to ten thousand as today, without any foreign ministry, a fortiori without giving employment to more than one hundred thousand men who currently have this function, with a strong hope, like their peers, of making a very great fortune by the destruction of commerce and agriculture, not to say by the ruin of the king and his people, although it is the same thing; Francis I, I say, raised sixteen million in regular tribute in his kingdom, which he left calmly to his successor, although he possessed a fifth less territory than the great monarch who reigns now.

This is evident in the printed memoirs of M. de Sully, who had seen and lived among his contemporaries. Now, it is maintained that the 16 million of that time provided King Francis I with an income equivalent to 240 million, so that if he had enjoyed what has since been annexed to France, he would have had an income of 300 million without lacking anything. — Let us once again put aside the supposed absurdity of this fact: it is true in its entirety, and what follows will convince even those who will find it more unpleasant to make such an admission, given their interest in and involvement with the practices at hand. The people, under Francis I, paid 240 million in today's money, because to provide the sum of 16 million they had to sell the same quantity of goods that would be necessary to pay 240 million today; and the king enjoyed 240 million, because with this sum those to whom he distributed it procured the same degree of their needs as they could now with 240 million. All things were only at a fifteenth part of the price they are today. To agree on this, one only has to look at the police ordinances printed at that time; one will see that wheat is valued at twenty sous per setier, Paris measure, which should be and even has been for thirty years, one leading to the other, at fifteen or sixteen francs, although the distribution has been very badly done, having been sometimes higher, and sometimes lower, which is one of the principal causes of the misery of France, although this is nothing less than the effect of chance, but of blind zeal and misunderstood piety; This, being easy to restore, will be the main resource in the present situation for providing the 80 million.

But to return to the parity of King Francis I's 16 million with 240 million today, it is argued that to say they are not the same thing without any difference is to claim that King Saint Louis, who gave only 6,000 livres to his daughter when she married a King of Castile, was no richer than a mediocre shopkeeper in Paris today, who often gives more than that amount of money to a son-in-law of the same trade. Similarly, one would have to say that a master mason, who earned four deniers a day three hundred years ago in Paris, as can be seen from public records of that time, gave all his time and effort for less than half a pound of bread a day; And since there wouldn't have been enough for lunch alone, he and his entire family would have had to beg for the rest, if those four pennies hadn't been enough to buy as much

food as one could now get for thirty sous. We won't push the absurdity of those who would argue that there is a disparity between the 16 million of King Francis I's regular income, both in cause and effect, and the 240 million of today, any further. But to show that the continuation and dependence of his reign corresponded to such wealth, one need only look at what transpired during his time.

Everyone knows that, for almost his entire reign, that is, for more than thirty years, he had to defend the kingdom against the very same nations that have now conspired to ruin France. It is also known that these peoples, instead of obeying various princes, as is the case today, were subject to only one or two crowned heads, namely Emperor Charles V and his brother Ferdinand, King of Hungary; that England often joined the fray, as did the Pope and the Venetians; and that even the Swiss declared war on him, against which very warlike nation he won the only and greatest victory that any prince has ever won. With all this, not only did he not lose an inch of land, but he considerably increased his domain, especially in Italy. It can even be said that he would have conquered all the countries of his enemies, who could not resist him openly, had they not corrupted not only his princes and principal officers, but even his council. This alone caused him to lose his liberty at the Battle of Pavia, the Duchy of Milan, the Kingdom of Naples, and even the empire. And, far from having so many enemies force him to cut back on his other expenses, no prince before him had been more magnificent, whether in the purchase of precious furnishings—since he spent 22,000 écus on a single tapestry, equivalent to nearly a million today, a sum that his adversary, Charles V, could not pay despite his desire to do so, even though the merchant, like Fleming, was his subject—or in the construction of superb palaces. Moreover, he restored learning in his kingdom and even in Europe, having brought in all the most skilled people in every kind of science at great expense, and supporting them with large pensions. As printing was then only just beginning, copies of the best and rarest authors were in manuscripts, of which the ignorance of previous centuries had greatly disadvantaged France; this forced him to incur a further exorbitant expense, both in sending people to conduct research in the most remote regions of the Levant, and in purchasing these same manuscripts, which often cost considerable sums.

Two years before his death, far from having exhausted him and brought his kingdom to its knees through so many wars, in which he had often suffered very poor results, he equipped a fleet of two hundred ships, as well supplied with men and armaments as it could be today if nothing were spared, with which he ravaged the coasts of England and conquered the Isle of Wight, during the reign of Henry VIII, the richest, most powerful, and most accredited and authorized prince that this island had ever seen rule over it, who was forced to retreat, having been unable to oppose him with such a number of ships. The armies were not, in truth, nearly as numerous as they are today; But they cost no less: each of the gendarmes, who were far more numerous than today, received enough to feed four men and four horses, which were all essential aids in battle, and the pay of an infantryman amounted to more than forty sous in today's money.

Not just anyone could be a gendarme; they were chosen, and everyone had a servant or a valet; this is evident in the printed memoirs of a man named Boivin, a court messenger, who

had the details of the Piedmontese wars printed. — And King Francis I, upon his death in 1547, far from being burdened with debt, of which he had very little, left four million in cash, some even say eight; but sticking to the former, that's more than sixty million in today's prices.

Were all these magnificent displays and expenditures achieved by trampling on the people, and through coercion, executions, and imprisonment? — Nothing less than that; and to agree to this, one need only listen to him speak on his deathbed. Here are his last words, reported by a contemporary to Henry II, his son and successor: “Know, my son, that I leave you a beautiful kingdom, filled with the best people on earth; not only have they never refused me anything, but they have always anticipated my needs. But know also, at the same time, that I have asked nothing of them that was not just, and to my knowledge, I have never done violence to anyone. For know, my son, that it will not be the large number of troops, nor formidable armies, that will make your enemies fear you, but only the love that your subjects will have for you.” Besides this advantage, it will be a great consolation to you, when you have to appear before God, as I will in a few hours, to have done nothing but what was right. This will was true to the letter, given the sums and methods used in France to collect the equivalent of three hundred million today. Whatever difference there may certainly be in the success, there is a thousand times more in the present-day ceremonial of collection. — In the first system, there were only three or four kinds of taxes, and in the second there are more than ten thousand; and if there are no more, it is because there is no one left to levy them, because, having nothing left to destroy, there is consequently nothing left to gain. Everything passed smoothly without hindrance from province to province, and even from the two extremities of the kingdom; and now there is a 300 to 400 percent tax to be paid for the passage of things from one bordering country to the neighboring one, and even everything is destroyed, which is a tribute that the most barbaric nations have never demanded of their greatest enemies; not to mention the multiplicity of offices, which is a doubling and tripling of evil.

The corsairs of Algiers and Morocco, having captured a Christian vessel, return it to the owner for a third of its value, so as not to ruin him, and to recapture it another time, if possible; but in France, a trader hardly cares if everything perishes after him, provided he makes his fortune. — Under Francis I, only the people were involved in the recovery of these funds, and this without cost; and now there are more than one hundred thousand people who live and grow rich off them, that is to say, at the expense of the king and the people. And what they even extract for their subsistence is nineteen times less destructive than the wealth they destroy, since it is certain that they do not raise more than eight hundred million, which their administration alone has squandered, and of which more than five hundred million can be revived in a moment, when one is willing to open one's eyes to such a scheme;

And in order not to alarm the stakeholders, we reiterate what we've already said: not a single ordinary contractor will be dismissed; we will negotiate with them for a few concessions, with their consent. We shall see, in the following chapter, by what degrees this happy situation of the reign of Francis I began to decline, and finally reached its peak, as we can say

it is today: the mere recognition of the cause of the evil will make all the remedy by its cessation, these two things being inseparable in an art such as the government of peoples, that is to say that the remedy of an evil is never anything but the cessation of its cause, although it has been pitifully alleged that the author of the first work on this subject had found the principle of the disorder, but had not found the remedy, which is a complete impertinence, since one never goes without the other, any more than there can be a mountain without a valley.

## Chapter VII:

Before discussing the first blow to the fortunate situation of Francis I's reign and to his predecessors, we must say a word about the manner in which the prince's revenues were distributed.

Each year necessarily entailed its expenses, because each fund had its designated purpose, which was never touched, and the levy was more or less substantial, quite literally, according to the needs of the State. There was no carryover of the year's expenses, which has since caused dreadful confusion, because, through these carryovers, everything was often spent two or three years before it was due and payable, and unforeseen and necessary needs arose, forcing recourse to methods ruinous for the prince and his people, such as loans at high interest rates, and other even more disastrous measures. — This was the first breach through which the tax farmers gained entry to offer their ill-fated services, which, like a ball of snow, steadily grew until it finally reached its peak, as we can say it has today. — This, however, would not have happened if powerful people, as we shall see, had not joined in, to share in the appalling profit that such entrepreneurs made from the ruin of the king and his people.

Mr. Fouquet, in his printed defenses presented to the renowned tribunal before which he had to answer, attests to this truth: that there was never any transfer of offices from one year to the next, the cessation of which caused all the confusion of the finances, having established the power to fish in troubled waters, due to the impossibility of uncovering frauds and deceptions amidst such profound obscurity.

During the imprisonment of King Francis I, the Children of France having been given as hostages, in order to free them it was necessary to pay their ransom, estimated at twelve hundred thousand gold écus, worth four million at that time, that is to say more than fifty million today. No one thought of resorting to contractors, partisans, much less to the constitution of annuities on the prince, which is the same as if the people constituted themselves, since it falls equally upon them to pay the capital and the interest, although today people are sufficiently blind to believe the contrary, and they look very indifferently upon the debts that the prince contracts; So it is preferable that the monarch establish a million-franc annuity on himself at a dreadful interest rate, rather than demanding a single crown from each individual, who would, however, be quite displeased, if he were wise, to have to contribute himself to pay off his debt arrears or cover his ordinary expenses, since such conduct would soon condemn him to beggars. Nevertheless, whether the king or he proceeds in this manner is equally the same thing, although, once again, no one gives it the slightest thought. — But, to return to the ransom of the Children of France, since this dreadful sum could not be found in ordinary revenues, the people did not hesitate for a moment to contribute a tenth of all income. It was each place, that is to say each town or village, that carried out the taxation, the distribution, the collection, and the contribution of revenue, after the total had been divided by all the deputies of the provinces, according to the previous taxes that had been the norm. — The same procedure was followed in several other instances, and this tenth had been paid

more than once, as well as under King John, which is the custom of all nations of the world, all without foreign intervention, superior authority, or any expense.

But we must finally come to the fatal era when these happy ways came to an end, to give birth to those which have reduced France to the state in which she is, and not all her enemies, whom she will always laugh at, being more powerful on her own than all of Europe together, when she uses all her forces, that is to say when they are not enervated by measures which do her more damage than her most formidable adversaries; which can be done by two hours of work, and this in the opinion of Tacitus, who said and published more than fifteen centuries ago: *Galli si non dissenserint, vix vinci possunt* (France is invincible when she does not make war on herself), as we can say that she has been doing, since 1660, in a frightful way; And to agree with this, one need only look at its desolate countryside, or rather at the loss of half its wealth, and one must recognize that its greatest enemies could never have wrought such devastation upon it, nor caused it so much damage through the greatest victories.

To begin, then, with the origins of the cause of this ruin, it was during the reign of King Henry II, successor to Francis I, that the first foundations were laid. Catherine de Medici, whom he had married very young, and while still only Duke of Orléans, was a princess who loved magnificence and great extravagance; that is to say, she delighted in spending more than her ordinary income allowed; thus, she had to resort to external means. Her beauty, wit, and fertility made her extremely esteemed by her husband, the king, and consequently granted her a degree of authority necessary to change the state of affairs. It was then that the Italians at her court, some of whom were her close relatives, offered her their services for this purpose: to advance money for new taxes or levies, entering into a fixed-price agreement for a new matter, of which they knew full well that the king would receive the smallest share and they the remainder, which they would share with her, as will be seen later. The creation of the presidial courts, which were eclipsed by the parliaments without any compensation, and of the criminal lieutenants, whose functions were taken from the civil lieutenants, is found at the earliest date, and this is the first seed of a sowing that would subsequently bear so much fruit.

Since it was necessary to provide guarantees to all these new officers, and even to the civil lieutenants, to compensate them in some way for this new arrangement, it amounted to more than 50,000 écus of income, which constituted the king's income. Many other innovations were introduced, too numerous to detail; and if there were not more, it was not for lack of goodwill on the part of the queen. The Constable of Montmorency, who held the principal seat on the council, would not allow her to fully exercise her authority.

After the death of King Henry II, her husband, the situation was much the same; the queen was not lacking in intention, but she encountered an obstacle in the princes of Guise, who held a large share of the government because of Mary Stuart, their niece, wife of the reigning King Francis II. And since these princes were very popular, and consequently very hostile to novelties, however great Catherine de Medici's vocation for such matters, which were likewise inspired in her by the Italians, she had to take them where she could, and not according to her own will.

But having finally been freed from this constraint by the death of King Francis II, which came soon after, she had neither rest nor patience until she had sent Mary Stuart, his widow, back to her island. And this, by a breach of the crudest political etiquette, since, having three sons still to be married off, and such dispensations being easily obtained between sovereigns, it was in France's interest to retain a queen who currently possessed the kingdom of Scotland, and was the presumptive heir to the two other monarchies of England and Ireland, which was the reason why so much trouble had been taken and such great armaments undertaken to bring her over in her prime. — This hunt is marked to show what should be expected of zeal for the public interest when it is compromised with particular and personal utility, as has happened countless times since that time: it is not surprising that the latter has always been preferred, since a queen and a mother succumbed to it on such an important occasion, and the desire to govern and spend prevailed over the establishment of her children, against the glory and enlargement of a kingdom whose crown she had the honor of wearing, although, judging by appearances alone, she should never have hoped for such a high degree of greatness; which should have excited her to show even more gratitude. Since this sacrifice, once again, of the public good to private interest is the principal and perhaps the sole cause of France's ruin, this point has been discussed at length, so that no one may be surprised that such weakness has been so frequently indulged in. For even a person who seemed to possess a far more powerful safeguard against falling into it was nonetheless caught in such a crucial situation, and therein lies the key to the diminution or loss of France's wealth. All the crowns in the world on the head of one of Catherine de Medici's sons would not have compensated her for the loss of a portion of the government that the Guise family would have retained through their niece, as in the past; she had to be dismissed as soon as possible; after which the regency was granted to her during the reign of King Charles IX.

It was at this point that the queen, finding herself in a way emancipated, gave free rein to her wealth, and consequently to new ventures, through the Italian merchants. The Estates General, which convened at that time, as was the custom, certainly did their duty: the deputies of all orders were charged, by all the provinces, with representing that the Contractors and the Partisans were public thieves who were ruining the king and the people. As these assemblies were usually summoned only to obtain extraordinary assistance, all the deputies unanimously declared that there was no quicker or more certain way to recover money than to seize the property of the Italians and their associates, since they had stolen it from the prince and the kingdom, and to send them back to their countries as destitute as they had arrived, all of them having nothing of value, as was widely known, upon their arrival. An auditor, who testified before the Estates, demonstrated that of every écu the king received through such a channel, only fourteen sous went to his own benefit. Since all of this is in print and publicly available, nothing is being presented that isn't entirely certain, nor anything that could be suspected of slander or seditious rhetoric.

But, to return to Catherine de Medici, all these remonstrances were to no avail; she continued her life in the same way, and even after King Charles IX was declared of age, she retained, through her cunning, the principal role in the government. Historians accuse her of having

fomented dissension within the kingdom, or rather civil wars, in order to make herself indispensable, thus rendering a young monarch, with his lack of experience, incapable of resolving such difficulties. This is further proof of what private interest can do over that of the public; and as the opportunity has often presented itself, and the latter has always been the underdog, one should not be surprised by the ruin of France, nor that the main cause is attributed to this.

King Charles IX having died in 1574, Henry left Poland to take the crown. Unfortunately, he encountered, in matters of expenditure, even the most extravagant, a character similar to, if not surpassing, Queen Catherine de Medici, since the wedding of the Duke of Joyeuse alone cost twelve hundred thousand écus, equivalent to more than ten million today. As this arrangement was coupled with far greater authority than a regency, and as the same Italians remained to provide him with the same means to carry it out as in the past, it can be said that things were then pushed to excess.

And this reached such a high degree that the suppliers to his household, not being paid at all, absolutely refused to provide anything more; so that it would have been completely without provisions, had the Third Estate not undertaken to personally pay those concerned. And the same confusion and disorder persisted until his death. King Henry IV, having ascended to the throne in whatever way he could, as he himself often admitted—that is to say, with great difficulty and hardship—the kingdom being more of a conquest than a succession, was in no position whatsoever to reform or find fault with anything done by those entrusted with the management of finances, however flawed and rife with corruption they might be. But in 1594, at his wits' end, struggling to make ends meet and forced to eat at the homes of the common people, as evidenced by the printed letters he wrote to Monsieur de Sully, this same Monsieur de Sully, then thirty-eight years old and having spent his entire life in warfare, not in finance, did not hesitate to take his side. He pointed out to the monarch that it was the tax farmers and partisans who had reduced him to this pitiful state. The king replied, "Why then did the superintendent and his council tolerate and admit them?" Monsieur de Sully told him it was because the superintendent and his entire council were in league with all those who were causing him and his people so much distress. And to justify such a vehement accusation, he showed him a list of all those involved in the tax farming, where the superintendent of public funds, the intendants of finance, and the councilors of state were at the helm, as well as in other private matters, all of which were adjudicated before them, making them both judge and party. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, a relative of Catherine de Medici, had found the scheme so appealing that he had joined in, which is a certainty that the queen had also played a part. The Duke of Sully added that there was a way to enrich him, namely, that all the tributes should pass directly from the hands of the people into those of the prince. When the king presented this plan to his Council, they all replied that such ideas were inspired by fools. To which he immediately responded that since they, who were very wise, had ruined him, he wanted to see if fools would not enrich him, which indeed happened, and he subsequently proclaimed it: that the wise had impoverished him, and the fools had made him wealthy.

Indeed, having entrusted Monsieur de Sully with the management of his finances, although very inexperienced in this field, to use today's terminology, his ignorance proved so fortunate that in ten years he paid off 200 million in debts out of the mere 35 million in revenue the king then possessed, and amassed 30 million in profit from this 35 million revenue, which was deposited in the Bastille and remained there at the death of Henry IV.

But with the Italians, or rather the shrewd financiers, having returned to the scene with the help of Marie de Medici, declared regent during the minority of King Louis XIII, and of much the same extravagant nature as Catherine, the 30 million were consumed without any foreign war or other extraordinary circumstances. Instead of having been amassed by M. de Sully, partly while there was a war with Spain, which, as we know, seized several considerable places almost at the gates of Paris, both by surprise and otherwise, without the pitiful reason given today for his entry into the ministry in new ways, that war is not suitable for any change, the administration of the interior of the kingdom having absolutely nothing in common, nor that of justice, with what the armies do outside. And, just as it would be ridiculous to say that a man with equity on his side cannot win his case because of the war in Italy and Spain, it is equally absurd to excuse oneself, for that reason, from justly sharing the tributes, both on persons and on goods, the disruption of which costs the kingdom twenty times more than the king receives, and consequently far more than would be necessary to end the war. Thus, these objections are the opposite of what the most basic reason should dictate; but as with all unfair trials, the one in the wrong has no other recourse than to quibble in order to delay judgment. We made this digression because such objections are today the usual hobbyhorse against which the restoration of France is fought, by clinging to the delay in stopping ways which are horrifying to heaven and earth, while absolutely it only takes two hours, M. de Sully having used no more, to establish his plan in the middle of the war.

But, to return to the chronicle of Marie de Medici's ministry, the Italians, having plunged the kingdom back into the state from which Monsieur de Sully had rescued it, were removed from power in the manner everyone knows—that is to say, somewhat violently, though fundamentally quite just. Cardinal Richelieu soon entered the fray; and, without going into the details of his ministry, it will suffice to say that all the kingdom's revenues doubled during his time, as did those of the king, who, having found only thirty-five million in income, left seventy million at his death.

The Italians returned to the attack and resumed their ways under a regency, employing practices similar to those of Marie and Catherine de Medici. They encountered countless objections, all consistently in the service of the king during his minority. It should not be said, although another day and another interpretation have been given to what happened then, that it was out of a spirit of rebellion; since, besides the testimony of King Francis I, which indicates that there was never a more submissive people; and that of Guicciardini, the Italian historian, who recounts, speaking of the Battle of Fornovo, where the person of King Charles VIII was in peril, that all the troops immediately gathered around him, "because," he says, "this nation loves its king to the point of adoration"; besides, I say, these authentic proofs, one could not accuse contemporaries of wanting to close their purses to the sovereign, since they

had calmly seen the taxes triple in less than thirty years, because these were sums that passed directly from the hands of the people into those of the prince.

It was the Contractors and the Partisans they were targeting, who were ruining everything for their own personal gain, supported by the ministers with whom they shared power.

These are the exact words of the harangue of Mr. Amelot, First President of the Court of Aids of Paris, delivered in consultation with all the companies, or rather, with all the people. Since it is printed in the collections of that time, and since there are few libraries that have not made room for this kind of book, we will have no qualms about reproducing it, however forceful it may be, merely citing what is already public; all the more so since we would be considered to be betraying the interests of the cause we are defending if we were to omit the slightest of the supporting arguments.

He therefore said, speaking to the Queen Regent, “that extraordinary affairs and the Partisans had been invented and put into practice only to ruin the king and the people, and to generate indirect profits for the ministers, because they could take nothing from the regular taxes without anyone noticing; that nevertheless, no other means should be employed in matters of state, and all the king’s needs should be imposed on the people on occasion, and then removed once those occasions had passed.”

In short, he demonstrated through the terms of his harangue that since the Partisans were constantly the cause of the ruin of commerce and agriculture—a merit that no one will ever dispute, and which even the sincere among them do not disagree with—it was certain that the field and the vineyard of the ministers of that time were the destruction of fields and vineyards. Although the evil has always increased since then, so that it can be said without doubt that it has finally reached its peak, as there has been only surprise on the part of the ministers who have come since 1660, these very certain facts, far from offending them, will give them considerable pleasure, by making them leave a path which they believe to be very innocent, and consequently advantageous to the king; and this, on the word of authors whom they thought to be full of integrity, although it was precisely the opposite.

But to verify, or rather strengthen, Mr. Amelot's argument, what transpired in the court of justice, in full view of all France, and, so to speak, in contradiction with the interested parties, shows that he still hasn't said enough. One of the charges against this minister was that he had taken part in the king's affairs, either through pensions from the tax farmers and private individuals, or through shares he retained in the parties, both of which being a crime according to the laws of all nations. — But when he saw that he was being addressed in this way, far from remaining silent, not only could he not be clearly convinced, but even when he countered the argument against the parties, he actually showed that the minister, of whom he was in a sense only the clerk, had taken part in all the extraordinary affairs that had occurred during his time; that he had a pension of 40,000 écus from the general farms, and that in all private matters, no one had ever offered him anything except cash in hand, either upfront or later: he names a number of such cases, and even some that this minister had handled alone.

The perfection lies in the accuser, or rather the accused, declaring that he was only saying part of it, and that there was no need to elaborate further, otherwise he would be saying many other things, or rather, would be writing the history of Cardinal Mazarin's life, which would not bring him much honor, although his opponents wanted to make him a saint in matters of integrity. All this was made public and printed in the eyes of the whole kingdom, and yet remained without rebuttal; This is what is called acquiescence in court, since it took place before a tribunal where the parties were currently being sued for this single matter. The twenty million francs that this minister had left behind to bear his name were not enough to compel him to defend his honor, as would certainly have been the case had it not been a matter of fighting a truth known to everyone.

That's not all, Mr. Fouquet maintains, that under such a master, such disciples; that thus all the important people, both at court and in the Council, as well as those employed in the administration of finances, led the same kind of life; and to leave no doubt, he names them all one after the other, as well as the kinds of affairs in which they had participated. They refrain from naming them more precisely, for reasons of discretion; But those who are curious to know will easily find out by reading the trial of Mr. Fouquet, of which there are perhaps more than two thousand copies printed in France, and which are sold publicly at booksellers'; so that there is no criticism to be made against the author of these Memoirs, since he reveals nothing new, but merely cites what is already common knowledge. — And it would be quite wrong, moreover, to take offense, after the death of these gentlemen, at this discourse, since they, during their lifetime, who saw and heard everything, and even to some of whom it was formally communicated, made no objection to it, having always maintained the same composure or prudence that had appeared in the master's heirs regarding similar allegations. — Finally, Mr. Fouquet concludes his catalogue or his plea by declaring that there was nothing new in all this; that all the ministers and all the people employed in the administration had always acted in this way; that even kings found it good, under the pretext that it provided them with the means to uphold the dignity of their offices.

These are the founders of the preference given to extraordinary affairs and partisans over the regular tributes passing directly from the hands of the people into those of the prince, as France had been governed for eleven hundred years, and as all states in the world are, both ancient and new. The certainty of this change costs the loss of half the kingdom's wealth in pure annihilation, since there is no treaty that does not destroy twenty times as much in goods as it transfers profit into the prince's coffers; this certainty, I say, or rather the cause of the sovereign and the people, which are not two separate things, was in a precarious position, having to defend their interests before people who were both judge and party, against all the rules of justice and reason. — And the supposed zeal for the good of the State, which one would suppose to have been great enough in them to prefer the general good to their own particular advantage when they found themselves in a compromise before it, and when it was a question of rendering their judgment, cannot be reasonably conceived or alleged, after Catherine de Medici, who succumbed to the temptation, as has been said, on a far more important occasion, even though she had much stronger interests, both personal and public, in

not having this weakness. — Besides, what has happened in several other instances shows all too clearly which of the two, in similar cases, has always lost their case.

But finally, however strong these gentlemen may have been inclined to pursue their own interests at the expense of the king and the people, they were far from cutting into the fabric of the matter; the will was always entirely there, but the power was often lacking. — The parliaments and companies had retained the authority to issue remonstrances regarding establishments which, based on the principles just mentioned, would have caused too great a prejudice to the king and the people. This was the guardian, or tutelary god, that had protected France since the suppression of the Estates-General, which had previously held this function and had fulfilled it so well that no monarchy since the creation of the world has been so long-lasting or so flourishing, having provided the monarch, in his needs, with three times more than the opposing methods, namely the Partisans, have ever done in the most urgent necessities, such as those of today. It took only the reign of Francis I to silence the dissenters and their protectors. These Estates had done so well, and the superior companies after them, that they had doubled the kingdom's wealth, as well as that of the king, every thirty to forty years, and this continued until 1660, despite the obstacles placed in their way by those whose history we have just recounted, and who began more than a century ago to suppress the Estates General. — Besides the reasons that this detail sufficiently suggests for acting in this way, one only has to glance at the speeches delivered publicly, in the presence of the king and the entire kingdom, to see how the tax farmers and their supporters are appeased, to understand by what interest these assemblies, which were so vital to the preservation of the kingdom, were destroyed.

But finally the superior companies had compensated for this, and had produced about the same utility, so that France found itself, in 1660, in the most flourishing state it had ever seen itself in: the same fate which was made to them with regard to the right of remonstrance, founded its decline, which can be said today to have reached its perfection only on the side of the faculties of the people, but not of their zeal, nor even of the natural power of commerce and the cultivation of the land, since the greater part can be restored in two or three hours, by the simple cessation of the greatest violence which nature has ever suffered since the creation of the world; and this proposal is made by the people themselves, under the conditions already so often stated, that if any objection that can be made, whether for time or for peril, is not a clear proof and demonstration of extravagance or of a completed prevarication, the advocate consents to be treated as a madman himself; and this will be seen in the future irresistibly, as well as the impossibility of getting out of the present situation otherwise, after a word has been said about this suppression of remonstrance, and about the circumstances which have reduced France, since 1660, to the unfortunate state in which it finds itself, of no longer being able to supply the needs of the king, although much below what it had contributed formerly, and what it can do, once again, with only two hours of attention.

## Chapter VIII:

Here, in 1660 or 1661, is the combination of the two greatest contradictions ever encountered: a very high level of integrity in the minister and a very high level of disorder in the administration.

Taxes, such as the Taille, which passed directly from the hands of the people into those of the prince, were greatly neglected, a practice that had already begun under the previous ministry. And extraordinary matters, or rather treaties and agreements, were carried to the extreme. This neglect of the Taille was a premeditated design, so that the disorder would render it insufficient to meet the needs of the State, thus giving rise to extraordinary matters, entirely by surprise of the minister, who was very honest. No commodity was exempted; No place, no passage could be encountered on a road without the need to make declarations and pay fees that were merely the result of practices used by clerks to make everything consumed in expenses three times more ruinous than the sums themselves. — That's not all; several tax collectors were seen on the same commodity, principally liquors, in the same place and for the same prince, which seemed to carry his disapproval with it, since they had their fortunes, as we have seen, to take as a pre-emption, as well as the costs of offices and clerks; and these, each, the inconveniences and stays of the carriers to employ for their own profit, having erected them into revenues by demanding specific contributions to avoid such inconveniences; Besides, these pre-emptions, I say, were so many abductions or thefts that were done to the king, everything that is taken from the people and does not pass directly into his hands cannot be called otherwise.

But this is the least of the problems in such matters, because at least if it had caused no other harm, nothing would have been destroyed, and only justice would have been violated; but the consequences of such conduct are and have been something far more dreadful. — Since wealth consists in a continual exchange of what one has in excess with another, in exchange for what the other has in abundance; the moment this ease, or rather this trade, is lacking, a country immediately becomes miserable in the midst of plenty. — Now, this fortunate situation must end the moment the proper proportions are removed, and a merchant, regardless of which of the two, could only make the exchange or barter at a loss, compared to the expenses incurred in producing the goods he intends to sell; In which case, the market is immediately broken, which distresses both parties equally, and immediately follows a dreadful series of miseries, because the wealth of a state, especially France, consists in maintaining all the professions, numbering more than two hundred today. Their existence is mutually dependent, giving and receiving life from one another at all times.

It is the fruits of the earth, and first and foremost grains and liquors, that initiate this movement, and which, passing through the channel from masters and landowners to the hands of the workers, cause the latter to give in return the fruits of their labor, always on terms marked by proportion that allow everyone to find their share, otherwise the slightest disarray immediately becomes contagious and corrupts the entire population. It is the fear of

such disorder that makes the Dutch throw pepper into the sea, and that makes the English give money, at the public's expense, to those who come from abroad to plunder the abundant grain. And yet, it is the opposite, to a terrifying surprise, that is being built and fomented every day in France by all sorts of efforts since 1660, which is the sole cause of the 1,500 million in losses that have befallen the kingdom since that time. — The grain has suffered and continues to suffer this fate: but as it is not the subject at present, and as it has already been discussed, as it will be mentioned again when the possible recovery in two hours is discussed, we turn to liquors, which are the second primary source of income for the kingdom, both for the subsistence of the people and for generating revenue for them; The surplus of personal consumption in the landowners provides them with the means to procure the surplus of their needs, just as similarly to the workers, the canal provides them with the means to obtain liquor. — Now, what has happened since 1600 has condemned two-thirds of the population to drink only water, because most of the vineyard owners have been forced to uproot their vines, and thereby reduced to utter destitution.

Here is how it happened. These liquors, such as wines, ciders and brandies, which passed with mutual profit from the hands of the masters to those of the workers and buyers, were suddenly forced to receive a frightful price increase to support the profit of the traders, as well as what was given to the king, which was always increased in almost all leases; the costs of offices and clerks, the ruinous stays that the carriages were obliged to endure in order to pay these duties in various places, or to redeem this same stay: all this having to be borne by the merchandise, put it at an exorbitant rate, and those who previously made their provision of it no longer being able to attain it by the fruit of their labor, it was a necessity either to do without it, or to have it from the merchant at a considerable loss on his part, which is always the same for both for the reasons stated, and consequently the ruin of a State, which cannot be denied to be today the situation of France, nor that it is from such causes that it arose. Finally, things reached such a great excess in 1677, which was a very bountiful year, that the winegrowers or merchants, having transported wines by river to a fair in a sizable town, and the quantity exceeding consumption (although in previous times it would have been six times greater with profit), it happened that these merchants, finding themselves barely able to recoup the tax they had had to guarantee and promise in advance, wanted to sell their goods to the tax collectors at a complete loss, asking only to return free of all obligation; but the latter declared that this arrangement would be too detrimental to them, and that the most favorable thing they could do was that the boats be similarly liable for the tax, and that they would refrain from exercising their coercion over individuals.

One need not consult the oracle to agree that it is to such practices that France owes its ruin; but so that such facts, which are nevertheless very constant, may not be called into question, what is happening every day in France in several of its provinces is of a similar degree of horror, although, to the greatest surprise, it is the authority of the king and of the ministers that is employed night and day to maintain such a state of affairs.

It should be noted that all goods from Japan and China, upon arriving in France, increase in price by only three parts to one of what they cost there, merely quadrupling, and often even

less. The duties levied on the princes from whose countries they originate, who have no other income than these customs fees, the three to four thousand leagues of journey, the storms, and the pirates, cost only this sum to avert.

But liquors that pass through France from one province to another, although often bordering ones, increase by nineteen parts to twenty, and even more. Wines that are sold in Anjou and Orléanais, often at one sou per measure and even less—that is to say, at a loss for the winemaker—are sold for 20 and 24 sous in Picardy and Normandy, and there is still not much profit to be made by the merchants; that is to say, the clerks and traders who obstruct this route are six times more formidable and destructive to commerce than pirates, storms, and three to four thousand leagues of road; so that, with liquors growing at the doorsteps of those who drink only water, they are forced into this misery, or to buy these liquors six times more than if they came from China and Japan; which ruins both merchants and buyers equally for the stated reasons, and consequently the king.

As the primary motive behind this whole scheme is those known as the king's tax farmers, one can see from this account, which only mentions a part of the disorder, the remainder of which can be seen in the book entitled "The Detail of France," or rather, from what is public knowledge. We can see, I say, how ill-suited the name "farmers of the prince" is to these gentlemen, since the duty and function of a man who holds a tax is to cultivate and make the most of the land possible; they, on the contrary, believed they could not better profit their master than by destroying everything and causing more devastation than enemy armies that had set out to lay waste to everything. For these excesses or these plagues of God are never more than short-lived, after which a ravaged country recovers immediately, often better than before, as has already been said several times. — But it is not the same with these men; After the most obvious or crude lease has been destroyed, the successors can only recoup their losses by raising taxes which, further reducing consumption, consequently increases the ruin of both the people and the king, who has no other asset than the land of his subjects, who can only pay him in proportion to the produce that grows on it and can be consumed; otherwise, they remain at a loss and cause the land to be abandoned, as is all too well known. And for such an important service, these gentlemen make princely fortunes; and, to destroy a hundred times more property than they transfer to the prince's coffers, they deserve to have a thousand times more resources than they possessed when they began this work. — This is about the Aids which we know play such a large role in the ruin of France, and whose cessation, without any risks and perils, will have such a large part in the restoration of the 500 million of goods to the people, without it being necessary to have more than half an hour of attention, as will be shown later.

The Valence Customs House owes its existence to a crime that the misfortunes of the times allowed to be tolerated, and which the restoration of order was therefore meant to abolish. During the religious wars, the Constable of Lesdiguières, having become the leader of the Huguenot party in this region, established this tax by force of law, without any princely authority, for the upkeep of his troops; and after things were pacified, personal interests, contrary to those of the State, have maintained it to this day. It is these same abuses that have

allowed the other customs houses to be maintained, and consequently, the ruin of the kingdom to increase daily. This has gone so far with regard to export duties, even though it is known that a nation's wealth lies in its exports, and that there can be as many as 26 such duties in a single seaport—that is to say, twenty-six duties or declarations to be submitted to various people or offices before a single vessel can unload or set sail, and carry or unload its cargo.

There is not one of these tax collectors who doesn't want to make his fortune: they all know full well that this cannot be achieved through their salaries, which are often very meager; it is therefore only through such and similar forms of harassment as have been described in the article on Excise.

This goes so far that a famous merchant, in order to avoid paying a fee owed by the seller of certain goods before delivery, according to an old ordinance, based on who knows what, To be rid, I say, of this servitude, or rather of these accompanying obligations which were carefully cultivated like everything else, 1,500 livres a year were given in pure waste, which certainly did not benefit the king, nor even his so-called tax farmers; and yet they wanted to persuade him that he was being spared. Thus, one can judge the rest by this example. It is through similar methods, of which this is only the smallest part, that foreigners, who, all things considered, before 1660 took in more goods from the kingdom than they brought in, have since then brought in twice as many as they have taken out, that is to say, France has become indebted, as the creditor she was.

But since the people, seeing themselves gradually undermined and slowly being burned alive, did not show complete complacency towards such distressing practices, and since they prompted higher authorities to remonstrate with such establishments, demonstrating that they caused great harm to the king and benefited only the entrepreneurs; however upright and enlightened the minister might be, he believed it to be an attack on the king's authority and a breach of the respect owed by subjects to their sovereign. He repealed the remonstrances by the ordinance of 1667, which stipulated that any edict presented would be accepted and provisionally executed, subject to remonstrance after the initial surprise. This was entirely unnecessary, because each new measure, bolstered by its patrons, meant no one wanted to oppose it, and besides, the delays, while the damage was being done, rendered all legal action futile. This same ordinance was renewed again in 1673. This was the foundation and culmination of the 1,500 million francs in lost revenue in the kingdom over the past forty years. And the ruin of France, which had been attempted in vain for over a century and a half, as has been shown, could only be fully accomplished by employing the king's complete authority; otherwise, it would never have been achieved.

Indeed, if, after the establishment of a first duty on the entry of beverages and liquors into a city of high consumption, a second duty was introduced by a new contractor, with a new office and new clerks, it had been pointed out, before its introduction was permitted, that this was contrary to the King's interests, because, besides the fact that these new expenses did not benefit him, it was an additional impediment to consumption, which was destroyed by these

measures, without any benefit to anyone; and that if His Majesty wished to raise the levy, there should be only one bidder, namely the one who bid the most, only one office, only one revenue collection point, and consequently only one obstacle to commerce; faced with such remonstrances, I ask, could one have argued, without abandoning reason, that it was in the prince's interest that all these pre-existing conditions, that so many costs of destruction, be borne by the merchandise?

This degree of horror intensifies in the third, fourth, and fifth, and finally, in the eleventh instance, as is found in several cities of the kingdom, for the same commodity, in the same place, always with the same circumstances, or rather the same vexations, which have reduced the consumption of one of the cities where this unfortunate scene unfolds from 60,000 pieces of grain, as it once was, to barely 4,000 now, and consequently led to the uprooting of the vines and a reduction in the tax by six times more than the king received from this increase in aid.

Therefore, let no one be surprised by the ten million in lost revenue from the single Election of Mantes, and proportionally as much in the rest of the kingdom, due to the shared interest that all the provinces have with one another. — Similarly, regarding the twenty-six duties or declarations on the charge of a ship: the mere presentation of the fact, from the first addition to the first duty, far from waiting until the twenty-sixth, would have created a degree of horror that would have allowed the King's Council to express no other opinion than condemnation of those responsible for such impositions.

Who wouldn't have thought that it's exactly the same thing, without any difference, as if a prince, having to receive 100,000 livres a year from a few very willing and able individuals, were to have his steward appoint ten people, each with a salary of 1,000 livres, to collect 10,000 livres each, even though only one of them, handling all the revenue, had nothing to do, giving only a twentieth of his time? Wouldn't one say that the steward is dividing his salary half and half with the clerks, and that he's keeping his own account at his master's expense? This is precisely what happened in 1660, through the suppression of the people's remonstrances, not on the part of the minister, who was very honest, but on the part of the court and all the important people in the kingdom, who turned these disorders, or rather the ruin of France, into a regulated source of income. — Firstly, one can only attain the position of tax collector or tax farmer by taking revenues at a price higher than their fair value, by people of high standing who do this quite innocently, unaware of the true cost of such a profit to the king and the kingdom. All commissions are so many benefices coveted by all people of rank, either to reward their servants and save their own purses, or to obtain personal contributions. — This is what Mr. Fouquet states in his defenses, where he names all the plaintiffs on similar occasions, namely all the people of the court and the Council currently living. Thus, however good a minister's intentions may be, he is only applauded and praised to the extent that he satisfies so many petitioners. Since he cannot do this not only by levying fixed taxes, but even through a small number of measures that would not satisfy a twentieth of the claimants, he is forced, almost against his will, to acquiesce to all these horrors.

These are the manners and the nation that have reduced the kingdom to its present state, a state all the more deplorable because those who could have pointed out the disorder and its causes to the king and the ministers were bound by their own self-interest to maintain it. And it was their method, when people declared themselves against these ways in a muted and half-hearted manner, to proclaim that it was restless and visionary minds who spoke this language, and who even wanted to overthrow the kingdom, calling the cessation of the greatest upheaval that ever occurred an overthrow. Indeed, if France had consisted of only four or five hundred people, of whom at most such a retinue was composed—that is to say, subjects who deserved consideration—they would have been right to speak in this way; but since, on the contrary, it is the kingdom, which consists of fifteen thousand lions of souls, and the king at their head, who are ruined by these ways, such allegations can only be regarded as a horrible extravagance.

This type of government having ruined all revenues, and the Contractors and Partisans no longer having any fortune to make by adding new duties on foodstuffs, which was no longer possible, the war of 1689 came about, and the ministers, although personally very upright, did not suppose that there were any other measures to find the necessary funds, than the channels just mentioned, namely the service of the Contractors and Partisans, which they accepted with regard to funds and buildings, to make them suffer the same fate as the revenues and foodstuffs, on which there was nothing more to be done, which are the terms they use; which means in clear and simple language, that there is nothing more to be gained for them, when there is nothing more to be destroyed. What is obvious to everyone is too public, namely, a general desolation, which is their own doing, to leave the slightest suspicion that this expression is too strong and too violent. — They therefore attacked the offices and dignities of the robe, as well as the employments dependent on them, which we know constitute or which constituted such a large mass in the kingdom, and in fifteen or sixteen years they made them suffer the same fate as the revenues, on the same account as the destruction of foodstuffs and produce of the land, namely twenty of loss in pure annihilation, for one of profit to the king. What is most cruel is that this cut down the tree at the base and destroyed all the paper and parchment money printing operations, because these kinds of operations rely solely on the solvency of property owners, and these owners saw all their credit vanish, having to be replaced by cash itself, from the moment their funds were exposed to continuous destruction. However, no one can complain in any way about the ministers, who practiced these methods with the utmost reluctance, but for whom it was as impossible to act otherwise as it would be for someone born into error to embrace and profess the Catholic religion in a country where there were only heretics.

But finally, this means being exhausted and having run its course like the other, and no Partisan now appearing to discuss new developments, because he is certain he cannot rid himself of them, those who had accommodated themselves to almost all of them, finding themselves unhappy and exposed in this respect to suffer the fate of their predecessors, that is to say, to pay a second time, or else to have bought nothing and lost their money; it is hoped that the restoration of France, in such an important situation, will no longer have so many enemies to fight, especially since it is declared that what is done is done, and that no one is

being asked to pay up, contrary to common practice. — If we have dwelt at length on this third cause of the disorders in France, it is to preempt any objections that might be raised to the restoration of the kingdom. Besides the fact that, although it is not essential to abolish the king's farms or farmers—even though this would be the greatest service that could ever be rendered to the State, as evidenced by the housecleaning they have done since 1660—it is nevertheless necessary that their functions be reduced to a less distressing ceremony, which will be beneficial to them, far from detrimental. Now, since until now they have been regarded as sacred figures down to the smallest part of their ministry, however appalling and distressing it may all be, it was appropriate to draw a parallel with them, and to show at the same time that the founders and protectors of the Order were far from being canonizable, having had nothing less as their objective in such establishments than the king's interest.

This clarification will bring a little more peace of mind to the kingdom, by examining the reasons for the objections and the people who will raise them. It is in this way that we intend to fulfill in two hours the promise contained in the title and at the beginning of this Memoir, that is to say, by ending the greatest violence that nature has ever experienced since the creation of the world, since not one of the three establishments in question is anything but a complete extravagance, committed innocently since 1660, by factual error, based on the probity of the first authors, but which cannot be maintained, after full knowledge of the facts, without abandoning reason, as will be irrefutably seen later.

## Chapter IX:

After what has just been reported, no one can doubt that no injustice is being done to the Excise Duties, Passage and Exit Duties of the Kingdom, by attributing to them the cause of the 800 million loss in the 1,500 million loss suffered by the kingdom since 1660. Now, although this cause is even more severe than the other two, it would take only a moment to put an end to it, with all the less inconvenience and fear, since it is certain that it has only ever been the self-interest of entrepreneurs that has set things in this way.

To summarize, then, the State is currently, with regard to these three causes of its ruin, like an individual or even a country that finds itself in utter desolation due to a very powerful force acting upon them immediately, and whose mere cessation could, in an instant, restore them to great happiness. A man condemned to death for a crime against the state, with the confiscation of all his property, which would be quite considerable, receiving a pardon from the king, would in an instant pass from utter misery to a very fortunate situation. The city of La Rochelle, which suffered the well-known hardships during its capture by King Louis XIII, was only briefly forced to buy bread at one hundred sous per pound, that is to say, to see one hundred or one hundred and twenty of its inhabitants die of hunger every day; and then, with its gates opened by its surrender, to obtain that same bread for less than one sou per pound.

If someone, in either of these two cases, proposing the remedy that would have saved them, had objected that such measures could not be taken without disrupting their natural situation, or at least that they could not enjoy the fruits of these favors after they had been granted, until a war raging two hundred leagues away had ended, would it not have been considered that those who spoke in such terms deserved the squalid conditions? Or rather, would anyone have deigned to answer them?

It is maintained, once again, that this is in every respect the situation of France with regard to the 500 million in revenue, part of the fifteen hundred lost, which can be restored to her in two hours, without risking more than with regard to this condemned individual and the besieged La Rochelle; And that the allegations of supposed bewilderment, peril, or the circumstances of war are of the same degree of extravagance as they would have been in the two cases just mentioned. Thus, to begin by addressing the matter, and to consider the three causes one after the other for their cessation, as was done for their discovery, we will see, both in particular and in general, that there is no way to maintain a foothold in the contradiction without abandoning reason.

The tax, which stands first and foremost as the sworn enemy of consumption, is so great because of its uncertainty, which keeps everyone on edge; because of its injustice, which decimates all subjects one after another, leaving them without bread, furniture, or shelter; and because of its collection, which forces those who have something to pay from time to time for the insolvent, or to perish in the process, as often happens. The tax, I say, can be rid of these three dreadful problems in an instant, by a simple order from the ministers to the intendants

of the provinces, to enforce the old ordinances with the utmost precision, without any discrimination. The visits of the Masters of Requests to the provinces, which were only conducted during a certain season of the year, were formerly ordered solely for this purpose. It is expressly stated that they will immediately tax, even the elected officials, all those whose tax rate is not proportionate to their holdings, whether owned outright or leased, and that they will likewise exempt those in the opposite situation. The tax assessment notices, sent annually to the parishes, order this. However, it can be asserted that nothing has ever been more poorly executed; and it is almost impossible for it to be otherwise, given the individuals who hold this office. Formerly, they were only local people; but for the last forty or fifty years, it has been absolutely necessary to exclude them; so that, however good their intentions may be, it is impossible for them ever to do anything right, arriving in a region where everything is new to them, and where everyone is paid to give them false reports, and no one to tell them the truth.

However, the execution of the old ordinances and justice are easy to put into practice, once the ministers have ordered it, which is where we must begin. — It is only a matter of ordering that each intendant share the responsibility for the elections among three or four officers of these companies, choosing those who are knowledgeable not only in commerce and agriculture, but also who know the regions and the resources of the individuals who own property there; which is easy to ascertain, if one wishes to apply oneself faithfully, down to a vine, a tree, an inch of land, and the smallest animal for sustenance. — This knowledge, acquired by them, or by taking notes from knowledgeable individuals, as can be found in all parishes, for a small fee, they must make an assessment of the resources of each village, noting on a roll at each level: This one has so much land under lease or owned by him, of such and such value; So much in arable land, so much in simple pasture, so much of excellent quality, so much of mediocre; so many livestock, and so much wine or cider, in an average year; and its rent amounts to so much per year. However surprising this may seem in general terms, there is nothing easier in detail, when dealing with people of the trade; and even if an electoral district were composed of one hundred and fifty or two hundred parishes, three or four subjects in each could easily accomplish it in fifteen days or three weeks; that is to say, all the assets of a generality would be constant and known in such a short time, all working together, and thus those of the entire kingdom for the same reason. — It would also be necessary to note the number of privileged individuals, nobles or clergymen, or those whose privileges stem from their employment; whether these privileges are ancient or newly created, and whether they exceed the amount of land they are entitled to. Likewise, there are the wretched, having only their labor for their subsistence, with no occupation other than their simple dwelling. With things in this state, an intendant would have the assets of his entire Generality assessed, election by election, to levy the *taille* (land tax) on each, in proportion to the assets; and then by subdivision by parish, and the officials would then assess each individual, without consulting the inhabitants except to collect their statements, since none of them would dare or be able to set the tax collectors or farmers for the wealthy at their correct rate. — Thus, at first glance, the uncertainty and injustice, which cost the kingdom more than three to four hundred million in revenue, would be eliminated, and even the lawsuits, since

there would only be questions of fact, which the subdelegate or intendant could resolve immediately.

But the tax must still be abolished, and this is easy, even with the people's approval. It must be decreed that anyone who, within the first three months of the tax's due date, brings their entire year's entitlement to revenue will be exempt from being a collector and guarantor of the parish's collection. There is no one, not even the poorest, who wouldn't sell their shirt to be exempt from this obligation; and who, when it comes their turn, through the acceptance that the wealthy of this faction will undoubtedly make, wouldn't give everything to have the same advantage.

It must likewise be decreed that the tax, and the other taxes that accompany it during wartime, will be collected as a privilege, like a land rent, that is to say, before the rent for the land and houses.

The custom was formerly for the landowner to precede the tax collection by one year, but this was due to its injustice, which would often have been overwhelming. This injustice being eliminated, and equity restored, as the cause ceases, so too must the effect. In this way, the tax collector will issue a writ against each individual, upon the first dispatch of the payment orders, as soon as they have submitted their declaration to the clerk of the Election, stipulating that they intend to pay their entire tax within three months to be exempt from being a tax collector. If the latter fails to do so, nothing will be lost, since this payment precedes the landowner's payment, and it will be up to the tax collector to enforce it. Regarding the towns subject to the tax and large market villages, where industry alone pays a substantial tax, they must absolutely be included in the tariff system. There is not one of these places that does not earnestly request it, and those who have been able to obtain it have acquired a degree of wealth that should lead them to never refuse such a favor. The only obstacle that has prevented it until now is that the judges and tax collectors have all opposed it. Indeed, it puts an end to the lawsuits, as well as to the costs and constraints that the tax collectors have established as regulated revenues, and of which a parish must bear a certain amount; otherwise, it would be transferred to the first department, over which they are almost always in control, under the pretext that they will not be able to collect the revenue if their idea is not followed.

Since there are now many people newly put to work, they all need to be paid, otherwise, as is usually the case, they will be poorly served, especially in wartime, where, if troops are to do their duty and not plunder, they must receive their pay. Fortunately, this new function has a certain and natural fund, without costing the king or the people anything. The six deniers per pound given to the parish tax collectors for the collection of the *taille* (land tax) are entirely useless, and only the costs of paper and the preparation of the tax rolls remain; and since this will be the responsibility of the subdelegates and those in charge of each region, the intendant must allocate to each of them, from this fund, 400 to 500 francs per year, more or less, depending on the work and the size of the district; They will issue receipts to the tax collectors, who will then account for them at the Chambers of Accounts, as with everything

else, because the intendant's order will be attached to the receipts. A sum of approximately 1,000 livres is also required from the individual tax collectors to increase the salary of a clerk, which will be necessary for the collection of all these specific taxes. Finally, a sum of approximately 2,000 or 3,000 livres must remain for the intendants to pay the spies who will report that the officials appointed by them are not fulfilling their duties, having favored their relatives and friends in the tax assessment; in which case, they must be dismissed with infamy and made to pay the damages of those who have been wronged, without any possibility of rejection, because it will be their fault. All of this is governed by the 1604 tax regulations, dating from the time of Monsieur de Sully, which were simply copied in this respect, as in everything else, especially regarding grain; a practice common to all governments worldwide. It will also be necessary for the intendants to frequently be out in the field, setting off at a moment's notice, without informing anyone, to verify on-site the veracity of the reports they have received, which entails expenses. Finally, it is essential that everyone understand that it will be impossible to resort to deception without incurring exemplary punishment.

But since the principle of all kinds of payments, and consequently of the tax as well as everything else, is the sale of goods, this collection will be extremely facilitated by the value that will be assigned to it, especially to grain, which, leading the way, is currently a loss for farmers, the price not even covering the costs of cultivation, as will be seen in the following chapter.

## Chapter X:

The disruption that occurs in the price of wheat due to its debasement, which, by ruining the proper proportions between the costs of its cultivation, the payment of rent, and the price at which it is purchased, prevents this primary trade, through which this essential resource passes solely into the hands of those who have only their labor to obtain it; which is still the ruin of both groups, being no less detrimental to a State, if not even more so, than the opposite situation, which produces horrors only through this same lack of proportion, all excesses being equally harmful, although diametrically opposed; this disruption, I say, is neither the effect of chance nor of nature, which by its design always intends and acts so well that there is no trade or profession that does not always feed its master, just as it does not bring animals into the world without simultaneously providing them with their pasture. This unfortunate situation, which currently costs the kingdom more than four times the king's needs, makes everyone very miserable, and the workers more than anyone else. It is the result of a determined will, which for six or seven years has been carried out with the utmost rigor, and even at great expense, based on the cruel and false idea that grains are of the nature of truffles and mushrooms; based on the continuation, I say, of this thought, as in 1660, that wheat is a free gift of nature, and that therefore the interest of the State, especially of the poor, is to force owners to give it away as cheaply as possible. After acknowledging the error, this conduct persists only because subjects covered with applause do not want to admit that they were capable of such a mistake, their obstinacy in maintaining the evil being less harmful to them, they believe, than a disavowal of their past conduct, whatever good it may have brought to the kingdom; they believed that the State could not avoid one excess, namely extreme depreciation, except by throwing itself into the other, which is degradation, although it is no less harmful in itself: it alone produces depreciation, as can be seen from the chapter at the end of this work.

However, since there is no doubt that those without such deplorable interests will finally open their eyes, we confidently move on to the remedy.

First, it will be said that the king and the ministers are absolutely masters of the price of grain, able to lower and raise it at will, at any time and in any season. Since its current state of degradation is the result of an external force other than nature, likewise, by contrary means that will cost far less, this commodity can be brought to the price and condition it needs to cover its costs, that is, the expenses of cultivation, and flow smoothly into the hands of those whose only capital is their labor. No further explanation is given on this subject, because although it is practiced in countless places, such as Rome, England, Holland, and Turkey, and although the same was done in France in 1679—otherwise, that year would have been as cruel as 1693 and 1694—it is nevertheless in the interest of this approach that it not be entirely public, being of the nature of secrecy, which loses its life as soon as it is revealed.

All that can be stated is that the high prices or the decline in prices, especially in a fertile country like France, are nothing less, strictly speaking, than the effect of the lack or

abundance of grain for the subsistence of all peoples; the latter has always been the result of determined efforts, as it is today, and the former of the folly and blindness of the people, who create for themselves the monster that devours them. In short, the people are certainly like a flock of sheep that one tries to herd through a very small and very awkward gate; one only has to grab one or two by the ears and pull them by force, and immediately all the others rush in with the same violence that was needed to lead the first two through. And even if there were a very large gate right next to it, in full view of them, which, leading them to the same place, would give them a much easier passage, it would not be possible to force them to take this route by force, but they would continue to stifle each other to follow the first ones. That is the portrait of the people, and their behavior in their tumultuous endeavors, especially with regard to grain. — Thus, with this fund restored in a single moment, it is maintained that over 300 million in revenue will be instantly returned to the kingdom, because the proportions, the disruption of which is the ruin of commerce, will begin to reappear, and consequently provide sustenance for all two hundred professions, which depend solely on the farmer for their sustenance. This is why we are now turning to Customs, exports and transits from the kingdom, as well as to the excise duties on liquors, which, as has been said, contribute over 800 million per year to the loss of the kingdom's assets.

The restoration is all the easier because, although they are supported night and day by continuous efforts, there are over twenty thousand men, and perhaps over thirty thousand, who have no other occupation than this, that is to say, ruining the people, and consequently the king; however, there is no one who does not personally detest them, and who does not agree that, if the intention had been to destroy the kingdom, no other measures could have been taken. The devastation we see before us, in the desolation of agriculture and commerce, removes any suspicion of slander from this statement.

Indeed, if a merchant, having his shops filled with excellent goods suitable for everyone's use, refused to deliver them, after selling them from his own home, until a declaration had been made to twenty-six of his agents and clerks scattered throughout various parts of the city, and often absent from their homes, so that it took an infinite amount of time to fulfill these obligations, would it not be immediately considered that he had lost his mind, and would everyone not abandon him? Now, one country trades with another just as one merchant trades with another; the same measures and the same facilities must be observed in this trade, and the same degree of extravagance attributed to one would be similarly applicable to the other. For if some friend of this merchant, who demanded twenty-six declarations before relinquishing his goods, were to point out that he should abandon this practice, otherwise he would ruin himself and be considered a fool, and the merchant were to reply that he acknowledged the extravagance of this conduct, but that he could not abandon it at the moment, for fear of disrupting the order of his affairs, and that at least he had to wait until a lawsuit he had two hundred leagues from his home was concluded; would that not be the reason he would be imprisoned, and would the administration of his property be completely taken from him? This, nevertheless, is the situation in France, both in terms of exports from the kingdom and passages from one country to another; And the reasons given for not

stopping the disorder, without losing a moment, are of the same caliber and worth as those just put into the mouth of this particular merchant.

The taxes are of much the same nature, especially in four Generalities, namely Rouen, Caen, Amiens, and Alençon, where the fourth penny tax on all liquors sold retail is levied not on the fourth, but on the third, because no consideration is given to daily levies and reductions, but only to the volume of the cask. This, combined with appalling entry duties, especially in the non-taxable towns of these regions, means that this demand in every respect is not and should not be called a contribution, but a confiscation, as its effect has only too clearly demonstrated. The single tax levied in Mantes, as has been mentioned, amounts to 2,400,000 livres. per year on the vineyards, which is merely a barometer of the rest of the kingdom, since it stems from a general cause.

Cider in Normandy, which serves as a substitute for wine, has likewise been thrown into such disarray by this same principle that in bountiful years more than half is lost, either because it is completely neglected to make use of it, or because it spoils during storage, while three-quarters of the population, not only of Normandy, but even of neighboring Brittany, Picardy, and Beauce, drink only water of a regulated standard. — It is in vain that Burgundy, as a country with its own Estates, enjoys this exemption from taxes; its lifeblood, namely wine, with which and in excess it can procure its other specific needs, is equally drained, just as if it possessed these rights within its own resources. Thus, it is her interests that are defended at least as much as those of these four Generalities: this is why she must contribute, by understanding its advantages, to lifting the cause of the degradation in which she often sees this commodity during an abundant harvest; and whatever she pays, that is to say, double what the king currently receives, she will still gain four to one, and so it will with the other regions of the kingdom, which all follow the same fate, however far removed they may be from those where the disorder that is consuming them originated; and, by the principle of opposites, the restoration or cessation of the evil will immediately produce the same effect with regard to them. The wine that is often given at one sou per measure in Burgundy, Orléanais, Petite Champagne, and Anjou, is at this miserable price below the winemaker's cost only because it is 24 sous in Picardy and Normandy; and it is so excessive in these provinces, for the same reasons that bread was 100 sous a pound during the siege of La Rochelle.

Ten thousand clerks halted the flow of these liquors, just as the king's army prevented grain from entering this city; and when the gates were opened, the same extravagance that would have been found in those who claimed that these starving inhabitants could not have alleviated their misery by obtaining bread at a penny a pound, since it was no better outside the gates, until a war being waged two hundred leagues from these quarters was over; the same folly, I say, is found in those who maintain that these ten thousand clerks, who are destroying half the kingdom with the abundance of liquors, and the other half with the exorbitant price, cannot be dismissed without overthrowing the state, or at least that it is necessary to wait until the war is over in Germany, Italy, and Spain.

To begin with the customs, exits, and passages from the kingdom, it would be a boon for the king and his people to abolish them all with respect to the interior of the state; the reasoning of the various princes who established them having ceased, the effect must also cease, given the dreadful consequences that accompany them all. Regarding entries into France, they should be maintained as they are with respect to the sums involved, while smoothing out the difficulties, for which the king receives no benefit, but which deter foreigners. As for exit duties, they should be shown no mercy, but abolished entirely, since they are the greatest enemies of the king and the kingdom that could ever exist.

Indeed, since poverty is the greatest evil that can befall a state, and the degradation of crops, whose cultivation costs cannot be met, is the greatest source of desolation, it must be treated as one would a declared enemy who comes to invade a country: when one sees him intending to retreat, one must build a bridge of gold. But is it truly building this bridge of gold to this degradation, the greatest destroyer of property that ever existed, to create up to twenty-six obstacles in the same place, with as many hired men, whose fortune lies in keeping him in the country to continue his ravages, as has just been demonstrated with regard to Customs on the exits and passages of France? The same approach should be taken with regard to grain and the reduction of taxes. All these monsters we have described work day and night only to maintain this degradation: thus, to continue waging war in this appalling manner, it is absolutely necessary to reduce the tax from one-fourth to one-eighth in these four Generalities, as everywhere else where taxes are levied.

When this tax was established for the countryside, where it did not previously exist, around the year 1640, it is believed, all the regions paid a sum to be exempt; but in the four Generalities mentioned, the gentlemen and notables had the audacity to buy it for almost nothing; and, fully understanding that it was not payable in full, without ruining everything, they collected less than a third of it, and sublet it to innkeepers at very high prices. But after 1660, those in power, believing the king to have been wronged in this sale, as he indeed was, reclaimed the property from the purchasers without reimbursement, considering that their continued enjoyment of it was sufficient, which was true; and nothing would have been spoiled if they had continued to use it as the original purchasers had. However, by insisting on it to the utmost severity, the result was the confiscation of vineyards and liquors, and a condemnation for two-thirds of the kingdom's population to drink only water, especially since the entry fees were quadrupled at the same time in the tax-exempt towns of these four administrative districts, through the establishment of various tax collectors and offices, which tripled, by this ceremony and the congestion or delays caused by the carriages, the harm already caused by the excessive sums. This reduced the consumption of these towns to a tenth or twelfth of what it had been previously; And even more so in the countryside, since where there used to be no village without two or three taverns, now it's a matter of chance if there's even one in ten for the whole region. From this, one can see the profit the tax farmers made by ruining the king and the people.

Thus, by reducing the tax burden to one-fourth of its size to one-eighth, the State is not overthrown, nor are they dismissed, and France is not suddenly liberated, as was done at La

Rochelle. On the contrary, they are treated with consideration, and a desire is made to live with them, asking only that a door be opened so that these vineyard provinces, which are perishing from overabundance, may suddenly become rich. On this same basis, the entry fees for non-taxable towns in these four generalities must be reduced to just half of what they are now; and since there are several tax farmers, the reduction must be to the penny per pound of their lease prices, and they will gain considerably, since they themselves practice this discount daily when the opportunity arises, knowing full well that without it nothing would be sold and they would lose everything.

It is also necessary that all these various duties be reduced to a single, fixed sum, denominated in silver, and in no way given a war name, as before, namely parisis, sou-denier, travers, resve, haut passage, grand, petit, and nouveau droit, which, often being combined together, are so many traps set for people who can neither read nor write, as all carters are, in order to confiscate everything or ruin them with tolls, when they do not want to buy them out with money.

The gauging system is the height of vexation: besides the fact that it is naturally impossible to construct a cask with mathematical precision, so that there isn't a glass or a setier more or less, it is equally impossible for a gauger to maintain such accuracy in their calculations, and no two people with the same measurements ever match, even by a considerable margin, as has sometimes been observed. They even exploit it so effectively that they call out their votes at the auction to see who can offer the most from the clerk or the carrier, in order to produce a report favorable to one or the other regarding the cask's capacity.

These gauging systems must absolutely be abolished, and the regions will gain a hundredfold by reimbursing them. It can be ordered that ships be built as accurately as possible, with the measurements clearly marked. and when, in the entrances, it is believed that the casks are defective, it will be necessary, without being able to stop them, to denounce the owners to the judges, to be condemned to a fine, as one does to a tavern keeper when his vessels are not fair; which cannot be done unless the harm is considerable, and without cost, before the intendant or his subdelegate; otherwise the remedy would be worse than the harm.

There is yet another monster to be exorcised, namely the declarations and tolls demanded on anything that passes by at every turn, causing the same vexations already mentioned. Freedom of movement is essential for consumption and, consequently, income; this cannot exist as long as there are people at every turn who are paid and who rely on their wealth to prevent one country from trading with another, mutually providing each other with the goods whose abundance ruins them, in order to recover those whose scarcity makes them equally miserable. On this matter, it must be decreed that every carrier, whether by water or cart, who wishes to transport liquors to any location, however remote, shall be required to obtain a permit from the nearest excise office, if one exists, or failing that, from the magistrate of police. This permit shall cost no more than ten sous, all inclusive. This document shall state the quantity of the convoy and the destination. With this permit, he shall set out, and no one may stop him on his journey, whether in towns or walled cities, nor may any office demand

anything other than the simple presentation of his permit, without confiscating it or delaying him or his convoy for a moment.

In places such as excise towns and villages where he spends the night, he may not unload or handle his goods unless there is some unforeseen circumstance which requires an order to be given, in which case he shall be required to notify the local tax collector. All this, under penalty of confiscation of the goods, carts, and horses, and a fine of one thousand pounds against the inn where the offenders are lodged. If the carrier, while traveling, finds a more convenient place to sell his merchandise than where he intended to sell it, he may do so by paying the local tolls; if it is in a village where no tolls are due, he will pay nothing.

In this way, not only is the state not overthrown, but on the contrary, being completely disrupted, it is restored to full prosperity; in short, in this article as in the other two, it is the lifting of the siege of La Rochelle. and the same extravagance that would have been found in the objections that could have been made, in maintaining that it would have taken time, after the doors were opened, to have the bread at one penny a hundred times as much as it was, is found on this occasion, if someone were to claim that a Declaration published in this style would not immediately put all things to good use, and consequently all peoples in happiness, and in a position to profitably supply all the needs of the king.

This moderation applied to the functions and income bases of the tax collectors, it is maintained, as already stated, will in no way be detrimental to their interests, and that they will regain, in general, through increased consumption, what they would claim today to be losing due to the alteration of retail prices. This has always been the case whenever the situation has arisen, and recently in the distribution of tobacco, where revenue increased after the price was lowered. The opposite is true with regard to letters, and we know of offices significantly diminished by the increase in duties. Finally, it is maintained that the reduction in the four Generalities, whose plundering by the Aids is equally ruining the rest of the kingdom, must not decrease by a single penny the price of leases, through this moderation of the fourth to the eighth, and of the entry duties in non-taxable towns.

If today's farmers refuse to understand this, it will cause no trouble, because, since none of them are on a fixed-rate contract, and all of them request compensation each year due to the misfortunes of the times, there are plenty of people ready to take their place on the condition that nothing is reduced, and we are certain they will be satisfied.

There remain the tolls and exit fees, both from the kingdom and from provinces considered foreign, established by a terrible surprise: it is certain that the king is not currently receiving 1,500,000 livres from them, not including the Bordeaux convoy, which is untouched, as there is almost nothing there except the Joigny bridge whose revenue is considerable. Now, besides the fact that this sum of fifteen hundred thousand pounds will be far more than earned by the entire kingdom through general affluence, if the king were to hand it over to his people as a pure loss to himself, refusing to listen to it is the same as refusing to sow in order to reap twenty-one, considering the wheat sown in the ground as lost. The 80 million in increased

taxes that will be levied on the people, with applause and thanks from all those who are not suspect in this matter, which confirms that it is real money; this sum, I say, is a harvest abundant enough that such a seed should not be wasted.

And to irrefutably demonstrate that there is nothing but the very real consequences of a Declaration that will not cost three hours to construct based on this model, by rectifying the three articles, the sole principles of the people's misery, one need only try it out by publishing it, while suspending its implementation for a month or two: it is maintained that in the moment all goods will be considerably increased; one can then judge, by this sample, the effect that can be expected from the document, which is visionary, by the author of these Memoirs, or by those who oppose it.

Counting, therefore, on a sudden increase of 500 to 600 million in consumption, and a cessation of violence like that at La Rochelle, we must now consider the king's position. It would be as unjust for the people to refuse the prince, as a result of this increase in wealth, as it was surprising previously to establish the complete confiscation of both movable and immovable property as a regulated tax. This, by refusing the prince and his subjects on the one hand—refusals which the mere impossibility of executing them prevented from being criminal—and by resorting to futile, albeit extremely violent, coercion on the other, has destroyed more property and wrought more havoc than ever before, even in the kingdom's greatest enemies, in their most complete victories since the establishment of the monarchy. Tributes must flow into the hands of the prince like rivers into the sea, that is to say, smoothly, which will inevitably happen when they are proportionate to the taxpayers' power, both over things and over people: the deviation from this rule is the sole cause of all the disorder.

A monarch must treat his people as God declares he will treat Christians; namely, that he will demand much from those who have much, and little from those who have little.

And in the same vein, a Church Father attests that, however precious paradise may be, God sells it to the faithful, however wretched they may be, only for the price they can afford: this is the sole basis for taxes, and for the eighty million increase that will be established in the following chapter.

## Chapter XI:

It was stated at the beginning of these Memoirs that the wealthiest princes were those who received the fewest types of tribute, and whose revenues passed most directly into their hands without leaving the hands of their people.

Now, to create such a system, it is not necessary to do anything new: one need only turn to the poll tax, which already possesses the two qualities of passing directly, without cost, from the hands of the people into those of the monarch; and, to make it reach the level of its current needs—which it is not nearly doing, although this was the intention of its founders, as indicated by the very title of its establishment—it is not so much necessary to perfect it as to make it cease to be ridiculous. Indeed, the principle of rank or status established therein to regulate the degree of contribution owed by each individual, regardless of their great wealth or extreme poverty—this level, I say, making no distinction whatsoever—is a measure as absurd as a law that would dictate that one should pay for cloth at a merchant's and expenses at a tavern not in proportion to what was purchased from each, but according to the rank and dignity of the individual who provided for their needs. Taxes are a due as legitimate, commanded by the very mouth of God, as the payment of any debt whatsoever, and this is based on the penny per pound of the goods one possesses in a state; And it is a sham to have established a system where some pay four times more than they receive, and consequently owe, while others receive one-fiftieth less than they are required to by this same principle of justice.

It is certain, and common knowledge, that a man's qualities and dignity no more denote his abilities than his height or hair color. It is therefore equally ridiculous to have established that a lawyer or merchant, or a parish lord and an officer, will pay the same sum, as it would be to stipulate that all the lame would contribute the same amount, and that those who walk straight would provide another: the reason for the extravagance of this latter provision lies in the fact that in both of these two classes there would be very wealthy individuals and others who would have nothing at all, opulence or poverty not being necessarily attached to any profession, any more than to any type of stature or hair color. Since this diversity is found among lawyers, merchants, officers, and parish lords, one cannot deny that the same degree of error or absurdity is found in the provision that is currently in practice and in the one just mentioned. One cannot presume anything else in those whom Messrs. The ministers had been charged with this economy, except that they intended to render illusory the intention put forward at the head, namely the suppression of extraordinary affairs, by making the proceeds of this tax insufficient to meet the king's needs; which would not have been the case if they had proceeded in another way. And this, in the same spirit that had been used in allowing the Tailles to be thrown into disarray by the suffering caused by the poor distribution, in order to give an opening to political parties; so that, from 56 million which they were, it was necessary to reduce them to 32, while the Aides were tripled, which did not even come close to compensating for this deficit with respect to the king, and cost the people ten times the Taille; and it should not be said that a portion of the Tailles remained in loss, because it was a

game played by hand, the assessors dealing with this rebate, in which they made immense sums; For now that the Taille, along with the Capitation and the Ustensile, amounts to more than fifty-six million, nothing is lost, even though the countryside is four times poorer. Or at most, finding themselves well-distributed in terms of wealth, they chose not to let wealth determine the level of this tax, but rather dignities; which, requiring a general possibility, and with the poorest consequently becoming the rule, was a safeguard for their opulence, allowing them to pay very little in relation to their possessions. In this, they were far more mistaken than the prince, since the extraordinary events having resumed with greater force than ever, the resulting decline in the state's finances costs them three times more than a quadruple Capitation would have, which would not even have been necessary to protect them from this storm.

The entire legal profession, the merchants, and the lords of the parishes are called upon to witness this; and they must agree, if they are willing to speak the truth, that the situation has reached the same point as with the taille (a direct tax). The exemption granted by the rich from their just contribution, in order to burden the poor, has rendered the latter unable to consume the aforementioned pastureland, which generally signifies all property. Consequently, it has become entirely lost to the landowners, who have been utterly ruined by this supposed privilege.

Because there is a point to consider, which no one has ever reflected upon, namely, that the body of the state is like the human body, all of whose parts and members must contribute equally to its common maintenance, since the desolation of one immediately affects everyone and destroys the entire body. This is why, since all these parts are not of equal strength and vigor, the most robust expose themselves and even present themselves to receive the blows that would be struck against the weakest and most delicate, which are not immune to the slightest attack; not to mention the serpent, which Holy Scripture uses as a symbol of prudence because, when attacked, it covers its head with its entire body: does not nature teach men in the same way, on similar occasions, to present their hands and arms to parry or receive blows to the eyes and head?

The poor, in the body of the State, are the eyes and the skull, and consequently the delicate and weak parts; and the rich are the arms and the rest of the body: the blows inflicted on them for the needs of the State are almost imperceptible, falling upon these strong and robust parts, but deadly when they strike the weak, which are the wretched, thus devastating those who had refused them aid.

We know how a poor person manages their household; their entire fortune often hinges on a single coin or two, which, through continual renewal, sustains them and their entire family, and consequently allows them to consume the goods that grow on the wealth of the rich, otherwise they would remain a loss, which is the situation today. — If they are suddenly deprived of this crown or two, by an unjust tax redistribution, or some extraordinary event caused by the inadequacy of the regular taxes to meet the king's needs, because the powerful have not been willing to provide their share, then this skull and these eyes are mortally

wounded, causing the death of all those robust limbs that refused to defend themselves; something they could easily have done, receiving only very slight injuries. Therefore, in the interest of the wealthy, the poll tax must be paid at a rate of one-tenth of all assets, both capital and industry; and this will be profitable for them, both through the reinstatement of the three articles mentioned above, and for this latter reason; and no argument or contradiction is feared, which would be utterly extravagant, in maintaining, as is done, that there is not one of these taxpayers who does not gain tenfold on what they pay.

Poll taxes have existed at all times and in all states of the world; formerly in France, under Kings John and Francis I, and currently in England and Holland; and all of them, having no other rules than the proportion of property, have never caused the slightest commotion or disruption, either in their collection or their payment. Surprise may have established it differently in the form it finds itself in today in France; but, after these explanations, only crime could reject it in the manner proposed, which is that of all nations of the world.

The allegation that it is difficult to find the amount of private property, or cruel for them to account for it, is quite impertinent, since, in the first case, it supposes, in a way, that formerly the people in France, as well as in England and Holland, were sorcerers, to have such revelations, and that those of today have, on the contrary, lost their sense; and that, in the other, one treats as cruelty a method which, being the salvation of the State in the present conjuncture, is practiced every day calmly in a hundred other much less important occasions.

If, indeed, a church or a rectory needs rebuilding, the costs are unavoidable and are divided proportionally to the parish's assets. If a daughter's marriage or inheritance needs to be settled with her brothers after the death of both parents, this is done daily in the presence of the relatives, or through the courts, upon presentation of the documents. The same applies to debts that arise long afterward on an inheritance shared among several collateral relatives. From the highest lord to the humblest laborer, there are reliable barometers of wealth, evident to those familiar with private life, but which remain hidden from all those who merely speculate about them, as is the case with all provincial intendants, however well-intentioned they may be. The Parisian breed, from which they originate—which was not the case in the past, by a considerable margin—is hardly suitable for providing an understanding of a state, since one can possess great wealth without owning a single piece of land, which is considered the least of all possessions, even though it is the foundation of all others. In these parts, all attention is usually devoted to the countryside, to the embellishment and decoration of pleasure houses.

This tenth, once again, is as easy to find in this kingdom as elsewhere, when the same people who work in those regions are employed here, laboring at their own peril and risk, so that the ministers will not be burdened by the injustices that might be committed. It is a tenth in cash that must be paid, and not in essence or royal tithe, as a person of the highest standing, both by virtue of his personal merit and the high position he held, wished to propose to the king, based on the word of a private individual who had drafted the plan, without ever having practiced either commerce or agriculture—something which can only breed monstrosities.

Indeed, it is unheard of that one could establish or find a lease for a levy of one-tenth of all the produce of a village, without providing a place to store it, since there is no place in the world where useless produce can be found, as it is often impossible to maintain even the most essential. Furthermore, the obligation to provide security, as with royal funds, to pay every three months like the *taille* (a direct tax), and to collect this tithe from nobles and privileged individuals who were previously exempt, are clauses that ensure there is no country dweller who would not rather throw money away than acquire such a lease at a quarter of its fair value. An example of this can be seen in the seizure of lands belonging to gentlemen, since the lease is often granted at a tenth of its fair value, without the creditors being able to do otherwise, and without the debtor even resorting to violence in this matter. Even those who possess tithes in remote villages know full well that if they were to claim them without providing buildings, even if they were to own all the necessary land when the tithes were substantial, and on the condition of providing security and paying every three months without any quarter, they would find nothing at all, or at most only a tenth of the previous value; since, by dispensing with all these conditions, they often still lose the greater part of the tithes when the price of goods falls, as is the case today; something that a replacement of taxes and other levies cannot tolerate, since payment on the due date is mandatory, given that the maintenance of the State, which cannot suffer any delay, depends solely on the collection of taxes.

We have made this resumption to show that the restoration of France does not have two ways, and that there is only that which has been practiced in France in all centuries, and whose use has been received and is presently in all the States of the world, which is the one that is proposed as, once again, lucrative on the part of the people; for, although the *Capitation*, paid regularly at this tenth by a faithful execution of this system, would constantly reach more than one hundred million, it would certainly not take the fifth or sixth part of the goods that the king will have restored to his people in an instant, without fearing any objection with regard to the disconcertment, and even less to the conjuncture or the brevity of the time, which is not immediately shown to be a renunciation of reason and common sense; so that it is maintained, as has already been done several times, that there is no man so abandoned by God and his fellow men as to dare to put in writing and subscribe in his name to such objections.

The condemnation of the institutions being opposed, and the execration of their effects, which are public, purge these expressions of any suspicion of temerity and even extravagance; which would be, and the author liable to corporal punishment, were it not for the fact that an entire kingdom bears witness to the truths he proclaims. It is solely the interest of the king and the people that has led him to bring them to light, with all the more confidence because the integrity of the ministers, which is as well-known as the disorders being combated, assures him that he risks nothing in their eyes, but rather renders them a great service.

But, to anticipate objections and to spare those who might wish to raise them the trouble of doing so, it is argued, firstly, that the entire content of this Memorandum cannot be challenged without upholding the merit of the three articles being contested, and consequently, their retention. Now, to demonstrate the horror of such a role, one need only consider whether a man on earth could be found so devoid of sense and reason, or rather, so hostile to God and mankind, as to dare publicly claim responsibility for any of these three measures.

Indeed, would anyone have the audacity to utter such words: "I am the cause of the unfair distribution of the taxes, so that the poor are utterly ruined, rendering them completely unable to trade and consume, while the rich lose six times more than it would have cost them by taking their fair share of this tax, the disorder of which reflects on the king's revenues?" The same goes for the grain. Would a sensible man have the courage to say: "It was I who decreed and established that grain must be so cheap, so that everyone is comfortable, that farmers cannot give a penny to their masters, who, consequently, do not employ any workers? And also, since this low price prevents the cultivation of poor lands for lack of funds, this abandonment is an excellent way to avoid extraordinary high prices in barren years, and to have the grain consumed by livestock, as is happening now?" With regard to the Aids, Customs and passages, would it not take even greater audacity or extravagance to claim authorship of all the maneuvers carried out there, and to proclaim that one was justified in establishing twenty-six declarations to be made, or duties to be paid, in the same place and for the same prince, before a single shipment could be loaded? And that, with regard to liquors, there is justifiable justification for paying ten thousand people, at the expense of the king and the public, to uproot half the vineyards in the kingdom and force two-thirds of the population to drink only water? This is the admission of the establishment: let no one believe that there is anyone who can claim credit for it.

As for the delay, under the pretext of the situation, which is the most common recourse of those interested in maintaining this state of affairs, extravagance and the renunciation of reason are no less evident, since each of these articles, taken separately, brings more harm to the kingdom than it suffers from all the enemies of the king, and the principle which produces all these disorders has, moreover, no more relation to peace or war than to the life or death of the king of China: one cannot therefore use such reasoning to delay the remedy, without showing that one fears neither God nor men.

On the other hand, since very considerable sums are needed to escape the present situation, it is maintained that there is currently no man, however clever, in the kingdom who, by balancing on the one hand the ordinary and indispensable expenses of the State, as well as the payment of arrears of everything owed in the king's name, and on the other hand what ordinary revenues can provide, could find the means not to balance the books, but only to cover a quarter of the deficit presented by the State's resources, and who would, above all, be willing to mortgage his fortune to guarantee the success of his expedients. Thus, the struggle is between these two situations: the author of this Memoir proposes, in the name of the people, of whom he is merely the advocate, methods that are those of the whole world, which

cannot be contradicted without abandoning reason and making oneself ridiculous; And he has as adversaries people who want us to prefer a hope founded on means they would be ashamed to propose in writing, and on whose success they would be very upset that their own fortunes should depend.

The only and most cruel enemy these measures have to combat is that the basis of this great restoration of wealth to the people, which will enable them to share it with the king, rests solely on the cessation of established practices, applauded by their authors only, however, by self-interested, flattering, or ignorant subjects. A very unfortunate consequence follows, namely, that this destruction can only be a great good insofar as the acceptance of what is being overturned was a very great evil, and equally the ruin of the king and the people. Now, such a statement is hardly the language of a courtier. But, as Messrs. Today's ministers are to blame only for having acted too readily on the word of their predecessors, having judged others by their own judgment, and assuming as much integrity in others as they themselves possess. The recognition of this surprise, far from harming their reputation, may, on the contrary, bring them considerable honor at the expense of those who bequeathed them such a deplorable system.

And all things considered, it is a very advantageous bargain to extricate oneself from the current situation through a complete restoration of the people's wealth, which attracts the king's wealth in its wake, and consequently the payment of his debts, as in the time of Monsieur de Sully. But whatever benefit it may bring to the kingdom, and whatever modest price may be demanded for such a great good, one will never obtain the consent of people to whom a general upheaval is far less sensitive than a singular ruin of the hope of amassing wealth, or the fear of losing a very ill-gotten reputation, from which they derived the same profit as if they had very well deserved it. As this is, once again, hardly the kind of person the ministers are, one is persuaded that they will look kindly upon a work that has had no other purpose than to render service to the king, the public, and themselves, all the more so as they will add, with their great insights, what might be lacking in the perfection of these Memoirs; where we end them, with a strong conviction, based on the general idea of all those who have read them, that the author has fulfilled what was stated in the title of his work.

And as final, physical, and irrefutable proof of the truth of this entire detail, the one who composed it publicly claims to be the author of eighty million in increased demands on the people, and expects gratitude in return, because of the conditions attached to it; while those who would like to contradict him, or propose much smaller sums, collectable through standard methods, would dare neither reveal themselves nor declare themselves the authors of such plans. The reason for each course of action is quite clear, since by the first the author only intends to make taxpayers pay one-fifth of the restored assets; and by the second, he would have to demand the impossible, which is not without precedent, or rather, which has had all too many in the past.

And since it is unheard of to demand from the people what they cannot afford, it would be equally criminal for them to refuse their prince, for his needs, a portion of the resources he

has restored to them. To achieve this, it is being maintained before the whole world, without fear of being contradicted in writing, that three hours of work from the ministers and fifteen days of execution from the people are not necessary, because it is merely a matter of ending a very violent situation, such as the siege of La Rochelle. The Barbary wheat, as soon as it is excluded from Provence, will generate six times this tax increase for Languedoc, and for Provence itself. If this province buys grain at a higher price, since it grows very little there, it will recoup three times its investment through the sale, increased in both price and quantity, of its oils, olives, grapes, and dried figs, which are often known to be discarded there, and which are in this miserable state only because the provinces where the wheat serves as a counter-exchange to obtain the rest are rendered powerless by their degradation. This establishment of Barbary wheat can at best only be beneficial in times of barrenness; but, through ordinary continuation, there is nothing so detrimental; and this continual maintenance is merely the result of the singular and personal interest of the suppliers who, in order to profit in their markets by building their stores more cheaply, show little concern for the general welfare of the king and the people: added to this is the particular benefit of the entrepreneurs, who maintain themselves in this trade through protection bought at a price.

And this error against policy, of admitting foreign wheat outside the time of sterility, especially in a fertile country like France, is so gross that, besides the example of England, which buys the opposite at a price of money, that is to say the export of grain, Spain, which, by the almost continual abandonment of the cultivation of the greater part of its best lands, would seem to be very excusable to commit it, given that high prices are more common there than reasonable prices, nevertheless knows so well, in years of abundance, the horrible disadvantage of debasing a commodity of this nature, that, since the union of the two monarchies in the royal house of Bourbon, it has prayed that it not be brought to it on these occasions, although there would be something to gain for the common people, to speak the erroneous language which has reigned in France for so long. Thus, it is maintained that there is no muid of wheat, rejected by the Barbary Coast, that will not increase by a hundredfold in the kingdom, for reasons well-known and understood by all farmers, but which are closed to speculation, the sole cause of this surprise; and, quite apart from this hundredfold increase in production, there will be the same surge in revenue, since there is likewise none of these muids, banished from Provence, and consequently from France, that does not yield four thousand livres of revenue, for the same reasons.

Finally, for the last part of this Memoir, it is argued that the people cannot pay the king anything except through the sale of their produce, and the prince is in a position to double this same sale in an instant, by the cessation of violence that has destroyed or suspended more than half of it; it is the height of folly to call visionaries those who announce that the king can also double taxes, not only without ruining anyone, but enriching everyone. For the increase in the price of goods also increases the price of land, which alone sustains all social classes, from the highest to the lowest. And the farmer, finally, cultivates for himself and all other social classes; and he shares with them, penny by pound, the good and the bad he suffers in his trade or sale; although this is precisely the thing in the world that the poor understand least, as well as those speculators, filled with charity, who allow themselves to be deceived by

the voices of people who reason less well than The beasts, when they speak impulsively, as has already been said, and without knowledge of the facts, are incapable of doing what they are not.

The four generalities, relieved of the burden on the Aids, will immediately revive the provinces bordering the kingdom, which will promptly redistribute the same benefits to the most distant regions; so that the poll tax, levied on one-tenth of the land, will not amount to a quarter of what they will have gained from this agreement.

## Chapter XII:

To summarize this entire Memorandum, it is maintained that the king has the power to restore, whenever he so chooses, three hundred million in regular revenue, as in the time of King Francis I, not by resorting to coercion or executions against the people, as has been done; but by restoring them to full possession of their faculties, half of which, amounting to more than fifteen hundred million, they have been deprived of through means born solely of crime, as has been demonstrated, and continued by surprise since 1660.

For this purpose, it is necessary that the king regard France and all its wealth as belonging solely to him, and that he consider all the possessors as his own tenants; finally, that he understand that anything that hinders them in their farming, their commerce, and their trade is the same as if the harm were done to him personally on any lands he may possess in certain provinces of the kingdom.

Now, since there are countless institutions for extracting various dues from the people, the costs of which are borne first and foremost, while the burden accompanying the collection destroys twenty times as much wealth as is collected for the prince; is it not clear that it is as if the harm were done to him personally, and that consequently, the cessation of this harm, which can occur without delay, enriching his people, is a personal opulence that is procured for him? All those who disagree, who can only be the nation that lives and grows rich from the ruin of the king and the people, are readily asked whether, of the ten thousand types of taxes that exist today in France, levied through the tax collectors and partisans, with the known and documented circumstances, there is a single one whose basis is not created and demanded from a taxpayer or a person subject to the poll tax; These two taxes equally encompassed Nobles, Bourgeois, and Commoners—that is to say, all the men of the kingdom. Thus, by assessing all that the king receives through these ten thousand channels, which provide employment for over 100,000 men, and allocating it to the Taille and the Capitation, there is, all at once, one hundred thousand payments at 1,000 livres each per year, which is quite cheap; that is to say, 100 million in revenue for the king and his people. This is only the smallest part of the benefit, since most of the destruction of property caused by this measure would be immediately restored, to the benefit of these people, and consequently of the prince. For to believe that the channel of a Partisan will make one find good where there is none, he who ordinarily has nothing, is to renounce reason, and to impose on public faith, which knows that it is precisely the opposite; and that his hand alone, like fire, consumes the object to which it attaches itself.

To demonstrate this truth more clearly in a single article, there are only those subject to the taille (a direct tax) who feed the livestock that supplies the town butcher shops. Now, are there not tax collectors, offices, and clerks for their entry into these same towns? Are there not some for the sale of meat and tallow? Are there not similarly some for the wool that comes from them, for the cloth made from it, for their passage and exit? That's not all: don't hides, which operate on the same principle, similarly have their own separate taxes, and up to

four or five, if they travel any distance in transit? — All these costs and levies must be paid and borne by the owner of the sheep, namely, a tax collector or poll tax payer, who has fed and raised it; Since the king is the tax farmer, it is the same, by extension, as if these sums were drawn from the prince's purse or generosity; which is the lesser disorder, a point that cannot be emphasized enough, since the state derives nineteen times more from it than these salaries; and to illustrate this, it is maintained that there is not today in the kingdom a quarter of the livestock that was there forty-five years ago; which brings a similar depletion to the cultivation of the land, which is only good or bad in proportion to the herds that graze on it.

The same applies to wines: the ten or eleven tax offices that deal with liquors, along with the wages and wealth of the tax farmers, must be borne first and foremost by a man liable to the *taille* (a direct tax) or subject to the poll tax. Now, by receiving immediately from these people what belongs to the prince through this unfortunate ceremony, it represents immense wealth for them as well as for the monarch, and an end to misery for all the people. For the consequence of this dreadful economy is quite simply that, besides the ruin of farmers and winegrowers, more than half the population of large cities, especially on this side of the Loire, and even in Paris and the countryside, eats no meat and drinks only water; which diminishes most of their strength, and consequently their labor.

The same reasoning applies to taxes on timber, coal, hay, poultry, eggs, butter, fish, tobacco, and finally to all other commodities, since almost none are exempt.

We will find the same offices, the same clerks, the same tax collectors, the same pay, or rather the same fortune, and the same annihilation to be suffered by those liable for the *taille* or poll tax, who would be ready to buy back at triple the amount due to the king from these horrible practices, and even with quadruple profit for themselves.

Let no one call this a vision; it is pure reality, and the contrary cannot be maintained without extravagance, and without showing that one fears neither God nor men; whereas what is being proposed amounts to asking that France be administered as all other states in the world are, and as it was, even, until the death of King Francis I. In short, they are simply begging the ministers to be so kind as to enrich, at the same time, both the people and the king.

Indeed, there is no tenant farmer who would not be happy to raise his rent if the yield from his farm increased. If a hundred farmers, bourgeois, or merchants were summoned from all parts of the kingdom, there would not be one who would refuse, provided they had not been bribed to speak against their conscience, to pay four times their poll tax, even in advance, provided they were relieved of all those wretched levies, which were invented only to ruin the king and the people, and enrich the entrepreneurs.

And yet, what is appalling is that, in the present situation, where France needs all its strength to defend itself against so many enemies, the exact opposite approach has been taken, piling treaty upon treaty every day, with the marked circumstances, that is to say, twenty losses on the land, for one profit to the king. Although there is only surprise on the part of the

ministers, since only 1660, it is still said, when it is proposed to cease such practices, that one wants to overthrow the State, as if the State consisted, as has already been said, in those who ruin its lands and commerce, and consequently the king and his people; But since the opposite is true, and the nation being fought is the kingdom's greatest enemy, we must regard with horror the appalling allegations that the aim is to overthrow the State, when we speak of ending the greatest desolation that ever existed. Should we not, on the contrary, agree that the goal is to provide ample leisure time for the Ministers and the Council of Finance, who are occupied today, from morning till night, with nothing but directing and fighting monsters that should never have been established? And, although this is done with the utmost integrity on their part, the same cannot be said of their subordinates and assistants, whose numbers are countless; for there is no party, however small, that does not generate indirect profits for more than a hundred people, who, without being tax farmers, join their voices to say that the aim is to overthrow the State.

Since ills are cured by the opposite of what caused them, as the king needs help, he need only treat his people like the farmer we mentioned earlier, who readily raises his tenant's rent because he simultaneously increases the size of his farm. The king can safely say to his people: "You will pay me this much in increased taxes and poll taxes because I am eliminating such and such a tax that cost you ten times as much; thus, you will earn four times more than I do from this deal." But this course of action will not be taken as long as the aforementioned nation is consulted, for whom the destruction of the kingdom would be far less painful than that of its fortune, as has been proven every time such a situation has arisen. However, since this is not the character of Messrs. The ministers, who are very honest, though very surprised, hope for some success due to the necessity of circumstances that do not allow for the use of any other remedy for the salvation of the State. This is all the more true since a kind of transaction is being made with the destroyers of the kingdom, contenting themselves with asking them for a few concessions, which will immediately restore enough resources to the people, with a profit on their part, to provide the king with the 80 million francs in revenue he needs; and which will also be certain proof that the complete eradication of the evil will later put the kingdom in a position to give the king 300 million francs, as in the time of Francis I.

The error we have hitherto made regarding money, considering it as the principle of wealth, which is only true in Peru, cannot be justified after reading the chapter devoted to it, where it is shown that it is solely the slave of consumption, following its destiny step by step, and moving or stopping with it, an écu making a hundred changes in a day, when there are many sales and resales, and remaining for entire months in one place, when consumption is ruined, as is happening at present; from which it follows that, being possible to restore this consumption to more than five hundred million in an instant, this will be so much movement of money, and not new species put into circulation; whereby the supposed absurdity of such a sudden rise in revenues is amply purged and cast upon the detractors, who will not be able to maintain their position, given the authority they owe only to the error of Messrs. The ministers will be missed, their system having been able to maintain itself to this day only like that of the Quran, that is to say, by forbidding dissent and by threatening impalement without

reprieve for disobedience. Moreover, in all this, they have been merely the mouthpiece or advocate of the people; and they fear so little being disavowed that they agree to provide the signatures of one hundred thousand men, each possessing ten thousand crowns of wealth, one supporting the other; it is therefore a bargain without fear or peril, which can only be refused by those they have spoken of.

And finally, as the title of this Memoir indicates, it is maintained that there is no man on earth who can object, under any pretext whatsoever, to the raising of eighty million, which will be only a fifth of what will be restored to the people by three hours of work, without utter ridicule and without being abhorrent to God and men, while this offer is, on the contrary, filled with blessings. Similarly, it is always claimed that it is equally impossible to establish in any other way a quarter of the supply of the king's needs in the current circumstances, and that there is no one in the world willing to guarantee the success of even the smallest portion; from which one can see the basis on which the proposed solution can be rejected, in order to rely on another so devoid of certainty, on an occasion where one must not be mistaken.

Finally, the author of these Memoirs presents them to the public on one condition, which will not be envied by the detractors, namely, that which was practiced by the Athenians.

This people had established that anyone proposing new regulations would be listened to calmly, whoever they might be; but that it was necessary to begin by having a rope around their neck, so that if the implementation, far from being advantageous, proved detrimental to the State, the author would be immediately strangled. If France had acted in this way one hundred and fifty years ago, when the Italians sowed the first seeds of the practices that have reduced it to its present state, the king would certainly have two hundred million more regulated revenue than he has today, and would not owe a penny, because there would be two hundred thousand fewer edicts or declarations and ten thousand fewer types of taxes, all introduced since that time: the fate decreed by the laws of the Athenians, which justly befell the first inventor, would have completely dried up the source of such undertakings. But, far from this destiny, two hundred thousand fortunes were made where only a single rope fell to Athens, which produced a completely contrary fate for the government; its destruction, through the lack of this safeguard, was erected as the quickest means of procuring the highest opulence. France saw its commerce and the cultivation of its lands utterly ruined by these purveyors of novelties; and more than half of the kingdom become useless to the people, and consequently to the prince; not to mention the destruction of the subjects and the decline in the fertility of families, a necessary consequence of the desolation of agriculture.

And to illustrate, by way of comparison, what France would be like if this system had not, in a way, hindered the growth of the state's strength and wealth, it should be noted that Judea, at the height of its kings' power, never possessed more than a territory 70 leagues long by 25 leagues wide, that is to say, ten times smaller than that of France: yet its monarchs, according to Holy Scripture, raised armies of 1,670,000 men. And, since those fit to bear arms do not constitute a fifth of a country's population, the elderly, the infirm, women, and children making up at least the other four, this country contained and sustained nearly nine million

people; that is to say, on the basis of one hundred million in France, who could subsist there, if circumstances were equal. And we must not dwell on the fertility of Judea, which was nothing other than the number and labor of its inhabitants, since today, things having changed considerably due to the devastation it has suffered, there are not one hundred thousand souls in that region, and the soil there appears naturally very poor; and its fertility, praised in Scripture, was therefore only the result of this number and this labor, just as the Barbets' comfortable habitation in the Alps was.

This observation was made to demonstrate France's ability to provide King Francis I with an annual income of three hundred million, without the constraints it has suffered since, which have weakened it by more than half. This is likewise a sure guarantee of the ease with which she will recover to her natural state, once the violent causes that reduce her to this pitiful situation have disappeared, as can happen in an instant, as in all cases where nature suffers violence, according to the philosophers' principle that anything violent cannot last. This creates a kind of certainty of seeing the kingdom restored soon, since evils, like goods, have their period, after which a revolution is necessary to return things to their original state, especially goods; and the hearts of people are always disposed to do good, as long as they are given the power to exercise their good will, which is, unfortunately, the opposite of the course followed for a very long time, up to this day.

**TREATISE ON THE NATURE,  
CULTIVATION, TRADE AND BENEFITS  
OF GRAINS  
(1704)**

**(“Both in relation to the public and to all the conditions of a state; divided into two parts, the first of which shows that the more grain is cheap, the more miserable the poor, especially the workers, are; and the second, that the more grain leaves a kingdom, the more it protects itself from the disastrous effects of extreme scarcity.”)**

## **Preliminary Considerations:**

Although agriculture was in early times the occupation of the highest ranks—since, according to Josephus, the descendants of David invited their friends to shear their flocks, and Livy recounts that, in ancient Rome, senators were taken to their plows—things have changed considerably since then, for what was once an honor has become a kind of derogation from all sorts of merit; and one can say today, in France, that the task of feeding and sustaining everyone else is left to the lowest of men.

Although farmers are found in all walks of life, a man must, before dedicating himself to it, be considered, both by himself and by everyone else, incapable of anything more elevated than this profession, which is considered the lowest of all, while it requires distinguished merit and consists of combining long practice with rigorous study to bring things to the perfection necessary for the common good of all peoples.

There is even something more: not only have theory and practice never been united in any subject for this purpose, but one could even say that they have always been separated by such a great distance that there is more interaction between peoples from one hemisphere to the other than there is today between those who merely theorize about farming and those who actually practice it. However, since the distribution of the resulting benefits is entirely in the hands of those who only possess the theory—that is, those who are completely ignorant of its true implications—without others having any part in it, even if there were individuals capable of reflecting on the practice (which is very rare), the same disorder ensued as during the construction of the famous Tower of Babel: the workers no longer knew what they were doing, or rather, they were doing the opposite of what would have been necessary for the perfection of the work; not that they had lost their sense of it, but because, by an act of Providence, having suddenly come to speak different languages, they could no longer understand each other, which necessarily produced indescribable confusion.

It is therefore maintained that the same thing has happened in France for the past forty years with regard to wheat, and that if, since then, it has been seen either at an excessive price several times, causing the ruin of countless people, or in a state of appalling degradation, ruining both rich and poor, it has been due to a misunderstanding, or a continual misinterpretation, between practical experience and speculation concerning it, since the combination of these two kinds of knowledge would certainly have prevented these two extremes and compensated for one another, as is practiced in all the states of Europe, and as was done even in France for several centuries before 1660. It is true that contrary ordinances exist, but they were made in times of hardship and necessity, and their application was subsequently neglected, as is easy to ascertain; And if it was used, it was hardly ever by governors, who secretly received payments to pretend not to notice the abductions.

It was to achieve this peace and this reunification that several years were deemed well spent on the practice, as well as on the speculation, of agriculture and commerce, which is a

necessary consequence of it. The effect of this was to understand irrefutably, and even to put oneself in a position to persuade others, that there is only one way to avoid the two extremes just mentioned, equally detrimental to a state: to maintain such a strong balance between these two disadvantages that, by continually replacing or compensating each other, they form a permanent whole, which distributes the grain equally every year, as a fair father distributes bread to his children.

Now, there is only one way, which is the one outlined at the beginning of this Memoir: namely, that the disorders of extreme high prices can only be avoided by allowing the free removal of grain from foreign countries at all times, without any tax, except in extraordinary cases; while on the other hand, the excessive debasement of this same commodity, which is hardly less damaging, if not as much so, despite what some may think because it is less publicized, can only be guaranteed by never allowing the destruction of grain, which is a certain consequence of low prices, and consequently a clear sign of future and imminent high prices, as experience has all too clearly shown, and as will be demonstrated even more clearly later on.

To summarize, then, after this preamble, which we deemed necessary, we maintain, as we did at the beginning of this Memoir, that the people will never be less rich or more miserable than when they buy wheat at rock-bottom prices.

This will be the first part; and the second, that one cannot avoid extreme high prices from time to time, to avoid using a harsher word, except by constantly selling wheat to foreigners.

These two propositions may perhaps lead to the author being treated, as Christopher Columbus was, and perhaps even more harshly, since if the latter was considered an eccentric when he expounded his ideas on the existence of a new world, the author of these Memoirs would deserve the names of executioner and traitor to the fatherland if he were mistaken; but we hope that no such risk will be taken until the entire work is read. and even, so as not to expose ourselves for a single moment to a similar fate, we will say, in anticipation, that we are doing nothing other than proposing to follow the example of Holland and England, where the people, having control of their destiny, at least with regard to subsistence, practice exactly the advice that is being given to France today.

## **PART ONE**

**(“Where it is Shown that the Lower the Price of Grain, the  
More Miserable the Poor, Especially the Workers,  
Become”)**

## Chapter I:

All the wealth of France, as well as that of all other countries, and of which it is better endowed than they, generally speaking, consists of two kinds: the fruits of the earth, which were the only ones at the beginning, or rather the innocence, of the world, and the goods of industry, which can be further reduced to the following four types: these bounty of the earth; and the ownership of the lands that produce them, and which divides the profit between the landowner and the tenant farmers, which is the second type; the third is formed by the rental of town houses, mortgaged annuities, offices in the legal profession, the military, and finance, money, and notes of exchange; and the fourth, finally, consists of manual labor and commerce, both wholesale and retail.

These last three species derive, first of all, their origin and maintenance from the fruits of the earth, since where they do not grow, such as on sand or rocks, they are entirely unknown; but this is only the first time they owe it this freely; for immediately thereafter, these three other kinds of goods must restore existence to those same fruits from which they originate, and this circulation must never be interrupted for a single moment, because the slightest cessation immediately becomes fatal to both parties, wherever it may occur. Indeed, the essential, and capital, fruits produced by France consist of wheat, which constitutes the first and most considerable part; and of liquids, such as wines, ciders, and brandies; in livestock, which provide meat and wool, and in cloth, the farmer will never raise and feed these four commodities on the land, and all the others in very large numbers which are a consequence of them, unless the three other states of goods which have been mentioned buy them from him at a price which is above the expense which he had to make to bring them to their perfection; as at the same time, it is absolutely necessary that the farmer and his master, who are but one and the same thing, and form but a common interest, buy from all the professions of life, as well as from all those who live by manual labor or by commerce, numbering two hundred by account, a part at the penny per pound of what they can supply them; and at a price, likewise, which puts them out of loss, so that everything is reciprocal. That is not all: it is also necessary that all two hundred professions trade mutually, through continuous commerce, in the products of their craft, all at the same level as the fruits of the earth, and especially the grain, to which they all owe their existence, as has been said; because none can be disrupted without immediately sharing its misfortune with all the other professions, whatever they may be, either immediately or indirectly, since they all form a kind of chain of opulence, which has value only through the assembly of the links of which it is composed, and which loses its value, or at least most of its value, as soon as a single one is detached.

So that, in order to maintain the harmony upon which the entire cohesion of peoples and states rests, and consequently the revenues of the prince, it is essential that one part not exploit another; That is to say, it is necessary that the balance be so equal in all these transactions that everyone finds their own advantage equally; otherwise, it will inevitably

happen, as when goods are sold with false weights or measures, that one of the merchants will soon be ruined.

From all this reasoning, it is easy to see that, while each private individual works toward their own particular benefit, they must not lose sight of equity and the common good, since it is from these that they must derive their sustenance; and that by momentarily destroying these principles with regard to a merchant with whom they trade, even though, through common error and corruption of the heart, they believe they have gained everything, they must, on the contrary, expect, if this conduct were to become widespread, as sometimes happens, to pay for its foolish gamble with their own destruction, which they thereby bring about in the future, as will be shown. However, all men do, from morning till night, to do precisely the opposite; and there is no one who would not be content, in buying another's merchandise, to receive not only a loss from the seller, but also everything of value he owns on top of that, so blinding is self-interest to men; so that, if a superior and general authority did not intervene to curb this greed for absolutely necessary commodities, such as grain, by setting a price, there are men inhumane enough to want to save the lives of their fellow men, in pressing situations, only at the cost of all their possessions. And, as this policing cannot be equal in the In detail, it is necessary to supplement this, indirectly, by preventing, through a powerful authority, a commodity from becoming the prey and victim of the greed of a merchant, who would be happy, if it were at his disposal, to sacrifice everything to his individual interest, without any concern for religion and humanity, which are banished from all sales and purchase operations, because it is believed that God and men have been satisfied by not using fraud and deception, and only taking advantage of the necessity of circumstances.

## Chapter II:

What was stated in the previous chapter is certainly true, with regard to wheat, in two opposing ways, although misguided zeal only acknowledges one: the excessive price of grain, which constantly destroys countless wretches, as has been all too evident, having always been considered a scourge used by God to punish the sins of humankind.

But to maintain that the opposite excess, namely the great debasement of this grain compared to the price of other commodities, is not an equally violent evil, and does not have such disastrous results, even though it does not attract so much attention, is to be completely ignorant of what is happening in the world, and to have only a superficial understanding of the details of farming and agricultural commerce.

To get to the point, we ask those whose zeal blinds them, and who are inclined to always wish for low-priced wheat for the poor, if they would believe their wishes would be fully granted if this commodity of grain were to be returned to the same price as in 1550, namely, the Paris setier weighing approximately 240 pounds, at 20 or 21 sous in an average year. Since there is no farm laborer who earns less than seven or eight sous a day, which doubles during the harvest months, and since a farm or piece of land yielding 200 setiers of wheat needs five or six of these laborers throughout the year to cultivate it; Each of these people, taking more than a cent's worth for their share, would require the master farmer to give them not only his entire harvest, but even a mina of silver, to pay three or four times as much, in order to satisfy them and to sow and feed himself and his entire family. We will not push the absurdity of this situation further in comparison to the present state, which was not so absurd at that time, because this worker earning eight to sixteen sous a day earned only a similar amount of money in 1550, and shoes, which today sell for one hundred sous and six francs in Paris, were valued at five sous by the ordinances of Henry II in 1549, and partridges and leverets at six deniers.

Thus, no longer discourse is needed to show the horror of false zeal, taking things absolutely, and without delving into them; but, so as not to go back so far, or go down less far, by speaking only of the year 1600, that is to say of a time which several of our contemporaries are aware of, this same setier of Paris was worth three pounds ten sous or thereabouts, in an ordinary year, shoes fifteen sous, and the rest in proportion; and although wheat had tripled the price at which it was fifty years before, it was not quarreled over as it is today, although taking it since 1650, it has not received such a strong increase, apart from the time of extraordinary depreciation, which one should not count; and this, given that all things had taken on the same increase, and that there was no reason for the worker to complain about buying his wheat three times more, when the shoemaker was selling the same shoes for fifteen sous that he had given for five when wheat was worth three times less.

The self-proclaimed protectors of the poor cannot yet, without abandoning reason, demand this price for grain; for although the consequences would lose two-thirds of the absurdity previously displayed in the demand for a price of twenty sous per setier, which reasonably existed in 1550, the remaining excess would still be enough to ruin everything, at today's level. Indeed, if, in the first scenario, the farmer had to buy three times more wheat than he harvested,

in order to satisfy his workers, he still could not, in the second scenario, pay them with his entire harvest. Thus, there is still no way to maintain this position, since, for something to be impertinent and ridiculous, it is not necessary for disorder to be in the most extreme form; it is enough that reason be even slightly offended: and in this case, it would be terribly offended.

On this principle, we must boldly come to the year 1650, that is to say, to our time, when wheat, a setier of Paris, was at ten and eleven francs in a common year, without anyone crying famine, or even showing any surprise, and without anyone being similarly bothered by the fact that it had tripled the price at which it was fifty years before, for the same reasons that had procured this rest in 1600, namely that shoes which were worth fifteen sous at that time, were sold in 1650 for forty-five and fifty sous, and everything else in proportion. And yet, when in the year 1700 and subsequent years, in which we find ourselves, all these same commodities, except for wheat, have doubled in price due to perfectly natural causes, which will be discussed in a separate chapter (namely, the floods of money that arrive daily in Europe), it is readily accepted that all kinds of goods should receive their share of the price increase, as they have always done since the discovery of the New World; but this justice is denied to grain alone, and it is believed that everything has been gained by forcing a farmer or his master, who are but one and the same thing or the same interest, to sell his grain at the same price they paid fifty years ago, while they are forced to buy all other commodities at double the price, both for their personal needs and for the necessities of agriculture, a fact which, by constantly obliging them to share the profits with countless others, ruins them when the proportions are no longer maintained. There is even more, it will be said, for this makes it absolutely impossible for them to continue this trade with the perfection necessary for the maintenance of the State; which, subsequently spreading to all other sectors, which unjustly seek to sell their goods at high prices and buy grain cheaply, inevitably leads to their own destruction. Indeed, since the source of all France's wealth is the cultivation of the land, this disorder of disproportionate value first renders it imperfect due to the savings that must be made, and even ruins it entirely in many places; which makes the reckless bidding of the injustice of the primary instigators of all this disorder pay the price, namely those who always claim to buy cheaply and always sell at exorbitant prices.

### Chapter III:

It is easy to see, from everything discussed in the previous chapter, that it would be unreasonable to wish that the Paris setier were worth only twenty sous, as in 1550, or three pounds ten sous, as in 1600.

Now, on this same basis, it is argued that wanting it to be worth approximately nine or ten francs, as is claimed today, and as it was without any demands in 1650, is to allow a degree of irregularity capable of ruining everything, destroying all estates, and consequently the poor, who have no other subsistence than the labor provided by the wealthy landowners, so that a man who has only his arms or his day's work to live on is lost as soon as he cannot find it, even if wheat were worth only twenty sous per setier, as in 1550. From this it follows that it suffices to say that, wheat being on the At nine to ten pounds per setier, Paris measure, as it is now, and even less, it is impossible for most farmers to pay their landlords anything, which ruins both parties equally, irrefutably demonstrating that all workers lose three-quarters of their income, if they are not entirely reduced to begging, as is seen every day.

Providence willed that in France the rich and the poor should be mutually dependent on each other for subsistence, since the former would perish with all their means and possessions, which are originally nothing other than land (all the rest, such as rents, charges, and dues, being properly property only by fiction, and in relation to this primary cause that gives them existence), if the latter, that is to say, the poor, did not lend them the help of their labor to cultivate these assets; conversely, if the earth gave its riches of its own accord, without any constraint, instead of feeding and paying men, as it does, only in proportion to their labor, and according to the sentence pronounced from the mouth of God himself after the sin of Adam, it would happen that all those who had no capital would be absolutely unable to subsist; and thus the interest of these two conditions, the rich and the poor, is to be in perpetual commerce: and as the first law of trade is that both parties find their profit, otherwise it ceases entirely because it destroys its subject, it is absolutely necessary to keep the balance equal, in order to share the benefit, and that one of the basins not tipping too far to one side by the occurrence of some extraordinary weight, it does not carry away all the profit of the other, which would render it unable to continue in the future. It is the price of wheat that balances the playing field in agriculture between the farmer and his master, and the worker who helps to cultivate it. Now, to show that the balance is too heavily tipped in favor of the worker, with wheat at nine and ten francs per setier in Paris, it is necessary to examine the quality and various types of soil perfection in France.

It is certain that there are more than a hundred degrees of difference between the most fertile and best-producing lands of nature, and the least fertile, which seem to have been created only to form the world's container, providing nothing for either plowing or grazing. Indeed, if one sees some, albeit in very small quantities, where only two poor horses can cultivate up to

a hundred acres a year, and plow or turn over two acres a day, without any need for fertilizer, which would cause everything to perish with too great a yield, and which still manage to pay twenty to one for the cost of seed; and this every year, without ever resting, contrary to the practice of almost all the others; there are others, on the other hand, and in much greater numbers, which must be forced to produce, and this through continual labor, both in terms of fertilizer and increasing the number of horses, the land resisting at every step; And with all this, they must be given a rest period of at least three years, and even more often, such as seven or eight consecutive years, and sometimes even up to fifteen or twenty years, depending on whether the price of wheat allows them to believe that the crop could bear the costs.

Thus, an acre of land of the least quality, leased for three pounds, as is often the case, and even less, which makes six pounds, considering the year of rest, cannot be cultivated without a heavy sowing, that is to say, a setier worth about eight pounds: it requires at least four plowings, and quite often five, which are never paid less than three pounds ten sous each, and even more for poor soils, which are usually stony, and which consequently require, due to the wear they cause to the plowshare, that it be taken frequently to the forge to be re-hardened; thus, there are at least fourteen francs in expenses; There is the manure, which cannot be less than twelve cartloads, or other proportionate measures, which comes to another twelve francs; there are the costs of the harvest to be made from the field, which, at three pounds, amounts to more than thirty-eight francs sown in the ground, and when the yield is four setiers, which almost never happens in such soil, one considers oneself very fortunate; and if the wheat that has been sown cost eight francs per setier, as poor soils always deteriorate it and cause it to lose its perfection, unlike excellent soils, as in Hungary, where rye becomes wheat after three years; the grain from this poor soil is sold at most for six francs. Thus, the farmer and the landowner are in considerable loss, which forces them to leave the land fallow, as happens every day; There being a great many uncultivated fields, formerly plowed, which inevitably reduces both the landowner and the farmer to extreme poverty; if wheat had been worth eleven to twelve pounds per setier, as it easily can be, the landowner and the farmer, the servants and the laborers, would have all benefited equally, and it would have been a formal guarantee and a sure defense against the horrors of a barren year, which never fails to occur from time to time.

This, then, is in many ways the supposed pity and charity of those who want, on behalf of the poor, wheat at low prices, far from their own means; since this first poor person, who is a laborer, is not only reduced to begging by the dismissal he receives at the same time as the land is no longer cultivated, but also the farmer and the landowner are plunged into utter destitution. And that all the conditions of the State, which depend on this primary motive for their subsistence, receive the same fate, penny for pound, according to the necessity of their profession, without prejudice to the certainty of a general [disaster], when the disposition of heaven is not favorable to the goods of the earth. Thus, we see that the English have not lost the sense of giving money to those who export their grain to foreign countries, in order to oblige the inhabitants to cultivate the poor lands, of which they have plenty. We have even seen this practice employed a year after grain prices there had been extraordinarily high,

without alleging the pitiful reason that one must fear falling back into the misery of barrenness when one has only just emerged from it, and provide a kingdom with ample grain before sharing it with foreigners, since it is precisely the opposite, as has been shown, and will be shown even more clearly in the second part.

What has been said about the fate of poor lands, that they are a loss to both the farmer and the landowner because wheat is cheap, is common to lands of the highest quality, even at a penny per pound; because, if the costs of cultivation are lower, the profit for the landowner, who leases his property, is a proportionate price, which, since the harvest cannot be recouped because wheat is cheap, produces all the same effects as we have just noted, and towards as many people.

## Chapter IV:

Although the error in the reasoning of those who advocate low-priced wheat for the poor is all too clearly demonstrated by what has just been said, it is appropriate to examine the details of all their circumstances and show that all their wealth lies in cultivating the land; that for them, it is all that the farmer sows and reaps; that when he sows much, they reap much, and equally little when the opposite is true; that thus, it is in their interest to constantly enable him to produce an abundant harvest, which, since this is currently prevented by the low price of grain, all their hopes and wishes must be directed toward a price level that compels him to cultivate as much as possible.

All the professions, arts, and trades that make up a state, and especially in France, where there are far more kinds and types than anywhere else in the world, have as their purpose their own subsistence, by procuring or supplying that of others, which obliges them to rely on each other and to provide employment for one another. Nevertheless, not all have a function of equal necessity, one that the world cannot do without entirely. Some provide the essentials, such as the most basic and fundamental sustenance, that is to say, bread and liquor; others something more, such as the lesser delicacies; still others, meats, among which there are many different degrees, such as the delicate, the sensual, the superfluous, and finally the fanciful and utterly useless. and all these various degrees, which are found not only in food, but also in clothes, furniture, carriages, spectacles, and finally in all the rest of what is called magnificence, and which gives existence to more than two hundred professions, arts and trades which are found in France, take, as has been said, their birth from the fruits of the earth, which, if it became as sterile as the sands of Africa, would dismiss or cause to perish more than one hundred and seventy of these two hundred professions: thus, once again, their interest is to maintain the plowman, and to prevent him from perishing. Now, it is a constant maxim in mechanics that every trade must feed its master, or that master must immediately close his shop. Thus, the moment the farmer fails to sell his wheat, as often happens, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of cultivation and all related expenses, such as taxes and other various rent payments, it is certain that this farmer will abandon everything or fail to meet his obligations to the landowner. From that moment on, all two hundred professions are in peril, and if this farmer's fate is shared by many others—as it is impossible for it not to be, since the problem stems from a general cause—all sectors suffer considerable losses.

Indeed, a landowner who is not paid cannot buy anything, since one has nothing without money. The first blow falls on superfluous things; after that, if the disorder continues, one gradually retreats, step by step, according to the scale just described.

And since it was opulence that gave rise to them, which is usually none other than the fruits of the earth, their fall brings them all down with it.

There is one more point to consider: this reform should not be limited to the superfluous, or even to the convenient and useful, but should attack even the most essential aspects of several conditions or professions, through a backlash that immediately becomes contagious and embraces all professions. Indeed, if only the superfluous and the magnificent were suffering, the disorder would not be so deplorable. But since the craftsman of the superfluous and the magnificent practices this art and profession only to procure necessities, one cannot be eliminated without the loss of the other immediately ensue, causing further waste in the state. This is because each individual must bear their ordinary expenses, on which necessary goods have acquired a price, and when that price falls, they all become a loss for the merchant or the craftsman.

On such occasions, a man living off his investments, who has a hundred crowns in his pocket and who would have spent them only on useful and convenient needs, had his tenant not assured him that he cannot pay him any more money at the approaching end of the term, carefully keeps them to be spun for the bare necessities. This excessively long holding keeps the money in a state of prolonged inactivity, contrary to its nature, which is to always be in motion and to generate income with every step it takes. Now, without this waste that reached the original cause, which is the wheat, the hundred crowns just mentioned would have made one hundred, even two hundred hands, during their stay, if they had always been on the move; and this strong guard, which held this sum in its initial deposit for so long, cannot be achieved without involving all the transits that survived only by virtue of their custom of receiving it with the help of their goods or services, for the poor sale of grain renders both completely useless in this case.

And, as there is order in the increase of expenditure, in proportion to the increase in one's means; as soon as one has more than the necessities, one procures the comfortable; that after this, one moves on to the refined, the superfluous, the magnificent, and finally, to all the excesses that vanity has invented to ruin the rich and enrich those who had nothing of their origins; Similarly, when disillusionment arises from the cessation of income from funds, caused by the debasement of wheat, the reform retraces the same path by going backwards, which first ruins all the workers of magnificence and superfluity, and throws a leaven which, spoiling the whole State, produces the bankruptcies that one never fails to see on these occasions, and makes those blind in such matters say that it is because there is no more money: there is as much and more than ever, but it is becoming paralyzed, as has been shown.

And to demonstrate this truth even more clearly, one need only look at the bankruptcies that have occurred in Paris since wheat became so cheap: there are more than there were ten years ago, and twice as many as there are today. Indeed, a landlord who isn't paid won't pay thirty pistoles for a wig, fifty pistoles for a scarf, or four thousand francs for a carriage; thus, merchants of such extravagant goods, who have made large advances and taken out substantial loans to stock their shops with such superfluities, must perish entirely when they cannot find buyers, abandoning everything to their creditors. This becomes so contagious that a single bankruptcy triggers countless others.

There is yet another disorder, which is likewise a child of the first cause, which is that when a worker or merchant sees his affairs in disorder, and he cannot satisfy those to whom he owes at the due date, lack of sales, he does finance, as it is called, to escape begging; that is to say, he gives everything at a low price and at a loss, not from himself, but from his creditors, and then puts the money in his pocket, and the key under the door of his house, taking leave of the company, never to reappear at all, or only after he has obtained considerable discounts from those to whom he owes; which, besides the disorder that it causes to the whole State, creates yet another terrible one, in that this sale at a low price and at a loss of goods which should be much more expensive by their nature, reduces to nothing those of all the other sellers, who can never hope for the liberality of the customer to prefer their goods at a price higher than that at which they can be obtained elsewhere; and this first merchant is only obliged to give his merchandise at a loss because he has obtained the farmer's wheat on the same condition.

## Chapter V:

One might be surprised, given the widespread misconception about the nature or price of grain, to hear the assertion that all these individuals whose fortunes are crumbling, who are enduring such a great loss and causing it to so many others—losses of 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 thousand francs, and even more—suffer this unfortunate fate only because they attempted to earn, at most, fifty, one hundred, or three hundred francs a year on the bread they ate and which was consumed in their homes in Paris. The price of bread for the common people now does not exceed fifteen deniers per pound, based on ten pounds per setier: but to raise it by half, to about two sous, which would increase the expense for a family of about ten or twelve people, as they all are, by only five or six sous per day, would amount to only one hundred francs per year; and this scheme, or supposed profit from these one hundred francs, results in a loss of more than ten thousand pounds, and reduces the entire family to alms.

Although this fact is undeniable, the people, who in their general reasoning are no different from animals and who do not extend their views beyond their immediate and personal interests, will have difficulty understanding these principles, namely: that they cannot be rich and comfortable as long as wheat is cheap, and that, on the contrary, they must maintain the level and proportionate increases in all commodities, at least for the last one hundred and fifty years, so that, with the balance always in equilibrium, trade can be conducted fairly, failing which everything perishes.

But this is no less undeniable: everything that happens, everything that is seen, and everything that has just been verified, demonstrates it all too clearly. All estates sow the land, and it is not the farmer alone who has this responsibility, although this is crudely assumed; And, as when one sows little, one reaps little, and on the contrary the harvest is abundant when one cultivates a quantity of land; all states and all conditions must make this reasoning, each for their own particular, when they buy wheat or bread at a considerable price, which is not exorbitant, of which it is not necessary to make an exception, since all excesses are defective, and do not enter into the reasoning: when, I say, they provide themselves with this first need of life at a reasonable price, which does not make the plowman, who is only their commission agent, at a loss as today; it is a number of seeds that they throw on the earth, and which will bring them with interest an abundant harvest, and the five or six sous a day or one hundred francs a year, will often produce more than two or three thousand pounds; Instead of sowing only for the cost of the harvest, which is the main concern of farmers today, they must expect that the landowner, receiving nothing, will generate no profit for them through any action on their produce, which will cause them to perish along with that same farmer.

Although all this may seem like a very abstract speculation to those who are not currently farmers, it can nevertheless be assured that it is truly and in fact a pure practice, and that things happen this way every day; that the surplus of necessities becomes comfort; that the surplus of comfort is transformed into luxury; and that the abundance of the latter likewise

gives birth to the magnificent, which divides again into new branches, extending as far as the vivacity of the mind or the corruption of the heart can imagine.

And since this abundance of necessities is the first motive and the first cause of all this generation, from the moment it ceases by the debasement of the price of grain, all posterity perishes immediately, for the reason provided by philosophy or by nature, that when the cause ceases, the effects immediately have the same fate.

Although, by all that has just been said, it is impossible not to give hands to such sensitive and natural reasoning, supported by two such incontestable facts, which take place in the eyes of everyone, although without any attention which can bring back prejudices which are engendered by the error of the people, as well as a blind compassion, caused by the ignorance of all the people in place, on the nature and the true interests of the wheat; However, as the example of what was seen in the discovery of the shape of the earth has only too clearly taught us the fate that all bearers of surprising new things must expect, it is appropriate to further strengthen this reasoning by a parallel of the fate of peoples, in all conditions, during these last years when grains have always been cheap, with the state in which these same peoples found themselves during the three preceding years, when wheat was constantly at a much higher rate than it is today, and this is what we will see in the following chapter.

## Chapter VI:

The certainty of the fact that, from 1690 to 1700, and even a little longer, wheat was always at eighteen livres per setier, and that, since 1700, it has steadily declined to the present day, where it is only at nine or ten livres, does not need to be established: thus, it is only a matter of making the comparison just mentioned.

All conditions have barometers, or touchstones of their ease or hardship, exposed to the light, which do not allow for a moment to doubt the situation in which they find themselves. If one were to argue that in the year 1660, and around that time, people were buying offices in the legal profession without any produce, for up to one hundred thousand francs and forty thousand écus, and the lesser amounts in proportion; And this, in all parts of the kingdom, without ever suffering a single moment of vacancy, unless preference gave rise to a kind of struggle; if one were to claim, I say, that this situation did not have a superiority and wealth of an infinite number of degrees compared to the state of today, that these same offices remain vacant by the dozen for several years, without one being able to find a quarter of the previous price, while more than two-thirds of the lower ones are abandoned to the casual parties by the owners, or that they are only wanted at a price less than the provisions would have cost in 1660; it would certainly be necessary for the author of such a doctrine to begin by establishing Pyrrhonism, and to doubt that he was even seeing the light of day in broad daylight. Just as it would be to say that this opulence was singular to the legal profession; because it was certainly general, and all conditions had a similar display of opulence, which did not allow one to doubt that it was real and effective in all states.

Since that time, or thereabouts, all things have always been in decline, except for a few periods when sterility, coming to the aid of the people, although sometimes too strong, raised the price of grain, corrected the balance, and restored the necessary proportions in general commerce: indeed, without this aid, it can be said that all the farmers would have perished, as had already happened countless times; and, although the remedy is violent, it can nevertheless be compared to all those used for the healing of the human body; their operation never acts, even with the most success, without altering the subject who undergoes them, and without costing blood, as well as a temporary decrease or suspension of vital forces. It is in this way that, however dreadful the disasters which followed the years 1693 and 1694, the following five or six years advantageously compensated for the harm, which one dares to put forward on a principle which is certain, and which will be established without fear of rebuttal in the following chapter, namely that a long debasement of the price of grain does more damage to a State, and even causes more people to perish than an excessive depreciation, which lasts at least one year; and that thus, if one wishes to condemn it absolutely, one must claim that instead of rejoicing in a victory obtained over a powerful enemy who, coming to invade and ruin a kingdom, would have been defeated, and the advantage itself followed by conquests made over him; Instead, I say, of celebrating this success with bonfires, we should deplore and mourn it, as if it were a public calamity, because the victory cost the lives of a considerable number of men.

For six consecutive years since 1694, wheat was almost always at double the price it is today; and consequently, all the land, both good and bad, was well cultivated; the wheat was well managed, and not diverted to foreign uses, as happens in times of decline; the landowners were well paid, and everything was of value; and there was no profession in the state that did not derive its livelihood from this abundance, thanks to the vigor of this first being, which gives birth to them all, as has been shown. Wools, linens, all manufactured goods were selling for half as much as they do today, and dress charges for almost double, which, being the height of perfection of this situation, is a sure barometer of general opulence: the whole thing is too recent to be called into question.

And, to preemptively answer the objection that war alone has changed this disposition, we have seen things in this state not only during three years of this last war, but also during all those preceding the Peace of the Pyrenees, as well as during all the others; and even, speaking frankly, if wars were sustained by the prince's ordinary revenues, as would not be impossible if all commerce were in its perfect state, one could say that they would be more advantageous to France than complete tranquility: war sets everything in motion; it purges sinful humors, and it somehow enhances the vivacity of a nation that does not naturally like rest, and to whom it is often even detrimental. But, to return to the tangible signs of opulence of these last three, or six, years, which have concluded the century that has just ended, besides those already mentioned and which are undeniable; There are some recorded accounts, proof of which can easily be established in writing, since one need only produce the rolls or accounts of the tax collectors.

Just as the wealth and opulence of the upper classes are marked by the purchase of offices, buildings, and all the trappings of complete magnificence, which is produced by the possession of a very great abundance of necessities, as has been said; similarly, the common people, who take their share, penny by pound, from their station to this situation, also have the tavern at their disposal, especially the workers, as a singular barometer of their means: it is there that often, on holidays and Sundays, outside of the hours of divine service, if the police magistrates do their duty, and often even on working days, more than half the week's wages are spent, and often even all of them. This rises and falls, according to the level and proportion of this work; If one has earned a great deal, one spends a great deal, and little in proportion; and the cessation of this behavior is a sure sign that one has found little or no work, due to a lack of trade or sales, caused by the collapse of the first principle. Now, it is certain, and the ministers know this all too well from the deductions that the tax farmers, both general and private, have demanded of them for the past three years, that the revenue from the excise taxes has decreased by more than half; in some places, it has even reached two-thirds, and even three-quarters. The books or registers of all the merchants, which are considered authoritative in court, would only further attest to such a decrease, if one were not to rely on their own words, even though they have nothing else to say. And it is in this conjuncture that money, far from continually producing a kind of representation with paper and notes of exchange, when it cannot suffice by its volubility or by its quantity to that of consumption, is itself reduced to a tenth part of its functions or its ordinary course, making

whole years of residence in hands where it would scarcely have remained for a moment, if the cessation of consumption, by the ruin of the proportion of prices, without which it cannot take place, did not hold it immobile by force: which makes it say in these circumstances, but only by the people, that there is no more money, because it is no longer seen moving, as if one could claim that a man asleep in some secret place was dead, because he would no longer be seen always by way and by way, as he showed himself before.

## Chapter VII:

To finally complete the argument that nothing is so detrimental to a state as the debasement of the price of grain, compared to the price previously charged for other commodities, and for grain itself; it must be proven, as is the truth, that this situation causes far more people to die violently or unnaturally than any form of sterility.

Although this proposition should cause a great deal of surprise, because it strongly reinforces the entire argument, it is no less true for that reason; And, whatever prejudice may prevail to believe the contrary, one will be forced to give in to it, however little attention is paid to the details of the facts that are about to be boldly presented to the public, because they are indisputable, although far too often ignored, unfortunately, due to the great distance that exists between those who suffer this unfortunate fate and those who could change it in an instant, were it not for the countless mechanisms, deployed from morning till night, designed to mislead them, despite the clarity of their minds and the sincerity of their intentions.

It is known, and no one disputes it, that the two extremes, although very opposed, being almost always vicious, produce the same pernicious effects; too much cold, like too much heat, equally destroys the subject upon which it acts. Overeating without restraint can kill a man, just as much as prolonged total abstinence.

There is even more: although wars, especially those that are too violent, have always been regarded as the greatest and most terrible of God's scourges, because they cause more destruction and kill more people, and thus possess a degree of horror surpassing the effects of barrenness or famine; nevertheless, Seneca dares to maintain, and no one has yet attempted to contradict him, that gluttony kills more people than war or the sword; and finally, after the siege of La Rochelle, as many people died from overeating, their stomachs having lost the ability to digest, as had perished from famine.

On this account, it is maintained that the debasement of grain prices, a kind of state indigestion caused by excessive abundance, attacks all conditions, like a worm or a canker that gradually gnaws at them; and although one continually reduces spending, which visibly increases, the harm is often so severe that it only ends with the demise of countless individuals and families.

It is in these situations that abundance in a kingdom is as detrimental as an individual consuming too much food at once: just as excess hinders the functions of nature, and everything turns to corruption, destroying the individual, so too is an excess of grain, which cannot be disposed of in order to meet the demands of all kinds of commerce, and especially farming.

Indeed, a farmer accustomed to living comfortably, he and all his family, as well as his master, when he was able to pay the latter, is made to sell by this same master and at a loss by

the debasement of the price of grain, and thereby reduced to alms, and very often the master himself, or to earn their living by the work of their hands; not being made for this, as well as for the bad food which is a necessary consequence of it, it can be said with certainty that the persons soon suffer the same fate as the goods: the grief of mind, the shame, the general desolation, make them perish before our very eyes, them and all their family; The evil begins with children, for, as they need help to be raised until they are old enough to earn their own living, and cannot receive it from parents who are destitute, it can be said with certainty that more than half perish for lack of basic necessities, both at the breast and in early childhood, all diseases becoming fatal at these times, for want of care, remedies, and proper nourishment. And, as this disaster among the farmers immediately becomes contagious and spreads to all social classes, as has been shown, this fate becomes commonplace; And if the rich are forced to reduce their surplus, since it provides what is necessary for many arts and professions, this reduction causes them utter desolation and general misery. Large families have no other recourse than to hope for a decrease in divine favor, and it can be said that their extreme poverty greatly contributes to providing the means to obtain this grace. It would then be excellent to listen to these charitable people, who want grain for the poor at the lowest possible price, by asking them if they believe their wishes are fully granted by this situation, and if their intention is to make the rich very poor, and then extend the harm to all social classes.

Only experience and close attention, through personal and in-depth discussion of all the specific facts, can make all this plausible, but it is nonetheless certain: extreme necessity not only dries up all the tenderness of nature, but even causes nature to be outraged in pressing situations. Thus, in besieged cities driven by famine, we have seen mothers snatch food from their children's mouths to sustain their own lives, and during the siege of Jerusalem under Titus Vespasian, a mother devoured her own child for lack of any other sustenance. Since necessity knows no laws, it transgresses even the most sacred, in proportion to the extreme it reaches. Let no one be surprised, then, by the assertion that extreme poverty makes the reduction of families seem a blessing, and that this situation brings with it the means to procure it: this evil, in truth, makes less noise and uproar than that caused by extreme sterility; but, if it is less violent in appearance, it is more pernicious in its effects; and it is like the dagger and poison used to kill men. Two stabbed individuals will cause more noise and horror, and attract more violent pursuit, than twenty others who have perished by a slow poison, administered in secret: the doubts about the true cause of death, and the greater degree of uncertainty about the perpetrator of the crime, halve, in this circumstance, all the uproar that ordinarily follows the other way of killing men; but, with all this, the latter does no less harm. On the contrary, it surpasses the other, in that it makes its subject suffer longer, and the less violent outward appearance it presents diminishes the measures necessary to ward it off, which does not happen in the other, where heaven and earth seem to arm themselves on these occasions to take revenge for the past, and prevent evil in the future.

We have dwelt at length on this parallel because the same can be said of the misery caused by excessive high prices and that produced by the debasement of grain: if one stabs, the other poisons, and both have the same consequences, both in their origin and progression, and in

their end, as has just been indicated. It should be noted that if this disease of grain debasement were not occasionally relieved by excessively high prices, which inevitably come at a cost to the body of the state, the consequences of such great debasement would have plunged things into utter desolation, as if the cultivation of most lands had been completely abandoned. These lands receive their fate and their obligation to bear the price of wheat, as has been shown by everything said above, and which has more than acquitted the author of what he promised in this first part, namely, that the lower the price of grain, and the more the common people, as well as the rich, are miserable: that is why we move on to the second, in which we also hope to keep our word.

## **PART TWO**

**(“Where it is Shown that the More Wheat is Removed  
From France, the Less There Will Be to Fear From High  
Prices”)**

## Chapter I:

The misfortunes of extreme high prices in France can never be avoided except by granting foreigners complete freedom to purchase grain at any time and in whatever quantity they please, except in cases of exorbitant prices, which carry their own defenses, as do the rules of commerce which forbid such purchases at a loss, as would happen in such situations. Hoping, therefore, that the reader will be less skeptical and more disillusioned with prejudice than the average person, we will now proceed, and we are confident that this second proposition will be equally beyond reproach, just as we maintain that the first is.

However dreadful and horrifying the portrayal of the plummeting price of wheat may have seemed—more than enough to convict him, despite the popular sentiment in France that sanctifies him, unlike in England where the people decide their own livelihood—here is yet another piece of evidence that renders him even more criminal and should therefore hasten his condemnation.

It is the extraordinary high price of grain that he inevitably brings into his wake, and which he never fails to convey with the same degree of horror he himself experienced in a completely opposite situation. This plummeting price is the sole seed from which springs this excessive scourge, considered one of God's plagues. by this certain principle, that there is nothing moderate among the people, who, knowing no middle ground, pass in a moment from one extreme to the other: this will be agreed upon, provided one pays little attention to what follows.

Grain in France has two interests and two sides, although both are always engaged in a continual struggle, seeking only to destroy each other, because each side is convinced that it can only be happy through the destruction of its enemy. These two sides are formed from the two effects that grain produces: the first, to feed the people of Europe, so that the lack of this sustenance causes them to perish; The other is that the fact that landowners possess a greater quantity of grain than they need for their own personal use allows them to procure, through the sale of this surplus, all the other things required by the necessities, pleasures, or magnificence of life.

The first interest demands that grain exist in the greatest possible quantity, and cheaply, and stops there; and the second would share the same opinion regarding quantity, if excess did not degrade it, which, as experience clearly shows, is impossible. Therefore, this second interest does not hesitate to take its course, to desire it, and to make every effort to see it at a high price, even if there should be less. The dispute, then, lies between the sellers of wheat and those who buy it. But, while it is true that, in a certain respect, the grain trade resembles the trade in all other commodities, where the buyer would like to have the merchandise for nothing, and the seller to get four times its price, it is no less true that it differs greatly in

another respect, in that in ordinary commerce the merchant's greed is restrained, firstly by the certainty that his neighbor, whose shop is as well-stocked as his own, will always sell on reasonable terms, and secondly by the fact that the customer is not in absolute necessity to acquire the goods he trades. But these two circumstances, which impose regulations on the trade in all other commodities, cannot impose them on the grain trade. The farmer cannot do without selling his wheat any more than someone who wants to eat has the power not to obtain it. And it is these two obligations that cause disorder and ensure that, in this trade, the two parties just mentioned are continually at war. Even more, the degree of advantage that one has over the other is a leavening agent that immediately multiplies before our very eyes, and throws things into such excess that one party completely overwhelms the other, which is the ruin of the State, whichever way victory may turn.

We have just noted that it is in the interest of every buyer to have a large number of merchants, as well as a large quantity of goods, so that competition will lead them to offer the commodity at a discount in order to gain preferential treatment; and that, on the contrary, a merchant never sells better than when he is assured, by the scarcity of the commodity, that he has few competitors, and that the buyer is almost obligated to pay him on the spot.

Now, in the grain trade, when a year of abundant grain occurs at low prices, the sale of a portion is insufficient to meet the household's needs and pay the farmer. The farmer is then forced to seize everything, which exacerbates his difficulties. He is almost compelled to take his sacks back from the market untied, thus increasing both the already low price and the necessity of selling. Unable to dispose of it, he earns a loss, compared to the costs of plowing through ordinary means, and squanders it on livestock fertilization and even on the production of manufactured goods such as starches and beer, preventing its natural destruction, due to the costs that the price of the commodity cannot cover. Thus, this is the strategy of the great prosperity of victorious grain, which has utterly destroyed its enemy: this advantage, which is the low price of grain, is very falsely called the advantage of the common people. And it is a victory for which he later pays three times the price, not to mention the present misfortune, which is the cessation of all kinds of work.

Indeed, this squandering of grain in an abundant year, caused by the farmer's needs, and this neglect of cultivation, which have eliminated provisions and precautions against the effects of a barren year, which inevitably occurs from time to time, leave one caught unprepared by this barren year: it is then that fortunes take a complete turn, and the initial scarcity that necessarily accompanies it receives the same degrees of increase, from the same causes that had produced the decline in abundance.

Only a small amount of grain sold by the farmer is needed to meet the daily household expenses: thus, he believes he has the right, as he is able, to keep the surplus at home, and far from bringing the grain back without taking it to market, he doesn't bother to transport it there. Consequently, there are far fewer sellers and far less obligation to sell; and therefore, the excessive high prices that have been all too evident in France for the past forty years.

Although everything said in this chapter sufficiently proves this reciprocal relationship between high prices and low prices, even considering only the simple trade and sale of grain, this truth will appear even more evident when we delve into the details of agriculture, which is the primary factor in this situation, distinct from the price of grain. so that we can say, as in music, that it is he who keeps the beat, and who assigns each his part, as will be shown in the following chapter.

## Chapter II:

If the land in France produced wheat as it produces truffles and mushrooms; if this were a pure effect of its bounty, requiring no expense or care for cultivation, so that, since everything had to be expected from its purely gratuitous goodness, neither attention nor labor would play any part in the greater or lesser abundance of the harvest, reason would itself dictate that the only remaining resource, the guard, be managed with the utmost rigor to prevent famine in years when the earth and sky are not favorable to production.

It could still be the case, as we have just said, if the cultivation, or the acquisition, of these same grains cost as little in this kingdom as it does in Egypt, where it is claimed that the Nile itself covers both the costs of the four plowings necessary almost everywhere else to prepare the land, and those of the fertilizers and improvements that one is obliged to make, so that all that remains is to scatter the seed on its mud and wait, without any fear of cold, frost, or storm, until it has yielded its value with interest; this is what once led this country to be called the granary of the Romans, and why the dispositions of the heavens, which account for almost everything elsewhere, are counted as nothing in this region.

This system might still work in Muscovy, where snow, remaining on the ground for eight to nine months, leaves behind a salt in the soil after it has completely melted. This salt, with the help of simple, easy plowing, replaces all kinds of fertilizers and yields a very abundant harvest after only two months of the grain remaining in the field.

If things were the same in France, it would certainly be wrong to want to compromise on the grain trade, that is, to demand or stipulate a fixed price for plowing the land, especially poor soil, without incurring any costs. One might even say, however, that this is the assumption on which the French people reason, although the opposite is true. For, far from the lands being much close to such liberality, one can assure that they are all or the greater part very rebellious to the hand of the plowman, and with that very self-interested, giving nothing for nothing, and only in proportion to the care and fertilizers that have been given to them; and that often even when the sky is not favorable, there are many that go bankrupt, letting the fatal term, or the harvest season, expire without yielding either interest or capital, that is to say, the seed.

Since these lands are divided into more than a hundred different classes of merit, their fate for cultivation is more or less determined solely by the price of grain. As nothing can be brought to its full potential unless the interests of the worker or the entrepreneur are taken into account, there are more than half that cannot be cultivated with the necessary fertilizers, proportionate to the infertile nature of the soil, good wheat costing nine to ten francs in Paris, that is to say, five to six francs for the small grain in the provinces. It is therefore impossible, when the situation persists, for the farmer not to suffer the fate described in the first part.

Thus, it cannot be denied that the price of wheat is an unmistakable barometer that raises and lowers the value of land cultivation as it increases or decreases. This is how they are treated, first with regard to fertilizers, and finally by complete abandonment when the situation is dire, and when the supposed wishes of pitying people are granted—that is, when the farmer loses his wheat.

That's not all: this abandonment, whether of fertilizers or of the entire cultivation of a quantity of land, is only part of the harm caused by the debasement of the price of wheat; since, while on the one hand self-interest leads to this course of action, it also causes another, no less damaging effect, namely, the squandering of wheat for entirely unrelated uses, such as horse feed, livestock fertilizer, and manufacturing, as has already been mentioned; then, by a completely contrary twist of fate, when this degradation caused famine in the first barren year, as was impossible otherwise, people were forced to resort to animal food, namely oats, animal flesh such as horses, and even grass; which is not without precedent, because these same animals, in the extreme degradation of grain prices, had usurped pasture intended solely for human use.

It is clear from all this reasoning, or this exposition of undeniable facts, that these two great enemies, the degradation of grain prices and its excessive cost, which are contradictory, are locked in a continual war, and that they have neither rest nor patience until they have destroyed each other, only to rise again like phoenixes from their own ashes, and reappear more violent than ever.

Indeed, without addressing the question of who started the quarrel, isn't this how things unfold? — Extraordinary high prices lead to the careful and profitable cultivation of even the poorest lands and to neglecting nothing to increase the yield of the best ones. This, combined with constant attention to and careful management of the use of all kinds of grain, as if it were a very precious commodity, creates an abundance in the kingdom more than sufficient for its ordinary needs. But because this surplus does not find the necessary outlet, as happens with the human body, this excess becomes a contagious leaven at the dawn of a fertile year, corrupting, through a dreadful degradation, all the materials that were once so precious, and producing the disastrous results so often observed. Then, in turn, the low price takes its revenge; and by the abandonment or neglect of cultivation and prodigality of grain use, a barren year tipping the balance to the other side, there is a frightful depreciation, and its monstrous consequences which appear all of a sudden, and which everyone deplores, without anyone until now having noticed or been able to understand that it is the effect solely of the wishes of charitable people and the blind measures taken to support such ill-founded zeal. It is clear, then, that to avoid these two extremes, it is absolutely necessary to make peace between them, or rather, not to continually sow the seeds of war between them. Indeed, they would not have experienced such fierce upheavals or engaged in such furious battles long ago, had a foreign hand not, through entirely superfluous actions, demonstrated its distrust of nature, and it was not appropriate to rely solely on it for the dispensation of its bounty, even

though we owe it in part for everything the earth produces. This will be shown even more clearly in the following chapter.

### **Chapter III:**

We are convinced that, after what has just been said, no one can doubt that the debasement of grain prices produces extraordinary high prices, just as the latter, in turn, gives rise to the former; thus, it is certain that stopping only one of these two situations will put an end to both forever.

As soon as there appears to be the slightest fear of a rise in grain prices, letters are sent to foreign countries and efforts are made to import grain from all sides, and these measures are quite natural; and indeed, however careful one may be, one often finds oneself short in all these precautions; so that, in announcing, as has been done, and as will surely be agreed upon upon reflection to these Memoirs, there is a sure way to protect oneself from this extreme, which is considered one of God's scourges; knowing how to avoid another evil, namely the extreme degradation of these same grains, is maintained as rendering France the greatest service she could ever receive, both in comparison to the past and in relation to the future, and through the harm that will be stopped and the good that will be brought about.

As a counter to the disorder of degradation caused by so many evils, wheat must be sold to foreigners, which, besides the evil that this will banish forever—namely, both annihilation and famine, equally damaging—will change France's situation with regard to foreigners by making them indebted to the creditors they were before, as is well known.

The moment there is talk of seizing wheat, the world immediately rises up, both the people, who are blind, and the most enlightened individuals. And it is believed that the insatiable avarice of grain owners seeks to sacrifice the lives of the wretched to their greed. This error is so deeply rooted in people's minds, due to the error made at the beginning of this Memoir—namely, the lack of unity between the practical and theoretical aspects of farming, which, on this occasion as everywhere else, breeds only monstrous ideas—that one dares say that a man resurrected would have difficulty changing most people's minds. However, the weakness of such a disposition will be greatly increased by the detail that will be given regarding the pitiful quantity that must be exported in order to prevent the pernicious effects of the two extremes of high prices and degradation of grain, so opposed yet so united in their potential to ruin a state.

We will be truly ashamed when it becomes crystal clear, as it will soon become, that the only issue is sowing, not to receive a return of twenty to one, which is the highest yield even the most abundant lands can achieve, nor even fifty, but more than one hundred to one, something agriculture has never known. Thus, the same absurdity that would be found in someone arguing that the land should not be sown when there is a fear of high prices, lest the state find itself without grain to feed its people during the current year, is found in the reasoning of those who want grain not to be allowed to leave the kingdom until after several

consecutive very abundant harvests; that is to say, in addition to the aforementioned misfortunes, this commodity cannot be put to profit under this arrangement until a very large part of it has been lost, and an even greater portion has ceased to be produced by the land.

## Chapter IV:

Those who engage in the conduct or reasoning refuted in this Memoir fall into such a gross error only because they reason about grain like a border governor fearing a siege, or like an arithmetic teacher who knows and is certain that when two are subtracted from five, three remain; just as a soldier is certain that the more grain he removes from his stronghold, the less will remain; and that this is thus so much reinforcement he provides to his enemy, who may be pressed by famine if the stronghold is besieged.

These, then, are the ideas that present themselves to speculation, which cannot help but dismiss as extravagance anything that can be reported to the contrary. But besides all that has been said above, which shows quite clearly the weakness or pitiful error of this reasoning, we will show a detail of the quantity of wheat and grains that can grow in France, as well as the amount that the kingdom needs for its ordinary consumption; and we will see that it is their price alone that sows the lands, from the worst, where in living memory nothing has ever been seen to grow, to the best distributed by nature; and then there is still a sub-order, or a subdivision of various degrees of fertility, sterility, or abundance in the harvest, which receives the rate or its orders of this same price, which makes it more or less possible to make the necessary expenses in management, on which absolutely depends the fate of a good or bad harvest.

The very power that the price of grain wields in this trade does not stop there: it also extends its influence and power over consumption, as has been said; it follows it step by step, and its rise or fall by half, or rather by a whole, just as it does over plowing, without ever losing sight of either; and this is what justifies the English in not having lost their sense, as one would have to suppose, if the contrary reasoning were not erroneous, of giving money for pure profit to those who sell the country's wheat to foreigners, and even to their greatest enemies, given that it would be necessary to give it even to demons if they asked for it, since it is to avoid a very great evil and at the same time procure a very great good.

It is through this method that they clear countless tracts of land daily that had never been cultivated before, maintaining a price for wheat that covers the necessary costs; and thus, reaping a guaranteed return of one hundred to one for what they have brought forth, they avoid both the horrors of barrenness and those of degradation.

Based on these principles, it is maintained that in an average year, France almost always grows half as much wheat as is needed for its ordinary consumption; this can amount to eighteen hundred thousand muids, or two or three million, measured in Paris. of which roughly two-thirds are needed for the interior of the kingdom: thus, based on the fourteen to fifteen million inhabitants that there may be in France, at five quarterons per day per person, this amounts to twelve hundred thousand large casks of consumption, and six or eight hundred thousand of surplus that must absolutely be lost, if after several consecutive years of

abundance, which maintain things roughly on this basis, there is no permitted export, nor freedom to give it to foreigners, which, far from being a guarantee against the accidents of sterility or extraordinary high prices, is, on the contrary, what brings them about and what produces them, as has been irrefutably shown. We will therefore not repeat what has already been explained in too much detail; But it should be noted that the cultivation and production of these six to eight hundred thousand muids, which exceed the kingdom's ordinary consumption, do not cover their costs, the price of wheat being nine or ten francs per setier in Paris, that is to say, lesser wheat at five or six livres in the provinces. And, if the landowners, on these occasions, did not extend credit to their tenants for four or five consecutive years, awaiting a period of barrenness, for which they yearn no less ardently than the Jews for the Messiah, it is certain that they would all perish, and that almost all of France would remain fallow.

For, finally, as has been said, not all lands are of the same degree, even remotely, of fertility or ease of cultivation; there are even more than a hundred degrees of difference between them. In this encounter, it is solely the price of wheat that decides their fate, and that of the plowman, with regard to the profit or loss involved in cultivating them.

Indeed, if the price were more secure, not only would it not yield two million muids, as is usually the case, but this number could even double, and naturally triple, without assuming anything less than the very real possibility.

It is quite certain that there are lands that are never plowed, due to the aforementioned shortage; others only every fifteen or two years; others only every seven or eight years, and almost all of them lie fallow for at least three years; while there are some lands even more poorly managed than these, from which, naturally, nothing should be demanded, that are plowed every year, and which even yield up to two harvests in a single summer.

The reason for this difference is that, since none of these plots are truly robust and can withstand the amount of fertilizer necessary to make them fertile, provided that such plots are located in places where this advantage can be obtained at a price not exceeding that of the harvested produce, these measures are always taken with regard to them: these are the plots located at the gates and surrounding areas of large cities, which, despite being stony or sandy, are all cultivated as vegetable gardens, and even bear wheat every year, without ever having a moment's rest. The reason for this is that, since the manure from cities has no other purpose than to be removed as quickly as possible, the neighboring land is preferred for transport because of its proximity, which also allows for the sale of the produce from this fertile soil, despite nature's limitations. and this violence which is done to it spreads and reaches the country outside in proportion to the price of grain, to the point where we have seen farmers two leagues from a seaside town, maintaining two horses and a servant all year round, to fetch only two loads a day of certain filth, watered with spills of salt water, which have the virtue of tripling the effects of all other kinds of fertilizer; that is to say, these farmers spend eight hundred francs a year, making their horses travel eight leagues every day, to fertilize only fifteen or sixteen acres of land; and it was profitable, the wheat being at 16 or 18 francs

in Paris; as it was a loss, or rather, this maneuver is abandoned, as soon as they are only at 9 or 10 francs.

It was on this basis that the Moors, having been driven out of Spain at the beginning of the last century, presented themselves to France and offered, if they were allowed to settle in the most barren and uncultivated region imaginable, such as greater Provence or the moors of Bordeaux, to make it the most fertile in the kingdom. Although this may seem surprising, it is nevertheless quite certain, and they would have succeeded. Here is how: since they had brought with them movable goods, that is to say, a great deal of money, they would have used it all to make these barren places suffer the same fate as similar lands found at the gates of large cities; since there would have been no difference in terms of nature, but only in terms of cost, the harvest, sustained by the frugality of these people, would have compensated them, which is not the case among those of the North, who eat much more and want to live better; And if these Moors had suffered losses in the first and second years, they certainly would not have suffered losses later on, and would even have recouped their losses and become richer for life: the reason for this is that, in farming, the first years are the most expensive; it is from them that the farmer receives his destiny for his entire farm; if he is strong enough to spare nothing, he is rich for life; otherwise, he will certainly lose everything he has invested.

Indeed, it is a truth known to all who have never engaged in this trade that, in matters of agriculture, abundance breeds abundance, and so does poverty: a farmer who has incurred immense expenses buying manure and straw, which are one and the same when one has livestock, obtains a bountiful harvest, that is to say, a great abundance of these same fodders, which gives him the means to replenish the manure on the spot; he is no longer obliged to buy it, nor to go and fetch it from afar, but maintains this circulation throughout his life, unless a prolonged deterioration of the grain, producing his ruin, forces him to abandon everything; which is a loss for the entire state, all the greater because the cause, being widespread, carries this same fate to an infinite number of places.

We can see, therefore, from all that has just been said, that it is solely the price of grain, although this truth has hitherto been so little known, that determines both the abundance and the wealth of the kingdom. But the surprise will be even greater when we come to examine in depth, as we will do in the following chapter, the magnitude of the misunderstanding in which we have lived until now in France on this subject, since we will show that all the misfortunes of both situations of debasement or high prices of grain have only occurred because we thought we could protect ourselves from them by preventing three or four thousand muids of wheat from leaving the kingdom per year, although there was not a single muid of this reserve that did not cause more than a hundred to perish for its part, each year one leading to the next, and very often three hundred; not to mention the nearly five hundred million in revenue that this conduct costs the kingdom in pure loss, and the lives of an infinite number of people, and the ruin of all conditions, which have no wealth per pound, from the highest to the most abject, except in proportion to the fact that the fruits of the earth, and especially wheat, are not in existence, but in value, the antipode of which is when they cannot bear the costs of cultivation.

## Chapter V:

The debasement of the price of grain, and its extreme depreciation, which is a necessary consequence, being the greatest evil that can befall the kingdom, everything that gives rise to it must be regarded with the same degree of horror. Now, since the prohibition on exporting grain is precisely what produces this debasement, it is against this prohibition alone that war must be declared; but before doing so, it is appropriate to dispel the common misconception, which is the first idea that comes to mind for those unfamiliar with this trade, namely, that one cannot remove grain from a pile or a quantity without a reduction or loss in quantity: besides the fact that this is not entirely true, since based on this principle, one would never sow; Similarly, if a reduction increases the price of the remainder, and the removal of a small quantity necessitates care for the preservation of the surplus, which cannot be done without expense, it will certainly be said that the removal of a portion increases, far from diminishing, the overall quantity.

But there is more: this export of grain, however freely foreigners may come and take it, bears so little relation to the quantity necessary for the kingdom's sustenance that it is no more significant for fear of diminishing it than if an army supplier, having contracted to provide bread at twenty ounces per loaf, were to be accused of starving the army because he had missed the delivery by half a gross, especially since such a discrepancy has never been observed in the sale of this commodity.

Indeed, one does not supply a large, naturally fertile kingdom as one supplies a city or a ship, where no grain grows. However, it is true to say that, if grain were not brought in from abroad during times of extreme scarcity, half the population would perish, even though this supply would not, on its own, be sufficient to feed the fifth of the world whose lives it saves. But this is how things happen. As shown above, grain has two sides and produces two very opposing effects, which are in constant conflict: one, to nourish humankind, and the other, to provide the landowner with the means to meet the surplus of their needs, whatever their nature.

The former does what it can and has no other aim than to obtain it at a very low price, regardless of any kind of justice or equity, and even of the consequences, however terrible they may be, as has been demonstrated. And the other, on the contrary, is only able to breathe when he sees it in excess with so little reason: barren or abundant years make the case win for one or the other. We have spoken of the consequences of these former, as well as those of the other party; but it is appropriate to mention the latter again, in relation to what we have undertaken to prove, namely that what is brought into France of wheat, or what is taken from it, is no more important in its quantity for the food of the people than the reduction marked above is for the bread of the army.

To demonstrate this, it is necessary to examine in detail how these devastating high prices, not to say famines, arise: it is a pure consequence of the brutality and stupidity of the people,

and not at all of the barrenness of the land, in a country like France, although the latter certainly contributes to it; it is this confused mass of headless, brainless people who are spinning the rope that strangles them.

We know the effects of panic terror when it seizes the minds of an entire army, since we have sometimes seen two or three hundred men put more than ten thousand to flight, who, to save their lives, without even being pursued, threw themselves into rivers and almost all drowned. We have seen, on crowded passenger boats, at the slightest leak that appeared, a hole that could easily have been plugged, everyone rushing to the other side, capsizing the boat and drowning.

It is through this same behavior that these extraordinary price spikes occur, since we have never seen one, however great, without there being even more wheat in France, either from the current year or previous years, than was needed to feed the entire population. And to demonstrate this, one need only consider that if, in 1693 and 1694, all the gold and silver in the kingdom held in china, even that in the sacristies, as the cannons carry on such occasions, had been reduced to currency, it would certainly have amounted to more than two hundred million. And if four or five pistoles had been given to each of the three or four million people exposed to the effects of famine, not only would none have perished, but none would even have fasted for a single moment. However, all that money would not have been wheat, nor could it have been made into wheat if it had not already been; but it would have forced it out of the hoards where the inhumanity of the owners held it, due to the misunderstanding of the people's conduct.

What balances these two aforementioned parties, which are such fierce enemies of one another, although they must always be in equilibrium, otherwise the State suffers regardless of the advantage, is the markets where grain is sold publicly; it is these markets that decide the fate of the people, one way or another, with regard to the price of wheat. Indeed, a public market or stage, where five hundred setters of wheat are usually sold every week, cannot see the alteration of only twenty above or below, without these same grains receiving a very considerable rise or fall, which increases visibly, and which doubles and triples by the slightest increase all the preceding effects; just as a balance suspended in equilibrium, because the weight is equal in each of the two pans, as of one hundred pounds of any substance whatsoever, cannot receive an increase of only two pounds in one of its pans, without the other being carried away entirely, and going down as low, raising the one that has lost the counterweight as high, as if there were nothing at all, and the whole load were in one. This is precisely what is happening in the markets with regard to the price of wheat: an increase or decrease of twenty sacks in the usual supply, again, of five hundred sacks brought in each week, tips the balance and makes it tip entirely to one side; and as bad things often lead to bad things, the devaluation of wheat produces devaluation, and high prices lead to a continuous rise in prices. It happens with regard to this market balance that, when one side has swayed the other through the aforementioned alteration, the resulting surge, which occurs at any moment, pushes things to an excess, in one way or another, equally detrimental to the State.

And since between the very high price of grain and its greatest debasement there are at least seven or eight degrees of difference, and since it is worth seven times more or seven times less in these situations than in the opposite situation; it would be just as wrong to say in the case of high prices, that there is seven times less wheat than is needed for the food of France, because it has been seen in previous years at seven times a price; just as, in the case of debasement, to claim that there is seven times more than is needed for usual consumption; and finally, it is the same absurdity as if one were to say, in this example of a balance, first put into equilibrium by an equality of weights, and then pulled out of this situation by an overload of two or three pounds, which makes one side completely carry off the other; that if we were to suggest, I say, that there is nothing at all on one side and everything on the other, because the situation is no different than if that were actually the case: however, nothing could be further from the truth, since, by making the same adjustment of two or three pounds of excess on the affected side, we would restore the balance. This seven-degree difference in the price of wheat is due to the fact that, in times of high prices, the farmer is seven times less pressured to sell, and, in times of low prices, seven times more compelled to dispose of his produce, driven by the landowner or by self-interest, which forms the counterweight.

We must pause for a moment on this balancing act, to digress on how extraordinary high prices arise, their origin, their progression, and how they receive their excess of devastation; and we will be surprised to see that it is merely a misunderstanding, and most often a panic-stricken terror of the people, that compels them to rush headlong into a very deep and very fast-flowing river, to flee an enemy who has neither feet nor legs to reach them, nor weapons to harm them.

It cannot be said that the heavens, which are not always equally favorable to the earth in contributing to the perfection of its fruits, or rather, which are never equally favorable, do not primarily give rise to this disposition: a long drought, a great abundance of rain, a harsh and unpleasant winter without snow, which is an excellent covering for wheat against the rigors of the cold, and finally a light, wet rain that usually attacks the stalk a little before its maturity, and renders it completely incapable of further nourishing the grain in the ear, are all enemies that this primal sustenance of humankind in Europe must endure, and not fight, or at least not with anything other than mere wishes. As soon as one of these disturbances has taken its toll, a little sooner or a little later, alarm immediately spreads among the people, that the year will not be bountiful, and that wheat has been lacking in many regions; And as with all public rumors, the harm is made to be much greater than it is. The disorder begins in the countryside, whose inhabitants have a twofold interest in spreading this rumor: the first in order to raise the price of grain, and the second in order to avoid paying their masters, alleging, most often untruthfully, that they have not harvested enough to sow their lands and feed themselves and their families: all the rest of the common people, who are extremely inclined to adopt a plaintive tone, either out of natural sorrow or out of spite for not being in a better fortune, further enhance the common reputation, without knowledge of the facts and without greater depth, which they are not even capable of.

Thus, two effects immediately follow the first: first, all grain sellers, anticipating that the crisis will worsen, refrain from supplying the markets as usual, leaving no stone unturned in obtaining payment extensions from their creditors, promising to grant them much more substantial extensions in time; and second, those who normally stock up on grain week by week or month by month hasten to obtain enough for the entire year, and even more, all driven by a panic-stricken fear of a crisis that is only perceived as great because fantasy and error lead people to believe what is not true.

However, from these two effects of a sterility that is often largely artificial, a consequence arises that is as real as if it were genuine: namely, a rise in grain prices, since, while the markets are less supplied on one side than in the past, they are more depleted than usual; these conditions increase according to and in proportion to the reputation.

That's not all: even if the year were very bountiful, and the people had been mistaken in their conjectures or ideas, the harm or the rise that has taken root does not stop for that reason, at least not in part, since, as when grain is cheap, no farmer or merchant would sell if the necessity of paying his debts did not closely pursue him, which means that, in his destitution, he is forced to seize everything because a great deal of grain is needed to make a little money; similarly, he is pulled out of this situation by the high price, which allows him to sell less to meet his obligations, and thus to supply the markets less.

Here, then, is the balance, to return to the point, which has lost its equilibrium, for it is the markets alone that sovereignly decide on this occasion, and not the quantity of wheat, whatever it may be, that there may be, either in the granaries or in the barns of the farms: twenty sacks above or below in a market determines the fate of the grain, while once more or less, put back in the places just mentioned, does not change its destiny in the slightest.

Even, every time the police have tried to intervene, to force grain owners to supply the markets regularly, by forbidding them to keep too much wheat in public staging areas, despite the countless ordinances printed and published on this subject, it can be said that this has only increased the alarm, as well as the problem, far from diminishing it.

It is therefore in these encounters that foreign wheats work wonders, and have saved the lives of countless people on several occasions, not because of their quantity, which is no bigger than a pea for each person, compared to the number of people in France, but because they restore balance; and just as it would be ridiculous to say that a pan weighing one hundred pounds, which had absolutely swept away the other in which there was nothing, could be balanced by putting only two pounds back into the empty pan, it would be equally absurd to claim that twenty or thirty thousand muids of wheat save the lives of the people of a kingdom, who need more than twelve hundred thousand muids a year; But on the contrary, as noted above, this side of the balance, which was thought to be completely empty because it appeared to be entirely carried upwards, already weighing one hundred pounds and receiving an additional two pounds, regains the equilibrium that the other basin had gained over it by the addition of such an advantage.

## Chapter VI:

To explain even more clearly the role of the grain trade with respect to foreign countries, both in terms of exports and imports, one can say that everything about it is violent and extreme, because everything is exposed to the fervor of a public, or rather a blind and tumultuous mob that knows neither what is good for it nor what is harmful to it: it is enough for the people to gather and form a sedition, and since they become alarmed enough to rise up over the export of a very small quantity of grain, a thousand times less than what the low price would destroy either through neglect of plowing or through prodigality in consumption, they quite believe that the arrival of a small quantity of foreign grain has relieved them of their fear of famine. The year 1679 would have seen the same disasters as those of 1693 and 1694, were it not for twenty-five or thirty thousand muids of foreign wheat at most, which certainly averted the disaster because it arrived before the price had risen too sharply. Since this did not occur in 1693 and 1694, a larger quantity could not overcome the disaster, and what happened was what we see every day with fires: the fire is easily extinguished in its early stages, but not once it has spread significantly. The balance, therefore, lies in the necessity of buying and selling; these are the two basins where the slightest weight, on either side, produces a decrease or a rise that is always increasing.

All this clearly demonstrates, once again, that the receipt or export of foreign grain is of no importance to the kingdom in terms of subsistence, but only in terms of maintaining the balance of trade and price: since excessive prices are usually based solely on rumors or panic, stemming from the possibility, to a greater or lesser degree, that farmers might not be able to sell their grain, the arrival of a ship laden with this commodity is considered a kind of miracle, because it is invariably said that a much larger quantity will arrive on the first day, and quite wisely so.

Moreover, as noted above, and this is true, the market supply alone, whether strong or weak, determines the price of wheat, regardless of any abundance in granaries or barns. A single ship carrying only three to four hundred muids of wheat is like suddenly bringing that quantity to a market that ordinarily only has thirty to forty muids on market days, at best the most reputable sources. It is certain that unless the price were extremely high and buyers were buying more than their usual supply or reselling to others, the price would fall suddenly; and if this practice continued, it could be said that all would be lost, as noted in the first part of these Memoirs.

The same is true in the opposite situation, where the sale of a few tons of wheat results in a price collapse.

The people, who reason no more in this latter case than in the former, and who, without any justification, swing in an instant from one extreme to the opposite extreme, believe that all is lost the moment grain is allowed to be removed, however much of it may be superfluous. It should not be assumed that they can conceive that it is the price that sows and fertilizes the

soil and that, consequently, produces the abundance that maintains magnificence among the rich and provides necessities for the workers. This understanding far exceeds the grasp of people who, although endowed with reason, possess less than beasts when they express their opinions tumultuously. And since they believe everything is saved by the arrival of ten or twelve thousand muids of wheat, or even much less, they think everything is lost by the mere permission to remove some that could never, under the greatest freedom, reach that number, and which would not even be a fiftieth of what this removal would preserve or increase the yield of the land in the kingdom, thanks to the fertilizers it would make available.

He imagines, first of all, that upon seeing this permission to export, he will be seized by the throat, and that they cannot remove less than half the wheat in the kingdom, and perhaps all of it; all the preceding reflections or all these truths, which are of undeniable certainty, will never enter his mind; and what is most astonishing is that he communicates this reasoning, depraved as it is, to the most enlightened people, but who lack practical experience because they are in positions of power. Christian piety and charity are added on top of this, and people convince themselves they have earned paradise by saying that wheat must be cheap so that the poor can survive. But, to sum it all up, it is undeniable that the import or export of wheat to France has no other effect than to redress the balance when it is too far off; and, since people eagerly import wheat when it is too expensive, it is a terrible mistake not to do the same for exports when they are in the opposite situation, that is to say, in a state of great degradation.

In this conduct, there is as much derogation from politics, justice, and even religion as one would find in a police judge who, lowering the price of bread to bakers when the price of wheat decreased, would not want to render them the same justice when he raised it, and would be blind enough to believe that these unfortunate people could serve the public and keep their shops stocked to their ruin, since surely the course they would take would be to abandon everything, close their houses and flee, which immediately attracts a mutiny or sedition, far from providing public utility: it is the same thing with the farmers, and one falls into the same error with regard to them.

We can even assert that we have not always been in this state of surprise. Freedom was once absolute, except in truly extraordinary times, and the only attempt in 1650 to create a quarrel over grain by suppressing this free movement was to force it to regain the price of fifty years earlier, which was three times lower, although it was far more criminal of them than it is today to want to exceed by even half the price of 1650, and this for the reasons discussed in the first part of this Memoir. In 1600, it was the same thing, the same price progression being found when going back fifty years earlier, and grain, in gratitude for this favor, had tripled all revenues by tripling its value, both in 1600 and in 1650, for both workers and landowners; But today we suffer roughly this same gradation for the former, and we cry out in horror when the latter demand the same justice, which is the ruin of both, since neither can subsist without the other, and their fate, good or bad, is always mutually intertwined.

It appears from the Memoirs of M. de Sully that all his efforts were directed solely toward facilitating the export of grain, which is now almost always hindered by a stroke of the most subtle policy, although there was no such disparity in the situation of those times, with respect to the rise in wheat prices, compared to that of today, since it is currently only a matter of allowing them to gain half the additional value they were selling for fifty years ago; and that in the two periods mentioned, they had tripled in the same space of time, as has just been stated.

However, to return to what happened in 1600, the parliament of Toulouse, having wanted, through a very unfounded zeal, to prevent the free exit of wheat, M. de Sully immediately gave notice to King Henry IV, who was then away, and told him that if this conduct took place, he should not expect that the people would be able to pay the ordinary subsidies, and that consequently the revenues would be sterile: which led His Majesty to order the parliament of Toulouse to remain calm, and to employ its zeal in some other use less detrimental to the State.

Nevertheless, the reasoning of the people and charitable individuals of today is based on a completely contrary idea when they revolt against the export of wheat.

But, to cut to the chase, one would readily ask them to set the price of wheat themselves: if it must be at the lowest price ever, they need only set it at twenty sous per setier in Paris, since that was the price there in 1550; if they find this price ridiculous, as it indeed is, and even more so, then they must agree that a proportion is necessary: however, there will not be one as long as the price cannot cover the costs of cultivation to a considerable extent, as is the case in the current situation.

On this principle, or on this line of reasoning, the people—as well as those pitiful individuals who complain about the release of a very small quantity of wheat, that is to say, a hundredth or even a thousandth of what would be needed for the population's ordinary subsistence, even though double that amount would not always be available, either of the grain harvested during the year or of that which is stored—the people, I say, would be far more justified, and would have far better grounds, in attacking the landowners who leave their land fallow because they cannot bear the costs of plowing; as well as those who do not apply the necessary fertilizers to the cultivated land, because this negligence reduces the harvest by more than half. That is not all, and their anger should not stop there; they must also attack all those who squander grain on foreign uses, such as animal feed and fertilizer, and the manufacture of goods. Now, although all these items bring a waste to the food of men fifty times greater and more violent, or even often a thousand times greater, as will be shown in the following chapter, than that which could have come from the removal of some quantity of grain which foreigners had taken away, and which would have prevented this other disorder, nevertheless the people, so attentive to their interests, see all this miscalculation very calmly, they do not even make the slightest reflection on it; and although one is not surprised by this, because they are not capable of it, there is cause to be surprised that people in whom reason seems to have established its principal seat speak the same language. The cause was marked

in the first part of this Memoir, and it is the same one which had filled very great men with such a gross error regarding the figure of the world: however frightful it may be on this occasion, it will receive a degree of increase in the following chapter, which will give cause to wonder that the human mind was ever capable of such a frightful error.

## Chapter VII:

The entire cause of the disorder described in this Memoir lies in the fact that no one has ever paid a moment's attention to the quantity of grain that could leave the kingdom during times of complete freedom. It was believed that there was no difference between reducing the people to famine and this license; and everyone is so firmly convinced of this maxim that the slightest theft produces almost the same effects and causes as much alarm as severe sterility. It is shameful to say that instead of the twenty-five or thirty thousand muids of wheat that can be brought into the kingdom during times of scarcity, and which foreigners see leaving their ports calmly and even joyfully, believing, quite rightly, that this export brings them wealth and abundance, it would scarcely be possible, even in times of the greatest hardship, to obtain ten thousand from France, or even less, with considerable fanfare, and without almost immediately falling into the opposite extreme. Thus, all the misfortunes of both extremes, of which we have experienced all too often, could easily have been averted by the export of just a thousand muids of wheat in most bountiful years.

Let no one be surprised by this difference in situation or in the prevailing attitudes between France and other states; causes produce their effects only according to and in proportion to the dispositions of the subjects upon whom they act. And just as, among different groups, some are easily swayed and others very difficult to sway, so too in France the misconception surrounding grain exports has led to the misconception that fifty thousand muids of wheat, or even one hundred thousand, imported from Hamburg, Danzig, or England would be less surprising to the public than just fifty muids taken from France.

It is on this basis that it is maintained that, by failing to sell a thousand muids of wheat every year, one year leading to the next, to foreign buyers, and perhaps even less, France has lost over five hundred million in revenue, with the obligation to leave much of its land fallow and to cultivate the rest poorly, as well as to consume an enormous quantity of grain for foreign use. This, combined with the abandonment or neglect of the land, has caused over five hundred thousand muids of grain to be lost, from which have sprung the horrors of barrenness and all the misfortunes that accompany the extreme high prices and the great degradation of grain.

These appalling effects of a widespread and unfounded panic are confirmed daily by countless examples, not to mention those previously mentioned. It is known that during the Spanish conquest of the New World, their largest armies, composed of only three or four hundred soldiers, often defeated and defeated three to four hundred thousand men, and ultimately subjugated almost as many millions as they had men. And in our time, the undertaking on the island of Madagascar has shown much the same thing; The one who had the account printed remarks that one could not without surprise see three or four hundred Europeans have subjugated more than three hundred leagues of country, by obliging four hundred thousand men, all bearing arms, to pay them dues and contributions for fear of being punished if they failed to do so, as happened on those occasions.

Such are the effects of prudence and reason when they are divided into too many parts, reducing them as if to dust, rendering them as ineffective as any other body when they suffer this fate. Let no one be surprised, then, that France suffered such great misfortunes and such a severe decline in its wealth and its people from such a small cause: it was impossible for it to have been otherwise.

And we must believe that this error was not present during the Roman Empire, although it was anything but barbaric, since Seneca the philosopher, who possessed a perfect understanding of the state of all the world's lands, both past and present, notes in his writings that nature, even in its greatest fury, never denied anyone what was necessary. Since there is such a great advantage in following the laws of nature on these occasions, it will not be irrelevant to explain more clearly the effect of these ordinances in detail, as will be done in the following chapter, after a word has been said about the difference in interest and sensitivity regarding grain that exists between the people of France and those of other countries; and why the entire North sees its grain exported with pleasure in very large quantities, and why England itself gives money for pure profit to promote this trade, while the removal of even the smallest quantity in France, however abundant it may be, cannot be accomplished without a kind of uprising.

Besides the reasons of state already mentioned, which are known elsewhere and which have not been addressed in this kingdom, at least for some time, namely that it is a sure way to avoid famine; There is a significant cause, particularly in France, which, when it first comes to mind, is blindly embraced by the people, who always adhere to the initial idea in their conduct, without delving any deeper.

This difference, therefore, stems from the diet of the people.

It is a constant, and no one disputes it, that in France, grain alone constitutes almost the entire food of the common people, without any supplementary drinks or vegetables, as is common elsewhere, and even less meat and fish; whereas in England, one can say that bread occupies the smallest place in the ordinary diet of the inhabitants. Meat and fish, which are very abundant there, and consequently very cheap, replace grain by more than three-quarters, and often even by its entirety, in the role it plays in France of almost solely feeding the people. There is no countryman so unfortunate that he does not have his supply of salted meat and beer, which is a secondary food source; and it goes so far that they make no use of the broth in which the meats are cooked, although it is the most delicious dish for the common people in France: they throw it into the street with the rest of the filth, as well as the extremities of the animals, which they do not make use of, as everywhere else.

Thus, the two parties or the two interests concerning grain, which we have previously discussed, find themselves in a very different situation there than in France: the interest of solely providing for the people is not nearly as strong, which strengthens the other, namely, generating income for the landowners, or rather for the country. It should therefore come as

no surprise to see in England and the northern countries a conduct so contrary to that practiced in France, and if, while the removal of fifty thousand muids of grain is viewed with pleasure in those regions, there is an uprising in France over the removal of only eight or ten muids, even though this is enough seed to produce a hundred times more, for reasons that have been all too clearly explained, but which the people are incapable of understanding in that kingdom. What is also worth noting is that this shift in the role of bread in the sustenance of the people increases in proportion to the opposing interest, which is the high price of grain, or rather the income of landowners and masters, which strengthens, because the sole and unique use of wealth being to procure all kinds of comforts up to the highest degree of magnificence, this cannot be done without providing, to all kinds of arts and professions, each earning a penny, a portion of this wealth which enables one to procure everything one desires: thus, many people are relieved of the condemnation of eating only bread and drinking only water by an ample function of their art, which alone regulates their daily diet; This means that in good grain prices meat consumption is tripled, and wheat is consequently dispensed from serving as a substitute for all kinds of food and liquor for the people: this is also why, in times of sterility, there is a much greater consumption of it, because if the rate makes the poor eat less, those of intermediate fortune consume much more, since bread serves as a substitute for meat, to which they were accustomed, and which they are deprived of by the high price of wheat, they eat much more of it, without however almost ever being satisfied.

## Chapter VIII:

It has already been noted that nature, which is none other than Providence, does not treat men less favorably than it treats beasts; and that since there is no beast for whom it does not provide sustenance at bringing it into the world, it would surely treat all peoples in the same way, if, through excessive distrust, under the pretext of prudent measures, they did not commit a kind of outrage against it, which it believes itself compelled to punish, often placing them, after all their efforts, in a more unfortunate situation than that of nations whose crudeness and barbarity force them solely to rely on it.

There is certainly ingratitude on the part of France toward nature in adopting this course of action: it has shared its favors more generously with it than any other country in Europe; and if this practice has often been disrupted, as one cannot say otherwise, it is for the same reason that the Israelites saw the suppression of manna in the desert. Since this distrust is far more criminal in this kingdom than elsewhere, it should come as no surprise that it was punished more rigorously. One only had to let nature take its course with regard to the grain, as one does with springs, and one can say that it would never have been more lacking or caused more disorder, whether through drought or flood, than one sees happen to running water, which is not naturally harmful like that of torrents.

The grain springs from the earth through the work of man and the influences of heaven, in the same way that water flows from springs; it never runs dry as long as the flow is free. Nature has taken care of their distribution, provided that we rely on it, and that we do not build dikes and causeways to retain everything at the place of their origin; because in this case, as with waters, avarice causes a very great loss, besides the fact that the water in a reservoir is never as natural or as good as that of a stream: similarly, wheat held back by force spoils easily, while the neighboring places perish from a contrary situation, namely famine, as has been shown above; and moreover, the spring dries up, because the pond or reservoir has reached the level and height of its origin; thus there is no longer any flow, and there is a general drought for all the neighboring regions. It has been sufficiently demonstrated, without needing to be repeated, that since most land cannot be cultivated, grain being cheap, and forced storage utterly degrades it, to retain it, despite its nature, is tantamount to dismissing it and pronouncing a general prohibition against ever sowing.

Reservoirs are necessary, but it is nature that should provide them, not authority and violence. And to return to the example of springs, the ponds and lakes they naturally form, without any outside intervention, are extremely useful, without any of the unfortunate consequences mentioned above; witness Lake Geneva, which, far from drying up the source of the Rhône when it enters or forms it, emerges more magnificent and majestic than before.

The same applies to the reserves of grain created by nature, and this is what they are: they are formed by the general interest of all peoples, without the intervention of any superior authority, which must be banished from all the production of the earth, because nature, far

from obeying the authority of men, always proves rebellious and never fails to punish the outrage done to it with famines and desolations that are all too well known. These reserves are created as soon as farmers, able to pay their masters with part of their harvest, keep their surplus for barren years, thus enriching them by supplying the state, whereas otherwise both would be entirely lacking.

## Chapter IX:

To summarize all that has been said in this Memoir, in which we have been merely the mouthpiece or spokesperson for the farmers and inhabitants of the fields, or rather, for the entire earth, we do not believe that anyone can doubt the truths contained herein, however surprising they may have seemed at first. And it cannot be said that, in this type of criminal trial, the prosecution has not fulfilled its primary obligation, which is to prove, by presenting the *corpus delicti*, that the crime is established. The fallow or poorly cultivated lands, exposed to everyone's view, that is the corpse of France, and the fact which puts the author out of all fear of being seen as a bad citizen, by announcing, as he has said and repeats again, that the people will never be more miserable than when wheat is at a low price, that is to say when it is not in proportion with that which is contracted by other commodities, because then the continuous trade, which must be among all conditions, ceases entirely, being based only on a natural balance which is broken as soon as one part sells at a loss, as it is maintained that this must be as soon as the head of wheat is at nine or ten francs in Paris.

The second proposition, that the sinister effects of sterile years can never be avoided except by allowing the free movement of grain out of the kingdom, is of a similar nature: the horror of the statement turns into a maxim of the greatest utility that can exist in a State, when the discussion is made. Besides the reasons stated above, which leave little room for doubt, and besides the example of England, where the people, deciding their fate immediately, regard this freedom of movement as the surest guarantee against famine, one only has to look at what is happening in Holland with regard to all kinds of merchandise, and even grain: the general maxim of these kinds of commerce is to regard the abundance of any kind of commodity whatsoever, not only as the ruin of the species that is degraded, but even of all others, through the necessary relationship and reciprocal communication of good and evil that they must continually have together, without which all is lost. Thus, there is nothing these peoples will not do to avert this disorder on such occasions, and they believe they owe the sea no less for swallowing what they deem to be in excess, which they throw into it in a wise folly to no avail, than for having brought the remainder to them through endless labors and at the peril of their lives.

The most precious commodities of the New World, like the most expensive groceries, are not exempt from this fate. As for wheat, since they do not believe by much the quantity necessary for the country, they have, in a way, forced nature, by a maxim almost similar to the preceding ones, to ensure that, in the barrenness of Europe, far from needing to draw extraordinary aid from other lands, it is to them that the most fertile and productive countries come seeking the means to ward off the severity of the hardship they suffer. By a fundamental principle, which is never deviated from, it is established that the source of the grain stored there, as in a warehouse, is and always will be free at all times, whatever reason there may be to practice the contrary. In this way, and based on this policy, the entire North uses it as its storehouse to supply, when necessary, with the ease of sea transport, the regions that find themselves in need of this essential commodity.

In this way, they have a sure guarantee, whatever misfortune may befall them, that they will only have to contend with the price and not with the lack of the grain itself, which would be a hopeless situation in a country that does not produce grain. But there is more: in competition, they not only have the advantage, but even a reduced one, because they save on transport costs. Since the merchant is not obligated to pay these costs, he finds it advantageous to sell his goods to them at a much lower price, selling them on the spot, than if he were obliged to bear the costs and risks of a long journey.

From this, we see that nature breathes only freedom, since it is through the complete enjoyment of something of which it is so jealous that it abundantly provides food in a country where it does not grow, while it often withholds it from regions that produce it in greater quantities.

It is easy to see, from all that has just been said, the importance in a country, in maintaining abundance, of preventing any merchandise from being discarded, which is the means of causing it to dry up. Because by causing the entrepreneurs to lose money, they completely cease their trade, which makes them pay for the insane price gouging resulting from the previous degradation of the commodity. Just as we have too much respect for grain to throw it into the sea, at least we should not refuse the resource, in times of abundance, of sharing it with our neighbors for fear of falling into the opposite situation; since, on the contrary, this is the means of falling into that extreme that we so greatly fear, and which is a consequence of this degradation, as has been shown.

## Chapter X:

To conclude this work, in which we believe we have amply fulfilled the two contractual obligations undertaken by each of the two parties, we believe and maintain that the sole and unique interest of France, as well as of all the kingdoms of the world, is that all the lands be perfectly cultivated, with all the necessary fertilizers; that all kinds of commerce be carried on to the greatest possible level of value; that all men whose labor is the only source of their sustenance not waste a moment of time, and never be idle. If things were to find themselves in this situation, which one can much more wish for than hope to ever see in its ultimate perfection—a situation scarcely found except in Holland and China—it would be utter folly to ever fear the disastrous effects of any sterility, however severe it might be: the more than six million casks of wheat that this arrangement would produce, while ordinary consumption would require only half that at most, even assuming that the population had doubled, which is quite possible, would be such a strong guarantee that nothing approaching panic could ever enter anyone's mind.

We must therefore do as nature does; when she cannot produce a completely perfect subject, she forms one that is less perfect: it is therefore not necessary that the moors of Bordeaux and the Crau of Provence be made as fertile and as abundant as the lands at the gates of Paris, as the Moors promised when they left Spain; It is simply necessary that what was cultivated forty years ago, and which had always been cultivated throughout the centuries of the monarchy, still be cultivated. Now, it is impossible for this to ever happen, as long as the entrepreneur is operating at a loss, as he always will be as long as the merchandise cannot cover its costs.

There is a necessary regulation that only nature, and never authority, can impose upon the various individuals or entities that all contribute, penny for pound, to the perfection of all kinds of work and commerce, and especially agriculture.

Although they both give birth to one another, as has been observed, instead of conspiring together for their common maintenance, as they should, they work from morning till night only to destroy each other and to clothe themselves in each other's spoils. The laborer would like to receive the full price of the harvest for his labor, without worrying about how his employer pays his master and the taxes, nor about his inability to replenish his land to make it earnable again; and the farmer, in turn, would like to receive the labor of all those he uses to cultivate his land for far less than it takes for these artisans to support themselves and their families. Whichever of the two wins their case, the State suffers, because the land remains uncultivated, and trade ceases. Therefore, only balance can save everything; and nature alone, once again, can bring it about; but it must not be prevented from acting. This is precisely what is done when farmers are forbidden to sell their grain to those who offer money for it, for in this way the worker's cause is won, though ultimately lost.

Necessity alone, which drives these kinds of people, has lost the power it once held over them: if they earn the entire week's expenses in a single day's work, because the grain is unprofitable, far from keeping pace with the price reductions, this situation strengthens their resolve to exacerbate the master's misery by demanding a higher price, given the possibility, in case of refusal, of going without work for a considerable period. And since farming has no time that is not fatal—that is to say, if everything is not done on the day and at the hour marked by the seasons, everything is lost—the farmer has only the choice of either perishing, leaving everything behind, or making an expense from which he will never be reimbursed. This situation immediately spreads to all the arts and professions, where one sees the same rebellion on the part of the worker against the employer, and even of the servants against their masters, who, at the slightest word, put the bargain in their hands, smelling the cheap bread; only to then, both workers and servants pay the exorbitant price when their supply runs out, and returning from their revolt, they find themselves with far less than the bargain they refused; because misery has become firmly established, everyone has an interest in dismissing people, and not in hiring new ones.

This proportion of interest is therefore necessary between all kinds of merchants, so that one does not derive double benefit by taking from the other; otherwise, all the harmony upon which the maintenance of the State depends is entirely destroyed.

This is nevertheless what happens between these workers and their master in the case of low wheat prices; because this commodity is subject to fluctuations, due to causes beyond human control, such as the workings of the heavens, the craftsman who claims to follow his destiny in the event of a rise, as he actually does, refuses to apply this fairness in the event of a discount, which is the cause of all the misfortunes just mentioned, and of which we have had all too much experience.

Indeed, it is just to raise the workers' wages when their work, as well as their needs, suffer such a fate; and even on these occasions they do not rely on the liberality of their masters, who would be no more reasonable than they are, if everything depended on their goodwill; but in these encounters they obtain justice in such a way that neither they nor their masters, nor the State, suffer any loss. Because the abundance of trade, always driven by the high price of foodstuffs, especially wheat, and the annual influx of money into Europe, forces the press to recruit workers, they capitulate to the price increase, not by threatening to do nothing, but by going elsewhere where their demands will be met. It is in this way that those who earned fifteen deniers a day one hundred and fifty years ago have obtained, and now earn, fifteen to twenty sous for the same work, because wheat, which was worth twenty sous a setier in Paris at that time, as has been said, has been worth and should have been worth sixteen to eighteen livres; and so it is with other commodities.

And they never fail to secure this additional income whenever the price of grain rises, if not excessively. Then, when they fall, it can be said that the farmers are ruined, as are all the professions that depend on them for their livelihood, and that they subsequently lose what they had gained in previous years; there being such a strong spirit of rebellion against justice

among the workers on these occasions, taking the side just mentioned, that one sees, in commercial towns, seven to eight hundred workers from a single factory suddenly and in an instant, abandoning their unfinished work, because they were being offered a one-penny reduction in their daily wage, the price of their work being reduced fourfold; the most rebellious resorting to violence against those who might have been reasonable.

There are even statutes among them, some of which are in writing, and which they pass from hand to hand, although most of them are itinerant and foreign, by which it is stated that if one of them undertakes to reduce the ordinary price, he is immediately forbidden to do the trade; and besides the force which they use on these occasions, the master himself is affected by a general prohibition to all workers from ever working for him: we have seen considerable merchants go bankrupt for this sole reason, that they had been two or three years without being able to find anyone to do their work, although there were many in the place, of the same art, who could not find masters.

This stubborn insistence on maintaining the agreed price is not unique to simple day laborers; all trades and craftspeople regard it as the safeguard and sole means of preserving their profession, and they prefer to sell only one item at the agreed price than to sell ten at some discount, even though the profit on the quantity far outweighs the reduction or loss on the individual; the opposite is something they are incapable of understanding.

To make them agree, one need only haggle for a month, every day, écu for écu, or pistole for pistole, over a wig or a carriage; the seller refused the deal twenty times for a pistole or two less, swearing that this was all he stood to gain, swearing that such oaths are of equal merit and value in commerce as in love. And then, when the deal is struck, and the goods delivered and paid for, if they are returned to him a moment later, he will not want to take them back at half his loss.

This detail was made with regard to the price of wheat, because since the wealth of a state consists in continuous trade, so that neither land, nor workers, nor production are ever at rest, the same effect occurs with regard to money; this interruption or confusion arises only from their devaluation, after a rate has been set on commodities during their rise, a rate that cannot keep pace with their changing circumstances.

Now, since it is impossible to reason with all the nations just mentioned, and to make them lower their prices when wheat prices rise, it is necessary to maintain the price that grain has once contracted, and not to destroy it arbitrarily, as has been done for the last forty years under the pretext of pleasing the poor, even though this utterly ruins them, as has been demonstrated.

Finally, trade only occurs through mutual benefit; and each party, both buyers and sellers, must have an equal interest or necessity in selling or buying; otherwise, if this balance is disrupted, the one with the advantage will seize the opportunity to force the other to capitulate by imposing the law he wishes to impose.

Indeed, if a man who can do without selling is dealing with another who is compelled to buy, or vice versa, the transaction will not be concluded without the destruction of one of the two. Now, the freedom taken from farmers to support the price of their grain by exporting it, with no regard whatsoever for the necessary subsistence of the kingdom, even if it did not double both the increase and the maintenance, as has been shown, is the same as if, while two men were fighting sword to sword and fiercely opposed each other, someone, to make peace or separate them, were to seize one of them completely by the body and render him defenseless: the fight would certainly be over, because the other would use the opportunity to kill his enemy outright, which is not without precedent. Grain, along with the rest of the trade, defends itself valiantly, which demonstrates a struggle in which considerable bravery is evident. But when they are seized, their enemy pierces them through and through: this is the reason for the difference between the two opposing situations discussed among the merchants, who initially only want to sell on demand, and then, when necessity overtakes them and they are seized, they sell at a very great loss.

This Memoir is believed to have convinced even the most skeptical of the two propositions that at first seemed to outrage heaven and earth. The reason for this very common error, as stated at the beginning of this work, is that true knowledge of grains being a necessary consequence of a continuous combination of practice and speculation concerning them, it can be said that these two dispositions have been separated for forty years by such a great distance that the possession of one by virtue of the subject's situation has been a formal exclusion from ever having the other: those who could speak had no practice of it, and those who are destined for it by their condition are no more able to explain its advantages than a lame horse is to indicate its ailment.

For the last period of this Memoir, the first part is reduced to showing that it was believed, in order for everyone to be at ease, that no laborer should be able to pay his master; and the other, that to avoid the horrors of extreme depreciation, it was appropriate to cease plowing the lands of difficult exploitation, as well as fertilizing the best ones, and to consume the grains for feeding livestock and manufacturing; which being equally the desolation of a State, it was felt accountable to heaven and earth to work to reverse such a great error, which has done more harm in France than all the plagues of God, regaining by its duration what might seem most violent in such misfortunes, which never have more than a limited time: in which it can be said that Providence wanted in some way to restrain France, which otherwise is alone more powerful than all of Europe together; And this was the sentiment of Corneille Tacitus when he observed that a nation is invincible when it has no need to defend itself. The same reasoning applies today with far greater justification, since, besides the fact that the nation's strength has always been increasing, it now has a monarch at its head who, having no equal in the past, could alone utter today what has been published about the entire nation. And since the correction of this error is possible in a short time, we leave it to the readers to draw their own conclusions in the present circumstances, especially given that there are ministers as upright and enlightened as those currently in office.



**DISSERTATION  
ON THE NATURE OF WEALTH,  
MONEY AND TRIBUTE, IN WHICH WE  
DISCOVER THE FALSE IDEA WHICH  
REIGNS IN THE WORLD WITH  
REGARD TO THESE THREE ITEMS  
(1707)**

## Chapter I:

Everyone wants to be rich, and most people work day and night to achieve it; but they are usually mistaken about the path they take to succeed.

The error in the true acquisition of wealth that can be lasting stems first from being deluded in their understanding of opulence, as well as with regard to the concept of money.

People believe that this is a matter in which one cannot sin by excess, nor ever, under any circumstances, possess or acquire too much; consideration for the interests of others is a mere vision, or religious reflections, which do not transcend theory. But, to show that this is a gross misconception, whoever would place those so singularly devoted to it in possession of the whole earth with all its riches, without exception or diminution, would not make them the most wretched of all, if they could not dispose of the labor of their fellow human beings? And would they not prefer the condition of a beggar in an inhabited world? For firstly, besides the fact that they would have to be the producers of all their own needs, far from thereby satisfying their desires, it would be a masterpiece if, through continual labor, they could even manage to procure what they need; and secondly, in the slightest indisposition, they would perish for lack of assistance, or rather, for lack of despair.

And even without assuming things in this extreme, have not a very small number of men in possession of a very large country, as has sometimes happened through shipwrecks, been so many unfortunates, far from being so many monarchs? And it is only too certain, from the Spanish accounts of the discovery of the New World, that the first conquerors, although absolute masters of a country where gold and silver were measured by pipes, spent several years of their lives so miserably that, besides the fact that several died of hunger, almost all of them were protected from this extremity only by the vilest and most repugnant foods that nature had to offer.

Therefore, it is neither the size of the land one possesses, nor the quantity of gold and silver, which the corruption of the heart has erected into idols, that truly makes a man rich and wealthy: they only make him wretched, as can be seen from the examples just cited; this is still verified daily by the parallel of what happens in mining country, where fifty crowns to spend a day makes a man live less comfortably than he would in Hungary with eight or ten sous, which is almost enough to abundantly enjoy all necessary and pleasant needs. This undeniable truth shows that it is far from sufficient to be rich to possess a large estate and a very large quantity of precious metals, which can only leave their owner to perish miserably if the former is not cultivated; and the other cannot be exchanged for the immediate necessities of life, such as food and clothing, which no one can do without. These alone, therefore, should be called riches; and this is the name the Creator gave them when He placed the first man in possession of the earth after having formed him. It was not gold or silver that received this title of opulence, since they only came into use long afterward, that is to say, as long as innocence, at least according to the laws of nature, remained among the inhabitants of the globe, and the degrees of deviation from this disposition have been those of the increase

in general misery. Once again, these metals have been made into idols; And leaving aside the purpose and intention for which they had been brought into commerce—namely, to serve as collateral in the exchange and reciprocal delivery of goods—when this could no longer be done immediately due to their proliferation, they were almost entirely abandoned from this service to be transformed into deities to whom more precious goods and necessities, and even men, have been and continue to be sacrificed every day than blind antiquity ever offered to those false deities that for so long constituted the entire worship and religion of most peoples. Thus, it is appropriate to devote a separate chapter to gold and silver, to show how this disorder entered the world, where it has wrought such great havoc, especially in recent times, that even the most barbaric nations, in their greatest floods, never approached such levels, however appalling the descriptions found in historians. It is hoped that after the discovery of the source of the evil, the path to the remedy will be shorter, and that this may lead humanity to abandon its blindness, its daily destruction of countless goods, fruits of the earth, and comforts of life—the very things necessary for human survival—in order to recover a commodity which, being utterly useless in itself, was only ever put to use to facilitate exchange and trade, as has already been said. It is hoped that after verification of this undeniable fact—that the misery of nations stems solely from making a master, or rather a tyrant, of what was a slave—this error will be abandoned, and that, by restoring things to their natural state, the end of this revolt will be one of public desolation.

## Chapter II:

Heaven is not so far from earth that there is any distance between the true idea one should have of money and that which corruption has established in the world, and which is almost so universally accepted that the other is scarcely known, although this oversight is such a great depravity that it causes the ruin of states and wrought more destruction than the greatest foreign enemies could ever cause by their ravages.

Indeed, money, which is idolized from morning till night, with the circumstances that have been mentioned and which are too well known to be doubted, is absolutely useless in itself, being fit neither for sustenance nor for clothing; And none of those who so eagerly seek it, and to whom good and evil are equally indifferent in the pursuit of it, is driven in this endeavor except to dispose of it immediately in order to procure the necessities of their station or subsistence.

It is therefore, at most, and has never been, merely a means of acquiring goods, because it is itself acquired only through a prior sale of goods, this intention being generally present both in those who receive it and in those who relinquish it; so that if all the necessities of life were reduced to three or four species, as at the beginning of the world, with exchange occurring immediately and barter for barter, which is still practiced in many countries, the metals so precious today would be of no use whatsoever.

There is not even any commodity so abject, suitable for feeding man, that would not be preferred to it, in whatever quantity it might be found, if it were absolutely forbidden or impossible for the possessor of money to part with it, which would soon reduce him to the same state as the Midas of the fable.

It was therefore only as a guarantor at most of exchanges, and of reciprocal tradition, that it was called into the world, when corruption and politeness having multiplied the needs of life, from three or four kinds which they were in its infancy, to more than two hundred where they are today; which means that there is no way for trade and barter to be done hand to hand, as in those times of innocence; And since the seller of a commodity does not usually trade with the merchant of the one he currently needs, and for the recovery of which he relinquishes his own, money then comes to the rescue. The receipt he receives from his buyer is a power of attorney, with a guarantee, that his intention will be carried out wherever the merchant may be, and this at a current and proportionate price, commensurate with the amount he has relinquished of the commodity he owned: this, then, is the sole function of money; and every degree of deviation from it, however appallingly excessive it may be today, is so much detrimental to the well-being of a state.

Indeed, as long as he remains in this position, not only is nothing spoiled, but far from being obliged to sacrifice so many victims to him every day in order to recover him, if he were to

rebel, if men were to come to an understanding, it would be easy to dismiss him; which, in fact, happens to him constantly on countless occasions, even though no one notices it.

Since he is, at most, as has just been said, only a guarantee of the future delivery of a commodity, which is not received immediately upon selling what one possesses, since it can be obtained without his intervention, he will be forced to curb all his pride and remain utterly useless and immobile. Do not copper and bronze, from which considerable sums of money are minted, replace him?

Haven't they often made leather from it on certain occasions, which, bearing the prince's mark and costing nothing, possesses the same virtue, and even more, since it has provided for the necessities of life more than piles of silver ever did in Peru and the New World? In the Maldives, where the people are not at all barbaric, being even refined and magnificent, as can be seen from accounts, certain shells, given in small bags, have the same power and provide the same certainty of future delivery of what one wants or will want to have, as gold and silver do everywhere else where they are in vogue, although these islands are not even deprived of them, and they nonetheless calmly suffer the competition with such abject materials as shells.

The islands of America, though abundant in silver, were for a long time unfamiliar with its use in daily trade, even among the European nations that inhabited them, even though the people lacked none of their necessities, which they built locally or which were brought to them in abundance from the Old World. Tobacco alone constituted all the trade, as well as the function of money, both wholesale and retail: if one wanted a penny's worth of bread, or even less, one gave the same amount of this fruit of the earth, which had a fixed and certain price, on which there was no more dispute than on current currency, in any country whatsoever; and yet, despite all this, the necessary, the convenient, and the magnificent were no more lacking there than anywhere else.

But why is it necessary to go so far in seeking examples to verify this doctrine, that it is a gross error to regard gold and silver as the sole principle of wealth and happiness in life?

In Europe, we have, and it is practiced daily, a much easier and more economical way to bring these metals to heel, and, destroying their usurpation, confine them to their true limits, which are to be servants and slaves of commerce alone, and not its tyrants. This is achieved by giving them as competitors not copper, not shells, not tobacco, as in the aforementioned places, which cost effort and labor to recover, but a simple piece of paper that costs nothing, and yet replaces all the functions of money in millions, an infinite number of times over—that is to say, through as many hands as it passes—as long as these metals do not depart from their natural state and the principles that brought them into being.

So, the entire civilized nation, so prejudiced by prevailing maxims, and utterly ignorant of the practice and customs of commerce that sustains all men, without ever wanting to learn about it for fear that acknowledging its error might be detrimental to it, is asked whether the notes

of a famous merchant, whose credit is powerfully established by a known and undeniable wealth—of which there are more than one example in Europe—are not worth as much as, and do not prevail over, hard cash; and whether, possessing all the virtue and efficacy, they do not have particular advantages over metals, due to the ease of safekeeping and transport, without fear of violent seizure?

There is much more: these promissory notes will never be redeemed as long as they remain in wise and innocent hands, and those who intend to use them only prudently, whether in relation to the past or the present. This means only relinquishing one's property, especially a considerable sum, to acquire its equivalent in real estate or personal property, if one is a merchant, and not spending it on ordinary expenses, whether already incurred or yet to be incurred. This is the only instance in which the promissory note is no longer valid. Otherwise, after passing through countless hands, all of which would have enriched the holder by guaranteeing the future delivery of what could not be provided immediately, it would have returned to its original issuer, or only compensation would have been due. In this way, we have a general opulence, that is to say, a frightful enjoyment and consumption of goods, without the use of the slightest sum of money.

Therefore, once again, the priests of this idol are far from their understanding, making it a tutelary god of life, and maintaining that men are only happy or unhappy in proportion to the amount of this highly sought-after metal they possess.

The fairs of Lyon prove the error of the contrary sentiment every year, for while they are sometimes good and sometimes bad, the cause cannot in any way be attributed to the abundance or lack of money, since in the buying and selling of more than eighty million francs that comprise them, not a single penny of cash has ever been seen; everything is done by exchange and by promissory notes, which, after countless hands, finally return to the first issuer, as has already been said.

This is more than enough to show that the quantity of gold and silver, more or less considerable, especially in a country full of necessary and convenient goods for life, is absolutely irrelevant in allowing the inhabitants to enjoy it abundantly; but this is only when these metals remain within their natural limits, for the moment they leave them, as we have only too often experienced in more than one place, they become necessary, because they set themselves up as tyrants, not wanting to suffer that anything other than themselves be called riches; and this is what we will see in the following chapters, where we will show the two ways in which money has left its ministry; the first being ambition, luxury, avarice, idleness and laziness; and the other, formal crime, both that which is punished by laws, and another kind which ignorance causes to be crowned every day.

### Chapter III:

The condemnation that God pronounced against humankind, in the person of the first among them, that henceforth, after his sin, they could only live and subsist by labor and the sweat of their brow, was strictly enforced only as long as the world remained innocent, that is to say, as long as there was no difference in conditions and social standing: each subject was then his servant and his master, and enjoyed the riches and treasures of the earth in proportion to his personal talent for making them profitable; all ambition and all luxury were reduced to procuring food and clothing. The two foremost workers in the world, who were also its two monarchs, divided these two occupations between them: one plowed the land to obtain grain, and the other tended flocks to clothe himself, and the mutual exchange they could make allowed them to reciprocally benefit from each other's labor.

But, as crime and violence gradually became involved, the strongest among us chose to do nothing and instead enjoy the fruits of the weakest's labor, rebelling entirely against the Creator's will. This corruption reached such extremes that today humanity is entirely divided into two classes: one that does nothing and enjoys every pleasure, and the other that, working from morning till night, barely has enough to live on and is often completely deprived of it.

It is from this situation that money first deviated from its natural purpose: its equivalence to all other commodities, so that it could be readily exchanged at any moment, was immediately severely compromised. A pleasure-seeking man, who scarcely has enough time in his entire life to indulge his desires, scoffed at keeping his house and stores full of grain and other fruits of the earth, to be sold at the current price in due season. This care, this waiting, and this anxiety were incompatible with his way of life; half as much cash, even a quarter, suited him better, and his pleasures were served with greater discretion and diligence.

Therefore, this plundering of all kinds of goods on such occasions terribly disrupts the balance that should exist between gold and silver, and all sorts of things. The arduousness with which one acquires the former, and the profusion with which one acquires the latter, raises the former to the clouds and brings the latter to the depths. Here, then, is the slave of commerce, now its tyrant; but this is only the least of his vexations. This ease that money offers to serve all crimes makes him double his earnings, in proportion as corruption takes hold of hearts; and it is certain that almost all crimes would be banished from a State, if the same could be done with this fatal metal: the little service it renders to commerce, as has been shown in the preceding, is not worth a hundredth part of the harm it causes.

We are not talking about thieves or brigands, for whom money alone is a sure means of violently stripping a man of his life, without any right or title other than force majeure, which thereby empowers them not only to steal him, but even to hide him away from all searches.

If all their abilities were limited to the necessities of life, brigands would lose these two means of stealing; they could only take a small quantity of goods at a time, and even then,

they would need a large number of horses and wagons impossible to conceal, because everything would be easy to identify and consequently easy to discover.

The first legislator of antiquity so clearly recognized this disorder that the currency he introduced into his republic was such a common metal and of such large quantity that this supposed compendium of all commodities had a body almost as extensive as the things it represented: thus, thieves, bankrupts, and all those who need secrecy and obscurity to perpetrate crimes were not much better served.

But it is not yet time to put an end to the use that crime makes of money alone, a use which it would be prevented by other kinds of assets, if they did not have this unfortunate representation: bankrupts, who completely disrupt commerce, sowing distrust in everyone, and preventing trade by credit and promissory notes, would scarcely be able to steal from everyone with such impunity as they do daily.

It is known that their game and their strategy is to use a reputation, whether well-earned or ill-gotten, to buy on credit from all sides, at whatever price they choose, because they are quite certain they will never have to pay anything; then, they resell immediately, for cash, at half or two-thirds less, and continue this fraud until their promissory notes mature; they sell off entire properties under the pretext of alleged losses, which they are expected to believe, since proving otherwise is an endless legal battle, even more ruinous for those who lose than bankruptcy itself.

And this fraud is the least deplorable aspect of the state as a whole, since the high price it inflates through these customary, albeit criminal, increases in value, as has been said, simultaneously drives the other side of the scales—that of commodities—down to the abyss. One reaches the price of precious stones, while the other is reduced to dust by the prodigality with which it is spent to achieve nefarious ends. And although these practices are found only among a few individuals, they are nonetheless contagious to the entire population, because all things, movable and immovable, share a common interest; the slightest harm that befalls one part, whether good or bad, immediately affects everyone else. The price of grain cannot rise or fall considerably in one market without this effect immediately spreading to all surrounding areas. and its continuation of only three or four weeks allows it to penetrate from one end of the kingdom to the other, however extensive it may be, and even further.

Finally, gangrene at the extremities of the human body soon kills the entire individual, even though all the parts initially far removed from the disease appear perfectly healthy and in excellent condition. This will be explained more fully in the following chapter, which will deal with wealth, showing what it must be to make a country prosperous, especially when it is abundantly supplied by nature.

It is not yet time to finish the account of the ravages of money, and to show that it alone causes more damage in lands where care is not taken to confine it within its proper limits than

all the barbaric nations that have flooded the earth, perpetrating all kinds of violence with which history is replete.

Until now, however great the disorders he has caused, which have just been described, as are all crimes forbidden by law and punished severely when justice can be served, the declamation or description could scarcely end except with wishes for their cessation, although some of these crimes, such as bankruptcies, have their origins further back, namely, a necessity caused by a previous state crisis, which is not at all the result of brigandage or highway robbery. This unfortunate idolatry of money, the source of all evils, would not have its temples so full of worshippers if there were no others besides those subjected without mercy to the rigor of the law.

Here is yet another group, namely those responsible for collecting tribute for princes: the rigorous investigations and inquiries that have been carried out on many occasions, not to mention public opinion, purge this statement of any suspicion of slander or seditious rhetoric. On the contrary, it is the greatest service that can be rendered to princes to show the surprise that they and their ministers, however well-intentioned, suffer at this great preference that those who cloak themselves in their authority give to money over other commodities; although either is indifferent to the sovereign, as he is to everything that is in their pay, and especially to their soldiers, who no sooner receive their watches than they convert them to food and the necessities of life, so that it would be all the same to them to receive them immediately without the payment of money, as is the practice in many places.

This truth will be clarified and discussed further in a separate chapter, where it will be shown that there are princes who do not provide a single pint of wine to any of their soldiers, yet as many as twenty or even a hundred have been squandered, had this quantity not been sacrificed to the determined desire for money at any price, and not wine; and so on.

It is therefore those who undermine their authority who suggest that the money they make the prince pay is considerable only in its quantity, and not at all in the manner in which it is levied on the people. And, although sovereigns receive it only to provide the means for those to whom they distribute it to obtain. They dare to claim that it is of no consequence that these intermediaries have damaged or destroyed twenty times more of those same needs by making this fatal recovery, which the master or those in his pay could not obtain with the money that comes from it and is distributed to them.

This is a dreadful crime committed by this metal, which, far from being prosecuted by provosts like highway robbers, is crowned with laurels every day, although it inspires no less horror in the people, and the evils it causes exceed all those that could be inflicted upon the most notorious brigands, who would have complete freedom to commit the most extreme acts of violence.

Entire regions, once productive, are now devoid of the most precious fruits, entirely abandoned without being able to afford the costs of cultivation; and especially liquors, while

neighboring countries drink only water, and buy them at exorbitant prices for the most basic necessities, which doesn't even cover a hundredth of their potential consumption, and they suffer the same fate for other essential and unique commodities that they would give in exchange; all these things, I say, which are so many living, though silent, witnesses, show that it is no exaggeration to give these purveyors of money a preference for crime and disorder over all other forms of violence and harassment.

Indeed, if taxes were essentially levied on every single fruit and commodity, as was the case for a very long time, and as is still practiced in many places—since, after all, every tax collection is solely for the purpose of recovering goods, and since that cruel intermediary, namely money, destroys so much of it through its fatal influence—if, I say, this requirement were actually enforced, the horror of such consequences would have absolutely prevented its introduction, or at least would have led to its immediate rejection at the first attempt. Could one, with sound judgment, have enacted an ordinance stipulating that whoever harvests thirty setiers of wheat on their land would pay forty in taxes; and another, whose harvest amounts to two hundred, would contribute only four, or even less, depending on their creditworthiness? — Since such a demand, as well as its execution, would have a frightful sight and face, it was necessary to mask them, and this is what money does wonderfully well; it hides all the horror of such a measure from the high-ranking people who might give the order for it, because having only a confused idea of the detail, which is learned only through practice, that is to say, private life, which is far removed from their situation, they are completely unaware that no one can pay a penny, neither tribute nor other dues, except by the sale of the goods he possesses; and that thus the demand for money has limits of rigor, given by nature, which cannot be violated without producing a frightful monster.

Indeed, if the lack of success were limited to a simple refusal, one could say that there would only be time and paper lost; but it is far from being that things remain there; the moral and natural impossibility, which does not stop those who are charged with such exactions, forces nature to make itself obeyed; and the precipitous which must be taken before the tribute, and even all sorts of demands, namely the costs of cultivation, are first sacrificed, as well as the utensils and instruments to achieve it; And the certainty of abandoning the entire world in the future—that is, a thousand losses for one gain—is of no consideration to people in whom the self-interest of the present moment dominates, whether they are driven by necessity to act in this way, otherwise they themselves would be subject to similar harm, which is only too well known, or whether their singular fortune is promised to them only at this price, which is equally common; finally, in either case, the interest, I say, of this moment bought at such a high price at the expense of the public good, prevails over all these disastrous consequences, however numerous and dreadful they may be, which are inseparable from this conduct. And then, when all these means are exhausted, a man is a criminal because he could not do the impossible and give what he does not have; He is dragged into prison and held there for months on end, in addition to the loss of his property, namely his time and labor, which constitute his sole income, as well as that of the state and the prince.

This is the fine arrangement of money in tributes, which differs little, if not surpasses, from that of brigands, since at least in the latter case, what is forcibly taken remains in the state, and only justice is harmed, whereas in the former, everything is destroyed.

In this way, the prince and those very people who, out of two hundred setiers of harvest, only want to pay four, leaving a wretch to contribute thirty out of twenty, are completely misled, utterly building their own ruin, as will be shown in a separate chapter on true wealth, where it will be demonstrated that these powerful people would have gained if they had been willing to contribute fifty setiers out of the two hundred mentioned, and will even make a considerable profit if they choose to use it in this way and not ruin a wretch whose upkeep constitutes the opulence of the rich, although this is the thing they least understand, that he cannot be destroyed without making his loss common to the entire State.

In the taxes levied on liquors in certain States, money serves as a cloak, at the very least, for such great absurdities; Under this cover, the impossible is assumed and demanded, without the disastrous consequences of such conduct almost ever bringing back the perpetrators of appalling actions.

In this article on liquors, we calmly assume that money grows in a vine or in a cask, and not that this metal can only be recovered through the sale of this commodity—a sale which is still far from representing a profit equal to all that nature produces, since a portion of the resulting price must be considered sacred, and from which nothing can be taken without committing a crime, namely, the portion necessary to cover the costs without which there would be nothing at all for anyone in the world.

This must be true, once again, and we must assume this marvel, when we calmly ask, without intending to deviate from the laws of wisdom, prudence, and the most consummate political acumen, the value of forty muids of wine from a plot of vines that yielded only thirty, and that of three hundred pints of wine from a cask that contains only two hundred. so that the complete abandonment that can be made cannot acquit the merchant, and that his person and his other goods must be held liable for the remainder, which is not entirely without precedent in some parts of Europe, and is an evil against which no other remedy has been found than to renounce the cultivation of the commodity in question, in order to be rid of it by the loss of this single type of asset, which in several countries amounts to hundreds of millions per year; and on top of this, the evil, being recomunicated to all other species by a solidarity of interests they have among themselves, causes this same fate to affect almost all other types of goods; and this is the origin of the great waste and the appalling decline that has befallen all things, both movable and immovable, in these same countries. Money has transgressed its natural limits there in a frightful way; It has taken a preferential price over all other commodities with which it should only compete to preserve the harmony of a State, that is to say, a general opulence, which means that, far from serving to facilitate the trade and exchange of the necessities of life, it becomes its tyrant and vulture, causing frightful quantities to be immolated every day by pure annihilation, to procure very little of this metal compared to what it costs the whole body of the State, to entrepreneurs who possess it less

innocently than highway robbers, although they think nothing less, given that the disasters that this acquisition causes outweigh them twenty times over others, however great and violent they may be.

## Chapter IV:

At the beginning of these Memoirs, we have generally stated what true wealth consists of: namely, the complete enjoyment not only of life's necessities, but also of all superfluities and everything that can please the senses, which the corruption of the heart invents and refines daily. All this, however, in every kind of state of being, in proportion to the excess of what is necessary, enabling one to procure what is not nearly necessary.

This is why, in the infancy or innocence of the world, when man was rich simply by enjoying basic necessities, there was employment for only three or four professions; a practice that still exists in many countries poorly endowed by nature, either in terms of land or intellectual development.

But today, in those regions where contrary conditions have led to excess in this matter of opulence and pleasure, there are more than two hundred such cases, not counting those that are invented every day.

It is therefore appropriate to examine this in more detail, and to show that while this ample possession of everything the mind can discover beyond what is necessary constitutes wealth, it is also the most perilous situation and the one that most requires careful management; otherwise, it happens that what has been instituted to allow the enjoyment of superfluity, when the measures are poorly implemented, only serves to deprive people of necessities, plunging a state from the height of opulence to the lowest degree of misery in an instant.

The two hundred professions that today make up a civilized and prosperous state, from bakers to actors, are, for the most part, initially drawn to one another by mere pleasure; but no sooner are they introduced, or have they taken root, than, having become part of the very substance of a state, they can no longer be disjoined or separated from it without immediately altering the entire body. They are all, down to the smallest or least necessary, like the Emperor Augustus, of whom it was quite rightly said that he should not have been born, or should not have died.

To prove this reasoning, one must agree on a principle, which is that all professions, whatever they may be in a country, work for one another and sustain each other, not only for the provision of their needs, but even for their own existence.

No one buys his neighbor's produce or the fruit of his labor except on a strict condition, though tacit and unexpressed, namely that the seller will do the same for the buyer, either immediately, as sometimes happens, or through the circulation of several hands or intermediaries, which always amounts to the same thing; otherwise he destroys the ground beneath his feet, since not only will he cause his death by this cessation, but he will even cause his personal ruin, thereby putting him out of the ability to return home to shop, which will cause him to go bankrupt and close his shop.

This trade must therefore continue without interruption, and even at a price that is strictly enforced, although this is the least conceivable thing to do—that is, at a rate that allows the merchant to break even, so that he can continue his business profitably; otherwise, it is as if he were not selling at all; and perishing, he will end up like those ships entangled together, one of which ignites the powder keg, causing them both to explode.

However, through a terrifying blindness, there is no merchant, whoever he may be, who does not work with all his might to disrupt this harmony; it is only at the point of the sword, either by selling or by buying, that it is maintained. And public wealth, which provides sustenance for all subjects, subsists only through a superior Providence, which sustains it as it makes the earth's produce fruitful. There is not a moment nor a single market in which it does not have to act, since there is not a single encounter in which it is not subject to conflict.

As long as things remain in this equilibrium, there is no other means of enrichment, whatever one's station, than to exert labor and skill upon one's neighbor, not to deceive him by trying to obtain his goods at a low price, but to outwit him in cunning.

And as this emulation becomes widespread through the despair of acquiring wealth in any other way, all the arts are perfected, and wealth is raised to the highest point it can reach.

Money, to which this chapter had granted respite, far from being the tyrant of wealth and ruining all goods as it does in the opposite situation, is merely the humble servant of commerce, and scarcely finds anyone willing to give it refuge. When it appears in excessive quantities at once, there is no commodity, however deplorable, provided it is in demand, whether movable or immovable, that is not given preference.

As it is and should only be the pledge of future transactions, when these are not carried out immediately, and when sufficient solvency does not reside or appear in the buyer to guarantee payment by word or deed, otherwise this method would be preferred to the service of this metal; since almost no one needs this guarantee, given the sustained value of all personal goods, this frees them from this necessity; and it is therefore an undeniable consequence that this metal is appreciated by almost everyone.

Thus, being completely useless to commerce, it is obliged, in order not to remain idle, to offer its services to households and for displaying wealth, and to have recourse to goldsmiths and other craftsmen; which is still only the least of these inconveniences, for it is waiting to be needed, in which case it is always ready to do good, although this assistance cannot be implored unless the State is ill, and suffering from such a terrible indisposition that, if it were prolonged, the remedy would be shorter than the illness, the severity of which is known by the demand or high prices at which gold and silver are found.

In the other situation, namely that of opulence, it is the least of all commodities; and in famine, it is not only the first, but almost the only one. In the first state, only the destitute pay

homage to it, and for whom it is absolutely necessary, being alone in their despair at being in this servitude, and making every effort to escape it; and in the second, the richest barely have enough, which reduces all other conditions to the utmost extremity.

This disposition, which is a very dangerous disease in a state, is caused solely by the disparity in the price of commodities, which must always be proportionate, since only this understanding can make them coexist, to be given at all times, and to receive from one another the sustenance of others.

But, since their dissension, and consequently their misery, is not a very unknown thing in Europe, it is necessary to examine who first started the quarrel, and through what means the disorder was introduced.

It has been said in these Memoirs that these two hundred professions, which constitute the perfection of the most civilized and best-endowed states, are all children of the fruits of the earth; that the more or less the earth is able to produce them abundantly and to encourage their consumption—otherwise the outgrowth becomes useless and even a loss—is what gives rise to them, beginning with the most necessary, such as the baker and the tailor, and ending with the actor, who is the ultimate luxury and the highest mark of an excess of superfluity, since he consists only in flattering the ears and delighting the mind with a simple tale of fictions that one knows full well never had any basis in reality; so that one is so far removed from the fear of lacking necessities that one gladly buys the performance of falsehood, as happens on such occasions.

Thus, when the opposite state, that is to say, poverty, arises and seeks to replace this flourishing state, it is through this profession that reform begins, just as it was through this profession that the acquisition of superfluity was completed.

However, since this is not by his consent, as this dismissal sends these theatrical kings personally to the hospital, and since this reduction is not limited to these people alone, making many other advances, always by degrees, this cannot happen without disconcerting an entire country, or rather all professions, for the reasons already stated.

They are therefore to be pitied, both in relation to themselves and to the other conditions that this disturbs and similarly destroys as a consequence, since, once again, a certain type of trade is like the Emperor Augustus: it should never be accepted, nor should it ever be dismissed. The worker of superfluity buys his necessities from the one who gave him his livelihood, and thereby supports the price of the farmer's produce, which alone allows him to pay his master and enables him to buy from this worker.

But if anything diminishes the pity one might feel for them, or rather, to enter into the discussion of the cause of their dismissal, one can be certain that they themselves bring it about, and that they are all digging their own graves.

It has been said, and rightly so, that it is the fruits of the earth, and especially wheat, that establish all professions. However, their production is neither the result of chance nor a free gift from nature; it is the product of continuous labor and expenses purchased with money. This essential and fundamental resource is abundant only to the extent that one is generous enough to spare nothing, refusing everything to anyone unwilling to give.

Now, there is a crucial point to consider: the landowners, although they may appear to be the most fortunate, the absolute masters of all means of subsistence, are in fact merely the agents and intermediaries of all other professions, even actors, and are accountable to them every day, from clerk to master. And if a shoemaker cannot live without bread, which he certainly cannot earn from land he does not own, a landowner cannot walk without shoes, and so on.

These landowners, I say, provide at every moment a statement of the expenses incurred to cultivate the land that supports and sustains the trades: if their expenditure is covered, as happens when the price of grain is high enough to cover their costs with decent wages for the farmer, the household continues, and each lives peacefully in their profession, without anyone thinking of taking leave of the other.

But if, unfortunately, the opposite occurs, and the fall in the price of grain (which is not currently unknown in Europe) fails to cover the costs of cultivation, which, once incurred, never suddenly decrease as wheat does, then the supplier cannot be compensated for their expenses or meet their wages; they are no more able to continue feeding an entire population than bakers in a city forced to keep their shops stocked when the price of bread falls below that of grain.

This is the cause of the disorder and the principle of the quarrel which, growing ever larger over time like a snowball or a canker, creates extreme misery amidst the abundance of all things.

An actor rejoices, as do all the others, that is to say all professions, to have, by a special grace from heaven, as he believes, bread at a very high price, and that for one penny he can get as much as he can consume in his whole day; if he needed two pennies, he would not be in this joy.

But he doesn't see, wretched as he is, as has been said, that he is digging his own grave, and that the postman and landlord, no longer being paid his expenses and wages by his tenant farmer, with whom he has only a vested interest, is forced to cut himself off, and that, starting with the superfluous, the actor finds himself at the top, and will thus cease to earn a penny a day because he wanted and rejoiced in earning a penny on his bread.

What is marvelous is that after this, both of them, the actor and the one who went to the theater, play a game of one-upmanship, each trying to destroy the other first, thinking they are saving each other. Since possessions, and their enjoyment, do not arrive all at once, and everything happens gradually, one can say that they decline in the same way, returning to the theater in a similar, gradual fashion.

A man who, in his days of prosperity, used to go to the theater every day—that is, when his farmers paid him punctually by selling their produce to the actors themselves—experienced a decrease due to some violent cause, such as those mentioned earlier, namely those that destroy a hundred times as much wealth as they bring immediate money to the entrepreneur; experiencing, I say, this loss, he reduced his attendance to only three times a week, to compensate for the decrease in his income by reducing his expenses.

The actor, for his part, who suffers from the same ailment, does the same, and if he used to eat meat and even poultry every day, he similarly cuts back on his usual fare, and is reduced to enjoying a decent meal only half the time; hence, in addition to the debasement of grain prices, the farmer of the man who went to the theater, and who is a cattle dealer, finds it even more difficult to pay his master, and the latter finds it even more difficult to support the actor; and the extravagance is to attribute this predicament to a lack of money, as if one were in Peru where, originating there, it is the sole and unique source of sustenance.

And this maneuver continues until they have mutually and completely parted ways with one another, which is absolutely the ruin of a state, and of a prince more than of anyone else, as will be explained in the chapter on the interests of sovereigns. This is the same reasoning applied to all other professions, which are all made miserable only by the same conduct and the same circumstances.

But what is most astonishing is that the debasement of grain prices, which certainly holds first place in public distress, is regarded, on the contrary, as the preserver of the general welfare.

One believes one can only protect oneself from the horrors of famine by throwing oneself into the completely opposite situation, which is no less detrimental to a state, since it is a constant that all extremes, or rather all excesses, are equally harmful, although always diametrically opposed.

Indeed, wanting grain to be so cheap that it cannot cover the costs of cultivation or provide income for the landowner, thus rendering him unable to employ workers who have no other means of subsistence, is akin to banning the entire use of liquor, even to revive a man from weakness, because we have seen many who have consumed so much that they have lost their minds, and quite often even their lives.

But enough talk of wealth; we must now turn to poverty, although the explanation of the one paints a picture of the other.

## Chapter V:

Everyone knows what it is to be miserable, since everyone works from morning till night to avoid becoming so, unless their passions blind them, or to cease being so, if they are unfortunate enough to find themselves in that situation.

All, therefore, have this disposition in their own right, but not one has ever extended their views to the general level, although one cannot be permanently rich, and the prince more than others, except through public opulence; and no one will ever easily and for long enjoy bread or wine, meat, clothing, or the most superfluous magnificence, as long as these are not available in the country, and even in abundance: otherwise, their funds will become worthless, and their money will vanish without being able to return.

No one is their own architect of all these things in general; No one, however wealthy, possesses an estate large enough for all their crops to grow almost entirely on their land.

Similarly, no one, possessing only the most valuable commodity, would not be utterly miserable if they could not exchange their excess to acquire what they lack, thereby relieving those with whom they trade of the similar and unfortunate obligation of consuming ten times more of one thing than they need and being forced to do without everything else.

Since wealth, therefore, is nothing but this continuous mixing, whether from person to person, from trade to trade, from region to region, or even from kingdom to kingdom; It is a terrible blindness to seek the cause of misery anywhere other than in the cessation of such commerce, brought about by the disruption of proportionality in prices, which is no less essential to the prosperity of all states than to the very maintenance of their existence. All maintain this wealth day and night through their private interests, and at the same time, though it is what they least consider, they form the general good from which, despite their own reservations, they must always expect their individual benefit.

A police force is necessary to maintain harmony and the laws of justice among such a great number of people, who seek only to destroy them, and to deceive and deceive one another from morning till night, and who continually aspire to establish their opulence on the ruin of their neighbors. But it is nature alone that can establish this order and maintain peace. Any other authority that tries to interfere, however well-intentioned, spoils everything.

Nature itself, jealous of its operations, immediately takes its revenge with general bewilderment as soon as it sees that, through some foreign interference, its wisdom and the sanctity of its processes are being questioned. Its primary intention is that all people live comfortably from their own labor, or from that of their ancestors; in short, it has established that each trade must provide for its master, or else he must close his shop and find another. Since it cannot love humans any less than it loves animals, and since it does not bring a single

animal into the world without simultaneously ensuring its sustenance, it acts similarly toward humans wherever they rely on it.

Thus, in order for this plan to be accomplished, it is necessary that everyone, both seller and buyer, finds their share equally, that is to say, that the profit be fairly shared between both parties. However, so much quibbling, as seen in all sorts of deals before they are concluded, is done precisely to undermine this rule of justice: every merchant, whether wholesale or retail, would like the profit of the deal, instead of being shared as it should be, to be for himself alone, even if it cost his fellow citizen all his possessions and even his life. For the thought that this would be the ruin of a state, just as if trade were conducted with false weights or measures, is something no one ever entertained, although one could very well apply to this conduct the maxim from the Gospel, which states that one should be measured by the same standard with which one measures others; and that it happens that because one has sought to obtain one's neighbor's goods at a loss, one will be obliged to give away one's own in the same way, for the reasons already mentioned.

Nature, therefore, or Providence alone, can ensure this justice, provided once again that no one else interferes; and this is how it fulfills this duty. It first establishes an equal necessity for buying and selling in all kinds of transactions, so that the sole desire for profit is the driving force of all markets, both in the seller and the buyer; and it is by means of this equilibrium or balance that both are equally compelled to listen to reason and submit to it. The slightest deviation, regardless of which party is at fault, immediately spoils everything; and provided one is aware of it, they immediately force the other to capitulate and demand their services at will; and if they do not extract the other's soul from their body, it is not for lack of goodwill, since it would not be their fault if they did not act as in cities besieged for a long time, where bread is bought for a hundred times the ordinary price because life is at stake.

As long as nature is allowed to take its course, there is nothing of the sort to fear; indeed, it is only by disrupting it and interfering with its daily processes that misfortune arises.

It has been said, and it is repeated again, that in order for this fortunate situation to persist, all things and all commodities must be continually in equilibrium and maintain a price proportionate to their relationship with one another and to the costs incurred in establishing them. Now, it is known that as soon as something in equilibrium, like a balance, receives the slightest increase on one side, the other immediately rises as much as if there were nothing at all.

The same occurs in all kinds of commerce: all a commodity can do is defend itself against the oppression of another, even if no external aid were to come to its enemy. But, as soon as this happens, as is all too well known, it can be said immediately that all is lost, both for the one who profits from the misfortune of another and for the one who suffers it.

This fate is experienced in two ways: when the merchant, or his merchandise, is struck by some violent and unforeseen blow, which amounts to the same thing and produces the same effect.

Here is how it happens when it is the merchant, whether seller or buyer: it has been said that in order to maintain this balance, the sole preserver of general opulence, there must always be an equal parity of sales and purchases, and a similar obligation or necessity to do one or the other, otherwise all is lost. Now, as soon as a considerable number of buyers or sellers are forced to buy less or sell faster, to satisfy some unexpected demand, or to refrain from spending for the same reason, the commodity is immediately discarded, either for lack of buyers, or because it has to be thrown away; This never happens without ruining the merchant, because then those with whom one contracts, rejoicing in their neighbor's misfortune, believe they have found a way to enrich themselves from his ruin, not seeing, as has been said, that it is their own tomb they are building. And it is enough for this fate to befall one part to poison all the rest; because this small amount of bewilderment is like a contagious leaven that corrupts the entire mass of a state, through the interconnectedness of all things, as has been shown.

If it is the commodity itself that receives a particular mark, and which, having previously been sold at a current price with profit for the merchant, needs an increase through the one it has unexpectedly received, like a new tribute, to bring the seller back into the black; And though the buyer may refuse to hear of it, the necessity of selling where the merchant is, in order to subsist daily, compels him to sacrifice his future ruin to the present moment. The buyer can think of nothing less than reflecting that every seller is merely the buyer's agent, and that he must reckon with him as a clerk to a master, like a factor with a merchant, allocating to him all his expenses justly incurred, and paying him the price of his labor; otherwise, more work, and consequently more profit for the master.

This justice, which, being a natural right, must be observed in the individual commerce of the smallest commodities, failing which they destroy one another, is an indispensable obligation in the trade of grain with everything else, because, giving rise to all the necessities of life, however numerous they may be, they all play out equally. but it must be on equal terms: otherwise, for obvious reasons, one soon overpowered the other, which is the immediate death of both, as is all too well known, and has been shown.

However, through a terrible misfortune, this is where bewilderment is most common, although it is not so much in this article as in others, which are almost all works of human hands and consequently more subject to their laws.

But in this one, nature having the principal and almost sole role, foresight and wisdom in its dispensation are its only concern, and no foreign ministry could interfere anywhere in the world without spoiling everything, as has already been said.

She loves all men equally and wishes them to subsist in the same way, without distinction. Now, since this bounty of grain is not always as generous in one country as in another, and

since it provides it in abundance in one country and even in a kingdom, while depriving another almost entirely, it intends that through mutual aid there should be compensation for their reciprocal benefit; and that through a mixture of these two extremes of extraordinary scarcity or degradation of grain, there should result a whole which constitutes public opulence, which is nothing other than the maintenance of this essential balance, or rather the sole principle of wealth, though largely unknown to those who are only interested in speculation.

On this point, it recognizes neither different states nor various sovereigns, nor is it concerned whether they are friends or enemies, nor whether they are at war with each other, provided they do not declare it. This happens, even if through sheer ignorance, and she is quick to punish any rebellion against her laws, as has been all too often demonstrated.

And this is so true that in the Roman Empire, where almost the entire known world recognized only one dominion, and where consequently this diversity of sovereignties did not place any prince in the supposed and fatal interest of rebelling against the laws of nature regarding grain, the difference in fate—contrary to that so often experienced in Europe in recent times, a fate which people have not wished to rely upon—is authentically attested to by Seneca the Philosopher in his writings. He states unequivocally that nature, even in his own time, despite his advanced age, and in antiquity, which he knew intimately, had never denied men, even in its greatest fury, what was necessary for their sustenance: had he lived in recent times, he certainly would not have spoken in this way.

The barbarian peoples, who have no other laws or books than this same nature, which has been known in recent centuries and which is still being discovered every day, are yet another living and equally certain proof of this truth. Nature, their guide, does not, in some cases, provide them with meals as magnificent or as refined as those in civilized and consequently rebellious lands; but in general, it is far from providing them with such poor ones, so that, all things considered, there is a complete contrast between these two dispositions.

We have dwelt at length on this article because the violation of this law, which should be sacred, is the first and principal cause of public misery, given that its observance is so often ignored.

The balance between all commodities, the sole preserver of general opulence, suffers the most cruel blows, so that if one sees a kingdom overflowing with goods while its people are entirely lacking, one should not look for the cause elsewhere: this one perishes because its cellars are full of wine, and it lacks everything else; that one finds itself in the same predicament with regard to its grain; and finally, all the rest, living off industry, languish equally, unable to recover bread and drink through the fruits of its labor, the lack of which plunges the possessors of these resources into the same misery, unable to exchange a portion of them for their other necessities, such as clothing, shoes, and so on.

If each of these individuals is asked the reason for their poverty, they calmly reply that they cannot sell anything unless it is at a loss, failing to realize that they are in this unfortunate situation only because they presume to demand this rule of others and refuse to accept it for themselves. A shoemaker wants to sell his shoes for four francs, if the price has once been that high; he will never budge an inch, unless it is to go bankrupt, and yet he wants to acquire the farmer's wheat for the price that abundance, combined with a prohibition against sending it abroad, forces him to give it, that is to say, for less than it cost him to import; and so it is with all the others. Without this unfortunate shoemaker ever realizing he was building his own ruin, because this farmer was thereby rendered unable to pay his master, and the latter consequently unable to buy shoes from the shoemaker: thus, for the sake of the two or three sous a day that the latter earns from his family's bread, he and his entire family end up in the hospital.

Now, it would be pure folly to try to reason with him on this matter, by suggesting that the price of four francs for these shoes was incurred because the grain price was at a proportionate rate, so that both merchants could trade profitably; but that now, one having fallen, the other must do the same.

A day when he has less obligation to sell than the farmer driven by taxes or by his master makes him scoff at these reasons, and his only sorrow is not yet having grain at a better price; and he is foolish enough to bless God, who is certainly not the author of this situation, because he is never the author of evil, which he only permits; but it is those who, through ignorance, procure for him such fatal happiness.

Although this error regarding grain was more than sufficient to disrupt the balance, the sole preserver of commerce and consequently of public wealth, it receives further considerable aid from the specific attacks that are inflicted daily on both people and foodstuffs, in which liquor dealers in some countries have certainly taken more than their share, since it is there, more than anywhere else, that these two extremes of excess and scarcity exert their most violent influence.

So that such a great combination of devastating causes should occur together—although a single one would be enough to ruin an entire kingdom—namely, with regard to grain, liquor, and other marked commodities, it should not be surprising to see two such contradictory things coexisting: such great abundance and such extreme poverty.

But, as if that were not enough to ruin everything, there is yet another additional tax, dictated in a way by injustice itself, since it is a continual derogation from fairness in the distribution of taxes.

A rich man believes he has won everything when, instead of taking his share in proportion to his wealth, he utterly overwhelms a wretch, unwittingly building his complete ruin. He thereby declares that he claims to be the sole inhabitant of the world, and the sole possessor of all wealth and money; which throws him into the same situation as the first inhabitants of

the earth, in proportion to the unfortunate success of this conduct, and he possesses everything without being able to enjoy anything.

There is a point to consider here, which almost no one has ever reflected upon: that while wealth consists in maintaining all the professions of a civilized and magnificent kingdom, which support and operate one another like the parts of a clock, not all of them, by any means, are equally secure or immune to similar attacks.

Those who have long been accepted, as well as the individuals who practice them, are not entirely disconcerted by the arrival of some storm, even if it is not of the utmost violence. Some, indeed many, find in the past resources that help them in the present and even in the future; but this is not the case for nearly an infinite number of others, that is to say, the unfortunate for whom misery, constantly holding a knife to their throat, is all they can do by working night and day to avoid perishing: there is always only a hair's breadth between their subsistence, however meager, and their complete destruction. Everything often revolves around a single coin, which, through continual renewal, usually provides them with the equivalent of a hundred coins during the course of the year. If they are deprived of it by an unexpected blow, farewell to the hundred écus of consumption for the entire state; this being found in countless situations, one can see the loss that falls upon the masses, who alone, despite the error of the rich, are what should provide them with their opulence at the current rate of trade, while this écu taken from a powerful man would never have been anything more than a écu, both with regard to the individual and to the entire body of the state. It should therefore not be surprising that the country where the accumulation of so many disturbances occurs is and appears miserable in the abundance of all things, and that it is like a Tantalus who perishes of thirst in the midst of the waters.

This is certainly not through the fault of nature, which has done more than its duty; This is because not only have we failed to rely on its operations, but we have even fought them to the bitter end. We have regarded its gifts as mere dung; the criminal conception and use we have made of money is the reason we have sacrificed to it a hundred times as much of the most essential necessities for life as we received from this fatal metal, which, having been introduced (as has been noted) only to facilitate commerce and exchange, has become the executioner of all things, because nothing else has the power, like it, to serve and cover up crimes by acquiring or spending.

This state of misery, therefore, having made a god of what was merely a slave in the opposite situation, namely in wealth, we must see with what tyranny it exercises its power, and what shameful homage it demands be paid to its divinity.

First, it must settle accounts with the past; and the insult he claims to have received from the competition, and even from the preference given to a piece of paper, or even to a mere word, over such a precious metal, must be solemnly expiated by fire, into which all his competitors must be thrown, with a promise never to use it again in the future. This is not a game, but a certain truth known to all merchants.

The lifeblood of these notes or this paper money is the known solvency of the drawer, which is based entirely on the current value of what he possesses, whether movable or immovable. Now, both being crushed at every moment by unexpected blows, not only is this currency, which was twenty or thirty times more traded than silver, being debased, but all the mints are being destroyed, and this metal is needed everywhere, or else perish. It is reasonable to assume that such a large number of functions being assigned to something which was previously almost entirely useless, at least for the honest and necessary subsistence of life, puts it in a position to make a good name for itself, and to pass into the hands of anyone except under good names.

This is also where money is plentiful: whereas previously he could find no one willing to pay him more than his own expenses, not only does he now have his previous wages doubled and tripled, but he often demands the full stipend of a man to enter his home, even though some time before he would have considered himself very grateful for even the bare necessities. Now, this appalling increase in wages or interest is the death and ruin of a state, just as it would be of a private individual, there being no difference, although no one gives it a second thought.

In times of plenty, he was no sooner admitted to a place than people thought of evicting him; and he was accustomed, without being surprised, to sometimes occupy more than a hundred lodgings in a single day, that is to say, a hundred times as much consumption, and consequently income, as he produces in times of poverty. Not to mention its counterparts, namely paper and credit, which generated twenty times more revenue than it, and which lose their value the moment only money retains it; yet, there is the blindness to proclaim, untruthfully, that there is no more cash.

But in the other situation, it moves at a snail's pace, and the great surge in business only serves to slow it down further, becoming paralyzed wherever it sets foot; and it takes dreadful machinery to dislodge it, and even then, it is most often a waste of time and effort.

A thousand reasons, the slightest of which would once have been sufficient to expel it, are most often useless to elicit the slightest movement; which is hardly different from a general bankruptcy, putting everyone on high alert, and causing letters of postponement to be issued at all hours.

Life, which the possessor believes is solely dependent on its safekeeping, leads him to defend his possession as he would his own person if someone came to assassinate him. He resorts to spending less, which is a perpetuation of evil that increases poverty, and consequently, the scarcity of money.

It is known that in such times, even the greatest acts of violence, and even crimes, are excusable; this is how one acts, and one believes one can do so innocently in these troubled times regarding the safekeeping of money.

In a country that is naturally wealthy, money should not, by its very nature, constitute more than a thousandth part of the country's resources, assuming it possesses its full ordinary value; but in this state of flux, money alone is and is called wealth; all the rest is but dust.

There were few false deities in antiquity to whom all things were generally sacrificed: animals were offered to some, fruits and liquors to others, and, in utter blindness, the life of some unfortunate soul. But money uses it far more tyrannically; not all these commodities, which it is somewhat repelled by, are continually burned at its altar, but real estate is required if one wishes to capture its favor, and even then, it must be the most valuable, the largest estates: dignities, once of the greatest worth, and even entire countries, are not too good to it, or rather, only serve to whet its appetite. And as for the victims of men, never did all the plagues, in their greatest unity and fury, destroy so many as this silver idol sacrifices itself to. For firstly, these marks of heaven's wrath are but short-lived, after which a desolate land sometimes recovers even better than ever; but this devouring god never attaches itself to its object, like natural fire, except to consume it. The first things redouble its ardor to consume the rest, and the annihilation of dreadful possessions it causes, inconveniencing even the richest, means that the share of this devastation borne by the wretched is the suppression of their necessities, which no one can be deprived of without the complete perishment of the individual, a fact that is all too well known. After this, are not men, beyond comparison, like beasts, and especially horses? Whoever would make a horse work continuously without giving it even a quarter of its necessary food would not soon see its end? Now, can men who must endure constant toil, sweating blood and tears to survive, with no other sustenance than bread and water, in the midst of a land of plenty, hope for a long life, or do they not all perish halfway through their journey, not to mention those whom the poverty of their parents prevents from leaving childhood, being as if stifled in the cradle, this god or this silver vulture devouring them at every age and in every kind of state?

This is the description, the cause, and the effects of poverty when it appears in a country that should be rich by nature's design, and which would be so even if it were allowed to finish its work as it began it; she is so benevolent, in fact, that she is always ready to restore order at the slightest sign, but this can only happen by abandoning the false worship of this metal, her enemy, or rather, the enemy of humankind.

The slave must not become the master, or rather, the tyrant and the idol; it is up to nature, who bestows her favors, to bestow them. Otherwise, she takes her leave, which is no different from a general upheaval. And those individuals who believe they are making their fortune, and even seem to be making it in such a universal rout, by sinning, as they say, in troubled waters, only rise so high so that their fall will wound them all the more.

Nature, who sees them running before her without seeming to notice them, will not forget them in the end in her vengeance. The credit she gives them will be dearly bought, since they will never be anything but wretches when they believe they alone can be rich.

The interest that all men have in particular in fighting such a situation, and in getting out of it when they unfortunately find themselves caught up in it, is increased in princes in proportion to their elevation, which is absolutely no different to the penny than that of all their subjects in general; and this will be shown in the following chapter.

## Chapter VI:

The princes in whose states this upheaval, or rather this disruption of the nature of money, occurs—a disruption that sets everything ablaze and, in a way, razes everything to the ground—are consistently the most unfortunate.

Since this can only be achieved, and indeed only occurs, through indirect interests, which have no natural right to the thing, the subjects are little concerned about the cost to an entire body of the state of something they could never have acquired legitimately.

But it is far from being a case of applying the same reasoning to sovereigns: not only do they not need crime to acquire and subsist, their maintenance being by divine and human right, but even all the losses suffered by individuals, or rather the entire body of the state, in order to create these criminal entities through an infinite number of annihilations, fall back on their own person.

They are the primary owners and eminent possessors, in philosophical terms, of all lands, and are rich or poor in proportion to their value.

It is from the share of income they receive that they maintain their power and sustain their armies, and not from the destruction of all these things, as has unfortunately been practiced in some countries.

Thus, in their eyes, a crown is never worth more than the amount of bread, wine, or other provisions they or those in their pay can procure; and were it not for the inconveniences of transportation, they would be quite willing to give preference to these essential things, for which alone they wish to have money, and they know full well that their subjects can only provide it to them through the sale of these same goods.

Since crime and the destruction of crops are not necessary for them to receive money, nor do they wish to use it criminally, this metal is far from being, or should be, an idol among them, as it is among subjects who have no other recourse than crime to end their misery, and to whom, once again, general horrors are quite indifferent when they bring about their own personal fortune.

It is therefore neither in their interest nor their will that lands remain fallow, the most precious fruits abandoned, due to the degradation they suffer in certain regions, while others lack them entirely, suffering the same fate with regard to other specific commodities, which they would have given in exchange, through a reciprocal compensation that, from two very flawed extremes, would have formed two perfect situations, if only the interests of individuals and those of the prince had to be considered. But the subjects, who can only live and grow rich from precious things, put all these goods into a still and evaporate nineteen out of twenty parts into smoke; and by giving a portion of this twentieth to the prince, they

believe not only that they have fulfilled their duty, but even that they are the ones sustaining his state, and that without this precious aid, all would be lost.

They blindfold themselves, assuming that the guarantee or personal intervention of people who have absolutely nothing of their own is an indispensable necessity for making those who possess everything pay, and that this cruel service can never be bought at a high enough price.

And what makes this even more absurd, and in a way shames human understanding, is that, while it is undeniable that the prince only wants money to acquire goods, just as his subjects can only provide them through the sale of their own produce, as has been said so many times, people nevertheless calmly accept, and even admire, the means by which, to achieve this end, they destroy twenty times as much of everything as they put to good use.

What has just been stated is considered a hollow vision or a fable: that a sovereign only has enough wealth as his subjects possess, and that they will never share with him what is not in their possession, or is neither consumed nor sold, since nature forbids giving what one does not have, or what is destroyed, as happens to everything that cannot be sold, or that is sold at a loss for the merchant.

If they have a lot of wheat from the cultivation of a large quantity of land, made possible by a grain price that covers the costs and expenses, the prince will certainly have enough to feed a large number of troops. Likewise, wine, clothes, meat, horses, ropes, timber, metals from which all kinds of weapons are made, and finally all the species from which all armies of land and sea are raised and maintained, which things only receive their origin, their limits and their duration, from the degree of power, more or less, that the country has not only to produce them, but to consume them, which is the only thing that makes these goods come from the bowels of the earth, because individuals must consume ten times more than the sovereign for their own use if this payment is to be lasting; And if the prince needs a quantity of goods, such as the materials used to build ships and naval armaments, in a degree that exceeds the proportion of consumption among his subjects, so that he requires more than a portion of their ordinary use, this is replaced by the exchange he makes and can make of other things that he receives in greater quantities than he needs; and he will take, for example, all the cast iron from a worker who will work only for the prince, because the prince alone will pay him all his expenses with the surplus of other dues that he cannot consume: just as an individual who has only wheat, since it is in very large quantities, exchanges the surplus of his necessities for all the rest of his needs or desires. For, however just the tributes owed to princes may be, it would be impossible for the people to pay them if they did not find their sustenance in the means employed or made to satisfy them; and this sustenance must even precede all payments, by a justice owed even to animals, and which God mentions in the first law He gave to humankind.

The master of a carriage horse gives it its food before taking the profit it derives from its service, or else he will lose it completely; which will undoubtedly ruin him, without anyone pitying him or doubting the cause of his desolation, which he brought upon himself through his imprudence.

Let a prince act in the same way when he is master of a naturally fertile country, and the people are hardworking, and he will lack nothing.

The supposition or practice of the contrary is an outrage against religion, humanity, justice, politics, and the most basic reason.

Why then, in a naturally fertile land, do we see a sovereign who does not have armies as numerous and as well-maintained as he would wish, and as his needs would seem to demand? It is because he does not have enough bread, wine, meat, and indeed everything else to distribute.

And why this deficiency? It is because the lands of his kingdom, which would amply produce all these goods, are fallow and very poorly cultivated.

And why this disorder? It is because the mouths of men, not only of animals, have been tied, against the divine precept, while they were working in the fields. They have been denied their lives and sustenance, and they have abandoned their work. Who has created this mess? They are the sacrificers and priests of this idol, money.

It only competes with other commodities in relation to the prince, and it should be nothing more than their slave or proxy for guaranteeing the future continuation of exchange, both with the prince and between individuals, who share a single interest; but the priests of this idol are far from viewing it in the same light.

All these sources of armies and fleets, or rather of maintaining public wealth, are merely victims to be burned night and day at this altar; and not content with the fruits, the funds must follow a similar path and be sacrificed to this god, as is all too evident in certain parts of Europe.

Thus, there is a benevolent form of money, subject to the dictates of its purpose in the world and always ready to serve commerce, without the need for the slightest violence, provided it is not disturbed. And, being subordinate to consumption, like a servant to his master, it is not allowed to overtake it, or rather, to become a vulture that devours it entirely.

As long as it remains within these bounds, it not only does not disrupt consumption, but even fosters and encourages it. And, far from refusing its assistance, and ensuring that one could ever experience a shortage, the speed with which it moves means that it can be seen in a hundred different places in a single moment. And when that is not enough, it calmly endures competition, and even the preference given to a piece of paper or parchment, since there are almost no commodities that cannot replace it with an equivalent value.

But there is criminal money, because it has wanted to be a god instead of a slave, which, after declaring war on individuals, or rather on all humankind, finally turns to the Throne and

shows it no more mercy than anything else, denying it a portion of the necessities of which it reduces a terrifying quantity to dust every day, since it is impossible for things to be otherwise.

And the cruel thing is that, since ignorance has made its tyranny acceptable and tolerated, it redoubles its efforts to prevent any kind of end to these disorders, and seeks in the redoublement of evil the remedy for the ills it has caused.

This criminal money, or rather its perpetrators, have the audacity and effrontery to claim, when public desolation is in its final phase, which is their sole doing, that there is no more currency and that it has passed into foreign countries.

But it is precisely the opposite, and there is too much of it if its use were not corrupted by the methods described in this Memoir; which, once restored as can be done in a moment, nothing approaching what appears today will be seen. If a few individuals are not so magnificent, the rest will not be so miserable; and by a just compensation, the general population, and consequently the prince, will be twenty times richer than they are in the opposing situation that persists and that we are fighting against.

To believe that the remedy for this evil could ever arise from the perpetrators themselves is a gross delusion. The corruption of the heart will never allow one to waver in the choice between innocent poverty and criminal opulence, especially when the two are so closely intertwined, and when this kind of wealth is far removed from any fear of persecution from those who can be apprehended. The latter is given preference every day at a lower price; thus, one can imagine what can be expected of it in such circumstances.

Perfection and the ultimate are the arguments and discourses that abound when the question of a remedy arises; nothing less than a complete overthrow of the state is being discussed when one speaks of seeing if there might be a way to put an end to the greatest upheaval that has ever occurred.

And no one is ashamed to claim, in a further affront to reason, that one cannot continue to leave the central lands of a kingdom fallow, and the harvested fruits to nothing, while neighboring peoples are entirely without sustenance, until a foreign war, taking place two hundred leagues from those lands, is over; although, on the contrary, its fate, good or bad, depends entirely on the just or ill-conceived measures taken within a state: now, it is easy to judge from this what success can be expected from such measures as have just been described, when, unfortunately, they are met, and the enemies adopt entirely contrary measures, which are those of all the nations of the world.

Besides the fact that all the things that are destroyed are the sole support of war, and that they constantly play the principal role by abundantly influencing the decisions of fortune, the perfect knowledge that enemies can have that this sole resource of armies will be more or less lasting among opposing nations, depending on their own situation with regard to these same

supplies, is solely what leads them to consider peace, which must be the objective of all wars, however holy and just they may be.

It takes only a moment to suddenly change this unfortunate situation, described in the *Memoir on the Evil Effects of Criminal Money*, into a very fortunate one.

It is not a question of taking action; it is only necessary to cease acting with the great violence that is done to nature, which always tends toward freedom and perfection.

Since there is only surprise regarding these disturbances, both among the princes and their ministers, who have always been well-intentioned, their mere change of heart will be the end of all the trouble and the beginning of general prosperity, and consequently, of the sovereign's own wealth.

They need only allow each individual to be personally the prince's tenant farmer, and that the rent for this lease not exceed the value of the farm. As this happens, and it is not unheard of, a tenant farmer can only flee and leave the land fallow, thereby causing the prince to lose at least as much as he does.

Far from it being possible that, after a hapless still has evaporated a terrible quantity of goods and produce to create this fatal sum for the master, the tax lost by the prince on the destroyed goods will be replaced by those who caused this depletion—something that would not even be within their power. It is precisely the opposite, since they do not even pay their fair share of a just contribution in relation to what remains of their wealth, due to this unfortunate custom: that the quantity of resources is a safeguard against taxes owed to the prince, which should only be demanded or paid by those who are burdened by them and are destined to be so.

Thus, one sees the appalling loss that results for a sovereign from this conduct; but this is not all, or rather, it is only the least of the disaster he suffers; and to verify this, one must recall what was said earlier, namely that a crown in the hands of a poor man or a very small merchant has a hundred times more effect, or rather, a hundred times more income, than in the hands of a rich man, due to the continual and daily renewal that this modest sum undergoes in the former; This is not the case with the other man, in whose coffers far greater quantities of money remain idle for months and years, and consequently useless, either through the corruption of a heart blinded by avarice, or in anticipation of a more substantial bargain.

Now, neither the king nor the body of the state derives any benefit from this hoarding, and it amounts to nothing more than theft from both.

But this sum, like a thousand crowns, distributed among a thousand common people, would have been put to use in a hundred thousand hands in less time than it remained in the coffers of this rich man, which could only have happened by spending a hundred thousand crowns.

The prince would have had and received a tenth part of it for his share, that is to say, he would have received the value of ten thousand crowns from a sum for which he receives not a penny due to the misuse of the funds, which is increased and exacerbated daily, by falsely persuading him that it is for his particular benefit that he and his people are being ruined equally.

If, therefore, the rich understood their own interests, they would entirely relieve the poor of their taxes, which would immediately create as many wealthy people; and this, which cannot be achieved without a great increase in consumption, which spreads throughout the entire population of a state, would triple the compensation paid to the rich for their initial investment, being the same as a landowner who lends grain to his tenant farmer to sow his land, without which he would lose the harvest. And the practice of doing the opposite in the past ultimately costs these powers six times what they claimed to gain by shifting all taxes onto the poor.

Thus, one sees, throughout this Memoir, the extent to which the prince is deceived when he is led to believe that his interest lies in maintaining intermediaries between himself and his people for the payment of taxes, intermediaries who pour everything into the alembic to produce these criminal summaries; but, since this is one of the greatest acts of violence that nature has ever received, the remedy is all the easier in the regions where this confusion is found, because it is not a question, once again, of acting to procure great wealth, but simply of ceasing to act, which requires only a moment.

And as soon as this same nature, set free and regaining all its rights, will re-establish trade and the proportion of prices between all commodities, causing them to give birth to one another and continually, through perpetual vicissitude, a general mass of opulence will be formed, from which everyone will draw in proportion to their labor or their domain; and this will always increase until the earth from which all these sources originate can no longer supply, one can suppose what an abundance of riches one would see if all things, both the land and the rest, were as valuable as nature could make them, since there is no country so uncultivated and so barren as one supposes, that it is not easy to make very abundant, if the price of the fruits that would be re-harvested there were not lacking in guarantee in relation to the expenses that would have been necessary to achieve it. And this would never happen if countless people, who through poverty consume almost nothing in terms of food or clothing, were enabled, as would be easy, to amply provide for all their necessities and even luxuries.

One might even say that there are examples in Europe of this mutual support that both these destitute people and these lands, poorly distributed by nature, have given each other: their alliance is somewhat, even quite, difficult to establish; the beginnings are very daunting; work and frugality must be practiced for a long time in tandem at a very high degree; but finally, both overcome everything, and even quite often surpass in wealth countries and peoples much more favored by heaven: the Barbary macaques live comfortably in the rocks of the Alps; and Spain lacks almost everything in a very fertile and productive country, which is mostly uncultivated in many places.

But, since this is a masterpiece of nature, it must act in all its perfection, that is to say, in all its freedom, to produce such works: the degree of derogation one inflicts on the one, namely on this freedom, is immediately punished by a similar diminution in the other.

Thus, to conclude this work, one can see what a dreadful mistake it is to distrust the liberality or prudence of a goddess who knows how to procure immense riches, even in the most barren lands, for those who are willing to rely on her for the fruitfulness of their labor, while she leaves in utter misery those whom she had initially treated much more favorably, but who show their gratitude only by seeking to enslave her; something they never manage, except to make themselves more miserable than slaves.

However, she is so benevolent and loves mankind so dearly that at the first sign of repentance she forgets all past indignities and consequently showers them with favors in an instant, as has been said.

It is simply a matter of granting her freedom, which requires no longer than the manumission of slaves in ancient Rome—that is to say, a moment—and immediately, with everything returning to its proper proportion of value, which is absolutely necessary for consumption—that is to say, general opulence—immense wealth will result.

The farmer and the vine grower will no longer cultivate the land at a loss, and will not be forced to leave it fallow; and since they are both providers for all humankind, they will not be obliged to declare to most people, as they are currently doing in some parts of Europe, that there is no more bread and wine for them because they were unwilling or unable to pay the ordinary or accidental expenses incurred by the agents; something that should never be expected of their generosity or prudence, even if they were all to die of hunger one after another. This proves that any single tax on a single commodity is fatal to the entire state, because, since everyone is interdependent on it, the others, instead of sharing the burden, leave it entirely to the state, which ruins them all in turn, and demonstrates a lack of understanding. Instead of personal taxes, relative to each individual's general means, being spread and shared across the entire population, and allocating the burden to the penny per pound on each commodity, which is absolutely necessary for the common good, and which should never be expected from the prudence and reason of individuals who seek only to destroy themselves, especially in a region where widespread desolation is capable of creating the greatest fortunes.

Money, then, through this innumerable influx of competitors, which will be the commodities themselves restored to their true values, will be confined within its natural limits; from tyrant and master, it will be nothing more than a slave whose very service will most often prove useless; and in this prodigious increase in movement which would occur to him as a result of consumption, a trip or two, or more, to the prince, followed immediately by an equally prompt return, would be imperceptible, and would not fail to be a doubling of tribute which, far from inconveniencing the people, would only be the effect of their surge of opulence, all

kinds of dues deriving their degree of excess or mediocrity, not from their singular and absolute quota, but from the faculties of those who pay; and these frequent visions of money, previously hidden or paralyzed, would make those same ignorant people who publish that modern misery comes from the lack of money say that there would be a lot of it.

Since all this is only possible in the countries where this bewilderment is found, through a cessation of practices for which, although very ruinous, very grand institutions were believed to be deserved, it will be easy to understand that, far from such measures being a source of merit and the result of great knowledge, they are, on the contrary, solely indebted to both the prince and his people for extreme misery, which will cease as soon as the cause (which hangs by a thread on the side of nature) is removed.

But it is far from being the same on the side of the will, or rather of the heart, which, according to Holy Scripture, a resurrected dead person would not change once they are corrupted.

This is the pitiful principle of the allegation: that one cannot, without risking a state upheaval, cease to ruin movable and immovable property from morning till night, recognizing no other God or good than money, which should not constitute a thousandth part of a kingdom filled with provisions suitable for all the necessities of life, and which is the source of wealth only in Peru, because there it is solely the fruit of the land, which, far from being enviable, feeds its inhabitants only very miserably amidst piles of this metal, while countries that barely know it lack none of their needs; provided, of course, that liberty, or rather nature, dispenses its gifts, since production has been its work.

For, finally, to summarize these Memoirs, whose purpose has been to combat criminal summaries, one can say with certainty that general opulence, both with regard to the prince and his people in an abundant country, is a general and perpetual composite in which each individual must work at all times, by contributing and receiving the same amount from the mass, the risk being equal regardless of which side the decrease occurs; which, if observed exactly, results in a perfect composition where everything is found, because everything is contributed. But, the moment someone wants to deviate from this rule of justice, to take more or contribute less than their share, distrust then arises, as well as a disconcerting disproportion of prices, the mass becomes corrupted, and individuals, who no longer find their subsistence in it, are forced to provide for it through singular measures, which are very distressing and almost always criminal, or rather both at once.

Each one perishes, as has been noted, through an excess of one commodity and a scarcity of another, which plunges all subjects reciprocally into misery, whereas the mutual compensation of these extremes had made them very happy.

It is as if some prince, abusing his authority—a phenomenon not unknown in the persecutions of the early Church—were tormenting and causing the grotesque death of various subjects, and had ten or twelve of them chained a hundred paces apart, while one of them, completely

naked despite the bitter cold, had a terrifying quantity of meat and bread beside him, more than ten times what he could possibly consume before dying, which would not be far off, because he would lack everything else, and especially liquor, of which he would not have a drop within reach. — that another, chained at a marked distance, would have about twenty clothes around him, more than three times what he could use in several years, without any food to sustain his life, and forbidden to provide any; — while at the same distance a third, and so on, would find himself surrounded by several casks of liquor, but without any clothes or food: — it would be true to say, after their inevitable decline if the violence continued to the end, that they would all have died of hunger, cold, and thirst, lacking liquor, bread, meat, and clothing; however, it would be quite certain that, all things considered, not only did they lack neither food nor clothing, but that they could even, without the force majeure, be well-dressed and eat well. And if someone, in the midst of their suffering, before their complete decline, were to implore the prince's clemency to have them unleashed—which could be done in an instant, and which would not fail to make them happy at once through a reciprocal exchange, which they would not delay a moment—the prince would reply, or those who would make him speak, that the time was not right, and that it could cause great harm; that in any case it would be necessary to wait until a dispute he had two hundred leagues from the country where these unfortunate people were suffering was finished; would it not be judged immediately that one would want to add insult and mockery to persecution?

There may be countries on earth where examples of such conduct occur, not just approximately, but to a greater degree, and where similar arguments are put forward to justify its continuation, or to delay remedying it when it is called for, as can also happen at any moment.

But since there is only surprise, and no ill will on the part of those in power where such a scene can be performed today, we must certainly hope for its cessation, which will immediately triple public wealth. It is as impossible for the prince not to have his share as it is presumable that the contrary and deplorable state that persists will not bring about a dreadful reduction in his revenues, both present and potential.

To say that this cannot be accomplished in two hours of work and fifteen days of execution is to utter the same absurdity that has just been put in the mouths of the perpetrators of the violence described or assumed above.

Everything ultimately boils down to four often-repeated words: that people cannot become rich or pay the prince except through the sale of their produce. Now, if one can double the sale of this produce in two hours of work, or rather, of cessation of work—as cannot be denied without abandoning reason and common sense—it is equally certain that one can double their wealth in two hours, and consequently the prince's revenues, even though in some parts of Europe the opposite approach has been taken to achieve the same goals, which has caused public devastation. Thus, by the natural principle that opposite causes always produce opposite effects, the consequences promised and outlined in this reasoning or these

Memoirs cannot find any contradiction among those willing to be convinced that neither authority nor favor exempts anyone from obeying the laws of justice and reason.

Moreover, it is believed that the proof promised at the beginning of these Memoirs has been provided, demonstrating the error prevalent among most people in their understanding of wealth, money, and taxes; since in the first instance, they seek opulence through its own destruction and conceal money by attempting to obtain it against the laws of nature; just as, in order to receive taxes, means are employed that render the people unable to meet their obligations, causing them a loss of property ten to twenty times greater than the sum intended for collection. This often means that, since the damage is certain, the payment of the tax that causes it cannot follow, having become impossible, so that the ruin is entirely gratuitous.

Now, to deny that the cessation of such a practice is an immense source of wealth for the people and for the prince is to deny that a torrent held back on the edge of a slope by a strong dam will flow down as soon as the barrier obstructing its course is removed.