EDMUND BURKE

THE WORKS OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE EDMUND BURKE, VOL. 04 (OF 12)

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LETTER TO A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, IN ANSWER TO SOME OBJECTIONS TO HIS BOOK ON FRENCH AFFAIRS. 1791

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 church-wardens 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 fervors 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 rigor. 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 past 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

[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.

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. 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 feast

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 dexterous 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 massæ 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 *lanterne* 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

[2] See Burnet's Life of Hale.

the 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, peddlers, and itinerant Jew discounters 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 Jew jobbers 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 those 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 Asiæ*, 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, wherever 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 than 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 impolitic or 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 monarch 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, wise for the general Grecian interests, as well as a brave Lacedæmonian 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 the 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. Tho necessities created even 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 the full lustre of their native villany 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 a 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

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

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 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 humors 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 his 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 harboring 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,[4] 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 this 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 *præceptorem 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

[4] "Filiola tua te delectari lætor, et prohari tibi Φυσικὴν esse τὴν πρὸς τὰ τεκνα: etenim, si hæc non est, nulla potest homini esse ad hominem naturæ adjunctio: qua sublata, vitæ societas tollitur. Valete Patron [Rousseau] et tui condiscipuli [L'Assemblée Nationale]"—Cic. Ep. ad Atticum.

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 honor 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 natural 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 Éloise*.

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 æqui.

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 Éloise* 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 Helvétius, 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 it 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 Virgil[5] 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

[5] Mirabeau's speech concerning universal peace.

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 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 them selves 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. Cazalès, 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 reëstablishment of order and property of *every* kind, and, through the reëstablishment 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 your 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 guardians 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 État*, 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 morientibus 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 ægra,
> 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 an 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 État* 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 État*. On a sober and dispassionate view of your old Constitution, as connected with all the present circumstances, I was fully persuaded that 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, Δός που στῶ.

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 splendor,—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 qualified 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 or 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 turn 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.,
EDMUND BURKE.
BEACONSFIELD, January 19th, 1791.

AN APPEAL FROM THE NEW TO THE OLD WHIGS, IN CONSEQUENCE OF SOME LATE DISCUSSIONS IN PARLIAMENT RELATIVE TO THE REFLECTIONS ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. 1791

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION

There are some corrections in this edition, which tend to render the sense less obscure in one or two places. The order of the two last members is also changed, and I believe for the better. This change was made on the suggestion of a very learned person, to the partiality of whose friendship I owe much; to the severity of whose judgment I owe more.

AN APPEAL FROM THE NEW TO THE OLD WHIGS

At Mr. Burke's time of life, and in his dispositions, *petere honestam missionem* was all he had to do with his political associates. This boon they have not chosen to grant him. With many expressions of good-will, in effect they tell him he has loaded the stage too long. They conceive it, though an harsh, yet a necessary office, in full Parliament to declare to the present age, and to as late a posterity as shall take any concern in the proceedings of our day, that by one book he has disgraced the whole tenor of his life.—Thus they dismiss their old partner of the war. He is advised to retire, whilst they continue to serve the public upon wiser principles and under better auspices.

Whether Diogenes the Cynic was a true philosopher cannot easily be determined. He has written nothing. But the sayings of his which are handed down by others are lively, and may be easily and aptly applied on many occasions by those whose wit is not so perfect as their memory. This Diogenes (as every one will recollect) was citizen of a little bleak town situated on the coast of the Euxine, and exposed to all the buffets of that inhospitable sea. He lived at a great distance from those weather-beaten walls, in ease and indolence, and in the midst of literary leisure, when he was informed that his townsmen had condemned him to be banished from Sinope; he answered coolly, "And I

condemn them to live in Sinope."

The gentlemen of the party in which Mr. Burke has always acted, in passing upon him the sentence of retirement,[6] have done nothing more than to confirm the sentence which he had long before passed upon himself. When that retreat was choice, which the tribunal of his peers inflict as punishment, it is plain he does not think their sentence intolerably severe. Whether they, who are to continue in the Sinope which shortly he is to leave, will spend the long years, which I hope remain to them, in a manner more to their satisfaction than he shall slide down, in silence and obscurity, the slope of his declining days, is best known to Him who measures out years, and days, and fortunes.

The quality of the sentence does not, however, decide on the justice of it. Angry friendship is sometimes as bad as calm enmity. For this reason the cold neutrality of abstract justice

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[6] Newspaper intelligence ought always to be received with some degree of caution. I do not know that the following paragraph is founded on any authority; but it comes with an air of authority. The paper is professedly in the interest of the modern Whigs, and under their direction. The paragraph is not disclaimed on their part. It professes to be the decision of those whom its author calls "the great and firm body of the Whigs of England." Who are the Whigs of a different composition, which the promulgator of the sentence considers as composed of fleeting and unsettled particles, I know not, nor whether there be any of that description. The definitive sentence of "the great and firm body of the Whigs of England" (as this paper gives it out) is as follows: —"The great and firm body of the Whigs of England, true to their principles, have decided on the dispute between Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke; and the former is declared to have maintained the pure doctrines by which they are bound together, and upon which they have invariably acted. The consequence is, that Mr. Burke retires from Parliament."—*Morning Chronicle*, May 12, 1791.

is, to a good and clear cause, a more desirable thing than an affection liable to be any way disturbed. When the trial is by friends, if the decision should happen to be favorable, the honor of the acquittal is lessened; if adverse, the condemnation is exceedingly embittered. It is aggravated by coming from lips professing friendship, and pronouncing judgment with sorrow and reluctance. Taking in the whole view of life, it is more safe to live under the jurisdiction of severe, but steady reason, than under the empire of indulgent, but capricious passion. It is certainly well for Mr. Burke that there are impartial men in the world. To them I address myself, pending the appeal which on his part is made from the living to the dead, from the modern Whigs to the ancient.

The gentlemen, who, in the name of the party, have passed sentence on Mr. Burke's book, in the light of literary criticism, are judges above all challenge. He did not, indeed, flatter himself that as a writer he could claim the approbation of men whose talents, in his judgment and in the public judgment, approach to prodigies, if ever such persons should be disposed to estimate the merit of a composition upon the standard of their own ability.

In their critical censure, though Mr. Burke may find himself humbled by it as a writer, as a man, and as an Englishman, he finds matter not only of consolation, but of pride. He proposed to convey to a foreign people, not his own ideas, but the prevalent opinions and sentiments of a nation, renowned for wisdom, and celebrated in all ages for a well-understood and well-regulated

love of freedom. This was the avowed purpose of the far greater part of his work. As that work has not been ill received, and as his critics will not only admit, but contend, that this reception could not be owing to any excellence in the composition capable of perverting the public judgment, it is clear that he is not disavowed by the nation whose sentiments he had undertaken to describe. His representation is authenticated by the verdict of his country. Had his piece, as a work of skill, been thought worthy of commendation, some doubt might have been entertained of the cause of his success. But the matter stands exactly as he wishes it. He is more happy to have his fidelity in representation recognized by the body of the people than if he were to be ranked in point of ability (and higher he could not be ranked) with those whose critical censure he has had the misfortune to incur.

It is not from this part of their decision which the author wishes an appeal. There are things which touch him more nearly. To abandon them would argue, not diffidence in his abilities, but treachery to his cause. Had his work been recognized as a pattern for dexterous argument and powerful eloquence, yet, if it tended to establish maxims or to inspire sentiments adverse to the wise and free Constitution of this kingdom, he would only have cause to lament that it possessed qualities fitted to perpetuate the memory of his offence. Oblivion would be the only means of his escaping the reproaches of posterity. But, after receiving the common allowance due to the common weakness of man, he wishes to owe no part of the indulgence of the world to its

forgetfulness. He is at issue with the party before the present, and, if ever he can reach it, before the coming generation.

The author, several months previous to his publication, well knew that two gentlemen, both of them possessed of the most distinguished abilities, and of a most decisive authority in the party, had differed with him in one of the most material points relative to the French Revolution: that is, in their opinion of the behavior of the French soldiery, and its revolt from its officers. At the time of their public declaration on this subject, he did not imagine the opinion of these two gentlemen had extended a great way beyond themselves. He was, however, well aware of the probability that persons of their just credit and influence would at length dispose the greater number to an agreement with their sentiments, and perhaps might induce the whole body to a tacit acquiescence in their declarations, under a natural and not always an improper dislike of showing a difference with those who lead their party. I will not deny that in general this conduct in parties is defensible; but within what limits the practice is to be circumscribed, and with what exceptions the doctrine which supports it is to be received, it is not my present purpose to define. The present question has nothing to do with their motives; it only regards the public expression of their sentiments.

The author is compelled, however reluctantly, to receive the sentence pronounced upon him in the House of Commons as that of the party. It proceeded from the mouth of him who must be regarded as its authentic organ. In a discussion which continued

for two days, no one gentleman of the opposition interposed a negative, or even a doubt, in favor of him or his opinions. If an idea consonant to the doctrine of his book, or favorable to his conduct, lurks in the minds of any persons in that description, it is to be considered only as a peculiarity which they indulge to their own private liberty of thinking. The author cannot reckon upon it. It has nothing to do with them as members of a party. In their public capacity, in everything that meets the public ear or public eye, the body must be considered as unanimous.

They must have been animated with a very warm zeal against those opinions, because they were under no *necessity* of acting as they did, from any just cause of apprehension that the errors of this writer should be taken for theirs. They might disapprove; it was not necessary they should *disavow* him, as they have done in the whole and in all the parts of his book; because neither in the whole nor in any of the parts were they directly, or by any implication, involved. The author was known, indeed, to have been warmly, strenuously, and affectionately, against all allurements of ambition, and all possibility of alienation from pride or personal pique or peevish jealousy, attached to the Whig party. With one of them he has had a long friendship, which he must ever remember with a melancholy pleasure. To the great, real, and amiable virtues, and to the unequalled abilities of that gentleman, he shall always join with his country in paying a just tribute of applause. There are others in that party for whom, without any shade of sorrow, he bears as high a degree of love

as can enter into the human heart, and as much veneration as ought to be paid to human creatures; because he firmly believes that they are endowed with as many and as great virtues as the nature of man is capable of producing, joined to great clearness of intellect, to a just judgment, to a wonderful temper, and to true wisdom. His sentiments with regard to them can never vary, without subjecting him to the just indignation of mankind, who are bound, and are generally disposed, to look up with reverence to the best patterns of their species, and such as give a dignity to the nature of which we all participate. For the whole of the party he has high respect. Upon a view, indeed, of the composition of all parties, he finds great satisfaction. It is, that, in leaving the service of his country, he leaves Parliament without all comparison richer in abilities than he found it. Very solid and very brilliant talents distinguish the ministerial benches. The opposite rows are a sort of seminary of genius, and have brought forth such and so great talents as never before (amongst us at least) have appeared together. If their owners are disposed to serve their country, (he trusts they are,) they are in a condition to render it services of the highest importance. If, through mistake or passion, they are led to contribute to its ruin, we shall at least have a consolation denied to the ruined country that adjoins us: we shall not be destroyed by men of mean or secondary capacities.

All these considerations of party attachment, of personal regard, and of personal admiration rendered the author of the

Reflections extremely cautious, lest the slightest suspicion should arise of his having undertaken to express the sentiments even of a single man of that description. His words at the outset of his Reflections are these:—

"In the first letter I had the honor to write to you, and which at length I send, I wrote neither *for* nor *from* any description of men; nor shall I in this. My errors, if any, are *my own*. My reputation *alone* is to answer for them." In another place he says, (p. 126,[7]) "I have *no man's* proxy. I speak *only* from *myself*, when

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[7] Reflections, &c., 1st ed., London, J. Dodsley, 1790.—Works, Vol. III. p. 343, in the present edition."Since the business of the armament against Russia has been under discussion, a great personage has been heard to say, 'that he was not so wedded to Mr. PITT as not to be very willing to give his confidence to Mr. FOX, if the latter should be able, in a crisis like the present, to conduct the government of the country with greater advantage to the public.'"This patriotic declaration immediately alarmed the swarm of courtly insects that live only in the sunshine of ministerial favor. It was thought to be the forerunner of the dismission of Mr. Pitt, and every engine was set at work for the purpose of preventing such an event. The principal engine employed on this occasion was CALUMNY. It was whispered in the ear of a great personage, that Mr. Fox was the last man in England to be trusted by a KING, because he was by PRINCIPLE a REPUBLICAN, and consequently an enemy to MONARCHY."In the discussion of the Quebec Bill which stood for yesterday, it was the intention of some persons to connect with this subject the French Revolution, in hopes that Mr. Fox would be warmed by a collision with Mr. Burke, and induced to defend that Revolution, in which so much power was taken from, and so little left in the crown."Had Mr. Fox fallen into the snare, his speech on the occasion would have been laid before a great personage, as a proof that a man who could defend such a revolution might be a very good republican, but could not possibly be a friend to monarchy."But those who laid the snare were disappointed; for Mr. Fox, in the short conversation which took place yesterday in the House of Commons, said, that he confessedly had thought favorably of the French Revolution, but that most certainly he never had, either in Parliament or

I disclaim, as I do with all possible earnestness, all communion with the actors in that triumph, or with the admirers of it. When I assert anything else, as concerning the people of England, I speak from observation, *not from authority*."

To say, then, that the book did not contain the sentiments of their party is not to contradict the author or to clear themselves. If the party had denied his doctrines to be the current opinions of the majority in the nation, they would have put the question on its true issue. There, I hope and believe, his censurers will find, on the trial, that the author is as faithful a representative of the general sentiment of the people of England, as any person amongst them can be of the ideas of his own party.

The French Revolution can have no connection with the objects of any parties in England formed before the period of that event, unless they choose to imitate any of its acts, or to consolidate any principles of that Revolution with their own opinions. The French Revolution is no part of their original contract. The matter, standing by itself, is an open subject of political discussion, like all the other revolutions (and there are

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out of Parliament, professed or defended republican principles."—*Argus*, April 22d, 1791.Mr. Burke cannot answer for the truth nor prove the falsehood of the story given by the friends of the party in this paper. He only knows that an opinion of its being well or ill authenticated had no influence on his conduct. He meant only, to the best of his power, to guard the public against the ill designs of factions out of doors. What Mr. Burke did in Parliament could hardly have been intended to draw Mr. Fox into any declarations unfavorable to his principles, since (by the account of those who are his friends) he had long before effectually prevented the success of any such scandalous designs. Mr. Fox's friends have themselves done away that imputation on Mr. Burke.

many) which have been attempted or accomplished in our age. But if any considerable number of British subjects, taking a factious interest in the proceedings of France, begin publicly to incorporate themselves for the subversion of nothing short of the *whole* Constitution of this kingdom,—to incorporate themselves for the utter overthrow of the body of its laws, civil and ecclesiastical, and with them of the whole system of its manners, in favor of the new Constitution and of the modern usages of the French nation,—I think no party principle could bind the author not to express his sentiments strongly against such a faction. On the contrary, he was perhaps bound to mark his dissent, when the leaders of the party were daily going out of their way to make public declarations in Parliament, which, notwithstanding the purity of their intentions, had a tendency to encourage ill-designing men in their practices against our Constitution.

The members of this faction leave no doubt of the nature and the extent of the mischief they mean to produce. They declare it openly and decisively. Their intentions are not left equivocal. They are put out of all dispute by the thanks which, formally and as it were officially, they issue, in order to recommend and to promote the circulation of the most atrocious and treasonable libels against all the hitherto cherished objects of the love and veneration of this people. Is it contrary to the duty of a good subject to reprobate such proceedings? Is it alien to the office of a good member of Parliament, when such practices increase,

and when the audacity of the conspirators grows with their impunity, to point out in his place their evil tendency to the happy Constitution which he is chosen to guard? Is it wrong, in any sense, to render the people of England sensible how much they must suffer, if, unfortunately, such a wicked faction should become possessed in this country of the same power which their allies in the very next to us have so perfidiously usurped and so outrageously abused? Is it inhuman to prevent, if possible, the spilling *their* blood, or imprudent to guard against the effusion of *our own?* Is it contrary to any of the honest principles of party, or repugnant to any of the known duties of friendship, for any senator respectfully and amicably to caution his brother members against countenancing, by inconsiderate expressions, a sort of proceeding which it is impossible they should deliberately approve?

He had undertaken to demonstrate, by arguments which he thought could not be refuted, and by documents which he was sure could not be denied, that no comparison was to be made between the British government and the French usurpation.—That they who endeavored madly to compare them were by no means making the comparison of one good system with another good system, which varied only in local and circumstantial differences; much less that they were holding out to us a superior pattern of legal liberty, which we might substitute in the place of our old, and, as they describe it, superannuated Constitution. He meant to demonstrate that the French scheme was not a

comparative good, but a positive evil.—That the question did not at all turn, as it had been stated, on a parallel between a monarchy and a republic. He denied that the present scheme of things in France did at all deserve the respectable name of a republic: he had therefore no comparison between monarchies and republics to make.—That what was done in France was a wild attempt to methodize anarchy, to perpetuate and fix disorder. That it was a foul, impious, monstrous thing, wholly out of the course of moral Nature. He undertook to prove that it was generated in treachery, fraud, falsehood, hypocrisy, and unprovoked murder.—He offered to make out that those who have led in that business had conducted themselves with the utmost perfidy to their colleagues in function, and with the most flagrant perjury both towards their king and their constituents: to the one of whom the Assembly had sworn fealty; and to the other, when under no sort of violence or constraint, they had sworn a full obedience to instructions.—That, by the terror of assassination, they had driven away a very great number of the members, so as to produce a false appearance of a majority.—That this fictitious majority had fabricated a Constitution, which, as now it stands, is a tyranny far beyond any example that can be found in the civilized European world of our age; that therefore the lovers of it must be lovers, not of liberty, but, if they really understand its nature, of the lowest and basest of all servitude.

He proposed to prove that the present state of things in France is not a transient evil, productive, as some have too favorably

represented it, of a lasting good; but that the present evil is only the means of producing future and (if that were possible) worse evils.—That it is not an undigested, imperfect, and crude scheme of liberty, which may gradually be mellowed and ripened into an orderly and social freedom; but that it is so fundamentally wrong as to be utterly incapable of correcting itself by any length of time, or of being formed into any mode of polity of which a member of the House of Commons could publicly declare his approbation.

If it had been permitted to Mr. Burke, he would have shown distinctly, and in detail, that what the Assembly calling itself National had held out as a large and liberal toleration is in reality a cruel and insidious religious persecution, infinitely more bitter than any which had been heard of within this century.—That it had a feature in it worse than the old persecutions.—That the old persecutors acted, or pretended to act, from zeal towards some system of piety and virtue: they gave strong preferences to their own; and if they drove people from one religion, they provided for them another, in which men might take refuge and expect consolation.—That their new persecution is not against a variety in conscience, but against all conscience. That it professes contempt towards its object; and whilst it treats all religion with scorn, is not so much as neutral about the modes: it unites the opposite evils of intolerance and of indifference.

He could have proved that it is so far from rejecting tests, (as unaccountably had been asserted,) that the Assembly had

imposed tests of a peculiar hardship, arising from a cruel and premeditated pecuniary fraud: tests against old principles, sanctioned by the laws, and binding upon the conscience.—That these tests were not imposed as titles to some new honor or some new benefit, but to enable men to hold a poor compensation for their legal estates, of which they had been unjustly deprived; and as they had before been reduced from affluence to indigence, so, on refusal to swear against their conscience, they are now driven from indigence to famine, and treated with every possible degree of outrage, insult, and inhumanity.—That these tests, which their imposers well knew would not be taken, were intended for the very purpose of cheating their miserable victims out of the compensation which the tyrannic impostors of the Assembly had previously and purposely rendered the public unable to pay. That thus their ultimate violence arose from their original fraud.

He would have shown that the universal peace and concord amongst nations, which these common enemies to mankind had held out with the same fraudulent ends and pretences with which they had uniformly conducted every part of their proceeding, was a coarse and clumsy deception, unworthy to be proposed as an example, by an informed and sagacious British senator, to any other country.—That, far from peace and good-will to men, they meditated war against all other governments, and proposed systematically to excite in them all the very worst kind of seditions, in order to lead to their common destruction.—That they had discovered, in the few instances in which they have

hitherto had the power of discovering it, (as at Avignon and in the Comtat, at Cavaillon and at Carpentras,) in what a savage manner they mean to conduct the seditions and wars they have planned against their neighbors, for the sake of putting themselves at the head of a confederation of republics as wild and as mischievous as their own. He would have shown in what manner that wicked scheme was carried on in those places, without being directly either owned or disclaimed, in hopes that the undone people should at length be obliged to fly to their tyrannic protection, as some sort of refuge from their barbarous and treacherous hostility. He would have shown from those examples that neither this nor any other society could be in safety as long as such a public enemy was in a condition to continue directly or indirectly such practices against its peace.—That Great Britain was a principal object of their machinations; and that they had begun by establishing correspondences, communications, and a sort of federal union with the factious here.—That no practical enjoyment of a thing so imperfect and precarious as human happiness must be, even under the very best of governments, could be a security for the existence of these governments, during the prevalence of the principles of France, propagated from that grand school of every disorder and every vice.

He was prepared to show the madness of their declaration of the pretended rights of man,—the childish, futility of some of their maxims, the gross and stupid absurdity and the palpable falsity of others, and the mischievous tendency of all such

declarations to the well-being of men and of citizens and to the safety and prosperity of every just commonwealth. He was prepared to show, that, in their conduct, the Assembly had directly violated not only every sound principle of government, but every one, without exception, of their own false or futile maxims, and indeed every rule they had pretended to lay down for their own direction.

In a word, he was ready to show that those who could, after such a full and fair exposure, continue to countenance the French insanity were not mistaken politicians, but bad men; but he thought that in this case, as in many others, ignorance had been the cause of admiration.

These are strong assertions. They required strong proofs. The member who laid down these positions was and is ready to give, in his place, to each position decisive evidence, correspondent to the nature and quality of the several allegations.

In order to judge on the propriety of the interruption given to Mr. Burke, in his speech in the committee of the Quebec Bill, it is necessary to inquire, First, whether, on general principles, he ought to have been suffered to prove his allegations? Secondly, whether the time he had chosen was so very unseasonable as to make his exercise of a parliamentary right productive of ill effects on his friends or his country? Thirdly, whether the opinions delivered in his book, and which he had begun to expatiate upon that day, were in contradiction to his former principles, and inconsistent with the general tenor of his public

conduct?

They who have made eloquent panegyrics on the French Revolution, and who think a free discussion so very advantageous in every case and under every circumstance, ought not, in my opinion, to have prevented their eulogies from being tried on the test of facts. If their panegyric had been answered with an invective, (bating the difference in point of eloquence,) the one would have been as good as the other: that is, they would both of them have been good for nothing. The panegyric and the satire ought to be suffered to go to trial; and that which shrinks from if must be contented to stand, at best, as a mere declamation.

I do not think Mr. Burke was wrong in the course he took. That which seemed to be recommended to him by Mr. Pitt was rather to extol the English Constitution than to attack the French. I do not determine what would be best for Mr. Pitt to do in his situation. I do not deny that *he* may have good reasons for his reserve. Perhaps they might have been as good for a similar reserve on the part of Mr. Fox, if his zeal had suffered him to listen to them. But there were no motives of ministerial prudence, or of that prudence which ought to guide a man perhaps on the eve of being minister, to restrain the author of the Reflections. He is in no office under the crown; he is not the organ of any party.

The excellencies of the British Constitution had already exercised and exhausted the talents of the best thinkers and the most eloquent writers and speakers that the world ever saw. But

in the present case a system declared to be far better, and which certainly is much newer, (to restless and unstable minds no small recommendation,) was held out to the admiration of the good people of England. In that case it was surely proper for those who had far other thoughts of the French Constitution to scrutinize that plan which has been recommended to our imitation by active and zealous factions at home and abroad. 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. From this temper, men and factions, and nations too, have sacrificed the good of which they had been in assured possession, in favor of wild and irrational expectations. What should hinder Mr. Burke, if he thought this temper likely at one time or other to prevail in our country, from exposing to a multitude eager to game the false calculations of this lottery of fraud?

I allow, as I ought to do, for the effusions which come from a *general* zeal for liberty. This is to be indulged, and even to be encouraged, as long as *the question is general*. An orator, above all men, ought to be allowed a full and free use of the praise of liberty. A commonplace in favor of slavery and tyranny, delivered to a popular assembly, would indeed be a bold defiance to all the principles of rhetoric. But in a question whether any

particular Constitution is or is not a plan of rational liberty, this kind of rhetorical flourish in favor of freedom in general is surely a little out of its place. It is virtually a begging of the question. It is a song of triumph before the battle.

"But Mr. Fox does not make the panegyric of the new Constitution; it is the destruction only of the absolute monarchy he commends." When that nameless thing which has been lately set up in France was described as "the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty which had been erected on the foundation of human integrity in any time or country," it might at first have led the hearer into an opinion that the construction of the new fabric was an object of admiration, as well as the demolition of the old. Mr. Fox, however, has explained himself; and it would be too like that captious and cavilling spirit which I so perfectly detest, if I were to pin down the language of an eloquent and ardent mind to the punctilious exactness of a pleader. Then Mr. Fox did not mean to applaud that monstrous thing which, by the courtesy of France, they call a Constitution. I easily believe it. Far from meriting the praises of a great genius like Mr. Fox, it cannot be approved by any man of common sense or common information. He cannot admire the change of one piece of barbarism for another, and a worse. He cannot rejoice at the destruction of a monarchy, mitigated by manners, respectful to laws and usages, and attentive, perhaps but too attentive, to public opinion, in favor of the tyranny of a licentious, ferocious, and savage multitude, without laws, manners, or morals, and

which, so far from respecting the general sense of mankind, insolently endeavors to alter all the principles and opinions which have hitherto guided and contained the world, and to force them into a conformity to their views and actions. His mind is made to better things.

That a man should rejoice and triumph in the destruction of an absolute monarchy,—that in such an event he should overlook the captivity, disgrace, and degradation of an unfortunate prince, and the continual danger to a life which exists only to be endangered,—that he should overlook the utter ruin of whole orders and classes of men, extending itself directly, or in its nearest consequences, to at least a million of our kind, and to at least the temporary wretchedness of a whole community, —I do not deny to be in some sort natural; because, when people see a political object which they ardently desire but in one point of view, they are apt extremely to palliate or underrate the evils which may arise in obtaining it. This is no reflection on the humanity of those persons. Their good-nature I am the last man in the world to dispute. It only shows that they are not sufficiently informed or sufficiently considerate. When they come to reflect seriously on the transaction, they will think themselves bound to examine what the object is that has been acquired by all this havoc. They will hardly assert that the destruction of an absolute monarchy is a thing good in itself, without any sort of reference to the antecedent state of things, or to consequences which result from the change,

—without any consideration whether under its ancient rule a country was to a considerable degree flourishing and populous, highly cultivated and highly commercial, and whether, under that domination, though personal liberty had been precarious and insecure, property at least was ever violated. They cannot take the moral sympathies of the human mind along with them, in abstractions separated from the good or evil condition of the state, from the quality of actions, and the character of the actors. None of us love absolute and uncontrolled monarchy; but we could not rejoice at the sufferings of a Marcus Aurelius or a Trajan, who were absolute monarchs, as we do when Nero is condemned by the Senate to be punished *more majorum*; nor, when that monster was obliged to fly with his wife Sporus, and to drink puddle, were men affected in the same manner as when the venerable Galba, with all his faults and errors, was murdered by a revolted mercenary soldiery. With such things before our eyes, our feelings contradict our theories; and when this is the case, the feelings are true, and the theory is false. What I contend for is, that, in commending the destruction of an absolute monarchy, *all the circumstances* ought not to be wholly overlooked, as "considerations fit only for shallow and superficial minds." (The words of Mr. Fox, or to that effect.)

The subversion of a government, to deserve any praise, must be considered but as a step preparatory to the formation of something better, either in the scheme of the government itself, or in the persons who administer it, or in both. These events

cannot in reason be separated. For instance, when we praise our Revolution of 1688, though the nation in that act was on the defensive, and was justified in incurring all the evils of a defensive war, we do not rest there. We always combine with the subversion of the old government the happy settlement which followed. When we estimate that Revolution, we mean to comprehend in our calculation both the value of the thing parted with and the value of the thing received in exchange.

The burden of proof lies heavily on those who tear to pieces the whole frame and contexture of their country, that they could find no other way of settling a government fit to obtain its rational ends, except that which they have pursued by means unfavorable to all the present happiness of millions of people, and to the utter ruin of several hundreds of thousands. In their political arrangements, men have no right to put the well-being of the present generation wholly out of the question. Perhaps the only moral trust with any certainty in our hands is the care of our own time. With regard to futurity, we are to treat it like a ward. We are not so to attempt an improvement of his fortune as to put the capital of his estate to any hazard.

It is not worth our while to discuss, like sophisters, whether in no case some evil for the sake of some benefit is to be tolerated. Nothing universal can be rationally affirmed on any moral or any political subject. Pure metaphysical abstraction does not belong to these matters. The lines of morality are not like the ideal lines of mathematics. They are broad and deep as well as long.

They admit of exceptions; they demand modifications. These exceptions and modifications are not made by the process of logic, but by the rules of prudence. Prudence is not only the first in rank of the virtues political and moral, but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all. Metaphysics cannot live without definition; but Prudence is cautious how she defines. Our courts cannot be more fearful in suffering fictitious cases to be brought before them for eliciting their determination on a point of law than prudent moralists are in putting extreme and hazardous cases of conscience upon emergencies not existing. Without attempting, therefore, to define, what never can be defined, the case of a revolution in government, this, I think, may be safely affirmed,—that a sore and pressing evil is to be removed, and that a good, great in its amount and unequivocal in its nature, must be probable almost to certainty, before the inestimable price of our own morals and the well-being of a number of our fellow-citizens is paid for a revolution. If ever we ought to be economists even to parsimony, it is in the voluntary production of evil. Every revolution contains in it something of evil.

It must always be, to those who are the greatest amateurs, or even professors, of revolutions, a matter very hard to prove, that the late French government was so bad that nothing worse in the infinite devices of men could come in its place. They who have brought France to its present condition ought to prove also, by something better than prattling about the Bastile, that their

subverted government was as incapable as the present certainly is of all improvement and correction. How dare they to say so who have never made that experiment? They are experimenters by their trade. They have made an hundred others, infinitely more hazardous.

The English admirers of the forty-eight thousand republics which form the French federation praise them not for what they are, but for what they are to become. They do not talk as politicians, but as prophets. But in whatever character they choose to found panegyric on prediction, it will be thought a little singular to praise any work, not for its own merits, but for the merits of something else which may succeed to it. When any political institution is praised, in spite of great and prominent faults of every kind, and in all its parts, it must be supposed to have something excellent in its fundamental principles. It must be shown that it is right, though imperfect,—that it is not only by possibility susceptible of improvement, but that it contains in it a principle tending to its melioration.

Before they attempt to show this progression of their favorite work from absolute pravity to finished perfection, they will find themselves engaged in a civil war with those whose cause they maintain. What! alter our sublime Constitution, the glory of France, the envy of the world, the pattern for mankind, the masterpiece of legislation, the collected and concentrated glory of this enlightened age? Have we not produced it ready-made and ready-armed, mature in its birth, a perfect goddess of wisdom

and of war, hammered by our blacksmith midwives out of the brain of Jupiter himself? Have we not sworn our devout, profane, believing, infidel people to an allegiance to this goddess, even before she had burst the *dura mater*, and as yet existed only in embryo? Have we not solemnly declared this Constitution unalterable by any future legislature? Have we not bound it on posterity forever, though our abettors have declared that no one generation is competent to bind another? Have we not obliged the members of every future Assembly to qualify themselves for their seats by swearing to its conservation?

Indeed, the French Constitution always must be (if a change is not made in all their principles and fundamental arrangements) a government wholly by popular representation. It must be this or nothing. The French faction considers as an usurpation, as an atrocious violation of the indefensible rights of man, every other description of government. Take it, or leave it: there is no medium. Let the irrefragable doctors fight out their own controversy in their own way and with their own weapons; and when they are tired, let them commence a treaty of peace. Let the plenipotentiary sophisters of England settle with the diplomatic sophisters of France in what manner right is to be corrected by an infusion of wrong, and how truth may be rendered more true by a due intermixture of falsehood.

Having sufficiently proved that nothing could make it *generally* improper for Mr. Burke to prove what he had alleged concerning the object of this dispute, I pass to the second

question, that is, Whether he was justified in choosing the committee on the Quebec Bill as the field for this discussion? If it were necessary, it might be shown that he was not the first to bring these discussions into Parliament, nor the first to renew them in this session. The fact is notorious. As to the Quebec Bill, they were introduced into the debate upon that subject for two plain reasons: First, that, as he thought it *then* not advisable to make the proceedings of the factious societies the subject of a direct motion, he had no other way open to him. Nobody has attempted to show that it was at all admissible into any other business before the House. Here everything was favorable. Here was a bill to form a new Constitution for a French province under English dominion. The question naturally arose, whether we should settle that constitution upon English ideas, or upon French. This furnished an opportunity for examining into the value of the French Constitution, either considered as applicable to colonial government, or in its own nature. The bill, too, was in a committee. By the privilege of speaking as often as he pleased, he hoped in some measure to supply the want of support, which he had but too much reason to apprehend. In a committee it was always in his power to bring the questions from generalities to facts, from declamation to discussion. Some benefit he actually received from this privilege. These are plain, obvious, natural reasons for his conduct. I believe they are the true, and the only true ones.

They who justify the frequent interruptions, which at length

wholly disabled him from proceeding, attribute their conduct to a very different interpretation of his motives. They say, that, through corruption, or malice, or folly, he was acting his part in a plot to make his friend Mr. Fox pass for a republican, and thereby to prevent the gracious intentions of his sovereign from taking effect, which at that time had begun to disclose themselves in his favor.[8] This is a pretty serious charge. This, on Mr. Burke's part, would be something more than mistake, something worse than formal irregularity. Any contumely, any outrage, is readily passed over, by the indulgence which we all owe to sudden passion. These things are soon forgot upon occasions in which all men are so apt to forget themselves. Deliberate injuries, to a degree, must be remembered, because they require deliberate precautions to be secured against their return.

I am authorized to say for Mr. Burke, that he considers that cause assigned for the outrage offered to him as ten times worse than the outrage itself. There is such a strange confusion of ideas on this subject, that it is far more difficult to understand the nature of the charge than to refute it when understood. Mr. Fox's friends were, it seems, seized with a sudden panic terror lest he should pass for a republican. I do not think they had any ground

[8] To explain this, it will be necessary to advert to a paragraph which appeared in a paper in the minority interest some time before this debate. "A very dark intrigue has lately been discovered, the authors of which are well known to us; but until the glorious day shall come when it will not be a LIBEL to tell the TRUTH, we must not be so regardless of our own safety as to publish their names. We will, however, state the fact, leaving it to the ingenuity of our readers to discover what we dare not publish.

for this apprehension. But let us admit they had. What was there in the Quebec Bill, rather than in any other, which could subject him or them to that imputation? Nothing in a discussion of the French Constitutions which might arise on the Quebec Bill, could tend to make Mr. Fox pass for a republican, except he should take occasion to extol that state of things in France which affects to be a republic or a confederacy of republics. If such an encomium could make any unfavorable impression on the king's mind, surely his voluntary panegyrics on that event, not so much introduced as intruded into other debates, with which they had little relation, must have produced that effect with much more certainty and much greater force. The Quebec Bill, at worst, was only one of those opportunities carefully sought and industriously improved by himself. Mr. Sheridan had already brought forth a panegyric on the French system in a still higher strain, with full as little demand from the nature of the business before the House, in a speech too good to be speedily forgotten. Mr. Fox followed him without any direct call from the subject-matter, and upon the same ground. To canvass the merits of the French Constitution on the Quebec Bill could not draw forth any opinions which were not brought forward before, with no small ostentation, and with very little of necessity, or perhaps of propriety. What mode or what time of discussing the conduct of the French faction in England would not equally tend to kindle this enthusiasm, and afford those occasions for panegyric, which, far from shunning, Mr. Fox has always industriously sought? He himself said, very

truly, in the debate, that no artifices were necessary to draw from him his opinions upon that subject. But to fall upon Mr. Burke for making an use, at worst not more irregular, of the same liberty, is tantamount to a plain declaration that the topic of Franco is *tabooed* or forbidden ground to Mr. Burke, and to Mr. Burke alone. But surely Mr. Fox is not a republican; and what should hinder him, when such a discussion came on, from clearing himself unequivocally (as his friends say he had done near a fortnight before) of all such imputations? Instead of being a disadvantage to him, he would have defeated all his enemies, and Mr. Burke, since he has thought proper to reckon him amongst them.

But it seems some newspaper or other had imputed to him republican principles, on occasion of his conduct upon the Quebec Bill. Supposing Mr. Burke to have seen these newspapers, (which is to suppose more than I believe to be true,) I would ask, When did the newspapers forbear to charge Mr Fox, or Mr. Burke himself, with republican principles, or any other principles which they thought could render both of them odious, sometimes to one description of people, sometimes to another? Mr. Burke, since the publication of his pamphlet, has been a thousand times charged in the newspapers with holding despotic principles. He could not enjoy one moment of domestic quiet, he could not perform the least particle of public duty, if he did not altogether disregard the language of those libels. But, however his sensibility might be affected by such abuse, it would

in *him* have been thought a most ridiculous reason for shutting up the mouths of Mr. Fox or Mr. Sheridan, so as to prevent their delivering their sentiments of the French Revolution, that, forsooth, "the newspapers had lately charged Mr. Burke with being an enemy to liberty."

I allow that those gentlemen have privileges to which Mr. Burke has no claim. But their friends ought to plead those privileges, and not to assign bad reasons, on the principle of what is fair between man and man, and thereby to put themselves on a level with those who can so easily refute them. Let them say at once that his reputation is of no value, and that he has no call to assert it,—but that theirs is of infinite concern to the party and the public, and to that consideration he ought to sacrifice all his opinions and all his feelings.

In that language I should hear a style correspondent to the proceeding,—lofty, indeed, but plain and consistent. Admit, however, for a moment, and merely for argument, that this gentleman had as good a right to continue as they had to begin these discussions; in candor and equity they must allow that their voluntary descant in praise of the French Constitution was as much an oblique attack on Mr. Burke as Mr. Burke's inquiry into the foundation of this encomium could possibly be construed into an imputation upon them. They well knew that he felt like other men; and of course he would think it mean and unworthy to decline asserting in his place, and in the front of able adversaries, the principles of what he had penned in his closet and without

an opponent before him. They could not but be convinced that declamations of this kind would rouse him,—that he must think, coming from men of their calibre, they were highly mischievous, —that they gave countenance to bad men and bad designs; and though he was aware that the handling such matters in Parliament was delicate, yet he was a man very likely, whenever, much against his will, they were brought there, to resolve that there they should be thoroughly sifted. Mr. Fox, early in the preceding session, had public notice from Mr. Burke of the light in which he considered every attempt to introduce the example of France into the politics of this country, and of his resolution to break with his host friends and to join with his worst enemies to prevent it. He hoped that no such necessity would ever exist; but in case it should, his determination was made. The party knew perfectly that he would at least defend himself. He never intended to attack Mr. Fox, nor did he attack him directly or indirectly. His speech kept to its matter. No personality was employed, even in the remotest allusion. He never did impute to that gentleman any republican principles, or any other bad principles or bad conduct whatsoever. It was far from his words; it was far from his heart. It must be remembered, that, notwithstanding the attempt of Mr. Fox to fix on Mr. Burke an unjustifiable change of opinion, and the foul crime of teaching a set of maxims to a boy, and afterwards, when these maxims became adult in his mature age, of abandoning both the disciple and the doctrine, Mr. Burke never attempted, in any one particular, either to criminate or to

recriminate. It may be said that he had nothing of the kind in his power. This he does not controvert. He certainly had it not in his inclination. That gentleman had as little ground for the charges which he was so easily provoked to make upon him.

The gentlemen of the party (I include Mr. Fox) have been kind enough to consider the dispute brought on by this business, and the consequent separation of Mr. Burke from their corps, as a matter of regret and uneasiness. I cannot be of opinion that by his exclusion they have had any loss at all. A man whose opinions are so very adverse to theirs, adverse, as it was expressed, "as pole to pole," so mischievously as well as so directly adverse that they found themselves under the necessity of solemnly disclaiming them in full Parliament,—such a man must ever be to them a most unseemly and unprofitable incumbrance. A coöperation with him could only serve to embarrass them in all their councils. They have besides publicly represented him as a man capable of abusing the docility and confidence of ingenuous youth,—and, for a bad reason or for no reason, of disgracing his whole public life by a scandalous contradiction of every one of his own acts, writings, and declarations. If these charges be true, their exclusion of such a person from their body is a circumstance which does equal honor to their justice and their prudence. If they express a degree of sensibility in being obliged to execute this wise and just sentence, from a consideration of some amiable or some pleasant qualities which in his private life their former friend may happen to possess, they add to the praise of their

wisdom and firmness the merit of great tenderness of heart and humanity of disposition.

On their ideas, the new Whig party have, in my opinion, acted as became them. The author of the Reflections, however, on his part, cannot, without great shame to himself, and without entailing everlasting disgrace on his posterity, admit the truth or justice of the charges which have been made upon him, or allow that he has in those Reflections discovered any principles to which honest men are bound to declare, not a shade or two of dissent, but a total, fundamental opposition. He must believe, if he does not mean wilfully to abandon his cause and his reputation, that principles fundamentally at variance with those of his book are fundamentally false. What those principles, the antipodes to his, really are, he can only discover from their contrariety. He is very unwilling to suppose that the doctrines of some books lately circulated are the principles of the party; though, from the vehement declarations against his opinions, he is at some loss how to judge otherwise.

For the present, my plan does not render it necessary to say anything further concerning the merits either of the one set of opinions or the other. The author would have discussed the merits of both in his place, but he was not permitted to do so.

I pass to the next head of charge,—Mr. Burke's inconsistency. It is certainly a great aggravation of his fault in embracing false opinions, that in doing so he is not supposed to fill up a void, but that he is guilty of a dereliction of opinions that are true and

laudable. This is the great gist of the charge against him. It is not so much that he is wrong in his book (that, however, is alleged also) as that he has therein belied his whole life. I believe, if he could venture to value himself upon anything, it is on the virtue of consistency that he would value himself the most. Strip him of this, and you leave him naked indeed.

In the case of any man who had written something, and spoken a great deal, upon very multifarious matter, during upwards of twenty-five years' public service, and in as great a variety of important events as perhaps have ever happened in the same number of years, it would appear a little hard, in order to charge such a man with inconsistency, to see collected by his friend a sort of digest of his sayings, even to such as were merely sportive and jocular. This digest, however, has been made, with equal pains and partiality, and without bringing out those passages of his writings which might tend to show with what restrictions any expressions quoted from him ought to have been understood. From a great statesman he did not quite expect this mode of inquisition. If it only appeared in the works of common pamphleteers, Mr. Burke might safely trust to his reputation. When thus urged, he ought, perhaps, to do a little more. It shall be as little as possible; for I hope not much is wanting. To be totally silent on his charges would not be respectful to Mr. Fox. Accusations sometimes derive a weight from the persons who make them to which they are not entitled from their matter.

He who thinks that the British Constitution ought to consist

of the three members, of three very different natures, of which it does actually consist, and thinks it his duty to preserve each of those members in its proper place and with its proper proportion of power, must (as each shall happen to be attacked) vindicate the three several parts on the several principles peculiarly belonging to them. He cannot assert the democratic part on the principles on which monarchy is supported, nor can he support monarchy on the principles of democracy, nor can he maintain aristocracy on the grounds of the one or of the other or of both. All these he must support on grounds that are totally different, though practically they may be, and happily with us they are, brought into one harmonious body. A man could not be consistent in defending such various, and, at first view, discordant, parts of a mixed Constitution, without that sort of inconsistency with which Mr. Burke stands charged.

As any one of the great members of this Constitution happens to be endangered, he that is a friend to all of them chooses and presses the topics necessary for the support of the part attacked, with all the strength, the earnestness, the vehemence, with all the power of stating, of argument, and of coloring, which he happens to possess, and which the case demands. He is not to embarrass the minds of his hearers, or to incumber or overlay his speech, by bringing into view at once (as if he were reading an academic lecture) all that may and ought, when a just occasion presents itself, to be said in favor of the other members. At that time they are out of the court; there is no question concerning them. Whilst

he opposes his defence on the part where the attack is made, he presumes that for his regard to the just rights of all the rest he has credit in every candid mind. He ought not to apprehend that his raising fences about popular privileges this day will infer that he ought on the next to concur with those who would pull down the throne; because on the next he defends the throne, it ought not to be supposed that he has abandoned the rights of the people.

A man, who, among various objects of his equal regard, is secure of some, and full of anxiety for the fate of others, is apt to go to much greater lengths in his preference of the objects of his immediate solicitude than Mr. Burke has ever done. A man so circumstanced often seems to undervalue, to vilify, almost to reprobate and disown, those that are out of danger. This is the voice of Nature and truth, and not of inconsistency and false pretence. The danger of anything very dear to us removes, for the moment, every other affection from the mind. When Priam had his whole thoughts employed on the body of his Hector, he repels with indignation, and drives from him with a thousand reproaches, his surviving sons, who with an officious piety crowded about him to offer their assistance. A good critic (there is no better than Mr. Fox) would say that this is a masterstroke, and marks a deep understanding of Nature in the father of poetry. He would despise a Zoïlus who would conclude from this passage that Homer meant to represent this man of affliction as hating or being indifferent and cold in his affections to the poor relics of his house, or that he preferred a dead carcass to his living children.

Mr. Burke does not stand in need of an allowance of this kind, which, if he did, by candid critics ought to be granted to him. If the principles of a mixed Constitution be admitted, he wants no more to justify to consistency everything he has said and done during the course of a political life just touching to its close. I believe that gentleman has kept himself more clear of running into the fashion of wild, visionary theories, or of seeking popularity through every means, than any man perhaps ever did in the same situation.

He was the first man who, on the hustings, at a popular election, rejected the authority of instructions from constituents, —or who, in any place, has argued so fully against it. Perhaps the discredit into which that doctrine of compulsive instructions under our Constitution is since fallen may be due in a great degree to his opposing himself to it in that manner and on that occasion.

The reforms in representation, and the bills for shortening the duration of Parliaments, he uniformly and steadily opposed for many years together, in contradiction to many of his best friends. These friends, however, in his better days, when they had more to hope from his service and more to fear from his loss than now they have, never chose to find any inconsistency between his acts and expressions in favor of liberty and his votes on those questions. But there is a time for all things.

Against the opinion of many friends, even against the solicitation of some of them, he opposed those of the Church clergy who had petitioned the House of Commons to be

discharged from the subscription. Although he supported the Dissenters in their petition for the indulgence which he had refused to the clergy of the Established Church, in this, as he was not guilty of it, so he was not reproached with inconsistency. At the same time he promoted, and against the wish of several, the clause that gave the Dissenting teachers another subscription in the place of that which was then taken away. Neither at that time was the reproach of inconsistency brought against him. People could then distinguish between a difference in conduct under a variation of circumstances and an inconsistency in principle. It was not then thought necessary to be freed of him as of an incumbrance.

These instances, a few among many, are produced as an answer to the insinuation of his having pursued high popular courses which in his late book he has abandoned. Perhaps in his whole life he has never omitted a fair occasion, with whatever risk to him of obloquy as an individual, with whatever detriment to his interest as a member of opposition, to assert the very same doctrines which appear in that book. He told the House, upon an important occasion, and pretty early in his service, that, "being warned by the ill effect of a contrary procedure in great examples, he had taken his ideas of liberty very low in order that they should stick to him and that he might stick to them to the end of his life."

At popular elections the most rigorous casuists will remit a little of their severity. They will allow to a candidate some

unqualified effusions in favor of freedom, without binding him to adhere to them in their utmost extent. But Mr. Burke put a more strict rule upon himself than most moralists would put upon others. At his first offering himself to Bristol, where he was almost sure he should not obtain, on that or any occasion, a single Tory vote, (in fact, he did obtain but one,) and rested wholly on the Whig interest, he thought himself bound to tell to the electors, both before and after his election, exactly what a representative they had to expect in him.

"The *distinguishing* part of our Constitution," he said, "is its liberty. To preserve that liberty inviolate is the *peculiar* 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;* and that not only exists *with* order and virtue, but cannot exist at all *without* them. It inheres in good and steady government, as in *its substance and vital principle*."

The liberty to which Mr. Burke declared himself attached is not French liberty. That liberty is nothing but the rein given to vice and confusion. Mr. Burke was then, as he was at the writing of his Reflections, awfully impressed with the difficulties arising from the complex state of our Constitution and our empire, and that it might require in different emergencies different sorts of exertions, and the successive call upon all the various principles which uphold and justify it. This will appear from what he said at the close of the poll.

"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 key-stone 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."

In this manner Mr. Burke spoke to his constituents seventeen years ago. He spoke, not like a partisan of one particular member of our Constitution, but as a person strongly, and on principle, attached to them all. He thought these great and essential members ought to be preserved, and preserved each in its place, —and that the monarchy ought not only to be secured in its

peculiar existence, but in its preeminence too, as the presiding and connecting principle of the whole. Let it be considered whether the language of his book, printed in 1790, differs from his speech at Bristol in 1774.

With equal justice his opinions on the American war are introduced, as if in his late work he had belied his conduct and opinions in the debates which arose upon that great event. On the American war he never had any opinions which he has seen occasion to retract, or which he has ever retracted. He, indeed, differs essentially from Mr. Fox as to the cause of that war. Mr. Fox has been pleased to say that the Americans rebelled "because they thought they had not enjoyed liberty enough." This cause of the war, *from him*, I have heard of for the first time. It is true that those who stimulated the nation to that measure did frequently urge this topic. They contended that the Americans had from the beginning aimed at independence,—that from the beginning they meant wholly to throw off the authority of the crown, and to break their connection with the parent country. This Mr. Burke never believed. When he moved his second conciliatory proposition, in the year 1776, he entered into the discussion of this point at very great length, and, from nine several heads of presumption, endeavored to prove the charge upon that people not to be true.

If the principles of all he has said and wrote on the occasion be viewed with common temper, the gentlemen of the party will perceive, that, on a supposition that the Americans had rebelled

merely in order to enlarge their liberty, Mr. Burke would have thought very differently of the American cause. What might have been in the secret thoughts of some of their leaders it is impossible to say. As far as a man so locked up as Dr. Franklin could be expected to communicate his ideas, I believe he opened them to Mr. Burke. It was, I think, the very day before he set out for America that a very long conversation passed between them, and with a greater air of openness on the Doctor's side than Mr. Burke had observed in him before. In this discourse Dr. Franklin lamented, and with apparent sincerity, the separation which he feared was inevitable between Great Britain and her colonies. He certainly spoke of it as an event which gave him the greatest concern. America, he said, would never again see such happy days as she had passed under the protection of England. He observed, that ours was the only instance of a great empire in which the most distant parts and members had been as well governed as the metropolis and its vicinage, but that the Americans were going to lose the means which secured to them this rare and precious advantage. The question with them was not, whether they were to remain as they had been before the troubles,—for better, he allowed, they could not hope to be,—but whether they were to give up so happy a situation without a struggle. Mr. Burke had several other conversations with him about that time, in none of which, soured and exasperated as his mind certainly was, did he discover any other wish in favor of America than for a security to its *ancient* condition. Mr.

Burke's conversation with other Americans was large, indeed, and his inquiries extensive and diligent. Trusting to the result of all these means of information, but trusting much more in the public presumptive indications I have just referred to, and to the reiterated solemn declarations of their Assemblies, he always firmly believed that they were purely on the defensive in that rebellion. He considered the Americans as standing at that time, and in that controversy, in the same relation to England as England did to King James the Second in 1688. He believed that they had taken up arms from one motive only: that is, our attempting to tax them without their consent,—to tax them for the purposes of maintaining civil and military establishments. If this attempt of ours could have been practically established, he thought, with them, that their Assemblies would become totally useless,—that, under the system of policy which was then pursued, the Americans could have no sort of security for their laws or liberties, or for any part of them,—and that the very circumstance of *our* freedom would have augmented the weight of *their* slavery.

Considering the Americans on that defensive footing, he thought Great Britain ought instantly to have closed with them by the repeal of the taxing act. He was of opinion that our general rights over that country would have been preserved by this timely concession.[9] When, instead of this, a Boston Port Bill, a Massachusetts Charter Bill, a Fishery Bill, an Intercourse

[9] See his speech on American Taxation, the 19th of April, 1774.

Bill, I know not how many hostile bills, rushed out like so many tempests from all points of the compass, and were accompanied first with great fleets and armies of English, and followed afterwards with great bodies of foreign troops, he thought that their cause grew daily better, because daily more defensive,—and that ours, because daily more offensive, grew daily worse. He therefore, in two motions, in two successive years, proposed in Parliament many concessions beyond what he had reason to think in the beginning of the troubles would ever be seriously demanded.

So circumstanced, he certainly never could and never did wish the colonists to be subdued by arms. He was fully persuaded, that, if such should be the event, they must be held in that subdued state by a great body of standing forces, and perhaps of foreign forces. He was strongly of opinion that such armies, first victorious over Englishmen, in a conflict for English constitutional rights and privileges, and afterwards habituated (though in America) to keep an English people in a state of abject subjection, would prove fatal in the end to the liberties of England itself; that in the mean time this military system would lie as an oppressive burden upon the national finances; that it would constantly breed and feed new discussions, full of heat and acrimony, leading possibly to a new series of wars; and that foreign powers, whilst we continued in a state at once burdened and distracted, must at length obtain a decided superiority over us. On what part of his late publication, or on what expression

that might have escaped him in that work, is any man authorized to charge Mr. Burke with a contradiction to the line of his conduct and to the current of his doctrines on the American war? The pamphlet is in the hands of his accusers: let them point out the passage, if they can.

Indeed, the author has been well sifted and scrutinized by his friends. He is even called to an account for every jocular and light expression. A ludicrous picture which he made with regard to a passage in the speech of a late minister[10] has been brought up against him. That passage contained a lamentation for the loss of monarchy to the Americans, after they had separated from Great Britain. He thought it to be unseasonable, ill-judged, and ill-sorted with the circumstances of all the parties. Mr. Burke, it seems, considered it ridiculous to lament the loss of some monarch or other to a rebel people, at the moment they had forever quitted their allegiance to theirs and our sovereign, at the time when they had broken off all connection with this nation and had allied themselves with its enemies. He certainly must have thought it open to ridicule; and now that it is recalled to his memory, (he had, I believe, wholly forgotten the circumstance,) he recollects that he did treat it with some levity. But is it a fair inference from a jest on this unseasonable lamentation, that he was then an enemy to monarchy, either in this or in any other country? The contrary perhaps ought to be inferred,—if anything at all can be argued from pleasantries good or bad. Is

[10] Lord Lansdowne.

it for this reason, or for anything he has said or done relative to the American war, that he is to enter into an alliance offensive and defensive with every rebellion, in every country, under every circumstance, and raised upon whatever pretence? Is it because he did not wish the Americans to be subdued by arms, that he must be inconsistent with himself, if he reprobates the conduct of those societies in England, who, alleging no one act of tyranny or oppression, and complaining of no hostile attempt against our ancient laws, rights, and usages, are now endeavoring to work the destruction of the crown of this kingdom, and the whole of its Constitution? Is he obliged, from the concessions he wished to be made to the colonies, to keep any terms with those clubs and federations who hold out to us, as a pattern for imitation, the proceedings in France, in which a king, who had voluntarily and formally divested himself of the right of taxation, and of all other species of arbitrary power, has been dethroned? Is it because Mr. Burke wished to have America rather conciliated than vanquished, that he must wish well to the army of republics which are set up in France,—a country wherein not the people, but the monarch, was wholly on the defensive, (a poor, indeed, and feeble defensive,) to preserve *some fragments* of the royal authority against a determined and desperate body of conspirators, whose object it was, with whatever certainty of crimes, with whatever hazard of war, and every other species of calamity, to annihilate the *whole* of that authority, to level all ranks, orders, and distinctions in the state, and utterly to destroy

property, not more by their acts than in their principles?

Mr. Burke has been also reproached with an inconsistency between his late writings and his former conduct, because he had proposed in Parliament several economical, leading to several constitutional reforms. Mr. Burke thought, with a majority of the House of Commons, that the influence of the crown at one time was too great; but after his Majesty had, by a gracious message, and several subsequent acts of Parliament, reduced it to a standard which satisfied Mr. Fox himself, and, apparently at least, contented whoever wished to go farthest in that reduction, is Mr. Burke to allow that it would be right for us to proceed to indefinite lengths upon that subject? that it would therefore be justifiable in a people owing allegiance to a monarchy, and professing to maintain it, not to *reduce*, but wholly to *take away all* prerogative and *all* influence whatsoever? Must his having made, in virtue of a plan of economical regulation, a reduction of the influence of the crown compel him to allow that it would be right in the French or in us to bring a king to so abject a state as in function not to be so respectable as an under-sheriff, but in person not to differ from the condition of a mere prisoner? One would think that such a thing as a medium had never been heard of in the moral world.

This mode of arguing from your having done *any* thing in a certain line to the necessity of doing *every* thing has political consequences of other moment than those of a logical fallacy. If no man can propose any diminution or modification of

an invidious or dangerous power or influence in government, without entitling friends turned into adversaries to argue him into the destruction of all prerogative, and to a spoliation of the whole patronage of royalty, I do not know what can more effectually deter persons of sober minds from engaging in any reform, nor how the worst enemies to the liberty of the subject could contrive any method more fit to bring all correctives on the power of the crown into suspicion and disrepute.

If, say his accusers, the dread of too great influence in the crown of Great Britain could justify the degree of reform which he adopted, the dread of a return under the despotism of a monarchy might justify the people of France in going much further, and reducing monarchy to its present nothing.—Mr. Burke does not allow that a sufficient argument *ad hominem* is inferable from these premises. If the horror of the excesses of an absolute monarchy furnishes a reason for abolishing it, no monarchy once absolute (all have been so at one period or other) could ever be limited. It must be destroyed; otherwise no way could be found to quiet the fears of those who were formerly subjected to that sway. But the principle of Mr. Burke's proceeding ought to lead him to a very different conclusion,—to this conclusion,—that a monarchy is a thing perfectly susceptible of reform, perfectly susceptible of a balance of power, and that, when reformed and balanced, for a great country it is the best of all governments. The example of our country might have led France, as it has led him, to perceive that monarchy is not only

reconcilable to liberty, but that it may be rendered a great and stable security to its perpetual enjoyment. No correctives which he proposed to the power of the crown could lead him to approve of a plan of a republic (if so it may be reputed) which has no correctives, and which he believes to be incapable of admitting any. No principle of Mr. Burke's conduct or writings obliged him from consistency to become an advocate for an exchange of mischiefs; no principle of his could compel him to justify the setting up in the place of a mitigated monarchy a new and far more despotic power, under which there is no trace of liberty, except what appears in confusion and in crime.

Mr. Burke does not admit that the faction predominant in France have abolished their monarchy, and the orders of their state, from any dread of arbitrary power that lay heavy on the minds of the people. It is not very long since he has been in that country. Whilst there he conversed with many descriptions of its inhabitants. A few persons of rank did, he allows, discover strong and manifest tokens of such a spirit of liberty as might be expected one day to break all bounds. Such gentlemen have since had more reason to repent of their want of foresight than I hope any of the same class will ever have in this country. But this spirit was far from general, even amongst the gentlemen. As to the lower orders, and those little above them, in whose name the present powers domineer, they were far from discovering any sort of dissatisfaction with the power and prerogatives of the crown. That vain people were rather proud of them: they

rather despised the English for not having a monarch possessed of such high and perfect authority. *They* had felt nothing from *lettres de cachet*. The Bastile could inspire no horrors into *them*. This was a treat for their betters. It was by art and impulse, it was by the sinister use made of a season of scarcity, it was under an infinitely diversified succession of wicked pretences wholly foreign to the question of monarchy or aristocracy, that this light people were inspired with their present spirit of levelling. Their old vanity was led by art to take another turn: it was dazzled and seduced by military liveries, cockades, and epaulets, until the French populace was led to become the willing, but still the proud and thoughtless, instrument and victim of another domination. Neither did that people despise or hate or fear their nobility: on the contrary, they valued themselves on the generous qualities which distinguished the chiefs of their nation.

So far as to the attack on Mr. Burke in consequence of his reforms.

To show that he has in his last publication abandoned those principles of liberty which have given energy to his youth, and in spite of his censors will afford repose and consolation to his declining age, those who have thought proper in Parliament to declare against his book ought to have produced something in it which directly or indirectly militates with any rational plan of free government. It is something extraordinary, that they whose memories have so well served them with regard to light and ludicrous expressions, which years had consigned to oblivion,

should not have been able to quote a single passage in a piece so lately published, which contradicts anything he has formerly ever said in a style either ludicrous or serious. They quote his former speeches and his former votes, but not one syllable from the book. It is only by a collation of the one with the other that the alleged inconsistency can be established. But as they are unable to cite any such contradictory passage, so neither can they show anything in the general tendency and spirit of the whole work unfavorable to a rational and generous spirit of liberty; unless a warm opposition to the spirit of levelling, to the spirit of impiety, to the spirit of proscription, plunder, murder, and cannibalism, be adverse to the true principles of freedom.

The author of that book is supposed to have passed from extreme to extreme; but he has always kept himself in a medium. This charge is not so wonderful. It is in the nature of things, that they who are in the centre of a circle should appear directly opposed to those who view them from any part of the circumference. In that middle point, however, he will still remain, though he may hear people who themselves run beyond Aurora and the Ganges cry out that he is at the extremity of the West.

In the same debate Mr. Burke was represented by Mr. Fox as arguing in a manner which implied that the British Constitution could not be defended, but by abusing all republics ancient and modern. He said nothing to give the least ground for such a censure. He never abused all republics. He has never professed

himself a friend or an enemy to republics or to monarchies in the abstract. He thought that the circumstances and habits of every country, which it is always perilous and productive of the greatest calamities to force, are to decide upon the form of its government. There is nothing in his nature, his temper, or his faculties which should make him an enemy to any republic, modern or ancient. Far from it. He has studied the form and spirit of republics very early in life; he has studied them with great attention, and with a mind undisturbed by affection or prejudice. He is, indeed, convinced that the science of government would be poorly cultivated without that study. But the result in his mind from that investigation has been and is, that neither England nor France, without infinite detriment to them, as well in the event as in the experiment, could be brought into a republican form; but that everything republican which can be introduced with safety into either of them must be built upon a monarchy,—built upon a real, not a nominal monarchy, *as its essential basis*; that all such institutions, whether aristocratic or democratic, must originate from their crown, and in all their proceedings must refer to it; that by the energy of that mainspring alone those republican parts must be set in action, and from thence must derive their whole legal effect, (as amongst us they actually do,) or the whole will fall into confusion. These republican members have no other point but the crown in which they can possibly unite.

This is the opinion expressed in Mr. Burke's book. He has never varied in that opinion since he came to years of discretion.

But surely, if at any time of his life he had entertained other notions, (which, however, he has never held or professed to hold,) the horrible calamities brought upon a great people by the wild attempt to force their country into a republic might be more than sufficient to undeceive his understanding, and to free it forever from such destructive fancies. He is certain that many, even in France, have been made sick of their theories by their very success in realizing them.

To fortify the imputation of a desertion from his principles, his constant attempts to reform abuses have been brought forward. It is true, it has been the business of his strength to reform abuses in government, and his last feeble efforts are employed in a struggle against them. Politically he has lived in that element; politically he will die in it. Before he departs, I will admit for him that he deserves to have all his titles of merit brought forth, as they have been, for grounds of condemnation, if one word justifying or supporting abuses of any sort is to be found in that book which has kindled so much indignation in the mind of a great man. On the contrary, it spares no existing abuse. Its very purpose is to make war with abuses,—not, indeed, to make war with the dead, but with those which live, and flourish, and reign.

The *purpose* for which the abuses of government are brought into view forms a very material consideration in the mode of treating them. The complaints of a friend are things very different from the invectives of an enemy. The charge of abuses on the late monarchy of France was not intended to lead to its

reformation, but to justify its destruction. They who have raked into all history for the faults of kings, and who have aggravated every fault they have found, have acted consistently, because they acted as enemies. No man can be a friend to a tempered monarchy who bears a decided hatred to monarchy itself. He, who, at the present time, is favorable or even fair to that system, must act towards it as towards a friend with frailties who is under the prosecution of implacable foes. I think it a duty, in that case, not to inflame the public mind against the obnoxious person by any exaggeration of his faults. It is our duty rather to palliate his errors and defects, or to cast them into the shade, and industriously to bring forward any good qualities that he may happen to possess. But when the man is to be amended, and by amendment to be preserved, then the line of duty takes another direction. When his safety is effectually provided for, it then becomes the office of a friend to urge his faults and vices with all the energy of enlightened affection, to paint them in their most vivid colors, and to bring the moral patient to a better habit. Thus I think with regard to individuals; thus I think with regard to ancient and respected governments and orders of men. A spirit of reformation is never more consistent with itself than when it refuses to be rendered the means of destruction.

I suppose that enough is said upon these heads of accusation. One more I had nearly forgotten, but I shall soon dispatch it. The author of the Reflections, in the opening of the last Parliament, entered on the journals of the House of Commons a motion for a

remonstrance to the crown, which is substantially a defence of the preceding Parliament, that had been dissolved under displeasure. It is a defence of Mr. Fox. It is a defence of the Whigs. By what connection of argument, by what association of ideas, this apology for Mr. Fox and his party is by him and them brought to criminate his and their apologist, I cannot easily divine. It is true that Mr. Burke received no previous encouragement from Mr. Fox, nor any the least countenance or support, at the time when the motion was made, from him or from any gentleman of the party,—one only excepted, from whose friendship, on that and on other occasions, he derives an honor to which he must be dull indeed to be insensible.[11] If that remonstrance, therefore, was a false or feeble defence of the measures of the party, they were in no wise affected by it. It stands on the journals. This secures to it a permanence which the author cannot expect to any other work of his. Let it speak for itself to the present age and to all posterity. The party had no concern in it; and it can never be quoted against them. But in the late debate it was produced, not to clear the party from an improper defence in which they had no share, but for the kind purpose of insinuating an inconsistency between the principles of Mr. Burke's defence of the dissolved Parliament and those on which he proceeded in his late Reflections on France.

It requires great ingenuity to make out such a parallel between the two cases as to found a charge of inconsistency in the

[11] Mr. Windham.

principles assumed in arguing the one and the other. What relation had Mr. Fox's India Bill to the Constitution of France? What relation had that Constitution to the question of right in an House of Commons to give or to withhold its confidence from ministers, and to state that opinion to the crown? What had this discussion to do with Mr. Burke's idea in 1784 of the ill consequences which must in the end arise to the crown from setting up the commons at large as an opposite interest to the commons in Parliament? What has this discussion to do with a recorded warning to the people of their rashly forming a precipitate judgment against their representatives? What had Mr. Burke's opinion of the danger of introducing new theoretic language, unknown to the records of the kingdom, and calculated to excite vexatious questions, into a Parliamentary proceeding, to do with the French Assembly, which defies all precedent, and places its whole glory in realizing what had been thought the most visionary theories? What had this in common with the abolition of the French monarchy, or with the principles upon which the English Revolution was justified,—a Revolution in which Parliament, in all its acts and all its declarations, religiously adheres to "the form of sound words," without excluding from private discussions such terms of art as may serve to conduct an inquiry for which none but private persons are responsible? These were the topics of Mr. Burke's proposed remonstrance; all of which topics suppose the existence and mutual relation of our three estates,—as well as the relation of the East India

Company to the crown, to Parliament, and to the peculiar laws, rights, and usages of the people of Hindostan. What reference, I say, had these topics to the Constitution of France, in which there is no king, no lords, no commons, no India Company to injure or support, no Indian empire to govern or oppress? What relation had all or any of these, or any question which could arise between the prerogatives of the crown and the privileges of Parliament, with the censure of those factious persons in Great Britain whom Mr. Burke states to be engaged, not in favor of privilege against prerogative, or of prerogative against privilege, but in an open attempt against our crown and our Parliament, against our Constitution in Church and State, against all the parts and orders which compose the one and the other?

No persons were more fiercely active against Mr. Fox, and against the measures of the House of Commons dissolved in 1784, which Mr. Burke defends in that remonstrance, than several of those revolution-makers whom Mr. Burke condemns alike in his remonstrance and in his book. These revolutionists, indeed, may be well thought to vary in their conduct. He is, however, far from accusing them, in this variation, of the smallest degree of inconsistency. He is persuaded that they are totally indifferent at which end they begin the demolition of the Constitution. Some are for commencing their operations with the destruction of the civil powers, in order the better to pull down the ecclesiastical,—some wish to begin with the ecclesiastical, in order to facilitate the ruin of the civil; some would destroy the

House of Commons through the crown, some the crown through the House of Commons, and some would overturn both the one and the other through what they call the people. But I believe that this injured writer will think it not at all inconsistent with his present duty or with his former life strenuously to oppose all the various partisans of destruction, let them begin where or when or how they will. No man would set his face more determinedly against those who should attempt to deprive them, or any description of men, of the rights they possess. No man would be more steady in preventing them from abusing those rights to the destruction of that happy order under which they enjoy them. As to their title to anything further, it ought to be grounded on the proof they give of the safety with which power may be trusted in their hands. When they attempt without disguise, not to win it from our affections, but to force it from our fears, they show, in the character of their means of obtaining it, the use they would make of their dominion. That writer is too well read in men not to know how often the desire and design of a tyrannic domination lurks in the claim of an extravagant liberty. Perhaps in the beginning it *always* displays itself in that manner. No man has ever affected power which he did not hope from the favor of the existing government in any other mode.

The attacks on the author's consistency relative to France are (however grievous they may be to his feelings) in a great degree external to him and to us, and comparatively of little moment to the people of England. The substantial charge upon him is

concerning his doctrines relative to the Revolution of 1688. Here it is that they who speak in the name of the party have thought proper to censure him the most loudly and with the greatest asperity. Here they fasten, and, if they are right in their fact, with sufficient judgment in their selection. If he be guilty in this point, he is equally blamable, whether he is consistent or not. If he endeavors to delude his countrymen by a false representation of the spirit of that leading event, and of the true nature and tenure of the government formed in consequence of it, he is deeply responsible, he is an enemy to the free Constitution of the kingdom. But he is not guilty in any sense. I maintain that in his Reflections he has stated the Revolution and the Settlement upon their true principles of legal reason and constitutional policy.

His authorities are the acts and declarations of Parliament, given in their proper words. So far as these go, nothing can be added to what he has quoted. The question is, whether he has understood them rightly. I think they speak plain enough. But we must now see whether he proceeds with other authority than his own constructions, and, if he does, on what sort of authority he proceeds. In this part, his defence will not be made by argument, but by wager of law. He takes his compurgators, his vouchers, his guaranties, along with him. I know that he will not be satisfied with a justification proceeding on general reasons of policy. He must be defended on party grounds, too, or his cause is not so tenable as I wish it to appear. It must be made out for him not only that in his construction of these public acts and

monuments he conforms himself to the rules of fair, legal, and logical interpretation, but it must be proved that his construction is in perfect harmony with that of the ancient Whigs, to whom, against the sentence of the modern, on his part, I here appeal.

This July it will be twenty-six years[12] since he became connected with a man whose memory will ever be precious to Englishmen of all parties, as long as the ideas of honor and virtue, public and private, are understood and cherished in this nation. That memory will be kept alive with particular veneration by all rational and honorable Whigs. Mr. Burke entered into a connection with that party through that man, at an age far from raw and immature,—at those years when men are all they are ever likely to become,—when he was in the prime and vigor of his life,—when the powers of his understanding, according to their standard, were at the best, his memory exercised, his judgment formed, and his reading much fresher in the recollection and much readier in the application than now it is. He was at that time as likely as most men to know what were Whig and what were Tory principles. He was in a situation to discern what sort of Whig principles they entertained with whom it was his wish to form an eternal connection. Foolish he would have been at that time of life (more foolish than any man who undertakes a public trust would be thought) to adhere to a cause which he, amongst all those who were engaged in it, had the least sanguine hopes of as a road to power.

[12] July 17th, 1765.

There are who remember, that, on the removal of the Whigs in the year 1766, he was as free to choose another connection as any man in the kingdom. To put himself out of the way of the negotiations which were then carrying on very eagerly and through many channels with the Earl of Chatham, he went to Ireland very soon after the change of ministry, and did not return until the meeting of Parliament. He was at that time free from anything which looked like an engagement. He was further free at the desire of his friends; for, the very day of his return, the Marquis of Rockingham wished him to accept an employment under the new system. He believes he might have had such a situation; but again he cheerfully took his fate with the party.

It would be a serious imputation upon the prudence of my friend, to have made even such trivial sacrifices as it was in his power to make for principles which he did not truly embrace or did not perfectly understand. In either case the folly would have been great. The question now is, whether, when he first practically professed Whig principles, he understood what principles he professed, and whether in his book he has faithfully expressed them.

When he entered into the Whig party, he did not conceive that they pretended to any discoveries. They did not affect to be better Whigs than those were who lived in the days in which principle was put to the test. Some of the Whigs of those days were then living. They were what the Whigs had been at the Revolution,—what they had been during the reign of Queen Anne,—what they

had been at the accession of the present royal family.

What they were at those periods is to be seen. It rarely happens to a party to have the opportunity of a clear, authentic, recorded declaration of their political tenets upon the subject of a great constitutional event like that of the Revolution. The Whigs had that opportunity,—or to speak more properly, they made it. The impeachment of Dr. Sacheverell was undertaken by a Whig ministry and a Whig House of Commons, and carried on before a prevalent and steady majority of Whig peers. It was carried on for the express purpose of stating the true grounds and principles of the Revolution,—what the Commons emphatically called their *foundation*. It was carried on for the purpose of condemning the principles on which the Revolution was first opposed and afterwards calumniated, in order, by a juridical sentence of the highest authority, to confirm and fix Whig principles, as they had operated both in the resistance to King James and in the subsequent settlement, and to fix them in the extent and with the limitations with which it was meant they should be understood by posterity. The ministers and managers for the Commons were persons who had, many of them, an active share in the Revolution. Most of them had seen it at an age capable of reflection. The grand event, and all the discussions which led to it and followed it, were then alive in the memory and conversation of all men. The managers for the Commons must be supposed to have spoken on that subject the prevalent ideas of the leading party in the Commons, and of the Whig ministry.

Undoubtedly they spoke also their own private opinions; and the private opinions of such men are not without weight. They were not *umbratiles doctores*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.