New
Direction

Edmund Burke

ON REVOLUTION, SCARCITY AND PARLIAMENTARY CONDUCTS

Speech at the Guildhall in Bristol [1780], reprinted from
The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. II, Boston 1865

Speeches at His Arrival at Bristol, and at the Conclusion of the Poll [1774],
reprinted from *The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke,* vol. II, Boston 1865

A Letter from Mr. Burke, to a Member of the National Assembly in Answer
to Some Objections to His Book on French Affairs [1791], reprinted from
The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. VI, London 1826

Thoughts and details of scarcity [1795], reprinted from
The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. V, London 1887

Letter to a Noble Lord [1796], reprinted from
The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. V, Boston 1881

On the genius and character of the French revolution as it regards other nations [1796],
reprinted from *The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*, vol. V, London 1887

Edmund Burke

On Revolution, Scarcity and Parliamentary Conducts

New Direction | OMP
MMXX

New
Direction

Founded by Margaret Thatcher in 2009 as the intellectual hub of European Conservativism, New Direction has established academic networks across Europe and research partnerships throughout the world.


newdirection.online


@europeanreform


@europeanreform

New Direction is registered in Belgium as a not-for-profit organisation and is partly funded by the European Parliament.
Registered Office: Rue du Trône, 4, 1000 Brussels, Belgium **President:** Tomasz Poręba MEP **Executive Director:** Witold de Chevilly

CONTENTS

Introduction: Tomasz Poręba MEP	**7**
Preface: Rafał Olszowski	**11**
On Revolution, Scarcity and Parliamentary Conducts	**25**
Speeches at His Arrival at Bristol, and at the Conclusion of the Poll 1774	**27**
Speech at the Guildhall in Bristol	**43**
A Letter from Mr. Burke, to a Member of the National Assembly; in Answer to Some Objections to His Book on French Affairs	**87**
Thoughts and details of scarcity	**127**
Letter to a Noble Lord	**155**
On the genius and character of the French revolution as it regards other nations	**197**

INTRODUCTION

Tomasz Poręba MEP

Conservatism is primarily associated with opposition to sudden political changes. Such an image is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that its origins, as a separate ideological-political trend, are commonly sought in the actions against the slogans and practices of the French Revolution of 1789, especially in the criticism of the radicalization of revolutionary governments after they were taken over by the Jacobins. Indeed, it was then that with both great talent and extraordinary power of persuasion, the revolutionary theories and practices were attacked by high-class thinkers, like Edmund Burke, Joseph de Maistre, and Louis de Bonald, who laid the foundations for a conservative reflection on reality. Since then, conservatism has been recognized – although for this reason it is assessed in different ways – as the most expressive alternative to radicalism striving to destroy the existing orders, and to the abstract political and social theories ignoring both tradition and experience advocated by radicals. Nonetheless, this is far too narrow a view of what conservatism is and what role it can and should play. Not only in times of revolutions or other disturbances and violent upheavals political community finds useful the conservative moderation, protection of traditional, evolutionarily developed customs, local colour and diversity – and the common sense associated with these values. Even in times of stability, when there are no signs of major threats to the current order, it is worthwhile to prophylactically protect what is valuable. After all, it is better to avoid acute crises than to fight them later.

But it is also a mistake to equate conservatism only with reluctance to change or defending a given *status quo*. Such an understanding would lead to the conclusion that conservatives should protect also the orders that are fully non-conservative as well as threatening to all which conservatives consider valuable in politics, culture or social life. There are situations when a conservative must even be focused on a thorough change of the *status quo*, although carried out with appropriate caution and the awareness of his own limitations, which his opponents often lack. It is not worth defending a given state of affairs at all costs, if there are elements which need improving. Neither does it make sense to idealize the past by force. Though, it is always worth drawing conclusions from it. The legacy of the conservative thought of the past centuries gives a lot of room for expression here, and can still become an excellent inspiration in dealing with the current dilemmas.

Conservatives are facing many such challenges and dilemmas in the present times. In many countries of the Western world, they are pushed to the margins of both political and intellectual life, and those who wish to place them there transform reality in a way that not only disregards the lessons of the past, but is directly dangerous to the harmony of freedom and order, without which the continued successful development of political communities would be difficult. Political correctness certainly limits the freedom of public debate. Opinions, until recently treated as ordinary voices in a discussion, are now stigmatized as inappropriate. Those who preach them not only face ruthless criticism, but often are eradicated from many media, including those introducing themselves as objective and pluralistic. There are attempts to marginalize them also in the academia. The arbitrariness of solutions enforced by the political 'mainstream' is often clearly visible also within the European Union, the evolution of which towards left-liberalism is legitimately causing concern among conservative circles. At the same time, the crisis currently affecting the Western world increases the risk of growing popularity of various radical ideas, in facing which this political 'mainstream' and its media are either helpless or even naively favourable. In such a situation, conservatives must present a clear alternative to these trends and phenomena – which they need to try to consistently promote and implement wherever possible.

Old conservative books do not contain ready-made solutions on how to deal with these modern threats. To the modern reader, who wishes to find recipes for now, this lack of simple answers may seem disappointing. A conservative, however, if he has learnt well the lessons of the classics of conservatism, is perfectly aware that as the political, cultural, and social conditions change, various political forms gain or lose their value. Therefore, both the dogmatic attachment to certain solutions or the imposition of them on countries and nations that have followed a different path is often a dangerous mistake. On the other hand, a conservative should look for inspiration in the heritage of conservative thought as well as treat it as a great lesson in political thinking. He should also popularize this heritage in order to combat the long-lingering myth that there is no alternative to left-liberal ideas that have largely dominated the political and academic 'mainstream' of the Western world.

Based on this belief, New Direction – The Foundation for European Reform of Brussels and the Centre for Political Thought of Krakow undertook the initiative to publish selections of the classics of conservative thought. It includes diverse authors who took different positions on many issues. As this is how conservatism has always been – also before the French Revolution when it was still unnamed. It always drew on different national traditions, emphasized various principles, and referred to various practical experiences. In order to better understand the nature of politics and the cultural processes taking place before our eyes, it is precisely this ambiguity and the wealth of experiences captured by the classics of conservative thought that can be especially inspiring. And it is exactly this decent, reasonable inspiration which, among other things, the Western world needs so very much right now.

PREFACE

Rafał Olszowski

Several years ago, Russell Kirk, an intellectual heritor and one of the most diligent readers of Edmund Burke, wrote an article titled "How dead is Burke?" Nowadays this provocative question is taking on an even more twisted meaning. Although 230 years have passed since the publication of the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke is alive and well, that is to say, his ideas continue to stir up interest among new generations of researchers in the fields of politics, society and history and to ignite new ideological debates, and almost each year there appear new publications that reveal previously unknown aspects of his ideas. All signs suggest that this British statesman of the Irish origin refuses to be locked in the museum of stale political doctrines or to sit comfortably as a sedate statute placed on the pedestal. Provoking, sharing his passion for justice, enchanting with his language artistry, moving others with the sublime spirit, impressing with the sound intellectual grasp – even death did not stop Burke from doing what he has been doing all his life.

The range of publications that became available in the recent years is a clear testimony to Burke's popularity. In *The Great Debate* (2014) Yuval Levin compared the ideas of Burke with those of his famous adversary – Thomas Paine; Jesse Norman, a British MP and the minister in Theresa May's government, wrote the book *Edmund Burke: The First Conservative* (2013); in the *Patriotism and Public Spirit* (2012) Ian Crowe analyzed Burke's patriotism and investigated his youth spent in the literary circles of London. In turn, David Bromwich presented Burke's intellectual biography – *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke*

(2014), while the works by Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (2015), and by Daniel O'Neill, *Edmund Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire* (2016), centred on the issues pertinent to the British Empire. Additionally, in *The Reactionary Mind* (2017) Corey Robin argued (not without controversy) for a doctrinal link between Burke and Donald Trump; Soro Taro provided a comprehensive survey of Burke's historical thought in his *Edmund Burke as Historian* (2019), while Gregory M. Collins in the *Commerce and Manners in Edmund Burke's Political Economy* looked closely at Burke's reflections on economy.

Burke has greatly influenced the sphere of political thought, especially following the publication of the *Reflections*, but he has also left his imprint on culture, whether through inspirations, citations, references or interpretations. Burke's influence is, in my opinion, unparalleled and much work has yet to be done to understand fully its scope. While it is commonly known that Burke's works inspired the Lake Poets (particularly William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge) and influenced William Butler Yates, the key figure in the Irish literary renaissance, little is known about the reception of the *Reflections* in German-speaking countries, especially from Ernst Brandes, Friedrich Gentz or Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (better known by his pen name Novalis). The latter claimed that though there were many revolutionary books written for the revolution, Burke was unique as the author of a revolutionary book against the revolution. In turn, when it comes to Burke's influence on the Polish audience, the Anglophone scholarship is literally non-existent. Regrettably so, especially considering how popular the *Reflections* was in Poland – indeed, so much that there appeared in circulation Burke's apocrypha, which is a publication unique on the global scale. This brochure, titled *Lord Burke's Petition to the Poles* (orig. *Lord Burke do Polaków*), was published in Warsaw in 1791. Written in the style of the presumed author, it advises the reader not to accept French novelties and to be careful about any foreign political innovations; it calls for the audacious and thorough reformation of the country, but also for the preservation of its traditions; it recommends the protection of the king and promotes both a sound economy and a strong army. While the authorship of the publication has not been firmly established, the brochure was probably written by Józef Wybicki – a contemporary parliamentarian activist, remembered mostly as the author of the Polish national anthem.

However, it is a revisionist approach to Burke that has been gaining popularity in recent years; the approach that undermines Burke's position as the model British conservative. Thus, for instance, Richard Bourke claims that the author of the *Reflections* was chiefly a reformatory Whig, while Bromwich perceives Burke mainly as a defender of the minorities deprived of their rights and an opponent of militarism. Both scholars believe that Burke's views and his commitment to the colonists' cause against the British Empire cannot be reconciled with conservatism, seeing that the colonists' war of independence was an armed outbreak against the lawful authorities. Consequently, in the interpretation of Bourke and Bromwich, Burke – a reformer, a defender of all minorities and a severe critic of abuses by the royal power – emerges first and foremost as a supporter of progress.

Are they right? The affirmative and negative answers alike seem to be correct. Undoubtedly, Burke's ideas are too multi-dimensional to categorize them simply as "conservative" – the tag, itself slightly worn out, is insufficient to give justice to the richness of Burke's ideas. Burke was not a politician who uncritically defended the traditional order against any changes; he did not recommend blind adherence to the established rules; he was not indiscriminating towards the old kings, conventions and traditions. On the contrary, Burke believed that the state without a capacity for change has no means to preserve itself[1]. Moreover, it was exactly the balance between the principles of inheritance and continuity on the one hand, and openness to the continuous improvement on the other hand that the greatness of the English society stemmed from. According to Burke, *we must all obey the great law of change. It is the most powerful law of Nature (...)*.[2] Burke saw nature as incessant movement; in a way it expresses the human spirit which constantly craves some

(1) Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in Idem, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke in Twelve Volumes* (London, 1887), Vol. III, p. 259, henceforth *Reflections*.

(2) Edmund Burke, *A Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, Bart., M.P., on the Subject of the Roman Catholics in Ireland* in Idem, *The Works*, Vol. IV, p. 301.

activity. Those in power have a duty to ensure that any changes to the government are introduced gradually, even without being noticed, thus minimizing the risks of social unrest. But what did it mean to be conservative? Did Burke understand it simply as stalling the process of unavoidable or necessary changes (thus attaching importance to the form rather than the matter of changes) or did he rather permit a change, providing it did not violate established values?

According to Burke, people are innately disposed to be fascinated by novelties, to hope for a better future and to undermine established views. Such a disposition may be a moving force behind warranted social changes – that is the changes that are necessary in the light of historical circumstances. However, this disposition was riddled with risks, for according to Burke:

> Our complexion is such, that we are palled with enjoyment, and stimulated with hope; that we become less sensible to a long-possessed benefit, from the very circumstance that it is become habitual. Specious, untried, ambiguous prospects of new advantage recommend themselves to the spirit of adventure, which more or less prevails in every mind.[3]

Accordingly, human nature is inwardly contradictory and, as a result, man is inclined to do good and evil alike, leaning to selfishness and destructive anger; people tend to stay the course as well as to desire a change. Burke's unique views on human nature stand in strong contrast with the Enlightenment anthropologies according to which the spontaneous pursuits of individuals assured their harmonious personality. Burke, on the contrary, thought that people's selfishness and their unbridled passions often degenerate and take a caricatural form and that people have an unfortunate predilection for treating themselves and their views as a reference point for assessing the perfection of all things.

(3) Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, in Consequence of Some Late Discussions in Parliament, Relative to the Reflections of the French Revolution* (London, 1791), p. 15. Henceforth *An Appeal.*

A remedy against those predispositions Burke found in natural moral law, which – though not directly accessible – is imbedded in human nature: *There are some fundamental points in which Nature never changes; but they are few and obvious, and belong rather to morals than to politics*.[4] Burke was convinced that changeability is the reality's pervasive feature, but at the same time he strongly believed in the existence of unquestionably permanent values.

> We know that we have made no discoveries; and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born, altogether as well as they will be after the grave has heaped its mould upon our presumption.[5]

Morality was one of the world's fixed elements, for *it may be doubted whether Omnipotence itself is competent to alter the essential constitution of right and wrong*.[6]

It is indeed the matter of morality that shows clearly a difference in Burke's and Hume's thinking. They shared a predilection for empirical observations and an interest in history, however, Burke was convinced that Hume's rejection of Christianity affected his perception of moral principles in politics. According to Burke, atheism induced a range of positions that allowed the creation of laws contrary to the essence of justice, whether in a manner of royal or egalitarian despotism. Despite the application of the Enlightenment vocabulary, the adoption of empiricism and the appreciation of human reason, Burke remained convinced that an individual has both inalienable duties towards society and a duty to self-improve, that is to develop virtue; the latter obligation derived from man's moral position. Burke frequently adopted the Enlightenment

(4) Edmund Burke, *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies with respect to France: with an Appendix* in Idem, *The Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 468-469.

(5) Burke, *Reflections,* p. 345.

(6) Edmund Burke, *Speech at Bristol previous to the Election* in Idem, *The Works*, Vol. II, p. 421.

phraseology, yet though he spoke the language of his times, he infused it with the meaning rooted in the values of the traditional order. According to F.J.C. Hearnshaw, Burke employed in his argumentation terms that were characteristic for the Whigs, but he vested them with a different, "providential and organic" meaning.[7] Leo Strauss shared this opinion and claimed that:

> "Burke's practical reasoning partially explains why he was not afraid to apply the language of modern natural law, if it could help him to convince his readers about the superiority of politics which he recommended. Burke discussed the state of nature, natural laws and human rights, social contract and the artificial character of state. However, he put those terms in the classical or Thomistic context.[8]

Burke was not a utilitarian; regarding success as the only infallible criterion of wisdom was, in his opinion, both vulgar and worthy of condemnation[9]; evaluation of the utility of laws, principles and institutions should depend on their relation to the principles of natural law. Burke opposed a purely mechanical conservation of laws and principles, if they were worthless in terms of their moral value and he went against the continuation of abuses that he had noticed in France, India and Ireland. Similarly, he exposed to ridicule the opinions that supported the preservation of old laws in the colonies merely because they had been in force there for years, *this useless taxation is to be kept sacred not for its own sake, but as a counter-guard and security of the laws of trade*[10]. The world of Burke was neither static nor fossilized; on

(7) F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'The Social Political Ideas of some Representative Thinkers of the Revolutionary Era' in Subrata Mukherjee and Sumathi Ramaswamy (eds), *Edmund Burke. A Biography of his Vision and Ideas* (New Delhi, 1998).

(8) Leo Strauss, *Prawo naturalne w świetle historii* [Natural rights and history], translated by Tomasz Górski (Warsaw, 1969), p. 269.

(9) Edmund Burke, *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly, in Answer to Some Objections to His Book on French Affairs* in Idem, *The* Works, Vol. IV, p. 7. Henceforth *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly.*

(10) Edmund Burke, *Speech on Moving Resolutions for Conciliation with America, March 22, 1775* in

the contrary – it was the reality open to change, though determined by the lasting, God-given moral order. This order was to be discerned and preserved by people – it was their eternal duty, to be realized throughout generations in the manner of "working after the pattern of Nature". In the sphere of politics, the idea of inheritance translated into the application of *a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission, without at all excluding a principle of improvement*[11].

However, Burke was far from absolutizing history and treating all inherited principles and institutions with equal reverence. While the respect for the ancestors' legacy was a praiseworthy mark of prudence, yet the thoughtless reception of all their traditions and structures would be a grave mistake. Time and again Burke opposed the faithful application of historical analogies to the present-day events, recognizing that the wisdom of forefathers cannot always provide recommendations for utterly novel occurrences.[12] Indeed, it was to be doubted *whether the history of mankind is yet complete enough, if ever it can be so, to furnish grounds for a sure theory on the internal causes which necessarily affect the fortune of a state*[13]. In addition, Burke rejected fatalism and the alleged necessity to conform to the determining rules of history; similarly, he opposed any efforts to create a universal political programme that was supposed to solve all contemporary and future problems[14]. Burke argued that man is not a slave, who is bound to play an assigned role in history that had been planned by God; history that is supposedly unavoidable and takes "the only correct course". On the contrary – man is a co-participant of the plan of Creation; he relies on his reason and feelings to discern the nature of events in order to fight for

Idem, *The Works,* Vol. II, p. 143.

(11) Burke, *Reflections*, p. 275.

(12) For instance, Burke took this position in 1769 when he criticized the government's policy towards the American colonies, arguing that it had been wrong to rely on the previous experience in this case: *The object [the colonies] is wholly new in the world. It is singular; it is grown up to this magnitude and importance within the memory of man; nothing in history is parallel to it* - Edmund Burke, *Observations on a late Publication Intituled "The Present State of the Nation"* in Idem, *The Works,* Vol. I, p. 395.

(13) Edmund Burke, *Three Letters Addressed to a Member of the Present Parliament, on the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France. 1796-7. Letter I. On the Overtures of Peace* in Idem, *The Works*, Vol. V, p. 235, henceforth *On the Overtures of Peace.*

(14) Edmund Burke, *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* in Idem, *The Works*, Vol. I., p. 80.

the preservation or restoration of the world's moral essence (providing, naturally, he does not miss his vocation). Thus, Burke stops far short of Hegel's determinism, for his adherence to the doctrine of free will tells him that it is not arbitrary, unreasoning will, not material force, not racial destiny that make history, but rather human character and conduct.[15]

It was prescription that was to sanction gradual and long-lasting processes of change; it was the long usage of a particular norm, custom or an institution that served as an argument for their preservation. According to Burke, prescription was the most natural mechanism of the principles' transmission; it ensured the historical continuity – the fortunate combination of the regard for tradition and experience. However, prescription did not legitimize the power if it was exercised in the opposition to moral principles; it did not legitimize the power that led to the poverty and submission of the people who were under its influence. Importantly, continuity was not to be ensured by preserving all patrimonial institutions and customs, but it was a highly creative undertaking, understood as man's collaboration with God's creation. In Burke's opinion, even the oldest custom or the strongest tradition could not justify the obvious "substantial" wrong – wrong that negates the nature and purpose of each law, especially moral law.

This perspective allows us to understand Burke's perception of the French Revolution as the break from European civilization. The French revolution was exceptional, because for the first time in history an ideology gained the status of a "lay religion", whose devoted followers fought against the old institutions, beliefs and traditions with all their zeal. The spirit of the revolution was, in Burke's opinion, *the evil spirit that possesses the body of France (...) and inspires into them a new, a pernicious, a desolating activity*[16]. Paradoxically, by overthrowing the old regime, the French did not gain more freedom, but instead they were sentenced to life in an artificial reality, to which nobody could attribute anything concrete, based on any prior experience. The old traditions,

(15) Russell Kirk, "Burke and the Philosophy of Prescription", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 14 No. 3 (Jun. 1953), p. 375.

(16) Edmund Burke, *Three Letters to a Member of Parliament on the Proposals for Peace with the regicide Directory of France. Letter II. On the Genius and Character of the French Revolution as it regards Other nations* in Idem, *The Works*, Vol. V, pp. 343. Henceforth *On the Genius*.

structures and authorities were replaced with a vacuum, which could be filled with nothing else but brutal, ruthless violence, thus it became unavoidable that the most violent tyranny became a leading principle of the revolutionary government.[17] As Burke observed, once the people broke loose from all the principles of natural authority, they became the natural prey of impostors and knaves[18], who replaced old, true liberties, rights and obligations with vague and superficial "human rights"[19]. Burke argued that the government's blatantly unjust political actions, especially the condemnation of the king to death and the violation of all property, were manifestations of the negation of the most basic rule of justice; they constituted a "substantial error", that is, those actions were directed against the substance of moral law that both monarchy and land ownership grew on. Those destructive actions were underpinned by deceitful theories. Burke noticed the arrogance and ruthlessness of the revolutionary reformers; their "a priori position" – a poisonous fruit of speculative arguments – was characteristic of the eighteenth-century society who became intoxicated with new possibilities of shaping the world and believed in the supreme powers of man over nature.

Burke was afraid that the Empire's crude and immoral politics in India, France, Ireland and the American colonies put in danger the most fundamental European values such as honor, justice and humanity, as they undermined both the principle of good faith and the "noble" and "honorary" principles that were at the pinnacle of European achievements and that distinguished Europe from other civilizations[20]. Like Montesquieu and Emer de Vattel, Burke realized that in the European civilization the sense of honour remained one of the key motivations for fair conduct and has led to the ennoblement of duties which otherwise would have become abstract terms.[21] Burke considered

(17) Burke, *Reflections*, pp. 307-308.

(18) Burke, *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, p. 10.

(19) F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke. Volume II: 1784-1797* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 314-315.

(20) Burke, *Reflections*, p. 332.

(21) „Honor, meddling in everything, enters into all the modes of thought and all the ways of feeling and even directs the principles. This eccentric honor shapes the virtues into what it wants and as it wants: on its own, it puts rules on everything prescribed to us (...)" – Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, translated and edited by Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone

honour and chivalrous values the noblest legacy of the Middle Ages and the adopted defence rhetoric expressed his concern for the core of natural values and his willingness to protect it. At the same time, he severely criticized governmental abuses, especially those which clearly violated the principles of noble conduct, as they were detrimental to social equilibrium and made the preservation of the said values impossible.

In Burke's opinion, the Enlightenment "radicalism" should not be met with "moderation", but with prudent, yet resolute defence of the moral principles inherited from the ancestors. The biggest challenge in fighting for social balance against the backdrop of the revolutionary chaos was not as much balancing the scales of preservation and change as ensuring that each factor was taken into consideration when appropriate; however, it was the moral values – irrespective of time and circumstances alike – that set the level of change. According to Burke, extreme dangers called for drastic countermeasures, so if radical social upheavals endangered fundamental values, he approved of radical counteractions, including a political revolution. Burke did not consider revolution evil in itself; on the contrary, he believed the revolution (or rather the counterrevolution) to be a necessity at times. In order to recognize a historical moment that calls for the adaptation of such a position one should follow the marks of the evil triumphant[22]. As Burke commented on his own times, writing to Lord Fitzwilliam in November 1793: *I am terrified to observe the current state of humankind's morals; I feel as if the gates of hell open before me*[23]. Burke considered the ongoing French revolution an astonishing event[24]; it was wholly unprecedented seeing as the existing values were to be replaced by ideologically determined "anti-values" and that it was

(Cambridge, 1989), p. 33. Cf. Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/vattel-the-law-of-nations-lf-ed (Access: 23.11.2020).

(22) „There is no safety for honest man, but by believing all possible evil of evil men, and by acting with promptitude, decision, and steadiness on that belief" – Burke, *Letter to the Member of the National Assembly*, p. 8.

(23) Edmund Burke, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke 1744-1796, edited by T. W. Copeland*, (Chicago 1958-1978, Vol. I-X), Vol. VII, pp. 496-497.

(24) *All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world* – Burke, *Reflections*, pp. 243-244.

meant as *a destruction and decomposition of the whole society*[25].

Presently, when challenging the legacy of the past with all one's might is a dominant intellectual mindset, Burke's call *to avoid the evils of inconstancy and versatility, ten thousand times worse than those of obstinacy and the blindest prejudice*[26] seems nothing more than a belated warning; a piece of advice from a different time meant for a different reality. In truth, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* Burke has anticipated a post-revolutionary world and indicated actual consequences of the breakup of intergenerational continuity, disrespect for the ancestors' wisdom, and collapse of moral principles (to which a plague of divorces and a crisis of the traditionally defined family are clear testimonies) – *the commonwealth itself would in a few generations crumble away, be disconnected into dust and powder of individuality, and at length dispersed to all the winds of heaven (...) Men would become little better than the flies of a summer*[27]. Assuming that a new generation is born every thirty years, then over seven generations have passed since Burke's time – enough time to realize and experience the consequences of revolution that Burke has analysed with such insightfulness.

Nowadays, innovation is commonly presented as good in itself. This uncritical appraisal includes also political innovations, hence, the parliaments' competence is very often measured simply by a number of accepted laws, irrespective of the damaging nature of many of them. Notably, Burke differentiated between a mere change and a wise reform – while the former alters the substance of the objects and gets rid of their essential good as well as of all the accidental evil attached to them, the latter rectifies the problem while keeping the substance of the object intact[28]. Accordingly, wise reforms are not only permissible – they are simply necessary to ensure social equilibrium; to bring them in is to show prudence, because wise reforms fill political institutions with "new life

(25) Burke, *On the Overtures of Peace*, p. 325.

(26) Burke, *Reflections*, p. 358.

(27) *Ibidem,* pp. 357-358, the emphasis by R.O.

(28) Edmund Burke, *Letter to a Noble Lord on the Attacks Made upon Mr. Burke ad His Pension, in the House of Lords, by the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale, 1796* in Idem, *The Works*, Vol. V, p. 186. Henceforth *Letter to a Noble Lord.*

and vigor"[29]. Importantly, such reforms should be thoroughly prepared, following a careful gathering of facts and an in-depth analysis of possible consequences. Does a common contemporary practice of dashing the laws off match those conditions? Making the laws that do not reflect the nature of a particular society, but instead they seek to „educate" the society, to change the people's mentality and their established customs, to revolutionize the language and to turn upside down the fundamental linguistical and philosophical categories – does it all fit Burke's bill? Hardly.

Facing „astonishing events" that endanger the most vital principles may be an arduous task, yet Burke encourages us not to lose hope and to persevere. He rejected historicism and belief in the nations' inevitable march along the path of progress and "enlightenment". He urged people not only to try to understand a metaphysical side of the world, but also to actively oppose the evil – the three-headed hydra of Jacobinism, atheism and regicide as well as *a den of bravoes and banditti that assume the garb and tone of an academy philosophers*[30], who supply the revolution with intellectual fuel. After all, it would be "mad and impious presumption" to trust in God's intervention in a form other than by the hands of the faithful[31]. History is never definite; not once not twice its course has been dramatically changed by an unexpected turn of events – *a common soldier, a child, a girl at the door of an inn, have changed the face of fortune, and almost of Nature*[32]. Politicians and all people in power would be wise to remember that *they act in trust, and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great master, Author, and Founder of society*[33], and an exceptional individual, who enters history in the right

(29) Burke, *An Appeal*, p. 137.

(30) Burke, *Letter to a Noble Lord*, pp. 213-215.

(31) Burke, *On the Genius*, p. 349.

(32) Burke, *On the Overtures of Peace*, p. 236. An interpretation of those figures can be found in the *Selected Works of Edmund Burke. Vol. 3: Letters on a Regicide Peace* (Indianapolis, 1999), p. 397. A common soldier alludes to Arnold Winkelried, whose sacrifice in the battle of Sempach helped to defend the independence of the Swiss Confederation; a child supposedly stands for Hannibal and a girl at the door of an inn symbolizes Joan d'Arc.

(33) Burke, *Reflections*, p. 354.

place and at the right time has power to change its course[34]. Our epoch hopefully awaits careful readers of Burke to appear in the right place and at the right time to defend and protect everlasting values.

We are living in "the astonishing historical moment", when the states and corporations are omnipotent (or to borrow Burke's phrase – we are facing *a system of public offices in the disguise of a counting house*[35]), yet whose internal disorder, chaos and the lack of control cannot escape our notice; we are living in the times of street fighting and terrorist attacks; we are living in the times of family disintegration and the cultural promotion of selfishness and immorality; we are living in the times of common insecurity caused by global pandemic; in such times, let us be inspired by Burke who believed that those unforeseen works of Providence, *which the all-wise, but mysterious, Governor of the world sometimes interposes, to snatch nations from ruin*[36] might shake the old European civilization and thus would help to save it.

Translated by
Martyna Mirecka

(34) Burke, *The Correspondence*, vol. VI, p. 37.

(35) Burke, *Speeches in the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, Esquire, Late Governor-general of Bengal* in Idem, *The Works*, Vol. IX, p. 350.

(36) Burke, *On the genius*, p. 349.

Speech at the Guildhall in Bristol [1780], reprinted from
The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. II, Boston 1865

Speeches at His Arrival at Bristol, and at the Conclusion of the Poll [1774],
reprinted from *The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke,* vol. II, Boston 1865

A Letter from Mr. Burke, to a Member of the National Assembly in Answer
to Some Objections to His Book on French Affairs [1791], reprinted from
The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. VI, London 1826

Thoughts and details of scarcity [1795], reprinted from
The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. V, London 1887

Letter to a Noble Lord [1796], reprinted from
The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. V, Boston 1881

On the genius and character of the French revolution as it regards other nations [1796],
reprinted from *The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*, vol. V, London 1887

Edmund Burke

On Revolution, Scarcity and Parliamentary Conducts

New Direction | OMP
MMXX

Speeches at His Arrival at Bristol, and at the Conclusion of the Poll 1774

Editor's Advertisement

We believe there is no need of an apology to the public for offering to them any genuine speeches of Mr. Burke: the two contained in this publication undoubtedly are so. The general approbation they met with (as we hear) from all parties at Bristol persuades us that a good edition of them will not be unacceptable in London; which we own to be the inducement, and we hope is a justification, of our offering it.

We do not presume to descant on the merit of these speeches; but as it is no less new than honorable to find a popular candidate, at a popular election, daring to avow his dissent to certain points that have been considered as very popular objects, and maintaining himself on the manly confidence of his own opinion, so we must say that it does great credit to the people of England, as it proves to the world, that, to insure their confidence, it is not necessary to flatter them, or to affect a subserviency to their passions or their prejudices.

It may be necessary to promise, that at the opening of the poll the candidates were Lord Clare, Mr. Brickdale, the two last members, and Mr. Cruger, a considerable merchant at Bristol. On the second day of the poll, Lord Clare declined; and a considerable body of gentlemen, who had wished that the city of Bristol should, at this critical season, be represented by some gentleman of tried abilities and known commercial knowledge, immediately put Mr. Burke in nomination. Some of them set off express for London to apprise that gentleman of this event; but he was gone to Malton, in Yorkshire. The spirit and active zeal of these gentlemen followed him to Malton. They arrived there just after Mr. Burke's election for that place, and invited him to Bristol. Mr. Burke, as he tells us in his first speech, acquainted his constituents with the honorable offer that was made him, and, with their consent, he immediately set off for Bristol, on the Tuesday, at six in the evening; he arrived at Bristol at half past two in the afternoon, on Thursday, the 13th of October, being the sixth day of the poll.

He drove directly to the mayor's house, who not being at home, he proceeded to the Guildhall, where he ascended the hustings, and having saluted the electors, the sheriffs, and the two candidates, he reposed himself for a few minutes, and then addressed the electors in a speech which was received with great and universal applause and approbation.

Speech at His Arrival at Bristol

GENTLEMEN, - I am come hither to solicit in person that favor which my friends have hitherto endeavored to procure for me, by the most obliging, and to me the most honorable exertions.

I have so high an opinion of the great trust which you have to confer on this occasion, and, by long experience, so just a diffidence in my abilities to fill it in a manner adequate even to my own ideas, that I should never have ventured of myself to intrude into that awful situation. But since I am called upon by the desire of several respectable fellowsubjects, as I have done at other times, I give up my fears to their wishes. Whatever my other deficiencies may be, I do not know what it is to be wanting to my friends.

I am not fond of attempting to raise public expectations by great promises. At this time, there is much cause to consider, and very little to presume. We seem to be approaching to a great crisis in our affairs, which calls for the whole wisdom of the wisest among us, without being able to assure ourselves that any wisdom can perceive us from many and great inconveniences. You know I speak of our unhappy contest with America. I confess, it is a matter on which I look down as from a precipice. It is difficult in itself, and it is rendered more intricate by a great variety of plans of conduct. I do not mean to enter into them. I will not suspect a want of good intention in framing them. But however pure the intentions of their authors may have been, we all know that the event has been unfortunate. The means of recovering our affairs are not obvious. So many great questions of commerce, of finance, of constitution, and of policy are involved in this American deliberation, that I dare engage

for nothing, but that I shall give it, without any predilection to former opinions, or any sinister bias whatsoever, the most honest and impartial consideration of which I am capable. The public has a full right to it; and this great city, a main pillar in the commercial interest of Great Britain, must totter on its base by the slightest mistake with regard to our American measures.

Thus much, however, I think it not amiss to lay before you, - that I am not, I hope, apt to take up or lay down my opinions lightly. I have held, and ever shall maintain, to the best of my power, unimpaired and undiminished, the just, wise, and necessary constitutional superiority of Great Britain. This is necessary for America as well as for us. I never mean to depart from it. Whatever may be lost by it, I avow it. The forfeiture even of your favor, if by such a declaration I could forfeit it, though the first object of my ambition, never will make me disguise my sentiments on this subject.

But – I have ever had a clear opinion, and have ever held a constant correspondent conduct, that this superiority is consistent with all the liberties a sober and spirited American ought to desire. I never mean to put any colonist, or any human creature, in a situation not becoming a free man. To reconcile British superiority with American liberty shall be my great object, as far as my little faculties extend. I am far from thinking that both, even yet, may not be preserved.

When I first devoted myself to the public service, I considered how I should render myself fit for it; and this I did by endeavoring to discover what it was that gave this country the rank it holds in the World. I found that our prosperity and dignity arose principally, if not solely, from two sources: our Constitution, and commerce. Both these I have spared no study to understand, and no endeavor to support.

The distinguishing part of our Constitution is its liberty. To preserve that liberty inviolate seems the particular duty and proper trust of a member of the House of Commons. But the liberty, the only liberty, I mean is a liberty connected with order: that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all without them. It inheres in good and steady government, as in its substance and vital principle.

The other source of our power is commerce, of which you are so large a part, and which cannot exist, no more than your liberty, without

a connection with many virtues. It has ever been a very particular and a very favorite object of my study, in its principles, and in its details. I think many here are acquainted with the truth of what I say. This I know, - that I have ever had my house open, and my poor services ready, for traders and manufacturers of every denomination. My favorite ambition is, to have those services acknowledged. I now appear before you to make trial, whether my earnest endeavors have been so wholly oppressed by the weakness of my abilities as to be rendered insignificant in the eyes of a great trading city; or whether you choose to give a weight to humble abilities, for the sake of the honest exertions with which they are accompanied. This is my trial to-day. My industry is not on trial. Of my industry I am sure, as far as my constitution of mind and body admitted.

When I was invited by many respectable merchants, freeholders, and freemen of this city to offer them my services, I had just received the honor of an election at another place, at a very great distance from this. I immediately opened the matter to those of my worthy constituents who were with me, and they unanimously advised me not to decline it. They told me that they had elected me with a view to the public service; and as great questions relative to our commerce and colonies were imminent that in such matters I might derive authority and support from the representation of this great commercial city: they desired me, therefore, to set off without delay, very well persuaded that I never could forget my obligations to them or to my friends, for the choice they had made of me. From that time to this instant I have not slept; and if I should have the honor of being freely chosen by you, I hope I shall be as far from slumbering or sleeping, when your service requires me to be awake, as I have been in coming to offer myself a candidate for your favor.

Speech to the Electors of Bristol

On His Being Declared by the Sheriffs Duly Elected one of the Representatives in Parliament for that City, On Thursday, the 3rd of November, 1774.

GENTLEMEN, - I cannot avoid sympathizing strongly with the feelings of the gentleman who has received the same honor that you have conferred on me. If he, who was bred and passed his whole life amongst you, - if he, who, through the easy gradations of acquaintance, friendship, and esteem, has obtained the honor which seems of itself, naturally and almost insensibly, to meet with those who, by the even tenor of pleasing manners and social virtues, slide into the love and confidence of their fellow-citizens, - if he cannot speak but with great emotion on this subject, surrounded as he is on all sides with his old friends, - you will have the goodness to excuse me, if my real, unaffected embarrassment prevents me from expressing my gratitude to you as I ought.

I was brought hither under the disadvantage of being unknown, even by sight, to any of you. No previous canvass was made for me. I was put in nomination after the poll was opened. I did not appear until it was far advanced. If, under all these accumulated disadvantages, your good opinion has carried me to this happy point of success, you will pardon me, if I can only say to you collectively, as I said to you individually, simply and plainly, I thank you, - I am obliged to you, - I am not insensible of your kindness.

This is all that I am able to say for the inestimable favor you have conferred upon me. But I cannot be satisfied without saying a little more in defence of the right you have to confer such a favor. The person that appeared here as counsel for the candidate who so long and so earnestly solicited your votes thinks proper to deny that a very great part of you have any votes to give. He fixes a standard period of time in his own imagination, (not what the law defines, but merely what the convenience of his client suggests,) by which he would cut off at one stroke all those freedoms which are the dearest privileges of your Corporation, - which the Common Law authorizes, - which your magistrates are compelled to grant, - which come duly authenticated into this court, - and are saved in the clearest words, and with the most religious care and tenderness, in that very act of Parliament which was made to regulate the elections by freemen, and to prevent all possible abuses in making them.

I do not intend to argue the matter here. My learned counsel has supported your cause with his usual ability; the worthy sheriffs have acted with their usual equity; and I have no doubt that the same equity which dictates the return will guide the final determination. I had the honor, in conjunction with many far wiser men, to contribute a very small assistance, but, however, some assistance, to the forming the judicature which is to try such questions. It would be unnatural in me to doubt the justice of that court, in the trial of my own cause, to which I have been so active to give jurisdiction over every other.

I assure the worthy freemen, and this corporation, that, if the gentleman perseveres in the intentions which his present warmth dictates to him, I will attend their cause with diligence, and I hope with effect. For, if I know anything of myself, it is not my own interest in it, but my full conviction, that induces me to tell you, *I think there is not a shadow of doubt in the case*.

I do not imagine that you find me rash in declaring myself, or very forward in troubling you. From the beginning to the end of the election, I have kept silence in all matters of discussion. I have never asked a question of a voter on the other side, or supported a doubtful vote on my own. I respected the abilities of my managers; I relied on the candor of the court. I think the worthy sheriffs will bear me witness that I have never once made an attempt to impose upon their reason, to surprise their justice,

or to ruffle their temper. I stood on the hustings (except when I gave my thanks to those who favored me with their votes) less like a candidate than an unconcerned spectator of a public proceeding. But here the face of things is altered. Here is an attempt for a general *massacre* of suffrages, - an attempt, by a promiscuous carnage of *friends* and *foes*, to exterminate above two thousand votes, including *seven hundred polled for the gentleman himself who now complains,* and who would destroy the friends whom he has obtained, only because he cannot obtain as many of them as be wishes.

How he will be permitted, in another place, to stultify and disable himself, and to plead against his own acts, is another question. The law will decide it. I shall only speak of it as it concerns the propriety of public conduct in this city. I do not pretend to lay down rules of decorum for other gentlemen. They are best judges of the mode of proceeding that will recommend them to the favor of their fellow-citizens. But I confess I should look rather awkward, if I had been *the very first to produce the new copies of freedom,* – if I had persisted in producing them to the last, – if I had ransacked, with the most unremitting industry and the most penetrating research, the remotest corners of the kingdom to discover them, - if I were then, all at once, to turn short, and declare that I had been sporting all this while with the right of election, and that I had been drawing out a poll, upon no sort of rational grounds, which disturbed the peace of my fellow-citizens for a month together, – I really, for my part, should appear awkward under such circumstances.

It would be still more awkward in me, if I were gravely to look the sheriffs in the face, and to tell them they were not to determine my cause on my own principles, nor to make the return upon those votes upon which I had rested my election. Such would be my appearance to the court and magistrates.

But how should I appear to the *voters* themselves? If I had gone round to the citizens entitled to freedom, and squeezed them by the hand, - "Sir, I humbly beg your vote, - I shall be eternally thankful, - may I hope for the honor of your support? - Well! - come, - we shall see you at the Council-House." - If I were then to deliver them to my managers, pack them into tallies, vote them off in court, and when I heard from the bar, - "Such a one only! and such a one forever! - he's my man!" – "Thank you, good Sir, Hah! my worthy friend! Thank you kindly, - that's an honest fellow,—how

is your good family?" – Whilst these words were hardly out of my mouth, if I should have wheeled round at once, and told them, - "Get you gone, you pack of worthless fellows! You have no votes, - you are usurpers! you are intruders on the rights of real freemen! I will have nothing to do with you! you ought never to have been produced at this election, and the sheriffs ought not to have admitted you to poll!"-

Gentlemen, I should make a strange figure, if my conduct had been of this sort. I am not so old an acquaintance of yours as the worthy gentleman. Indeed, I could not have ventured on such kind of freedoms with you. But I am bound, and I will endeavor, to have justice done to the rights of freemen, - even though I should at the same time be obliged to vindicate the former(1) part of my antagonist's conduct against his own present inclinations.

I owe myself, in all things, to *all* the freemen of this city. My particular friends have a demand on me that I should not deceive their expectations. Never was cause or man supported with more constancy, more activity, more spirit. I have been supported with a zeal, indeed, and heartiness in my friends, which (if their object had been at all proportioned to their endeavors) could never be sufficiently commended. They supported me upon the most liberal principles. They wished that the members for Bristol should be chosen for the city, and for their country at large, and not for themselves.

So far they are not disappointed. If I possess nothing else, I am sure I possess the temper that is fit for your service. I know nothing of Bristol, but by the favors I have received, and the virtues I have seen exerted in it.

I shall ever retain, what I now feel, the most perfect and grateful attachment to my friends, - and I have no enmities, no resentments. I never can consider fidelity to engagements and constancy in friendships but with the highest approbation, even when those noble qualities are employed against my own pretensions. The gentleman who is not so fortunate as I have been in this contest enjoys, in this respect, a consolation full of honor both to himself and to his friends. They have certainly left nothing undone for his service.

(1) Mr. Brickdale opened his poll, it seems, with a tally of those very kind of freemen, and voted many hundreds of them.

As for the trifling petulance which the rage of party stirs up in little minds, though it should show itself even in this court, it has not made the slightest impression on me. The highest flight of such clamorous birds is winged in an inferior region of the air. We hear them, and we look upon them, just as you, Gentlemen, when you enjoy the serene air on your lofty rocks, look down upon the gulls that skim the mud of your river, when it is exhausted of its tide.

I am sorry I cannot conclude without saying a word on a topic touched upon by my worthy colleague. I wish that topic had been passed by at a time when I have so little leisure to discuss it. But since he has thought proper to throw it out, I owe you a clear explanation of my poor sentiments on that subject.

He tells you that "the topic of instructions has occasioned much altercation and uneasiness in this city", and he expresses himself (if I understand him rightly) in favor of the coercive authority of such instructions.

Certainly, Gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinions high respect; their business unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his *pleasure, his satisfactions, to theirs,* - and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own.

But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure, - no, nor from the law and the Constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

My worthy colleague says, his will ought to be subservient to yours. If that be all, the thing is innocent. If government were a matter of will upon any side, yours, without question, ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgment, and not of inclination; and what sort of reason is that in which the determination precedes the discussion, in which one set of men deliberate and another

decide, and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear the arguments?

To deliver an opinion is the right of all men; that of constituents is a weighty and respectable opinion, which a representative ought always to rejoice to hear, and which he ought always most seriously to consider. But *authoritative* instructions, *mandates* issued, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest conviction of his judgment and conscience, - these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenor of our Constitution.

Parliament is not a *congress* of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but Parliament is a *deliberative* assembly of *one* nation, with *one* interest, that of the whole –where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member, indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not member of Bristol, but he is a member of *Parliament*. If the local constituent should have an interest or should form an hasty opinion evidently opposite to the real good of the rest of the community, the member for that place ought to be as far as any other from any endeavor to give it effect. I beg pardon for saying so much on this subject; I have been unwillingly drawn into it; but I shall ever use a respectful frankness of communication with you. Your faithful friend, your devoted servant, I shall be to the end of my life: a flatterer you do not wish for. On this point of instructions, however, I think it scarcely possible we ever can have any sort of difference. Perhaps I may give you too much, rather than too little trouble.

From the first hour I was encouraged to court your favor, to this happy day of obtaining it, I have never promised you anything but humble and persevering endeavors to do my duty. The weight of that duty, I confess, makes me tremble; and whoever well considers what it is, of all things in the world, will fly from what has the least likeness to a positive and precipitate engagement. To be a good member of Parliament is, let me tell you, no easy task, - especially at this time, when there is so strong a disposition to run into the perilous extremes of servile compliance or wild popularity. To unite circumspection with vigor is absolutely

necessary, but it is extremely difficult. We are now members for a rich commercial *city*; this city, however, is but a part of a rich commercial *nation*, the interests of which are various, multiform, and intricate. We are members for that great nation, which, however, is itself but part of a great *empire*, extended by our virtue and our fortune to the farthest limits of the East and of the West. All these wide-spread interests must be considered, - must be compared, - must be reconciled, if possible. We are members for a *free* country; and surely we all know that the machine of a free constitution is no simple thing, but as intricate and as delicate as it is valuable. We are members in a great and ancient *monarchy*; and we must preserve religiously the true, legal rights of the sovereign, which form the keystone that binds together the noble and well-constructed arch of our empire and our Constitution. A constitution made up of balanced powers must ever be a critical thing. As such I mean to touch that part of it which comes within my reach. I know my inability, and I wish for support from every quarter. In particular I shall aim at the friendship, and shall cultivate the best correspondence, of the worthy colleague you have given me.

I trouble you no farther than once more to thank you all: you, Gentlemen, for your favors; the candidates, for their temperate and polite behavior; and the sheriffs, for a conduct which may give a model for all who are in public stations.

Speech at the Guildhall in Bristol

Previous to the late election in that City, upon Certain Points Relative to his Parliamentary Conduct, 1780

MR. MAYOR, AND GENTLEMEN, - I am extremely pleased at the appearance of this large and respectable meeting. The steps I may be obliged to take will want the sanction of a considerable authority; and in explaining anything which may appear doubtful in my public conduct, I must naturally desire a very full audience.

I have been backward to begin my canvass. The dissolution of the Parliament was uncertain; and it did not become me, by an unseasonable importunity, to appear diffident of the effect of my six years' endeavors to please you. I had served the city of Bristol honorably, and the city of Bristol had no reason to think that the means of honorable service to the public were become indifferent to me.

I found, on my arrival here, that three gentlemen had been long in eager pursuit of an object which but two of us can obtain. I found that they had all met with encouragement. A contested election in such a city as this is no light thing. I paused on the brink of the precipice. These three gentlemen, by various merits, and on various titles, I made no doubt were worthy of your favor. I shall never attempt to raise myself by depreciating the merits of my competitors. In the complexity and confusion of these cross pursuits, I wished to take the authentic public sense of my friends upon a business of so much delicacy. I wished to take your opinion along with me, that, if I should give up the contest at the very beginning, my surrender of my post may not seem the effect of inconstancy, or timidity, or anger, or disgust, or indolence, or any other temper unbecoming a man who has engaged in the public service. If, on the contrary, I should undertake the election, and fail of success, I was full as anxious that it should be manifest to the whole world that the peace of the city had not been broken by my rashness, presumption, or fond conceit of my own merit.

I am not come, by a false and counterfeit show of deference to your judgment, to seduce it in my favor. I ask it seriously and unaffectedly. If you wish that I should retire, I shall not consider that advice as a censure upon my conduct, or an alteration in your sentiments, but as a rational submission to the circumstances of affairs. If, on the contrary, you should think it proper for me to proceed on my canvass, if you will risk the trouble on your part, I will risk it on mine. My pretensions are such as you cannot be ashamed of, whether they succeed or fail.

If you call upon me, I shall solicit the favor of the city upon manly ground. I come before you with the plain confidence of an honest servant in the equity of a candid and discerning master. I come to claim your approbation, not to amuse you with vain apologies, or with professions still more vain and senseless. I have lived too long to be served by apologies, or to stand in need of them. The part I have acted has been in open day; and to hold out to a conduct which stands in that clear and steady light for all its good and all its evil, to hold out to that conduct the paltry winking tapers of excuses and promises, - I never will do it. They may obscure it with their smoke, but they never can illumine sunshine by such a flame as theirs.

I am sensible that no endeavors have been left untried to injure me in your opinion. But the use of character is to be a shield against calumny. I could wish, undoubtedly, (if idle wishes were not the most idle of all things), to make every part of my conduct agreeable to every one of my constituents; but in so great a city, and so greatly divided as this, it is weak to expect it.

In such a discordancy of sentiments it is better to look to the nature of things than to the humors of men. The very attempt towards pleasing everybody discovers a temper always flashy, and often false and insincere. Therefore, as I have proceeded straight onward in my conduct, so I will proceed in my account of those parts of it which have been most excepted to. But I must first beg leave just to hint to you that we may suffer very great detriment by being open to every talker. It is not to be imagined how much of service is lost from spirits full of activity and full of energy, who are pressing, who are rushing forward, to great and capital objects, when you oblige them to be continually looking back. Whilst they are defending one service, they defraud you of an hundred. Applaud us when we run, console us when we fall, cheer us when we recover; but let us pass on, - for God's sake, let us pass on!

Do you think, Gentlemen, that every public act in the six years since I stood in this place before you, that all the arduous things which have been done in this eventful period which has crowded into a few years' space the revolutions of an age, can be opened to you on their fair grounds in half an hour's conversation?

But it is no reason, because there is a bad mode of inquiry, that there should be no examination at all. Most certainly it is our duty to examine; it is our interest, too: but it must be with discretion, with an attention to all the circumstances and to all the motives; like sound judges, and not like cavilling pettifoggers and quibbling pleaders, prying into flaws and hunting for exceptions. Look, Gentlemen, to the *whole tenor* of your member's conduct. Try whether his ambition or his avarice have justled him out of the straight line of duty, - or whether that grand foe of the offices of active life, that master vice in men of business, a degenerate and inglorious sloth, has made him flag and languish in his course. This is the object of our inquiry. If our member's conduct can bear this touch, mark it for sterling. He may have fallen into errors, he must have faults; but our error is greater, and our fault is radically ruinous to ourselves, if we do not bear, if we do not even applaud, the whole compound and mixed mass of such a character. Not to act thus is folly; I had almost said it is impiety. He censures God who quarrels with the imperfections of man.

Gentlemen, we must not be peevish with those who serve the people; for none will serve us, whilst there is a court to serve, but those who are of a nice and jealous honor. They who think everything, in comparison of that honor, to be dust and ashes, will not bear to have it soiled and impaired by those for whose sake they make a thousand sacrifices to preserve it immaculate and whole. We shall either drive such men from the public stage, or we shall send them to the court for protection, where, if they must sacrifice their reputation, they will at least secure their interest. Depend upon it, that the lovers of freedom will be free. None will violate their conscience to please us, in order afterwards to discharge that conscience, which they have violated, by doing us faithful and affectionate service. If we degrade and deprave their minds by servility, it will be absurd to expect that they who are creeping and abject towards us will ever be bold and incorruptible assertors of our freedom against the most seducing and the most formidable of all powers. No! Human nature is not so formed: nor shall we improve the faculties or better the morals of public men by our possession of the most infallible receipt in the world for making cheats and hypocrites.

Let me say, with plainness, I who am no longer in a public character, that, if, by a fair, by an indulgent, by a gentlemanly behavior to our

representatives, we do not give confidence to their minds and a liberal scope to their understandings, if we do not permit our members to act upon a *very* enlarged view of things, we shall at length infallibly degrade our national representation into a confused and scuffling bustle of local agency. When the popular member is narrowed in his ideas and rendered timid in his proceedings, the service of the crown will be the sole nursery of statesmen. Among the frolics of the court, it may at length take that of attending to its business. Then the monopoly of mental power will be added to the power of all other kinds it possesses. On the side of the people there will be nothing but impotence: for ignorance is impotence; narrowness of mind is impotence; timidity is itself impotence, and makes all other qualities that go along with it impotent and useless.

At present it is the plan of the court to make its servants insignificant. If the people should fall into the same humor, and should choose their servants on the same principles of mere obsequiousness and flexibility and total vacancy or indifference of opinion in all public matters, then no part of the state will be sound, and it will be in vain to think of saving it.

I thought it very expedient at this time to give you this candid counsel; and with this counsel I would willingly close, if the matters which at various times have been objected to me in this city concerned only myself and my own election. These charges, I think, are four in number: my neglect of a due attention to my constituents, the not paying more frequent visits here; my conduct on the affairs of the first Irish Trade Acts; my opinion and mode of proceeding on Lord Beauchamp's Debtors' Bills; and my votes on the late affairs of the Roman Catholics. All of these (except perhaps the first) relate to matters of very considerable public concern; and it is not lest you should censure me improperly, but lest you should form improper opinions on matters of some moment to you, that I trouble you at all upon the subject. My conduct is of small importance.

With regard to the first charge, my friends have spoken to me of it in the style of amicable expostulation, - not so much blaming the thing as lamenting the effects. Others, less partial to me, were less kind in assigning the motives. I admit, there is a decorum and propriety in a member of Parliament's paying a respectful court to his constituents. If I were conscious to myself that pleasure, or dissipation, or low, unworthy occupations had detained me from personal attendance on you, I

would readily admit my fault, and quietly submit to the penalty. But, Gentlemen, I live at an hundred miles' distance from Bristol; and at the end of a session I come to my own house, fatigued in body and in mind, to a little repose, and to a very little attention to my family and my private concerns. A visit to Bristol is always a sort of canvass, else it will do more harm than good. To pass from the toils of a session to the toils of a canvass is the furthest thing in the world from repose. I could hardly serve you *as I have done*, and court you too. Most of you have heard that I do not very remarkably spare myself in *public* business; and in the *private* business of my constituents I have done very near as much as those who have nothing else to do. My canvass of you was not on the 'change, nor in the county meetings, nor in the clubs of this city: it was in the House of Commons; it was at the Custom-House; it was at the Council; it was at the Treasury; it was at the Admiralty. I canvassed you through your affairs, and not your persons. I was not only your representative as a body; I was the agent, the solicitor of individuals; I ran about wherever your affairs could call me; and in acting for you, I often appeared rather as a shipbroker than as a member of Parliament. There was nothing too laborious or too low for me to undertake. The meanness of the business was raised by the dignity of the object. If some lesser matters have slipped through my fingers, it was because I filled my hands too full, and, in my eagerness to serve you, took in more than any hands could grasp. Several gentlemen stand round me who are my willing witnesses; and there are others who, if they were here, would be still better, because they would be unwilling witnesses to the same truth. It was in the middle of a summer residence in London, and in the middle of a negotiation at the Admiralty for your trade, that I was called to Bristol; and this late visit, at this late day, has been possibly in prejudice to your affairs.

Since I have touched upon this matter, let me say, Gentlemen, that, if I had a disposition or a right to complain, I have some cause of complaint on my side. With a petition of this city in my hand, passed through the corporation without a dissenting voice, a petition in unison with almost the whole voice of the kingdom, (with whose formal thanks I was covered over,) whilst I labored on no less than five bills for a public reform, and fought, against the opposition of great abilities and of the greatest power, every clause and every word of the largest of those bills, almost to the

very last day of a very long session, - all this time a canvass in Bristol was as calmly carried on as if I were dead. I was considered as a man wholly out of the question. Whilst I watched and fasted and sweated in the House of Commons, by the most easy and ordinary arts of election, by dinners and visits, by “How do you dos,” and “My worthy friends,” I was to be quietly moved out of my seat, - and promises were made, and engagements entered into, without any exception or reserve, as if my laborious zeal in my duty had been a regular abdication of my trust.

To open my whole heart to you on this subject, I do confess, however, that there were other times, besides the two years in which I did visit you, when I was not wholly without leisure for repeating that mark of my respect. But I could not bring my mind to see you. You remember that in the beginning of this American war (that era of calamity, disgrace, and downfall, an era which no feeling mind will ever mention without a tear for England) you were greatly divided, - and a very strong body, if not the strongest, opposed itself to the madness which every art and every power were employed to render popular, in order that the errors of the rulers might be lost in the general blindness of the nation. This opposition continued until after our great, but most unfortunate victory at Long Island. Then all the mounds and banks of our constancy were borne down at once, and the frenzy of the American war broke in upon us like a deluge. This victory, which seemed to put an immediate end to all difficulties, perfected us in that spirit of domination which our unparalleled prosperity had but too long nurtured. We had been so very powerful, and so very prosperous, that even the humblest of us were degraded into the vices and follies of kings. We lost all measure between means and ends; and our headlong desires became our polities and our morals. All men who wished for peace, or retained any sentiments of moderation, were overborne or silenced; and this city was led by every artifice (and probably with the more management because I was one of your members) to distinguish itself by its zeal for that fatal cause. In this temper of yours and of my mind, I should sooner have fled to the extremities of the earth than have shown myself here. I, who saw in every American victory (for you have had a long series of these misfortunes) the germ and seed of the naval power of France and Spain, which all our heat and warmth against America was only hatching into life, - I should

not have been a welcome visitant, with the brow and the language of such feelings. When afterwards the other face of your calamity was turned upon you, and showed itself in defeat and distress, I shunned you full as much. I felt sorely this variety in our wretchedness; and I did not wish to have the least appearance of insulting you with that show of superiority, which, though it may not be assumed, is generally suspected, in a time of calamity, from those whose previous warnings have been despised. I could not bear to show you a representative whose face did not reflect that of his constituents, - a face that could not joy in your joys, and sorrow in your sorrows. But time at length has made us all of one opinion, and we have all opened our eyes on the true nature of the American war, - to the true nature of all its successes and all its failures.

In that public storm, too, I had my private feelings. I had seen blown down and prostrate on the ground several of those houses to whom I was chiefly indebted for the honor this city has done me. I confess, that, whilst the wounds of those I loved were yet green, I could not bear to show myself in pride and triumph in that place into which their partiality had brought me, and to appear at feasts and rejoicings in the midst of the grief and calamity of my warm friends, my zealous supporters, my generous benefactors. This is a true, unvarnished, undisguised state of the affair. You will judge of it.

This is the only one of the charges in which I am personally concerned. As to the other matters objected against me, which in their turn I shall mention to you, remember once more I do not mean to extenuate or excuse. Why should I, when the things charged are among those upon which I found all my reputation? What would be left to me, if I myself was the man who softened and blended and diluted and weakened all the distinguishing colors of my life, so as to leave nothing distinct and determinate in my whole conduct?

It has been said, and it is the second charge, that in the questions of the Irish trade I did not consult the interest of my constituents, - or, to speak out strongly, that I rather acted as a native of Ireland than as an English member of Parliament.

I certainly have very warm good wishes for the place of my birth. But the sphere of my duties is my true country. It was as a man attached to your interests, and zealous for the conservation of your power and

dignity, that I acted on that occasion, and on all occasions. You were involved in the American war. A new world of policy was opened, to which it was necessary we should conform, whether we would or not; and my only thought was how to conform to our situation in such a manner as to unite to this kingdom, in prosperity and in affection, whatever remained of the empire. I was true to my old, standing, invariable principle, that all things which came from Great Britain should issue as a gift of her bounty and beneficence, rather than as claims recovered against a struggling litigant, or at least, that, if your beneficence obtained no credit in your concessions, yet that they should appear the salutary provisions of your wisdom and foresight, not as things wrung from you with your blood by the cruel gripe of a rigid necessity. The first concessions, by being (much against my will) mangled and stripped of the parts which were necessary to make out their just correspondence and connection in trade, were of no use. The next year a feeble attempt was made to bring the thing into better shape. This attempt, (countenanced by the minister,) on the very first appearance of some popular uneasiness, was, after a considerable progress through the House, thrown out by *him*.

What was the consequence? The whole kingdom of Ireland was instantly in a flame. Threatened by foreigners, and, as they thought, insulted by England, they resolved at once to resist the power of France and to cast off yours. As for us, we were able neither to protect nor to restrain them. Forty thousand men were raised and disciplined without commission from the crown. Two illegal armies were seen with banners displayed at the same time and in the same country. No executive magistrate, no judicature, in Ireland, would acknowledge the legality of the army which bore the king's commission; and no law, or appearance of law, authorized the army commissioned by itself. In this unexampled state of things, which the least error, the least trespass on the right or left, would have hurried down the precipice into an abyss of blood and confusion, the people of Ireland demand a freedom of trade with arms in their hands. They interdict all commerce between the two nations. They deny all new supply in the House of Commons, although in time of war. They stint the trust of the old revenue, given for two years to all the king's predecessors, to six months. The British Parliament, in a former session, frightened into a limited concession by the menaces of Ireland,

frightened out of it by the menaces of England, was now frightened back again, and made an universal surrender of all that had been thought the peculiar, reserved, uncommunicable rights of England: the exclusive commerce of America, of Africa, of the West Indies, - all the enumerations of the Acts of Navigation, - all the manufactures, - iron, glass, even the last pledge of jealousy and pride, the interest hid in the secret of our hearts, the inveterate prejudice moulded into the constitution of our frame, even the sacred fleece itself, all went together. No reserve, no exception; no debate, no discussion. A sudden light broke in upon us all. It broke in, not through well-contrived and well-disposed windows, but through flaws and breaches, - through the yawning chasms of our ruin. We were taught wisdom by humiliation. No town in England presumed to have a prejudice, or dared to mutter a petition. What was worse, the whole Parliament of England, which retained authority for nothing but surrenders, was despoiled of every shadow of its superintendence. It was, without any qualification, denied in theory, as it had been trampled upon in practice. This scene of shame and disgrace has, in a manner, whilst I am speaking, ended by the perpetual establishment of a military power in the dominions of this crown, without consent of the British legislature(1), contrary to the policy of the Constitution, contrary to the Declaration of Right; and by this your liberties are swept away along with your supreme authority, - and both, linked together from the beginning, have, I am afraid, both together perished forever.

What! Gentlemen, was I not to foresee, or foreseeing, was I not to endeavor to save you from all these multiplied mischiefs and disgraces? Would the little, silly, canvass prattle of obeying instructions, and having no opinions but yours, and such idle, senseless tales, which amuse the vacant ears of unthinking men, have saved you from "the pelting of that pitiless storm," to which the loose improvidence, the cowardly rashness, of those who dare not look danger in the face so as to provide against it in time, and therefore throw themselves headlong into the midst of it, have exposed this degraded nation, beat down and prostrate on the earth, unsheltered, unarmed, unresisting? Was I an Irishman on that day that

(1) Irish Perpetual Mutiny Act.

I boldly withstood our pride? or on the day that I hung down my head, and wept in shame and silence over the humiliation of Great Britain? I became unpopular in England for the one, and in Ireland for the other. What then? What obligation lay on me to be popular? I was bound to serve both kingdoms. To be pleased with my service was their affair, not mine.

I was an Irishman in the Irish business, just as much as I was an American, when, on the same principles, I wished you to concede to America at a time when she prayed concession at our feet. Just as much was I an American, when I wished Parliament to offer terms in victory, and not to wait the well-chosen hour of defeat, for making good by weakness and by supplication a claim of prerogative, preeminence, and authority.

Instead of requiring it from me, as a point of duty, to kindle with your passions, had you all been as cool as I was, you would have been saved disgraces and distresses that are unutterable. Do you remember our commission? We sent out a solemn embassy across the Atlantic Ocean, to lay the crown, the peerage, the commons of Great Britain at the feet of the American Congress. That our disgrace might want no sort of brightening and burnishing, observe who they were that composed this famous embassy. My Lord Carlisle is among the first ranks of our nobility. He is the identical mail who, but two years before, had been put forward, at the opening of a session, in the House of Lords, as the mover of an haughty and rigorous address against America. He was put in the front of the embassy of submission. Mr. Eden was taken from the office of Lord Suffolk, to whom he was then Under-Secretary of State, from the office of that Lord Suffolk who but a few weeks before, in his place in Parliament, did not deign to inquire where a congress of vagrants was to be found. This Lord Suffolk sent Mr. Eden to find these vagrants, without knowing where his king's generals were to be found who were joined in the same commission of supplicating those whom they were sent to subdue. They enter the capital of America only to abandon it; and these assertors and representatives of the dignity of England, at the tail of a flying army, let fly their Parthian shafts of memorials and remonstrances at random behind them. Their promises and their offers, their flatteries and their menaces, were all despised; and we were saved the disgrace of their formal reception

only because the Congress scorned to receive them; whilst the State-house of independent Philadelphia opened her doors to the public entry of the ambassador of France. From war and blood we went to submission, and from submission plunged back again to war and blood, to desolate and be desolated, without measure, hope, or end. I am a Royalist: I blushed for this degradation of the crown. I am a Whig: I blushed for the dishonor of Parliament. I am a true Englishman: I felt to the quick for the disgrace of England. I am a man: I felt for the melancholy reverse of human affairs in the fall of the first power in the world.

To read what was approaching in Ireland, in the black and bloody characters of the American war, was a painful, but it was a necessary part of my public duty. For, Gentlemen, it is not your fond desires or mine that can alter the nature of things; by contending against which, what have we got, or shall ever get, but defeat and shame? I did not obey your instructions. No. I conformed to the instructions of truth and Nature, and maintained your interest, against your opinions, with a constancy that became me. A representative worthy of you ought to be a person of stability. I am to look, indeed, to your opinions, - but to such opinions as you and I *must* have five years hence. I was not to look to the flash of the day. I knew that you chose me, in my place, along with others, to be a pillar of the state, and not a weathercock on the top of the edifice, exalted for my levity and versatility, and of no use but to indicate the shiftings of every fashionable gale. Would to God the value of my sentiments on Ireland and on America had been at this day a subject of doubt and discussion! No matter what my sufferings had been, so that this kingdom had kept the authority I wished it to maintain, by a grave foresight, and by an equitable temperance in the use of its power.

The next article of charge on my public conduct, and that which I find rather the most prevalent of all, is Lord Beauchamp's bill: I mean his bill of last session, for reforming the law-process concerning imprisonment. It is said, to aggravate the offence, that I treated the petition of this city with contempt even in presenting it to the House, and expressed myself in terms of marked disrespect. Had this latter part of the charge been true, no merits on the side of the question which I took could possibly excuse me. But I am incapable of treating this city with disrespect. Very fortunately, at this minute, (if my bad eyesight does not deceive me,) the

worthy gentleman[2] deputed on this business stands directly before me. To him I appeal, whether I did not, though it militated with my oldest and my most recent public opinions, deliver the petition with a strong and more than usual recommendation to the consideration of the House, on account of the character and consequence of those who signed it. I believe the worthy gentleman will tell you, that, the very day I received it, I applied to the Solicitor, now the Attorney General, to give it an immediate consideration; and he most obligingly and instantly consented to employ a great deal of his very valuable time to write an explanation of the bill. I attended the committee with all possible care and diligence, in order that every objection of yours might meet with a solution, or produce an alteration. I entreated your learned recorder (always ready in business in which you take a concern) to attend. But what will you say to those who blame me for supporting Lord Beauchamp's bill, as a disrespectful treatment of your petition, when you hear, that, out of respect to you, I myself was the cause of the loss of that very bill? For the noble lord who brought it in, and who, I must say, has much merit for this and some other measures, at my request consented to put it off for a week, which the Speaker's illness lengthened to a fortnight; and then the frantic tumult about Popery drove that and every rational business from the House. So that, if I chose to make a defence of myself, on the little principles of a culprit, pleading in his exculpation, I might not only secure my acquittal, but make merit with the opposers of the bill. But I shall do no such thing. The truth is, that I did occasion the loss of the bill, and by a delay caused by my respect to you. But such an event was never in my contemplation. And I am so far from taking credit for the defeat of that measure, that I cannot sufficiently lament my misfortune, if but one man, who ought to be at large, has passed a year in prison by my means. I am a debtor to the debtors. I confess judgment. I owe what, if ever it be in my power, I shall most certainly pay, - ample atonement and usurious amends to liberty and humanity for my unhappy lapse. For, Gentlemen, Lord Beauchamp's bill was a law of justice and policy, as far as it went: I say, as far as it went; for its fault was its being in the remedial part miserably defective.

(2) Mr. Williams.

There are two capital faults in our law with relation to civil debts. One is, that every man is presumed solvent: a presumption, in innumerable cases, directly against truth. Therefore the debtor is ordered, on a supposition of ability and fraud, to be coerced his liberty until he makes payment. By this means, in all cases of civil insolvency, without a pardon from his creditor, he is to be imprisoned for life; and thus a miserable mistaken invention of artificial science operates to change a civil into a criminal judgment, and to scourge misfortune or indiscretion with a punishment which the law does not inflict on the greatest crimes.

The next fault is, that the inflicting of that punishment is not on the opinion of an equal and public judge, but is referred to the arbitrary discretion of a private, nay, interested, and irritated, individual. He, who formally is, and substantially ought to be, the judge, is in reality no more than ministerial, a mere executive instrument of a private man, who is at once judge and party. Every idea of judicial order is subverted by this procedure. If the insolvency be no crime, why is it punished with arbitrary imprisonment? If it be a crime, why is it delivered into private hands to pardon without discretion, or to punish without mercy and without measure?

To these faults, gross and cruel faults in our law, the excellent principle of Lord Beauchamp's bill applied some sort of remedy. I know that credit must be preserved: but equity must be preserved, too; and it is impossible that anything should be necessary to commerce which is inconsistent with justice. The principle of credit was not weakened by that bill. God forbid! The enforcement of that credit was only put into the same public judicial hands on which we depend for our lives and all that makes life dear to us. But, indeed, this business was taken up too warmly, both here and elsewhere. The bill was extremely mistaken. It was supposed to enact what it never enacted; and complaints were made of clauses in it, as novelties, which existed before the noble lord that brought in the bill was born. There was a fallacy that ran through the whole of the objections. The gentlemen who opposed the bill always argued as if the option lay between that bill and the ancient law. But this is a grand mistake. For, practically, the option is between not that bill and the old law, but between that bill and those occasional laws called acts of grace. For the operation of the old law is so savage, and so inconvenient

to society, that for a long time past, once in every Parliament, and lately twice, the legislature has been obliged to make a general arbitrary jail-delivery, and at once to set open, by its sovereign authority, all the prisons in England.

Gentlemen, I never relished acts of grace, nor ever submitted to them but from despair of better. They are a dishonorable invention, by which, not from humanity, not from policy, but merely because we have not room enough to hold these victims of the absurdity of our laws, we turn loose upon the public three or four thousand naked wretches, corrupted by the habits, debased by the ignominy of a prison. If the creditor had a right to those carcasses as a natural security for his property, I am sure we have no right to deprive him of that security. But if the few pounds of flesh were not necessary to his security, we had not a right to detain the unfortunate debtor, without any benefit at all to the person who confined him. Take it as you will, we commit injustice. Now Lord Beauchamp's bill intended to do deliberately, and with great caution and circumspection, upon each several case, and with all attention to the just claimant, what acts of grace do in a much greater measure, and with very little care, caution, or deliberation.

I suspect that here, too, if we contrive to oppose this bill, we shall be found in a struggle against the nature of things. For, as we grow enlightened, the public will not bear, for any length of time, to pay for the maintenance of whole armies of prisoners, nor, at their own expense, submit to keep jails as a sort of garrisons, merely to fortify the absurd principle of making men judges in their own cause. For credit has little or no concern in this cruelty. I speak in a commercial assembly. You know that credit is given because capital must be employed; that men calculate the chances of insolvency; and they either withhold the credit, or make the debtor pay the risk in the price. The counting-house has no alliance with the jail. Holland understands trade as well as we, and she has done much more than this obnoxious bill intended to do. There was not, when Mr. Howard visited Holland, more than one prisoner for debt in the great city of Rotterdam. Although Lord Beauchamp's act (which was previous to this bill, and intended to feel the way for it) has already preserved liberty to thousands, and though it is not three years since the last act of grace passed, yet, by Mr. Howard's last account, there were

near three thousand again in jail. I cannot name this gentleman without remarking that his labors and writings have done much to open the eyes and hearts of mankind. He has visited all Europe, - not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces or the stateliness of temples, not to make accurate measurements of the remains of ancient grandeur nor to form a scale of the curiosity of modern art, not to collect medals or collate manuscripts, - but to dive into the depths of dungeons, to plunge into the infection of hospitals, to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain, to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt, to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries. His plan is original; and it is as full of genius as it is of humanity. It was a voyage of discovery, a circumnavigation of charity. Already the benefit of his labor is felt more or less in every country; I hope he will anticipate his final reward by seeing all its effects fully realized in his own. He will receive, not by retail, but in gross, the reward of those who visit the prisoner; and he has so forestalled and monopolized this branch of charity, that there will be, I trust, little room to merit by such acts of benevolence hereafter.

Nothing now remains to trouble you with but the fourth charge against me, - the business of the Roman Catholics. It is a business closely connected with the rest. They are all on one and the same principle. My little scheme of conduct, such as it is, is all arranged. I could do nothing but what I have done on this subject, without confounding the whole train of my ideas and disturbing the whole order of my life. Gentlemen, I ought to apologize to you for seeming to think anything at all necessary to be said upon this matter. The calumny is fitter to be scrawled with the midnight chalk of incendiaries, with "No Popery," on walls and doors of devoted houses, than to be mentioned in any civilized company. I had heard that the spirit of discontent on that subject was very prevalent here. With pleasure I find that I have been grossly misinformed. If it exists at all in this city, the laws have crushed its exertions, and our morals have shamed its appearance in daylight. I have pursued this spirit wherever I could trace it; but it still fled from me. It was a ghost which all had heard of, but none had seen. None would acknowledge that he thought the public proceeding with regard to our Catholic dissenters to

be blamable; but several were sorry it bad made an ill impression upon others, and that my interest was hurt by my share in the business. I find with satisfaction and pride, that not above four or five in this city (and I dare say these misled by some gross misrepresentation) have signed that symbol of delusion and bond of sedition, that libel on the national religion and English character, the Protestant Association. It is, therefore, Gentlemen, not by way of cure, but of prevention, and lest the arts of wicked men may prevail over the integrity of any one amongst us, that I think it necessary to open to you the merits of this transaction pretty much at large; and I beg your patience upon it: for, although the reasonings that have been used to depreciate the act are of little force, and though the authority of the men concerned in this ill design is not very imposing, yet the audaciousness of these conspirators against the national honor, and the extensive wickedness of their attempts, have raised persons of little importance to a degree of evil eminence, and imparted a sort of sinister dignity to proceedings that had their origin in only the meanest and blindest malice.

In explaining to you the proceedings of Parliament which have been complained of, I will state to you, - first, the thing that was done, - next, the persons who did it, - and lastly, the grounds and reasons upon which the legislature proceeded in this deliberate act of public justice and public prudence.

Gentlemen, the condition of our nature is such that we buy our blessings at a price. The Reformation, one of the greatest periods of human improvement, was a time of trouble and confusion. The vast structure of superstition and tyranny which had been for ages in rearing, and which was combined with the interest of the great and of the many, which was moulded into the laws, the manners, and civil institutions of nations, and blended with the frame and policy of states, could not be brought to the ground without a fearful struggle; nor could it fall without a violent concussion of itself and all about it. When this great revolution was attempted in a more regular mode by government, it was opposed by plots and seditions of the people; when by popular efforts, it was repressed as rebellion by the band of power; and bloody executions (often bloodily returned) marked the whole of its progress through all its stages. The affairs of religion, which are no longer heard of in the tumult

of our present contentions, made a principal ingredient in the wars and politics of that time: the enthusiasm of religion threw a gloom over the politics; and political interests poisoned and perverted the spirit of religion upon all sides. The Protestant religion, in that violent struggle, infected, as the Popish had been before, by worldly interests and worldly passions, became a persecutor in its turn, sometimes of the new sects, which carried their own principles further than it was convenient to the original reformers, and always of the body from whom they parted: and this persecuting spirit arose, not only from the bitterness of retaliation, but from the merciless policy of fear.

It was long before the spirit of true piety and true wisdom, involved in the principles of the Reformation, could be depurated from the dregs and feculence of the contention with which it was carried through. However, until this be done, the Reformation is not complete; and those who think themselves good Protestants, from their animosity to others, are in that respect no Protestants at all. It was at first thought necessary, perhaps, to oppose to Popery another Popery, to get the better of it. Whatever was the cause, laws were made in many countries, and in this kingdom in particular, against Papists, which are as bloody as any of those which had been enacted by the Popish princes and states: and where those laws were not bloody, in my opinion, they were worse; as they were slow, cruel outrages on our nature, and kept men alive only to insult in their persons every one of the rights and feelings of humanity. I pass those statutes, because I would spare your pious ears the repetition of such shocking things; and I come to that particular law the repeal of which has produced so many unnatural and unexpected consequences.

A statute was fabricated in the year 1699, by which the saying mass (a church service in the Latin tongue, not exactly the same as our liturgy, but very near it, and containing no offence whatsoever against the laws, or against good morals) was forged into a crime, punishable with perpetual imprisonment. The teaching school, an useful and virtuous occupation, even the teaching in a private family, was in every Catholic subjected to the same unproportioned punishment. Your industry, and the bread of your children, was taxed for a pecuniary reward to stimulate avarice to do what Nature refused, to inform and prosecute on this law. Every Roman Catholic was, under the same act, to forfeit his estate to his

nearest Protestant relation, until, through a profession of what he did not believe, he redeemed by his hypocrisy what the law had transferred to the kinsman as the recompense of his profligacy. When thus turned out of doors from his paternal estate, he was disabled from acquiring any other by any industry, donation, or charity; but was rendered a foreigner in his native land, only because he retained the religion, along with the property, handed down to him from those who had been the old inhabitants of that land before him.

Does anyone who hears me approve this scheme of things, or think there is common justice, common sense, or common honesty in any part of it? If any does, let him say it, and I am ready to discuss the point with temper and candor. But instead of approving, I perceive a virtuous indignation beginning to rise in your minds on the mere cold stating of the statute.

But what will you feel, when you know from history how this statute passed, and what were the motives, and what the mode of making it? A party in this nation, enemies to the system of the Revolution, were in opposition to the government of King William. They knew that our glorious deliverer was an enemy to all persecution. They knew that he came to free us from slavery and Popery, out of a country where a third of the people are contented Catholics under a Protestant government. He came with a part of his army composed of those very Catholics, to overset the power of a Popish prince. Such is the effect of a tolerating spirit; and so much is liberty served in every way, and by all persons, by a manly adherence to its own principles. Whilst freedom is true to itself, everything becomes subject to it, and its very adversaries are an instrument in its hands.

The party I speak of (like some amongst us who would disparage the best friends of their country) resolved to make the king either violate his principles of toleration or incur the odium of protecting Papists. They therefore brought in this bill, and made it purposely wicked and absurd that it might be rejected. The then court party, discovering their game, turned the tables on them, and returned their bill to them stuffed with still greater absurdities, that its loss might lie upon its original authors. They, finding their own ball thrown back to them, kicked it back again to their adversaries. And thus this act, loaded with the double injustice of

two parties, neither of whom intended to pass what they hoped the other would be persuaded to reject, went through the legislature, contrary to the real wish of all parts of it, and of all the parties that composed it. In this manner these insolent and profligate factions, as if they were playing with balls and counters, made a sport of the fortunes and the liberties of their fellow-creatures. Other acts of persecution have been acts of malice. This was a subversion of justice from wantonness and petulance. Look into the history of Bishop Burnet. He is a witness without exception.

The effects of the act have been as mischievous as its origin was ludicrous and shameful. From that time, every person of that communion, lay and ecclesiastic, has been obliged to fly from the face of day. The clergy, concealed in garrets of private houses, or obliged to take a shelter (hardly safe to themselves, but infinitely dangerous to their country) under the privileges of foreign ministers, officiated as their servants and under their protection. The whole body of the Catholics, condemned to beggary and to ignorance in their native land, have been obliged to learn the principles of letters, at the hazard of all their other principles, from the charity of your enemies. They have been taxed to their ruin at the pleasure of necessitous and profligate relations, and according to the measure of their necessity and profligacy. Examples of this are many and affecting. Some of them are known by a friend who stands near me in this hall. It is but six or seven years since a clergyman, of the name of Malony, a man of morals, neither guilty nor accused of anything noxious to the state, was condemned to perpetual imprisonment for exercising the functions of his religion; and after lying in jail two or three years, was relieved by the mercy of government from perpetual imprisonment, on condition of perpetual banishment. A brother of the Earl of Shrewsbury, a Talbot, a name respectable in this country whilst its glory is any part of its concern, was hauled to the bar of the Old Bailey, among common felons, and only escaped the same doom, either by some error in the process, or that the wretch who brought him there could not correctly describe his person, - I now forget which. In short, the persecution would never have relented for a moment, if the judges, superseding (though with an ambiguous example) the strict rule of their artificial duty by the higher obligation of their conscience, did not constantly throw every difficulty in the way of such informers. But so ineffectual is the power of legal

evasion against legal iniquity, that it was but the other day that a lady of condition, beyond the middle of life, was on the point of being stripped of her whole fortune by a near relation to whom she had been a friend and benefactor; and she must have been totally ruined, without a power of redress or mitigation from the courts of law, had not the legislature itself rushed in, and by a special act of Parliament rescued her from the injustice of its own statutes. One of the acts authorizing such things was that which we in part repealed, knowing what our duty was, and doing that duty as men of honor and virtue, as good Protestants, and as good citizens. Let him stand forth that disapproves what we have done!

Gentlemen, bad laws are the worst sort of tyranny. In such a country as this they are of all bad things the worst, - worse by far than anywhere else; and they derive a particular malignity even from the wisdom and soundness of the rest of our institutions. For very obvious reasons you cannot trust the crown with a dispensing power over any of your laws. However, a government, be it as bad as it may, will, in the exercise of a discretionary power, discriminate times and persons, and will not ordinarily pursue any man, when its own safety is not concerned. A mercenary informer knows no distinction. Under such a system, the obnoxious people are slaves not only to the government, but they live at the mercy of every individual; they are at once the slaves of the whole community and of every part of it; and the worst and most unmerciful men are those on whose goodness they most depend.

In this situation, men not only shrink from the frowns of a stern magistrate, but they are obliged to fly from their very species. The seeds of destruction are sown in civil intercourse, in social habitudes. The blood of wholesome kindred is infected. Their tables and beds are surrounded with snares. All the means given by Providence to make life safe and comfortable are perverted into instruments of terror and torment. This species of universal subservience, that makes the very servant who waits behind your chair the arbiter of your life and fortune, has such a tendency to degrade and abase mankind, and to deprive them of that assured and liberal state of mind which alone can make us what we ought to be, that I vow to God I would sooner bring myself to put a man to immediate death for opinions I disliked, and so to get rid of the man and his opinions at once, than to fret him with a feverish being,

tainted with the jail-distemper of a contagious servitude, to keep him above ground an animated mass of putrefaction, corrupted himself, and corrupting all about him.

The act repealed was of this direct tendency; and it was made in the manner which I have related to you. I will now tell you by whom the bill of repeal was brought into Parliament. I find it has been industriously given out in this city (from kindness to me, unquestionably) that I was the mover or the seconder. The fact is, I did not once open my lips on the subject during the whole progress of the bill. I do not say this as disclaiming my share in that measure. Very far from it. I inform you of this fact, lest I should seem to arrogate to myself the merits which belong to others. To have been the man chosen out to redeem our fellow-citizens from slavery, to purify our laws from absurdity and injustice, and to cleanse our religion from the blot and stain of persecution, would be an honor and happiness to which my wishes would undoubtedly aspire, but to which nothing but my wishes could possibly have entitled me. That great work was in hands in every respect far better qualified than mine. The mover of the bill was Sir George Savile.

When an act of great and signal humanity was to be done, and done with all the weight and authority that belonged to it, the world could cast its eyes upon none but him. I hope that few things which have a tendency to bless or to adorn life have wholly escaped my observation in my passage through it. I have sought the acquaintance of that gentleman, and have seen him in all situations. He is a true genius; with an understanding vigorous, and acute, and refined, and distinguishing even to excess; and illuminated with a most unbounded, peculiar, and original east of imagination. With these he possesses many external and instrumental advantages; and he makes use of them all. His fortune is among the largest, - a fortune which, wholly unencumbered as it is with one single charge from luxury, vanity, or excess, sinks under the benevolence of its dispenser. This private benevolence, expanding itself into patriotism, renders his whole being the estate of the public, in which he has not reserved a *peculium* for himself of profit, diversion, or relaxation. During the session the first in and the last out of the House of Commons, he passes from the senate to the camp; and seldom seeing the seat of his ancestors, he is always in Parliament to serve his country or in the field

to defend it. But in all well-wrought compositions some particulars stand out more eminently than the rest; and the things which will carry his name to posterity are his two bills: I mean that for a limitation of the claims of the crown upon landed estates, and this for the relief of the Roman Catholics. By the former he has emancipated property; by the latter he has quieted conscience; and by both he has taught that grand lesson to government and subject, - no longer to regard each other as adverse parties.

Such was the mover of the act that is complained of by men who are not quite so good as he is, - an act most assuredly not brought in by him from any partiality to that sect which is the object of it. For among his faults I really cannot help reckoning a greater degree of prejudice against that people than becomes so wise a man. I know that he inclines to a sort of disgust, mixed with a considerable degree of asperity, to the system; and he has few, or rather no habits with any of its professors. What he has done was on quite other motives. The motives were these, which he declared in his excellent speech on his motion for the bill: namely, his extreme zeal to the Protestant religion, which he thought utterly disgraced by the act of 1699; and his rooted hatred to all kind of oppression, under any color, or upon any pretence whatsoever.

The seconder was worthy of the mover and the motion. I was not the seconder; it was Mr. Dunning, recorder of this city. I shall say the less of him because his near relation to you makes you more particularly acquainted with his merits. But I should appear little acquainted with them, or little sensible of them, if I could utter his name on this occasion without expressing my esteem for his character. I am not afraid of offending a most learned body, and most jealous of its reputation for that learning, when I say he is the first of his profession. It is a point settled by those who settle everything else; and I must add (what I am enabled to say from my own long and close observation) that there is not a man, of any profession, or in any situation, of a more erect and independent spirit, of a more proud honor, a more manly mind, a more firm and determined integrity. Assure yourselves, that the names of two such men will bear a great load of prejudice in the other scale before they can be entirely outweighed.

With this mover and this seconder agreed the *whole* House of Commons, the *whole* House of Lords, the *whole* Bench of Bishops, the king, the ministry, the opposition, all the distinguished clergy of the Establishment, all the eminent lights (for they were consulted) of the dissenting churches. This according voice of national wisdom ought to be listened to with reverence. To say that all these descriptions of Englishmen unanimously concurred in a scheme for introducing the Catholic religion, or that none of them understood the nature and effects of what they were doing so well as a few obscure clubs of people whose names you never heard of, is shamelessly absurd. Surely it is paying a miserable compliment to the religion we profess, to suggest that everything eminent in the kingdom is indifferent or even adverse to that religion, and that its security is wholly abandoned to the zeal of those who have nothing but their zeal to distinguish them. In weighing this unanimous concurrence of whatever the nation has to boast of, I hope you will recollect that all these concurring parties do by no means love one another enough to agree in any point which was not both evidently and importantly right.

To prove this, to prove that the measure was both clearly and materially proper, I will nest lay before you (as I promised) the political grounds and reasons for the repeal of that penal statute, and the motives to its repeal at that particular time.

Gentlemen, America - when the English nation seemed to be dangerously, if not irrecoverably divided, - when one, and that the most growing branch, was torn from the parent stock, and ingrafted on the power of France, a great terror fell upon this kingdom. On a sudden we awakened from our dreams of conquest, and saw ourselves threatened with an immediate invasion, which we were at that time very ill prepared to resist. You remember the cloud that gloomed over us all. In that hour of our dismay, from the bottom of the hiding-places into which the indiscriminate rigor of our statutes had driven them, came out the body of the Roman Catholics. They appeared before the steps of a tottering throne, with one of the most sober, measured, steady, and dutiful addresses that was ever presented to the crown. It was no holiday ceremony, no anniversary compliment of parade and show. It was signed by almost every gentleman of that persuasion, of note or property, in

England. At such a crisis, nothing but a decided resolution to stand or fall with their country could have dictated such an address, the direct tendency of which was to cut off all retreat, and to render them peculiarly obnoxious to an invader of their own communion. The address showed what I long languished to see, that all the subjects of England had cast off all foreign views and connections, and that every man looked for his relief from every grievance at the hands only of his own natural government.

It was necessary, on our part, that the natural government should show itself worthy of that name. It was necessary, at the crisis I speak of, that the supreme power of the state should meet the conciliatory dispositions of the subject. To delay protection would be to reject allegiance. And why should it be rejected, or even coldly and suspiciously received? If any independent Catholic state should choose to take part with this kingdom in a war with France and Spain, that bigot (if such a bigot could be found) would be heard with little respect, who could dream of objecting his religion to an ally whom the nation would not only receive with its freest thanks, but purchase with the last remains of its exhausted treasure. To such an ally we should not dare to whisper a single syllable of those base and invidious topics upon which some unhappy men would persuade the state to reject the duty and allegiance of its own members. Is it, then, because foreigners are in a condition to set our malice at defiance, that with *them* we are willing to contract engagements of friendship, and to keep them with fidelity and honor, but that, because we conceive some descriptions of our countrymen are not powerful enough to punish our malignity, we will not permit them to support our common interest? Is it on that ground that our anger is to be kindled by their offered kindness? Is it on that ground that they are to be subjected to penalties, because they are willing by actual merit to purge themselves from imputed crimes? Lest by an adherence to the cause of their country they should require a title to fair and equitable treatment, are we resolved to furnish them with causes of eternal enmity, and rather supply them with just and founded motives to disaffection than not to have that disaffection in existence to justify an oppression which, not from policy, but disposition, we have predetermined to exercise?

What shadow of reason could be assigned, why, at a time when the most Protestant part of this Protestant empire found it for its advantage

to unite with the two principal Popish states, to unite itself in the closest bonds with France and Spain, for our destruction, that we should refuse to unite with our own Catholic countrymen for our own preservation? Ought we, like madmen, to tear off the plasters that the lenient hand of prudence had spread over the wounds and gashes which in our delirium of ambition we had given to our own body? No person ever reprobated the American war more than I did, and do, and ever shall. But I never will consent that we should lay additional, voluntary penalties on ourselves, for a fault which carries but too much of its own punishment in its own nature. For one, I was delighted with the proposal of internal peace. I accepted the blessing with thankfulness and transport. I was truly happy to find *one* good effect of our civil distractions: that they had put an end to all religious strife and heart-burning in our own bowels. What must be the sentiments of a man who would wish to perpetuate domestic hostility when the causes of dispute are at an end, and who, crying out for peace with one part of the nation on the most humiliating terms, should deny it to those who offer friendship without any terms at all?

But if I was unable to reconcile such a denial to the contracted principles of local duty, what answer could I give to the broad claims of general humanity? I confess to you freely, that the sufferings and distresses of the people of America in this cruel war have at times affected me more deeply than I can express. I felt every gazette of triumph as a blow upon my heart, which has an hundred times sunk and fainted within me at all the mischiefs brought upon those who bear the whole brunt of war in the heart of their country. Yet the Americans are utter strangers to me; a nation among whom I am not sure that I have a single acquaintance. Was I to suffer my mind to be so unaccountably warped, was I to keep such iniquitous weights and measures of temper and of reason, as to sympathize with those who are in open rebellion against an authority which I respect, at war with a country which by every title ought to be, and is, most dear to me, and yet to have no feeling at all for the hardships and indignities suffered by men who by their very vicinity are bound up in a nearer relation to us, who contribute their share, and more than their share, to the common prosperity, who perform the common offices of social life, and who obey the laws, to the full as well as I do? Gentlemen, the danger to the State being out of the question, (of which,

let me tell you, statesmen themselves are apt to have but too exquisite a sense), I could assign no one reason of justice, policy, or feeling, for not concurring most cordially, as most cordially I did concur, in softening some part of that shameful servitude under which several of my worthy fellow-citizens were groaning.

Important effects followed this act of wisdom. They appeared at borne and abroad, to the great benefit of this kingdom, and, let me hope, to the advantage of mankind at large. It betokened union among ourselves. It showed soundness, even on the part of the persecuted, which generally is the weak side of every community. But its most essential operation was not in England. The act was immediately, though very imperfectly, copied in Ireland; and this imperfect transcript of an imperfect act, this first faint sketch of toleration, which did little more than disclose a principle and mark out a disposition, completed in a most wonderful manner the reunion to the state of all the Catholics of that country. It made us what we ought always to have been, one family, one body, one heart and soul, against the family combination and all other combinations of our enemies. We have, indeed, obligations to that people, who received such small benefits with so much gratitude, and for which gratitude and attachment to us I am afraid they have suffered not a little in other places.

I dare say you have all heard of the privileges indulged to the Irish Catholics residing in Spain. You have likewise heard with what circumstances of severity they have been lately expelled from the seaports of that kingdom, driven into the inland cities, and there detained as a sort of prisoners of state. I have good reason to believe that it was the zeal to our government and our cause (somewhat indiscreetly expressed in one of the addresses of the Catholics of Ireland) which has thus drawn down on their heads the indignation of the court of Madrid, to the inexpressible loss of several individuals, and, in future, perhaps to the great detriment of the whole of their body. Now that our people should be persecuted in Spain for their attachment to this country, and persecuted in this country for their supposed enmity to us, is such a jarring reconciliation of contradictory distresses, is a thing at once so dreadful and ridiculous, that no malice short of diabolical would wish to continue any human creatures in such a situation. But honest men

will not forget either their merit or their sufferings. There are men (and many, I trust, there are) who, out of love to their country and their kind, would torture their invention to find excuses for the mistakes of their brethren, and who, to stifle dissension, would construe even doubtful appearances with the utmost favor: such men will never persuade themselves to be ingenious and retimed in discovering disaffection and treason in the manifest, palpable signs of suffering loyalty. Persecution is so unnatural to them, that they gladly snatch the very first opportunity of laying aside all the tricks and devices of penal polities, and of returning home, after all their irksome and vexatious wanderings, to our natural family mansion, to the grand social principle that unites all men, in all descriptions, under the shadow of an equal and impartial justice.

Men of another sort, I mean the bigoted enemies to liberty, may, perhaps, in their politics, make no account of the good or ill affection of the Catholics of England, who are but an handful of people, (enough to torment, but not enough to fear), perhaps not so many, of both sexes and of all ages, as fifty thousand. But, Gentlemen, it is possible you may not know that the people of that persuasion in Ireland amount at least to sixteen or seventeen hundred thousand souls. I do not at all exaggerate the number. A *nation* to be persecuted! Whilst we were masters of the sea, embodied with America, and in alliance with half the powers of the Continent, we might, perhaps, in that remote corner of Europe, afford to tyrannize with impunity. But there is a revolution in our affairs, which makes it prudent to be just. In our late awkward contest with Ireland about trade, had religion been thrown in, to ferment and embitter the mass of discontents, the consequences might have been truly dreadful. But, very happily, that cause of quarrel was previously quieted by the wisdom of the acts I am commending.

Even in England, where I admit the danger from the discontent of that persuasion to be less than in Ireland, yet even here, had we listened to the counsels of fanaticism and folly, we might have wounded ourselves very deeply, and wounded ourselves in a very tender part. You are apprised that the Catholics of England consist mostly of our best manufacturers. Had the legislature chosen, instead of returning their declarations of duty with correspondent good-will, to drive them to despair, there is a country at their very door to which they would be invited, - a country in

all respects as good as ours, and with the finest cities in the world ready built to receive them. And thus the bigotry of a free country, and in an enlightened age, would have repeopled the cities of Flanders, which, in the darkness of two hundred years ago, had been desolated by the superstition of a cruel tyrant. Oar manufactures were the growth of the persecutions in the Low Countries. What a spectacle would it be to Europe, to see us at this time of day balancing the account of tyranny with those very countries, and by our persecutions driving back trade and manufacture, as a sort of vagabonds, to their original settlement! But I trust we shall be saved this last of disgraces.

So far as to the effect of the act on the interests of this nation. With regard to the interests of mankind at large, I am sure the benefit was very considerable. Long before this act, indeed, the spirit of toleration began to gain ground in Europe. In Holland the third part of the people are Catholics; they live at ease, and are a sound part of the state. In many parts of Germany, Protestants and Papists partake the same cities, the same councils, and even the same churches. The unbounded liberality of the king of Prussia's conduct on this occasion is known to all the world; and it is of a piece with the other grand maxims of his reign. The magnanimity of the Imperial court, breaking through the narrow principles of its predecessors, has indulged its Protestant subjects, not only with property, with worship, with liberal education, but with honors and trusts, both civil and military. A worthy Protestant gentleman of this country now fills, and fills with credit, an high office in the Austrian Netherlands. Even the Lutheran obstinacy of Sweden has thawed at length, and opened a toleration to all religions. I know, myself, that in France the Protestants begin to be at rest. The army, which in that country is everything, is open to them; and some of the military rewards and decorations which the laws deny are supplied by others, to make the service acceptable and honorable. The first minister of finance in that country is a Protestant. Two years' war without a tax is among the first fruits of their liberality. Tarnished as the glory of this nation is, and far as it has waded into the shades of an eclipse, some beams of its former illumination still play upon its surface; and what is done in England is still looked to, as argument, and as example. It is certainly true, that no law of this country ever met with such universal applause abroad, or

was so likely to produce the perfection of that tolerating spirit which, as I observed, has been long gaining ground in Europe: for abroad it was universally thought that we had done what I am sorry to say we had not; they thought we had granted a full toleration. That opinion was, however, so far from hurting the Protestant cause, that I declare, with the most serious solemnity, my firm belief that no one thing done for these fifty years past was so likely to prove deeply beneficial to our religion at large as Sir George Savile's act. In its effects it was "an act for tolerating and protecting Protestantism throughout Europe"; and I hope that those who were taking steps for the quiet and settlement of our Protestant brethren in other countries will, even yet, rather consider the steady equity of the greater and better part of the people of Great Britain than the vanity and violence of a few.

I perceive, Gentlemen, by the manner of all about me, that you look with horror on the wicked clamor which has been raised on this subject, and that, instead of an apology for what was done, you rather demand from me an account, why the execution of the scheme of toleration was not made more answerable to the large and liberal grounds on which it was taken up. The question is natural and proper; and I remember that a great and learned magistrate[3], distinguished for his strong and systematic understanding, and who at that time was a member of the House of Commons, made the same objection to the proceeding. The statutes, as they now stand, are, without doubt, perfectly absurd. But I beg leave to explain the cause of this gross imperfection in the tolerating plan, as well and as shortly as I am able. It was universally thought that the session ought not to pass over without doing *something* in this business. To revise the whole body of the penal statutes was conceived to be an object too big for the time. The penal statute, therefore, which was chosen for repeal (chosen to show our disposition to conciliate, not to perfect a toleration) was this act of ludicrous cruelty of which I have just given you the history. It is an act which, though not by a great deal so fierce and bloody as some of the rest, was infinitely more ready in the execution. It was the act which gave the greatest encouragement to

(3) The Chancellor.

those pests of society, mercenary informers and interested disturbers of household peace; and it was observed with truth, that the prosecutions, cither carried to conviction or compounded, for many years, had been all commenced upon that act. It was said, that, whilst we were deliberating on a more perfect scheme, the spirit of the age would never come up to the execution of the statutes which remained, especially as more steps, and a cooperation of more minds and powers, were required towards a mischievous use of them, than for the execution of the act to be repealed: that it was better to unravel this texture from below than from above, beginning with the latest, which, in general practice, is the severest evil. It was alleged, that this slow proceeding would be attended with the advantage of a progressive experience, - and that the people would grow reconciled to toleration, when they should find, by the effects, that justice was not so irreconcilable an enemy to convenience as they had imagined.

These, Gentlemen, were the reasons why we left this good work in the rude, unfinished state in which good works are commonly left, through the tame circumspection with which a timid prudence so frequently enervates beneficence. In doing good, we are generally cold, and languid, and sluggish, and of all things afraid of being too much in the right. But the works of malice and injustice are quite in another style. They are finished with a bold, masterly hand, touched as they are with the spirit of those vehement passions that call forth all our energies, whenever we oppress and persecute.

Thus this matter was left for the time, with a full determination in Parliament not to suffer other and worse statutes to remain for the purpose of counteracting the benefits proposed by the repeal of one penal law: for nobody then dreamed of defending what was done as a benefit, on the ground of its being no benefit at all. We were not then ripe for so mean a subterfuge.

I do not wish to go over the horrid scene that was afterwards acted. Would to God it could be expunged forever from the annals of this country! But since it must subsist for our shame, let it subsist for our instruction. In the year 1780 there were found in this nation men deluded enough, (for I give the whole to their delusion,) on pretences of zeal and piety, without any sort of provocation whatsoever, real or pretended, to

make a desperate attempt, which would have consumed all the glory and power of this country in the flames of London, and buried all law, order, and religion under the ruins of the metropolis of the Protestant world. Whether all this mischief done, or in the direct train of doing, was in their original scheme, I cannot say; I hope it was not: but this would have been the unavoidable consequence of their proceedings, had not the flames they had lighted up in their fury been extinguished in their blood.

All the time that this horrid scene was acting, or avenging, as well as for some time before, and ever since, the wicked instigators of this unhappy multitude, guilty, with every aggravation, of all their crimes, and screened in a cowardly darkness from their punishment, continued, without interruption, pity, or remorse, to blow up the blind rage of the populace with a continued blast of pestilential libels, which infected and poisoned the very air we breathed in.

The main drift of all the libels and all the riots was, to force Parliament (to persuade us was hopeless) into an act of national perfidy which has no example. For, Gentlemen, it is proper you should all know what infamy we escaped by refusing that repeal, for a refusal of which, it seems, I, among others, stand somewhere or other accused. When we took away, on the motives which I had the honor of stating to you, a few of the innumerable penalties upon an oppressed and injured people, the relief was not absolute, but given on a stipulation and compact between them and us: for we bound down the Roman Catholics with the most solemn oaths to bear true allegiance to this government, to abjure all sort of temporal power in any other, and to renounce, under the same solemn obligations, the doctrines of systematic perfidy with which they stood (I conceive very unjustly) charged. Now our modest petitioners came up to us, most humbly praying nothing more than that we should break our faith, without any one cause whatsoever of forfeiture assigned; and when the subjects of this kingdom had, on their part, fully performed their engagement, we should refuse, on our part, the benefit we had stipulated on the performance of those very conditions that were prescribed by our own authority, and taken on the sanction of our public faith; that is to say, when we had inveigled them with fair promises within our door, we were to shut it on them, and, adding mockery to outrage, to tell them, - “Now we have got you fast: your consciences are bound to a power resolved

on your destruction. We have made you swear that your religion obliges you to keep your faith: fools as you are! we will now let you see that our religion enjoins us to keep no faith with you." They who would advisedly call upon us to do such things must certainly have thought us not only a convention of treacherous tyrants, but a gang of the lowest and dirtiest wretches that ever disgraced humanity. Had we done this, we should have indeed proved that there were *some* in the world whom no faith could bind; and we should have *convicted* ourselves of that odious principle of which Papists stood *accused* by those very savages who wished us, on that accusation, to deliver them over to their fury.

In this audacious tumult, when our very name and character as gentlemen was to be cancelled forever, along with the faith and honor of the nation, I, who had exerted myself very little on the quiet passing of the bill, thought it necessary then to come forward. I was not alone; but though some distinguished members on all sides, and particularly on ours, added much to their high reputation by the part they took on that day, (a part which will be remembered as long as honor, spirit, and eloquence have estimation in the world), I may and will value myself so far, that, yielding in abilities to many, I yielded in zeal to none. With warmth and with vigor, and animated with a just and natural indignation, I called forth every faculty that I possessed, and I directed it in every way in which I could possibly employ it. I labored night and day. I labored in Parliament; I labored out of Parliament. If, therefore, the resolution of the House of Commons, refusing to commit this act of unmatched turpitude, be a crime, I am guilty among the foremost. But, indeed, whatever the faults of that House may have been, no one member was found hardy enough to propose so infamous a thing; and on full debate we passed the resolution against the petitions with as much unanimity as we had formerly passed the law of which these petitions demanded the repeal.

There was a circumstance (justice will not suffer me to pass it over) which, if anything could enforce the reasons I have given, would fully justify the act of relief, and render a repeal, or anything like a repeal, unnatural, impossible. It was the behavior of the persecuted Roman Catholics under the acts of violence and brutal insolence which they suffered. I suppose there are not in London less than four or five

thousand of that persuasion from my country, who do a great deal of the most laborious works in the metropolis; and they chiefly inhabit those quarters which were the principal theatre of the fury of the bigoted multitude. They are known to be men of strong arms and quick feelings, and more remarkable for a determined resolution than clear ideas or much foresight. But, though provoked by everything that can stir the blood of men, their houses and chapels in flames, and with the most atrocious profanations of everything which they hold sacred before their eyes, not a hand was moved to retaliate, or even to defend. Had a conflict once begun, the rage of their persecutors would have redoubled. Thus fury increasing by the reverberation of outrages, house being fired for house, and church for chapel, I am convinced that no power under heaven could have prevented a general conflagration, and at this day London would have been a tale. But I am well informed, and the thing speaks it, that their clergy exerted their whole influence to keep their people in such a state of forbearance and quiet, as, when I look back, fills me with astonishment, - but not with astonishment only. Their merits on that occasion ought not to be forgotten; nor will they, when Englishmen come to recollect themselves. I am sure it were far more proper to have called them forth, and given them the thanks of both Houses of Parliament, than to have suffered those worthy clergymen and excellent citizens to be hunted into holes and corners, whilst we are making low-minded inquisitions into the number of their people; as if a tolerating principle was never to prevail, unless we were very sure that only a few could possibly take advantage of it. But, indeed, we are not yet well recovered of our fright. Our reason, I trust, will return with our security, and this unfortunate temper will pass over like a cloud.

Gentlemen, I have now laid before you a few of the reasons for taking away the penalties of the act of 1699, and for refusing to establish them on the riotous requisition of 1780. Because I would not suffer anything which may be for your satisfaction to escape, permit me just to touch on the objections urged against our act and our resolves, and intended as a justification of the violence offered to both Houses. "Parliament," they assert, "was too hasty, and they ought, in so essential and alarming a change, to have proceeded with a far greater degree of deliberation." The direct contrary. Parliament was too slow. They took fourscore years

to deliberate on the repeal of an act which ought not to have survived a second session. When at length, after a procrastination of near a century, the business was taken up, it proceeded in the most public manner, by the ordinary stages, and as slowly as a law so evidently right as to be resisted by none would naturally advance. Had it been read three times in one day, we should have shown only a becoming readiness to recognize, by protection, the undoubted dutiful behaviour of those whom we had but too long punished for offences of presumption or conjecture. But for what end was that bill to linger beyond the usual period of an unopposed measure? Was it to be delayed until a rabble in Edinburgh should dictate to the Church of England what measure of persecution was fitting for her safety? Was it to be adjourned until a fanatical force could be collected in London, sufficient to frighten us out of all our ideas of policy and justice? Were we to wait for the profound lectures on the reason of state, ecclesiastical and political, which the Protestant Association have since condescended to read to us? Or were we, seven hundred peers and commoners, the only persons ignorant of the ribald invectives which occupy the place of argument in those remonstrances, which every man of common observation had heard a thousand times over, and a thousand times over had despised? All men had before heard what they have to say, and all men at this day know what they dare to do; and I trust all honest men are equally influenced by the one and by the other.

But they tell us, that those our fellow-citizens whose chains we have a little relaxed are enemies to liberty and our free Constitution. - Not enemies, I presume, to their *own* liberty. And as to the Constitution, until we give them some share in it, I do not know on what pretence we can examine into their opinions about a business in which they have no interest or concern. But, after all, are we equally sure that they are adverse to our Constitution as that our statutes are hostile and destructive to them? For my part, I have reason to believe their opinions and inclinations in that respect are various, exactly like those of other men; and if they lean more to the crown than I and than many of you think *we* ought, we must remember that he who aims at another's life is not to be surprised, if he flies into any sanctuary that will receive him. The tenderness of the executive power is the natural asylum of those upon whom the laws have declared war; and to complain that men are

inclined to favor the means of their own safety is so absurd, that one forgets the injustice in the ridicule.

I must fairly tell you, that so far as my principles are concerned, (principles that I hope will only depart with my last breath,) that I have no idea of a liberty unconnected with honesty and justice. Nor do I believe that any good constitutions of government, or of freedom, can find it necessary for their security to doom any part of the people to a permanent slavery. Such a constitution of freedom, if such can be, is in effect no more than another name for the tyranny of the strongest faction; and factions in republics have been, and are, full as capable as monarchs of the most cruel oppression and injustice. It is but too true, that the love, and even the very idea, of genuine liberty is extremely rare. It is but too true that there are many whose whole scheme of freedom is made up of pride, perverseness, and insolence. They feel themselves in a State of thraldom, they imagine that their souls are cooped and cabined in, unless they have some man or some body of men dependent on their mercy. This desire of having some one below them descends to those who are the very lowest of all; and a Protestant cobbler, debased by his poverty, but exalted by his share of the ruling church, feels a pride in knowing it is by his generosity alone that the peer whose footman's instep he measures is able to keep his chaplain from a jail. This disposition is the true source of the passion which many men in very humble life have taken to the American war. *Our* subjects in America; *our* colonies; *our* dependants. This lust of party power is the liberty they hunger and thirst for; and this Siren song of ambition has charmed ears that one would have thought were never organized to that sort of music.

This way of *proscribing the citizens by denominations and general descriptions*, dignified by the name of reason of state, and security for constitutions and commonwealths, is nothing better at bottom than the miserable invention of an ungenerous ambition which would fain hold the sacred trust of power, without any of the virtues or any of the energies that give a title to it, - a receipt of policy, made up of a detestable compound of malice, cowardice, and sloth. They would govern men against their will; but in that government they would be discharged from the exercise of vigilance, providence, and fortitude; and therefore, that they may sleep

on their watch, they consent to take someone division of the society into partnership of the tyranny over the rest. But let government, in what form it may be, comprehend the whole in its justice, and restrain the suspicious by its vigilance, - let it keep watch and ward, - let it discover by its sagacity, and punish by its firmness, all delinquency against its power, whenever delinquency exists in the overt acts, - and then it will be as safe as ever God and Nature intended it should be. Crimes are the acts of individuals, and not of denominations: and therefore arbitrarily to class men under general descriptions, in order to proscribe and punish them in the lump for a presumed delinquency, of which perhaps but a part, perhaps none at all, are guilty, is indeed a compendious method, and saves a world of trouble about proof; but such a method, instead of being law, is an act of unnatural rebellion against the legal dominion of reason and justice; and this vice, in any constitution that entertains it, at one time or other will certainly bring on its ruin.

We are told that this is not a religious persecution; and its abettors are loud in disclaiming all severities on account of conscience. Very fine indeed! Then let it be so: they are not persecutors; they are only tyrants. With all my heart. I am perfectly indifferent concerning the pretexts upon which we torment one another, - or whether it be for the constitution of the Church of England, or for the constitution of the State of England, that people choose to make their fellow-creatures wretched. When we were sent into a place of authority, you that sent us had yourselves but one commission to give. You could give us none to wrong or oppress, or even to suffer any kind of oppression or wrong, on any grounds whatsoever: not on political, as in the affairs of America; not on commercial, as in those of Ireland; not in civil, as in the laws for debt; not in religious, as in the statutes against Protestant or Catholic dissenters. The diversified, but connected, fabric of universal justice is well cramped and bolted together in all its parts; and depend upon it, I never have employed, and I never shall employ, any engine of power which may come into my hands to wrench it asunder. All shall stand, if I can help it, and all shall stand connected. After all, to complete this work, much remains to be done: much in the East, much in the West. But, great as the work is, if our will be ready, our powers are not deficient.

Since you have suffered me to trouble you so much on this subject, permit me, Gentlemen, to detain you a little longer. I am, indeed, most solicitous to give you perfect satisfaction. I find there are some of a better and softer nature than the persons with whom I have supposed myself in debate, who neither think ill of the act of relief, nor by any means desire the repeal, - yet who, not accusing, but lamenting, what was done, on account of the consequences, have frequently expressed their wish that the late act had never been made. Some of this description, and persons of worth, I have met with in this city. They conceive that the prejudices, whatever they might be, of a large part of the people, ought not to have been shocked, that their opinions ought to have been previously taken, and much attended to, and that thereby the late horrid scenes might have been prevented.

I confess, my notions are widely different; and I never was less sorry for any action of my life. I like the bill the better on account of the events of all kinds that followed it. It relieved the real sufferers; it strengthened the state; and, by the disorders that ensued, we had clear evidence that there lurked a temper somewhere which ought not to be fostered by the laws. No ill consequences whatever could be attributed to the act itself. We knew beforehand, or we were poorly instructed, that toleration is odious to the intolerant, freedom to oppressors, property to robbers, and all kinds and degrees of prosperity to the envious. We knew that all these kinds of men would gladly gratify their evil dispositions under the sanction of law and religion, if they could: if they could not, yet, to make way to their objects, they would do their utmost to subvert all religion and all law. This we certainly knew. But, knowing this, is there any reason, because thieves break in and steal, and thus bring detriment to you, and draw ruin on themselves, that I am to be sorry that you are in possession of shops, and of warehouses, and of wholesome laws to protect them? Are you to build no houses, because desperate men may pull them down upon their own heads? Or, if a malignant wretch will cut his own throat, because he sees you give alms to the necessitous and deserving, shall his destruction be attributed to your charity, and not to his own deplorable madness? If we repent of our good actions, what, I pray you, is left for our faults and follies? It is not the beneficence of the laws, it is the unnatural temper which beneficence can fret and sour, that is to be lamented.

It is this temper which, by all rational means, ought to be sweetened and corrected. If forward men should refuse this cure, can they vitiate anything but themselves? Does evil so react upon good, as not only to retard its motion, but to change its nature? If it can so operate, then good men will always be in the power of the bad, - and virtue, by a dreadful reverse of order, must lie under perpetual subjection and bondage to vice. As to the opinion of the people, which some think, in such cases, is to be implicitly obeyed, - near two years' tranquillity, which follows the act, and its instant imitation in Ireland, proved abundantly that the late horrible spirit was in a great measure the effect of insidious art, and perverse industry, and gross misrepresentation. But suppose that the dislike had been much more deliberate and much more general than I am persuaded it was, - when we know that the opinions of even the greatest multitudes are the standard of rectitude, I shall think myself obliged to make those opinions the masters of my conscience. But if it may be doubted whether Omnipotence itself is competent to alter the essential constitution of right and wrong, sure I am that such *things* as they and I are possessed of no such power. No man carries further than I do the policy of making government pleasing to the people. But the widest range of this politic complaisance is confined within the limits of justice. I would not only consult the interest of the people, but I would cheerfully gratify their humors. We are all a sort of children that must be soothed and managed. I think I am not austere or formal in my nature. I would bear, I would even myself play my part in, any innocent buffooneries, to divert them. But I never will act the tyrant for their amusement. If they will mix malice in their sports, I shall never consent to throw them any living, sentient creature whatsoever, no, not so much as a kitling, to torment.

"But if I profess all this impolitic stubbornness, I may chance never to be elected into Parliament." - It is certainly not pleasing to be put out of the public service. But I wish to be a member of Parliament to have my share of doing good and resisting evil. It would therefore be absurd to renounce my objects in order to obtain my seat. I deceive myself, indeed, most grossly, if I had not much rather pass the remainder of my life hidden in the recesses of the deepest obscurity, feeding my mind even with the visions and imaginations of such things, than to be placed on the most

splendid throne of the universe, tantalized with a denial of the practice of all which can make the greatest situation any other than the greatest curse. Gentlemen, I have had my day. I can never sufficiently express my gratitude to you for having set me in a place wherein I could lend the slightest help to great and laudable designs. If I have had my share in any measure giving quiet to private property and private conscience, - if by my vote I have aided in securing to families the best possession, peace, - if I have joined in reconciling kings to their subjects, and subjects to their prince, - if I have assisted to loosen the foreign holdings of the Citizen, and taught him to look for his protection to the laws of his country, and for his comfort to the good-will of his countrymen, - if I have thus taken my part with the best of men in the best of their actions, I can shut the book: I might wish to read a page or two more, but this is enough for my measure. I have not lived in vain.

And now, Gentlemen, on this serious day, when I come, as it were, to make up my account with you, let me take to myself some degree of honest pride on the nature of the charges that are against me. I do not here stand before you accused of venality, or of neglect of duty. It is not said, that, in the long period of my service, I have, in a single instance, sacrificed the slightest of your interests to my ambition or to my fortune. It is not alleged, that, to gratify any anger or revenge of my own, or of my party, I have had a share in wronging or oppressing any description of men, or any one man in any description. No! the charges against me are all of one kind: that I have pushed the principles of general justice and benevolence too far, - further than a cautious policy would warrant, and further than the opinions of many would go along with me. In every accident which may happen through life, in pain, in sorrow, in depression, and distress, I will call to mind this accusation, and be comforted.

Gentlemen, I submit the whole to your judgment. Mr. Mayor, I thank you for the trouble you have taken on this occasion: in your state of health it is particularly obliging. If this company should think it advisable for me to withdraw, I shall respectfully retire; if you think otherwise, I shall go directly to the Council-House and to the Change, and without a moment's delay begin my canvass.

Bristol, September 6, 1780.

At a great and respectable meeting of the friends of EDMUND BURKE, Esq., held at the Guildhall this day, the Right Worshipful the Mayor in the chair:

Resolved, That Mr. Burke, as a representative for this city, has done all possible honor to himself as a senator and a man, and that we do heartily and honestly approve of his conduct, as the result of an enlightened loyalty to his sovereign, a warm and zealous love to his country through its widely extended empire, a jealous and watchful care of the liberties of his fellow-subjects, an enlarged and liberal understanding of our commercial interest, a humane attention to the circumstances of even the lowest ranks of the community, and a truly wise, politic, and tolerant spirit, in supporting the national church, with a reasonable indulgence to all who dissent from it; and we wish to express the most marked abhorrence of the base arts which have been employed, without regard to truth and reason, to misrepresent his eminent services to his country.

Resolved, That this resolution be copied out, and signed by the chairman, and be by him presented to Mr. Burke, as the fullest expression of the respectful and grateful sense we entertain of his merits and services, public and private, to the citizens of Bristol, as a man and a representative.

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to the Right Worshipful the Mayor, who so ably and worthily presided in this meeting.

Resolved, That it is the earnest request of this meeting to Mr. Burke, that he should again offer himself a candidate to represent this city in Parliament; assuring him of that full and strenuous support which is due to the merits of so excellent a representative

This business being over, Mr. Burke went to the Exchange, and offered himself as a candidate in the usual manner. He was accompanied to the Council-House, and from thence to the Exchange, by a large body of most respectable gentlemen, amongst whom were the following members of the corporation, viz.: Mr. Mayor, Mr. Alderman Smith, Mr. Alderman Deane, Mr. Alderman Gordon, William Weare, Samuel Munckley, John Merlott, John Crofts, Levy Ames, John Fisher Weare, Benjamin Loscombe, Philip Protheroe, Samuel Span, Joseph Smith, Richard Bright, and John Noble, Esquires

A Letter from Mr. Burke, to a Member of the National Assembly; in Answer to Some Objections to His Book on French Affairs

Sir,

I had the honor to receive your letter of the 17th of November last in which, with some exceptions, you are pleased to consider favorably the letter I have written on the affairs of France. I shall ever accept any mark of approbation attended with instruction with more pleasure than general and unqualified praises. The latter can serve only to flatter our vanity; the former, whilst it encourages us to proceed, may help to improve us in our progress.

Some of the errors you point out to me in my printed letter are really such. One only I find to be material. It is corrected in the edition which I take the liberty of sending to you. As to the cavils which may be made on some part of my remarks, with regard to the *gradations* in your new Constitution, you observe justly that they do not affect the substance of my objections. Whether there be a round more or less in the ladder of representation by which your workmen ascend from their parochial tyranny to their federal anarchy, when the whole scale is false, appears to me of little or no importance.

I published my thoughts on that Constitution, that my countrymen might be enabled to estimate the wisdom of the plans which were held out to their imitation. I conceived that the true character of those plans would be best collected from the committee appointed to prepare them. I thought that the scheme of their building would be better comprehended in the design of the architects than in the execution of the masons. It was not worth my reader's while to occupy himself with the alterations by which bungling practice corrects absurd theory. Such an investigation would be endless: because every day's past experience of impracticability has driven, and every day's future experience will drive, those men to new devices as exceptionable as the old, and which are no otherwise worthy of observation than as they give a daily proof of the delusion of their promises and the falsehood of their professions. Had I followed all these changes, my letter would have been only a gazette of their wanderings, a journal of their march from error to error, through a dry dreary desert, unguided by the lights of Heaven, or by the contrivance which wisdom has invented to supply their place.

I am unalterably persuaded that the attempt to oppress, degrade, impoverish, confiscate and extinguish the original gentlemen and landed

property of a whole nation cannot be justified under any form it may assume. I am satisfied beyond a doubt, that the project of turning a great empire into a vestry, or into a collection of vestries, and of governing it in the spirit of a parochial administration, is senseless and, absurd, in any mode or with any qualifications. I can never be convinced that the scheme of placing the highest powers of the state in churchwardens and constables and other such officers, guided by the prudence of litigious attorneys and Jew brokers, and set in action by shameless women of the lowest condition, by keepers of hotels, taverns and brothels, by pert apprentices, by clerks, shop-boys, hair-dressers, fiddlers, and dancers on the stage, (who, in such a commonwealth as yours, will in future overbear, as already they have overborne, the sober incapacity of dull, uninstructed men, of useful, but laborious occupations) can never be put into any shape that must not be both disgraceful and destructive. The whole of this project, even if it were what it pretends to be, and was not in reality the dominion, through that disgraceful medium, of half a dozen, or perhaps fewer, intriguing politicians, is so mean, so low-minded, so stupid a contrivance, in point of wisdom, as well as so perfectly detestable for its wickedness, that I must always consider the correctives which might make it in any degree practicable to be so many new objections to it.

In that wretched state of things, some are afraid that the authors of your miseries may be led to precipitate their further designs by the hints they may receive from the very arguments used to expose the absurdity of their system, to mark the incongruity of its parts, and its inconsistency with their own principles; and that your masters may be led to render their schemes more consistent by rendering them more mischievous. Excuse the liberty which your indulgence authorizes me to take, when I observe to you that such apprehensions as these would prevent all exertion of our faculties in this great cause of mankind.

A rash recourse to *force* is not to be justified in a state of real weakness. Such attempts bring on disgrace, and in their failure discountenance and discourage more rational endeavors. But *reason* is to be hazarded, though it may be perverted by craft and sophistry; for reason can suffer no loss nor shame, nor can it impede any useful plan of future policy. In the unavoidable uncertainty, as to the effect, which attends on every

measure of human prudence, nothing seems a surer antidote to the poison of fraud than its detection. It is true, the fraud may be swallowed after this discovery, and perhaps even swallowed the more greedily for being a detected fraud. Men sometimes make a point of honor not to be disabused; and they had rather fall into an hundred errors than confess one. But after all, when neither our principles nor our dispositions, nor, perhaps, our talents, enable us to encounter delusion with delusion, we must use our best reason to those that ought to be reasonable creatures, and to take our chance for the event. We cannot act on these anomalies in the minds of men. I do not conceive that the persons who have contrived these things can be made much the better or the worse for anything which can be said to them. *They* are reason-proof. Here and there, some men, who were at first carried away by wild, good intentions may be led, when their first fervours are abated, to join in a sober survey of the schemes into which they had been deluded. To those only (and I am sorry to say they are not likely to make a large description) we apply with any hope. I may speak it upon an assurance almost approaching to absolute knowledge, that nothing has been done that has not been contrived from the beginning, even before the States had assembled. *Nulla nova mihi res inopinave surgit*. They are the same men and the same designs that they were from the first, though varied in their appearance. It was the very same animal that at first crawled about in the shape of a caterpillar that you now see rise into the air and expand his wings to the sun.

Proceeding, therefore, as we are obliged to proceed, - that is, upon an hypothesis that we address rational men, - can false political principles be more effectually exposed than by demonstrating that they lead to consequences directly inconsistent with and subversive of the arrangements grounded upon them? If this kind of demonstration is not permitted, the process of reasoning called *deductio ad absurdum*, which even the severity of geometry does not reject, could not be employed at all in legislative discussions. One of our strongest weapons against folly acting with authority would be lost.

You know, Sir, that even the virtuous efforts of your patriots to prevent the ruin of your country have had this very turn given to them. It has been said here, and in France too, that the reigning usurpers would not have carried their tyranny to such destructive lengths, if they had not

been stimulated and provoked to it by the acrimony of your opposition. There is a dilemma to which every opposition to successful iniquity must, in the nature of things, be liable. If you lie still, you are considered as an accomplice in the measures in which you silently acquiesce. If you resist, you are accused of provoking irritable power to new excesses. The conduct of a losing party never appears right: at least, it never can possess the only infallible criterion of wisdom to vulgar judgments, – success.

The indulgence of a sort of undefined hope, an obscure confidence, that some lurking remains of virtue, some degree of shame, might exist in the breasts of the oppressors of France, has been among the causes which have helped to bring on the common ruin of king and people. There is no safety for honest men, but by believing all possible evil of evil men, and by acting with promptitude, decision, and steadiness on that belief. I well remember, at every epocha of this wonderful history, in every scene of this tragic business, that when your sophistic usurpers were laying down mischievous principles, and even applying them in direct resolutions, it was the fashion to say, that they never intended to execute those declarations in their rigour. This made men careless in their opposition, and remiss in early precaution. By holding out this fallacious hope, the impostors deluded sometimes one description of men, and sometimes another, so that no means of resistance were provided against them, when they came to execute in cruelty what they had planned in fraud.

There are cases in which a man would be ashamed not to have been imposed on. There is a confidence necessary to human intercourse, and without which men are often more injured by their own suspicions than they would be by the perfidy of others. But when men whom we *know* to be wicked impose upon us, we are something worse than dupes. When we know them, their fair pretences become new motives for distrust. There is one case, indeed, in which it would be madness not to give the fullest credit to the most deceitful of men, - that is, when they make declarations of hostility against us.

I find that some persons entertain other hopes, which I confess appear more specious than those by which at first so many were deluded and disarmed. They flatter themselves that the extreme misery brought upon the people by their folly will at last open the eyes of the multitude, if not of their leaders. Much the contrary, I fear. As to the leaders in this

system of imposture, - you know that cheats and deceivers never can repent. The fraudulent have no resource but in fraud. They have no other goods in their magazine. They have no virtue or wisdom in their minds, to which, in a disappointment concerning the profitable effects of fraud and cunning, they can retreat. The wearing out of an old serves only to put them upon the invention of a new delusion. Unluckily, too, the credulity of dupes is as inexhaustible as the invention of knaves. They never give people possession; but they always keep them in hope. Your state doctors do not so much as pretend that any good whatsoever has hitherto been derived from their operations, or that the public has prospered in any one instance, under their management. The nation is sick, very sick, by their medicines. But the charlatan tells them that what is passed cannot be helped; - they have taken the draught, and they must wait its operation with patience; - that the first effects, indeed, are unpleasant, but that the very sickness is a proof that the dose is of no sluggish operation; - that sickness is inevitable in all constitutional revolutions; - that the body must pass through pain to ease; - that the prescriber is not an empiric who proceeds by vulgar experience, but one who grounds his practice[1] on the sure rules of art, which cannot possibly fail. You have read, Sir, the last manifesto, or mountebank's bill, of the National Assembly. You see their presumption in their promises is not lessened by all their failures in the performance. Compare this last address of the Assembly and the present state of your affairs with the early engagements of that body, engagements which, not content with declaring, they solemnly deposed upon oath; - swearing lustily, that if they were supported, they would make their country glorious and happy; and then judge whether those who can write such things, or those who can bear to read them, are of *themselves* to be brought to any reasonable course of thought or action.

As to the people at large, when once these miserable sheep have broken the fold, and have got themselves loose, not from the restraint, but from the protection, of all the principles of natural authority and legitimate subordination, they become the natural prey of impostors.

---

(1) It is said in the last quackish address of the National Assembly to the people of France, that they have not formed their arrangements upon vulgar practice; but on a theory which cannot fail; or something to that effect.

When they have once tasted of the flattery of knaves, they can no longer endure reason, which appears to them only in the form of censure and reproach. Great distress has never hitherto taught, and whilst the world lasts it never will teach, wise lessons to any part of mankind. Men are as much blinded by the extremes of misery as by the extremes of prosperity. Desperate situations produce desperate councils and desperate measures. The people of France, almost generally, have been taught to look for other resources than those which can be derived from order, frugality, and industry. They are generally armed; and they are made to expect much from the use of arms. *Nihil non arrogant armis*. Besides this, the retrograde order of society has something flattering to the dispositions of mankind. The life of adventurers, gamesters, gypsies, beggars, and robbers is not unpleasant. It requires restraint to keep men from falling into that habit. The shifting tides of fear and hope, the flight and pursuit, the peril and escape, the alternate famine and feasts of the savage and the thief, after a time; render all course of slow, steady, progressive, unvaried occupation, and the prospect only of a limited mediocrity at the end of long labor, to the last degree tame, languid, and insipid. Those who have been once intoxicated with power, and have derived any kind of emolument from it, even though but for one year, never can willingly abandon it. They may be distressed in the midst of all their power; but they will never look to anything but power for their relief. When did distress ever oblige a prince to abdicate his authority? And what effect will it have upon those who are made to believe themselves a people of princes?

The more active and stirring part of the lower orders having got government, and the distribution of plunder into their hands, they will use its resources in each municipality to form a body of adherents. These rulers, and their adherents will be strong enough to overpower the discontents of those who have not been able to assert their share of the spoil. The unfortunate adventurers in the cheating lottery of plunder will probably be the least sagacious or the most inactive and irresolute of the gang. If, on disappointment, they should dare to stir, they will soon be suppressed as rebels and mutineers by their brother rebels. Scantily fed for a while with the offal of plunder, they will drop off by degrees; they will be driven out of sight and out of thought; and they will be left to perish obscurely, like rats, in holes and corners.

From the forced repentance of invalid mutineers and disbanded thieves you can hope for no resource. Government itself, which ought to constrain the more bold and dextrous of these robbers, is their accomplice. Its arms, its treasures, its all are in their hands. Judicature, which above all things should awe them, is their creature and their instrument. Nothing seems to me to render your internal situation more desperate than this one circumstance of the state of your judicature. Many days are not passed since we have seen a set of men brought forth by your rulers for a most critical function. Your rulers brought forth a set of men, steaming from the sweat and drudgery, and all black with the smoke and soot, of the forge of confiscation and robbery, – *ardentis massae fuligine lippos*, - a set of men brought forth from the trade of hammering arms of proof, offensive and defensive, in aid of the enterprises, and for the subsequent protection, of housebreakers, murderers, traitors, and malefactors; - men, who had their minds seasoned with theories perfectly conformable to their practice, and who had always laughed at possession and prescription, and defied all the fundamental maxims of jurisprudence. To the horror and stupefaction of all the honest part of this nation, and indeed of all nations who are spectators, we have seen, on the credit of those very practices and principles, and to carry them further into effect, these very men placed on the sacred seat of justice in the capital city of your late kingdom. We see that in future you are to be destroyed with more form and regularity. This is not peace: it is only the introduction of a sort of discipline in their hostility. Their tyranny is complete in their justice; and their *lantern* is not half so dreadful as their court.

One would think, that, out of common decency, they would have given you men who had not been in the habit of trampling upon law and justice in the Assembly, neutral men, or men apparently neutral, for judges, who are to dispose of your lives and fortunes.

Cromwell, when he attempted to legalize his power, and to settle his conquered country in a state of order, did not look for dispensers of justice in the instruments of his usurpation. Quite the contrary. He sought out, with great solicitude and selection, and even from the party most opposite to his designs, men of weight and decorum of character, - men unstained with the violence of the times, and with hands not

fouled with confiscation and sacrilege: for he chose an Hale for his chief justice, though he absolutely refused to take his civic oaths, or to make any acknowledgment whatsoever of the legality of his government. Cromwell told this great lawyer, that, since he did not approve his title, all he required of him was to administer, in a manner agreeable to his pure sentiments and unspotted character, that justice without which human society cannot subsist, - that it was not his particular government, but civil order itself, which, as a judge, he wished him to support. Cromwell knew how to separate the institutions expedient to his usurpation from the administration of the public justice of his country. For Cromwell was a man in whom ambition had not wholly suppressed, but only suspended, the sentiments of religion, and the love (as far as it could consist with his designs) of fair and honorable reputation. Accordingly, we are indebted to this act of his for the preservation of our laws, which some senseless assertors of the rights of men were then on the point of entirely erasing, as relics of feudality and barbarism. Besides, he gave, in the appointment of that man, to that age, and to all posterity, the most brilliant example of sincere and fervent piety, exact justice, and profound jurisprudence[(2)]. But these are not the things in which your philosophic usurpers choose to follow Cromwell.

One would think, that, after an honest and necessary revolution, (if they had a mind, that theirs should pass for such,) your masters would have imitated the virtuous policy of those who have been at the head of revolutions of that glorious character. Burnet tells us, that nothing tended to reconcile the English nation to the government of King William so much as the care he took to fill the vacant bishoprics with men who had attracted the public esteem by their learning, eloquence, and piety, and, above all, by their known moderation in the state. With you, in your purifying revolution, whom have you chosen to regulate the church? M. Mirabeau is a fine speaker, and a fine writer, and a fine – a very fine man; but, really, nothing gave more surprise to everybody here than to find him the supreme head of your ecclesiastical affairs. The rest is of course. Your Assembly addresses a manifesto to France, in which they tell the

(2) See Burnet's Life of Hale.

people, with an insulting irony, that they have brought the Church to its primitive condition. In one respect their declaration is undoubtedly true: for they have brought it to a state of poverty and persecution. What can be hoped for after this? Have not men, (if they deserve the name,) under this new hope and head of the Church, been made bishops for no other merit than having acted as instruments of atheists? for no other merit than having thrown the children's bread to dogs? and, in order to gorge the whole gang of usurers, pedlars, and itinerant Jewdiscounters at the corners of streets, starved the poor of their Christian flocks, and their own brother pastors? Have not such men been made bishops to administer in temples, in which (if the patriotic donations have not already stripped them of their vessels) the church-wardens ought to take security for the altar plate, and not so much as to trust the chalice in their sacrilegious hands, so long as Jews have assignats on ecclesiastic plunder, to exchange for the silver stolen from churches?

I am told, that the very sons of such Jewjobbers have been made bishops: persons not to be suspected of any sort of *Christian* superstition, fit colleagues to the holy prelate of Autun, and bred at the feet of that Gamaliel. We know who it was that drove the money-changers out of the temple. We see, too, who it is that brings them in again. We have in London very respectable persons of the Jewish nation, whom we will keep; but we have of the same tribe others of a very different description, - housebreakers, and receivers of stolen goods, and forgers of paper currency, more than we can conveniently hang. These we can spare to France, to fill the new episcopal thrones: men well versed in swearing; and who will scruple no oath which the fertile genius of any of your reformers can devise.

In matters so ridiculous, it is hard to be grave. On a view of their consequences, it is almost inhuman to treat them lightly. To what a state of savage, stupid, servile insensibility must your people be reduced, who can endure such proceedings in their Church, their state, and their judicature, even for a moment! But the deluded people of France are like other madmen, who, to a miracle, bear hunger, and thirst, and cold, and confinement, and the chains and lash of their keeper, whilst all the while they support themselves by the imagination that they are generals of armies, prophets, kings, and emperors. As to a change of mind in

these men, who consider infamy as honor, degradation as preferment, bondage to low tyrants as liberty, and the practical scorn and contumely of their upstart masters as marks of respect and homage. I look upon it as absolutely impracticable. These madmen, to be cured, must first, like other madmen, be subdued. The sound part of the community, which I believe to be large, but by no means the largest part, has been taken by surprise, and is disjointed, terrified, and disarmed. That sound part of the community must first be put into a better condition, before it can do anything in the way of deliberation or persuasion. This must be an act of power, as well as of wisdom: of power in the hands of firm, determined patriots, who can distinguish the misled from traitors, who will regulate the state (if such should be their fortune) with a discriminating, manly, and provident mercy; men who are purged of the surfeit and indigestion of systems, if ever they have been admitted into the habit of their minds; men who will lay the foundation of a real reform in effacing every vestige of that philosophy which pretends to have made discoveries in the *Terra Australia* of morality; men who will fix the state upon these bases of morals and politics, which are our old and immemorial, and, I hope, will be our eternal possession.

This power, to such men, must come from *without*. It may be given to you in pity: for surely no nation ever called so, pathetically on the compassion of all its neighbors. It may be given by those neighbors on motives of safety to themselves. Never shall I think any country in Europe to be secure, whilst there is established, in the very centre of it a state (if so it may be called) founded on principles of anarchy, and which is in reality a college of armed fanatics, for the propagation of the principles of assassination, robbery, rebellion, fraud, faction, oppression, and impiety. Mahomet, hid, as for a time he was, in the bottom of the sands of Arabia, had his spirit and character been discovered, would have been an object of precaution to provident minds. What if he had erected his fanatic standard for the destruction of the Christian religion *in luce Asiae*, in the midst of the then noonday splendor of the then civilized world? The princes of Europe, in the beginning of this century, did well not to suffer the monarchy of France to swallow up the others. They ought not now, in my opinion, to suffer all the monarchies and commonwealths to be swallowed up in the gulf of this polluted anarchy. They may be tolerably

safe at present, because the comparative power of France for the present is little. But times and occasions make dangers. Intestine troubles may arise in other countries. There is a power always on the watch, qualified and disposed to profit of every conjuncture, to establish its own principles and modes of mischief, whereever it can hope for success. What mercy would these usurpers have on other sovereigns, and on other nations, when they treat their own king with such unparalleled indignities, and so cruelly oppress their own countrymen?

The king of Prussia, in concurrence with us, nobly interfered to save Holland from confusion. The same power, joined with the rescued Holland and with Great Britain, has put the Emperor in the possession of the Netherlands, and secured, under that prince, from all arbitrary innovation, the ancient, hereditary Constitution of those provinces. The chamber of Wetzlar has restored the Bishop of Liege, unjustly dispossessed by the rebellion of his subjects. The king of Prussia was bound by no treaty nor alliance of blood; nor had any particular reasons for thinking the Emperor's government would be more mischievous or more oppressive to human nature that of the Turk; yet, on mere motives of policy, that prince has interposed with the threat of all his force, to snatch even the Turk from the pounces of the Imperial eagle. If this is done in favor of a barbarous nation, with a barbarous neglect of police, fatal to the human race, - in favor of a nation by principle in eternal enmity with the Christian name, a nation which will not so much as give the salutation of peace (*Salam*) to any of us, nor make any pact with any Christian nation beyond a truce, - if this be done in favor of the Turk, shall it be thought either impoliticor unjust or uncharitable to employ the same power to rescue from captivity a virtuous monarch, (by the courtesy of Europe considered as Most Christian) who, after an intermission of one hundred and seventy-five years, had called together the States of his kingdom to reform abuses, to establish a free government, and to strengthen his throne, - a monarchy who at the very outset, without force, even without solicitation, had given to his people such a Magna Charta of privileges as never was given by any king to any subjects? Is it to be tamely borne by kings who love their subjects, or by subjects who love their kings, that this monarch, in the midst of these gracious acts, was insolently and cruelly torn from his palace by a gang

of traitors and assassins, and kept in close prison to this very hour, whilst his royal name and sacred character were used for the total ruin of those whom the laws had appointed him to protect?

The only offence of this unhappy monarch towards his people was his attempt, under a monarchy, to give them a free Constitution. For this, by an example hitherto unheard of in the world, he has been deposed. It might well disgrace sovereigns to take part with a deposed tyrant. It would suppose in them a vicious sympathy. But not to make a common cause with a just prince, dethroned by traitors and rebels, who proscribe, plunder, confiscate, and in every way cruelly oppress their fellow-citizens, in my opinion is to forget what is due to the honor and to the rights of all virtuous and legal government.

I think the king of France to be as much an object both of policy and compassion as the Grand Seignior or his states. I do not conceive that the total annihilation of France (if that could be effected) is a desirable thing to Europe, or even to this its rival nation. Provident patriots did not think it good for Rome that even Carthage should be quite destroyed; and he was a wise Greek, wisefor the general Grecian interests, as well as a brave Lacedaemonian enemy and generous conqueror, who did not wish, by the destruction of Athens, to pluck out the other eye of Greece.

However, Sir, what I have here said of the interference of foreign princes is only the opinion of a private individual, who is neither the representative of any state nor the organ of any party, but who thinks himself bound to express his own sentiments with freedom and energy in a crisis of such importance to the whole human race.

I am not apprehensive, that, in speaking freely on the subject of the king and queen of France, I shall accelerate (as you fear) the execution of traitorous designs against them. You are of opinion, Sir, that the usurpers may, and that they will, gladly lay hold of any pretext to throw off the very name of a king: assuredly, I do not wish ill to your king; but better for him not to live (he does not reign) than to live the passive instrument of tyranny and usurpation.

I certainly meant to show, to the best of my power, that the existence of such an executive officer in such a system of republic as theirs is absurd in the highest degree. But in demonstrating this, to *them*, at least, I can have made no discovery. They only held out the royal name to catch

those Frenchmen to whom the name of king is still venerable. They calculate the duration of that sentiment; and when they find it nearly expiring, they will not trouble themselves with excuses for extinguishing the name, as they have the thing. They used it as a sort of navel-string to nourish their unnatural offspring from the bowels of royalty itself. Now that the monster can purvey for its own subsistence, it will only carry the mark about it, as a token of its having torn the womb it came from. Tyrants seldom want pretexts. Fraud is the ready minister of injustice; and whilst the currency of false pretence and sophistic reasoning was expedient to their designs, they were under no necessity of drawing upon me to furnish them with that coin. But pretexts and sophisms have had their day, and have done their work. The usurpation no longer seeks plausibility: it trusts to power.

Nothing that I can say, or that you can say, will hasten them, by a single hour, in the execution of a design which they have long since entertained. In spite of their solemn declarations, their soothing addresses, and the multiplied oaths which they have taken and forced others to take, they will assassinate the king when his name will no longer be necessary to their designs, - but not a moment sooner. They will probably first assassinate the queen, whenever the renewed menace of such an assassination loses its effect upon the anxious mind of an affectionate husband. At present, the advantage which they derive from the daily threats against her life is her only security for preserving it. They keep their sovereign alive for the purpose of exhibiting him, like some wild beast at a fair, - as if they had a Bajazet in a cage. They choose to make monarchy contemptible by exposing it to derision in their person of the most benevolent of their kings.

In my opinion their insolence appears more odious even than their crimes. The horrors of the fifth and sixth of October were less detestable than the festival of the fourteenth of July. There are situations (God forbid I should think that of the 5th and 6th of October one of them!) in which the best men may be confounded with the worst, and in the darkness and confusion, in the press and medley of such extremities, it may not be so easy to discriminate the one from the other. The necessities created eyen by ill designs have their excuse. They may be forgotten by others, when the guilty themselves do not choose to cherish their recollection, and, by

ruminating their offences, nourish themselves, through the example of their past, to the perpetration of future crimes. It is in the relaxation of security, it is in the expansion of prosperity, it is in the hour of dilatation of the heart, and of its softening into festivity and pleasure, that the real character of men is discerned. If there is any good in them, it appears then or never. Even wolves and tigers, when gorged with their prey, are safe and gentle. It is at such times that noble minds give all the reins to their good nature. They indulge their genius even to intemperance, in kindness to the afflicted, in generosity to the conquered, - forbearing insults, forgiving injuries, overpaying benefits. Full of dignity themselves, they respect dignity in all, but they feel it sacred in the unhappy. But it is then, and basking in the sunshine of unmerited fortune, that low, sordid, ungenerous, and reptile souls swell with their hoarded poisons; it is then that they display their odious splendor, and shine out in full lustre of their native villainy and baseness. It is in that season that no man of sense or honor can be mistaken for one of them. It was in such a season, for them of political ease and security, though their people were but just emerged from actual famine, and were ready to be plunged into the gulf of penury and beggary, that your philosophic lords chose, with an ostentatious pomp and luxury, to feast an incredible number of idle and thoughtless people, collected, with art and pains from all quarters of the world. They constructed a vast amphitheatre in which they raised a species of pillory[3]. On this pillory they set their lawful king and queen, with an insulting figure over their heads. There they exposed these objects of pity and respect to all good minds to the derision of an unthinking and unprincipled multitude, degenerated even from the versatile tenderness which marks the irregular and capricious feelings of the populace. That their cruel insult might have nothing wanting to complete it, they chose the anniversary of that day in which they exposed the life of their prince to the most imminent dangers and the vilest indignities, just following the instant when the assassins, whom they had hired without owning, first openly took up arms against their king, corrupted his guards, surprised his castle, butchered some of the poor

(3) The pillory (*carcan*) in England is generally made very high like that raised for exposing the king of France.

invalids of his garrison, murdered his governor, and, like wild beasts, tore to pieces the chief magistrate of his capital city, on account of his fidelity to his service.

Till the justice of the world is awakened, such as these will go on, without admonition and without provocation, to every extremity. Those who have made the exhibition of the fourteenth of July are capable of every evil. They do not commit crimes for their designs; but they form designs that they may commit crimes. It is not their necessity, but their nature, that impels them. They are modern philosophers, which when you say of them, you express everything that is ignoble, savage, and hard-hearted.

Besides the sure tokens which are given by the spirit of their particular arrangements, there are some characteristic lineaments in the general policy of your tumultuous despotism, which, in my opinion, indicate, beyond a doubt, that no revolution whatsoever *in their disposition* is to be expected: I mean their scheme of educating the rising generation, the principles which they intend to instil and the sympathies which they wish to form in the mind at the season in which it is the most susceptible. Instead of forming their young minds to that docility, to that modesty, which are the grace and charm of youth, to an admiration of famous examples, and to an averseness to anything which approaches to pride, petulance, and self-conceit, (distempers to which that time of life is of itself sufficiently liable) they artificially foment these evil dispositions, and even form them into springs of action. Nothing ought to be more weighed than the nature of books recommended by public authority. So recommended, they soon form the character of the age. Uncertain indeed is the efficacy, limited indeed is the extent, of a virtuous institution. But if education takes in *vice* as any part of its system, there is no doubt but that it will operate with abundant energy, and to an extent indefinite. The magistrate, who in favor of freedom thinks himself obliged to suffer all sorts of publications, is under a stricter duty than any other well to consider what sort of writers he shall authorize, and shall recommend by the strongest of all sanctions, that is, by public honors and rewards. He ought to be cautious how he recommends authors of mixed or ambiguous morality. He ought to be fearful of putting into the hands of youth writers indulgent to the peculiarities of their own complexion, lest they should

teach the humours of the professor, rather than the principles of the science. He ought, above all, to be cautious in recommending any writer who has carried marks of a deranged understanding: for where there is no sound reason, there can be no real virtue; and madness is ever vicious and malignant.

The Assembly proceeds on maxims the very reverse of these. The Assembly recommends to its youth a study of the bold experimenters in morality. Everybody knows that there is a great dispute amongst their leaders, which of them is the best resemblance of Rousseau. In truth, they all resemble him. His blood they transfuse into their minds and into their manners. Him they study; him they meditate; him they turn over in all the time they can spare from the laborious mischief of the day, or the debauches of the night. Rousseau is their canon of holy writ; in his life he is their canon of Polycletus; he is their standard figure of perfection. To this man and this writer, as a pattern to authors and to Frenchmen, the foundries of Paris are now running for statues, with the kettles of their poor and the bells of their churches. If an author had written like a great genius on geometry, though its practical and speculative morals were vicious in the extreme, it might appear that in voting the statue they honored only the geometrician. But Rousseau is a moralist or he is nothing. It is impossible, therefore, putting the circumstances together, to mistake their design in choosing the author with whom they have begun to recommend a course of studies.

Their great problem is, to find a substitute for all the principles which hitherto have been employed to regulate the human will and action. They find dispositions in the mind of such force and quality as may fit men, far better than the old morality, for the purposes of such a state as theirs, and may go much further in supporting their power and destroying their enemies. They have therefore chosen a selfish, flattering, seductive, ostentatious vice, in the place of plain duty. True humility, the basis of the Christian system, is the low, but deep and firm foundation of all real virtue. But this, as very painful in the practice, and little imposing in the appearance, they have totally discarded. Their object is to merge all natural and all social sentiment in inordinate vanity. In a small degree, and conversant in little things, vanity is of little moment. When full-grown, it is the worst of vices, and the occasional mimic of them all. It

makes the whole man false. It leaves nothing sincere or trustworthy about him. His best qualities are poisoned and perverted by it, and operate exactly as the worst. When your lords had many writers as immoral as the object of their statue (such as Voltaire and others) they chose Rousseau, because in him that peculiar vice which they wished to erect into ruling virtue was by far the most conspicuous.

We have had the great professor and founder of *the philosophy of vanity* in England. As I had good opportunities of knowing his proceedings almost from day to day, he left no doubt on my mind that he entertained no principle, either to influence his heart, or to guide his understanding, but *vanity*. With this vice he was possessed to a degree little short of madness. It is from the same deranged, eccentric vanity, that this, the insane *Socrates* of the National Assembly, was impelled to publish a mad confession of his mad faults, and to attempt a new sort of glory from bringing hardily to light the obscure and vulgar vices which we know may sometimes be blended with eminent talents. He has not observed on the nature of vanity who does not know that it is omnivorous, - that it has no choice in its food, - that it is fond to talk even of its own faults and vices, as what will excite surprise and draw attention, and what will pass at worst for openness and candor.

It was this abuse and perversion, which vanity makes even of hypocrisy, which has driven Rousseau to record a life not so much as checkered or spotted here and there with virtues, or even distinguished by a single good action. It is such a life he chooses to offer to the attention of mankind. It is such a life that, with a wild defiance, he flings in the face of his Creator, whom he acknowledges only to brave. Your Assembly, knowing how much more powerful example is found than precept, has chosen this man (by his own account without a single virtue) for a model. To him they erect their first statue. From him they commence their series of honors and distinctions.

It is that new_invented virtue which your masters canonize that led their moral hero constantly to exhaust the stores of his powerful rhetoric in the expression of universal benevolence, whilst his heart was incapable of harbouring one spark of common parental affection. Benevolence to the whole species, and want of feeling for every individual with whom the professors come in contact, form the character of the

new philosophy. Setting up for an unsocial independence, this their hero of vanity refuses the just price of common labor, as well as the tribute which opulence owes to genius, and which, when paid, honors the giver and the receiver; and then he pleads his beggary as an excuse for his crimes. He melts with tenderness for those only who touch him by the remotest relation, and then, without one natural pang, casts away, as a sort of offal and excrement, the spawn of his disgustful amours, and sends his children to the hospital of foundlings. The bear loves, licks, and forms her young: but bears are not philosophers. Vanity, however, finds its account in reversing the train of our natural feelings. Thousands admire the sentimental writer; the affectionate father is hardly known in his parish.

Under this philosophic instructor in *the ethics of vanity*, they have attempted in France a regeneration of the moral constitution of man. Statesmen like your present rulers exist by everything which is spurious, fictitious, and false,- by everything which takes the man from his house, and sets him on a stage, - which makes him up an artificial creature, with painted, theatric sentiments, fit to be seen by the glare of candle-light, and formed to be contemplated at a due distance. Vanity is too apt to prevail in all of us, and in all countries. To the improvement of Frenchmen, it seems not absolutely necessary that it should be taught upon system. But it is plain that the present rebellion was its legitimate offspring, and it is piously fed by that rebellion with a daily dole.

If the system of institution recommended by the Assembly is false and theatric, it is because their system of government is of the same character. To that, and to that alone, it is strictly conformable. To understand either, we must connect the morals with the politics of the legislators. Your practical philosophers, systematic in everything, have wisely began at the source. As the relation between parents and children is the first among the elements of vulgar, natural morality, they erect statues to a wild, ferocious, low-minded, hard-hearted father, of fine general feelings, - a lover of his kind, but a hater of his kindred. Your masters reject the duties of his vulgar relation, as contrary to liberty, as not founded in the social compact, and not binding according to the rights of men; because the relation is not, of course, the result of *free election*, - never so on the side of the children, not always on the part of the parents.

The next relation which they regenerate by their statues to Rousseau is that which is next in sanctity to that of a father. They differ from those old-fashioned thinkers who considered pedagogues as sober and venerable characters, and allied to the parental. The moralists of the dark times *preceptorem sancti voluere parentis esse loco*. In this age of light they teach the people that preceptors ought to be in the place of gallants. They systematically corrupt a very corruptible race, (for some time a growing nuisance amongst you) - a set of pert, petulant literators, to whom, instead of their proper, but severe, unostentatious duties, they assign the brilliant part of men of wit and pleasure, of gay, young, military sparks, and danglers at toilets. They call on the rising generation in France to take a sympathy in the adventures and fortunes, and they endeavor to engage their sensibility on the side, of pedagogues who betray the most awful family trusts and vitiate their female pupils. They teach the people that the debauchers of virgins, almost in the arms of their parents, may be safe inmates in their house, and even fit guardians of the honoor of those husbands who succeed legally to the office which the young literators had preoccupied without asking leave of law or conscience.

Thus they dispose of all the family relations of parents and children, husbands and wives. Through this same instructor, by whom they corrupt the morals, they corrupt the taste. Taste and elegance, though they are reckoned only among the smaller and secondary morals, yet are of no mean importance in the regulation of life. A moral taste is not of force to turn vice into virtue; but it recommends virtue with something like the blandishments of pleasure, and it infinitely abates the evils of vice. Rousseau, a writer of great force and vivacity, is totally destitute of taste in any sense of the word. Your masters, who are his scholars, conceive that all refinement has an aristocratic character. The last age had exhausted all its powers in giving a grace and nobleness to our mutual appetites, and in raising them into a higher class and order than seemed justly to belong to them. Through Rousseau, your masters are resolved to destroy these aristocratic prejudices. The passion called love has so general and powerful an influence, it makes so much of the entertainment, and indeed so much the occupation, of that part of life which decides the character forever, that the mode and the principles on which it engages the

sympathy and strikes the imagination become of the utmost importance to the morals and manners of every society. Your rulers were well aware of this; and in their system of changing your manners to accommodate them to their politics, they found nothing so convenient as Rousseau. Through him they teach men to love after the fashion of philosophers: that is, they teach to men, to Frenchmen, a love without gallantry, - a love without anything of that fine flower of youthfulness and gentility, which places it, if not among the virtues, among the ornaments of life. Instead of this passion, naturally allied to grace and manners, they infuse into their youth an unfashioned, indelicate, sour, gloomy, ferocious medley of pedantry and lewdness, - of metaphysical speculations blended with the coarsest sensuality. Such is the general morality of the passions to be found in their famous philosopher, in his famous work of philosophic gallantry, the *Nouvelle Eloise*.

When the fence from the gallantry of preceptors is broken down, and your families are no longer protected by decent pride and salutary domestic prejudice, there is but one step to a frightful corruption. The rulers in the National Assembly are in good hopes that the females of the first families in France may become an easy prey to dancing-masters, fiddlers, pattern-drawers, friseurs, and valets-de-chambre, and other active citizens of that description, who, having the entry into your houses, and being half domesticated by their situation, may be blended with you by regular and irregular relations. By a law they have made these people their equals. By adopting the sentiments of Rousseau they have made them your rivals. In this manner these great legislators complete their plan of levelling, and establish their rights of men on a sure foundation.

I am certain that the writings of Rousseau lead directly to this kind of shameful evil. I have often wondered how he comes to be so much more admired and followed on the Continent than he is here. Perhaps a secret charm in the language may have its share in this extraordinary difference. We certainly perceive, and to a degree we feel, in this writer, a style glowing, animated, enthusiastic, at the same time that we find it lax, diffuse, and not in the best taste of composition, - all the members of the piece being pretty equally labored and expanded, without any due selection or subordination of parts. He is generally too much on the stretch, and his manner has little variety. We cannot rest upon, any of

his works, though they contain observations which occasionally discover a considerable insight into human nature. But his doctrines, on the whole, are so inapplicable to real life and manners, that we never dream of drawing from them any rule for laws or conduct, or for fortifying or illustrating anything by a reference to his opinions. They have with us the fate of older paradoxes:

> Cum ventum ad verum est, sensus moresque repugnant,
> Atque ipsa utilitas, justi prope mater et aequi.

Perhaps bold speculations are more acceptable because more new to you than to us, who have been, long since satiated with them. We continue, as in the two last ages, to read, more generally than I believe is now done on the Continent, the authors of sound antiquity. These occupy our minds; they give us another taste and turn; and will not suffer us to be more than transiently amused with paradoxical morality. It is not that I consider this writer as wholly destitute of just notions. Amongst his irregularities, it must be reckoned that he is sometimes moral, and moral in a very sublime strain. But the *general spirit and tendency* of his works is mischievous, - and the more mischievous for this mixture: for perfect depravity of sentiment is not reconcilable with eloquence; and the mind (though corruptible, not complexionally vicious) would reject and throw off with disgust a lesson of pure and unmixed evil. These writers make even virtue a pander to vice.

However, I less consider the author than the system of the Assembly in perverting morality through his means. This I confess makes me nearly despair of any attempt upon the minds of their followers, through reason, honor, or conscience. The great object of your tyrants is to destroy the gentlemen of France; and for that purpose they destroy, to the best of their power, all the effect of those relations which may render considerable men powerful or even safe. To destroy that order, they vitiate the whole community. That no means may exist of confederating against their tyranny, by the false sympathies of this *Nouvelle Eloise* they endeavor to subvert those principles of domestic trust and fidelity which form the discipline of social life. They propagate principles by which every servant may think it, if not his duty, at least his privilege, to betray

his master. By these principles, every considerable father of a family loses the sanctuary of his house. *Debet sua cuique domus esse perfugium tutissimum*, says the law, which your legislators have taken so much pains first to decry, then to repeal. They destroy all the tranquillity and security of domestic life: turning the asylum of the house into a gloomy prison, where the father of the family must drag out a miserable existence, endangered in proportion to the apparent means of his safety, - where he is worse than solitary in a crowd of domestics, and more apprehensive from his servants and inmates than from the hired, bloodthirsty mob without doors who are ready to pull him to the *lanterne*.

It is thus, and for the same end, that they endeavor to destroy that tribunal of conscience which exists independently of edicts and decrees. Your despots govern by terror. They know that he who fears God fears nothing else; and therefore they eradicate from the mind, through their Voltaire, their Helvetius, and the rest of that infamous gang, that only sort of fear which generates true courage. Their object is, that their fellow-citizens may be under the dominion of no awe, but that of their Committee of Research, and of their *lanterne*.

Having found the advantage of assassination in the formation of their tyranny, it is the grand resource in which they trust for the support of it. Whoever opposes any of their proceedings, or is suspected of a design to oppose them, is to answer it with his life, or the lives of his wife and children. This infamous, cruel, and cowardly practice of assassination they have the impudence to call *merciful*. They boast that they operated their usurpation rather by terror than by force, and that a few seasonable murders have prevented the bloodshed of many battles. There is no doubt they will extend these acts of mercy whenever they see an occasion. Dreadful, however, will be the consequences of their attempt to avoid the evils of war by the merciful policy of murder. If, by effectual punishment of the guilty, they do not wholly disavow that practice, and the threat of it too, as any part of their policy, if ever a foreign prince enters into France, he must enter it as into a country of assassins. The mode of civilized war will not be practised: nor are the French who act on the present system entitled to expect it. They whose known policy is to assassinate every citizen whom they suspect to be discontented by their tyranny, and to corrupt the soldiery of every open enemy, must look for no modified

hostility. All war, which is not battle, will be military execution. This will beget acts of retaliation from you; and every retaliation will beget a new revenge. The hell-hounds of war, on all sides, will be uncoupled and unmuzzled. The new school of murder and barbarism, set up in Paris, having destroyed (so far as in it lies) all the other manners and principles which have hitherto civilized Europe, will destroy also the mode of civilized war, which, more than anything else, has distinguished the Christian world. Such is the approaching golden age which the[4] Virgil of your Assembly has sung to his Pollios!

In such a situation of your political, your civil, and your social morals and manners, how can you be hurt by the freedom of any discussion? Caution is for those who have something to lose. What I have said, to justify myself in not apprehending any ill consequence from a free discussion of the absurd consequences which flow from the relation of the lawful king to the usurped Constitution, will apply to my vindication with regard to the exposure I have made of the state of the army under the same sophistic usurpation. The present tyrants want no arguments to prove, what they must daily feel, that no good army can exist on their principles. They are in no want of a monitor to suggest to them the policy of getting rid of the army, as well as of the king, whenever they are in a condition to effect that measure. What hopes may be entertained of your army for the restoration of your liberties I know not. At present, yielding obedience to the pretended orders of a king, who, they are perfectly apprised, has no will, and who never can issue a mandate which is not intended, in the first operation, or in its certain consequences, for his own destruction, your army seems to make one of the principal links in the chain of that servitude of anarchy by which a cruel usurpation holds an undone people at once in bondage and confusion.

You ask me what I think of the conduct of General Monk. How this affects your case I cannot tell. I doubt whether you possess in France any persons of a capacity to serve the French monarchy in the same manner in which Monk served the monarchy of England. The army which Monk commanded had been formed by Cromwell to a perfection of discipline

(4) Mirabeau's speech concerning universal peace.

which perhaps has never been exceeded. That army was besides of an excellent composition. The soldiers were men of extraordinary piety after their mode; of the greatest regularity, and even severity of manners; brave in the field, but modest, quiet and orderly in their quarters; men who abhorred the idea of assassinating their officers or any other persons, and who (they at least who served in this island) were firmly attached to those generals by whom they were well treated and ably commanded. Such an army, once gained, might be depended on. I doubt much, if you could now find a Monk, whether a Monk could find in France such an army.

I certainly agree with you, that in all probability we owe our whole Constitution to the restoration of the English monarchy. The state of things from which Monk relieved England was, however, by no means, at that time, so deplorable, in any sense, as yours is now, and under the present sway is likely to continue. Cromwell had delivered England from anarchy. His government, though military and despotic, had been regular and orderly. Under the iron, and under the yoke, the soil yielded its produce. After his death, the evils of anarchy were rather dreaded than felt. Every man was yet safe in his house and in his property. But it must be admitted that Monk freed this nation from great and just apprehensions both of future anarchy and of probable tyranny in some form or other. The king whom he gave us was, indeed, the very reverse of your benignant sovereign, who, in reward for his attempt to bestow liberty on his subjects, languishes himself in prison. The person given to us by Monk was a man without any sense of his duty as a prince, without any regard to the dignity of his crown, without any love to his people, - dissolute, false, venal, and destitute of any positive good quality whatsoever, except a pleasant temper, and the manners of a gentleman. Yet the restoration of our monarchy, even in the person of such a prince, was everything to us; for without monarchy in England, most certainly we never can enjoy either peace or liberty. It was under this conviction that the very first regular step which we took, on the Revolution of 1688, was to fill the throne with a real king; and even before it could be done in due form, the chiefs of the nation did not attempt themselves to exercise authority so much as by *interim*. They instantly requested the Prince of Orange to take the government on himself. The throne was not effectively vacant for an hour.

Your fundamental laws, as Well as ours, suppose a monarchy. Your zeal, Sir, in standing so firmly for it as you have done, shows not only a sacred respect for your honor and fidelity, but a well-informed attachment to the real welfare and true liberties of your country. I have expressed myself ill, if I have given you cause to imagine that I prefer the conduct of those who have retired from this warfare to your behavior, who, with a courage and constancy almost supernatural, have struggled against tyranny, and kept the field to the last. You see I have corrected the exceptionable part in the edition which I now send you. Indeed, in such terrible extremities as yours, it is not easy to say, in a political view, what line of conduct is the most advisable. In that state of things, I cannot bring myself severely to condemn persons who are wholly unable to bear so much as the sight of those men in the throne of legislation who are only fit to be the objects of criminal justice. If fatigue, if disgust, if unsurmountable nausea drive them away from such spectacles, *ubi miseriarum pars non minima erat, videre et aspici*, I cannot blame them. He must have an heart of adamant who could hear a set of traitors puffed up with unexpected and undeserved power, obtained by an ignoble, unmanly, and perfidious rebellion, treating their honest fellow-citizens as *rebels*, because they refused to bind themselves through their conscience, against the dictates of conscience itself, and had declined to swear an active compliance with their own ruin. How could a man of common flesh and blood endure that those who but the other day had skulked unobserved in their antechambers, scornfully insulting men illustrious in their rank, sacred in their function, and venerable in their character, now in decline of life, and swimming on the wrecks of their fortunes, - that those miscreants should tell such men scornfully and outrageously, after they had robbed them of all their property, that it is more than enough if they are allowed what will keep them from absolute famine, and that, for the rest, they must let their gray hairs fall over the plough, to make out a scanty subsistence with the labor of their hands? Last, and, worst, who could endure to hear this unnatural, insolent, and savage despotism called liberty? If, at this distance, sitting quietly by my fire, I cannot read their decrees and speeches without indignation, shall I condemn those who have fled from the actual sight and hearing of all these horrors? No, no! mankind has no title to demand that we should

be slaves to their guilt and insolence, or that we should serve them in spite of themselves. Minds sore with the poignant sense of insulted virtue, filled with high disdain against the pride of triumphant baseness, often have it not in their choice to stand their ground. Their complexion (which might defy the rack) cannot go through such a trial. Something very high must fortify men to that proof. But when I am driven to comparison, surely I cannot hesitate for a moment to prefer to such men as are common those heroes - who, in the midst of despair perform all the tasks of hope, - who subdue their feelings to their duties, - who, in the cause of humanity, liberty, and honor, abandon all the satisfactions of life, and every day incur a fresh risk of life itself. Do me the justice to believe that I never can prefer any fastidious virtue (virtue still) to the unconquered perseverance, to the affectionate patience, of those who watch day and night by the bedside of their delirious country, - who, for their love to that dear and venerable name, bear all the disgusts and all the buffets they receive from their frantic mother. Sir, I do look on you as true martyrs; I regard you as soldiers who act far more in the spirit of our Commander-in-Chief, and the Captain of our Salvation, than those who have left you: though I must first bolt myself very thoroughly, and know that I could do better, before I can censure them. I assure you, Sir, that, when I consider your unconquerable fidelity to your sovereign, and to your country, - the courage, fortitude, magnanimity, and long-suffering of yourself, and the Abbé Maury, and of M. Cazales, and of many worthy persons of all orders in your Assembly, - I forget, in the lustre of these great qualities, that on your side has been displayed an eloquence so rational, manly, and convincing, that no time or country, perhaps, has ever excelled. But your talents disappear in my admiration of your virtues.

As to M. Mounier and M. Lally, I have always wished to do justice to their parts, and their eloquence, and the general purity of their motives. Indeed, I saw very well, from the beginning, the mischiefs which, with all these talents and good intentions, they would do their country, through their confidence in systems. But their distemper was an epidemic malady. They were young and inexperienced; and when will young and inexperienced men learn caution and distrust of themselves? And when will men, young or old, if suddenly raised to far higher power than that which absolute kings and emperors commonly enjoy, learn

anything like moderation? Monarchs, in general, respect some settled order of things, which they find it difficult to move from its basis, and to which they are obliged to conform, even when there are no positive limitations to their power. These gentlemen conceived that they were chosen to new-model the state, and even the whole order of civil society itself. No wonder that *they* entertained dangerous visions, when the king's ministers, trustees for the sacred deposit of the monarchy, were so infected with the contagion of project and system (I can hardly think it black premeditated treachery) that they publicly advertised for plans and schemes of government, as if they were to provide for the rebuilding of an hospital that had been burned down. What was this, but to unchain the fury of rash speculation amongst a people of itself but too apt to be guided by a heated imagination, and a wild spirit of adventure?

The fault of M. Mounier and M. Lally was very great; but it was very general. If those gentlemen stopped, when they came to the brink of the gulf of guilt and public misery that yawned before them in the abyss of these dark and bottomless speculations, I forgive their first error: in that they were involved with many. Their repentance was their own.

They who consider Mounier and Lally as deserters must regard themselves as murderers and as traitors: for from what else than murder and treason did they desert? For my part, I honor them for not having carried mistake into crime. If, indeed, I thought that they were not cured by experience, that they were not made sensible that those who would reform a state ought to assume some actual constitution of government which is to be reformed, - if they are not at length satisfied that it is become a necessary preliminary to liberty in France, to commence by the reestablishment of order and property of *every* kind, and, through the reestablishment of their monarchy, of every one of the old habitual distinctions and classes of the state, - if they do not see that these classes are not to be confounded in order to be afterwards revived and separated, - if they are not convinced that the scheme of parochial and club governments takes up the state at the wrong end, and is a low and senseless contrivance, (as making the sole constitution of a supreme power) - I should then allow that their early rashness ought to be remembered to the last moment of their lives.

You gently reprehend me, because, in holding out the picture of your disastrous situation, I suggest no plan for a remedy. Alas! Sir, the proposition of plans, without an attention to circumstances, is the very cause of all your misfortunes; and never shall you find me aggravating, by the infusion of any speculations of mine, the evils which have arisen from the speculations of others. Your malady, in this respect, is a disorder of repletion. You seem to think that my keeping back my poor ideas may arise from an indifference to the welfare of a foreign, and, sometimes, an hostile nation. No, Sir, I faithfully assure you, my reserve is owing to no such causes. Is this letter, swelled to a second book, a mark of national antipathy, or even of national indifference? I should act altogether in the spirit of the same caution, in a similar state of our own domestic affairs. If I were to venture any advice, in any case, it would be my best. The sacred duty of an adviser (one of the most inviolable that exists) would lead me, towards a real enemy, to act as if my best friend were the party concerned. But I dare not risk a speculation with no better view of your affairs than at present I can command; my caution is not from disregard, but from solicitude for welfare. It is suggested solely from my dread of becoming the author of inconsiderate counsel.

It is not, that, as this strange series of actions has passed before my eyes, I have not indulged my mind in a great variety of political speculations concerning them; but, compelled by no such positive duty as does not permit me to evade an opinion, called upon by no ruling power, without authority as I am, and without confidence, I should ill answer my own ideas of what would become myself, or what would be serviceable to others, if I were, as a volunteer, to obtrude any project of mine upon a nation to whose circumstances I could not be sure it might be applicable.

Permit me to say, that, if I were as confident, as I ought to be diffident in my own loose, general ideas, I never should venture to broach them, if but at twenty leagues' distance from the centre of your affairs. I must see with my own eyes, I must, in a manner, touch with my own hands, not only the fixed, but the momentary circumstances, before I could venture to suggest any political project whatsoever. I must know the power and disposition to accept, to execute, to persevere. I must see all the aids and all the obstacles. I must see the means of correcting the plan,

where correctives would be wanted. I must see the things; I must see the men. Without a concurrence and adaptation of these to the design, the very best speculative projects might become not only useless, but mischievous. Plans must be made for men. We cannot think of making men, and binding Nature to our designs. People at a distance must judge ill of men. They do not always answer to their reputation, when you approach them. Nay, the perspective varies, and shows them quite otherwise than you thought them. At a distance, if we judge uncertainly of men, we must judge worse of *opportunities*, which continually vary their shapes and colors, and pass away like clouds. The Eastern politicians never do anything without the opinion of the astrologers on *the fortunate moment*. They are in the right, if they can do no better; for the opinion of fortune is something towards commanding it. Statesmen of a more judicious prescience look for the fortunate moment too; but they seek it, not in the conjunctions and oppositions of planets, but in the conjunctions and oppositions of men and things. These form their almanac.

To illustrate the mischief of a wise plan, without any attention to means and circumstances, it is not necessary to go farther than to your recent history. In the condition in which France was found three years ago, what better system could be proposed, what less even savoring of wild theory, what fitter to provide for all the exigencies whilst it reformed all the abuses of government, than the convention of the States-General? I think nothing better could be imagined. But I have censured, and do still presume to censure, your Parliament of Paris for not having suggested to the king that this proper measure was of all measures the most critical and arduous, one in which the utmost circumspection and the greatest number of precautions were the most absolutely necessary. The very confession that a government wants either amendment in its conformation or relief to great distress causes it to lose half its reputation, and as great a proportion of its strength as depends upon that reputation. It was therefore necessary first to put government out of danger, whilst at its own desire it suffered such an operation as a general reform at the hands of those who were much more filled with a sense of the disease than provided with rational means of a cure.

It may be said that this care and these precautions were more naturally the duty of the king's ministers than that of the Parliament. They were so: but every man must answer in his estimation for the advice he gives, when he puts the conduct of his measure into hands who he does not know will execute his plans according to his ideas. Three or four ministers were not to be trusted with the being of the French monarchy, of all the orders, and of all the distinctions, and all the property of the kingdom. What must be the prudence of those who could think, in the then known temper of the people of Paris, of assembling the States at a place situated as Versailles?

The Parliament of Paris did worse than to inspire this blind confidence into the king. For, as if names were things, they took no notice of (indeed, they rather countenanced) the deviations, which were manifest in the execution, from the true ancient principles of the plan which they recommended. These deviations (as guardian of the ancient laws, usages, and Constitution of the kingdom) the Parliament of Paris ought not to have suffered, without the strongest remonstrances to the throne. It ought to have sounded the alarm to the whole nation, as it had often done on things of infinitely less importance. Under pretence of resuscitating the ancient Constitution, the Parliament saw one of the strongest acts of innovation, and the most leading in its consequences, carried into effect before their eyes, - and an innovation through the medium of despotism: that is, they suffered the king's ministers to new-model the whole representation of the *Tiers Etat*, and, in a great measure, that of the clergy too, and to destroy the ancient proportions of the orders. These changes, unquestionably, the king had no right to make; and here the Parliaments failed in their duty, and, along with their country, have perished by this failure.

What a number of faults have led to this multitude of misfortunes, and almost all from this one source, - that of considering certain general maxims, without attending to circumstances, to times, to places, to conjunctures, and to actors! If we do not attend scrupulously to all these, the medicine of to-day becomes the poison of to-morrow. If any measure was in the abstract better than another, it was to call the States: *ea visa salus morientibtis una*. Certainly it had the appearance. But see the consequences of not attending to critical moments, of not regarding

the symptoms which discriminate diseases, and which distinguish constitutions, complexions, and humors:

> Mox erat hoc ipsum exitio; furiisque refecti
> Ardebant; ipsique suos, jam morte sub aegra,
> Discissos nudis laniabant dentibus artus.

Thus the potion which was given to strengthen the Constitution, to heal divisions, and to compose the minds of men, became the source of debility, frenzy, discord, and utter dissolution.

In this, perhaps, I have answered, I think, another of your questions, – Whether the British Constitution is adapted to your circumstances? When I praised the British Constitution, and wished it to be well studied, I did not mean that its exterior form and positive arrangement should become a model for you, or for any people servilely to copy. I meant to recommend the *principles* from which it has grown, and the policy on which it has been progressively improved out of elements common to you and to us. I am sure it is no visionary theory of mine. It is not an advice that subjects you to the hazard of any experiment. I believed the ancient principles to be wise in all cases of a large empire that would be free. I thought you possessed our principles in your old forms in as great a perfection as we did originally. If your States agreed (as I think they did) with your circumstances, they were best for you. As you had a Constitution formed upon principles similar to ours, my idea was, that you might have improved them as we have done, conforming them to the state and exigencies of the times, and the condition of property in your country, - having the conservation of that property, and the substantial basis of your monarchy, as principal objects in all your reforms.

I do not advise a House of Lords to you. Your ancient course by representatives of the noblesse (in your circumstances) appears to me rather a better institution. I know, that, with you, a set of men of rank have betrayed their constituents, their honor, their trust, their king, and their country, and levelled themselves with their footmen, that through this degradation they might afterwards put themselves above their natural equals. Some of these persons have entertained a project, that, in reward of this their black perfidy and corruption, they may be chosen

to give rise to a new order, and to establish themselves into an House of Lords. Do you think, that, under the name of a British Constitution, I mean to recommend to you such Lords, made of such kind of stuff? I do not, however, include in this description all of those who are fond of this scheme.

If you were now to form such an House of Peers, it would bear, in my opinion, but little resemblance to ours, in its origin, character, or the purposes which it might answer, at the same time that it would destroy your true natural nobility. But if you are not in a condition to frame a House of Lords, still less are you capable, in my opinion, of framing anything which virtually and substantially could be answerable (for the purposes of a stable, regular government) to our House of Commons. That house is, within itself, a much more subtle and artificial combination of parts and powers, than people are generally aware of. What knits it to the other members of the Constitution, what fits it to be at once the great support, and the great control of government, what makes it of such admirable service to that monarchy which, if it limits, it secures and strengthens, would require a long discourse, belonging to the leisure of a contemplative man, not to one whose duty it is to join in communicating practically to the people the blessings of such a Constitution.

Your *Tiers Etat* was not in effect and substance an House of Commons. You stood in absolute need of something else to supply the manifest defects in such a body as your *Tiers Etat*. On a sober and dispassionate view of your old Constitution, as connected with all the present circumstances, I was fully persuadedthat the crown, standing as things have stood, (and are likely to stand, if you are to have any monarchy at all) was and is incapable, alone and by itself, of holding a just balance between the two orders, and at the same time of effecting the interior and exterior purposes of a protecting government. I, whose leading principle it is, in a reformation of the state, to make use of existing materials, am of opinion, that the representation of the clergy, as a separate order, was an institution which touched all the orders more nearly than any of them touched the other; that it was well fitted to connect them, and to hold a place in any wise monarchical commonwealth. If I refer you to your original Constitution, and think it, as I do, substantially a good one, I do not amuse you in this, more than in other things, with any inventions

of mine. A certain intemperance of intellect is the disease of the time, and the source of all its other diseases. I will keep myself as untainted by it as I can. Your architects build without a foundation. I would readily lend an helping hand to any superstructure, when once this is effectually secured, – but first I would say δοσ που στω.

You think, Sir, (and you might think rightly, upon the first view of the theory,) that to provide for the exigencies of an empire so situated and so related as that of France, its king ought to be invested with powers very much superior to those which the king of England possesses under the letter of our Constitution. Every degree of power necessary to the state, and not destructive to the rational and moral freedom of individuals, to that personal liberty and personal security which contribute so much to the vigor, the prosperity, the happiness, and the dignity of a nation, - every degree of power which does not suppose the total absence of all control, and all responsibility on the part of ministers, - a king of France, in common sense, ought to possess. But whether the exact measure of authority assigned by the letter of the law to the king of Great Britain can answer to the exterior or interior purposes of the French monarchy is a point which I cannot venture to judge upon. Here, both in the power given, and its limitations, we have always cautiously felt our way. The parts of our Constitution have gradually, and almost insensibly, in a long course of time, accommodated themselves to each other, and to their common as well as to their separate purposes. But this adaptation of contending parts, as it has not been in ours, so it can never be in yours, or in any country, the effect of a single instantaneous regulation, and no sound heads could ever think of doing it in that manner.

I believe, Sir, that many on the Continent altogether mistake the condition of a king of Great Britain. He is a real king, and not an executive officer. If he will not trouble himself with contemptible details, nor wish to degrade himself by becoming a party in little squabbles, I am far from sure that a king of Great Britain, in whatever concerns him as a king, or indeed as a rational man, who combines his public interest with his personal satisfaction, does not possess a more real, solid, extensive power than the king of France was possessed of before this miserable revolution. The direct power of the king of England is considerable. His indirect, and far more certain power, is great indeed. He stands in need

of nothing towards dignity, - of nothing towards splendour, - of nothing towards authority,- of nothing at all towards consideration abroad. When was it that a king of England wanted wherewithal to make him respected, courted, or perhaps even feared, in every state in Europe?

I am constantly of opinion, that your States, in three orders, on the footing on which they stood in 1614, were capable of being brought into a proper and harmonious combination with royal authority. This constitution by Estates was the natural and only just representation of France. It grew out of the habitual conditions, relations, and reciprocal claims of men. It grew out of the circumstances of the country, and out of the state of property. The wretched scheme of your present masters is not to fit the Constitution to the people, but wholly to destroy conditions, to dissolve relations, to change the state of the nation, and to subvert property, in order to fit their country to their theory of a Constitution.

Until you make out practically that great work, a combination of opposing forces, "a work of labor long, and endless praise," the utmost caution ought to have been used in the reduction of the royal power, which alone was capable of holding together the comparatively heterogeneous mass of your States. But at this day all these considerations are unseasonable. To what end should we discuss the limitations of royal power? Your king is in prison. Why speculate on the measure and standard of liberty? I doubt much, very much indeed, whether France is at all ripe for liberty on any standard. Men are unqualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites, - in proportion as their love to justice is above their rapacity, - in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption, - in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, in preference to the flattery of knaves. Society cannot exist, unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.

This sentence the prevalent part of your countrymen execute on themselves. They possessed not long since what was next to freedom, a mild, paternal monarchy. They despised it for its weakness. They were

offered a well-poised, free Constitution. It did not suit their taste nor their temper. They carved for themselves: they flew out, murdered, robbed, and rebelled. They have succeeded, and put over their country an insolent tyranny made up of cruel and inexorable masters, and that, too, of a description hitherto not known in the world. The powers and policies by which they have succeeded are not those of great statesmen or great military commanders, but the practices of incendiaries, assassins, housebreakers, robbers, spreaders of false news, forgers of false orders from authority, and other delinquencies, of which ordinary justice takes cognizance. Accordingly, the spirit of their rule is exactly correspondent to the means by which they obtained it. They act more in the manner of thieves who have got possession of an house than of conquerors who have subdued a nation.

Opposed to these, in appearance, but in appearance only, is another band, who call themselves *the Moderate*. These, if I conceive rightly of their conduct, are a set of men who approve heartily of the whole new Constitution, but wish to lay heavy on the most atrocious of those crimes by which this fine Constitution of theirs has been obtained. They are a sort of people who affect to proceed as if they thought that men may deceive without fraud, rob without injustice, and overturn everything without violence. They are men who would usurp the government of their country with decency and moderation. In fact, they are nothing more or better than men engaged in desperate designs with feeble minds. They are not honest; they are only ineffectual and unsystematic in their iniquity. They are persons who want not the dispositions, but the energy and vigor, that is necessary for great evil machinations. They find that in such designs they fall at best into a secondary rank, and others take the place and lead in usurpation which they are not qualified to obtain or to hold. They envy to their companions the natural fruit of their crimes; they join to run them down with the hue and cry of mankind, which pursues their common offences; and then hope to mount into their places on the credit of the sobriety with which they show themselves disposed to carry on what may seem most plausible in the mischievous projects they pursue in common. But these men are naturally despised by those who have heads to know, and hearts that are able to go through the necessary demands of bold, wicked enterprises. They are naturally

classed below the latter description, and will only be used by them as inferior instruments. They will be only the Fairfaxes of your Cromwells. If they mean honestly, why do they not strengthen the arms of honest men, to support their ancient, legal, wise, and free government, given to them in the spring of 1788, against the inventions of craft and the theories of ignorance and folly? If they do not, they must continue the scorn of both parties, - sometimes the tool, sometimes the incumbrance of that whose views they approve, whose conduct they decry. These people are only made to be the sport of tyrants. They never can obtain or communicate freedom.

You ask me, too, whether we have a Committee of Research. No, Sir, - God forbid! It is the necessary instrument of tyranny and usurpation; and therefore I do not wonder that it has had an early establishment under your present lords. We do not want it.

Excuse my length. I have been somewhat occupied since I was honored with your letter; and I should not have been able to answer it at all, but for the holidays, which have given me means of enjoying the leisure of the country. I am called to duties which I am neither able nor willing to evade. I must soon return to my old conflict with the corruptions and oppressions which have prevailed in our Eastern dominions. I must tum myself wholly from those of France.

In England we *cannot* work so hard as Frenchmen. Frequent relaxation is necessary to us. You are naturally more intense in your application. I did not know this part of your national character, until I went into France in 1773. At present, this your disposition to labor is rather increased than lessened. In your Assembly you do not allow yourselves a recess even on Sundays. We have two days in the week, besides the festivals, and besides five or six months of the summer and autumn. This continued, unremitted effort of the members of your Assembly I take to be one among the causes of the mischief they have done. They who always labor can have no true judgment. You never give yourselves time to cool. You can never survey, from its proper point of sight, the work you have finished, before you decree its final execution. You can never plan the future by the past. You never go into the country, soberly and dispassionately to observe the effect of your measures on their objects. You cannot feel distinctly how far the people are rendered

better and improved, or more miserable and depraved, by what you have done. You cannot see with your own eyes the sufferings and afflictions you cause. You know them but at a distance, on the statements of those who always flatter the reigning power, and who, amidst their representations of the grievances, inflame your minds against those who are oppressed. These are amongst the effects of unremitted labor, when men exhaust their attention, burn out their candles, and are left in the dark. - *Malo meorum negligentiam, quam istorum obscuram diligentiam.*

I have the honor, &c.

(Signed)
Edmund Burke.
Beaconsfield,
January 19th, 1791.

Thoughts and details of scarcity

**originally presented, to the right hon. William Pitt,
in the month of November, 1795.**

Of all things, an indiscreet tampering with the trade of provisions is the most dangerous, and it is always worst in the time when men are most disposed to it, that is, in the time of scarcity; because there is nothing on which the passions of men are so violent, and their judgment so weak, and on which there exists such a multitude of ill-founded popular prejudices.

The great use of government is as a restraint; and there is no restraint, which it ought to put upon others, and upon itself too, rather than that which is imposed on the fury of speculating under circumstances of irritation. The number of idle tales spread about by the industry of faction and by the zeal of foolish good intention, and greedily devoured by the malignant credulity of mankind, tends infinitely to aggravate prejudices, which in themselves are more than sufficiently strong. In that state of affairs, and of the public with relation to them, the first thing that government owes to us, the people, is *information*; the next is timely coercion: the one to guide our judgment; the other to regulate our tempers.

To provide for us in our necessities is not in the power of government. It would be a vain presumption in statesmen to think they can do it. The people maintain them, and not they the people. It is in the power of government to prevent much evil; it can do very little positive good in this, or perhaps in anything else. It is not only so of the state and statesman, but of all the classes and descriptions of the rich: they are the pensioners of the poor, and are maintained by their superfluity. They are under an absolute, hereditary, and indefeasible dependence on those who labour and are miscalled the poor.

The labouring people are only poor because they are numerous. Numbers in their nature imply poverty. In a fair distribution among a vast multitude none can have much. That class of dependent pensioners called the rich is so extremely small, that, if all their throats were cut, and a distribution made of all they consume in a year, it would not give a bit of bread and cheese for one night's supper to those who labour, and who in reality feed both the pensioners and themselves.

But the throats of the rich ought not to be cut, nor their magazines plundered; because, in their persons, they are trustees for those who labour, and their hoards are the banking houses of these latter. Whether

they mean it or not, they do, in effect, execute their trust, some with more, some with less fidelity and judgment. But, on the whole, the duty is performed, and everything returns, deducting some very trifling commission and discount, to the place from whence it arose. When the poor rise to destroy the rich, they act as wisely for their own purposes as when they burn mills and throw corn into the river to make bread cheap.

When I say that we of the people ought to be informed, inclusively I say we ought not to be flattered: flattery is the reverse of instruction. The *poor* in that case would be rendered as improvident as the rich, which would not be at all good for them.

Nothing can be so base and so wicked as the political canting language, "the labouring *poor*." Let compassion be shown in action, the more, the better, according to every man's ability; but let there be no lamentation of their condition. It is no relief to their miserable circumstances; it is only an insult to their miserable understandings. It arises from a total want of charity or a total want of thought. Want of one kind was never relieved by want of any other kind. Patience, labour, sobriety, frugality, and religion should be recommended to them; all the rest is downright *fraud*. It is horrible to call them "the *once happy* labourer."

Whether what may be called the moral or philosophical happiness of the laborious classes is increased or not, I cannot say. The seat of that species of happiness is in the mind; and there are few data to ascertain the comparative state of the mind at any two periods. Philosophical happiness is to want little. Civil or vulgar happiness is to want much and to enjoy much.

If the happiness of the animal man (which certainly goes somewhere towards the happiness of the rational man) be the object of our estimate, then I assert, without the least hesitation, that the condition of those who labour (in all descriptions of labour, and in all gradations of labour, from the highest to the lowest inclusively) is, on the whole, extremely meliorated, if more and better food is any standard of melioration. They work more, it is certain; but they have the advantage of their augmented labour: yet, whether that increase of labour be on the whole a *good* or an *evil* is a consideration that would lead us a great way, and is not for my present purpose. But as to the fact of the melioration of their diet, I shall enter into the details of proof, whenever I am called upon: in

the meantime, the known difficulty of contenting them with anything but bread made of the finest flour and meat of the first quality is proof sufficient.

I further assert, that, even under all the hardships of the last year, the labouring people did, either out of their direct gains, or from charity, (which it seems is now an insult to them), in fact, fare better than they did in seasons of common plenty, fifty or sixty years ago, or even at the period of my English observation, which is about forty-four years. I even assert that as many in that class as ever were known to do it before continued to save money; and this I can prove, so far as my own information and experience extend.

It is not true that the rate of wages has not increased with the nominal price of provisions. I allow, it has not fluctuated with that price, nor ought it; and the squires of Norfolk had dined, when they gave it as their opinion that it might or ought to rise and fall with the market of provisions. The rate of wages, in truth, has no direct relation to that price. Labour is a commodity like every other and rises or falls according to the demand. This is in the nature of things; however, the nature of things has provided for their necessities. Wages have been twice raised in my time; and they bear a full proportion, or even greater than formerly, to the medium of provision during the last bad cycle of twenty years. They bear a full proportion to the result of their labour. If we were wildly to attempt to force them beyond it, the stone which we had forced up the hill would only fall back upon them in a diminished demand, or, what indeed is the far lesser evil, an aggravated price of all the provisions, which are the result of their manual toil.

There is an implied contract, much stronger than any instrument or article of agreement between the labourer in any occupation and his employer, that the labour, so far as that labour is concerned, shall be sufficient to pay to the employer a profit on his capital and a compensation for his risk: in a word, that the labour shall produce an advantage equal to the payment. Whatever is above that is a direct tax; and if the amount of that tax be left to the will and pleasure of another, it is an arbitrary tax.

If I understand it rightly, the tax proposed on the fanning interest of this kingdom is to be levied at what is called the discretion of justices of peace.

The questions arising on this scheme of arbitrary taxation are these: whether it is better to leave all dealing, in which there is no force or fraud, collusion or combination, entirely to the persons mutually concerned in the matter contracted for, or to put the contract into the hands of those who can have none or a very remote interest in it, and little or no knowledge of the subject.

It might be imagined that there would be very little difficulty in solving this question: for what man, of any degree of reflection, can think that a want of interest in any subject, closely connected with a want of skill in it, qualifies a person to intermeddle in the smallest affair, much less in affairs that vitally concern the agriculture of the kingdom, the first of all its concerns, and the foundation of all its prosperity in every other matter by which that prosperity is produced?

The vulgar error on this subject arises from a total confusion in the very idea of things widely different in themselves, those of convention, and those of judicature. When a contract is in the making, it is a matter of discretion and of interest between the parties. In that intercourse, and in what is to arise from it, the parties are the masters. If they are not completely so, they are not free, and therefore the contracts are void.

But this freedom has no farther extent, when the contract is made: then their discretionary powers expire, and a new order of things takes its origin. Then, and not till then, and on a difference between the parties, the office of the judge commences. He cannot dictate the contract. It is his business to see that it is enforced, provided that it is not contrary to pre-existing laws or obtained by force or fraud. If he is in any way a maker or regulator of the contract, in so much he is disqualified from being a judge. But this sort of confused distribution of administrative and judicial characters (of which we have already as much as is sufficient, and a little more) is not the only perplexity of notions and passions, which trouble us in the present hour.

What in doing supposes, or pretends, that the farmer and the labourer have opposite interests, that the farmer oppresses the labourer, and that a gentleman, called a justice of peace, is the protector of the latter, and a control and restraint on the former; and this is a point I wish to examine in a manner a good deal different from that in which gentlemen proceed, who confide more in their abilities than is fit, and suppose them capable

of more than any natural abilities, fed with no other than the provender furnished by their own private speculations, can accomplish. Legislative acts attempting to regulate this part of economy do, at least as much as any other, require the most exact details of circumstances, guided by the surest general principles that are necessary to direct experiment and inquiry, in order again from those details to elicit principles, firm and luminous general principles, to direct a practical legislative proceeding.

First, then, I deny that it is in this case, as in any other, of necessary implication that contracting parties should originally have had different interests. By accident it may be so, undoubtedly, at the outset: but then the contract is of the nature of a compromise; and compromise is founded on circumstances that suppose it the interest of the parties to be reconciled in some medium. The principle of compromise adopted, of consequence the interests cease to be different.

But in the case of the farmer and the labourer, their interests are always the same, and it is absolutely impossible that their free contracts can be onerous to either party. It is the interest of the farmer that his work should be done with effect and celerity; and that cannot be, unless the labourer is well fed, and otherwise found with such necessities of animal life, according to its habitudes, as may keep the body in full force, and the mind gay and cheerful. For of all the instruments of his trade, the labour of man (what the ancient writers have called the *instrumentum vocale*) is that on which he is most to rely for the repayment of his capital. The other two, the *semivocale* in the ancient classification, that is, the working stock of cattle, and the *instrumentum mutum*, such as carts, ploughs, spades, and so forth, though not all inconsiderable in themselves, are very much inferior in utility or in expense, and, without a given portion of the first, are nothing at all. For, in all things whatever, the mind is the most valuable and the most important; and in this scale the whole of agriculture is in a natural and just order: the beast is as an informing *principia* to the plough and cart; the labourer is as reason to the beast; and the farmer is as a thinking and presiding principle to the labourer. An attempt to break this chain of subordination in any part is equally absurd; but the absurdity is the most mischievous, in practical operation, where it is the most easy, that is, where it is the most subject to an erroneous judgment.

It is plainly more the farmer's interest that his men should thrive than that his horses should be well fed, sleek, plump, and fit for use, or than that his wagon and ploughs should be strong, in good repair, and fit for service.

On the other hand, if the farmer ceases to profit of the labourer, and that his capital is not continually manured and fructified, it is impossible that he should continue that abundant nutriment and clothing and lodging proper for the protection of the instruments he employs.

It is, therefore, the first and fundamental interest of the labourer, that the farmer should have a full incoming profit on the product of his labour. The proposition is self-evident; and nothing but the malignity, perverseness, and ill-governed passions of mankind, and particularly the envy they bear to each other's prosperity, could prevent their seeing and acknowledging it, with thankfulness to the benign and wise Disposer of all things, who obliges men, whether they will or not, in pursuing their own selfish interests, to connect the general good with their own individual success.

But who are to judge what that profit and advantage ought to be? Certainly, no authority on earth. It is a matter of convention, dictated by the reciprocal conveniences of the parties, and indeed by their reciprocal necessities. But if the farmer is excessively avaricious? Why, so much the better: the more he desires to increase his gains, the more interested is he in the good condition of those upon whose labour his gains must principally depend.

I shall be told by the zealots of the sect of regulation, that this may be true, and may be safely committed to the convention of the farmer and the labourer, when the latter is in the prime of his youth, and at the time of his health and vigour, and in ordinary times of abundance. But in calamitous seasons, under accidental illness, in declining life, and with the pressure of a numerous offering, the future nourishers of the community, but the present drains and blood-suckers of those who produce them, what is to be done? When a man cannot live and maintain his family by the natural hire of his labour, ought it not to be raised by authority?

On this head I must be allowed to submit what my opinions have ever been, and somewhat at large.

And, first, I premise that labour is, as I have already intimated, a commodity, and, as such, an article of trade. If I am right in this notion, then labour must be subject to all the laws and principles of trade, and not to regulations foreign to them, and that may be totally inconsistent with those principles and those laws. When any commodity is carried to market, it is not the necessity of the tender, but the necessity of the purchaser, that raises the price. The extreme want of the seller has rather (by the nature of things with which we shall in vain contend) the direct contrary operation. If the goods at market are beyond the demand, they fall in their value; if below it, they rise. The impossibility of the subsistence of a man who carries his labour to a market is totally beside the question, in this way of viewing it. The only question is, what is it worth to the buyer?

But if authority comes in and forces the buyer to a price, what is this in the case (say) of a farmer who buys the labour of ten or twelve labouring men, and three or four handicrafts, what is it but to make an arbitrary division of his property among them?

The whole of his gains (I say it with the most certain conviction) never does amount anything like in value to what he pays to his labourers and artificers; so that a very small advance upon what one man pays to many may absorb the whole of what he possesses, and amount to an actual partition of all his substance among them. A perfect equality will, indeed, be produced, that is to say, equal want, equal wretchedness, equal beggary, and, on the part of the partitioners, a woeful, helpless, and desperate disappointment. Such is the event of all compulsory equalizations. They pull down what is above; they never raise what is below; and they depress high and low together beneath the level of what was originally the lowest.

If a commodity is raised by authority above what it will yield with a profit to the buyer, that commodity will be less dealt in. If a second blundering interposition be used to correct the blunder of the first and an attempt is made to force the purchase of the commodity, (of labour, for instance,) one of these two things must happen: either that the forced buyer is ruined, or the price of the product of the labour in that proportion is raised. Then the wheel turns round, and the evil complained of falls with aggravated weight on the complainant. The

price of corn, which is the result of the expense of all the operations of husbandry taken together, and for some time continued, will rise on the labourer, considered as a consumer. The best will be, that he remains where he was. But if the price of the corn should not compensate the price of labour, what is far more to be feared, the most serious evil, the very destruction of agriculture itself, is to be apprehended.

Nothing is such an enemy to accuracy of judgment as a coarse discrimination, a want of such classification and distribution that the subject admits. Increase the rate of wages to the labourer, say the regulators, as if labour was but one thing, and of one value. But this very broad, generic term, *labour*, admits, at least, of two or three specific descriptions: and these will suffice, at least, to let gentlemen discern a little the necessity of proceeding with caution in their coercive guidance of those whose existence depends upon the observance of still nicer distinctions and subdivisions than they commonly resort to in forming their judgments on this very enlarged part of the economy.

The labourers in husbandry may be divided:

First, into those who are able to perform the full work of a man, that is, what can be done by a person from twenty-one years of age to fifty. I know no husbandry work (mowing hardly excepted) that is not equally within the power of all persona within those ages, the more advanced fully compensating by knack and habit what they lose in activity. Unquestionably, there is a good deal of difference between the value of one man's labour and that of another, from strength, dexterity, and honest application. But I am quite sure, from my best observation, that any given five men will, in their total, afford a proportion of labour equal to any other five within the periods of life I have stated: that is, that among such five men there will be one possessing all the qualifications of a good workman, one bad, and the other three middling, and approximating to the first and the last. So that, in so small a platoon as that of even five, you will find the full complement of all that five men can earn. Taking five and five throughout the kingdom, they are equal: therefore, an error with regard to the equalization of their wages by those who employ five, as farmers do at the very least, cannot be considerable.

Secondly, those who are able to work, but not the complete task of a day-labourer. This class is infinitely diversified but will aptly enough fall

into principal divisions. *Men*, from the decline, which after fifty becomes every year more sensible, to the period of debility and decrepitude, and the maladies that precede a final dissolution. *Women*, whose employment on husbandry is but occasional, and who differ more in effective labour one from another than men do, on account of gestation, nursing, and domestic management, over and above the difference they have in common with men in advancing, in stationary, and in declining life. *Children*, who proceed on the reverse order, growing from less to greater utility, but with a still greater disproportion of nutriment to labour than is found in the second of these subdivisions: as is visible to those who will give themselves the trouble of examining the interior economy of a poor household.

This inferior classification is introduced to show that laws prescribing or magistrates exercising a very stiff and often inapplicable rule, or a blind and rash discretion, never can provide the just proportions between earning and salary, on the one hand, and nutriment on the other: whereas interest, habit, and the tacit convention that arise from a thousand nameless circumstances produce a tact that regulates without difficulty what laws and magistrates cannot regulate at all. The first class of labour wants nothing to equalize it; it equalizes itself. The second and third are not capable of any equalization.

But what if the rate of hire to the labourer comes far short of his necessary subsistence, and the calamity of the time is so great as to threaten actual famine? Is the poor labourer to be abandoned to the flinty heart and griping hand of base self-interest, supported by the sword of law, especially when there is reason to suppose that the very avarice of farmers themselves has concurred with the errors of government to bring famine on the land?

In that case, my opinion is this: whenever it happens that a man can claim nothing according to the rules of commerce and the principles of justice, he passes out of that department, and comes within the jurisdiction of mercy. In that province the magistrate has nothing at all to do; his interference is a violation of the property, which it is his office to protect. Without all doubt, charity to the poor is a direct and obligatory duty upon all Christians, next in order after the payment of debts, full as strong, and by Nature made infinitely more delightful to us. Pufendorf,

and other casuists, do not, I think, denominate it quite properly, when they call it a duty of imperfect obligation. But the manner, mode, time, choice of objects, and proportion are left to private discretion; and perhaps for that very reason it is performed with the greater satisfaction, because the discharge of it has more the appearance of freedom, recommending us besides very specially to the Divine favor, as the exercise of a virtue most suitable to a being sensible of its own infirmity.

The cry of the people in cities and towns, though unfortunately (from a fear of their multitude and combination) the most regarded, ought, in fact, to be the least attended to, upon this subject: for citizens are in a state of utter ignorance of the means by which they are to be fed, and they contribute little or nothing, except in an infinitely circuitous manner, to their own maintenance. They are truly *fruges consumere nati*. They are to be heard with great respect and attention upon matters within their province, that is, on trades and manufactures; but on anything that relates to agriculture they are to be listened to with the same *reverence*, which we pay to the dogmas of other ignorant and presumptuous men.

If any one were to tell them that they were to give in an account of all the stock in their shops, that attempts would be made to limit their profits, or raise the price of the labouring manufacturers upon them, or recommend to government, out of a Capital from the public revenues, to set up a shop of the same commodities, in order to rival them, and keep them to reasonable dealing, they would very soon see the impudence, injustice, and oppression of such a course. They would not be mistaken but they are of the opinion that agriculture is to be subject to other laws, and to be governed by other principles.

A greater and more ruinous mistake cannot be fallen into than that the trades of agriculture and grazing can be conducted upon any other than the common principles of commerce: namely, that the producer should be permitted, and even expected, to look to all possible profit, which without fraud or violence he can make; to turn plenty or scarcity to the best advantage he can; to keep back or to bring forward his commodities at his pleasure; to account to no one for his stock or for his gain. On any other terms he is the slave of the consumer: and that he should be so is of no benefit to the consumer. No slave was ever so beneficial to the master as a freeman that deals with him on an equal footing by convention, formed

on the rules and principles of contending interests and compromised advantages. The consumer, if he were suffered, would in the end always be the dupe of his own tyranny and injustice. The landed gentleman is never to forget that the farmer is his representative.

It is a perilous thing to try experiments on the farmer. The farmer's capital (except in a few persons and in a very few places) is far more feeble than is commonly imagined. The trade is a very poor trade; it is subject to great risks and losses. The capital, such as it is, is turned but once in the year; in some branches it requires three years before the money is paid: I believe never less than three in the turnip and grass-land course, which is the prevalent course on the more or less fertile sandy and gravelly loams, and these compose the soil in the south and southeast of England, the best adapted, and perhaps the only ones that are adapted, to turnip husbandry.

It is very rare that the most prosperous farmer, counting the value of his quick and dead stock, the interest of the money he earns, together with his own wages as a bailiff or overseer, ever does make twelve or fifteen per centum by the year on his capital. I speak of the prosperous. In most parts of England, which have fallen within my observation, I have rarely known a farmer, who to his own trade has not added some other employment or traffic, that, after a course of the most unremitting parsimony and labour, (such for the greater part is theirs,) and persevering in his business for a long course of years, died worth more than paid his debts, leaving his posterity to continue in nearly the same equal conflict between industry and want, in which the last predecessor, and a long line of predecessors before him, lived and died.

Observe that I speak of the generality of farmers, who have not more than from one hundred and fifty to three or four hundred acres. There are few in this part of the country within the former or much beyond the latter extent. Unquestionably, in other places there are much larger. But I am convinced, whatever part of England be the theatre of his operations, a farmer who cultivates twelve hundred acres, which I consider as a large farm, though I know there are larger, cannot proceed with any degree of safety and effect with a smaller capital than ten thousand pounds, and that he cannot, in the ordinary course of culture, make more upon that great Capital of ten thousand pounds than twelve hundred a year.

As to the weaker capitals, an easy judgment may be formed by what very small errors they may be farther attenuated, enervated, rendered unproductive, and perhaps totally destroyed.

This constant precariousness and ultimate moderate limits of a farmer's fortune, on the strongest capital, I press, not only on account of the hazardous speculations of the times, but because the excellent and most useful works of my friend, Mr. Arthur Young, tend to propagate that error (such I am very certain it is) of the largeness of a farmer's profits. It is not that his account of the produce does often greatly exceed, but he by no means makes the proper allowance for accidents and losses. I might enter into a convincing detail, if other more troublesome and more necessary details were not before me.

This proposed discretionary tax on labour militates against the recommendations of the Board of Agriculture: they recommend a general use of the drill culture. I agree with the Board, that, where the soil is not excessively heavy, or encumbered with large loose stones, (which, however, is the case with much otherwise good land) that course is the best and most productive, provided that the most accurate eye, the most vigilant superintendence, the most prompt activity, which has no such day as tomorrow in its calendar, the most steady foresight and predisposing order to have everybody and everything ready in its place, and prepared to take advantage of the fortunate, fugitive moment, in this coquetting climate of ours, provided, I say, all these combine to speed the plough, I admit its superiority over the old and general methods. But under procrastinating, improvident, ordinary husbandmen, who may neglect or let slip the few opportunities of sweetening and purifying their ground with perpetually renovated toil and undissipated attention, nothing, when tried to any extent, can be worse or more dangerous: the farm may be ruined, instead of having the soil enriched and sweetened by it.

But the excellence of the method on a proper soil, and conducted by husbandmen, of whom there are few, being readily granted, how, and on what conditions, is this culture obtained? Why, by a very great increase of labour: by the augmentation of the third part, at least, of the hand-labour, to say nothing of the horses and machinery employed in ordinary tillage. Now every man must be sensible how little becoming

the gravity of legislature it is to encourage a board, which recommends to us, and upon very weighty reasons unquestionably, an enlargement of the Capital we employ in the operations of the hand, and then to pass an act, which taxes that manual labour, already at a very high rate, thus compelling us to diminish the quantity of labour, which in the vulgar course we actually employ.

What is true of the farmer is equally true of the middle-man, whether the middle-man acts as factor, jobber, salesman, or speculator, in the markets of grain. These traders are to be left to their free course; and the more they make, and the richer they are, and the more largely they deal, the better both for the farmer and consumer, between whom they form a natural and most useful link of connection, though by the machinations of the old evil counsellor, *Envy*, they are hated and maligned by both parties.

I hear that middle-men are accused of monopoly. Without question, the monopoly of authority is, in every instance and in every degree, an evil; but the monopoly of Capital is the contrary. It is a great benefit, and a benefit particularly to the poor. A tradesman who has but a hundred pound Capital, which (say) he can turn but once a year, cannot live upon a profit of ten per cent, because he cannot live upon ten pounds a year; but a man of ten thousand pounds Capital can live and thrive upon five per cent profit in the year, because he has five hundred pounds a year. The same proportion holds in turning it twice or thrice. These principles are plain and simple; and it is not our ignorance, so much as the levity, the envy, and the malignity of our nature, that hinders us from perceiving and yielding to them: but we are not to suffer our vices to usurp the place of our judgment.

The balance between consumption and production makes the price. The market settles, and alone can settle, that price. Market is the meeting and *conference* of the *consumer* and, when they mutually discover each other's wants. Nobody, I believe, has observed with any reflection what market is, without being astonished at the truth, the correctness, the celerity, the general equity, with which the balance of wants is settled. They who wish the destruction of that balance and would gain by arbitrary regulation decree that defective production should not be compensated by increased price, directly lay their axe to the root of

production itself. They may, even in one year of such false policy, do mischiefs incalculable; because the trade of a farmer is, as I have before explained, one of the most precarious in its advantages, the most liable to losses, and the least profitable of any that is carried on. It requires ten times more of labour, of vigilance, of attention, of skill, and, let me add, of good fortune also, to carry on the business of a farmer with success, than what belongs to any other trade.

Seeing things in this light, I am far from presuming to censure the late circular instruction of Council to lord-lieutenants, but I confess I do not clearly discern its object. I am greatly afraid that the inquiry will raise some alarm, as a measure leading to the French system of putting corn into requisition. For that was preceded by an inquisition somewhat similar in its principle, though, according to their mode, their principles are full of that violence, which here is not much to be feared. It goes on a principle directly opposite to mine: it presumes that the market is no fair test of plenty or scarcity. It raises a suspicion, which may affect the tranquillity of the public mind, "that the farmer keeps back, and takes unfair advantages by delay;" on the part of the dealer, it gives rise obviously to a thousand nefarious speculations.

In case the return should on the whole prove favorable, is it meant to ground a measure for encouraging exportation and checking the import of corn? If it is not, what end can it answer? And I believe it is not.

This opinion may be fortified by a report gone abroad, that intentions are entertained of erecting public granaries, and that this inquiry is to give government an advantage in its purchases.

I hear that such a measure has been proposed, and is under deliberation: that is, for government to set up a granary in every market-town, at the expense of the State, in order to extinguish the dealer, and to subject the farmer to the consumer, by securing corn to the latter at a certain and steady price.

If such a scheme is adopted, I should not like to answer for the safety of the granary, of the agents, or of the town itself in which the granary was erected: the first storm of popular frenzy would fall upon that granary.

So far in a political light.

In an economic light, I must observe that the construction of such granaries throughout the kingdom would be at an expense beyond

all calculation. The upkeep of them would be at a great charge. The management and attendance would require an army of agents, store-keepers, clerks, and servants. The Capital to be employed in the purchase of grain would be enormous. The waste, decay, and corruption would be a dreadful drawback on the whole dealing; and the dissatisfaction of the people, at having decayed, tainted, or corrupted corn sold to them, as must be the case, would be serious.

This climate (whatever others may be) is not favorable to granaries, where wheat is to be kept for any time. The best, and indeed the only good granary, is the rick-yard of the farmer, where the corn is preserved in its own straw, sweet, clean, wholesome, free from vermin and from insects, and comparatively at a trifle of the expense. This, and the barn, enjoying many of the same advantages, have been the sole granaries of England from the foundation of its agriculture to this day. All this is done at the expense of the undertaker, and at his sole risk. He contributes to government, he receives nothing from it but protection, and to this he has a *claim*.

The moment that government appears in the market, all the principles of the market will be subverted. I don't know whether the farmer will suffer by it, as long as there is a tolerable market of competition; but I am sure, that, in the first place, the trading government will speedily become bankrupt, and the consumer in the end will suffer. If government makes all its purchases at once, it will instantly raise the market upon itself. If it makes them by degrees, it must follow the course of the market. If it follows the course of the market, it will produce no effect, and the consumer may as well buy as he wants; therefore, all the expense is incurred gratis.

But if the object of this scheme should be, what I suspect it is, to destroy the dealer, commonly called the middle-man, and by incurring a voluntary loss to carry the baker to deal with government, I am to tell them that they must set up another trade, that of a miller or a meal-man, attended with a new train of expenses and risks. If in both these trades they should succeed, so as to exclude those who trade on natural and private capitals, then they will have a monopoly in their hands, which, under the appearance of a monopoly of Capital, will, in reality, be a monopoly of authority, and will ruin whatever it touches. The agriculture of the kingdom cannot stand before it.

A little place like Geneva, of not more than from twenty-five to thirty thousand inhabitants, which has no territory, or next to none, which depends for its existence on the goodwill of three neighbouring powers and is of course continually in the state of something like a *siege*, or in the speculation of it, might find some resource in state granaries, and some revenue from the monopoly of what was sold to the keepers of public houses. This is a policy for a state too small for agriculture. It is not (for instance) fit for so great a country as the Pope possesses, where, however, it is adopted and pursued in a greater extent, and with more strictness. Certain of the Pope's territories, from whence the city of Borne is supplied, being obliged to furnish Borne and the granaries of his Holiness with corn at a certain price, that part of the Papal territories is utterly ruined. That ruin may be traced with certainty to this sole cause; and it appears indubitably by a comparison of their state and condition with that of the other part of the ecclesiastical dominions, not subjected to the same regulations, which are in the circumstances highly flourishing.

The reformation of this evil system is in a manner impracticable. For, first, it does keep bread and all other provisions equally subject to the chamber of supply, at a pretty reasonable and regular price, in the city of Borne. This preserves quiet among the numerous poor, idle, and naturally mutinous people of a very great Capital. But the quiet of the town is purchased by the ruin of the country and the ultimate wretchedness of both. The next cause which renders this evil incurable is the jobs which have grown out of it, and which, in spite of all precautions, would grow out of such things even under governments far more potent than the feeble authority of the Pope.

This example of Borne, which has been derived from the most ancient times, and the most flourishing period of the Roman Empire, (but not of Roman agriculture,) may serve as a great caution to all governments not to attempt to feed the people out of the hands of the magistrates. If once they are habituated to it, though but for one half-year, they will never be satisfied to have it otherwise. And having looked to government for bread, on the very first scarcity they will tum and bite the hand that fed them. To avoid that evil, government will redouble the causes of it; and then it will become inveterate and incurable.

I beseech the government (which I take in the largest sense of the word, comprehending the two Houses of Parliament) seriously to consider that years of scarcity or plenty do not come alternately or at short intervals, but in pretty long cycles and irregularly, and consequently that we cannot assure ourselves, if we take a wrong measure, from the temporary necessities of one season, but that the next, and probably more, will drive us to the continuance of it; so that, in my opinion, there is no way of preventing this evil, which goes to the destruction of all our agriculture, and of that part of our internal commerce, which touches our agriculture the most nearly, as well as the safety and very being of government, but manfully to resist the very first idea, speculative or practical, that it is within the competence of government, taken as government, or even of the rich, as rich, to supply to the poor those necessaries, which it has pleased the Divine Providence for a while to withhold from them. We, the people, ought to be made sensible that it is not in breaking the laws of commerce, which are the laws of Nature, and consequently the laws of God, that we are to place our hope of softening the Divine displeasure to remove any calamity under which we suffer or which hangs over us.

So far as to the principles of general policy.

As to the State of things which is urged as a reason to deviate from them, these are the circumstances of the harvest of 1794 and 1795. With regard to the harvest of 1794, in relation to the noblest grain, wheat, it is allowed to have been somewhat short, but not excessively, and in quality, for the seven-and twenty years during which I have been a farmer, I never remember wheat to have been so good. The world was, however, deceived in its speculations upon it, the farmer as well as the dealer. Accordingly, the price fluctuated beyond anything I can remember, for at one time of the year I sold my wheat at 14l. a load, (I sold off all I had, as I thought this was a reasonable price), when at the end of the season, if I had then any to sell, I might have got thirty guineas for the same sort of grain. I sold all that I had, as I said, at a comparatively low price, because I thought it a good price, compared with what I thought the general produce of the harvest; but when I came to consider what my own total was, I found that the quantity had not answered my expectation. It must be remembered that this year of produce, (the year 1794) short, but excellent, followed a year not extraordinary in production, nor of a superior quality, and left

but little in store. At first, this was not felt, because the harvest came in unusually early, earlier than common by a full month.

The winter, at the end of 1794 and beginning of 1795 was more than usually unfavorable both to corn and grass, owing to the sudden relaxation of very rigorous frosts, followed by rains, which were again rapidly succeeded by frosts of still greater rigour than the first.

Much wheat was utterly destroyed. The clover grass suffered in many places. What I never observed before, the rye grass, or coarse bent, suffered more than the clover. Even the meadow grass in some places was killed to the very roots. In the spring appearances were better than we expected. All the early sown grain recovered itself, and came up with great vigour; but that which was late sown was feeble, and did not promise to resist any blights in the spring, which, however, with all its unpleasant vicissitudes, passed off very well; and nothing looked better than the wheat at the time of blooming; but at that most critical time of all, a cold, dry east wind, attended with very sharp frosts, longer and stronger than I recollect at that time of year, destroyed the flowers, and withered up, in an astonishing manner, the whole side of the ear next to the wind. At that time I brought to town some of the ears, for the purpose of showing to my friends the operation of those unnatural frosts, and according to their extent, I predicted a great scarcity. But such is the pleasure of agreeable prospects, that my opinion was little regarded.

On threshing, I found things as I expected, the ears not filled, some of the capsules quite empty, and several others containing only withered, hungry grain, inferior to the appearance of rye. My best ears and grain were not fine; never had I grain of so low a quality: yet I sold one load for 21l. At the same time, I bought my seed wheat (it was excellent) at 23l. Since then the price has risen, and I have sold about two load of the same sort at 23l. Such was the state of the market when I left home last Monday. Little remains in my barn. I hope some in the rick may be better, since it was earlier sown, as well as I can recollect. Some of my neighbours have better, some quite as bad, or even worse. I suspect it will be found, that, wherever the blighting wind and those frosts at blooming time have prevailed, the produce of the wheat crop will turn out very indifferent. Those parts which have escaped will, I can hardly doubt, have a reasonable produce.

As to the other grains, it is to be observed, as the wheat ripened very late, (on account, I conceive, of the blights) the barley got the start of it and was ripe first. The crop was with me, and wherever my inquiry could reach, excellent; in some places far superior to mine.

The clover, which came up with the barley, was the finest I remember to have seen.

The turnips of this year are generally good.

The clover sown last year where not totally destroyed, gave two good crops, or one crop and a plentiful feed; and, bating the loss of the rye grass, I do not remember a better produce.

The meadow grass yielded but a middling crop, and neither of the sown or natural grass was there in any farmer's possession any remainder from the year worth taking into account. In most places, there was none at all.

Oats with me were not in a quantity more considerable than in commonly good seasons; but I have never known them heavier than they were in other places. The oat was not only a heavy, but an uncommonly abundant crop.

My ground under peas did not exceed an acre or thereabouts, but the crop was great indeed. I believe it is throughout the country exuberant. It is, however, to be remarked, as generally of all the grains, particularly of the peas, that there was not the smallest quantity in reserve.

The demand of the year must depend solely on its own produce; and the price of the spring corn is not to be expected to fall very soon, or at any time very low.

Uxbridge is a great corn market. As I came through that town, I found that at the last market day barley was at forty shillings a quarter. Oats there were literally none; and the inn keeper was obliged to send for them to London. I forgot to ask about peas. Potatoes were 5s. the bushel.

In the debate on this subject in the House, I am told that a leading member of great ability, *little conversant in these matters,* observed, that the general uniform dearness of butcher's meat, butter, and cheese could not be owing to a defective produce of wheat; and on this ground insinuated a suspicion of some unfair practice on the subject, that called for inquiry.

Unquestionably, the mere deficiency of wheat could not cause the dearness of the other articles, which extends not only to the provisions he mentioned, but to every other without exception.

The cause is, indeed, so very plain and obvious that the wonder is the other way. When a properly directed inquiry is made, the gentlemen who are amazed at the price of these commodities will find, that, when hay is at six pound a load, as they must know it is, herbage, and for more than one year, must be scanty; and they will conclude, that, if grass be scarce, beef, veal, mutton, butter, milk, and cheese must be dear.

But to take up the matter somewhat more in detail. If the wheat harvest in 1794, excellent in quality, was defective in quantity, the barley harvest was in quality ordinary enough, and in quantity deficient. This was soon felt in the price of malt.

Another article of produce (beans) was not at all plentiful. The crop of peas was wholly destroyed, so that several farmers pretty early gave up all hopes on that head and cut the green haulm as fodder for the cattle, then perishing for want of food in that dry and burning summer. I myself came off better than most: I had about the fourth of a crop of peas.

It will be recollected, that, in a manner, all the bacon and pork consumed in this country (the far largest consumption of meat out of towns) is, when growing, fed on grass, and on whey or skimmed milk, and when fatting, partly on the latter. This is the case in the dairy countries, all of them great breeders and feeders of swine; but for the much greater part, and in all the corn countries, they are fattened on beans, barley meal, and peas. When the food of the animal is scarce, his flesh must be dear. This, one would suppose, would require no great penetration to discover.

This failure of so very large a supply of flesh in one species naturally throws the whole demand of the consumer on the diminished supply of all kinds of flesh, and, indeed, on all the matters of human sustenance. Nor, in my opinion, are we to expect a greater cheapness in that article for this year, even though corn should grow cheaper, as it is to be hoped it will. The store swine, from the failure of subsistence last year, are now at an extravagant price. Pigs, at our fain, have sold lately for fifty shillings, which two years ago would not have brought more than twenty.

As to sheep, none, I thought, were strangers to the general failure of the article of turnips last year: the early haying been burned, as they came up, by the great drought and heat; the late, and those of the early which had escaped, were destroyed by the chilling frosts of the winter and the wet and severe weather of the spring. In many places, a full fourth of the

sheep or the lambs were lost; what remained of the lambs were poor and ill fed, the ewes haying had no milk. The calves came late, and they were generally articles the want of which was as much to be dreaded as any other. So that article of food, formerly so abundant in the early part of the summer, particularly in London, and which in a great part supplied the place of mutton for near two months, did little less than totally fail.

All the productions of the earth link in with each other. All the sources of plenty, in all and every article, were dried or frozen up. The scarcity was not, as gentlemen seem to suppose, in wheat only.

Another cause, and that not of inconsiderable operation, tended to produce a scarcity in flesh provision. It is one that on many accounts cannot be too much regretted, and the other ask was the sole cause of a scarcity in that article, which arose from the proceedings of men themselves: I mean the stop put to the distillery.

The hogs (and that would be sufficient), which were fed with the waste wash of that produce did not demand the fourth part of the corn used by farmers in fattening them. The spirit was nearly so much clear gain to the nation. It is an odd way of making flesh cheap, to stop or check the distillery.

The distillery in itself produces an immense article of trade almost all over the world, to Africa, to North America, and to various parts of Europe. It is of great use, next to food itself, to our fisheries and to our whole navigation. A great part of the distillery was carried on by damaged corn, unfit for bread, and by barley and malt of the lowest quality. These things could not be more unexceptionably employed. The domestic consumption of spirits produced, without complaints, a very great revenue, applicable, if we pleased, in bounties, to the bringing of corn from other places, far beyond the value of that consumed in making it, or to the encouragement of its increased production at home.

As to what is said, in a physical and moral view, against the home consumption of spirits, experience has long since taught me very little to respect the declamations on that subject. Whether the thunder of the laws or the thunder of eloquence “is hurled on gin,” I am always thunder proof. The alembic, in my mind, has furnished to the world a far greater benefit and blessing than if the opus had been really found by chemistry, and, like Midas, we could turn everything into gold.

Undoubtedly there may be a dangerous abuse in the excess of spirits; and at one time, I am ready to believe, the abuse was great. When spirits are cheap, the business of drunkenness is achieved with little time or labour; but that evil I consider to be wholly done away. Observation for the last forty years, and very particularly for the last thirty, has furnished me with ten instances of drunkenness from other causes for one from this. Ardent spirit is a great medicine, often to remove distempers, much more frequently to prevent them, or to chase them away in their beginnings. It is not nutritive in great degree. But if not food, it greatly alleviates the want of it. It invigorates the stomach for the digestion of poor, meagre diet, not easily alliable to the human constitution. Wine the poor cannot touch. Beer, as applied to many occasions, (as among seamen and fishermen, for instance) will by no means do the business. Let me add, what wits inspired with champagne and claret will tum into ridicule, it is a medicine for the mind. Under the pressure of the cares and sorrows of our mortal condition, men have at all times and in all countries called in some physical aid to their moral consolations: wine, beer, opium, brandy, or tobacco.

I consider, therefore, the stopping of the distillery, economically, financially, commercially, medicinally, and in some degree morally too, as a measure rather well meant than well considered. It is too precious a sacrifice to prejudice.

Gentlemen well know whether there be a scarcity of partridges, and whether that be an effect of hoarding and combination. All the time races of birds live and die as the wild do.

As to the lesser articles, they are like the greater. They have followed the fortune of the season. Why are fowls dear? Was not this the farmer's or jobber's fault? I sold from my yard to a jobber six young and lean fowls for four-and-twenty shillings, fowls for which two years ago the same man would not have given a shilling apiece. He sold them afterwards at Uxbridge, and they were taken to London to receive the last hand.

As to the operation of the war in causing the scarcity of provisions, I understand that Mr. Pitt has given a particular answer to it; but I do not think it worth powder and shot.

I do not wonder the papers are so full of this sort of matter, but I am a little surprised it should be mentioned in Parliament. Like all great state

questions, peace and war may be discussed, and different opinions fairly formed, on political grounds; but on a question of the present price of provisions, when peace with the Regicides is always uppermost, I can only say that great is the love of it.

After all, have we not reason to be thankful to the Giver of all Good? In our history, and when "the labourer of England is said to have been once happy", we find constantly, after certain intervals, a period of real famine, by which a melancholy havoc was made among the human races. The price of provisions fluctuated dreadfully, demonstrating a deficiency very different from the worst failures of the present moment. Never, since I have known England, have I known more than a comparative scarcity. The price of wheat, taking a number of years together, has had no very considerable fluctuation; nor has it risen exceedingly until within these twelve months. Even now, I do not know of one man, woman, or child that has perished from famine: fewer, if any, I believe, than in years of plenty, when such a thing may happen by accident. This is owing to a care and superintendence of the poor, far greater than any I remember.

The consideration of this ought to bind us all, rich and poor together, against those wicked writers of the newspapers who would inflame the poor against their friends, guardians, patrons, and protectors. Not only very few (I have observed that I know of none, though I live in a place as poor as most) have actually died of want, but we have seen no traces of those dreadful exterminating epidemics which, in consequence of scanty and unwholesome food, in former times not unfrequently wasted whole nations. Let us be saved from too much wisdom of our own, and we shall do tolerably well.

It is one of the finest problems in legislation, and what has often engaged my thoughts whilst I followed that profession: what the State ought to take upon itself to direct by the public wisdom, and what it ought to leave, with as little interference as possible, to individual discretion. Nothing, certainly, can be laid down on the subject that will not admit of exceptions, many permanent, some occasional. But the clearest line of distinction which I could draw, whilst I had my chalk to draw any line, was this: that the state ought to confine itself to what regards the state or the creatures of the State: namely, the exterior establishment of its religion; its magistracy; its revenue; its military force by sea and

land; the corporations that owe their existence to its fiat; in a word, to everything that is truly properly public, to the public peace, to the public safety, to the public order, to the public prosperity. In its preventive police it ought to be sparing of its efforts, and to employ means, rather few, infrequent, and strong, than many, and frequent, and, of course, as they multiply their puny political race, and dwindle, small and feeble. Statesmen who know themselves will, with the dignity which belongs to wisdom, proceed only in the superior orbit and be the first movers of their duty, steadily, vigilantly, severely, courageously: whatever remains will, in a manner, provide for itself. But as they descend from the state to a province, from a province to a parish, and from a parish to a private house, they go on accelerated in their fall. They cannot do the lower duty; and in proportion as they try it, they will certainly fail in the higher. They ought to know the different departments of things, what belongs to laws, and what manners alone can regulate. These great politicians may give a leaning, but they cannot give a law.

Our legislature has fallen into this fault, as well as other governments: all have fallen into it more or less. The once mighty state, which was nearest to us locally, nearest to us in every way, and whose ruins threaten to fall upon our heads, is a strong instance of this error. I can never quote France without a foreboding sigh, — ESSETAI HMAP! Scipio said it to his recording Greek friend amidst the dames of the great rival of his country. That state has fallen by the hands of the parricides of their country, called the Revolutionists and Constitutionalists of France: a species of traitors, of whose fury and atrocious wickedness nothing in the annals of the frenzy and depravation of mankind had before furnished an example, and of whom I can never think or speak without a mixed sensation of disgust, of horror, and of detestation, not easy to be expressed. These nefarious monsters destroyed their country for what was good in it: for much good there was in the Constitution of that noble monarchy, which, in all kinds, formed and nourished great men, and great patterns of virtue to the world. But though its enemies were not enemies to its faults, its faults furnished them with means for its destruction. My dear departed friend, whose loss is even greater to the public than to me, had often remarked, that the leading vice of the French monarchy (which he had well studied) was in ill-directed good intention, and a

restless desire of governing too much. The hand of authority was seen in everything and in every place. All, therefore, that happened amiss, in the course even of domestic affairs, was attributed to the government; and as it always happens in this kind of officious universal interference, what began in odious power ended always, I may say without an exception, in contemptible imbecility. For this reason, as far as I can approve of any novelty, I thought well of the provincial administrations. Those, if the superior power had been severe and vigilant and vigorous, might have been of much use politically in removing government from many invidious details. But as everything is good or bad as it is related or combined, government being relaxed above as it was relaxed below, and the brains of the people growing more and more addle with every sort of visionary speculation, the shifting of the scene in the provincial theatres became only preparations for a revolution in the kingdom, and the popular acting there only the rehearsals of the terrible drama of the Republic.

Tyranny and cruelty may make men justly wish the downfall of abused powers, but I believe that no government ever yet perished from any other direct cause than its own weakness. My opinion is against an overdoing of any sort of administration, and more especially against this most momentous of all meddling on the part of authority, the meddling with the subsistence of the people.

Letter to a Noble Lord

On the attacks made upon Mr. Burkę and his pension, in the House of Lords, by The Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale, early in the Present Session of Parliament, 1796

MY LORD, — I could hardly flatter myself with the hope that so very early in the season, I should have to acknowledge obligations to the Duke of Bedford and to the Earl of Lauderdale. These noble persons have lost no time in conferring upon me that sort of honor, which it is alone within their competence, and which it is certainly most congenial to their nature and their manners, to bestow.

To be ill spoken of, in whatever language they speak, by the zealots of the new sect in philosophy and politics, of which these noble persons think so charitably, and of which others think so justly, to me is no matter of uneasiness or surprise. To have incurred the displeasure of the Duke of Orleans or the Duke of Bedford, to fall under the censure of Citizen Brissot or of his friend the Earl of Lauderdale, I ought to consider as proofs, not the least satisfactory, that I have produced some part of the effect I proposed by my endeavors. I have laboured hard to earn what the noble Lords are generous enough to pay. Personal offence I have given them none. The part they take against me is from zeal to the cause. It is well, - it is perfectly well. I have to pay homage to their justice. I have to thank the Bedfords and the Lauderdales for having so faithfully and so fully acquitted towards me whatever arrear of debt was left undischarged by the Priestleys and the Paines.

Some, perhaps, may think them executors in their own wrong: I at least have nothing to complain of. They have gone beyond the demands of justice. They have been (a little, perhaps, beyond their intention) favorable to me. They have been the means of bringing out by their invectives the handsome things, which Lord Grenville has had the goodness and condescension to say in my behalf. Retired as I am from the world, and from all its affairs and all its pleasures, I confess it does kindle in my nearly extinguished feelings a very vivid satisfaction to be so attacked and so commended. It is soothing to my wounded mind to be commended by an able, vigorous, and well-informed statesman, and at the very moment when he stands forth, with a manliness and resolution worthy of himself and of his cause, for the preservation of the person and government of our sovereign, and therein for the security of the laws, the liberties, the morals, and the lives of his people. To be in any fair way connected with such things is indeed a distinction. No philosophy can

make me above it: no melancholy can depress me so low as to make me wholly insensible to such an honor.

Why will they not let me remain in obscurity and inaction? Are they apprehensive, that, if an atom of me remains, the sect has something to fear? Must I be annihilated, lest, like old John Zisca's, my skin might be made into a drum, to animate Europe to eternal battle against a tyranny that threatens to overwhelm all Europe and all human race?

My Lord, it is a subject of awful meditation. Before this of France, the annals of all time have not furnished an instance of a *complete* revolution. That revolution seems to have extended even to the constitution of the mind of man. It has this of wonderment in it, that it resembles what Lord Verulam says of the operations of Nature: it was perfect, not only in its elements and principles, but in all its members and its organs, from the very beginning. The moral scheme of France furnishes the only pattern ever known, which they who admire will instantly resemble. It is, indeed, an inexhaustible repertory of one kind of examples. In my wretched condition, though hardly to be classed with the living, I am not safe from them. They have tigers to fall upon animated strength; they have hyenas to prey upon carcasses. The national menagerie is collected by the first physiologists of the time; and it is defective in no description of savage nature. They pursue even such as me into the obscurest retreats and haul them before their revolutionary tribunals. Neither sex, nor age, nor the sanctuary of the tomb, is sacred to them. They have so determined a hatred to all privileged orders, that they deny even to the departed the sad immunities of the grave. They are not wholly without an object. Their turpitude purveys to their malice; and they unplumb the dead for bullets to assassinate the living. If all revolutionists were not proof against all caution, I should recommend it to their consideration, that no persons were ever known in history, either sacred or profane, to vex the sepulchre, and by their sorceries to call up the prophetic dead, with any other event than the prediction of their own disastrous fate. – "Leave me, oh, leave me to repose!"

In one thing I can excuse the Duke of Bedford for his attack upon me and my mortuary pension: he cannot readily comprehend the transaction he condemns. What I have obtained was the fruit of no bargain, the production of no intrigue, the result of no compromise, the

effect of no solicitation. The first suggestion of it never came from me, mediately or immediately, to his Majesty or any of his ministers. It was long known that the instant my engagements would permit it, and before the heaviest of all calamities had forever condemned me to obscurity and sorrow, I had resolved on a total retreat. I had executed that design. I was entirely out of the way of serving or of hurting any statesman or any party when the ministers so generously and so nobly carried into effect the spontaneous bounty of the crown. Both descriptions have acted as became them. When I could no longer serve them, the ministers have considered my situation. When I could no longer hurt them, the revolutionists have trampled on my infirmity. My gratitude, I trust, is equal to the manner in which the benefit was conferred. It came to me, indeed, at a time of life, and in a state of mind and body, in which no circumstance of fortune could afford me any real pleasure. But this was no fault in the royal donor, or in his ministers, who were pleased, in acknowledging the merits of an invalid servant of the public, to assuage the sorrows of a desolate old man.

It would ill become me to boast of anything. It would as ill become me, thus called upon, to depreciate the value of a long life spent with unexampled toil in the service of my country. Since the total body of my services, on account of the industry, which was shown in them, and the fairness of my intentions, have obtained the acceptance of my sovereign, it would be absurd of me to range myself on the side of the Duke of Bedford and the Corresponding Society, or, as far as in me lies, to permit a dispute on the rate at which the authority appointed by *our* Constitution to estimate such things, has been pleased to set them.

Loose libels ought to be passed by in silence and contempt. By me they have been so always. I knew, that, as long as I remained in public, I should live down the calumnies of malice and the judgments of ignorance. If I happened to be now and then in the wrong, (as who is not?) like all other men, I must bear the consequence of my faults and my mistakes. The libels of the present day are just of the same stuff as the libels of the past. But they derive an importance from the rank of the persons they come from, and the gravity of the place where they were uttered. In some way or other I ought to take some notice of them. To assert myself thus traduced is not vanity or arrogance. It is a demand of

justice; it is a demonstration of gratitude. If I am unworthy, the ministers are worse than prodigal. On that hypothesis, I perfectly agree with the Duke of Bedford.

For whatever I have been (I am now no more), I put myself on my country. I ought to be allowed a reasonable freedom because I stand upon my deliverance; and no culprit ought to plead in irons. Even in the utmost latitude of defensive liberty, I wish to preserve all possible decorum. Whatever it may be in the eyes of these noble persons themselves, to me their situation calls for the most profound respect. If I should happen to trespass a little, which I trust I shall not, let it always be supposed that a confusion of characters may produce mistakes, that, in the masquerades of the grand carnival of our age, whimsical adventures happen, odd things are said and passed off. If I should fail a single point in the high respect I owe to those illustrious persons, I cannot be supposed to mean the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale of the House of Peers, but the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale of Palace Yard and the Dukes and Earls of Brentford. There they are on the pavement; there they seem to come nearer to my humble level, and, virtually at least, to have waived their high privilege.

Making this protestation, I refuse all revolutionary tribunals, where men have been put to death for no other reason than that they had obtained favors from the crown. I claim, not the letter, but the spirit of the old English law, that is, to be tried by my peers. I decline his Grace's jurisdiction as a judge. I challenge the Duke of Bedford as a juror to pass upon the value of my services. Whatever his natural parts may be, I cannot recognize in his few and idle years the competence to judge of my long and laborious life. If I can help it, he shall not be on the inquest of my *quantum meruit*. Poor rich man! He can hardly know anything of public industry in its exertions or can estimate its compensations when its work is done. I have no doubt of his Grace's readiness in all the calculations of vulgar arithmetic; but I shrewdly suspect that he is little studied in the theory of moral proportions and has never learned the rule of three in the arithmetic of policy and state.

His Grace thinks I have obtained too much. I answer that my exertions, whatever they have been, were such as no hopes of pecuniary reward could possibly excite; and no pecuniary compensation can possibly reward them. Between money and such services, if done by abler men than I am, there is no common principle, of comparison: they are quantities incommensurable. Money is made for the comfort and convenience of animal life. It cannot be a reward for what mere animal life must, indeed, sustain, but never can inspire. With submission to his Grace, I have not had more than sufficient. As to any noble use, I trust I know how to employ as well as he a much greater fortune than he possesses. In a more confined application, I certainly stand in need of every kind of relief and easement much more than he does. When I say I have not received more than I deserve, is this the language I hold to Majesty? No! Far, very far from it! Before that presence I claim no merit at all. Everything towards me is favor and bounty. One style to a gracious benefactor; another to a proud and insulting foe.

His Grace is pleased to aggravate my guilt by charging my acceptance of his Majesty's grant as a departure from my ideas and the spirit of my conduct with regard to economy. If it be, my ideas of economy were false and ill-founded. But they are the Duke of Bedford's ideas of economy I have contradicted, and not my own. If he means to allude to certain bills brought in by me on a message from the throne in 1782, I tell him that there is nothing in my conduct that can contradict either the letter or the spirit of those acts. Does he mean the Pay-Office Act? I take it for granted he does not. The act to which he alludes is, I suppose, the Establishment Act. I greatly doubt whether his Grace has ever read the one or the other. The first of these systems cost me, with every assistance, which my then situation gave me, pains incredible. I found an opinion common through all the offices, and general in the public at large, that it would prove impossible to reform and methodize the office of paymaster-general. I undertook it, however; and I succeeded in my undertaking. Whether the military service, or whether the general economy of our finances have profited by that act, I leave to those who are acquainted with the army and with the treasury to judge.

An opinion full as general prevailed also, at the same time, that nothing could be done for the regulation of the civil list establishment. The very attempt to introduce method into it, and any limitations to its services, was held absurd. I had not seen the man who so much as suggested one economical principle or an economical expedient upon

that subject. Nothing but coarse amputation or coarser taxation were then talked of, both of them without design, combination, or the least shadow of principle. Blind and headlong zeal or factious fury were the whole contribution brought by the most noisy, on that occasion, towards the satisfaction of the public or the relief of the crown.

Let me tell my youthful censor, that the necessities of that time required something very different from what others then suggested or what his Grace now conceives. Let me inform him, that it was one of the most critical periods in our annals.

Astronomers have supposed, that, if a certain comet, whose path intersected the ecliptic, had met the earth in some (I forget what) sign, it would have whirled us along with it, in its eccentric course, into God knows what regions of heat and cold. Had the portentous comet of the Rights of Man, (which "from its horrid hair shakes pestilence and war," and "with fear of change perplexes monarchs"), had that comet crossed upon us in that internal state of England, nothing human could have prevented our being irresistibly hurried out of the highway of heaven into all the vices, crimes, horrors, and miseries of the French Revolution.

Happily, France was not then Jacobinized. Her hostility was at a good distance. We had a limb cut off, but we preserved the body: we lost our colonies, but we kept our Constitution. There was, indeed, much intestine heat; there was a dreadful fermentation. Wild and savage insurrection quit the woods and prowled about our streets in the name of Reform. Such was the distemper of the public mind, that there was no madman, in his maddest ideas and maddest projects, who might not count upon numbers to support his principles and execute his designs.

Many of the changes, by a great misnomer called Parliamentary Reforms, went, not in the intention of all the professors and supporters of them, undoubtedly, but went in their certain, and, in my opinion, not very remote effect, home to the utter destruction of the Constitution of this kingdom. Had they taken place, not France, but England would have had the honor of leading up the death-dance of democratic revolution. Other projects, exactly coincident in time with those, struck at the very existence of the kingdom under any Constitution. There are those who remember the blind fury of some and the lamentable helplessness of others; here, a torpid confusion, from a panic fear of the danger, there,

the same inaction, from a stupid insensibility to it; here, well-wishers to the mischief, there, indifferent onlookers. At the same time, a sort of National Convention, dubious in its nature and perilous in its example, nosed Parliament in the very seat of its authority, sat with a sort of superintendence over it, and little less than dictated to it, not only laws, but the very form and essence of legislature itself. In Ireland, things ran in a still more eccentric course. Government was unnerved, confounded, and in a manner suspended. Its equipoise was totally gone. I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of Lord North. He was a man of admirable parts, of general knowledge, of a versatile understanding fitted for every sort of business, of infinite wit and pleasantry, of a delightful temper, and with a mind most perfectly disinterested. But it would be only to degrade myself by a weak adulation, and not to honor the memory of a great man, to deny that he wanted something of the vigilance and spirit of command that the time required. Indeed, a darkness next to the fog of this awful day lowered over the whole region. For a little time, the helm appeared abandoned.

> Ipse diem noctemque negat discernere coelo,
> Nec meminisse viae media Palinurus in unda.

At that time, I was connected with men of high place in the community. They loved liberty as much as the Duke of Bedford; and they understood it at least as well. Perhaps their politics, as usual, took a tincture from their character, and they cultivated what they loved. The liberty they pursued was a liberty inseparable from order, from virtue, from morals, and from religion, and was neither hypocritically nor fanatically followed. They did not wish that liberty, in itself one of the first of blessings, should in its perversion become the greatest curse, which could fall upon mankind. To preserve the Constitution entire, and practically equal to all the great ends of its formation, not in one single part, but in all its parts, was to them the first object. Popularity and power, they regarded alike. These were with them only different means of obtaining that object, and had no preference over each other in their minds, but as one or the other might afford a surer or a less certain prospect of arriving at that end. It is some consolation to me, in the cheerless gloom, which darkens the evening

of my life, that with them I commenced my political career, and never for a moment, in reality nor in appearance, for any length of time, was separated from their good wishes and good opinion.

By what accident it matters not, nor upon what desert, but just then, and in the midst of that hunt of obloquy, which ever has pursued me with a full cry through life, I had obtained a very considerable degree of public confidence. I know well enough how equivocal a test this kind of popular opinion forms of the merit that obtained it. I am no stranger to the insecurity of its tenure. I do not boast of it. It is mentioned to show, not how highly I prize the thing, but my right to value the use I made of it. I endeavored to turn that short-lived advantage to myself into a permanent benefit to my country. Far am I from detracting from the merit of some gentlemen, out of office or in it, on that occasion. No! It is not my way to refuse a full and heaped measure of justice to the aids that I receive. I have through life been willing to give everything to others, and to reserve nothing for myself, but the inward conscience that I had omitted no pains to discover, to animate, to discipline, to direct the abilities of the country for its service, and to place them in the best light to improve their age, or to adorn it. This conscience I have. I have never suppressed any man, never checked him for a moment in his course, by any jealousy, or by any policy. I was always ready, to the height of my means, (and they were always infinitely below my desires,) to forward those abilities, which overpowered my own. He is an ill-furnished undertaker who has no machinery but his own hands to work with. Poor in my own faculties, I ever thought myself rich in theirs. In that period of difficulty and danger, more especially, I consulted and sincerely cooperated with men of all parties who seemed disposed to the same ends, or to any main part of them. Nothing to prevent disorder was omitted: when it appeared, nothing to subdue it was left uncounselled nor unexecuted, as far as I could prevail. At the time I speak of, and having a momentary lead, so aided and so encouraged, and as a feeble instrument in a mighty hand – I do not say I saved my country; I am sure I did my country important service. There were few, indeed, that did not at that time acknowledge it, and that time was thirteen-years ago. It was but one voice, that no man in the kingdom better deserved an honorable provision should be made for him.

So much, for my general conduct through the whole of the portentous crisis from 1780 to 1782, and the general sense then entertained of that conduct by my country. But my character as a reformer, in the particular instances, which the Duke of Bedford refers to, is so connected in principle with my opinions on the hideous changes, which have since barbarized France, and, spreading thence, threaten the political and moral order of the whole world, that it seems to demand something of a more detailed discussion.

My economic reforms were not, as his Grace may think the suppression of a paltry pension or employment, more or less. Economy in my plans was, as it ought to be, secondary, subordinate, instrumental. I acted on state principles. I found a great distemper in the commonwealth, and according to the nature of the evil and of the object I treated it. The malady was deep; it was complicated, in the causes and in the symptoms. Throughout it was full of contra-indicants. On one hand, government, daily growing more invidious from an apparent increase of the means of strength, was everyday growing more contemptible by real weakness. Nor was this dissolution confined to government commonly so called. It extended to Parliament, which was losing not a little in its dignity and estimation by an opinion of its not acting on worthy motives. On the other hand, the desires of the people (partly natural and partly infused into them by art) appeared in so wild and inconsiderate a manner with regard to the economic object, (for I set aside for a moment the dreadful tampering with the body of the Constitution itself), that, if their petitions had literally been complied with, the state would have been convulsed, and a gate would have been opened through which all property might be sacked and ravaged. Nothing could have saved the public from the mischiefs of the false reform but its absurdity, which would soon have brought itself, and with it all real reform, into discredit. This would have left a rankling wound in the hearts of the people, who would know they had failed in the accomplishment of their wishes, but who, like the rest of mankind in all ages, would impute the blame to anything rather than to their own proceedings. But there were then persons in the world who nourished complaint, and would have been thoroughly disappointed, if the people were ever satisfied. I was not of that humour. I wished that they should be satisfied. It was my aim to give to the people the substance

of what I knew they desired, and what I thought was right, whether they desired it or not, before it had been modified for them into senseless petitions. I knew that there is a manifest, marked distinction, which ill men with ill designs, or weak men incapable of any design, will constantly be confounding, that is, a marked distinction between change and reformation. The former alters the substance of the objects themselves and gets rid of all their essential good as well as of all the accidental evil annexed to them. Change is novelty; and whether it is to operate any one of the effects of reformation at all, or whether it may not contradict the very principle upon which reformation is desired, cannot be certainly known beforehand. Reform is not a change in the substance or in the primary modification of the object, but a direct application of a remedy to the grievance complained of. So far as that is removed, all is sure. It stops there; and if it fails, the substance which underwent the operation, at the very worst, is but where it was.

All this, in effect, I think, but am not sure, I have said elsewhere. It cannot at this time be too often repeated, line upon line, precept upon precept, until it comes into the currency of a proverb, *To innovate is not to reform*. The French revolutionists complained of everything; they refused to reform anything; and they left nothing, no, nothing at all, unchanged. The consequences are before us, not in remote history, not in future prognostication: they are about us; they are upon us. They shake the public security; they menace private enjoyment. They dwarf the growth of the young; they break the quiet of the old. If we travel, they stop our way. They infest us in town; they pursue us to the country. Our business is interrupted, our repose is troubled, our pleasures are saddened, our very studies are poisoned and perverted, and knowledge is rendered worse than ignorance, by the enormous evils of this dreadful innovation. The Revolution harpies of France, sprung from Night and Hell, or from that chaotic Anarchy which generates equivocally "all monstrous, all prodigious things," cuckoo-like, adulterously lay their eggs, and brood over, and hatch them in the nest of every neighbouring state. These obscene harpies, who deck themselves in I know not what divine attributes, but who in reality are foul and ravenous birds of prey, (both mothers and daughters,) flutter over our heads, and souse down upon our tables, and leave nothing unrent, unrifled, unravaged, or unpolluted with the slime of their filthy offal.(1)

If his Grace can contemplate the result of this complete innovation, or, as some friends of his will call it, reform, in the whole body of its solidity and compound mass, at which, as Hamlet says, the face of heaven glows with horror and indignation, and which, in truth, makes every reflecting mind and every feeling heart perfectly thought-sick, without a thorough abhorrence of everything they say and everything they do, I am amazed at the morbid strength or the natural infirmity of his mind.

It was, then, not my love, but my hatred to innovation, that produced my plan of reform. Without troubling myself with the exactness of the logical diagram, I considered them as things substantially opposite. It was to prevent that evil, that I proposed the measures, which his Grace is pleased, and I am not sorry he is pleased, to recall to my recollection. I had (what I hope that noble Duke will remember in all his operations) a state to preserve, as well as a state to reform. I had a people to gratify, but not to inflame or to mislead. I do not claim half the credit for what I did as for what I prevented from being done. In that situation of the public mind, I did not undertake, as was then proposed, to newly model the House of Commons or the House of Lords, or *Proluvies, uncaeque manus, et pallida semper ora fame.*

Here the poet breaks the line, because he (and that he is Virgil) had not verse or language to describe that monster even as he had conceived her. Had he lived to our time, he would have been more over-powered with the reality than he was with the imagination. Virgil only knew the horror of the times before him. Had he lived to see the revolutionists and constitutionalists of France, he would have had more horrid and disgusting failures of his harpies to describe, and more frequent failures in the attempt to describe them.

To change the authority under which any officer of the crown acted, who was suffered at all to exist. Crown, lords, commons, judicial system, system of administration, existed as they had existed before, and in the mode and manner in which they had always existed. My measures were, what I then truly stated them to the House to be, in their intent, healing

(1) Tristius haud illis monstrum, nec saevior ulla Pestis et ira Deum Stygiis sese extulit undis. Virginei volucrum vultus, foedissima ventria.

and mediatorial. A complaint was made of too much influence in the House of Commons: I reduced it in both Houses; and I gave my reasons, article by article, for every reduction, and showed why I thought it safe for the service of the state. I heaved the lead every inch of way I made. A disposition to expense was complained of: to that I opposed, not mere retrenchment, but a system of economy, which would make a random expense, without plan or foresight, in future, not easily practicable. I proceeded upon principles of research to put me in possession of my matter, on principles of method to regulate it, and on principles in the human mind and in civil affairs to secure and perpetuate the operation. I conceived nothing arbitrarily, nor proposed anything to be done by the will and pleasure of others or my own, but by reason, and by reason only. I have ever abhorred, since the first dawn of my understanding to this its obscure twilight, all the operations of opinion, fancy, inclination, and will, in the affairs of government, where only a sovereign reason, paramount to all forms of legislation and administration, should dictate. Government is made for the very purpose of opposing that reason to will and to caprice, in the reformers or in the reformed, in the governors or in the governed, in kings, in senates, or in people.

On a careful review, therefore, and analysis of all the component parts of the civil list, and on weighing them against each other, in order to make as much as possible all of them a subject of estimate, (the foundation and cornerstone of all regular, provident economy,) it appeared to me evident that this was impracticable, whilst that part called the pension list was totally discretionary in its amount. For this reason, and for this only, I proposed to reduce it, both in its gross quantity and in its larger individual proportions, to a certainty; lest, if it were left without a *general* limit, it might eat up the civil list service, if suffered to be granted in portions too great for the fund, it might defeat its own end, and, by unlimited allowances to some, it might disable the crown in means of providing for others. The pension list was to be kept as a sacred fund; but it could not be kept as a constant, open fund, sufficient for growing demands, if some demands would wholly devour it. The tenor of the act will show that it regarded the civil list *only*, the reduction of which to some sort of estimate was my great object.

No other of the crown funds did I meddle with because they had not the same relations. This of the four-and-a-half per cents does his Grace imagine had escaped me, or had escaped all the men of business who acted with me in those regulations? I knew that such a fund existed, and that pensions had been always granted on it before his Grace was born. This fund was full in my eye. It was full in the eyes of those who worked with me. It was left on principle. On principle I did what was then done; and on principle what was left undone was omitted. I did not dare to rob the nation of all funds to reward merit. If I pressed this point too close, I acted contrary to the avowed principles on which I went. Gentlemen are very fond of quoting me; but if anyone thinks it worth his while to know the rules that guided me in my plan of reform, he will read my printed speech on that subject, at least what is contained from page 230 to page 241 in the second volume of the collection[(2)], which a friend has given himself the trouble to make of my publications. Be this as it may, these two bills (though achieved with the greatest labour, and management of every sort, both within and without the House) were only a part, and but a small part, of a very large system, comprehending all the objects I stated in opening my proposition, and, indeed, many more, which I just hinted at in my speech to the electors of Bristol, when I was put out of that representation. All these, in some state or other of forwardness, I have long had by me.

But do I justify his Majesty's grace on these grounds? I think them the least of my services. The time gave them an occasional value. What I have done in the way of political economy was far from confined to this body of measures. I did not come into Parliament to con my lesson. I had earned my pension before I set my foot in St. Stephen's Chapel. I was prepared and disciplined to this political warfare. The first session I sat in Parliament, I found it necessary to analyse the whole commercial, financial, constitutional, and foreign interests of Great Britain and its empire. A great deal was then done; and more, far more, would have been done, if more had been permitted by events. Then, in the vigour of my manhood, my constitution sunk under my labour. Had I then died,

(2) London, J. Dodsley, 1792, 3 vols. 4to. – Vol. II. pp. 324-336, in the present edition.

(and I seemed to myself very near death,) I had then earned for those who belonged to me more than the Duke of Bedford's ideas of service are of power to estimate. But, in truth, these services I am called to account for are not those on which I value myself the most. If I were to call for a reward, (which I have never done,) it should be for those in which for fourteen years without intermission I showed the most industry and had the least success: I mean in the affairs of India. They are those on which I value myself the most: most for the importance, most for the labour, most for the judgment, most for constancy and perseverance in the pursuit. Others may value them most for the *intention*. In that, surely, they are not mistaken.

Does his Grace think that they who advised the crown to make my retreat easy considered me only as an economist? That, well understood, however, is a good deal. If I had not deemed it of some value, I should not have made political economy an object of my humble studies from my very early youth to near the end of my service in Parliament, even before (at least to any knowledge of mine) it had employed the thoughts of speculative men in other parts of Europe. At that time, it was still in its infancy in England, where, in the last century, it had its origin. Great and learned men thought my studies were not wholly thrown away and deigned to communicate with me now and then on some particulars of their immortal works. Something of these studies may appear incidentally in some of the earliest things I published. The House has been witness to their effect, and has profited of them, more or less, for above eight-and-twenty years.

To their estimate, I leave the matter. I was not, like his Grace of Bedford, swaddled and rocked and dandled into a legislator: "*Nitor in advergum*" is the motto for a man like me. I possessed not one of the qualities nor cultivated one of the arts that recommend men to the favor and protection of the great. I was not made for a minion or a tool. As little did I follow the trade of winning the hearts by imposing on the understandings of the people. At every step of my progress in life, (for in every step was I traversed and opposed), and at every turnpike I met, I was obliged to show my passport, and again and again to prove my sole title to the honor of being useful to my country, by a proof that I was not wholly unacquainted with its laws and the whole system of its interests

both abroad and at home. Otherwise, no rank, no toleration even, for me. I had no arts but manly arts. On them I have stood, and, please God, in spite of the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale, to the last gasp will I stand.

Had his Grace condescended to inquire concerning the person whom he has not thought it below him to reproach, he might have found, that, in the whole course of my life, I have never, on any pretence of economy, or on any other pretence, so much as in a single instance, stood between any man and his reward of service or his encouragement in useful talent and pursuit, from the highest of those services and pursuits to the lowest. On the contrary, I have on a hundred occasions exerted myself with singular zeal to forward every man's even tolerable pretensions. I have more than once had good-natured reprehensions from my friends for carrying the matter to something bordering on abuse. This line of conduct, whatever its merits might be, was partly owing to natural disposition, but I think full as much to reason and principle. I looked on the consideration of public service or public ornament to be real and very just; and I ever held a scanty and penurious justice to partake of the nature of a wrong. I held it to be, in its consequences, the worst economy in the world. In saving money, I soon can count up all the good I do; but when by a cold penury I blast the abilities of a nation, and stunt the growth of its active energies, the ill I may do is beyond all calculation. Whether it be too much or too little, whatever I have done has been general and systematic. I have never entered into those trifling vexations and oppressive details that have been falsely and most ridiculously laid to my charge.

Did I blame the pensions given to Mr. Barr and Mr. Dunning between the proposition and execution of my plan? No! Surely, no! Those pensions were within my principles. I assert it, those gentlemen deserved their pensions, their titles, all they had; and if more they had, I should have been but pleased the more. They were men of talents; they were men of service. I put the profession of the law out of the question in one of them. It is a service that rewards itself. But their *public service*, though from their abilities unquestionably of more value than mine, in its quantity and in its duration was not to be mentioned with it. But I never could drive a hard bargain in my life, concerning any matter whatever; and least of all do I know how to haggle and huckster with merit. Pension for

myself I obtained none; nor did I solicit any. Yet I was loaded with hatred for everything that was withheld, and with obloquy for everything that was given. I was, thus, left to support the grants of a name ever dear to me and ever venerable to the world in favor of those who were no friends of mine or of his, against the rude attacks of those who were at that time friends to the grantees and their own zealous partisans. I have never heard the Earl of Lauderdale complain of these pensions. He finds nothing wrong till he comes to me. This is impartiality, in the true, modern, revolutionary style.

Whatever I did at that time, so far as it regarded order and economy, is stable and eternal, as all principles must be. A particular order of things may be altered: order itself cannot lose its value. As to other particulars, they are variable by time and by circumstances. Laws of regulation are not fundamental laws. The public exigencies are the masters of all such laws. They rule the laws and are not to be ruled by them. They who exercise the legislative power at the time must judge.

It may be new to his Grace, but I beg leave to tell him that mere parsimony is not economy. It is separable in theory from it; and in fact, it may or it may not be a part of economy, according to circumstances. Expense, and great expense, may be an essential part in true economy. If parsimony were to be considered as one of the kinds of that virtue, there is, however, another and a higher economy. Economy is a distributive virtue, and consists, not in saving, but in selection. Parsimony requires no providence, no sagacity, no powers of combination, no comparison, no judgment. Mere instinct, and that not an instinct of the noblest kind, may produce this false economy in perfection. The other economy has larger views. It demands a discriminating judgment, and a firm, sagacious mind. It shuts one door to impudent importunity, only to open another, and wider, to unpresuming merit. If none but meritorious service or real talent were to be rewarded, this nation has not wanted, and this nation will not want, the means of rewarding all the service it ever will receive and encouraging all the merit it ever will produce. No State, since the foundation of society, has been impoverished by that species of profusion. Had the economy of selection and proportion been at all times observed, we should not now have had an overgrown Duke of Bedford, to oppress the industry of humble men, and to limit, by the

standard of his own conceptions, the justice, the bounty, or, if he pleases, the charity of the crown.

His Grace may think as meanly as he will of my deserts in the far greater part of my conduct in life. It is free for him to do so. There will always be some difference of opinion in the value of political services. But there is one merit of mine which he, of all men living, ought to be the last to call in question. I have supported with very great zeal, and I am told with some degree of success, those opinions, or, if his Grace likes another expression better, those old prejudices, which buoy up the ponderous mass of his nobility, wealth, and titles. I have omitted no exertion to prevent him and them from sinking to that level to which the meretricious French faction his Grace at least coquets with omit no exertion to reduce both. I have done all I could to discountenance their inquiries into the fortunes of those who hold large portions of wealth without any apparent merit of their own. I have strained every nerve to keep the Duke of Bedford in that situation, which alone makes him my superior. Your Lordship has been a witness of the use he makes of that pre-eminence.

But be it that this is virtue; be it that there is virtue in this well-selected rigor: yet all virtues are not equally becoming to all men and at all times. There are crimes, undoubtedly there are crimes, which in all seasons of our existence ought to put a generous antipathy in action, crimes that provoke an indignant justice, and call forth a warm and animated pursuit. But all things that concern what I may call the preventive police of morality, all things merely rigid, harsh, and censorial, the antiquated moralists at whose feet I was brought up would not have thought these the fittest matter to form the favorite virtues of young men of rank. What might have been well enough and have been received with a veneration mixed with awe and terror, from an old, severe, crabbed Cato, would have wanted something of propriety in the young Scipios, the ornament of the Roman nobility, in the flower of their life. But the times, the morals, the masters, the scholars, have all undergone a thorough revolution. It is a vile, illiberal school, this new French academy of the *sans-culottes*. There is nothing in it that is fit for a gentleman to learn.

Whatever its vogue may be, I still flatter myself that the parents of the growing generation will be satisfied with what is to be taught to their children in Westminster, in Eton, or in Winchester; I still indulge the hope

that no *grown* gentleman or nobleman of our time will think of finishing at Mr. Thelwall's lecture whatever may have been left incomplete at the old universities of his country. I would give to Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt for a motto what was said of a Roman censor or praetor (or what was he?) who in virtue of a *Senatusconsultum* shut up certain academies, "*Cludere ludum impudentiae jussit*". Every honest father of a family in the kingdom will rejoice at the breaking-up for the holidays and will pray that there may be a very long vacation, in all such schools.

The awful state of the time, and not myself, or my own justification, is my true object in what I now write, or in what I shall ever write or say. It little signifies to the world what becomes of such things as me, or even as the Duke of Bedford. What I say about either of us is nothing more than a vehicle, as you, my Lord, will easily perceive, to convey my sentiments on matters far more worthy of your attention. It is when I stick to my apparent first subject that I ought to apologize, not when I depart from it. I therefore must beg your Lordship's pardon for again resuming it after this very short digression, assuring you that I shall never altogether lose sight of such matter as persons abler than I am may turn to some profit.

The Duke of Bedford conceives that he is obliged to call the attention of the House of Peers to his Majesty's grant to me, which he considers as excessive and out of all bounds.

I know not how it has happened, but it really seems, that, whilst his Grace was meditating his well-considered censure upon me, he fell into a sort of sleep. Homer nods, and the Duke of Bedford may dream; and as dreams (even his golden dreams) are apt to be ill-pieced and incongruously put together, his Grace preserved his idea of reproach to me, but took the subject-matter from the crown grants *to his own family*. This is "the stuff of which his dreams are made". In that way of putting things together his Grace is perfectly in the right. The grants to the House of Russell were so enormous as not only to outrage economy, but even to stagger credibility. The Duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk; he plays and frolics in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst "he lies floating many a rood," he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin, and covers me all over with

the spray, everything of him and about him is from the throne. Is it for *him* to question the dispensation of the royal favor?

I really am at a loss to draw any sort of parallel between the public merits of his Grace, by which he justifies the grants he holds, and these services of mine, on the favorable construction of which I have obtained what his Grace so much disapproves. In private life, I have not at all the honor of acquaintance with the noble Duke; but I ought to presume, and it costs me nothing to do so, that he abundantly deserves the esteem and love of all who live with him. But as to public service, why, truly, it would not be more ridiculous for me to compare myself, in rank, in fortune, in splendid descent, in youth, strength, or figure, with the Duke of Bedford, than to make a parallel between his services and my attempts to be useful to my country. It would not be gross adulation, but uncivil irony, to say that he has any public merit of his own to keep alive the idea of the services by which his vast landed pensions were obtained. My merits, whatever they are, are original and personal: his are derivative. It is his ancestor, the original pensioner, that has laid up this inexhaustible fund of merit, which makes his Grace so very delicate and exceptious about the merit of all other grantees of the crown. Had he permitted me to remain in quiet, I should have said, "It is his estate: that's enough. It is his by law: what have I to do with it or its history? " He would naturally have said, on his side, "It is this man's fortune. He is as good now as my ancestor was two hundred and fifty years ago. I am a young man with very old pensions; he is an old man with very young pensions: that's all."

Why will his Grace, by attacking me, force me reluctantly to compare my little merit with that which obtained from the crown those prodigies of profuse donation by which he tramples on the mediocrity of humble and laborious individuals? I would willingly leave him to the Herald's College, which the philosophy of the *sans-culottes* (prouder by far than all the Garters, and Norroys, and Clarencieux, and Rouge-Dragons that ever pranced in a procession of what his friends call aristocrats and despots) will abolish with contumely and scorn. These historians, recorders, and blazoners of virtues and arms differ wholly from that other description of historians who never assign any act of politicians to a good motive. These gentle historians, on the contrary, dip their pens in nothing but the milk of human kindness. They seek no further for merit

than the preamble of a patent or the inscription on a tomb. With them every man created a peer is first a ready-made hero. They judge of every man's capacity for office by the offices he has filled and the more offices, the more ability. Every general officer with them is a Marlborough, every statesman a Burleigh, every judge a Murray or a Yorke. They who, alive, were laughed at or pitied by all their acquaintances make as good a figure as the best of them in the pages of Guillim, Edmondson, and Collins.

To these recorders, so full of good nature to the great and prosperous, I would willingly leave the first Baron Russell and Earl of Bedford, and the merits of his grants. But the aulnager, the weigher, the meter of grants will not suffer us to acquiesce in the judgment of the prince reigning at the time when they were made. They are never good to those who earn them. Well, then, since the new grantees have war made on them by the old, and that the word of the sovereign is not to be taken, let us turn our eyes to history, in which great men have always a pleasure in contemplating the heroic origin of their house.

The first peer of the name, the first purchaser of the grants, was a Mr. Russell, a person of an ancient gentleman's family, raised by being a minion of Henry the Eighth. As there generally is some resemblance of character to create these relations, the favorite was in all likelihood much such another as his master. The first of those immoderate grants was not taken from the ancient demesne of the crown, but from the recent confiscation of the ancient nobility of the land. The lion, having sucked the blood of his prey, threw the offal carcass to the jackal in waiting. Having tasted once the food of confiscation, the favorites became fierce and ravenous. This worthy favorite's first grant was from the lay nobility. The second, infinitely improving on the enormity of the first, was from the plunder of the Church. In truth, his Grace is somewhat excusable for his dislike to a grant like mine, not only in its quantity, but in its kind, so different from his own.

Mine was from a mild and benevolent sovereign: his from Henry the Eighth.

Mine had not its fund in the murder of any innocent person of illustrious rank[3], or in the pillage of any body of unoffending men. His

(3) See the history of the melancholy catastrophe of the Duke of Buckingham. Temp. Hen. VIII.

grants were from the aggregate and consolidated funds of judgments iniquitously legal, and from possessions voluntarily surrendered by the lawful proprietors with the gibbet at their door.

The merit of the grantee whom he derives from was that of being a prompt and greedy instrument of a *levelling* tyrant, who oppressed all descriptions of his people, but who fell with particular fury on everything that was *great and noble*. Mine has been in endeavoring to screen every man, in every class, from oppression, and particularly in defending the high and eminent, who, in the bad times of confiscating princes, confiscating chief governors, or confiscating demagogues, are the most exposed to jealousy, avarice, and envy.

The merit of the original grantee of his Grace's pensions was in giving his hand to the work, and partaking the spoil, with a prince who plundered a part of the national Church of his time and country. Mine was in defending the whole of the national Church of my own time and my own country and the whole of the national Churches of all countries, from the principles and the examples, which lead to ecclesiastical pillage, thence to a contempt of all prescriptive titles, thence to the pillage of all property, and thence to universal desolation.

The merit of the origin of his Grace's fortune was in being a favorite and chief adviser to a prince who left no liberty to their native country. My endeavor was to obtain liberty for the municipal country in which I was born, and for all descriptions and denominations in it. Mine was to support with unrelaxing vigilance every right, every privilege, every franchise, in this my adopted, my dearer, and more comprehensive country; and not only to preserve those rights in this chief seat of empire, but in every nation, in every land, in every climate, language, and religion, in the vast domain that still is under the protection, and the larger that was once under the protection, of the British crown.

His founder's merits were, by arts in which he served his master and made his fortune, to bring poverty, wretchedness, and depopulation on his country. Mine were under a benevolent prince, in promoting the commerce, manufactures, and agriculture of his kingdom, in which his Majesty shows an eminent example, who even in his amusements is a patriot, and in hours of leisure an improver of his native soil.

His founder's merit was the merit of a gentleman raised by the arts of a court and the protection of a Wolsey to the eminence of a great and potent lord. His merit in that eminence was, by instigating a tyrant to injustice, to provoke a people to rebellion. My merit was, to awaken the sober part of the country, that they might put themselves on their guard against any one potent lord, or any greater number of potent lords, or any combination of great leading men of any sort, if ever they should attempt to proceed in the same courses, but in the reverse order, that is, by instigating a corrupted populace to rebellion, and, through that rebellion, introducing a tyranny yet worse than the tyranny, which his Grace's ancestor supported, and of which he profited in the manner we behold in the despotism of Henry the Eighth.

The political merit of the first pensioner of his Grace's house was that of being concerned as a counsellor of state in advising, and in his person executing, the conditions of a dishonorable peace with France, the surrendering of the fortress of Boulogne, then our outguard on the Continent. By that surrender, Calais, the key of France, and the bridle in the mouth of that power, was not many years afterwards finally lost. My merit has been in resisting the power and pride of France, under any form of its rule; but in opposing it with the greatest zeal and earnestness, when that rule appeared in the worst form it could assume, the worst, indeed, which the prime cause and principle of all evil could possibly give it. It was my endeavor by every means to excite a spirit in the House, where I had the honor of a seat, for carrying on with early vigour and decision the most clearly just and necessary war that this or any nation ever carried on, in order to save my country from the iron yoke of its power, and from the more dreadful contagion of its principles, to preserve, while they can be preserved, pure and untainted, the ancient, in-bred integrity, piety, good nature, and good humour of the people of England, from the dreadful pestilence which, beginning in France, threatens to lay waste the whole moral and in a great degree the whole physical world, having done both in the focus of its most intense malignity.

The labours of his Grace's founder merited the "curses, not loud, but deep," of the Commons of England, on whom he and his master had effected a *complete Parliamentary Reform*, by making them, in their slavery and humiliation, the true and adequate representatives of a

debased, degraded, and undone people. My merits were in having had an active, though not always an ostentatious share, in every one of the acts, without exception, of undisputed constitutional utility in my time, and in having supported, on all occasions, the authority, the efficiency, and the privileges of the Commons of Great Britain. I ended my services by a recorded and fully reasoned assertion on their own journals of their constitutional rights, and a vindication of their constitutional conduct. I laboured in all things to merit their inward approbation, and (along with the assistants of the largest, the greatest, and best of my endeavors) I received their free, unbiased, public, and solemn thanks.

Thus, stands the account of the comparative merits of the crown grants, which compose the Duke of Bedford's fortune as balanced against mine. In the name of common sense, why should the Duke of Bedford think that none but of the House of Russell are entitled to the favor of the crown? Why should he imagine that no king of England has been capable of judging of merit but King Henry the Eighth? Indeed, he will pardon me, he is a little mistaken: all virtue did not end in the first Earl of Bedford; all discernment did not lose its vision when his creator closed his eyes. Let him remit his rigor on the disproportion between merit and reward in others, and they will make no inquiry into the origin of his fortune. They will regard with much more satisfaction, as he will contemplate with infinitely more advantage, whatever in his pedigree has been dulcified by an exposure to the influence of heaven in a long flow of generations from the hard, acidulous, metallic tincture of the spring. It is little to be doubted that several of his forefathers in that long series have degenerated into honor and virtue. Let the Duke of Bedford (I am sure he will) reject with scorn and horror the counsels of the lecturers, those wicked panders to avarice and ambition, who would tempt him, in the troubles of his country, to seek another enormous fortune from the forfeitures of another nobility and the plunder of another Church. Let him (and I trust that yet he will) employ all the energy of his youth and all the resources of his wealth to crush rebellious principles, which have no foundation in morals, and rebellious movements that have no provocation in tyranny.

Then will be forgot the rebellious which, by a doubtful priority in crime, his ancestor had provoked and extinguished. On such a conduct

in the noble Duke, many of his countrymen with some excuse might, give way to the enthusiasm of their gratitude, and, in the dashing style of some of the old declaimers, cry out, that, if the Fates had found no other way in which they could give a[4] Duke of Bedford and his opulence as props to a tottering world, then the butchery of the Duke of Buckingham might be tolerated; it might be regarded even with complacency, whilst in the heir of confiscation they saw the sympathizing comforter of the martyrs who suffer under the cruel confiscation of this day, whilst they beheld with admiration his zealous protection of the virtuous and loyal nobility of France, and his manly support of his brethren, the yet standing nobility and gentry of his native land. Then his Grace's merit would be pure and new and sharp, as fresh from the mint of honor. As he pleased, he might reflect honor on his predecessors, or throw it forward on those who were to succeed him. He might be the propagator of the stock of honor, or the root of it, as he thought proper.

Had it pleased God to continue to me the hopes of succession, I should have been, according to my mediocrity and the mediocrity of the age I live in, a sort of founder of a family: I should have left a son, who, in all the points in which personal merit can be viewed, in science, in erudition, in genius, in taste, in honor, in generosity, in humanity, in every liberal sentiment and every liberal accomplishment, would not have shown himself inferior to the Duke of Bedford, or to any of those whom he traces in his line. His Grace very soon would have wanted all plausibility in his attack upon that provision, which belonged more to mine than to me. He would soon have supplied every deficiency and symmetrized every disproportion. It would not have been for that successor to resort to any stagnant, wasting reservoir of merit in me, or in any ancestry. He had in himself a salient, living spring of generous and manly action. Every day he lived he would have repurchased the bounty of the crown, and ten times more, if ten times more he had received. He was made a public creature and had no enjoyment whatever but in the performance of some duty. At this exigent moment, the loss of a finished man is not easily supplied.

(4) At si non aliam venturo fata Neroni, etc.

But a Disposer whose power we are little able to resist, and whose wisdom it behoves us not at all to dispute, has ordained it in another manner, and (whatever my querulous weakness might suggest) a far better one. The storm has gone over me; and I lie like one of those old oaks, which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honors, I am torn up by the roots, and lie prostrate on the earth. There, and prostrate there, I most unfeignedly recognize the Divine justice, and in some degree submit to it. But whilst I humble myself before God, I do not know that it is forbidden to repel the attacks of unjust and inconsiderate men. The patience of Job is proverbial. After some of the convulsive struggles of our irritable nature, he submitted himself and repented in dust and ashes. But even so, I do not find him blamed for reprehending, and with a considerable degree of verbal asperity, those ill-natured neighbours of his who visited his dunghill to read moral, political, and economical lectures on his misery. I am alone. I have none to meet my enemies in the gate. Indeed, my Lord, I greatly deceive myself, if in this hard season I would give a peck of refuse wheat for all that is called fame and honor in the world. This is the appetite but of a few. It is a luxury, it is a privilege, it is an indulgence for those who are at their ease. But we are all of us made to shun disgrace, as we are made to shrink from pain and poverty and disease. It is an instinct; and under the direction of reason, instinct is always in the right. I live in an inverted order. They who ought to have succeeded me are gone before me. They who should have been to me as posterity are in the place of ancestors. I owe to the dearest relation (whichever must subsist in memory) that act of piety, which he would have performed to me: I owe it to him to show that he was not descended, as the Duke of Bedford would have it, from an unworthy parent.

The crown has considered me after long service: the crown has paid the Duke of Bedford by advance. He has had a long credit for any service, which he may perform hereafter. He is secure, and long may he be secure, in his advance, whether he performs any services or not. But let him take care how he endangers the safety of that Constitution, which secures his own utility or his own insignificance, or how he discourages those who take up even puny arms to defend an order of things which, like the Sun of heaven, shines alike on the useful and the worthless.

His grants are ingrafted on the public law of Europe, covered with the awful hoar of innumerable ages. They are guarded by the sacred rules of prescription, found in that full treasury of jurisprudence from which the jejuneness and penury of our municipal law has by degrees been enriched and strengthened. This prescription I had my share (a very full share) in bringing to its perfection[5]. The Duke of Bedford will stand as long as prescriptive law endures, as long as the great, stable laws of property, common to us with all civilized nations, are kept in their integrity, and without the smallest intermixture of the laws, maxims, principles, or precedents of the Grand Revolution. They are secure against all changes but one. The whole Revolutionary system, institutes, digest, code, novels, text, gloss, comment, are not only not the same, but they are the very reverse, and the reverse fundamentally, of all the laws on which civil life has hitherto been upheld in all the governments of the world. The learned professors of the Rights of Man regard prescription not as a title to bar all claim set up against old possession, but they look on prescription as itself a bar against the possessor and proprietor. They hold an immemorial possession to be no more than a long continued and therefore an aggravated injustice.

Such are their ideas, such their religion, and such *their* law. But as to our country and *our* race, as long as the well-compacted structure of our Church and State, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power, a fortress at once and a temple[6], shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion, as long as the British monarchy, not more limited than fenced by the orders of the state, shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval towers, as long as this awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land, so long the mounds and dikes of the low, fat, Bedford level will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France. As long as our sovereign lord the king, and his faithful subjects, the lords and commons of this realm, the triple cord, which no man can break,

(5) Sir George Savile's act, called The *Nullum Tempus* Act.

(6) „Templun in modum arcis" – Tacitus, of the temple of Jerusalem.

the solemn, sworn, constitutional frank-pledge of this nation, the firm guarantees of each other's being and each other's rights, the joint and several securities, each in its place and order, for every kind and every quality of property and of dignity; as long as these endure, so long the Duke of Bedford is safe, and we are all safe together, the high from the blights of envy and the spoliations of rapacity, the low from the iron hand of oppression and the insolent spurn of contempt. Amen! and so be it! and so it will be,

> Dum domus AEneae Capitoli immobile saxum
> Accolet, imperiumque pater Roanus habebit.

But if the rude inroad of Gallic tumult, with its sophistical rights of man to falsify the account, and its sword as a make-weight to throw into the scale, shall be introduced into our city by a misguided populace, set on by proud great men, themselves blinded and intoxicated by a frantic ambition, we shall all of us perish and be overwhelmed in a common ruin. If a great storm blows on our coast, it will cast the whales on the strand, as well as the periwinkles. His Grace will not survive the poor grantee he despises, no, not for a twelvemonth. If the great look for safety in the services they render to this Gallic cause, it is to be foolish even above the weight of privilege allowed to wealth. If his Grace be one of these whom they endeavor to proselytize, he ought to be aware of the character of the sect whose doctrines he is invited to embrace. With them insurrection is the most sacred of revolutionary duties to the state. Ingratitude to benefactors is the first of revolutionary virtues. Ingratitude is, indeed, their four Cardinal virtues compacted and amalgamated into one; and he will find it in everything that has happened since the commencement of the philosophic Revolution to this hour. If he pleads the merit of having performed the duty of insurrection against the order he lives in, (God forbid he ever should!) the merit of others will be to perform the duty of insurrection against him. If he pleads (again God forbid he should, and I do not suspect he will) his ingratitude to the crown for its creation of his family, others will plead their right and duty to pay him in kind. They will laugh, indeed they will laugh, at his parchment and his wax. His deeds will be drawn out with the rest of the lumber of his

evidence room and burnt to the tune of *ça ira* in the courts of Bedford (then Equality) House.

Am I to blame, if I attempt to pay his Grace's hostile reproaches to me with a friendly admonition to himself? Can I be blamed for pointing out to him in what manner he is like to be affected, if the sect of the cannibal philosophers of France should proselytize any considerable part of this people, and, by their joint proselytizing arms, should conquer that government to which his Grace does not seem to me to give all the support his own security demands? Surely it is proper that he, and that others like him, should know the true genius of this sect, what their opinions are, what they have done, and to whom, and what (if a prognostic is to be formed from the dispositions and actions of men) it is certain they will do hereafter. He ought to know that they have sworn assistance, the only engagement they ever will keep, to all in this country who bear a resemblance to themselves, and who think, as such, that *the whole duty of man* consists in destruction. They are a misallied and disparaged branch of the House of Nimrod. They are the Duke of Bedford's natural hunters; and he is their natural game. Because he is not very profoundly reflecting, he sleeps in profound security: they, on the contrary, are always vigilant, active, enterprising, and, though far removed from any knowledge, which makes men estimable or useful, in all the instruments and resources of evil their leaders are not meanly instructed or insufficiently furnished. In the French Revolution everything is new, and, from want of preparation to meet so unlooked for an evil, everything is dangerous. Never before this time was a set of literary men converted into a gang of robbers and assassins; never before did a den of bravoes and banditti assume the garb and tone of an academy of philosophers.

Let me tell his Grace, that an union of such characters, monstrous as it seems, is not made for producing despicable enemies. But if they are formidable as foes, as friends they are dreadful indeed. The men of property in France, confiding in a force, which seemed to be irresistible because it had never been tried, neglected to prepare for a conflict with their enemies at their own weapons. They were found in such a situation as the Mexicans were, when they were attacked by the dogs, the cavalry, the iron, and the gunpowder of a handful of bearded men, whom they did not know to exist in Nature. This is a comparison that some, I think,

have made; and it is just. In France, they had their enemies within their houses. They were even in the bosoms of many of them. But they had not sagacity to discern their savage character. They seemed tame, and even caressing. They had nothing but *douce humanité* in their mouth. They could not bear the punishment of the mildest laws on the greatest criminals. The slightest severity of justice made their flesh creep. The very idea that war existed in the world disturbed their repose. Military glory was no more, with them, than a splendid infamy. Hardly would they hear of self-defence, which they reduced within such bounds as to leave it no defence at all. All this while they meditated the confiscations and massacres that we have seen. Had anyone told these unfortunate noblemen and gentlemen how and by whom the grand fabric of the French monarchy under which they flourished would be subverted, they would not have pitied him as a visionary, but would have turned from him as what they call a *mauvais plaisant*. Yet we have seen what has happened. The persons who have suffered from the cannibal philosophy of France are so like the Duke of Bedford, that nothing but his Grace's probably not speaking quite so good French could enable us to find out any difference. A great many of them had as pompous titles as he, and were of full as illustrious a race; some few of them had fortunes as ample; several of them, without meaning the least disparagement to the Duke of Bedford, were as wise, and as virtuous, and as valiant, and as well educated, and as complete in all the lineaments of men of honor, as he is; and to all this they had added the powerful outguard of a military profession, which, in its nature, renders men somewhat more cautious than those who have nothing to attend to but the lazy enjoyment of undisturbed possessions. But security was their ruin. They are dashed to pieces in the storm, and our shores are covered with the wrecks. If they had been aware that such a thing might happen, such a thing never could have happened.

I assure his Grace, that, if I state to him the designs of his enemies in a manner, which may appear to him ludicrous and impossible, I tell him nothing that has not exactly happened, point by point, but twenty-four miles from our own shore. I assure him that the Frenchified faction, more encouraged than others are warned by what has happened in France, look at him and his landed possessions as an object at once of curiosity and rapacity. He is made for them in every part of their double

character. As robbers, to them he is a noble booty; as speculatists, he is a glorious subject for their experimental philosophy. He affords matter for an extensive analysis in all the branches of their science, geometrical, physical, civil, and political. These philosophers are fanatics: independent of any interest, which, if it operated alone, would make them much more tractable, they are carried with such an headlong rage towards every desperate trial that they would sacrifice the whole human race to the slightest of their experiments. I am better able to enter into the character of this description of men than the noble Duke can be. I have lived long and variously in the world. Without any considerable pretensions to literature in myself, I have aspired to the love of letters. I have lived for a great many years in habitudes with those who professed them. I can form a tolerable estimate of what is likely to happen from a character chiefly dependent for fame and fortune on knowledge and talent, as well in its morbid and perverted state as in that which is sound and natural. Naturally, men so formed and finished are the first gifts of Providence to the world. But when they have once thrown off the fear of God, which was in all ages too often the case, and the fear of man, which is now the case, and when in that state they come to understand one another, and to act in corps, a more dreadful calamity cannot arise out of hell to scourge mankind. Nothing can be conceived harder than the heart of a thorough-bred metaphysician. It comes nearer to the cold malignity of a wicked spirit than to the frailty and passion of a man. It is like that of the Principle of Evil himself, incorporeal, pure, unmixed, dephlegmated, defecated evil. It is no easy operation to eradicate humanity from the human breast. What Shakespeare calls the "compunctious visitings of Nature" will sometimes knock at their hearts, and protest against their murderous speculations. But they have a means of compounding with their nature. Their humanity is not dissolved; they only give it a long prorogation. They are ready to declare that they do not think two thousand years too long a period for the good that they pursue. It is remarkable that they never see any way to their projected good but by the road of some evil. Their imagination is not fatigued with the contemplation of human suffering through the wild waste of centuries added to centuries of misery and desolation. Their humanity is at their horizon, and, like the horizon, it always flies before them. The geometricians and the chemists bring, the

one from the dry bones of their diagrams, and the other from the soot of their furnaces, dispositions that make them worse than indifferent about those feelings and habitudes, which are the supports of the moral world. Ambition is come upon them suddenly; they are intoxicated with it, and it has rendered them fearless of the danger, which may from thence arise to others or to themselves. These philosophers consider men in their experiments no more than they do mice in an air-pump or in a recipient of mephitic gas. Whatever his Grace may think of himself, they look upon him, and everything that belongs to him, with no more regard than they do upon the whiskers of that little long-tailed animal that has been long the game of the grave, demure, insidious, spring-nailed, velvet-pawed, green-eyed philosophers, whether going upon two legs or upon four.

His Grace's landed possessions are irresistibly inviting to an agrarian experiment. They are a downright insult upon the rights of man. They are more extensive than the territory of many of the Grecian republics; and they are without comparison more fertile than most of them. There are now republics in Italy, in Germany, and in Switzerland, which do not possess anything like so fair and ample a domain. There is scope for seven philosophers to proceed in their analytical experiments upon Harrington's seven different forms of republics, in the acres of this one Duke. Hitherto they have been wholly unproductive to speculation, fitted for nothing but to fatten bullocks, and to produce grain for beer, still more to stupefy the dull English understanding. Abbé Sieyès has whole nests of pigeon-holes full of ready-made constitutions, ticketed, sorted, and numbered, suited to every season and every fancy: some with the top of the pattern at the bottom, and some with the bottom at the top; some plain, some flowered; some distinguished for their simplicity, others for their complexity; some of blood colour, some of *boue de Paris*; some with directories, others without a direction; some with councils of elders and councils of youngsters, some without any council at all; some where the electors choose the representatives, others where the representatives choose the electors; some in long coats, and some in short cloaks; some with pantaloons, some without breeches; some with five-shilling qualifications, some totally unqualified. So that no constitution-fancier may go unsuited from his shop, provided he loves a pattern of pillage, oppression, arbitrary imprisonment, confiscation,

exile, revolutionary judgment, and legalized premeditated murder, in any shapes into which they can be put. What a pity it is that the progress of experimental philosophy should be checked by his Grace's monopoly! Such are their sentiments, I assure him; such is their language, when they dare to speak; and such are their proceedings, when they have the means to act.

Their geographers and geometricians have been some time out of practice. It is some time since they have divided their own country into squares. That figure has lost the charms of its novelty. They want new lands for new trials. It is not only the geometricians of the Republic that find him a good subject: the chemists have bespoke him, after the geometricians have done with him. As the first set have an eye on his Grace's lands, the chemists are not less taken with his buildings. They consider mortar as a very anti-revolutionary invention, in its present state, but properly employed, an admirable material for overturning all establishments. They have found that the gunpowder of *ruins* is far the fittest for making other ruins, and so *ad infinitum*. They have calculated what quantity of matter convertible into nitro is to be found in Bedford House, in Woburn Abbey, and in what his Grace and his trustees have still suffered to stand of that foolish royalist, Inigo Jones in Covent Garden. Churches, playhouses, coffeehouses, all alike, are destined to be mingled, and equalized, and blended into one common rubbish, and, well sifted, and lixiviated, to crystallize into true, democratic, explosive, insurrectionary nitre. Their Academy del *Cimento*, (*per antiphrasin*), with Morveau and Hassenfratz at its head, have computed that the brave *sans-culottes* may make war on all the aristocracy of Europe for a twelvemonth out of the rubbish of the Duke of Bedford's buildings[7].

(7) There is nothing on which the leaders of the Republic one and indivisible value themselves more than on the chemical operations by which, through science, they convert the pride of aristocracy to an instrument of its own destruction, on the operations by which they reduce the magnificent ancient country-seats of the nobility, decorated with the *feudal* titles of Duke, Marquis, or Earl, into magazines of what they call *revolutionary gunpowder.* They tell us, that hitherto things „had not yet been properly and in a *revolutionary* manner explored." „The strong *chateaus,* those *feudal* fortresses, that *were ordered to be demolished*, attracted next the attention of your committee. *Nature* there had *secretly* regained her *rights*, and had produced saltpetre, for the *purpose*, as it should seem, *of facilitating the execution of your decree by preparing the means of destruction.* From these *ruins*, which *still frown* on the liberties of the Republic, we have hitherto glutted the *pride of despots*, and covered the plots of La Vendée, will soon furnish wherewithal to tame the traitors and to overwhelm the disaffected."

While the Morveaux and Priestleys are proceeding with these experiments upon the Duke of Bedford's houses, the Sieyès, and the rest of the analytical legislators and constitution-venders, are quite as busy in their trade of decomposing organization, in forming his Grace's vassals into primary assemblies, national guards, first, second, and third requisitioners, committees of research, conductors of the travelling guillotine, judges of revolutionary tribunals, legislative hangmen, supervisors of domiciliary visitation, exactors of forced loans, and assessors of the maximum.

The din of all this smithery may sometime or other possibly wake this noble Duke and push him to an endeavor to save some little matter from their experimental philosophy. If he pleads his grants from the crown, he is ruined at the outset. If he pleads that he has received them from the pillage of superstitious corporations, this indeed will stagger them a little, because they are enemies to all corporations and to all religion. However, they will soon recover themselves, and will tell his Grace, or his learned council, that all such property belongs to the *nation*, and that it would be wiser for him, if he wishes to live the natural term of a citizen, (that is, according to Condorcet's calculation, six months on an average,) not to pass for an usurper upon the national property. This is what the *serjeants* at law of the rights of man will say to the puny *apprentices* of the common law of England.

Is the genius of philosophy not yet known? You may as well think the garden of the Tuileries was well protected with the cords of ribbon insultingly stretched by the National Assembly to keep the sovereign canaille from intruding on the retirement of the poor King of the French as that such flimsy cobwebs will stand between the savages of the Revolution and their natural prey. Deep philosophers are no triflers; brave *sans-culottes* are no formalists. They will no more regard a Marquis of Tavistock than an Abbot of Tavistock; the Lord of Woburn will not be more respectable in their eyes than the Prior of Woburn; they will make no difference between the superior of a Covent Garden of nuns and of a

„The *rebellious cities, also*, have afforded a large quantity of saltpetre. *Commune Affranchie*" (that is, the noble city of Lyons, reduced in many parts to a heap of ruins) „and Toulon will pay a *second* tribute to our artillery." – Report, 1st *February 1794*.

Covent Garden of another description. They will not care a rush whether his coat is long or short, whether the colour be purple, or blue and buff. They will not trouble their heads with what part of his head his hair is cut from; and they will look with equal respect on a tonsure and a crop. Their only question will be that of their Legendre, or some other of their legislative butchers: how he cuts up; how he tallows in the caul or on the kidneys.

Is it not a, singular phenomenon, that, whilst the *sans-culotte* carcass-butchers and the philosophers of the shambles are pricking their dotted lines upon his hide, and, like the print of the poor ox that we see in the shop-windows at Charing Cross, alive as he is, and thinking no harm in the world, he is divided into rumps, and sirloins, and briskets, and into all sorts of pieces for roasting, boiling, and stewing, that, all the while they are measuring *him*, his Grace is measuring me, is invidiously comparing the bounty of the crown with the deserts of the defender of his order, and in the same moment fawning on those who have the knife half out of the sheath? Poor innocent!

> "Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food,
> And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood."

No man lives too long who lives to do with spirit and suffer with resignation what Providence pleases to command or inflict; but, indeed, they are sharp incommodities which beset old age. It was but the other day, that, on putting in order some things, which had been brought here, on my taking leave of London forever, I looked over a number of fine portraits, most of them of persons now dead, but whose society, in my better days, made this a proud and happy place. Amongst these was the picture of Lord Keppel. It was painted by an artist worthy of the subject, the excellent friend of that excellent man from their earliest youth, and a common friend of us both, with whom we lived for many years without a moment of coldness, of peevishness, of jealousy, or of jar, to the day of our final separation.

I ever looked on Lord Keppel as one of the greatest and best men of his age, and I loved and cultivated him accordingly. He was much in my heart, and I believe I was in his to the very last beat. It was after his trial

at Portsmouth that he gave me this picture. With what zeal and anxious affection I attended him through that his agony of glory, what part my son, in the early flush and enthusiasm of his virtue, and the pious passion with which he attached himself to all my connections, with what prodigality we both squandered ourselves in courting almost every sort of enmity for his sake, I believe he felt, just as I should have felt such friendship on such an occasion. I partook, indeed, of this honor with several of the first and best and ablest in the kingdom, but I was behindhand with none of them; and I am sure, that, if, to the eternal disgrace of this nation, and to the total annihilation of every trace of honor and virtue in it, things had taken a different turn from what they did, I should have attended him to the quarter-deck with no less goodwill and more pride, though with far other feelings, than I partook of the general flow of national joy that attended the justice that was done to his virtue.

Pardon, my Lord, the feeble garrulity of age, which loves to diffuse itself in discourse of the departed great. At my years we live in retrospect, alone; and, wholly unfitted for the society of vigorous life, we enjoy, the best balm to all wounds, the consolation of friendship, in those only whom we have lost forever. Feeling the loss of Lord Keppel at all times, at no time did I feel it so much as on the first day when I was attacked in the House of Lords.

Had he lived, that reverend form would have risen in its place, and, with a mild, parental reprehension to his nephew, the Duke of Bedford, he would have told him that the favor of that gracious prince who had honored his virtues with the government of the navy of Great Britain, and with a seat in the hereditary great council of his kingdom, was not undeservedly shown to the friend of the best portion of his life, and his faithful companion and counsellor under his rudest trials. He would have told him, that, to whomever else these reproaches might be becoming, they were not decorous in his near kindred. He would have told him, that, when men in that rank lose decorum, they lose everything.

On that day I had a loss in Lord Keppel. But the public loss of him in this awful crisis! I speak from much knowledge of the person: he never would have listened to any compromise with the rabble rout of this *sans-culotterie* of France. His goodness of heart, his reason, his taste, his public duty, his principles, his prejudices, would have repelled him

forever from all connection with that horrid medley of madness, vice, impiety, and crime.

Lord Keppel had two countries: one of descent, and one of birth. Their interest and their glory are the same; and his mind was capacious of both. His family was noble, and it was Dutch: that is, he was of the oldest and purest nobility that Europe can boast, among a people renowned above all others for love of their native land. Though it was never shown in insult to any human being, Lord Keppel was something high. It was a wild stock of pride, on which the tenderest of all hearts had grafted the milder virtues. He valued ancient nobility; and he was not disinclined to augment it with new honors. He valued the old nobility and the new, not as an excuse for inglorious sloth, but as an incitement to virtuous activity. He considered it as a sort of cure for selfishness and a narrow mind, conceiving that a man born in an elevated place in himself was nothing, but everything in what went before and what was to come after him. Without much speculation, but by the sure instinct of ingenuous feelings, and by the dictates of plain, unsophisticated, natural understanding, he felt that no great commonwealth could by any possibility long subsist without a body of some kind or other of nobility decorated with honor and fortified by privilege. This nobility forms the chain that connects the ages of a nation, which otherwise (with Mr. Paine) would soon be taught that no one generation can bind another. He felt that no political fabric could be well made, without some such order of things as might, through a series of time, afford a rational hope of securing unity, coherence, consistency, and stability to the state. He felt that nothing else can protect it against the levity of courts and the greater levity of the multitude; that to talk of hereditary monarchy, without anything else of hereditary reverence in the commonwealth, was a low-minded absurdity, fit only for those detestable "fools aspiring to be knaves" who began to forge in 1789 the false money of the French Constitution; that it is one fatal objection to all *new* fancied and *new fabricated* republics, (among a people who, once possessing such an advantage, have wickedly and insolently rejected it,) that the *prejudice* of an old nobility is a thing that cannot be made. It may be improved, it may be corrected, it may be replenished; men may be taken from it or aggregated to it; but *the thing itself* is matter of *inveterate* opinion, and therefore cannot be matter of mere positive institution. He

felt that this nobility, in fact, does not exist in wrong of other orders of the state, but by them, and for them.

I knew the man I speak of: and if we can divine the future out of what we collect from the past, no person living would look with more scorn and horror on the impious parricide committed on all their ancestry, and on the desperate attainder passed on all their posterity, by the Orléans, and the Rochefoucaults, and the Fayettes, and the Vicomtes de Noailles, and the false Périgords, and the long *et cetera* of the perfidious *sans-culottes* of the court, who, like demoniacs possessed with a spirit of fallen pride and inverted ambition, abdicated their dignities, disowned their families, betrayed the most sacred of all trusts, and, by breaking to pieces a great link of society and all the cramps and holdings of the state, brought eternal confusion and desolation on their country. For the fate of the miscreant parricides themselves he would have had no pity. Compassion for the myriads of men, of whom the world was not worthy, who by their means have perished in prisons or on scaffolds, or are pining in beggary and exile, would leave no room in his, or in any well-formed mind, for any such sensation. We are not made at once to pity the oppressor and the oppressed.

Looking to his Batavian descent, how could he bear to behold his kindred, the descendants of the brave nobility of Holland, whose blood, prodigally poured out, had, more than all the canals, meres, and inundations of their country, protected their independence, to behold them bowed in the basest servitude to the basest and vilest of the human race, in servitude to those who in no respect were superior in dignity or could aspire to a better place than that of hangmen to the tyrants to whose sceptred pride they had opposed an elevation of soul that surmounted and overpowered the loftiness of Castile, the haughtiness of Austria, and the overbearing arrogance of France?

Could he with patience bear that the children of that nobility who would have deluged their country and given it to the sea rather than submit to Louis the Fourteenth, who was then in his meridian glory, when his arms were conducted by the Turennes, by the Luxembourgs, by the Boufflers, when his councils were directed by the Colberts and the Louvois, when his tribunals were filled by the Lamoignons and the D'Aguesseaus, that these should be given up to the cruel sport of the

Pichegrus, the Jourdans, the Santerres, under the Rolands, and Brissots, and Gorsas, and Robespierres, the Reubells, the Carnots, and Talliens, and Dantons, and the whole tribe of regicides, robbers, and revolutionary judges, that from the rotten carcass of their own murdered country have poured out innumerable swarms of the lowest and at once the most destructive of the classes of animated Nature, which like columns of locusts have laid waste the fairest part of the world?

Would Keppel have borne to see the ruin of the virtuous patricians, that happy union of the noble and the burgher, who with signal prudence and integrity had long governed the cities of the confederate republic, the cherishing fathers of their country, who, denying commerce to themselves, made it flourish in a manner unexampled under their protection? Could Keppel have borne that a vile faction should totally destroy this harmonious construction, in favor of a robbing democracy founded on the spurious rights of man?

He was no great clerk, but he was perfectly well versed in the interests of Europe, and he could not have heard with patience that the country of Grotius, the cradle of the law of nations, and one of the richest repositories of all law, should be taught a new code by the ignorant flippancy of Thomas Paine, the presumptuous foppery of La Fayette, with his stolen rights of man in his hand, the wild, profligate intrigue and turbulency of Marat, and the impious sophistry of Condorcet, in his insolent addresses to the Batavian Republic.

Could Keppel, who idolized the House of Nassau, who was himself given to England along with the blessings of the British and Dutch Revolutions, with Revolutions of stability, with Revolutions, which consolidated and married the liberties and the interests of the two nations forever, could he see the fountain of British liberty itself in servitude to France? Could he see with patience a Prince of Orange expelled, as a sort of diminutive despot, with every kind of contumely, from the country, which that family of deliverers had so often rescued from slavery, and obliged to live in exile in another country, which owes its liberty to his house?

Would Keppel have heard with patience that the conduct to be held on such occasions was to become short by the knees to the faction of the homicides, to entreat them quietly to retire? Or, if the fortune of war

should drive them from their first wicked and unprovoked invasion, that no security should be taken, no arrangement made, no barrier formed, no alliance entered into for the security of that which under a foreign name is the most precious part of England? What would he have said, if it was even proposed that the Austrian Netherlands (which ought to be a barrier to Holland, and the tie of an alliance to protect her against any species of rule that might be erected or even be restored in France) should be formed into a republic under her influence and dependent upon her power?

But above all, what would he have said, if he had heard it made a matter of accusation against me, by his nephew, the Duke of Bedford, that I was the author of the war? Had I in mind to keep that high distinction to myself, (as from pride I might, but from justice I dare not), he would have snatched his share of it from my hand and held it with the grasp of a dying convulsion to his end.

It would be a most arrogant presumption in me to assume to myself the glory of what belongs to his Majesty, and to his ministers, and to his Parliament, and to the far greater majority of his faithful people: but had I stood alone to counsel, and that all were determined to be guided by my advice, and to follow it implicitly, then I should have been the sole author of a war. But it should have been a war on my ideas and my principles. However, let his Grace think as he may of my demerits with regard to the war with Regicide, he will find my guilt confined to that alone. He never shall, with the smallest colour of reason, accuse me of being the author of a peace with Regicide. But that is high matter and ought not to be mixed with anything of so little moment as what may belong to me, or even to the Duke of Bedford.

I have the honor to be, & c.

Edmund Burke

On the genius and character of the French revolution as it regards other nations

MY DEAR SIR, I closed my first letter with serious matter, and I hope it has employed your thoughts. The system of peace must have a reference to the system of the war. On that ground, I must therefore again recall your mind to our original opinions, which time and events have not taught me to vary.

My ideas and my principles led me, in this context, to encounter France, not as a State, but as a faction. The vast territorial extent of that country, its immense population, its riches of production, its riches of commerce and convention, the whole aggregate mass of what in ordinary cases constitutes the force of a State, to me were but objects of secondary consideration. They might be balanced; and they have been often more than balanced. Great as these things are, they are not what make the faction formidable. It is the faction that makes them truly dreadful. That faction is the evil spirit that possesses the body of France, that informs it as a soul, that stamps upon its ambition, and upon all its pursuits, a characteristic mark, which strongly distinguishes them from the same general passions and the same general views in other men and in other communities. It is that spirit which inspires into them a new, pernicious, desolating activity. Constituted as France was ten years ago, it was not in that France to shake, to shatter, and to overwhelm Europe in the manner that we behold. A sure destruction impends over those infatuated princes who, in the conflict with this new and unheard-of power, proceed as if they were engaged in a war that bore a resemblance to their former contests, or that they can make peace in the spirit of their former arrangements of pacification. Here, the beaten path is the very reverse of the safe road.

As to me, I was always steadily of the opinion that this disorder was not in its nature intermittent. I conceived that the contest, once begun, could not be laid down again, to be resumed at our discretion, but that our first struggle with this evil would also be our last. I never thought we could make peace with the system; because it was not for the sake of an object we pursued in rivalry with each other, but with the system itself that we were at war. As I understood the matter, we were at war, not with its conduct, but with its existence, convinced that its existence and its hostility were the same.

The faction is not local or territorial. It is a general evil. Where it least appears in action, it is still full of life. In its sleep it recruits its strength

and prepares its exertion. Its spirit lies deep in the corruptions of our common nature. The social order, which restrains it feeds it. It exists in every country in Europe, and among all orders of men in every country, who look up to France as to a common head. The centre is there. The circumference is the world of Europe, wherever the race of Europe may be settled. Everywhere else the faction is militant; in France it is triumphant. In France is the bank of deposit and the bank of circulation of all the pernicious principles that are forming in every state. It will be a folly scarcely deserving of pity, and too mischievous for contempt, to think of restraining it in any other country whilst it is predominant there. War, instead of being the cause of its force, has suspended its operation. It has given a reprieve, at least, to the Christian world.

The true nature of a Jacobin war, in the beginning, was by most of the Christian powers felt, acknowledged, and even in the most precise manner, declared. In the joint manifesto published by the Emperor and the King of Prussia, on the 4th of August, 1792, it is expressed in the dearest terms, and on principles which could not fail, if they had adhered to them, of classing those monarchs with the first benefactors of mankind. This manifesto was published, as they themselves express it, "to lay open to the present generation, as well as to posterity, their motives, their intentions, and the disinterestedness of their personal views: taking up arms for the purpose of preserving social and political order amongst all civilized nations, and to secure to each state its religion, happiness, independence, territories, and real constitution." "On this ground they hoped that all empires and all States would be unanimous, and, becoming the firm guardians of the happiness of mankind, that they could not fail to unite their efforts to rescue a numerous nation from its own fury, to preserve Europe from the return of barbarism, and the universe from the subversion and anarchy with which it was threatened." The whole of that noble performance ought to be read at the first meeting of any congress, which may assemble for the purpose of pacification. In that piece "these powers expressly renounce all views of personal aggrandizement," and confine themselves to objects worthy of so generous, so heroic, and so perfectly wise and political an enterprise. It was to the principles of this confederation, and to no other, that we wished our sovereign and our country to accede, as a part of the commonwealth of Europe. To these

principles, with some trifling exceptions and limitations, they did fully accede[1]. And all our friends who took office acceded to the ministry, (whether wisely or not) as I always understood the matter, on the faith and on the principles of that declaration.

As long as these powers flattered themselves that the menace of force would produce the effect of force, they acted on those declarations; but when their menaces failed of success, their efforts took a new direction. It did not appear to them that virtue and heroism ought to be purchased by millions of rixdollars. It is a dreadful truth, but it is a truth that cannot be concealed: in ability, in dexterity, in the distinctness of their views, the Jacobins are our superiors. They saw the thing right from the very beginning. Whatever were the first motives to the war among politicians, they saw that in its spirit, and for its objects, it was a *civil war*; and as such they pursued it. It is a war between the partisans of the ancient civil, moral, and political order of Europe against a sect of fanatical and ambitious atheists, which means to change them all. It is not France extending a foreign empire over other nations: it is a sect aiming at universal empire, and beginning with the conquest of France. The leaders of that sect secured the *centre of Europe*: and that secured, they knew, that, whatever might be the event of battles and sieges, their cause was victorious. Whether its territory had a little more or a little less peeled from its surface, or whether an island or two was detached from its commerce, to them was of little moment. The conquest of France was a glorious acquisition. That once well laid as a basis of empire, opportunities never could be wanting to regain or to replace what had been lost, and dreadfully to avenge themselves on the faction of their adversaries.

They saw it was a *civil war*. It was their business to persuade their adversaries that it ought to be a foreign war. The Jacobins everywhere set up a cry against the new crusade; and they intrigued with effect in the cabinet, in the field, and in every private society in Europe. Their task was not difficult. The condition of princes, and sometimes of first ministers too, is to be pitied. The creatures of the desk and the creatures

---

(1) See Declaration, Whitehall, Oct. 29, 1793.

of favor had no relish for the principles of the manifestoes. They promised no governments, no regiments, no revenues from whence emoluments might arise by perquisite or by grant. In truth, the tribe of vulgar politicians are the lowest of our species. There is no trade so vile and mechanical as government in their hands. Virtue is not their habit. They are out of themselves in any course of conduct recommended only by conscience and glory. A large, liberal, and prospective view of the interests of States passes with them for romance, and the principles that recommend it for the wanderings of a disordered imagination. The calculators compute them out of their senses. The jesters and buffoons shame them out of everything grand and elevated. Littleness in object and in means to them appears soundness and sobriety. They think there is nothing worth pursuit, barring that which they can handle, which they can measure with a two-foot role, which they can tell upon ten fingers.

Without the principles of the Jacobins, perhaps without any principles at all, they played the game of that faction. There was a beaten road before them. The powers of Europe were armed; France had always appeared dangerous; the war was easily diverted from France as a faction to France as a state. The princes were easily taught to slide back into their old, habitual course of politics. They were easily led to consider the flames that were consuming France, not as a warning to protect their own buildings, (which were without any party wall, and linked by a contignation into the edifice of France,) but as a happy occasion for pillaging the goods, and for carrying off the materials of their neighbour's house. Their provident fears were changed into avaricious hopes. They carried on their new designs without seeming to abandon the principles of their old policy. They pretended to seek, or they flattered themselves that they sought, in the accession of new fortresses and new territories a defensive security. But the security wanted was against a kind of power, which was not so truly dangerous in its fortresses nor in its territories as in its spirit and its principles. They aimed, or pretended to aim, at defending themselves against a danger from which there can be no security in any defensive plan. If armies and fortresses were a defence against Jacobinism, Louis the Sixteenth would this day reign a powerful monarch over a happy people.

This error obliged them, even in their offensive operations, to adopt a plan of war against the success of which there was something little short

of mathematical demonstration. They refused to take any step which might strike at the heart of affairs. They seemed unwilling to wound the enemy in any vital part. They acted through the whole as if they really wished the conservation of the Jacobin power, as what might be more favorable than the lawful government to the attainment of the petty objects they looked for. They always kept on the circumference; and the wider and remoter the circle was, the more eagerly they chose it as their sphere of action in this centrifugal war. The plan they pursued in its nature demanded great length of time. In its execution, they who went the nearest way to work were obliged to cover an incredible extent of country. It left to the enemy every means of destroying this extended line of weakness. Ill success in any part was sure to defeat the effect of the whole. This is true of Austria. It is still more true of England. On this false plan, even good fortune, by further weakening the victor, put him but the further off from his object.

As long as there was any appearance of success, the spirit of aggrandizement, and consequently the spirit of mutual jealousy, seized upon all the coalesced powers. Some sought an accession of territory at the expense of France, some at the expense of each other, some at the expense of third parties; and when the vicissitude of disaster took its turn, they found common distress a treacherous bond of faith and friendship.

The greatest skill, conducting the greatest military apparatus, has been employed; but it has been worse than uselessly employed, through the false policy of the war. The operations of the field suffered from the errors of the cabinet. If the same spirit continues, when peace is made, the peace will fix and perpetuate all the errors of the war; because it will be made upon the same false principle. What has been lost in the field, in the field may be regained. An arrangement of peace in its nature is a permanent settlement: it is the effect of counsel and deliberation, and not of fortuitous events. If built upon a basis fundamentally erroneous, it can only be retrieved by some of those unforeseen dispensations, which the all-wise, but mysterious, Governor of the world sometimes interposes, to snatch nations from ruin. It would not be pious error, but mad and impious presumption, for anyone to trust in an unknown order of dispensations, in defiance of the rules of prudence, which are formed upon the known march of the ordinary providence of God.

It was not of that sort of war that I was amongst the least considerable, but amongst the most zealous advisers; and it is not by the sort of peace now talked of that I wish it concluded. It would answer no great purpose to enter into the particular errors of the war. The whole has been but one error. It was but nominally a war of alliance. As the combined powers pursued it, there was nothing to hold an alliance together. There could be no tie of *honor* in a society for pillage. There could be no tie of a common *interest*, where the object did not offer such a division amongst the parties as could well give them a warm concern in the gains of each other, or could, indeed, form such a body of equivalents as might make one of them willing to abandon a separate object of his ambition for the gratification of any other member of the alliance. The partition of Poland offered an object of spoil in which the parties might agree. They were circumjacent, and each might take a portion convenient to his own territory. They might dispute about the value of their several shares, but the contiguity to each of the demandants always furnished the means of an adjustment. Though hereafter the world will have cause to rue this iniquitous measure, and they most who were most concerned in it, for the moment there was wherewithal in the object to preserve peace amongst confederates in the wrong. But the spoil of France did not afford the same facilities for accommodation. What might satisfy the House of Austria in a Flemish frontier afforded no equivalent to tempt the cupidity of the King of Prussia. What might be desired by Great Britain in the West Indies must be coldly and remotely, if at all, felt as an interest at Vienna, and it would be felt as something worse than a negative interest at Madrid. Austria, long possessed with unwise and dangerous designs on Italy, could not be very much in earnest about the conservation of the old patrimony of the House of Savoy; and Sardinia, who owed to an Italian force all her means of shutting out France from Italy, of which she has been supposed to hold the key, would not purchase the means of strength upon one side by yielding it on the other: she would not readily give the possession of Novara for the hope of Savoy. No Continental power was willing to lose any of its Continental objects for the increase of the naval power of Great Britain; and Great Britain would not give up any of the objects she sought for, as the means of an increase to her naval power, to further their aggrandizement.

The moment this war came to be considered as a war merely of profit, the actual circumstances are such that it never could become really a war of alliance. Nor can the peace be a peace of alliance, until things are pat upon their right bottom.

I do not find it denied, that, when a treaty is entered into for peace, a demand will be made on the Regicides to surrender a great part of their conquests on the Continent. Will they, in the present state of the war, make that surrender without an equivalent? This Continental cession must of course be made in favor of that party in the alliance that has suffered losses. That party has nothing to furnish towards an equivalent. What equivalent, for instance, has Holland to offer, who has lost her all? What equivalent can come from the Emperor, every part of whose territories contiguous to France is already within the pale of the Regicide dominion? What equivalent has Sardinia to offer for Savoy, and for Nice, I may say, for her whole being? What has she taken from the faction of France? She has lost very near her all, and she has gained nothing. What equivalent has Spain to give? Alas! She has already paid for her own ransom the fund of equivalent, and a dreadful equivalent it is, to England and to herself. But I put Spain out of the question: she is a province of the Jacobin empire, and she must make peace or war according to the orders she receives from the Directory of Assassins. In effect and substance, her crown is a fief of Regicide.

Whence, then, can the compensation be demanded? Undoubtedly from that power, which alone has made some conquests. That power is England. Will the Allies, then, give away their ancient patrimony, that England may keep islands in the West Indies? They never can protract the war in good earnest for that object; nor can they act in concert with us, in our refusal to grant anything towards their redemption. In that case we are thus situated: either we must give Europe, bound hand and foot, to France, or we must quit the West Indies without any one object, great or small, towards indemnity and security. I repeat it, without any advantage whatever: because, supposing that our conquest could comprise all that France ever possessed in the tropical America, it never can amount in any fair estimation to a fair equivalent for Holland, for the Austrian Netherlands, for the Lower Germany, that is, for the whole ancient kingdom or circle of Burgundy, now under the yoke of Regicide,

to say nothing of almost all Italy, under the same barbarous domination. If we treat in the present situation of things, we have nothing in our hands that can redeem Europe. Nor is the Emperor, as I have observed, more rich in the fund of equivalents.

If we look to our stock in the Eastern world, our most valuable and systematic acquisitions are made in that quarter. Is it from France they are made? France has but one or two contemptible factories, subsisting by the offal of the private fortunes of English individuals to support them, in any part of India. I look on the taking of the Cape of Good Hope as the securing of a post of great moment; it does honor to those who planned and to those who executed that enterprise; but I speak of it always as comparatively good, as good as anything can be in a scheme of war that repels us from a centre and employs all our forces where nothing can be finally decisive. But giving, as I freely give, every possible credit to these Eastern conquests, I ask one question: on whom are they made? It is evident, that, if we can keep our Eastern conquests, we keep them not at the expense of France, but at the expense of Holland, our *ally*, of Holland, the immediate cause of the war, the nation whom we had undertaken to protect, and not of the Republic, which it was our business to destroy. If we return the African and the Asiatic conquests, we put them into the hands of a nominal State (to that Holland is reduced) unable to retain them, and which will virtually leave them under the direction of France. If we withhold them, Holland declines still more as a state. She loses so much carrying trade, and that means of keeping up the small degree of naval power she holds: for which policy alone, and not for any commercial gain, she maintains the Cape, or any settlement beyond it. In that case, resentment, faction, and even necessity, will throw her more and more into the power of the new, mischievous Republic. But on the probable state of Holland I shall say more, when in this correspondence I come to talk over with you the state in which any sort of Jacobin peace will leave all Europe.

So far as to the East Indies.

As to the West Indies, indeed, as to either, if we look for matter of exchange in order to ransom Europe, it is easy to show that we have taken a terribly roundabout road. I cannot conceive, even if, for the sake of holding conquests there, we should refuse to redeem Holland, and

the Austrian Netherlands, and the hither Germany, that Spain, merely as she is Spain, (and forgetting that the Regicide ambassador governs at Madrid), will see with perfect satisfaction Great Britain as the sole mistress of the isles. In truth, it appears to me, that, when we come to balance our account, we shall find in the proposed peace only the pure, simple, and unendowed charms of Jacobin amity. We shall have the satisfaction of knowing that no blood or treasure has been spared by the Allies for support of the Regicide system. We shall reflect at leisure on one great truth: that it was ten times more easy totally to destroy the system itself than, when established, it would be to reduce its power, and that this republic, most formidable abroad, was of all things the weakest at home; that her frontier was terrible, her interior feeble; that it was matter of choice to attack her where she is invincible, and to spare her where she was ready to dissolve by her own internal disorders. We shall reflect that our plan was good neither for offence nor defence.

It would not be at all difficult to prove that an army of a hundred thousand men, horse, foot, and artillery, might have been employed against the enemy, on the very soil, which he has usurped, at a far less expense than has been squandered away upon tropical adventures. In these adventures it was not an enemy we had to vanquish, but a cemetery to conquer. In carrying on the war in the West Indies, the hostile sword is merciful, the country in which we engage is the dreadful enemy. There the European conqueror finds a cruel defeat in the very fruits of his success. Every advantage is but a new demand on England for recruits to the West Indian grave. In a West Indian war, the Regicides have for their troops a race of fierce barbarians, to whom the poisoned air, in which our youth inhale certain death, is salubrious and life-giving. To them the climate is the surest and most faithful of allies.

Had we carried on the war on the side of France, which looks towards the Channel or the Atlantic, we should have attacked our enemy on his weak and unarmed side. We should not have to reckon on the loss of a man who did not fall in battle. We should have an ally in the heart of the country, who to our hundred thousand would at one time have added eighty thousand men at the least, and all animated by principle, by enthusiasm, and by vengeance: motives which secured them to the cause in a very different manner from some of those allies whom we subsidized with

millions. This ally, (or rather, this principal in the war,) by the confession of the Regicide himself, was more formidable to him than all his other foes united. Warring there, we should have led our arms to the Capital of Wrong. Defeated, we could not fail (proper precautions taken) of a sure retreat. Stationary, and only supporting the royalists, an impenetrable barrier, an impregnable rampart, would have been formed between the enemy and his naval power. We are probably the only nation who have declined to act against an enemy when it might have been done in his own country, and who, having an armed, a powerful, and a long-victorious ally in that country, declined all effectual cooperation, and suffered him to perish for want of support. On the plan of a war in France, every advantage that our allies might obtain would be doubled in its effect. Disasters on the one side might have a fair chance of being compensated by victories on the other. Had we brought the main of our force to bear upon that quarter, all the operations of the British and Imperial crowns would have been combined. The war would have had system, correspondence, and a certain direction. But as the war has been pursued, the operations of the two crowns have not the smallest degree of mutual bearing or relation.

Had acquisitions in the West Indies been our object, on success in France, everything reasonable in those remote parts might be demanded with decorum and justice and a sure effect. Well might we call for a recompense in America for those services to which Europe owed its safety. Having abandoned this obvious policy connected with principle, we have seen the Regicide power taking the reverse course, and making real conquests in the West Indies, to which all our dear-bought advantages (if we could hold them) are mean and contemptible. The noblest island within the tropics, worth all that we possess put together, is by the vassal Spaniard delivered into her hands. The island of Hispaniola (of which we have but one poor comer, by a slippery hold) is perhaps equal to England in extent, and in fertility is far superior. The part possessed by Spain of that great island, made for the seat and centre of a tropical empire, was not improved, to be sure, as the French division had been, before it was systematically destroyed by the Cannibal Republic; but it is not only the far larger, but the far more salubrious and more fertile part.

It was delivered into the hands of the barbarians, without, as I can find, any public reclamation on our part, not only in contravention to

one of the fundamental treaties that compose the public law of Europe, but in defiance of the fundamental colonial policy of Spain herself. This part of the Treaty of Utrecht was made for great general ends, unquestionably; but whilst it provided for those general ends, it was in affirmance of that particular policy. It was not to injure, but to save Spain, by making a settlement of her estate, which prohibited her to alienate to France. It is her policy not to see the balance of West Indian power overturned by France or by Great Britain. Whilst the monarchies subsisted, this unprincipled cession was what the influence of the elder branch of the House of Bourbon never dared to attempt on the younger, but cannibal terror has been more powerful than family influence. The Bourbon monarchy of Spain is united to the Republic of France by what may be truly called the ties of blood.

By this measure the balance of power in the West Indies is totally destroyed. It has followed the balance of power in Europe. It is not alone what shall be left nominally to the Assassins that is theirs. Theirs is the whole empire of Spain in America. That stroke finishes all. I should be glad to see our suppliant negotiator in the act of putting his feather to the ear of the Directory, to make it unclench the fist, and, by his tickling, to charm that rich prize out of the iron grip of robbery and ambition! It does not require much sagacity to discern that no power wholly baffled and defeated in Europe can flatter itself with conquests in the West Indies. In that state of things it can neither keep nor hold. No! It cannot even long make war, if the grand bank and deposit of its force is at all in the West Indies. But here a scene opens to my view too important to pass by, perhaps too critical to touch. Is it possible that it should not present itself in all its relations to a mind habituated to consider either war or peace on a large scale or as one whole?

Unfortunately, other ideas have prevailed. A remote, an expensive, a murderous, and, in the end, an unproductive adventure, carried on upon ideas of mercantile knight-errantry, without any of the generous wildness of Quixotism, is considered as sound, solid sense; and a war in a wholesome climate, a war at our door, a war directly on the enemy, a war in the heart of his country, a war in concert with an internal ally, and in combination with the external, is regarded as folly and romance.

My dear friend, I hold it impossible that these considerations should have escaped the statesmen on both sides of the water, and on both sides of the House of Commons. How a question of peace can be discussed without having them in view I cannot imagine. If you or others see a way out of these difficulties, I am happy. I see, indeed, a fund from whence equivalents will be proposed. I see it, but I cannot just now touch it. It is a question of high moment. It opens another Iliad of woes to Europe.

Such is the time proposed for making a *common political peace* to which no one circumstance is propitious. As to the grand principle of the peace, it is left, as if by common consent, wholly out of the question.

Viewing things in this light, I have frequently sunk into a degree of despondency and dejection hardly to be described; yet out of the profoundest depths of this despair, an impulse, which I have in vain endeavored to resist has urged me to raise one feeble cry against this unfortunate coalition, which is formed at home, in order to make a coalition with France, subversive of the whole ancient order of the world. No disaster of war, no calamity of season, could ever strike me with half the horror which I felt from what is introduced to us by this junction of parties under the soothing name of peace. We are apt to speak of a low and pusillanimous spirit as the ordinary cause by which dubious wars terminate in humiliating treaties. It is here the direct contrary. I am perfectly astonished at the boldness of character, at the intrepidity of mind, the firmness of nerve, in those who are able with deliberation to face the perils of Jacobin fraternity.

This fraternity is, indeed, so terrible in its nature, and in its manifest consequences, that there is no way of quieting our apprehensions about it, but by totally putting it out of sight, by substituting for it, through a sort of periphrasis, something of an ambiguous quality, and describing such a connection under the terms of "*the usual relations of peace and amity.*" By this means the proposed fraternity is hustled in the crowd of those treaties, which imply no change in the public law of Europe, and which do not upon system affect the interior condition of nations. It is confounded with those conventions in which matters of dispute among sovereign powers are compromised by the taking off a duty more or less, by the surrender of a frontier town or a disputed district on the one side or the other, by pactions in which the pretensions of families are settled, (as by a conveyancer making family substitutions and successions,) without any alteration in the laws, manners, religion, privileges, and customs of the cities or territories, which are the subject of such arrangements.

All this body of old conventions, composing the vast and voluminous collection called the *Corps Diplomatique*, form the code or statute law, as the methodized reasonings of the great publicists and jurists form the digest and jurisprudence, of the Christian world. In these treasures are to be found the usual relations of peace and amity in civilized Europe; and there the relations of ancient France were to be found amongst the rest.

The present system in France is not the ancient France. It is not the ancient France with ordinary ambition and ordinary means. It is not a new power of an old kind. It is a new power of a new species. When such a questionable shape is to be admitted for the first time into the brotherhood of Christendom, it is not a mere matter of idle curiosity to consider how far it is in its nature alliable with the rest, or whether "the relations of peace and amity" with this new state are likely to be of the same nature with the usual relations of the States of Europe.

The Revolution in France had the relation of France to other nations as one of its principal objects. The changes made by that Revolution were not the better to accommodate her to the old and usual relations, but to produce new ones. The Revolution was made, not to make France free, but to make her formidable, not to make her a neighbour, but a mistress, not to make her more observant of laws, but to put her in a condition to impose them. To make France truly formidable, it was necessary that France should be newly modelled. They who have not followed the train of the late proceedings have been led by deceitful representations (which deceit made a part in the plan) to conceive that this totally new model of a State, in which nothing escaped a change, was made with a view to its internal relations only.

In the Revolution of France, two sorts of men were principally concerned in giving a character and determination to its pursuits: the philosophers and the politicians. They took different ways, but they met in the same end.

The philosophers had one predominant object, which they pursued with a fanatical fury, that is, the utter extirpation of religion. To that

every question of empire was subordinate. They had rather domineer in a parish of atheists than rule over a Christian world. Their temporal ambition was wholly subservient to their proselytizing spirit, in which they were not exceeded by Mahomet himself.

They who have made but superficial studies in the natural history of the human mind have been taught to look on religious opinions as the only cause of enthusiastic zeal and sectarian propagation. But there is no doctrine whatever, on which men can warm, that is not capable of the very same effect. The social nature of man impels him to propagate his principles, as much as physical impulses urge him to propagate his kind. The passions give zeal and vehemence. The understanding bestows design and system. The whole man moves under the discipline of his opinions. Religion is among the most powerful causes of enthusiasm. When anything concerning it becomes an object of much meditation, it cannot be indifferent to the mind. They who do not love religion hate it. The rebels to God perfectly abhor the Author of their being. They hate Him "with all their heart, with all their mind, with all their soul, and with all their strength". He never presents Himself to their thoughts, but to menace and alarm them. They cannot strike the sun out of heaven, but they are able to raise a smouldering smoke that obscures him from their own eyes. Not being able to revenge themselves on God, they have a delight in vicariously defacing, degrading, torturing, and tearing in pieces His image in man. Let no one judge of them by what he has conceived of them, when they were not incorporated, and had no lead. They were then only passengers in a common vehicle. They were then carried along with the general motion of religion in the community, and, without being aware of it, partook of its influence. In that situation, at worst, their nature was left free to counterwork their principles. They despaired of giving any very general currency to their opinions: they considered them as a reserved privilege for the chosen few. But when the possibility of dominion, lead, and propagation presented themselves, and that the ambition which before had so often made them hypocrites might rather gain than lose by a daring avowal of their sentiments, then the nature of this infernal spirit, which has "evil for its good," appeared in its full perfection. Nothing, indeed, but the possession of some power can with any certainty discover what at the bottom is the true character of any

man. Without reading the speeches of Vergniaud, Français of Nantes, Isnard, and some others of that sort, it would not be easy to conceive the passion, rancour, and malice of their tongues and hearts. They worked themselves up to a perfect frenzy against religion and all its professors. They tore the reputation of the clergy to pieces by their infuriated declamations and invectives, before they lacerated their bodies by their massacres. This fanatical atheism left out, we omit the principal feature in the French Revolution, a principal consideration with regard to the effects to be expected from a peace with it.

The other sort of men were the politicians. To them, who had little or not at all reflected on the subject, religion was in itself no object of love or hatred. They disbelieved it, and that was all. Neutral with regard to that object, they took the side which in the present state of things might best answer their purposes. They soon found that they could not do without the philosophers; and the philosophers soon made them sensible that the destruction of religion was to supply them with means of conquest, first at home, and then abroad. The philosophers were the active internal agitators, and supplied the spirit and principles: the second gave the practical direction. Sometimes the one predominated in the composition, sometimes the other. The only difference between them was in the necessity of concealing the general design for a time, and in their dealing with foreign nations: the fanatics going straight forward and openly, the politicians by the surer mode of zigzag. In the course of events, this, among other causes, produced fierce and bloody contentions between them; but at the bottom they thoroughly agreed in all the objects of ambition and irreligion, and substantially in all the means of promoting these ends.

Without question, to bring about the unexampled event of the French Revolution, the concurrence of a very great number of views and passions was necessary. In that stupendous work, no one principle by which the human mind may have its faculties at once invigorated and depraved was left unemployed; but I can speak it to a certainty, and support it by undoubted proofs, that the ruling principle of those who acted in the Revolution as statesmen had the exterior aggrandizement of France as their ultimate end in the most minute part of the internal changes that were made. We, who of late have been drawn away from

an attention to foreign affairs by the importance of our domestic discussions, cannot easily form a conception of the general eagerness of the active and energetic part of the French nation, itself the most active and energetic of all nations, previous to its Revolution, upon that subject. I am convinced that the foreign speculators in France, under the old government, were twenty to one of the same description then or now in England; and few of that description there were who did not emulously set forward the Revolution. The whole official system, particularly in the diplomatic part, the regulars, the irregulars, down to the clerks in office, (a corps without all comparison more numerous than the same amongst us,) cooperated in it. All the intriguers in foreign politics, all the spies, all the intelligencers, actually or late in function, all the candidates for that sort of employment, acted solely upon that principle.

On that system of aggrandizement there was but one mind while two violent factions arose about the means. The first wished France, diverted from the politics of the continent, to attend solely to her marine affairs, to feed it by an increase of commerce, and thereby to overpower England on her own element. They contended, that, if England were disabled, the powers on the Continent would fall into their proper subordination; that it was England which deranged the whole Continental system of Europe. The others, who were by far the more numerous, though not the most outwardly prevalent at court, considered this plan for France as contrary to her genius, her situation, and her natural means. They agreed as to the ultimate object, the reduction of the British power, and, if possible, its naval power; but they considered an ascendancy on the Continent as a necessary preliminary to that undertaking. They argued, that the proceedings of England herself had proved the soundness of this policy: that her greatest and ablest statesmen had not considered the support of a Continental balance against France as a deviation from the principle of her naval power, but as one of the most effectual modes of carrying it into effect; that such had been her policy ever since the Revolution, during which period the naval strength of Great Britain had gone on increasing in the direct ratio of her interference in the politics of the Continent. With much stronger reason ought the politics of France to take the same direction, as well for pursuing objects, which her situation would dictate to her, though England had no existence, as for counteracting

the politics of that nation: to France Continental politics are primary; they looked on them only of secondary consideration to England, and, however necessary, but as means necessary to an end.

What is truly astonishing the partisans of those two opposite systems were at once prevalent, and at once employed, and in the very same transactions, the one ostensibly, the other secretly, during the latter part of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth. Nor was there one court in which an ambassador resided on the part of the ministers, in which another, as a spy on him, did not also reside on the part of the king: they who pursued the scheme for keeping peace on the Continent, and particularly with Austria, acting officially and publicly; the other faction counteracting and opposing them. These private agents were continually going from their function to the Bastille, and from the Bastille to employment and favor again. An inextricable cabal was formed, some of persons of rank, others of subordinates. But by this means the corps of politicians was augmented in number, and the whole formed a body of active, adventuring, ambitious, discontented people, despising the regular ministry, despising the courts at which they were employed, despising the court which employed them.

The unfortunate Louis the Sixteenth[(2)] was not the first cause of the evil by which he suffered. He came to it, as to a sort of inheritance, by the false politics of his immediate predecessor. This system of dark and perplexed intrigue had come to its perfection before he came to the throne; and even then the Revolution strongly operated in all its causes.

There was no point on which the discontented diplomatic politicians so bitterly arraigned their cabinet as for the decay of French influence in all others. From quarrelling with the court, they began to complain of

---

(2) It may be right to do justice to Louis the Sixteenth. He did what he could to destroy the double diplomacy of France. He had all the secret correspondence burnt, except one piece, which was called *Conjectures raisonnées sur la Situation actuelle de la France dans le Systéme Politique de l'Europe*: a work executed by M. Favier, under the direction of Count Broglie. A single copy of this was said to have been found in the cabinet of Louis the Sixteenth. It was published with some subsequent state papers of Vergennes, Turgot, and others, as "a new benefit of the Revolution," and the advertisement to the publication ends with the following words: "Il sera facile de se convaincre, qu'i compris meme la revolution, en grande partis, on trouve dane ces memoires et ces conjectures le germe de tout ce qui arrive aujourd'hui, eh qu;on ne peut, sans les avois lus, etre bien au fait des interest, et meme des vues actuelles des diverses puissances de P Europe." The book is entitled *Politique de tous les Cabinets de l'Europe pendant les Regnes de Louis XV. et de Louis XVI*. It is altogether curiosity inducing and worth reading.

monarchy itself, as a system of government too variable for any regular plan of national aggrandizement. They observed that in that sort of regimen too much depended on the personal character of the prince: that the vicissitudes produced by the succession of princes of a different character, and even the vicissitudes produced in the same man, by the different views and inclinations belonging to youth, manhood, and age, disturbed and distracted the policy of a country made by Nature for extensive empire, or what was still more to their taste, for that sort of general overruling influence, which prepared empire or supplied the place of it. They had continually in their hands the observations of Machiavelli on Livy. They had Montesquieu's *Grandeur Décadence des Romains* as a manual; and they compared, with mortification, the systematic proceedings of a Roman Senate with the fluctuations of a monarchy. They observed the very small additions of territory. which all the power of France, actuated by all the ambition of France, had acquired in two centuries. The Romans had frequently acquired more in a single year. They severely and in every part of it criticized the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, whose irregular and desultory ambition had more provoked than endangered Europe. Indeed, they who will be at the pains of seriously considering the history of that period will see that those French politicians had some reason. They who will not take the trouble of reviewing it through all its wars and all its negotiations will consult the short, but judicious, criticism of the Marquis de Montalembert on that subject. It may be read separately from his ingenious system of fortification and military defence, on the practical merit of which I am unable to form a judgement.

The diplomatic politicians of whom I speak, and who formed by far the majority in that class, made disadvantageous comparisons even between their more legal and formalizing monarchy and the monarchies of other States, as a system of power and influence. They observed that France not only lost ground herself, but, through the languor and unsteadiness of her pursuits, and from her aiming through commerce at naval force, which she never could attain without losing more on one side than she could gain on the other, three great powers, each of them (as military States) capable of balancing her, had grown up on the Continent. Russia and Prussia had been created almost within memory;

and Austria, though not a new power, and even curtailed in territory, was, by the very collision in which she lost that territory, greatly improved in her military discipline and force. During the reign of Maria Theresa, the interior economy of the country was made more to correspond with the support of great armies than formerly it had been. As to Prussia, a merely military power, they observed that one war had enriched her with as considerable a conquest as France had acquired in centuries. Russia had broken the Turkish power, by which Austria might be, as formerly she had been, balanced in favor of France. They felt it with pain, that the two Northern powers of Sweden and Denmark were in general under the sway of Russia, or that, at best, France kept up a very doubtful conflict, with many fluctuations of fortune, and at an enormous expense, in Sweden. In Holland the French party seemed, if not extinguished, at least utterly obscured, and kept under by a Stadtholder, leaning for support sometimes on Great Britain, sometimes on Prussia, sometimes on both, never on France. Even the spreading of the Bourbon family had become merely a family accommodation and had little effect on national politics. This alliance, they said, extinguished Spain by destroying all its energy, without adding anything to the real power of France in the accession of the forces of its great rival. In Italy the same family accommodation, the same national insignificance, were equally visible. What cure for the radical weakness of the French monarchy, to which all the means which it could devise, or Nature and fortune could bestow, towards universal empire, was not of force to give life or vigour or consistency, but in a republic? Out the word came: and it never went back.

Whether they reasoned right or wrong, or that there was some mixture of right and wrong in their reasoning, I am sure that in this manner they felt and reasoned. The different effects of a great military and ambitious republic and of a monarchy of the same description were constantly in their mouths. The principle was ready to operate, when opportunities should offer, which few of them, indeed, foresaw in the extent in which they were afterwards presented; but these opportunities, in some degree or other, they all ardently wished for.

When I was in Paris in 1773, the treaty of 1756 between Austria and France was deplored as a national calamity; because it united France in friendship with a power at whose expense alone they could hope any

Continental aggrandizement. When the first partition of Poland was made, in which France had no share, and which had farther aggrandized every one of the three powers of which they were most jealous, I found them in a perfect frenzy of rage and indignation: not that they were hurt at the shocking and uncoloured violence and injustice of that partition, but at the debility, improvidence, and want of activity in their government, in not preventing it as a means of aggrandizement to their rivals, or in not contriving, by exchanges of some kind or other, to obtain their share of advantage from that robbery.

In that or nearly in that State of things and of opinions came the Austrian match, which promised to draw the knot, as afterwards in effect it did, still more closely between the old rival houses. This added exceedingly to their hatred and contempt of their monarchy. It was for this reason that the late glorious queen, who on all accounts was formed to produce general love and admiration, and whose life was as mild and beneficent as her death was beyond example great and heroic, became so very soon and so very much the object of an implacable rancour never to be extinguished but in her blood. When I wrote my letter in answer to M. de Menonville, in the beginning of January, 1791, I had good reason for thinking that this description of revolutionists did not so early nor so steadily point their murderous designs at the martyr king as at the royal heroine. It was accident, and the momentary depression of that part of the faction, that gave to the husband the happy priority in death.

From their restless desire of an overruling influence, they bent a very great part of their designs and efforts to revive the old French party, which was a democratic party, in Holland, and to make a revolution there. They were happy at the troubles, which the singular imprudence of Joseph the Second had stirred up in the Austrian Netherlands. They rejoiced, when they saw him irritate his subjects, profess philosophy, send away the Dutch garrisons, and dismantle his fortifications. As to Holland, they never forgave either the king or the ministry for suffering that object, which they justly looked on as principal in their design of reducing the power of England, to escape out of their hands. This was the true secret of the commercial treaty, made, on their part, against all the old rules and principles of commerce, with a view of diverting the English nation, by a pursuit of immediate profit, from an attention to the progress of France

in its designs upon that republic. The system of the economists, which led to the general opening of commerce, facilitated that treaty, but did not produce it. They were in despair, when they found, that, by the vigour of Mr. Pitt, supported in this point by Mr. Fox and the opposition, the object to which they had sacrificed their manufactures was lost to their ambition.

This eager desire of raising France from the condition into which she had fallen, as they conceived, from her monarchical imbecility, had been the main spring of their precedent interference in that unhappy American quarrel, the bad effects of which to this nation have not as yet fully disclosed themselves. These sentiments had been long lurking in their breasts, though their views were only discovered now and then in heat and as by escapes, but on this occasion they exploded suddenly. They were professed with ostentation, and propagated with zeal. These sentiments were not produced, as some think, by their American alliance. The American alliance was produced by their republican principles and republican policy. This new relation undoubtedly did much. The discourses and cabals that it produced, the intercourse that it established, and, above all, the example, which made it seem practicable to establish a republic in a great extent of country, finished the work, and gave to that part of the revolutionary faction a degree of strength, which required other energies than the late king possessed to resist or even to restrain. It spread everywhere; but it was nowhere more prevalent than in the heart of the court. The palace of Versailles, by its language, seemed a forum of democracy. To have pointed out to most of those politicians, from their dispositions and movements, what has since happened, the fall of their own monarchy, of their own laws, of their own religion, would have been to furnish a motive the more for pushing forward a system on which they considered all these things as encumbrances. Such in truth they were. And we have seen them succeed, not only in the destruction of their monarchy, but in all the objects of ambition that they proposed from that destruction.

When I contemplate the scheme on which France is formed, and when I compare it with these systems with which it is and ever must be in conflict, those things which seem as defects in her polity are the very things which make me tremble. The States of the Christian world

have grown up to their present magnitude in a great length of time and by a great variety of accidents. They have been improved to what we see them with greater or less degrees of felicity and skill. Not one of them has been formed upon a regular plan or with any unity of design. As their constitutions are not systematic, they have not been directed to any peculiar end, eminently distinguished, and superseding every other. The objects which they embrace are of the greatest possible variety, and have become in a manner infinite. In all these old countries, the State has been made to the people, and not the people conformed to the state. Every state has pursued not only every sort of social advantage, but it has cultivated the welfare of every individual. His wants, his wishes, even his tastes, have been consulted. This comprehensive scheme virtually produced a degree of personal liberty in forms the most adverse to it. That liberty was found, under monarchies styled absolute, in a degree unknown to the ancient commonwealths. From hence the powers of all our modem States meet, in all their movements, with some obstruction. It is, therefore, no wonder, that when these States are to be considered as machines to operate for one great end, that this dissipated and balanced force is not easily concentrated or made to bear with the whole force of the nation upon one point.

The British state is, without question, that which pursues the greatest variety of ends, and is the least disposed to sacrifice any one of them to another or to the whole. It aims at taking in the entire circle of human desires, and securing for them their fair enjoyment. Our legislature has been ever closely connected, in its most efficient part, with individual feeling and individual interest. Personal liberty, the most lively of these feelings and the most important of these interests, which in other European countries has rather arisen from the system of manners and the habits of life than from the laws of the state, (in which it flourished more from neglect than attention,) in England has been a direct object of government.

On this principle, England would be the weakest power in the whole system. Fortunately, however, the great riches of this kingdom, arising from a variety of causes, and the disposition of the people, which is as great to spend as to accumulate, has easily afforded a disposable surplus that gives a mighty momentum to the state. This difficulty, with these

advantages to overcome it, has called forth the talents of the English financiers, who, by the surplus of industry poured out by prodigality, have outdone everything, which has been accomplished in other nations. The present minister has outdone his predecessors, and, as a minister of revenue, is far above my power of praise. But still there are cases in which England feels more than several others (though they all feel) the perplexity of an immense body of balanced advantages and of individual demands, and of some irregularity in the whole mass.

France differs essentially from all those governments, which are formed without system, which exist by habit, and which are confused with the multitude and with the complexity of their pursuits. What now stands as government in France is struck out at a heat. The design is wicked, immoral, impious, oppressive: but it is spirited and daring; it is systematic; it is simple in its principle; it has unity and consistency in perfection. In that country, entirely to cut off a branch of commerce, to extinguish a manufacture, to destroy the circulation of money, to violate credit, to suspend the course of agriculture, even to burn a city or to lay waste a province of their own, does not cost them a moment's anxiety. To them the will, the wish, the want, the liberty, the toil, the blood of individuals, is nothing. Individuality is left out of their schema of government. The state is all in all. Everything is referred to the production of force; afterwards, everything is trusted to the use of it. It is military in its principle, in its maxims, in its spirit, and in all its movements. The state has dominion and conquest as its sole objects, dominion over minds by proselytism, over bodies by arms.

Thus constituted, with an immense body of natural means, which are lessened in their amount only to be increased in their effect, France has, since the accomplishment of the Revolution, a complete unity in its direction. It has destroyed every resource of the state, which depends upon opinion and the goodwill of individuals. The riches of convention disappear. The advantages of Nature in some measure remain; even these, I admit, are astonishingly lessened; the command over what remains is complete and absolute. We go about asking when assignats will expire, and we laugh at the last price of them. But what signifies the fate of those tickets of despotism? The despotism will find despotic means of supply. They have found the short cut to the productions of Nature, while

others, in pursuit of them, are obliged to wind through the labyrinth of a very intricate state of society. They seize upon the fruit of the labour; they seize upon the labourer himself. Were France but half of what it is in population, in compactness, in applicability of its force, situated as it is, and being what it is, it would be too strong for most of the states of Europe, constituted as they are, and proceeding as they proceed. Would it be wise to estimate what the world of Europe, as well as the world of Asia, had to dread from Genghiz Khán, upon a contemplation of the resources of the cold and barren spot in the remotest Tartary from whence first issued that scourge of the human race? Ought we to judge from the excise and stamp duties of the rocks, or from the paper circulation of the sands of Arabia, the power by which Mahomet and his tribes laid hold at once on the two most powerful empires of the world, beat one of them totally to the ground, broke to pieces the other, and, in not much longer space of time than I have lived, overturned governments, laws, manners, religion, and extended an empire from the Indus to the Pyrenees?

Material resources never have supplied, nor ever can supply, the want of unity in design and constancy in pursuit. But unity in design and perseverance and boldness in pursuit have never wanted resources, and never will. We have not considered as we ought the dreadful energy of a State in which the property has nothing to do with the government. Reflect, my dear Sir, reflect again and again, on a government in which the property is in complete subjection, and where nothing rules but the mind of desperate men. The condition of a commonwealth not governed by its property was a combination of things which the learned and ingenious speculator, Harrington, who has tossed about society into all forms, never could imagine to be possible. We have seen it; the world has felt it; and if the world will shut their eyes to this State of things, they will feel it more. The rulers there have found their resources in crimes. The discovery is dreadful, the mine exhaustless. They have everything to gain, and they have nothing to lose. They have a boundless inheritance in hope, and there is no medium for them betwixt the highest elevation and death with infamy. Never can they, who, from the miserable servitude of the desk, have been raised to empire, again submit to the bondage of a starving bureau, or the profit of copying music, or writing *plaidoyers* by the sheet. It has made me often smile in bitterness, when I have heard talk

of an indemnity to such men, provided they returned to their allegiance.

From all this what is my inference? It is, that this new system of robbery in France cannot be rendered safe by any art; that it be destroyed, or that it will destroy all Europe; that to destroy that enemy, by some means or other, the force opposed to it should be made to bear some analogy and resemblance to the force and spirit which that system exerts; that war ought to be made against it in its vulnerable parts. These are my inferences. In one word, with this republic nothing independent can coexist. The errors of Louis the Sixteenth were more pardonable to prudence than any of those of the same kind into which the allied courts may fall. They have the benefit of his dreadful example.

The unhappy Louis the Sixteenth was a man of the best intentions that probably ever reigned. He was by no means deficient in talents. He had a most laudable desire to supply by general reading, and even by the acquisition of elemental knowledge, an education in all points originally defective; but nobody told him (and it was no wonder he should not himself divine it) that the world of which he read and the world in which he lived were no longer the same. Desirous of doing everything for the best, fearful of the cabal, distrusting his own judgment, he sought his ministers of all kinds upon public testimony. But as courts are the field for caballers, the public is the theatre for mountebanks and impostors. The cure for both those evils is in the discernment of the prince. But an accurate and penetrating discernment is what in a young prince could not be looked for.

His conduct in its principle was not unwise; but, like most other of his well-meant designs, it failed in his hands. It failed partly from mere ill fortune, to which speculators are rarely pleased to assign that very large share to which she is justly entitled in all human affairs. The failure, perhaps, in part, was owing to his suffering his system to be vitiated and disturbed by those intrigues which it is, humanly speaking, impossible wholly to prevent in courts, or indeed under any form of government. However, with these aberrations, he gave himself over to a succession of the statesmen of public opinion. In other things be thought that he might be a king on the terms of his predecessors. He was conscious of the purity of his heart and the general good tendency of his government. He flattered himself, as most men in his situation will, that he might consult

his ease without danger to his safety. It is not at all wonderful that both he and his ministers, giving way abundantly in other respects to innovation, should take up in policy with the tradition of their monarchy. Under his ancestors, the monarchy had subsisted, and even been strengthened, by the generation or support of republics. First, the Swiss republics grew under the guardianship of the French monarchy. The Dutch republics were hatched and cherished under the same incubation. Afterwards, a republican constitution was, under the influence of France, established in the Empire, against the pretensions of its chief. Even whilst the monarchy of France, by a series of wars and negotiations, and lastly by the Treaties of Westphalia, had obtained the establishment of the Protestants in Germany as a law of the Empire, the same monarchy under Louis the Thirteenth had force enough to destroy the republican system of the Protestants at home.

Louis the Sixteenth was a diligent reader of history. But the very lamp of prudence blinded him. The guide of human life led him astray. A silent revolution in the moral world preceded the political, and prepared it. It became of more importance than ever what examples were given, and what measures were adopted. Their causes no longer lurked in the recesses of cabinets or in the private conspiracies of the factions. They were no longer to be controlled by the force and influence of the grandees, who formerly had been able to stir up troubles by their discontents and to quiet them by their corruption. The chain of subordination, even in cabal and sedition, was broken in its most important links. It was no longer the great and the populace. Other interests were formed, other dependencies, other connections, other communications. The middle classes had swelled far beyond their former proportion. Like whatever is the most effectively rich and great in society, these classes became the seat of all the active politics, and the preponderating weight to decide on them. There were all the energies by which fortune is acquired; there the consequence of their success. There were all the talents, which assert their pretensions, and are impatient of the place, which settled society prescribes to them. These descriptions had got between the great and the populace; and the influence on the lower classes was with them. The spirit of ambition had taken possession of this class as violently as ever it had done of any other. They felt the importance of

this situation. The correspondence of the moneyed and the mercantile world, the literary intercourse of academies, but above all, the press, of which they had in a manner entire possession, made a kind of electric communication everywhere. The press, in reality, has made every government, in its spirit, almost democratic. Without the press, the first movements in this revolution could not, perhaps, have been given. But the spirit of ambition, now for the first time connected with the spirit of speculation, was not to be restrained at will. There was no longer any means of arresting a principle in its course. When Louis the Sixteenth, under the influence of the enemies to monarchy, meant to found but one republic, he set up two; when he meant to take away half the crown of his neighbour, he lost the whole of his own. Louis the Sixteenth could not with impunity countenance a new republic. Yet between his throne and that dangerous lodgement for an enemy, which he had erected, he had the whole Atlantic for a ditch. He had for an outwork the English nation itself, friendly to liberty, adverse to that mode of it. He was surrounded by a rampart of monarchies, most of them allied to him, and generally under his influence. Yet even thus secured, a republic erected under his auspices, and dependent on his power, became fatal to his throne. The very money, which he had lent to support this republic, by a good faith which to him operated as perfidy, was punctually paid to his enemies, and became a resource in the hands of his assassins.

With this example before their eyes, do any ministers in England, do any ministers in Austria, really flatter themselves that they can erect, not on the remote shores of the Atlantic, but in their view, in their vicinity, in absolute contact with one of them, not a commercial, but a martial republic, a republic not of simple husbandmen or fishermen, but of intriguers, and of warriors, a republic of a character the most restless, the most enterprising, the most impious, the most fierce and bloody, the most hypocritical and perfidious, the most bold and daring, that ever has been seen, or indeed that can be conceived to exist, without bringing on their own certain ruin?

Such is the republic to which we are going to give a place in civilized fellowship, the republic which, with joint consent, we are going to establish in the centre of Europe, in a post that overlooks and commands every other state, and which eminently confronts and menaces this kingdom.

You cannot fail to observe that I speak as if the allied powers wore actually consenting, and not compelled by events, to the establishment of this faction in France. The words have not escaped me. You will, hereafter, naturally expect that I should make them good. But whether in adopting this measure we are madly active or weakly passive or pusillanimously panic-struck, the effects will be the same. You may call this faction, which has eradicated the monarchy, expelled the proprietary, persecuted religion, and trampled upon law[3], you may call this France, if you please; but of the ancient France nothing remains but its central geography, its iron frontier, its spirit of ambition, its audacity of enterprise, its perplexing intrigue. These, and these alone, remain, and they remain heightened in their principle and augmented in their means. All the former correctives, whether of virtue or of weakness, which existed in the old monarchy, are gone. No single new corrective is to be found in the whole body of the new institutions. How should such a thing be found there, when everything has been chosen with care and selection to forward all those ambitions designs and dispositions, not to control them? The whole is a body of ways and means for the supply of dominion, without one heterogeneous particle in it.

Here I suffer you to breathe, and leave to your meditation what has occurred to me on the *genius and character* of the French Revolution. From having this before us, we may be better able to determine on the first question I proposed, that is, how far nations called foreign are likely to be affected with the system established within that territory. I intended to proceed next on the question of her facilities, *from the internal state of other nations, and particularly of this,* for obtaining her ends; but I ought to be aware that my notions are controverted. I mean, therefore, in my next letter, to take notice of what in that way has been recommended to me as the most deserving of notice. In the examination of those pieces, I shall have occasion to discuss some others of the topics to which I have called your attention. You know that the letters which I now send to the press, as well as a part of what is to follow, have been in their substance long since written. A circumstance, which your partiality

(3) See our Declaration.

alone could make of importance to you, but which to the public is of no importance at all, retarded their appearance. The late events, which press upon us obliged me to make some additions, but no substantial change in the matter.

This discussion, my friend, will be long. But the matter is serious; and if ever the fate of the world could be truly said to depend on a particular measure, it is upon this peace. For the present, farewell.

newdirection.online @europeanreform @europeanreform

978-2-87555-107-8