I have been hunted, like a criminal, from France. A lettre de cachet of the King has banished me from the kingdom, although the King has never heard my case; an unworthy minister of the King wielded that dread instrument of royal power.

The question has been asked of me whether I would return to France if the King's exile order were to be rescinded. “Assuredly yes,” I replied, “on one condition—that the Bastille, where I languished for six interminable months, be razed to the ground and a public promenade erected on its ruins.”

Ah, Frenchmen, you have all the ingredients for national felicity: a fertile soil, a gentle climate, a verve, a national genius—all that you could ask, dear friends, all the ingredients save personal security, respect for the dignity of the individual, the rights of man, so that a Frenchman may close the door of his house at night and lay his head upon his pillow, secure from tyranny, from injustice, unafraid. To work toward this happy revolution in the order of things is a task worthy of your parlements. Only timid souls would be dismayed at the task ahead.

And so I prophesy to you: One day a prince will govern in France who will abolish arbitrary powers and lettres de cachet, who will consult all three estates, who will convoke your States-General. Such a ruler will act upon the principle that abuse of power destroys power itself.