Lucy de la Tour du Pin, related to some of the most prominent noble and ecclesiastical families in France, fled the Revolution in 1790 and later recalled that, as the family passed through Dôle (Jura), there were cries of ‘There go some more on the way out, those dogs of aristocrats’. Once across the border in Lausanne:

I spent a very gay fortnight. … There were many other émigrés too. I did not enjoy their company, for they were much given to exaggeration … they mocked everything, and were everlastingly amazed that there should exist in the world anything besides themselves and their ways.

They derided those of their acquaintance who had not yet left the country, sending them white feathers or insulting drawings in the post.¹

The first waves of émigrés were not always well received. The Marquis de Marcillac, a captain in the King’s cavalry at 18 years of age, reached the duchy of Savoie in March 1791, only to find that ‘the people of Chambéry insulted the French who wore the white cockade … threats against those who did so were posted on every street corner’.² Even in exile, high aristocrats were sensitive to social slights. Alexandre de Tilly was affronted by the pretensions of non-noble émigrés:

in northern countries I have seldom met a French teacher or village vicar, a pedagogue or priest of any sort, who had not in France been near to becoming a bishop … I have never spoken to a French governness who had not been a girl from one of the best families. These bourgeois gentilshommes never failed to have their mouths full of it and easily out-talked the real émigrés; a Montmorency with weak lungs would have cut but a pitiful figure beside them.³
Tilly's scorn not only speaks eloquently of the social condescension which fuelled the enthusiasm of most of the former commoners for the Revolution, but it also indicates that nobles and the élite of the Church were not the only ones who regretted the events of 1789–91. Indeed, particular groups within the old Third Estate must be counted among them. Those who had invested heavily in offices carrying noble titles or seigneurial rights regretted the demise of the Ancien Régime; so too did those whose wealth was drawn from the slave system as slave-traders or colonial planters and who now shuddered at the news that the Caribbean colonies were bubbling with unrest over the attempts of planters to preserve the status quo.

Many members of the Third Estate had also been dependent on the structures of the Ancien Régime. There were thousands of children like Marie-Victoire Monnard, 12 years old when the Revolution began, the daughter of a laboureur from Creil, 60 km north of Paris. Her father's situation was made difficult when it became evident that his contract from the Church to collect the tithe for the canton of Creil would be redundant, and in 1790 she was sent to Paris as an apprentice to a linen merchant. The abolition of the tithe from the start of 1791 – and the refusal of thousands of rural communities to pay seigneurial dues – sharply altered the relationship between town and country, and often embittered the artisanate and the poor of old ecclesiastical centres against the Revolution after the loss of employment and charity. The Trappist monastery of Bonnecombe in the Aveyron, for example, had distributed annually 300,000 livres worth of bread to the destitute, paid for from the tithe collected in the countryside; after 1789, the peasantry consumed that part of their produce and the urban destitute were in an even more precarious situation.

The departure of aggrieved nobles was the occasion for mockery of those unable to accept that their world had changed irrevocably. Far more concerning for people across the country was widespread disquiet at the reduced status of the Catholic Church as Protestants and Jews were accorded civic equality. In the Protestant communities of the southern Massif Central, memories of the Ancien Régime underscored support for a Revolution which had brought them civil equality, but where denominational loyalties coincided with occupational divisions, the Revolution triggered open hostilities. In parts of the Midi, a Protestant bourgeoisie had won religious freedom and civil equality, opening the way to political power, and the Assembly's refusal to proclaim Catholicism the state religion in April 1790 provided the pretext for large-scale violence in Montauban and Nîmes.

In Montauban matters came to a head over the domination of the new national guard units of 'active' citizens by Protestants, alarming the mass of poorer Catholics, and coinciding with the inventory of Catholic religious houses required by the National Assembly. After panic-stricken guards had fired on a crowd, five of them were killed in retribution; at a meeting called in a church, the mayor reminded the crowd of where they were and that God...