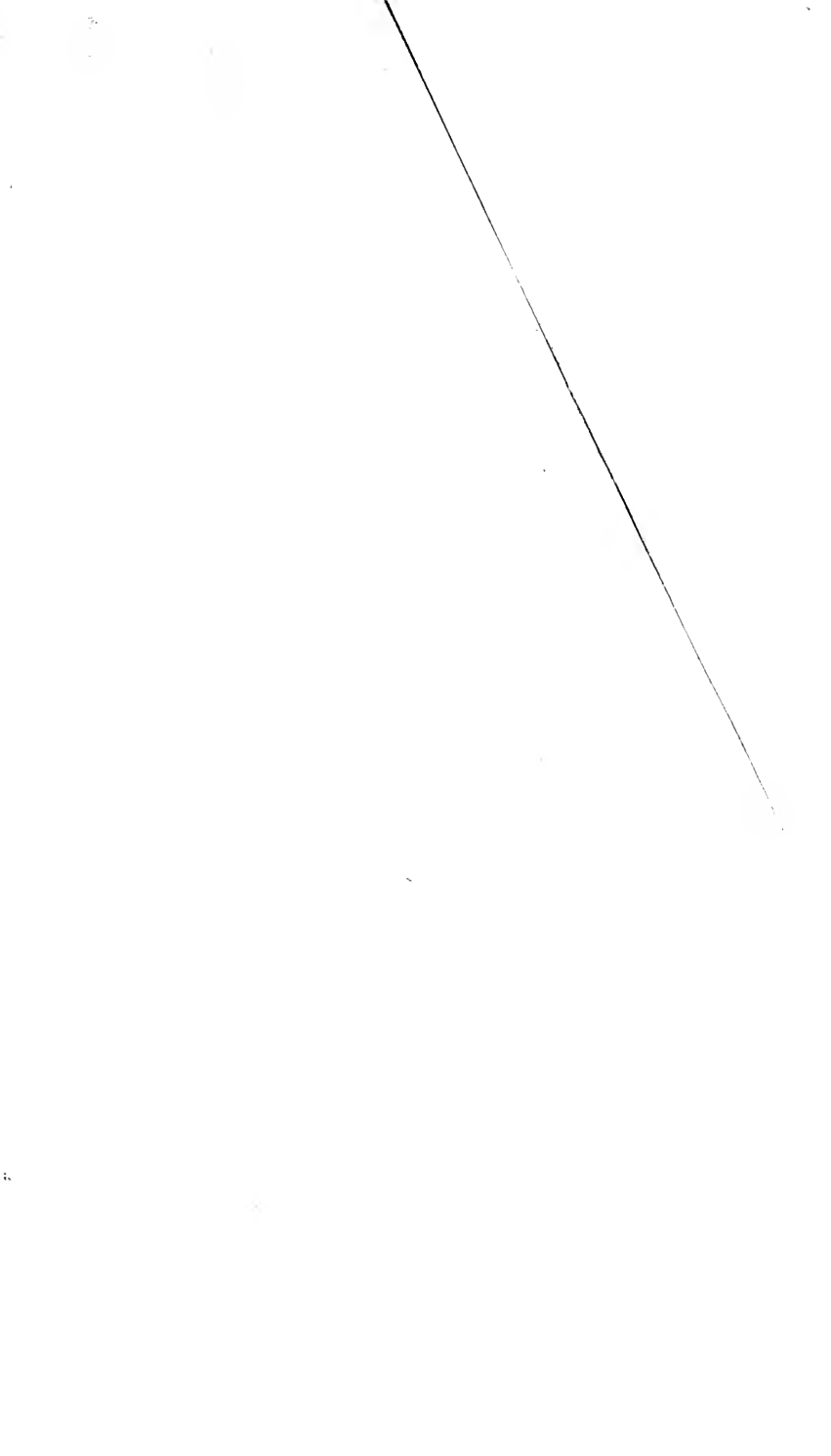


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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
Princeton, N. J.

From the Rev. W. B. SPRAGUE, D.D. *Sept.* 1839.

Case,
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A N
A P P E A L

T O
T H E P U B L I C,

ON THE SUBJECT OF
The Riots in Birmingham.

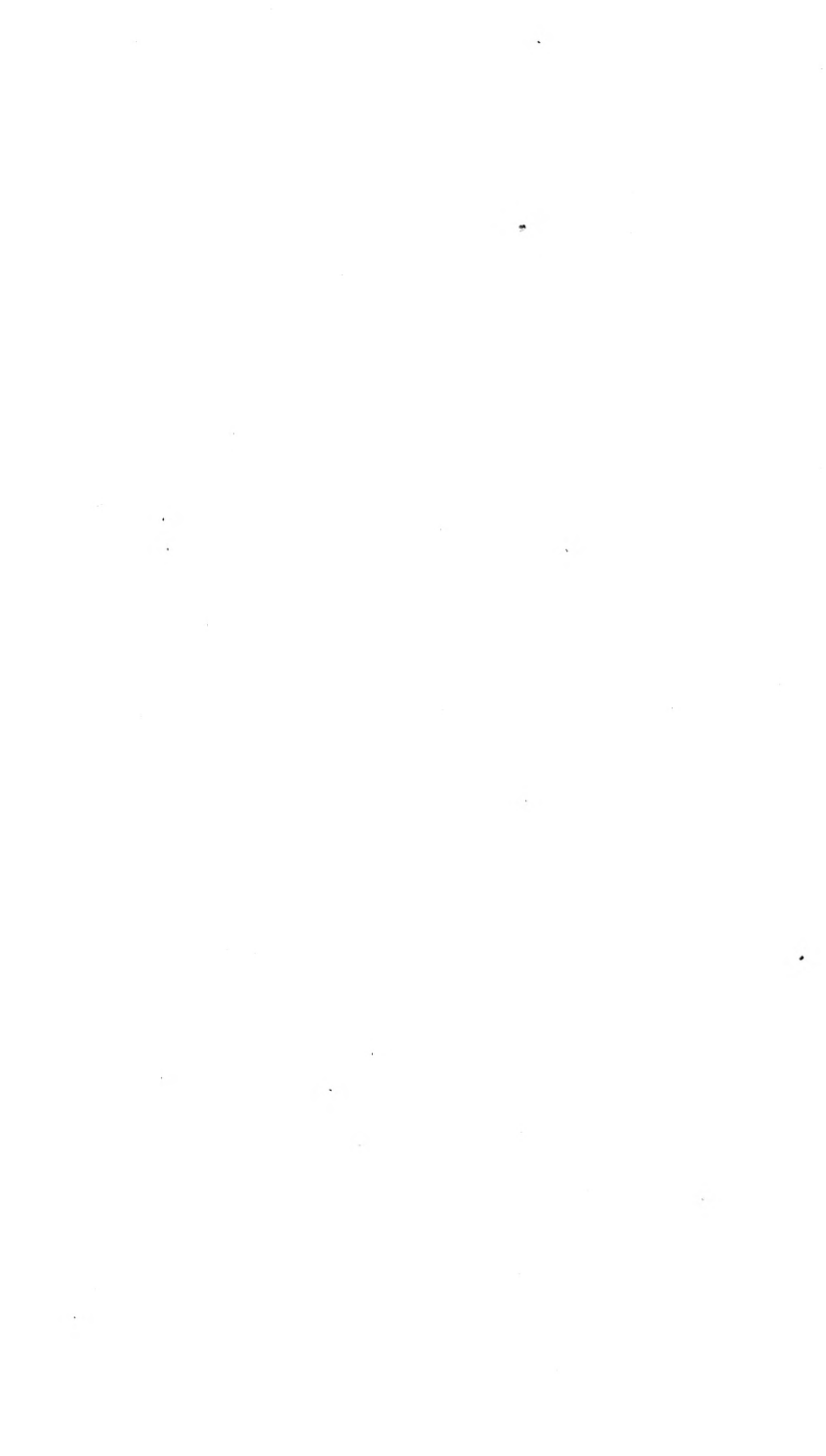
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
STRICTURES ON A PAMPHLET,
INTITLED
'Thoughts on the late Riot at Birmingham.'

By Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

QUIS NOVUS ISTE FUROR ; QUO NUNC, QUO TENDITIS ?
VIRGIL.



Birmingham,
PRINTED BY J. THOMPSON;
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.....
MDCXCXI.



THE DEDICATION.

To the People of England.

MY COUNTRYMEN,

I PRESENT myself before you in a situation that ought to engage your attention, because, in fact, it no less concerns yourselves than me. It has hitherto been your great boast, that you were possessed of the best form of government in the world; that in England all men are subject to the laws, from the king upon the throne to the meanest person in the realm; that no man can be long confined, much less punished, without the sentence

ence

ence of law ; that whenever any man is accused of a crime, opportunity is given him to make his defence, in the presence of his accusers and of the witnesses against him ; and that in all cases he must be tried by his peers, by persons in a situation in all respects similar to his own, so that they themselves may expect the same treatment in the same circumstances. Without this you are sensible there can be no equal law, or equal liberty. It has also been the great pride of Englishmen, that with us the press is free ; so that any opinion whatever, civil or religious, may be openly proposed, and discussed, without any apprehension of danger.

A jealousy with respect to law has ever distinguished Englishmen, so that you have been content to suffer the greatest pests of society to escape punishment,

punishment, rather than the law should be violated in their persons ; reasoning justly, that it is better that one man, though ever so criminal, should escape punishment, than that a precedent should be established, in consequence of which thousands of innocent persons might be exposed to suffering ; and this might be the case if any arbitrary mode of proceeding should be encouraged in courts of justice. Should a person actually condemned to die for the greatest crime, be put to death otherwise than by the sentence of a judge, and by the direction of the sheriff, it would be deemed *murder* ; so sacred do you justly esteem the regular execution of the laws, not bearing that any punishment should be inflicted but such as the law directs, and in the precise manner directed by it. Need I then to say what you ought to think of the mode of proceeding against me

and my friends at Birmingham, when all that I am charged with is the freedom of my writings?

I was born an Englishman as well any of you. Though labouring under civil disabilities, as a Dissenter, I have long contributed my share to the support of government, and supposed I had the protection of its constitution and laws for my inheritance. But I have found myself greatly deceived; and so may any of you, if, like me, you should, with or without cause, be so unfortunate as to incur popular odium. For then, as you have seen in my case, without any form of trial whatever, without any intimation of your crime, or of your danger, your houses and all your property may be destroyed, and you may not have the good fortune to escape with life, as I have done. Other innocent

nocent persons also may be involved in the same calamities with yourselves. What are the old French *Lettres de Cachet*, or the horrors of the late demolished *Bastile*, compared to this? Make then my case, what it soon may be, your own, and you will not rate the advantages of the British constitution so high as you have generally done. For in what part of the world could a peaceable citizen have had less protection of law, or enjoy less *security*, which is the great end of all civil government?

If we offend against the laws, let us be tried according to law, and suffer the penalty denounced by it. I do not flee my country, and am at all times amenable to the laws of it. But as you would not allow me to judge in my own case, and take my revenge upon any person whom I might have conceived

conceived to have injured me, let not others wreak their vengeance upon me.

You will say that such outrages as these cannot be prevented under any government, that they are like hurricanes or earthquakes; so that to complain of them, is to complain of the order of nature and providence. But not to say that sufficient provision might easily be made to prevent any disorder of this kind, our complaint is that the injury is not universally repented. The Country does not yet sufficiently feel the disgrace that has been done to it, and great numbers rather exult in our sufferings, so that we are far from thinking ourselves secure from farther injuries. Many persons not only express no disapprobation of our sufferings, or of the illegal manner in which they were inflicted, but

but plainly enough threaten us with more outrages of the same kind*.

Before you, therefore, I accuse my townsmen, and many others, whom I have described, of the greatest injustice and cruelty; and not having had an opportunity *before* my punishment, I now *after* it, plead my cause, and explain my whole conduct in this *Appeal*. Rather, the laws themselves, the laws that have been violated in my case, complain that *they* have been infringed, and that a

* Among other circumstances which prove this, is the following extract from a printed paper, dated *Birmingham Constitutional Tavern*, Oct. 17, 1791, sent to me by the post from Birmingham. "But let them" (the Dissenters) "beware—The *arm of Loyalty* has been raised against them—Their *present deportment* is in proof that it was "needful. The bolt, though shot, is not *intirely spent*, "and the people at large have too much affection for their "KING, and reverence for their present GOVERNMENT, "to suffer either of them to be attacked with *impunity*, by "the arts of the *sedition*. The lion is too magnanimous "to trample upon the *fallen*—*Misuse not* then his noble "nature, ye Dissenters—for if ye *again arouse him*—Your "Commentator Mr. Keir may *explain the consequences*."

principle

principle which leads to all confusion, and the dissolution of all government, has usurped their place. And no foreign enemy can be so dangerous to you as this within yourselves.

But we suffer, it is said, as Dissenters from the established religion. On this account we have a double title to protection. A Dissenter is one of a minority, and the Unitarian Dissenters, with whom I class myself, are a small minority, though an increasing one. We therefore stand in greater need of the protection of law; and it is the more inexcusable to treat us ill, because you have nothing to fear from us. You are more obliged to Dissenters than to other members of the community, as, besides bearing the whole expence of our own religion, we contribute our share to the expence of yours. If we be not defective in
any

any civil duty, why should we be exposed to any civil punishment? Leave our religion to our consciences, and to God, whom alone it concerns, and consider how you would wish to be treated if you lived in a country where any other religion than your own was professed. We are excluded, and we think unjustly, from civil employments and emoluments. If you think proper to continue this *negative* punishment, do not add *positive* ones, and least of all encourage such as are illegal, and which may introduce evils of an unknown nature and extent, which even your latest posterity may feel. For such has been the case of persecution in other countries, even when it was carried on in a much more unexceptionable manner than it has been at Birmingham.

As to the *French Revolution*, the defence and commemoration of which
has

has been imputed to myself and others as so great a crime, you will soon see it in a different light. The enormous expences of all modern European governments have opened the eyes of men to the nature and uses of government in general ; and in consequence of this, the whole of the Gothic Feudal system, embracing matters both of a civil and ecclesiastical nature, is beginning to shake to its foundation. This will necessarily produce a convulsion that will be felt in every state in Europe. All nations must ultimately be benefited by it, though they may suffer by the temporary shock. But be assured that those countries will suffer the least in which great *revolutions* will be prevented by temperate and seasonable *reforms*. Then we, who have suffered by the fury of a misguided populace (who have committed their lawless devastations in the name of *the church* and *the King*)

King) shall be considered as the martyrs of your liberties ; and in the firm belief of this we joyfully bear all their outrages.

As individuals we pretend not to deserve your notice ; but our case is general, and we hope it will lead you to respect, if not us, at least the law, yourselves, and your posterity.

Though an advocate for reformation, I am a friend to the general principles of our constitution ; and as a well-wisher to my country, and every description of men in it, I subscribe myself,

Your injured Countryman,

J. PRIESTLEY.

London, Nov. 1, 1791.

THE PREFACE.

FEW persons who have addressed the Public have ever been in circumstances which made it so difficult to give satisfaction to their different readers as I now am in, owing to their different opinions and prepossessions with respect to the subject of this Appeal. Those who have already formed their opinion as to the facts, will conclude that every account which represents them as having been different from what they have conceived them to be, is certainly false, if not from design, yet from misapprehension. They who are agreed with respect to the *facts* will draw different *conclusions* from them; and even they who agree both with respect to the facts and the conclusions, will think very differently of the *temper* and *manner* in which they should be spoken of, especially by myself, who am so much a party concerned.

With respect to my enemies, do what I will, I shall be equally censured. With them all my facts will be falsehoods, the language of just indignation will be insolence, and that of christian meekness either meanness or hypocrisy. I shall therefore make myself perfectly easy as to what *they* may say of me. Where there is nothing to lose, there is nothing to fear.

My friends whose feelings are as different as their constitutions, will expect that, writing as it were in a common cause, I should express their precise sentiments and feelings. But this being evidently impossible, I can only exculpate them, by declaring that both the sentiments and the language of this work are solely my own, and such as arose from my feelings at the time of writing, which was presently after my arrival in London, while the scenes that I have described were fresh in my mind, with a very few alterations and additions occasioned by subsequent accounts.

I make no apology for the severity with which I have occasionally condemned the conduct of my adversaries. For what greater crimes

crimes can men commit with respect to society, than those which they either have committed, or intended, and in which they now exult? But this implies no malice, or ill-will towards them. I sincerely pray for them in the language of the liturgy, for which they pretend to have so nobly exerted themselves, that as “my enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, God would forgive them, and turn their hearts.” As to the doctrine of christian meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and love of our enemies, it should be interpreted by our Saviour’s own conduct. For it will not be said that *he* felt otherwise than he ought to have done with respect to *his* enemies; and certainly his language is invariably that of the strongest indignation and reproof. The same was that of Paul, and of all the apostles, towards those who, in their opinion, corrupted the gospel, and opposed their ministry.

A strong sense of the impropriety of men’s sentiments and conduct naturally expresses itself in indignant language, though, when coming from a christian, it will always be accompanied with the most sincere compassion for the state of depravity into

which malignity of mind necessarily sinks men; and all that christianity can do, is earnestly to wish and pray, that our adversaries may be brought to a better state of mind, in order to their being entitled to our complacency, and forgiveness in the proper sense of the word.

With respect to the high church party in this country, I may be considered as in a state of open war. I utterly dislike their principles and maxims, as they do mine; and I scruple not to take any fair opportunity of expressing this dislike in the most unequivocal language. Let them do the same with respect to my principles; but let us observe the rules of honourable war. If, however, they chuse to proceed as they have begun to do at Birmingham, I do not wish to follow their example. They will find in time that to conquer in that manner is no victory. To conciliate these persons I consider as a thing absolutely impossible, and therefore not worth attempting. Whatever tends most completely to my justification, will only irritate them the more; as was the case with my *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. They are *parties* against whom I plead; and those that I wish to conciliate are our common

mon judges, our countrymen in general, the world at large, and especially posterity.

Whatever has been my indignation against my enemies, I have never forgotten, and I hope never shall forget, that their conduct forms a part of the plan of a wise and just providence; that they, as well as myself, have a proper place in the general system, the great scope of which is general and infinite good, of which they also, in due time, will partake; though I rejoice, and am truly thankful, that their place is not mine. On this occasion I shall take the liberty to quote what I wrote long ago in the *Dedication* of my *Treatise on Philosophical Necessity* to the late excellent Dr. Jebb.

“ You and I, Sir, rejoice in the belief,
“ that the whole human race are under the
“ same wholesome discipline, and that they
“ will all derive the most valuable advan-
“ tages from it, though in different degrees,
“ in different ways, and at different periods ;
“ that even the persecutors are only giving
“ the precedence to the persecuted, and ad-
“ vancing them to a much higher degree of
“ perfection and happiness ; and that they
“ must themselves undergo a more severe

“ discipline than that which they are the
 “ means of administering to others.”

“ With this persuasion we cannot but
 “ consider every *Being* and every *thing* in
 “ a favourable light. Every person with
 “ whom we have any connexion is a friend,
 “ and every event in life is a benefit, while
 “ God is equally the father, and the friend,
 “ of the whole creation.”

Feeling myself to be a publicly *injured person*, I cannot abandon the sense of dignity, peculiar to that character, or not feel the superiority which it gives me over my *injurers*, and which will necessarily influence the language in which I speak of them.

If I be asked whom I consider as my enemies, as holding principles most opposite to mine (which has been the true cause of their animosity towards me) I answer without hesitation, all those, of the clergy or laity, who are the avowed advocates for every thing continuing as it now is, in church and state. Their genuine sentiments may be seen in the late *Address of the Town of Birmingham to the King*, in which they say
 that

that “ they will oppose with their lives and “ fortunes, every attempt at innovation.”

Those who dislike this language, who are a great number, even among the clergy, I am far from considering in the light of adversaries. They are friends, engaged in the same cause, though occupying different posts. We equally wish that the world, and every thing in it, should improve. We think there are things both in church and state that require reformation, and that in every country pretending to freedom, there should be full liberty to point these out, and make them the subjects of free discussion.

From the love that we bear to our country, and even to our enemies in it, we think it our duty to point out whatever we think to be defective in its constitution ; and we shall do it with the more freedom and energy, from considering the dreadful evils which have lately arisen from these defects at Birmingham. What was there worse than this that took place during the great revolution in France, which I and many others consider as having issued in a most glorious state of liberty and happiness? Whereas, all
that

that we yet see at Birmingham, is the mad triumph of bigotry, and such as was seldom exhibited even in ages of acknowledged barbarism*.

I trust, however, that though nothing but *evil* appears at present, much *good* will in due time arise from it, if not to this country, in which the spectacle is exhibited, yet to Europe, and the world at large. To every reflecting mind the riots in Birmingham, must set in a peculiarly strong light the baneful nature of bigotry, and the evils to which men are exposed in a country destitute of a good police. Even the laws of this country, whose great boast it has been that it is the only seat of *true liberty*,

* How different are the spectacles that are now exhibited in France and in England? Here bigotry has been fostered, and has acquired new strength. There it is almost extinct. Here the friends of the establishment are burning the meeting-houses of the Dissenters, with all the rage of Crusaders; while in Paris one of the churches has been procured by the Protestants. It was opened by one of their ministers to a crowded audience, among whom were many Catholics, all in tears of joy for the happy change. The preacher's text was, *The night is far spent, the day is at hand*. Here we must rather preach from Isaiah lx. 2. *Behold, darkness shall cover the land, and gross darkness the people.*

are

are in a great degree intolerant; but the spirit of the people, if not that of the government, appears to be much more so, and the world will soon see to what this leads.

If it be to *good*, it will be a new thing in this old world of ours, viz. that persecution, and that by a mob, legislating, judging, and punishing, in the instant, is favourable to truth, and consequently to virtue and happiness. But if, which is most to be apprehended, this business, which certainly was evil in itself, should lead to farther evil, it will be another, and I wish it may be the last, instance of the baneful effects of intolerance, and will also show in a striking light the evils that arise from a civil establishment of christianity. If this be the case, and the world should take warning by it, I shall not think our sufferings, great as they have been, a subject of lamentation; considering myself, and my fellow-sufferers, as the instructors, and benefactors of mankind.

Some parts of this Appeal, I am well aware, will expose me to the charge of *vanity*, especially the *addresses* which I have thought proper to subjoin to it. But they
were

were in a great measure necessary to the narrative part of the work, particularly those of my late congregation, and that of Leeds, as they will shew that, notwithstanding my other pursuits, I did not, in their opinion, neglect the proper duties of my profession. The address from the Academy of Sciences at Paris, will shew in what light the riots at Birmingham are considered by scientific persons in a neighbouring and highly enlightened country; and that from Great Yarmouth, how they are thought of by Dissenters of different denominations at home*. I may likewise add in my justification, that persecution and calumny more than once extorted self praise from an apostle.

* As some persons may wish to see an account of all the addresses I have hitherto received to this time, Nov. 1, 1791, I shall briefly mention them with their dates.

- From the Academy of Sciences at Paris, July 30, 1791.
 From the Friends of the Constitution at Lyons, August 6.
 From the Friends of the Constitution at Nantz, August 9.
 From the Friends of the Constitution at Marmande on the Garonne, August 15.
 From the Friends of the Constitution at the Jacobins Rue St. Honoré, Paris, August 16.
 From the Friends of the Constitution at Clermont, August 20.
 From the Friends of the Constitution at Toulouse, September 21.

From

It will, however, be a gratification to my adversaries to be informed, that, except

From the Ministers and Members of the three denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Great Yarmouth, July 29.

From the Ministers and Members of the three denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Maidstone, August 8.

From the Society of the Old Meeting in Birmingham, August 21.

From the Protestant Dissenters of Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, August 24.

From the Committee of Protestant Dissenting Laymen and Ministers of the three denominations in the West Riding of the county of York, September 1, at their quarterly meeting.

From the Protestant Dissenting ministers of the three denominations at Llechryd, South Wales, August 25.

From the Philosophical Society at Derby, September 3.

From the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of Exeter, September 7, at their half yearly meeting.

From the Revolution Society at Norwich, September 8.

From the Constitutional Society at Manchester, September 13.

From the Students at the New College, Hackney, September 21.

From the Protestant Dissenters belonging to several congregations in the Southern and Western parts of the county of Somerset, at their annual meeting, September 28.

From several Protestant Dissenting ministers in the neighbourhood of Bolton, Lancashire.

From the Protestant Dissenters of the cities of Bristol and Bath.

From the Revolution Society at London.

in one instance, viz. the address from the Philosophical Society at Derby, I have received no address from any set of persons in this country who have not professedly separated themselves from the rest on the principle of civil or religious liberty. Indeed, I fear there may be even literary societies in England, and much more the inhabitants of whole towns, who, if they formed any resolutions on the subject, would make them more favourable to the rioters, than the sufferers at Birmingham; so general, in my present opinion, is the spirit favourable to church establishments, and those high maxims of government, by which the instigators of the riots at Birmingham were actuated. How long this will continue to be the case, I do not say.

Gratitude requires that I should say I have had very flattering prospects held out to me if I would remove to France, where both the laws, and the spirit of the people, would be much more favourable to me. But there I should be in a manner useless; and as, according to the course of nature, I have yet some years of activity left, and I can employ them to the most advantage in this country, I think it my duty to spend them

them in it. As to my personal safety, I may surely hope that the horrid scenes at Birmingham, which will long make it *a proverb and a bye word* in Europe, will not be repeated any where else. Or if they be, my life will always be at the disposal of him that gave it.

If I were disposed to boast, it will be, like Paul, of my sufferings; and though his list, no doubt, far exceeds mine, yet in one respect I think I need not yield to him, or to any man whatever. I mean with respect to *calumny*, which can hardly go deeper, or extend farther, than it has done with respect to me. To say nothing of old calumnies, which are, however, now circulated with as much confidence as ever, such as my having declared that I would never rest till I had pulled down that impostor Jesus Christ; that I made a convert of Silas Deane to atheism, &c. &c. &c. thousands have been made to believe that I am not only a speculative republican, and an enemy to our present government by king, lords, and commons, but an advocate for absolute anarchy or government by mobs, without any rule of proceeding whatever; that by mere mobs I seriously intended to subvert the constitution

tution in church and state, and that Mr. Ruffell and myself had armed men in readiness to act under our orders for this purpose, so that there could not be a more dangerous subject in any state*.

* In a Song entitled *Old Mother Church*, describing the Dissenters, are the two following stanzas.

Sedition is their Creed,
Feign'd sheep, but wolves indeed,
How can we trust?
Gunpowder Priestley would,
Deluge the throne with blood,
And lay the great and good,
Low in the Dust.

Hist'ry thy page unfold.
Did not their fires of old,
Murder their king?
And they would overthrow,
King, lords, and bishops too,
And while they gave the blow,
Loyally sing ;

O Lord our God arise,
Scatter our enemies
And make them fall.
&c. &c. &c.

The following paragraph from p. 42, of an *Address to Unitarians*, by T. G. Hancock is so curious, that I shall subjoin it to this note.

“ Dr. Priestley at present seems a chaos in miniature, not worth God's notice, has neither belief nor understanding

With respect to the subject of this Appeal, the populace of Birmingham were made to believe that I not only dined at the Hotel on the fourteenth of July last, but declared that, if no other person whatever would join me, I would dine there alone. At that dinner it was confidently said, that I gave the toasts *No church, no king*, and *The king's head in a charger*. It was even asserted that I had conveyed gunpowder into one of the churches, and had contrived that it should explode during divine service, and some pious ladies, I am well informed, actually forbore going to church under the apprehension of it. This report was strengthened by another, viz. that two barrels of gunpowder were certainly found in my house.

It has been advanced with equal confidence, and as little regard to truth, that no party spirit existed in Birmingham till my preaching and writing introduced it. It was

standing given him. For a careful analysis proves his spirit of the order of rebelling angels, his principles frothy and fiery, like fixed and inflammable air, mixed with gunpowder, his body a *terra damnata*, and the whole compound a *devil incarnate*. I hope Dissenters will be aware of his seduction, and take heed lest they are deceived through philosophy."

no wonder, they also said, that I should discover this turbulence here, when I had shown the same spirit at Leeds, and had been driven from that, and every other place where I lived, in the same manner as I had been from this. It was even said that my own congregation declared that I had misled them, and hoped, that I should never be permitted to return.

Nothing now remains but to charge me with a robbery or house breaking; and then, on such evidence as that on which the preceding and many equally false allegations gained credit, I may, by a *Warwickshire jury*, be legally convicted and executed; the principal people of Birmingham not interposing to procure me a pardon. If I be so formidable an enemy to the church and the state as I have been represented, let those who call themselves the friends of the church and the king invent their lies, and forge their letters for *this* purpose, and not merely for the burning of my house, my library, and laboratory. This was like shaving the lion's beard, which will grow again, when with the same razor, and with much less trouble, they might have cut his throat.

are

Let them, however, remember, if they believe any thing of the matter (for the most zealous friends of church establishments, and the most unrelenting persecutors of conscientious men, are not always real believers in christianity) that there is an *hereafter*, and other juries than those of Worcestershire or Warwickshire, before whom they must soon appear. To this judgment I appeal, and before it I cite my accusers.

The reason why I have added *Strictures on the Pamphlet intituled THOUGHTS ON THE LATE RIOTS AT BIRMINGHAM*, which was published after the greater part of this Appeal was printed, was that, whether it came from any authority, as some have supposed, or not, it speaks the genuine language of the high church party on the subject, such as has appeared in a less concentrated state in numberless paragraphs in the public newspapers, and without such authentic evidence, what has been said of the low prejudice, the malignant spirit, and absurd reasoning of that party, would hardly be credible, especially to my readers abroad. In any other view, this work would have been unworthy of any notice.

N. B. The Narrative part of this Appeal is in a manner confined to what I was witness to myself, and therefore chiefly relates to myself. For an account of the sufferings of others, I refer my readers to *An Authentic Account of the Riots in Birmingham*, printed by Mr. Belcher. And here I would observe, that if, to the losses that may be claimed in a court of justice, be added those that were necessarily occasioned by the riots, to many persons who were driven from their houses, obliged to remove their goods, and purchase protection, &c. &c. the sum would be enormous. If the loss of *peace of mind* could be estimated by money, to what would it not amount? What then have not the pretended friends of the church and the king at Birmingham to answer for?

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A D D E N D A.

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Errata et Corrigenda.

- Preface, p. xxxii, l. 14, read *such a Warwickshire jury as the last*
P. 13, l. 5, dele *if any*
P. 23, l. 23, read *some persons*
P. 27, l. 5, add, I had also *Notes on all the Psalms*, which I
had delivered from the pulpit
P. 47, l. 15, for *make*, read *have made*
P. 62, l. 12, for *No. III.* read *No. V.*
P. 70, l. 4, for *opinion*, read *opinions*
P. 83, l. 2, (*b*) for *the*, read *or the*
P. 84, l. 8, after *of me*, add, *and that without any truth*
P. 96, l. 12, read *many of them would*
P. 124, l. 18, for *to burn*, viz. read *viz. to burn*
P. 134, for *No. V.* read *No. IV.*
P. 142, l. 6, for *besiring*, read *desiring*

* * * (*b*) Signifies from the bottom of the page.

N. B. The first article of the *Reflections* is copied from the Preface to the *Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church*, which was the first of my publications after the riots. That work will not fall into many hands, and if ever it be reprinted, that part of the Preface will be omitted.

AN APPEAL
TO
THE PUBLIC,
ON THE SUBJECT OF
THE LATE RIOTS IN BIRMINGHAM.

THERE is no transaction, especially one of a public nature, that will not be viewed by persons of different dispositions, or placed in different situations, in different lights ; and least of all can the diligent inquirer expect an impartial account from the persons immediately concerned in it. All that he can do must be to compare every account that he can collect, and then form his own judgment. In some respects one party, and in others another, will be the best qualified to give him just information, and among the rest, in all cases of great calamity, he would certainly wish to hear the sufferers themselves, and not wholly depend on the accounts of those who either inflicted the sufferings,

B

or

or who rejoiced in them. I hope, therefore, it will not be thought improper in me, who am a principal sufferer by the late riots in Birmingham, to give *my* account of them, and my ideas of their causes and probable consequences. I shall endeavour to be as candid and impartial as I can, and the intelligent reader will easily perceive whether I be so, or not. I shall divide the work into two parts, *Narrative*, and *Reflections*.

.....

NARRATIVE.

I became an inhabitant of Birmingham in the year 1780, without any other view than as a proper situation for attending to my philosophical pursuits, in which, having no original fortune of my own, I was assisted by a few liberal friends of science, who were pleased to think favourably of me in that respect. It was a plan suggested by the late Dr. Fothergill, and cheerfully adopted by Sir George Saville, Sir Stephen Theodore Janßen, Mr. Constable of Burton Constable, and Dr. Price; all of them, it is something remarkable, of different religious persuasions, but equally lovers of experimental philosophy and disinterested promoters of it. Before, and since their deaths, the scheme was patronized by many other generous friends of science, whose names, as they are still living, I forbear to mention. None of them, I believe, have seen any reason to be dissatisfied with my conduct, as their operator.

In

In two administrations proposals were made to assist me by a *pension*. It was alleged that, since my studies had been highly useful to the public, and very expensive to myself, there was much more reason why I should receive this assistance than almost any other person who ever had obtained it. But in both the cases I declined the overture, chusing rather to be obliged to generous individuals, notwithstanding some unpleasant circumstances occasionally attending this situation, than add to the burdens of my country.

My original and favourite profession, however, was that of a christian minister, in my opinion, the most important, useful, and honourable of all others; for which, though discontinued six years while I was tutor in the academy at Warrington, and seven years while I was with the Marquis of Lansdown, I always had the strongest predilection, and in which I never failed to officiate occasionally, when I was out of the employment. But having been led, in the course of my theological studies, which I never discontinued, to adopt opinions materially different from those of the generality of Dissenters, and in which I could not expect that any considerable society of them would soon concur with me, I had no thought of ever being employed except as an occasional preacher, in assisting those of my friends whose congregations might not dislike my services.

It was, therefore, with equal surprize and pleasure that, on Mr. Hawkes's resignation of his office

of minister at the New Meeting in Birmingham, I had an almost unanimous invitation to succeed him. This, however, I accepted on the express condition of the congregation having no claim upon me except on Sundays ; the rest of the week being devoted to my philosophical and other pursuits. The other duties of the place were discharged by my worthy colleague Mr. Blythe. To my philosophical pursuits I gave constant attention, of which the public have seen the effects, and as a minister I did nothing more than attend to what appeared to me to be the faithful discharge of my duty, and I have reason to think to the satisfaction of my congregation.

Having, in every former situation, been upon terms of intimacy with some or other of the clergy of the church of England, men of liberal minds, and lovers of science, I should have been happy to have found those at Birmingham with whom I could have formed a similar connexion. But the spirit of party, I saw with regret, ran higher there than in most other places in the kingdom.

Such was the bigotry of the clergy of Birmingham, that long before I went thither, as well as during the whole time of my residing there, they refused to go into the same coach with the dissenting ministers at funerals, or to walk with them in the procession. We had hoped that they had become ashamed of this absurd instance of clerical pride, which I had never heard of before, and
hoping

hoping better things of Mr. Curtis, who was of a dissenting family, Mr. Scholefield, the minister of the Old Meeting, being invited to a funeral at which he officiated, sent to know whether he might be permitted to walk along with him. The answer was a civil but a peremptory refusal, and the proposal was never repeated. When I gave the late Bishop of St. Asaph an account of this behaviour of the clergy of Birmingham, which was long before my controversy with Mr. Madan, he expressed much concern at it, and said that he thought such bigotry had now existed no where.

That I was not eager to engage in any controversy with the clergy of the town, was evident from my making no reply whatever to two of their publications respecting me, before the appearance of Mr. Madan's Sermon. One had the signature of LUTHER, and the other that of M. S. The real names of the writers were well known; but I did not so much as read either of them. The latter I slightly looked into at a bookseller's shop; and perceiving that it contained much general and virulent invective, I paid no farther attention to it. In order to invite purchasers, the profits of this publication were advertised to go to the use of the General Infirmary. It was re-advertised during my controversy with Mr. Madan. The same clergyman was supposed to be the author of one of the tracts in that controversy, and of a virulent reply to my late *Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. But these also were unnoticed by me.

The spirit of the high church party was conspicuous on the establishment of Sunday schools in Birmingham; and this also was previous to my controversy with Mr. Madan. At first persons of all religious persuasions acted on this occasion in concert, of which an example had been set us in London; and at a meeting of all the subscribers, convened for the purpose, it was agreed that the children should go to whatever places of public worship their parents should chuse. As there were no children of Dissenters who wanted that instruction, all the Sunday scholars, without exception, went to the established church, and no complaint was ever made of this by any Dissenter. But the high church party, not being content with this, at a meeting of the subscribers, the business of which was not advertised, the former rule was rescinded, and the children were then absolutely ordered to do what they ever had done, and always might have done, that is, attend the worship of the established church, *and no other.*

The Dissenters waited more than a year, to see whether the high church party would revert to their former more liberal maxims, and continued their subscriptions. But having waited so long to no purpose, they opened their own separate Sunday schools, with advantages, I will venture to say, far superior to those of the establishment, but with liberty to every parent to order his child to attend whatever place of public worship he pleased. Still, however, several of the Dissenters continued their
subscriptions

subscriptions to the former Sunday schools, as well as to their own.

Such was the well known bigotry of the town in general, that when Mr. Newlin, a person of the most respectable character (who preceded Mr. Madan in the rectory of St. Philip's) came from Shrewsbury to Birmingham, though he had been, and continued to be, upon the best terms with the dissenting ministers in the former situation, he found he could have no intercourse with them in the latter; and yet I will venture to say there were not in all England three more respectable, or more peaceable dissenting ministers, and men who had less troubled the church of England in any way whatever, than those who served the two congregations of the Old and New Meetings at that time. Mr. Curtis himself, the Rector of St. Martin's, on his first coming to Birmingham, had the liberality to come and hear me preach a fast sermon at the Old Meeting, and brought his curate along with him. He even expressed himself much pleased with the service. But afterwards, I suppose, he perceived the true spirit of the place, and the necessity of conforming to it.

For a true representation of these facts I appeal to the town at large. With what truth, then, can it be said, as is now confidently done, that my coming to Birmingham, and my conduct there, was the sole cause of the animosity

between the church people and the Dissenters of that place?*

Wishing to discover the cause of this excessive party spirit, and to apply, if I should be able, some remedy to it, I found the Dissenters were in possession of all the civil power in the place, by having the nomination to all the offices; and though they constantly gave the principal office, viz. that of *High Bailiff*, to a member of the church of England, they chose to retain the power of nominating, of which they had long been in possession. This power, though I never heard of there being any complaint with respect to the exercise of it) I took much pains, from the beginning of my residence in Birmingham, to persuade the Dissenters to relinquish; and I gradually brought over to my opinion some of the principal

* A Letter lately addressed to me and Mr. Russell has these words: "It is notorious that the town of Birmingham had enjoyed an uninterrupted scene of peace and happiness for more than fifty years. Every thing in it moved in perfect order and harmony, till you, like a noxious planet, approached towards it."

A Poem written since the riots, in which I am represented as an enemy to God, and the government under which I live, concludes as follows:—

Pure was the breeze that fans this "Seat of Arts,"
 'Ere tainted by thy breath: in every street
 The voice of labour sung away its cares;
 The Church and Sectaries harmonious breath'd
 The genuine spirit of fraternal love:
 But when thy puritanic *scowl* appear'd,
 The heav'ns grew dark, and thy familiar fiend
 Flam'd in the pulpit, thunder'd from the pews,
 'Till all was uproar, and just vengeance hurl'd
 Sedition's Temples smoking to the ground.

could

of them. The objection to my proposal was that, such was the spirit of party, that without this power every burdensome office would be thrown upon the Dissenters. I always replied that I would willingly risk *that*; thinking that no set of men could make so ungenerous a return for such generous conduct; but that I would even bear every kind of ill usage, rather than that things should continue as they were.

I spake both to quakers, and to some of the more moderate members of the church of England on the subject; and though one of the latter told me that he knew the temper of the people of Birmingham better than I did, and that he believed no good would come of the measure, I persisted, as is well known, in my first opinion; and no objection was ever made to it by the Dissenters from any dislike of the measure itself, but only from the apprehension of the ungenerous use that might be made of it.

There are two annual dinners given by the *Low Bailiff*, who has long been a Dissenter, and who has the nomination of that *Jury*, which appoints to all the offices in the town, and also the Low Bailiff for the ensuing year. Having, from the habits of a studious life, a dislike of all public entertainments, I never attended more than one of these feasts, the first after my arrival; but I frequently said that I would with pleasure attend the first dinner of the kind that should be given by a member of the
church

church of England. This conduct of mine, of which I can produce abundant evidence, did not, surely, favour of much bigotry.

Till the application to parliament for the repeal of the Test Act, I neither wrote, nor preached, any thing that had any particular relation to the principles of Dissenters, and I sent my sons to the public grammar school, which is conducted wholly by clergymen, and the head master of which, a man of candour, as well as an excellent classical scholar, occasionally visited me.

When Mr. Burn came to Birmingham, having met him at a committee of the public library, I thought I perceived in him great marks of liberality, and on my invitation, he paid me two visits. In Mr. Madan, whom I met at a committee for abolishing the Slave Trade, and who was particularly civil to me there, I flattered myself I had found a clergyman entirely to my mind, and one with whom I might form a pleasing acquaintance. This I mentioned to a particular friend, requesting that he would endeavour to bring it about, as he is ready to witness if called upon. This, surely, did not favour of bigotry. Indeed, I have ever lived, and now live, in considerable intimacy with persons of every religious persuasion in this country, the members of the church of England not excepted, though not those residing in Birmingham. The greatest difference of opinion never led me to keep aloof from any man.

Before

Before I left Birmingham I was happy to have begun some pleasing intercourse with Dr. Parr, who had lately come to reside near Warwick. We had visited each other, and I am confident that the continuance of the intercourse would have been a pleasing circumstance to us both, though our religious principles are very different, and he was an avowed opposer of the repeal of the Test Act. When he dined with me, he was purposely met by Mr. Berington, a catholic priest, and Mr. Galton, a quaker. Mr. Porson was also of the party. I have a peculiar pleasure in the society of persons of different persuasions, and more instances of this are given in the *Preface to my Letters to Mr. Burn*, now published together with my *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. Dr. Parr, however, gave great offence to the clergy, and the high church party in Birmingham, by introducing some praise of me into a sermon of his, preached at the new church before our acquaintance commenced.

The first difference that I had with any of the clergy in Birmingham, arose from four of them withdrawing from our public library because my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* had been voted into it; a measure to which, it is well known, that I gave no countenance, but had always opposed, on the idea that it would be better to omit purchasing any books of controversy, till the library should be better stocked with books of other kinds, and more generally interesting. Find-
ing,

ing, however, the funds of the library sufficiently ample, and a disposition in many persons, members of the establishment, as well as Dissenters, to read on these, as well as on other subjects, without the obligation of purchasing the books for themselves, I at length concurred with them; but on the express condition that in every interesting controversy, books on both sides should be equally purchased; and I myself generally recommended such as were against my opinions. At length, however, the party opposed to me gained the ascendancy, which they still keep, in the conduct of the library, which was wholly new modelled by myself; and in this I quietly acquiesced, and withdrew from the committee, though I continued a member of the society. I appeal to my townsmen whether my whole conduct in this business was not uniformly open and generous. It had, however, an unfavourable effect in increasing the animosity against the Dissenters, who in this were joined by the more moderate churchmen.

But the great increase of party spirit in the town, and what, to all appearance, contributed most to the fatal catastrophe, the cause of which we are now investigating, arose from the application of the Dissenters for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, the nature and tendency of which were strangely misapprehended by the great body of the clergy, and other zealous members of the church of England. For had the repeal taken place, without their opposition, and with the concurrence

currence of the court, no difference whatever would have been perceived in our condition, and our interest as a dissenting body would probably have suffered by it, as indeed many of us were well aware.

As the case now is, few, if any, Dissenters are, in fact, excluded from any civil office which they wish to serve, so that the repeal would only have removed a mode of admission to them, highly disgraceful to religion in general, peculiar to this country, and which was not originally intended to affect Dissenters, many of whom were at that time in the habit of communicating with the church of England, though the practice has become less frequent since. And whatever tends to mix us with the world at large, is well known to lead us to think, and to act, as the world does, and consequently to lessen our zeal as Dissenters, and bring us to conformity with the established church.

On this principle great numbers of the most intelligent Dissenters were from the first more than indifferent to the measure, and sincerely wished that we might remain as we were in that respect; and I believe it was as much a regard to the honour of the nation, and of christianity, as for any positive advantage to themselves, that any Dissenters concerned themselves about it. The effect has shewn the truth of these apprehensions. The number of Dissenters had been evidently diminishing

ing before the late application, and they are greatly increased since, both in Birmingham and in many other parts of the kingdom.

Also religion in general, with the peculiar tenets of it, having by this means been brought into notice, and more public discussion, the increase of *unitarians*, whose sentiments are the most opposite to those of the church of England, has been in much more than a ten fold proportion. These converts to unitarianism consist chiefly of the middle, and some of the higher rank of persons, men who are known to read, and to think for themselves, and who of course have influence with others; so that there is now a moral certainty of this doctrine continuing to prevail in this and other countries.

Before the late applications to Parliament, and the violent opposition which the clergy made to them, the different classes of Dissenters were hostile to, and had little communication with, each other. But the opposition then made to their claims, (claims which we think to be founded in natural justice, on the clear principle that all who contribute to defray the expences of government should have equal access to its honours and emoluments, whatever be their religious faith) has brought us to feel a common interest, and has united us as one body, from one end of the kingdom to the other; so that we can act in concert, as we are now in the habit of doing. This happy
union

union strengthens every day, and in consequence of it religious bigotry in general is much decreased among us. We now attend more to the great things in which we all agree, and less to those with respect to which we differ from each other. On these accounts the strength of the Dissenters, has been greatly increased by the clerical opposition to our claims. So wretched has been the policy of our enemies, apprehending danger where there was even less than none, and having no apprehension at all of what is real.

In this business, however, whether there be merit or demerit in it, I had nothing to do. I did not so much as hear of the intention of applying to Parliament for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts till it was determined upon by the Dissenters in London.

Had I been consulted, I should rather have advised an application for the repeal of that Act of King William which makes it eventually confiscation of goods, and imprisonment for life, to deny the doctrine of the trinity. This is a case of simple toleration, as we should only have desired exemption from positive punishment, for maintaining opinions which we deem important, contrary to those of the state, and we should have had the better plea, as it is the great, though vain boast of this country, that here *toleration is complete*, whereas for these twenty years last past, I have walked at large only by the connivance of
my

my neighbours, and my opponents have not omitted to hold out to me the terror of this law which hangs over my head.

They who, in their speeches in Parliament, quoted my writings, as an authority with the Dissenters in general, were as ignorant of the Dissenters, as they were of the maxims of sound policy. If I had had any weight with the body of Dissenters at that time, we should have joined the Catholics, who generously made the proposal, in applying for the repeal of all the penal laws in matters of religion. But that golden opportunity was suffered to pass by, and I fear will never more return.

When the measure of applying for the repeal of the Acts above-mentioned (which affect the laity much more than ministers) was taken, I could not help wishing well to it; but well knowing my unpopularity even among the Dissenters (which till of late was much greater than with the members of the established church) I took no active part in promoting it, and what I did was altogether accidental.

Being in London at the time of the first debate on the subject, I heard Mr. Pitt (whom, justly or unjustly, we had been led to consider as friendly to our cause) speak against it; and perceiving, as I thought, his total misapprehension of the subject, I addressed a *Letter* to him relating to the situation of Dissenters, and on other collateral subjects, especially

cially the state of the established church, both here and in Ireland. This *Letter* gave great offence. But I appeal to the impartial public, whether, though written with some degree of indignation, at recent, and as we thought, unjust treatment, there be any thing in it unbecoming men and Englishmen, unjustly and ignominiously treated. This *Letter* was written, and published, while I was in London, and therefore had no particular reference to Birmingham. What I did there was as follows.

It being usual on the 5th of November to give our congregations a discourse on some subject relating to *religious liberty*, I made choice of that of the Test Act, and at the request of my hearers the discourse was published. But I will venture to say that it is one of the calmest, and most moderate, of all discourses that was ever written on a political subject.

What, now, was the conduct of the clergy throughout England, and especially at Birmingham, on this occasion? Endeavours were used to render the Dissenters the objects not only of exclusion from civil offices, but of general odium and punishment. Dr. *Croft's Sermon*, and that of Mr. Madan, both delivered at Birmingham, are extant, and the spirit of them was the same with that of hundreds, I may say thousands, that were echoed from other pulpits, charging the Dissenters, in opposition to all history, and even to recent and existing facts, with principles inimical to the government of the country, and to the prince upon the

throne; as pure republicans in their hearts, and who would scruple no means to overturn not the church only, but also the state.

Dr. Price and myself were particularly pointed out as seditious and dangerous persons, the very pests of society, and unworthy the protection of government. Such language as this is even held to this day, and in spite of the most explicit denial of what is thus laid to our charge, and of every possible species of evidence to the contrary, including the constant language of our serious writings, will, to all appearance, long continue to be held.

Being particularly pointed at by Mr. Madan, and both friends and enemies looking upon me as called upon to make some reply; I did it with great reluctance, as to a clergyman, whom, on other accounts, I truly respected, and whom, as living in the same town with me, I might occasionally meet; to say nothing of the farther acquaintance which I had once flattered myself I might make with him. This reply I made in a series of *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, and I appeal to any person who has the least pretention to impartiality, whether they be not a mild and good-humoured reply to an unprovoked invective.

I there showed that the Dissenters were, and always had been, the best friends to the present government, that I had myself written much in
defence

defence and praise of it; and though, being a Dissenter, I, of course, could be no friend to the established church, with respect either to doctrine or discipline, I allowed others to judge and act, as I did, for themselves, and that I wished for no alterations but such as should have the general concurrence of the country, and those made in such a manner, as that no person living should be injured by them. This has been my constant language on the subject of reformation in church or state. Mr. Madan replied without retracting any part of his charge. But notwithstanding this, I continued, and concluded, my *Letters* with the same good-humour with which I began them.

These Letters were much read both in Birmingham and the neighbourhood, and indeed throughout England. But though they convinced many persons that the Dissenters had been ill used, and that we had much more to say for ourselves than they had imagined, they were far from conciliating the clergy, or the more violent sticklers for the established church.

Other attempts, and some of them of a very infamous kind, were made to render my character odious. Old calumnies were revived, and new ones invented, concerning my being an enemy to Christianity, and to religion in general; and a clergyman (as there is every reason to think) published an account of my having converted Mr. Silas Deane to atheism, and his confession of it upon his

death-bed. This was represented in public prints, and the pamphlet containing the account was industriously circulated by some of the clergy in Birmingham and its neighbourhood. At first I neglected the idle story, as sufficiently contradicted by my writings and my whole conduct. Afterwards, however, at the instance of my friends, I published the clearest refutation of it. But even this did not appear to make any favourable impression on my enemies in Birmingham. The offence given by my *Familiar Letters* was never forgiven.

Mr. Burn also published a set of *Letters to me*, in which he charged me with rejecting the testimony of the Apostles concerning the person of Christ; and though I denied the charge, and shewed the absurdity of it, he replied without retracting it. In the *Preface to my Letters to Mr. Burn*, I gave my opinion with great freedom concerning the state of the Dissenters, and the clergy of the established church, warning them of the violence and folly of their conduct, and the probable consequences of it. But the use they made of this *Preface* was to print *Extracts from it*, so curtailed and arranged, as to represent me as a mover of sedition, and a dangerous member of society. This printed paper was sent to the bishops, and to all the members of the house of Commons the day before the last debate on the subject of the Test and Corporation Acts, so that it was impossible to counteract the effects of it; and being put into the hands of Mr. Burke, and declaimed upon by him,

him, was of material disservice to our cause. I shewed the unfairness of this proceeding in a *printed letter* sent to the bishops, and all the members of the house of Commons, as theirs had been. But to all appearance, this complete justification only tended to exasperate my enemies, and they spared no pains to exasperate others.

The effect of this controversy upon the common people in Birmingham, who were made to believe that, some way or other, both the church and the state were in danger, and that my object was the utter destruction of both, was great and visible enough. On the walls of houses, &c. and especially where I usually went, were to be seen in large characters, MADAN FOR EVER, DAMN PRIESTLEY, NO PRESBYTERIANS, DAMN THE PRESBYTERIANS, &c. &c. At one time I was followed by a number of boys, who left their play, repeating what they had seen on the walls, and shouting out, *Damn Priestley, damn him, damn him for ever, for ever, for ever, &c. &c.* This was, no doubt, a lesson which they had been taught by their parents, and what these, I fear, had learned from their superiors. Such things as these were certainly unpleasant to me; but I was conscious I had done nothing to deserve such treatment; and despising mere *obloquy*, I was far from suspecting that it would ever lead to the outrages which have since taken place.

In the exultation of the high church party on the defeat of our last application to Parliament, personal danger was apprehended to myself, by some of my more zealous friends; and a number of young men of my congregation came to tell me, that myself and my house were threatened, but that if I chose it, they would undertake to defend both me, and it, at the risk of their lives. I replied that I did not apprehend any danger, and that if any violence was offered to me on that account, I should make no resistance. It has always been my maxim, as may be seen in my writings, and what I have always maintained in conversation, that it becomes christians to bear every kind of insult and violence when it is offered on the account of *religion*, and that nothing but our *civil rights* are to be defended by the sword.

I took no notice of any of the particulars above-mentioned; and though I was told that some of the clergy of the town and neighbourhood were frequently preaching against the Dissenters, and often against myself by name, or by description, I never preached a single sermon on the subject, or wrote any thing more than the pieces above-mentioned, which are before the public, and may be examined at the reader's leisure, till the appearance of *Mr. Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution*, a work that has been more generally read than any publication in my time, and which has contributed more than any other to excite a spirit
of

of party; the clergy almost universally approving it, and the low church party and Dissenters as generally condemning it.

My friends well know that I was far from having any intention of animadverting upon this performance, being at that time engaged in other pursuits, and having a real respect for the writer, till I was pressed to undertake it by several of my friends, who were pleased to think me better qualified than most others to reply to what Mr. Burke had advanced on the subject of *Civil Establishments of Christianity*. At their sollicitation I wrote my *Letters to Mr. Burke*, and this publication, though a very temperate one, provoked the clergy, and the zealous friends of the establishment still more; and in consequence of this, their efforts to inflame the minds of the populace against the Dissenters in general, and myself in particular, were redoubled, and the profane habit of drinking *Damnation and confusion to the Presbyterians*, at the convivial meetings of persons of better fashion, as well as those of the lower order, was much increased.

So apparent were the marks of extreme bigotry, and the true spirit of persecution at this time, that upon occasion of preaching the *Hackney College Sermon*, in April last (and which my friends know that I long declined) I was led to say, “ In another
“ respect, also, we are now in the situation of the
“ primitive christians; as the friends of reformation

“ have nothing to expect from *power*, or *general*
 “ *favour*; but must look for every species of abuse
 “ and persecution that the spirit of the times will
 “ admit of. If even burning alive was a sight that
 “ the country would now bear, there exists a spirit
 “ which would inflict that horrid punishment, and
 “ with as much cool indifference, or savage ex-
 “ ultation, as in any preceding age of the world.”
 But though I saw this, and that the marks of
 this spirit were apparent in various other parts of
 England, I had no suspicion of its breaking out on
 the innocent occasion of celebrating the *French*
Revolution, and therefore was far from being pre-
 pared for any such outrage.

The celebration of this great event by a public
 dinner at Birmingham was no measure of mine. In-
 deed, I am well known to all my friends to be averse
 to public entertainments, and never enjoy myself at
 them; my habits of life, too long confirmed to be
 easily altered, being quite opposite to every thing
 of this nature. However, when the friends of that
 Revolution proposed it, and wished to have my
 company, I did not decline their invitation, and we
 had a meeting or two, partly for *that* purpose, and
 partly to settle the rules of a CONSTITUTIONAL
 SOCIETY, such as that which is established at Man-
 chester, the chief object of which was to promote
 a more equal representation of the people of this
 country in Parliament, and we had printed two
 copies of *general principles of government*, to be sub-
 scribed by all the members, and one copy of *par-*
 “ *ticular*

particular rules for our conduct, copied chiefly from those of Manchester; but we had not pleased ourselves with them, and nothing was absolutely settled.

Many persons in different parts of the kingdom, but more especially at Birmingham, thought the celebration of the French Revolution to be a right and a wise measure, in order to conciliate the French nation, and to promote a friendly and commercial intercourse with it. It is well known that the late *commercial treaty* is not popular in France, and it was thought to be impolitic to heighten the dislike of that nation to *this*, by refusing to partake of their joy, in what was known to give them the greatest satisfaction.

With the dinner itself I had, in a manner, nothing to do. I did not so much as suggest one of the proper and excellent *toasts* provided on the occasion, though it was natural for my friends to look to me for things of that kind, if I had interested myself much in it; and when opposition was talked of, and it was supposed that some insults would be offered to myself in particular, I yielded to the solicitations of my friends, and did not attend. Others, however, went on that very account; thinking it mean, and unbecoming Englishmen, to be deterred from a lawful and innocent act, by the fear of lawless insult; and accordingly they assembled, and dined, in number between eighty and ninety.

When

When the company met, a croud was assembled at the door, and some of them hissed, and shewed other marks of disapprobation, but no material violence was offered to any body. Mr. Keir, a member of the church of England, took the chair; and when they had dined, drank their toasts, and sung the songs which had been prepared for the occasion, they dispersed. This was about five o'clock, and the town remained quiet till about eight. It was evident, therefore, that the *dinner* was not the proper cause of the riot which followed: but that the mischief had been pre-concerted, and that this particular opportunity was laid hold of for the purpose.

Some days before this meeting, a few copies of a printed *hand-bill* of an inflammatory nature, of which a copy is given in the *Appendix*, No. I. had been found in a public house in the town, and of this great use was made to inflame the minds of the people against the Dissenters, to whom, though without any evidence whatever, it was confidently ascribed. The thing itself did not deserve any notice, and paragraphs of as seditious a nature frequently appear in the public newspapers, and other publications, and (as would, no doubt, have been the case with this) are neglected and forgotten. But the magistrates of Birmingham, and other known enemies of the Dissenters, were loud in their exclamations against it, though perhaps fabricated for the use that was made of it; and a copy was officiously sent to the secretaries of state, who ordered a strict enquiry to be made
after

after the author, printer, or distributor; and in consequence of this a reward of an hundred pounds was offered, for the discovery of any of them.

In consequence of all this preparation, we were informed that, though the trade of Birmingham had never been more brisk, so that hands could not be found to manufacture the goods that were ordered, many of the public-houses were that day full of people, whose horrid execrations against the Dissenters were heard into the streets; and it has been asserted that some of the master manufacturers had shut up their work-shops, and thereby left their men at full liberty for any mischief.

It has since appeared that besides the dinner at the Hotel, there were also dinners of the opposite party on this fourteenth of July, and those not of the lowest class of the people, with whom the common ale-houses were filled. These did not rise from their entertainment so early, or with so much sobriety, as those who dined at the Hotel; and it was at the breaking up of *their* companies that the riots commenced. Let the impartial then judge to which of the dinners the riot that followed is to be ascribed.

Mr. Adam Walker, the ingenious and well known lecturer in natural Philosophy, was passing through the town with his wife and family, and dined with me at my own house, for the last time,

on

on that day. Before dinner, I had walked to the town with him, and they left me in the evening. Some time after this, three of my intimate friends, whose houses were situated near the same road, and farther from the town than mine, called upon me to congratulate me, and one another, on the dinner having passed over so well; and after chatting cheerfully some time on the subject, they left me just as it was beginning to be dark.

After supper, when I was preparing to amuse myself, as I sometimes did, with a game of backgammon, we were alarmed by some young men rapping violently at the door; and when they were admitted, they appeared to be almost breathless with running. They said that a great mob had assembled at the Hotel, where the company had dined; that after breaking the windows there, they were gone to the New Meeting, and were demolishing the pulpit and pews, and that they threatened me and my house. That they should think of molesting *me* I thought so improbable, that I could hardly give any credit to the story. However, imagining that perhaps some of the mob might come to insult me, I was prevailed upon to leave the house, and meant to go to some neighbour's at a greater distance from the town; but having no apprehension for the house itself, or any thing in it, I only went up stairs, and put some papers and other things of value, where I thought that any persons getting into the house would not easily find

find them. My wife did the same with some things of hers. I then bade the servants keep the doors fastened; if any body should come, to say that I was gone, and if any stones should be thrown at the windows, to keep themselves out of danger, and that I did not doubt but they would go away again.

At this time, which was about half past nine o'clock, Mr. S. Ryland, a friend of mine, came with a chaise, telling us there was no time to lose, but that we must immediately get into it, and drive off. Accordingly, we got in with nothing more than the clothes we happened to have on, and drove from the house. But hearing that the mob consisted only of people on foot, and concluding that when they found I was gone off in a chaise, they could not tell whither, they would never think of pursuing me, we went no farther than Mr. Ruffell's, a mile on the same road, and there we continued several hours, Mr. Ruffell himself, and other persons, being upon the road on horseback to get intelligence of what was passing. I also more than once walked about half way back to my own house for the same purpose; and then I saw the fires from the two meeting-houses, which were burning down.

About twelve we were told that some hundreds of the mob were breaking into my house, and that when they had demolished *it*, they would certainly proceed to Mr. Ruffell's. We were persuaded,
therefore,

therefore, to get into the chaise again, and drive off; but we went no farther than Mr. Thomas Hawkes's on Moseley-Green, which is not more than half a mile farther from the town, and there we waited all the night.

It being remarkably calm, and clear moon-light, we could see to a considerable distance, and being upon a rising ground, we distinctly heard all that passed at the house, every shout of the mob, and almost every stroke of the instruments they had provided for breaking the doors and the furniture. For they could not get any fire, though one of them was heard to offer two guineas for a lighted candle; my son, whom we left behind us, having taken the precaution to put out all the fires in the house, and others of my friends got all the neighbours to do the same. I afterwards heard that much pains was taken, but without effect, to get fire from my large electrical machine, which stood in the library.

About three o'clock in the morning the noises ceased, and Mr. Russell and my son coming to us, said that the mob was almost dispersed, that not more than twenty of them remained, and those so much intoxicated, that they might easily be taken. We therefore returned with him, and about four o'clock were going to bed at his house. But when I was undressing myself for that purpose, news came that there was a fresh accession of some hundreds more to the mob, and that they were

advancing towards Mr. Ruffell's. On this we got into the chaise once more, and driving through a part of the town distant from the mob, we went to Dudley, and thence to my son-in-law's, Mr. Finch at Heath-Forge, five miles farther, where we arrived before breakfast, and brought the first news of our disaster.

Here I thought myself perfectly safe, and imagining that when the mischief was over (and I had no idea of its going beyond my own house) and supposing that, as the people in general would be ashamed, and concerned, at what had happened, I might return; thinking also that the area within the walls of the meeting-house might soon be cleared, I intended, if the weather would permit, to preach there the Sunday following, and from this text, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

At noon, however, we had an express from Stourbridge, to acquaint us that the mob had traced me to Dudley, and would pursue me to Heath. To this I paid no attention, nor to another from Dudley in the evening to inform us of the same thing; and being in want of sleep, I went to bed soon after ten. But at eleven I was awaked, and told that a third express was just arrived from Dudley, to assure us that some persons were certainly in pursuit of me, and would be there that night. All the family believing this, and urging me to make my escape, I dressed myself, got on horseback,

horseback, and with a servant rode to Bridgnorth, where I arrived about two in the morning.

After about two hours sleep in this place, I got into a chaise, and went to Kidderminster, on my way to London. Here I found myself among my friends, and, as I thought, far enough from the scene of danger, especially as we continually heard news from Birmingham, and that the mischief did not extend beyond the town. Hearing, particularly, that all was quiet at Dudley, I concluded that there could be no real cause of apprehension at Heath; and being unwilling to go farther than was necessary, I took a horse, and arrived there in the evening.

There, however, I found the family in great consternation at the sight of me; and Mr. Finch just arriving from Dudley, and saying that they were in momentary expectation of a riot there, that the populace were even assembled in the street, and were heard to threaten the meeting-house, the house of the minister, and those of other principal Dissenters, and that all attempts to make them disperse had been in vain, I mounted my horse again, though much fatigued, and greatly wanting sleep.

My intention was to get to an inn about six miles on the road to Kidderminster, where I might get a chaise, and in it proceed to that town. No chaise, however, was to be had; so that I was under

under the necessity of proceeding on horseback, and neither the servant nor myself distinguishing the road in the night, we lost our way, and at break of day found ourselves on Bridgnorth race ground, having ridden nineteen miles, till we could hardly fit our horses.

Arriving at this place a second time, about three o'clock in the morning, we with some difficulty roused the people at an indifferent inn, and I immediately got into bed, and slept a few hours. After breakfast we mounted our horses, and I got a second time to Kidderminster. There, finding that if I immediately took a chaise, and drove fast, I might get to Worcester time enough for the mail-coach, I did so; and meeting with a young man of my own congregation, he accompanied me thither, which was a great satisfaction to me, as he acquainted me with many particulars of the riot, of which I was before ignorant. At Worcester I was just time enough for the coach, and fortunately there was one place vacant. I took it, and travelling all night, I got to London on Monday morning, July 18.

Here I was in a place of safety, and had leisure for rest and reflection. I can truly say, however, that in all the hurry of my flight, and while the injuries I had received were fresh upon my mind, I had not one desponding, or unbenevolent thought. I really pitied the delusion of the poor incendiaries, and the infatuation of those who had deluded them,

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and

and never doubted but that, though I could not tell *how*, or *when*, good would arise from this, as well as from every other evil. The magnanimity of my wife was never shaken; and, as at other times, she then felt more for others than she did for herself. It was a distressing circumstance, that our daughter was expecting to be brought to bed in about a month, so that she was full of alarm, and her mother could not leave her to accompany me. We were, however, as happy as we could be in this state of forced separation, I with my old friends in London, and she either with our daughter, or with one of the most friendly, generous, and worthy families in the world, in the neighbourhood of Birmingham.

That there were instigators, as well as perpetrators, of these horrid scenes, was sufficiently evident. Most of those who committed the devastations appeared by their profaneness, intoxication, and their disposition to indiscriminate plunder, to have no sense of religion at all, and therefore could only adopt the cry of *church and king* as a pretence. In the midst of their devastations there were always some cool heads mixed with the drunken ones, who rejected all offers of money, and said that they must obey their orders. But the most decisive circumstance was that of *forged letters* being read, one at my house, in the name of Mr. Russell, and another at his, in the name of Mr. Jeffries of London, on purpose to inflame the mob to greater outrages. Whoever be the real author of the
hand-bill,

band-bill, certainly they who forged these letters were capable of writing it, for the use that was actually made of it. Indeed, there is nothing too atrocious for such persons not to be capable of.

Being now at my leisure, I wrote my *Address to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, APPENDIX, No. II. and upon the more moderate it had some influence, in counteracting the strange and mischievous accounts that had been every where industriously propagated, in order to throw the blame of the whole transaction upon the Dissenters in general, and myself in particular (See APPENDIX, No. III.) though on others it had a different effect.

In London I found by accident that Mr. W. Ruffell had just arrived in town, who, next to myself, was the principal object of dislike to the high church party in Birmingham. He came to represent to the ministry a true state of things relating to the riots, and to learn what steps they would take with respect to it. When this was settled, he returned to Birmingham, but not before he had published an account of what had passed at the Revolution dinner, with the toasts that were given on that occasion. (See APPENDIX, No. IV.) On the same day also, as it happened, Mr. Keir published an account of the proceedings, for the Birmingham newspaper (See APPENDIX, No. V.) and soon after a more particular account of the toasts, with observations, in explanation and vindication of them. These gentlemen giving their

names, their accounts fatisfied the impartial, that the behaviour of the Dissenters had not been liable to any just censure, and that it was not the dinner, but a deep-rooted animosity against the Dissenters, that was the true cause of all the mischief.

In this situation, what I regretted most was the loss, as I then supposed, of all my *manuscript papers*, for which no reparation could be made. They consisted of the following particulars:

I. My *Diaries* from the year 1752, containing the particulars of almost every day; and at the beginning of each of them I had given the state of my mind, of my affairs in general, and of my prospects, for that year; which it was often amusing, and also instructive, to me, to look back upon.

II. Several large *Common-place Books*, containing the fruits of my reading almost ever since I could read with any degree of judgment.

III. The *Register of my Philosophical Experiments*, and hints for new ones.

IV. All my *Sermons, Prayers, and Forms for administering the Lord's Supper, &c.* many of which I had with great expence got transcribed into a fair long hand.

V. *Notes and a Paraphrase on the whole of the New Testament*, excepting the book of *Revelation*.

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The whole of it had been delivered from the pulpit, and in a preface to another work, I had promised to publish it. I was within five days (employing my amanuensis three hours a day) of having the whole fairly transcribed for the press.

VI. *A New Translation of the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes*; having undertaken, in conjunction with several other Unitarians, to make a new Translation of both the Old and New Testament.

VII. *A series of Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church*, which was lately opened in Birmingham. These were fairly transcribed, and were to have gone to the press the Monday following; and being on the most friendly terms with the minister, and principal members of that church, I had made an appointment to meet them on the preceding Friday, to read the work to them from the manuscript, in order to be satisfied that I had not mistated any of their doctrines, and that I might hear their objections to what I had written. A rough draft of a great part of these *Letters* happened to be preserved, in consequence of taking a copy of them by Messrs. Boulton and Watt's machine, and from this I have lately published them.

VIII. *Memoirs of my own Life*, to be published after my death.

IX. A great number of *letters* from my friends and learned foreigners, with other papers.

X. A short account of all the persons whose names are introduced into my chart of Biography, which I intended to publish, though not very soon.

XI. *Illustrations of Hartley's doctrine of Association of Ideas*, and *farther Observations on the Human Mind*, the publication of which I had promised in the Preface to my *Essay on Education*. This would perhaps have been the most original, and nearly the last, of my publications. The hints and loose materials for it were written in several volumes, not one scrap of which is yet recovered.

XII. Besides these, I had what had cost me much labour, though, as I did not mean to make any public use of them, I do not much regret their loss, viz. A large course of *Lectures on the Constitution and Laws of England*, and another on *the History of England*, which I had read when I was tutor at Warrington, and of which a syllabus may be seen in the former editions of my *Essay on Education*. In the same class of manuscripts, not much to be regretted, I place a great variety of miscellaneous juvenile compositions, and collections of which I occasionally made some, though not much, use.

XIII *My last Will, Receipts and Accounts.*

Let

Let any man of letters, arrived, as I am, to near the age of sixty, consider what must have been my accumulation of curious papers of various kinds, from the variety and extent of my pursuits (greater unquestionably than that of most men now living) and think what I could not but have felt for their loss, and their dispersion into such hands as they fell into, and who make, as I hear, the most indecent and improper use of them. This makes the case much worse than that of mere plunder, and the destruction of books and papers by Goths and Vandals, who could not read any of them. It was, however, no small satisfaction to me, to think that my enemies, having the freest access to every paper I had, might be convinced that I had carried on no treasonable correspondence, and that I had nothing to be concerned about besides the effects of their impertinent curiosity.

The destruction of my library did not affect me so much on account of the money I had expended upon it, as the choice of the books; having had particular objects of study, and having collected them with great care, as opportunity served, in the course of many years. It had also been my custom to read almost every book with a pencil in my hand, marking the passages that I wished to look back to, and of which I proposed to make any particular use; and I frequently made an index to such passages on a blank leaf at the end of the book. In consequence of this, other sets of the

same work would not, by any means, be of the same value to me; for I have not only lost the books, but the chief fruit of my labour and judgment in reading them.

Also my laboratory not only contained a set of the most valuable and useful instruments of every kind, and original substances for experiments, but other substances, the results of numerous processes, reserved for farther experiments; as every experienced chymist will suppose, and these cannot be replaced without repeating the processes of many years. No money can repair damages of this kind. Also, several of my instruments were either wholly, or in part, of my own construction, and such as cannot be purchased any where.

Notwithstanding this destruction of my manuscripts, I do not know that such a calamity could have happened at a more convenient time, in the course of the last ten years. Had it been during the composition of my *History of early Opinions concerning Christ*, my *Church History*, or the *New Edition of my Philosophical Works*, I could never have completed, or resumed them; nor without the books which I then had, could I have undertaken what I have done since. Very happily also, I had finished a long course of experiments on the doctrine of *phlogiston*, and the *composition of water*, and my last paper on the subject was just printed for the *Philosophical Transactions*.

One of the most mortifying circumstances in this calamity was the disperſion of a great number of *letters* from my private friends, from the earlieſt period of my correſpondence, into the hands of perſons wholly deſtitute of generoſity or honour. Theſe letters I had carefully arranged, ſo that I could immediately turn to any of them, when I wiſhed to look back to them, as a memorial of former friendships, or for any other purpoſe. But they were kept in a box which was ordered by my laſt will to be burned without inſpection. Now, however, letters which I did not wiſh even my executors to ſee, were expoſed, without mercy or ſhame, to all the world. No perſon of honour will even look into a letter not directed to himſelf. But mine have not only been expoſed to every curious, impertinent eye, but, as I am informed, are eagerly peruſed, commented upon, and their ſenſe perverted, in order to find out ſomething againſt me.

Some of my private papers are ſaid to have been ſent to the ſecretary of ſtate. But ſecretaries of ſtate, I preſume, are *gentlemen*, and conſider themſelves as bound by the ſame rules of juſtice and honour that are acknowledged to bind other men, and therefore, if this be the caſe, theſe papers will certainly be returned to me.

Of this kind of ill uſage, I do not accuſe the illiterate mob, who made the deſtroyment; for few of them, I ſuppoſe, could read, but thoſe perſons
of

of better education into whose hands the papers afterwards came. Had persons of this class interposed, and exerted themselves, they might, no doubt, have saved the greatest part of *this*, to me most valuable property, for the loss of which (but more especially for the ungenerous use that was made of it) no compensation can be made me.

My numerous correspondents in different countries of Europe, but more especially those who wrote to me in confidence in this country, will be as much affected by this catastrophe as myself. I might, no doubt, have destroyed those letters, and other private papers, myself. But I could not foresee that men would act the part of brutes, without the least regard to law, to common equity, humanity, or decency; and that an event should happen at the close of the eighteenth century, of which it will not be easy to find a parallel for three centuries before. For the persecutions of christians by heathens, and of protestants by papists, were generally conducted by some *rule*; and in matters of *policy* and *religion* some decent regard was still paid to a man's *private concerns*, in which the state had no interest. Not to feel such losses as these, and such usage as this, would be not to be a man. But I am a christian, and I hope I bear them as such, acknowledging the hand of God, as well as that of man, in all events

I was also much consoled by the *addresses* I received, not only from particular persons, but from
various

various bodies of men, who interested themselves in my sufferings. Some, if not all of them, I shall insert in the *Appendix*; as they may serve to encourage other persons in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue, notwithstanding the utmost malice of their enemies. I need not say that I received the greatest consolation from the addresses of my congregation, and especially those of the younger part of it, to whom I had given particular attention.

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS.

AFTER the preceding detail of *faëts*, I now proceed to lay before my readers a series of *Reflections* to which they have given occasion, and I hope they are such as will not be without their use; and then, great as my loss has been stated to be, it will not be the subject of any regret.

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SECTION I.

Of the Power of Resentment to prevent Compassion.

I CANNOT help observing on this occasion, as on a thousand others, how much the least cause of resentment tends to stifle every emotion of sympathy and compassion.

Had any person whatever spent a great part of his life in the merely innocent employment of collecting medals, watching with the utmost anxiety every opportunity of completing his suite; had another given the same time to a collection of shells, fossils, prints, or books of any particular class,
without

any farther view than that of amusing himself and his friends; and any of his neighbours, who knew in what manner, and how long, he had been employed, have come, and destroyed the labours of his life in an hour, there are few persons, I believe, who would not have felt for the injury. For every man's labours are of value to himself; and every man has a natural right to enjoy the fruit of his labours, provided they do not interfere with the enjoyments of others. An injury of this kind would be considered as an injury done to society itself, which engages for the protection of every individual in the quiet enjoyment of his innocent gratifications and pursuits, whatever they be. Every person would make the case his own, and have considered what he himself would have felt, not after having spent his life in the same pursuits, because for them he might have had no particular taste, but in any pursuit equally pleasing to him, and would have resented the injury with the greatest sensibility.

Had this person's pursuits been of acknowledged utility to the public, and in the eye of the world done credit to his country, and to his age; had they been the labours of a Boyle, a Newton, or a Franklin, or those of a Pope, an Addison, or a Locke, that had been thus wantonly and maliciously destroyed, all the world in a manner, and his country in particular, would have taken fire at the injury, and have thought no punishment too great for it.

But

But let *politics*, or *religion*, be concerned; let the curious collector, the naturalist, the poet, or the philosopher, be suspected to be of an unpopular party in either, and the very circumstance that would have filled his countrymen with compassion for him, and with rage against his plunderers, would make many rejoice in the mischief; and without the least regard to the innocence, or public merit, of his pursuits, they would receive a gratification from the idea of their hereby having it in their power to give him and his friends the more sensible pain. Nay, provided they conceived that any advantage would accrue from it to their party, they would take a savage pleasure in destroying him, and his labours together.

Such has been the scene exhibited at Birmingham, and I wish it may prove an instructive lesson to mankind. I do not say what I have been, or what I have done. But had I been a Boyle, a Newton, or a Franklin, or had I had ten times the merit of each, or of all of them, I am confident, from what I have heard and observed, that this circumstance would only have been an excitement to my enemies to the mischief they have done me. The higher I had stood in the good opinion of my friends, or of the public, the greater pleasure would they have taken in pulling me down.

This has, moreover, been done by persons who do not want private virtue, by persons of honour, justice, and feeling in common life; and
who

who, if I had not been obnoxious to them on account of my *opinions*, would have relieved me in distress, and have done me any kindness in their power; nay who, if they had had any knowledge of literature, or science, might perhaps have been proud of having me for a townsman and acquaintance, and have taken a pleasure in shewing strangers the place where I lived.

Had I been a clergyman of the church of England, of little or no reputation, and the injury been done by Dissenters, no punishment would have been thought sufficient for the perpetrators of so much wickedness; and, in the eyes of the nation, the whole sect would have been thought deserving of extirpation. Like the death of Charles I. the guilt of it would have been entailed upon our latest posterity.

I was forcibly struck with this idea on seeing a most ingenious imitation of plants in paper, cut and painted so like to nature, that, at a very small distance, no eye could have perceived the difference; and by this means they were capable of being preserved from the attacks of insects, so as to be greatly preferable to any *hortus ficcus*. It appeared to me that weeks, and in some cases months, must have been employed on some single plants, so exquisitely were they finished.

What would this ingenious and deserving young lady have felt, how would her family and friends,
how

how would all botanists, though they should only have heard of the ingenious contrivance, and of the labour and time she had spent upon her plants; nay, how would the country in general have been filled with indignation, had any envious female neighbour come by force, or stealth, and thrown all her flowers into the fire, and thus destroyed all the fruits of her ingenuity, and patient working for years, in a single moment. And yet all this, excellent as it was, might with certainty have been done again, and perhaps in an improved manner. If this particular lady had not had time, or inclination, to do the same work over again, she might have instructed others, and precautions might have been taken to prevent such a misfortune a second time.

But the havoc that was made in almost as short a space of time in my library and laboratory, neither myself or any body else can repair; and yet thousands, and ten thousands, I have no doubt, are so far from feeling any sympathy with me, or my friends, on the occasion, that they rejoice in it, and would rejoice the more in proportion as the irreparable mischief had been greater*.

If the same malicious female should not only have thrown this lady's flowers into the fire, but ransacked her apartments, and, getting possession of all her private letters, have amused herself with

* So far am I from being considered an *injured person* by many, that they scruple not to consider me as the proper cause of the death of those who were executed for the riots, in short, nothing less than a *murderer*. Such is the idea conveyed by the author of a ballad in imitation

reading them, and publishing them in all the neighbourhood, in order to do her all the injury in her power, would not the crime be thought worthy of the severest punishment, as a violent breach of all the bonds of society? And yet in my case, this very outrage has been committed without any sense of guilt in the perpetrators, or the by-standers of the same party. Such is the baneful influence of party spirit.

SECTION II.

My coming to Birmingham not the Cause of the Party Spirit in the Place.

IT will be evident from the preceding narrative that my coming to Birmingham was by no means the cause, as is now asserted, of the party spirit which so unhappily prevails in that place. Every thing that I wrote respecting the established church was occasioned by the writings of others against the Dissenters. In no case whatever was I

tation of the song of *William and Margaret*, sent to me by the post from Chester.

This is the dark and fearful hour,
 When Ghosts their wrongs disclose.
 Now graves give up their dead, to haunt
 The guilty soul's repose.
 Bethink thee, Priestley, of thy fault,
 Thy love of civil strife;
 And give me back my honest fame,
 And give me back my life.

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the aggressor; and I never troubled even my own congregation with a single discourse on the subject, though this had been done again and again by my predecessor Mr. Bourne; and I never heard that he was particularly complained of on that account.

The long controversy I had on the subject of the *trinity*, which, however, had no particular respect to Birmingham, was the consequence of the attack of Bishop Horsley, and others of the clergy, on one part of my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. All my *Defences of Unitarianism*, written in the course of this controversy, are before the Public, and I appeal to all impartial readers, if they be not calm replies to some of the most virulent modes of attack of which there are any examples in this, or in any other, country. The Bishop's professed object was to destroy my credit *in toto*, so that nothing that I should ever write on the subject might be regarded.

Besides, what did I do, urged as I was, in every possible method, more than propose my *opinions*, with the *reasons* on which they were founded. There was no *violence* in this. And cannot opinion be opposed by opinion, and argument by argument? I seriously think that the doctrine of the *divine unity*, as opposed to that of the *trinity*, is of the greatest importance in christianity; and it is likewise my opinion, that *civil establishments of christianity* are the bane of it, tending to increase, and to perpetuate, every abuse that has been introduced

into it. But many other persons have maintained the same opinions, and have held the same language, before me. I, therefore, think it a peculiar honour to my writings, that my adversaries have at length found no method of replying to them so effectual as destroying my property, and attempting my life; instigating a furious mob to commit such ravages on general literature, as the European world has not known since the ages of acknowledged barbarism.

SECTION III.

Of Dissenters meddling with Politics.

IT is said by many that, if I had not meddled with *politics* the riots in Birmingham would not have taken place. But this also is an hypothesis not supported by facts. If the indignation of the populace had been excited against me as a politician, and not as a Dissenter, why did they begin with demolishing the meeting-house, before they proceeded to my own house, or made any attempt upon my person? Why did they demolish the Old Meeting, the ministers of which had never appeared in a political character? And what had Mr. Taylor and Mr. John Ryland ever done in a political capacity? The rioters evidently made no distinction between political Dissenters
and

and others, but confined their outrages to those who are generally called the more liberal, or unitarian Dissenters, as conceiving them to be peculiarly hostile to the church, and therefore to the state, as connected with the church.

But what have been my writings as a politician? They are very inconsiderable, and never, that I understood, gave much offence. All the time that I was with the Marquis of Lansdowne, which was seven years, in which I had no employment as a minister, I never wrote a political pamphlet, or paragraph. My studies were then, as before, and since, *theology, philosophy, and general literature.*

My *Essay on the First Principles of Government*, which, of all my writings, may be thought the most offensive to the friends of arbitrary power, was published more than twenty years ago, and never proceeded farther than a second edition, which also has been on sale almost twenty years; so that it could not have given any recent provocation. The political part of my *Lectures on History and General Policy*, is much in favour of the civil part of our present constitution, though not without hinting at such improvements in it, as many upright and enlightened persons of all denominations, wish for.

Supposing, however, that I had written much more largely on politics, particular as well as general, is this a subject that Dissenters must not

touch? As equal citizens, have we not an equal interest in the concerns of the state; and does it not behove us to watch over that interest, as much as others, whose stake in it is not greater than ours?

When the government was friendly to the Dissenters, our rulers were glad enough to avail themselves both of our pens and of our swords. Our *right* to give our opinion in affairs of state was not then questioned; and what has happened to affect that right since? It is plain that it is only our exercise of that right that gives offence. No complaint was ever made of the conduct of Mr. Bradbury, who was continually preaching political sermons, and who had a great hand in promoting the accession of the house of Hanover, except by the clergy, who were generally enemies of that accession.

Though no change has taken place in our general principles, our opinions are now supposed to be unfavourable to the maxims of those who have the conduct of administration; and hence the new language, that Dissenters, and particularly dissenting ministers, ought to confine themselves to matters of religion; and that, content with our toleration, we ought not even to reflect on the established church, which is now considered as an essential part of the state. I was never complained of for having meddled with *philosophy*, which is as foreign to my proper profession as *politics*.

But

But in what sense can this be called a *free country*, if every citizen be not at full liberty to deliver his opinion, in speaking or writing, on any subject whatever, without the dread of civil penalties, legally or illegally inflicted? And how is our religion even *tolerated*, if we be debarred the privilege of writing in its defence, and freely advancing whatever we may deem of importance for that purpose?

If umbrage be taken at Dissenters writing on any particular subject, let us, at least, be prohibited by *law*, and let not any man be punished for doing what no known law makes to be a crime, and which in itself may be highly meritorious. Let an Act of Parliament be made to declare it felony, or treason, for any Dissenter (or if that be thought too much, for any dissenting minister) to write a political pamphlet, finding fault with the constitution, or arraigning the conduct of administration, and we shall then consider what is to be done in these new circumstances,

Some weak politicians, and high churchmen, as an excuse for not appearing displeas'd at the riots in Birmingham, which did not affect the Calvinistic Dissenters, allege that the Dissenters of this day are a very different set of persons from those of former times, for whom the Act of Toleration was provided. This, no doubt, is true. All bodies of men have changed in a course of time, and the Dissenters among the rest. The clergy of the

established church are by no means the same that they were at the Revolution; for they were then generally the enemies of the present reigning family, though they now make so great a boast of their being the friends of it. With respect to their religious sentiments, they are greatly changed indeed since the time of Queen Elizabeth, being, from Predestinarians, become almost universally Arminians, and till of late the more learned of their body are well known to have been Arians. There has also been a great change in the general sentiments of many of the Roman Catholics. But, to a politician, the only question is whether any of these changes of opinion give them less right to the protection of civil government.

The principal change in the Dissenters is similar to that which has taken place among the members of the church of England. They have receded farther from the system of Calvinism. Many of them became Arians, and many are now Unitarians, heretofore more generally called Socinians. But what has this to do with civil government? Can it be pretended that the man who confines his adoration to *one God*, and who calls this one God *the God and Father of Jesus Christ*, is a worse subject of civil government than he who, in addition to the worship of this one God, pays equal divine honours to Jesus Christ, and also to another divine person called *the Holy Ghost*, or than he who adds to all these the worship of the Virgin Mary, and of all the saints and angels in the Popish calendar?

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The question is surely too ridiculous to be discussed. Why then should unitarian Dissenters be more exposed to lawless violence, and left out of the protection of the state, than trinitarian Dissenters, or than the Roman Catholics, to whom the favour of government has of late been very justly extended.

It is true also, that many of the Dissenters are of late become enemies to all civil establishments of religion. But so also are many Catholics, and even many members of the church of England itself. And in what sense are they enemies, and how are they to be dreaded, and guarded against, as such? They are only enemies in point of *argument*. They think it would be better for all states not to trouble themselves about religion, or at least not to give any preference to one form of it more than to another. But this is not an opinion for which they will disturb the peace of any state. They wish to have *this*, as well as every other great question, interesting to man and to society, to be freely discussed. But what is the proper use and termination of *discussion*, besides the prevalence of *truth* and of *general happiness*? No man who does not persist in supporting what he himself believes to be false and mischievous, will ever say the contrary. Why then should not Dissenters, and all other persons, be tolerated in maintaining *this*, as well as any other opinion, though it has a remote relation to practice, as, indeed, every opinion of much importance necessarily has.

Whatever

Whatever were my political sentiments, though I should be an avowed republican, and, as a person high in office, but, in this respect, of little information, lately said of me, “ready to destroy the king, the house of Lords, and house of Commons too*,” as this mischief, unless I were the dragon of Wantley, could only be effected by *argument*, by convincing the people, that such descriptions of men were useless, or mischievous, to them, it would be no justifiable reason for inflicting on me what I have suffered.

If my publications, be they what they will, be not contrary to law, but merely sophistical, let them be answered. My enemies will hardly say that my abilities as a writer are such, that, even without the advantage of *truth*, I can out-write all my opponents, and, in spite of all their efforts, get the great body of the people on my side. And till this be done the state is in no manner of danger from me. If by writing, or acting, I expose myself to the censure of the law, let it have its course; but let not persons, under the pretence of supporting *government*, encourage lawless violence, subversive of all government whatever.

If by our writings any person be injured in his private character, or affairs, Dissenters are pu-

* Such language as this may be said to have been unintentionally the cause of the riots in Birmingham, with as much probability as the speech of king Henry II. was that of the murder of Becket. The known, or the supposed, wishes of men in power do not always require to be accompanied with positive orders. They should, therefore, be particularly cautious what they say.

nishable by law, like other citizens. But public measures, and public characters, have always been, and it is to be hoped, always will be, open to public animadversion in this country. Otherwise, there is an end of all true liberty; or if from this liberty the Dissenters alone are excluded, it is no free country for *us*, whatever it may be for others. Whenever I find myself debarred the exercise of the invaluable privilege of perfect freedom of speech and writing, I shall consider it as a signal for my departure to some other part of the world, where it can be enjoyed without molestation.

SECTION IV.

The Bigotry of the High Church Party the true Cause of the Riots.

THAT the true source of the late riots in Birmingham was *religious bigotry*, and the animosity of the high church party against the Dissenters, and especially against the Presbyterians and Unitarians, and not the commemoration of the French Revolution, is evident from all that has passed *before, at, and after*, the day.

In the public houses where the people were inflaming themselves with liquor, all that day, and some time before, there were heard execrations of
the

the most horrid kind against *the Presbyterians*. One person was heard not only to wish *damnation* to them, but that "God Almighty would make a "week's holiday for the purpose of damning them." The mob did not arrive at the Hotel till more than two hours after the company had left it, and there they demanded only *myself*, who had not been there. No part of their vengeance fell upon any churchman, whether at the dinner or not. After demolishing the two meeting-houses, and every thing belong to *me*, their next objects were the houses of Mr. Taylor and Mr. John Ryland, who were well known to have been much averse to the scheme of the dinner; and during the whole course of the outrages, the constant cry was CHURCH AND KING, and DOWN WITH THE PRESBYTERIANS.

That the celebration of the French Revolution was not the true cause of the riots, has indeed sufficiently appeared from the narrative part of this work. That the plan was laid some time before, and that proper persons were provided to conduct it, is probable from this circumstance, that those in the mob who directed the rest, who were evidently not of the lowest class, and who were sometimes called their *leaders*, were not known to hundreds of all descriptions of the inhabitants of the town, who observed them attentively; so that persons who were no Dissenters, concluded that they came from a distance, and probably from London. The proper Birmingham mob were often persuaded to desist from their attempts, till they were joined
by

by these men, who both instigated them to mischief, and directed them how to proceed in the shortest and most effectual manner.

If there be any foundation for this supposition, the plan of the riots must have been laid some time before, and of course, have been entirely independent both of the *band-bill* and of the *Revolution dinner*, any farther than the latter directed to the proper time for the execution of the scheme, as these directors must have been engaged before hand. Time, it is hoped, will throw some light on this dark business. It was probably intended to humble and intimidate the Dissenters, by some persons who thought it more prudent to do it by a mob, than by legal methods.

That the storm was directed solely against those that are commonly called the more liberal Dissenters, and not the Calvinistic ones, was evident from the whole course of it, in which the houses and meeting-houses of the latter were spared. The only exception was the house of Mr. Hutton who attends public worship at Carr's Lane, but whose son and daughter belong to the New Meeting. It is also thought that he was obnoxious to the lower classes of the people on account of the strict and exemplary discharge of his duty in the Court of Requests. Let us now see what passed subsequent to the event.

The

The exultation of the high church party, not only in Birmingham, but through the kingdom in general, on the success of this crusade, was undisguised and boundless. All the newspapers both in town and country, in the conduct of which they had particular influence, were full of the grossest abuse of the Dissenters, and especially of myself; and such narratives of the proceedings were published as cannot be accounted for from mistake, or misapprehension, but must have been wilfully fabricated for the worst of purposes. Of this I have, in the APPENDIX, No. III. given one example from the paper called THE TIMES.

There were many of the high church party who did not hesitate to say that, if the mischief had terminated with the destruction of my house, and every thing belonging to *me*, all had been well. Some openly lamented that the mob had not seized me, or that I had not perished in the conflagration. One clergyman in a public assize sermon, called our sufferings *wholesome correction*; and another declared that, if all my writings were put together, and myself were placed on the top of them, he should rejoice to set fire to the pile.

Many of the high church party were so far from lamenting my sufferings, or complaining of the illegal manner in which the mischief was done, that they scrupled not to justify it, on the pretence, though absolutely groundless, that my writings were

were hostile to the *state*, if not directly, yet indirectly so, as being hostile to the *church*. One instance of this, and one of the most moderate of its kind, I shall give in the APPENDIX, No. VI. on account of the singular circumstance of its being printed together with my own *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, and thrown into many houses in London, with the title of SELF-MURDER, or the DOCTOR TRIED AND CONVICTED ON HIS OWN EVIDENCE.

The strange violence of the same party spirit also appeared by a *band-bill*, which was distributed in London the day after my arrival there, of which a copy is given, APPENDIX, No. VII. This could only be intended to point me out as a proper object of destruction, by some person who wanted the courage, though not the will, to dispatch me *himself*.

At the same time I received an anonymous letter, from a person who said "he was concerned "for my misfortunes and my folly," advising me to "have a strict guard on my future conduct;" adding, "Depend upon it, if you proceed to "foment disturbances in this place, nobody can "answer for your safety. I can assure you the "people of this country will not see their happy "constitution insulted by any man."

The same spirit was but too apparent during the trials; the most notorious of the rioters being acquitted

acquitted by the jury, against the clearest evidence, to the astonishment of the judge, and all the court, and their acquittal was received with the loudest applause by the surrounding audience. Nor was this indecent exultation confined to those of the lower class, who were heard to wish "that the Birmingham coin might circulate through the kingdom." Two persons of better condition, as I was informed, meeting in the Town Hall at Warwick, immediately after the acquittal of two of the principal rioters, one of them observed to the other, that they "had succeeded beyond their expectations, and that since those two *heartly cocks*" (as "he called them) were safe, he did not much care "for the rest." The poor wretches who were left to be hanged, it is presumed, were such as knew no secrets. This very much resembles the case of *Demareé*, who was condemned for burning a Meeting-house in the time of Queen Ann, but was afterwards pardoned, and in the report of the trial, by judge Foster, is called "one of Dr. Sacheverell's "ablest advocates."

We still have confidence in the justice of our country with respect to our *damages*. As to *lives*, we never wished to take any more than might be deemed necessary for our own future security, and the peace of the country. We shall still be sufferers in common with others, and much more than they, with respect to things for which no indemnification can be made us.

They

The same high church spirit prevailed through most parts of England, and in places where I had nothing to do. Similar outrages were threatened, and apprehended, at Manchester; and it is thought they would have taken place there, as well as at Birmingham, if some soldiers had not been stationed in that town. Many are of opinion that if Dr. Price had been living, the storm would have fallen at Hackney in preference to Birmingham. A friend of mine at Exeter, who had invited me to spend a few weeks with him this summer, said that he durst not now receive me. The Dissenters were also threatened by the high church party at Bristol, at Taunton, at Maidstone, and other places very distant from each other. However, things wore a better aspect in the northern, and in some of the eastern parts of the kingdom. I had friends who offered me an asylum at Leeds, Norwich, and Ipswich.

It will not be easy to produce an example of treatment so merciless and shameful as mine has been; and yet the high church party are perpetually saying, that, though the proceeding has been *irregular*, I have not, in fact, received more than I *deserved*. As to my *manuscripts*, they say that the loss of one part of them, viz. the philosophical ones, is sufficiently compensated for by the loss of the other, viz. the *theological* ones; so that I have my deserts, and the public is on the whole no loser. This, however, is a virtual acknowledgment that, in their apprehensions, there was something,

thing peculiarly formidable in my theological writings and that they found it easier to dispose of them in any other way than by answering them. This conduct is as weak as their arguments have always been; since, as was the case with the books of the Sybils, the destruction of some of my writings increases the value of those that are preserved; and by this most convincing proof of the success of *my* writings, other persons will be excited to write, though I should be so overwhelmed by my misfortunes, as to be incapacitated from writing any more.

Never shall *I* be heard to rejoice in the destruction of any of the performances of my opponents. On the contrary, I have always wished, as my writings will evidence, that they had been more numerous, in order that their futility might more clearly appear. But my adversaries must have found that this conduct would not so well suit *them*, and therefore that their wisdom was not to produce any books of their own, but to destroy mine.

On this occasion,* which would have called forth the commiseration of generous adversaries,

* In an anonymous manuscript ballad, intitled *The Ghost and the Doctor*, sent me by the post from Chester, one of the persons lately executed for the riots, represented as a man of "honest fame" and a "simple zealot," appears to me, and reproaches me as the "professed priest of sedition," whose object it has been to preach the destruction of all order, as the cause of his death, which in justice I ought to suffer. After this I am made to rise "raving from my bed," and to "burn my pen," with a resolution never to write again. To this is added *quod sit omnes boni pique ex imis peccatoribus precantur.*
But

there have appeared stronger marks of virulence against the Dissenters than have been known for many years before. Not a grain of merit has been allowed to us, as a compensation for the crimes of which we are accused; and we are particularly charged with the greatest ingratitude against the government under which we live.

Dr. Tatham of Oxford, exulting over us on this occasion, speaks of the Dissenters as *graciously indulged*. But whether is it *our* system of religion, or *his*, that is most graciously indulged, and which of them is best entitled to this indulgence? Will a mere parliamentary sanction give any form of religion a preference in the eye of God and of reason; and if this should be a case in which the judgment of man shall be found to differ from that of God, it will by no means be the first of the kind. The time is approaching when every thing of this nature will be weighed in a juster balance than they usually are at present, and while we are all waiting for this final decision, let us be humble and forbearing.

But though many of the clergy expressed the most rancorous sentiments against us, there have appeared on this occasion among them men of

But the zealots of Birmingham, and this martyr to the church of England among the rest, took a much more natural method to silence me than this ballad maker (probably a clergyman) of Chester. What he and his friends only *prayed for*, they used the proper means to secure. That they were disappointed in their scheme was not their fault. They may succeed better in a second attempt.

the most liberal minds and principles, who expressed the greatest abhorrence of the conduct and sentiments of the rest of their body, and who, together with some generous minded laity of the establishment, were among the first to afford me the most substantial assistance.

SECTION V.

*Of the Pretence that Government was adverse to the
Dissenters and favoured the Rioters.*

IT was unfortunately a very general opinion that *Government* favoured the violent proceedings against the Dissenters at Birmingham. It was the constant cry of the rioters, in the course of their ravages, "We have nothing to fear. The justices are for us, Government is for us;" and when they were told the troops were coming, they said the soldiers were on their side. When the king's proclamation, offering the reward of an hundred pounds for the discovery and conviction of any person concerned in the riot was published, some of the people were heard to cry, "Is he then turned Presbyterian, and are we to be hanged for this?" Similar language was held by some who ought to have known better.

This

This is a circumstance which it greatly concerns the governors of a country to attend to, if they wish to preserve the peace of it, and extend their protection alike to all the subjects. For if any small part of the community, and especially such members of it as are least disposed to violence, be held out, or imagined to be held out, to the rest of the community, as *unworthy of protection*, they will be considered as in a state of *proscription*, and proper objects of persecution, exposed to every insult; and they will have no resource but in temporary self defence, and final emigration. And surely the experience of the last century must have shewn this country the impolicy, if not the wickedness, of such irritation.

The Dissenters have no mob to oppose to such abandoned wretches as committed the outrages at Birmingham; and yet it is now pretended that if the high church party had not destroyed our houses, and places of public worship, we should have destroyed theirs. But admitting that the Dissenters are *knaves*, they are not *fools*, or rather *madmen*, as they must have been to have attempted violence in their situation, unless every one of them had been conscious to himself of having the strength of Samson, and that he was a match for a thousand of his enemies.

But when did Dissenters attempt any thing of the kind? There are instances enow upon record of similar outrages being committed *upon* the Dissenters,

fenters, in various parts of the kingdom ; but no example of any being committed *by* them. They are univerfally a fober and orderly people ; and whatever they may think of other people's opinions, they have no idea of promoting their caufe by *force*. Not one Independent, Baptift, or Methodift, I am confident, had any hand in the riot at Birmingham, but only thofe members of the church of England (if they can be faid to be the members of any church) who are in fact deftitute of all fenfe of religion ; and of fuch confifts a very great proportion of the inhabitants of Birmingham, and all other large manufacturing towns. In the height of the riot they were addreffed by the magiftrates, and other respectable members of the church of England, who then thought they had done mischief enough, and wifhed them to proceed no farther, by the appellation of *Friends and Fellow-churchmen*. See APPENDIX, No. VIII.

It cannot be denied that a crime has been committed, and of the greateft enormity in a civilized country. Immenfe property has been deftroyed, houfes burned, lives endangered, and the peace of many families interrupted, by an illegal infurrection, in defiance of all law and good order, and that thefe violences were committed on the pretence of fupporting *the church and the king*. It certainly, therefore, behoves both the church and the government, to exculpate themfelves, and to make every fatisfaction to the fufferers that the nature of the cafe will admit of.

The

The violences were committed by the lower orders of the people, but if the friends of the church and of the king in the higher ranks had been earnest to suppress the riot, it might, no doubt, have been effected before any mischief had been done. If the magistrates, and other principal inhabitants of the town, belonging to the church, of England, on the first hearing of the rioters going to the New Meeting, had interposed, by repairing to the place, and earnestly protesting against the violence, even that meeting-house would not have suffered. Had there not been time for *this* (which, however, there certainly was) their interposition might have prevented the destruction of the second meeting-house. At least, with the assistance of a few men with fire-arms, which they could easily have commanded, they might have prevented all the mischief at my house, with every thing that followed. There was, therefore, at least a criminal remissness in the friends of the church and the king. But the clearest facts shew that there was more than remissness on the part of many persons of better condition, and nothing that they ever did shewed a real disapprobation of the conduct of the mob previous to the demolition of my house, but only a wish that they should proceed no farther than that; and this on no other account than that of the *expence* it would be to themselves. This is evident from the hand-bills last referred to.

Making every allowance for the perpetrators and abettors of these horrid scenes at the moment,

there has been time for reflection and compunction since; and the eyes of the nation, and of all Europe, are open to see what part both the town and neighbourhood, and above all the government of the country, will take in the case. On the part of the town and neighbourhood nothing favourable to justice has appeared as yet.

Out of several thousand rioters evidence has been procured against no more than fifty-two. Of these not so many as twenty have been apprehended, and of these only five have been condemned, and three executed*. Instead of promoting an inquiry concerning the instigators of this mob, and censuring the manifest remissness of the magistrates, a town's meeting has voted the latter thanks and rewards for the part they acted; and an *Address to the King* reflecting more on the Dissenters, as friends to innovation, than on the rioters†. The whole town and neighbourhood, therefore, must

* On occasion of the riots in London, in which it is probable that fewer persons were concerned than in those of Birmingham, one hundred and thirty-five were tried, fifty-nine convicted, and twenty-six executed; and I believe merely for what they did in the riots. Whereas it is remarkable that of the very few who were convicted on occasion of the riots in Birmingham, all who were executed were men of notorious bad character in other respects. And certainly the execution of men who were universally considered as the pests of society, is no punishment for this particular offence, and therefore no warning against the commission of the like; since it will be concluded, that if men be chargeable with nothing but destroying the property of the Dissenters, they have no punishment to fear. For either the jury will not find them guilty, or the case will be so represented to the king that a pardon will certainly be procured.

† This address, and also that of the Dissenters, I shall insert in the APPENDIX, No. IX. that the object spirit of the one may be compared with the liberal and manly spirit of the other.

fall under the suspicion of screening the criminals, and therefore partaking in the guilt.

The clergy, if they had wished to wash their hands of this crime, and disclaim the conduct of those who call themselves *their friends*, should have been the first to reprobate their proceedings, and to preach moderation and peace. Instead of this, they have been the first to calumniate us, and represent the conduct of the mob in the most favourable light. Since two meeting-houses were destroyed on pretence of supporting the *church*, the least that they could have done, and the most natural compensation for the time, would have been to allow the Dissenters the use of their churches, till the meeting-houses could have been rebuilt.

This would only have been doing, as a compensation for an injury committed by churchmen, what the Dissenters at Banbury are at this very time doing in favour of the church of England, while the parish church of that place is rebuilding, though they had no hand in pulling it down. There are several places in Germany in which the Catholics and Protestants constantly make use of the same place of public worship. Such an offer on the part of the clergy, or the bishop of the diocese, would have done them the greatest credit, and have contributed very much towards exculpating them from having any share in the outrage. But this natural and easy method, which would have cost them nothing, not having been done, they remain without that exculpation. The clergy also, and
other

other principal inhabitants of the town, if they had been properly sensible of the injury done to myself in particular, might have joined in inviting me back again, and doing every thing in their power to make my re-establishment safe and easy.

On the contrary, I am informed from various quarters, that the inveteracy against me through the town in general, owing to the most atrocious calumnies, and misrepresentations, is rather increased than diminished, and that my return would both be hazardous to myself, and augment their hostility*.

It is evident, therefore, that we have now nothing to expect either from the clergy or laity of the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham, but must look to the general government of the country; and we hope it will be found that thence we do not look for justice, activity, or energy, in vain.

Had the bishop of the diocese sent a proper *pastoral letter* to the clergy of Birmingham, lamenting the effects of party spirit, and especially that any attempts should have been made to support a *christian church* by such unchristian means as had been employed on that pretence; had he advised an immediate reparation of the wrongs of the Dissenters, and the doing every thing that was in the power of the members of the church of England to restore

* In order to see the different spirit that actuates dissenting ministers, and the generality of the clergy, with respect to the late riots, I would refer my reader to Mr. Scholefield's truly christian *Discourse on loving our Enemies*, and his spirited and excellent *Preface* to it.

the peace of the town, the instigators of the riot would before this time have been made ashamed of their conduct, and greater harmony than ever might have taken place between the members of the established church and the Dissenters. But though many of his flock have behaved like wolves, their conduct has not been reprov'd by their pastor, at least in that public manner which the nature of the case required. Considering the part that many of the lower clergy have acted in this business, the eyes of the country are now upon the bishops; and their silence will be construed into approbation; especially since much of the bigotry of the present times is by many ascribed to their frequent and inflammatory charges against the Dissenters, and especially the Unitarians, not without plain allusions to myself in particular.

In the reigns of king William and queen Ann, the bigotry of the inferior clergy was constantly checked by the greater liberality of the bishops; the lower house of convocation being controlled by the upper house. But in this reign the high church spirit has descended from the superior to the inferior clergy.

If the spirit of persecution proceed as it has begun, unchecked by the superior clergy of the church of England, I shall not scruple to say of it, as of mystical Babylon in the Revelation (xviii. 4.) *Come out of her my people, lest ye be partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* But I hope, and I know better things of many of them,
and

and I have great expectations from their interference.

Of the two parties in whose names the outrages at Birmingham were committed, viz. *the church* and *the king*, the latter has, in a great measure, exculpated himself, by his proclamation to apprehend and punish the rioters. But the former, the boasted *ally* of the state (and which, like Cardinal Wolsey, always names herself before her king) has not hitherto done any thing in concurrence with her ally, but has taken another coadjutor. Henceforth, therefore, the cry should be not *church and king*, but *church and mob*.

SECTION VI.

Of the principal Use of an established Religion.

I CANNOT help observing on this occasion, that if the state be at the expence of providing the country with *religion*, it should be chiefly for the benefit of those who stand in the most need of it, and who would not provide any for themselves. The *better sort* of people, as we call them, will behave orderly and peaceably, which is the great end of civil government, without it. But with us the lower classes of the community are nearly in the same condition as if there was no established religion at all. If the inefficacy of an established religion to correct the disorders of the lower orders of the people, as manifested in the riots at Birmingham,

mingham, does not open the eyes of this country to the true nature of church establishments, it will be difficult to say what will, and so great and serious a lesson will have been given us in vain.

In consequence of the too general neglect of the lower classes of people by the ministers of the established church, their profaneness, brutality, and licentiousness, exceed that of the same class of people in any other country whatever, civilized or uncivilized. For those whom we call *savages* have infinitely more regard to decency, equity, and civility, in their conduct, than the untaught vulgar with us. What these learn from a state of society are the vices to which it gives occasion, and they are such as have no place in what we call the *uncivilized* part of the world, because, in their circumstances, there is no temptation to them.

If therefore, there must be a *state religion*, and the object of this religion be not the emolument of the teachers of it, or the power of the governors in disposing of those emoluments, but to inspire the people with a sense of their obligations to God and man, the most express provision should be made for the instruction of the lower orders of the people, in preference to that of all others. The clergy should know them all, and instruct them all. But with us too little of this kind is done, nor does there appear much disposition towards it.

The greatest part of the real advantage which this country derives from the religion of the lower orders

orders of the people costs it nothing at all, being that which accrues to it from the labours of the Dissenters and Methodists, who have been the means of civilizing and christianizing some of those for whose instruction principally the established clergy are paid, but who are too generally neglected by them, and are as sheep without a shepherd. The country will sooner or later consider the *cui bono* of this establishment, as well as of every thing else in the system for which it furnishes the expence.

The only thing that has of late years been done in favour of this greatly neglected part of the community, is the institution of *Sunday Schools*, which was the happy thought of Mr. Raikes of Gloucester, a member of the church of England, and which was immediately patronized by the clergy, and the members of the church of England in general. But because many of the Dissenters took them up with more zeal than they, and made better provision for instructing and rewarding Sunday scholars (so that their schools came into greater repute than those of the establishment) several of the clergy have taken umbrage at them. Some of them have endeavoured to compel the Dissenters to drop, or reduce, their Sunday Schools, and others who pretend to more sagacity than the rest, now say that they never approved of the scheme, because they foresaw that it would be the means of adding to the number of the Dissenters, a thing which they evidently consider as a greater evil than that shameful ignorance and profligacy of the poor, which this
excellent

excellent scheme is calculated to remove. See *Dr. Tatham's Letters*.

In this case it should be considered out of what class of the community is the addition to the Dissenters made. Is it not out of that which, previous to this measure, had no religion at all? The clergy in general are far from adopting this unchristian maxim, and in some places they act in concert with the Dissenters, in a scheme the object of which is common christianity, and common utility.

When an account shall be taken of the advantages and disadvantages of civil establishments of religion, every injury done by *persecution* should be placed on the *per contra* side. For the different sects of Dissenters in this country, where there is an establishment, and the different religious denominations in North America, where there is none, never molest one another, but live in good neighbourhood and friendship. It is when one sect enjoys temporal advantages from which the rest are excluded, that a bone of contention is thrown among them; and then the envy of the depressed party, but much more the jealousy and spirit of domination, the natural offspring of *power*, in the party that is favoured, may do infinite mischief. For the spirit of church establishments, which is ever jealous and vindictive, is not peculiar to *them*. It is the spirit not of religion in particular, but of all *monopolies*. Nor are the clergy so much to be complained of. *Men* in general are the same. They are *systems* and *institutions*, that corrupt mankind.

In all those who have possession of power, there too easily arises the idea, that what cannot be accomplished by *argument* in favour of their system, may be effected with much more ease and certainty by external *force*. Hence, instead of answering our books, the members of the church of England at Birmingham, have burned them, together with our houses and places of public worship. If such a proceeding as this either breaks the spirit, or lessens the number, of Dissenters, it will be the first experiment of the kind that has succeeded. But the heroic actors in this business probably never heard that any such experiment had ever been tried before.

I shall conclude this article with observing, that it is usual to praise every existing reign, as great and glorious, and to ascribe every thing that the age produces to the prince upon the throne. But whatever other advantages have accrued to this country during the present reign, I will venture to say that, if the despicable spirit of bigotry and intolerance continue to prevail, unchecked by government, as it has done of late years, it will (considering the increasing light of the age in every other country in Europe) be one of the most disgraceful in the annals of Britain. There was something plausible in the persecution of christians by heathens, and in that of Protestants by Catholics, because they introduced great innovations, and great and unknown consequences were dreaded from them. They were religions of yesterday
 overturning

overturning establishments of the remotest antiquity. But the persecution of one sect of Protestants by another, all equally *novelties*, and very much resembling one another, is nothing better than the mutual persecution of the *Sommites* and *Skiites* in Mahomedan countries, or than that of the *Littleendians* of Lilliput by the *Bigendians*.

A great number of the clergy, however, are men of other minds. They are sensible of the abuses of their system, and earnestly wish for a reform. They respect the Dissenters, and are always ready to act in concert with them, wherever humanity or common christianity is concerned. These are generally called *low churchmen*, while those of the *high church party*, which is certainly greatly increased of late years, are strenuous advocates for continuing every thing as it is, and opposing all *innovation*, that is, every *reform*. They hate, and they dread, all Dissenters, except the quietest among them, who neither speak nor write any thing on the subject of their dissent, and who, like all other Dissenters, generally pay them better, and more cheerfully, than their other parishioners. Such Dissenters as these they might not be very sorry to see increase.

SECTION VII.

Of the Importance of a good Police in a well constituted State.

WE may learn from the late riots in Birmingham, as well as from those in London in 1780, the necessity of having a force always ready to repel an undisciplined mob. On either of these occasions, twenty men armed with muskets, and only a general knowledge of the use of them, would at any time have dispersed the rioters. And how easy would it be to have many times this small force in constant readiness in every town and parish in the kingdom, without having recourse to a *standing army*, at the command of the crown only, which is the bane of all free states. Let all the reputable inhabitants of any town, or parish, be provided with fire arms, and exercised in the use of them, and no riots would ever be attempted.

What objection any wise and just government can have to this measure, I do not see; and without a provision of this kind, we are disappointed with respect to the principal advantage that a state of society and government holds out to us, which is protection from lawless violence, and the benefit of a fair trial for any offences of which we are accused.

accused. While men offend against no law, they should enjoy the protection of the law, and if they do offend, they should be tried and punished according to law. This is the first rule in all civil society, and yet in this country there is at this moment a too general exultation, that this rule has been violated in the case of the Dissenters in general, and of myself in particular, though we have done no injury to society whatever.

It is something extraordinary that persons used to a state of law and government should not be struck with the impropriety of making a mob both the judges, and executioners, of law, and that in a state of intoxication, when they are not capable of hearing any reason. In the present case, on the simple assertion of some malicious person, that I drank *no church no king*, and *the king's head in a charger*, at a place where I was not present, and that I was the author of a *band-bill* which I had barely heard of, I am instantly, without examination of myself, or my accuser, exposed to suffer infinitely more than I should have done if I had been actually guilty of all these offences, and the whole charge had been proved in a court of law. For *that* could only have amounted to *fine and imprisonment*. It would not have involved the innocent labours of my past life. The sentence of the law would not have been the burning of my house, without giving me an opportunity of removing any thing out of it, the destruction of my library, apparatus, and manuscripts.

Supposing the Dissenters should have had recourse to similar methods of revenge, which would have been more justifiable, as not having been the *aggressors*, and have burned church for church, house for house, library for library, &c. &c. into what a state of anarchy, worse than civil war, would the whole country have been thrown. The worst that my enemies can say of me is that I wish to set up a republican form of government; but this is at least *some* form of government, whereas those who planned, and directed, the proceedings at Birmingham, went by no sort of government at all; having adopted the very measures which all governments whatever were intended to guard against*.

Since the Dissenters are clearly innocent of what has been so generally laid to their charge, and for which they have suffered so severely, we may apply to their case the proverb used on a

* Some, however, take it for granted, that by a republican form of government, is meant no government at all, but to leave all people at liberty to act as they pleased, from the impulse of the moment. Thus the Ghost in the poem from Chester is made to say,

“How couldst thou preach that mobs might rule.”

A writer in the Gentleman's Magazine for September, 1791, p. 191, whose signature is OEDIPUS, says of me, “His own engine *the mob*, “which he vainly imagined he could wield with ability, and with “which he has in the present instance threatened the establishment of “his country, has at last recoiled upon him with ten-fold violence. “That Dr. Priestley has done all in his power to stir up the people “in opposition to government, is a fact easily proved.” That Mr. Nichols, a man who has some pretensions to literature, should suffer this publication, which goes into the hands of most men of letters, to be the hackneyed vehicle of such impudent and malicious falsehoods, against a person in my situation, will to many appear extraordinary. But he ranks with high churchmen, and on such, in the case of Dissenters, justice and humanity seem to have no claim.

similar

similar occasion by our Saviour (who, however, was not punished without the form of *law*, and the authority of the chief magistrate) *If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry.* If the innocent suffer thus much, what have the guilty to expect?

It was a blind and furious zeal for *the law*, the established religion of the country, a religion appointed by God himself, and the lawless violences to which their zeal led those of the Jews who were termed *zealots*, that preceded, and brought on, the destruction of Jerusalem; and those zealots were not more blind and furious than the friends of the church of England at Birmingham, and in many other parts of this country. Let those of them who are able, read Josephus, and take warning.

The number of such desperate and profligate wretches in this country as were instigated to lawless havoc and plunder, on the pretence of supporting the church and state, at Birmingham, and who will be equally ready to plunder on any other pretence, almost exceeds belief, and we have more to dread from them than from all our other evils put together. Indeed, they all point to this.

Whenever the difficulties of this country shall encrease, so that these people can neither be employed, nor fed, (and from more causes than one we draw nearer to this situation every day) every great town in England, if no provision be made
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against it, may be expected to exhibit such scenes as Birmingham has lately done, and as London did in the year 1780; when the labour of ages may be swept away in a day, and this whole country, at present the pride of the world, may become a scene of general desolation. It has within itself the ample seeds of such calamity, in the prodigious number of the ignorant, the profligate, and the profane part of the lower orders of the community, whom the impolicy of our *poor laws* chiefly, has rendered utterly averse to labour and economy, to a degree far below that of any of the brute creation. Our common soldiers are chiefly of this class, and cases may arise, in which little dependence can be placed upon *them*, for preserving the peace and good order of the kingdom.

The established clergy give little attention to the morals of this most depraved part of the community; nor indeed is it in their power to do much. But the case requires the immediate attention of government, if our statesmen mean to do any thing more than put off the evil day from their own times, contenting themselves with temporary expedients, instead of substantial remedies.

If our lives and properties are to be at the mercy of the mob, which may rise, and commit its premeditated ravages, without giving us any warning; and if there be no redress but in a military force, and that frequently at a considerable distance; if this redress depend on the arbitrary will of the
crown;

crown; let any person say in what our condition differs from that of perfect *despotism*; our imperfect security from the greatest injuries arising not from *law*, and *regular government*, but from *arbitrary will*. It would be a government in the strictest sense of the word *military*, and much worse than that which is usually so called; because in it there is at least some known mode of proceeding.

Such, however, is the present situation of this country, that there appears to be no effectual remedy for this great evil, but in voluntary associations for self-defence; and this is little less than superadding a new government, at a great expence, to supply the defects of an old one, which is already the most expensive in the world. It is so far from being improper, or illegal, for men to defend themselves, and their property, from lawless violence, by any sufficient means, fire-arms not excepted, that it is highly commendable to do it. See Sir William Jones's excellent tract on *The legal Method of suppressing Riots*.

In the riots at Birmingham relief was sent as soon as possible, the expedition of the troops was extraordinary; and thanks were certainly due to those who actually saved the town, and especially the Dissenters in it, from total destruction. But had government been remiss, or the troops tardy; nay, had the expresses been delayed, as they might

might have been, by accident: and if, from any of these causes, the fury of the mob had continued unrestrained a single day longer (in which case it is the general opinion that the town would have been on fire) where could have been the remedy, when such a town as Birmingham, and the manufactures of it, had been lost to the kingdom? Should the safety of a wise nation depend upon resources so precarious as these?

Let those who are not displeased with mobs when they think that they only execute summary justice on those whom the laws cannot reach, consider how hazardous a weapon they wish to employ, and how difficult it is to direct it. None of those who promoted the riots in Birmingham had, I am persuaded, any intention that the mischief should have proceeded so far as it did; and I should not wonder if the time come when the same lawless rabble, who lately shouted *Church and king*, should take up the cry of *No church, no king*, or at least that of *No game laws, no tythes, no excise*. Nothing is wanting but an artful leader.

Who does not recollect how the tide of popular favour has turned both with respect to our present sovereign, and the present king of France. No princes ever came to their crowns with more general popularity. But in a few years the case was so much the reverse in this country, that the king constantly

constantly went abroad, if not amidst the hisses (which was sometimes the case) yet with the most marked and disrespectful silence, of the people in general*. The case is now happily reversed, and the present reign is likely to close with as much popularity as it began,

Who was ever more idolized than the present king of France, and yet what was not thought, and openly said of him, on his late return to Paris? And he is now likely to be more, and more justly, popular than ever. Both these princes, however, are, no doubt, the very same that they ever were. The change has been in the people, and in their ideas of them.

The late king of France was almost idolized at the time of his illness at Rheims. Had he been literally the father of every family in the nation, they could not have appeared to feel more for him than they did. Yet though there was little change in his principles or conduct, into what universal contempt did he sink before he died. Wise men

* I never saw a greater croud on any occasion than on the king's once going through St. James's park to the house of Peers, at the beginning of the American war, and because one man, probably from the country, pulled off his hat as the coach passed close to him, he was very near being knocked down for it by those who were next to him. It was the constant custom for years to let the king's chair pass without any notice, at the same time that every person put off his hat in the most respectful manner to the queen. When, as by a kind of irresistible impulse, I was at one time going to pull off mine to the king, the person I was walking with, perceiving that I was putting up my hand for that purpose, checked me, by saying that if I did, I should certainly be insulted.

will reflect on these things, and the causes of them; and from the changes that have taken place, they will not be surprized at any others of the same kind, as great, and as sudden.

SECTION VIII.

The Impolicy of checking the natural Expression of Men's Sentiments.

SO many lessons as history holds out to us of the kind, I cannot help expressing some surprize, that the pretended friends of our government should endeavour to suppress the natural ebullition of men's minds by speaking, writing, or public entertainments. No attempts of this kind can prevent men's *thinking*. Nay, these measures have never failed to make men think the more, and the sooner to have recourse to other methods of expressing their sentiments, infinitely more hazardous to the public peace.

What did the late government of France gain by the most rigorous measures of this kind, restraining all liberty of the press, and preventing, as far as *power* could do it, all the usual modes of expressing men's sentiments? In these circumstances, *prohibited books* did infinitely more mischief,

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as it would be called, than any that could have been published; and private conversation, in this state of restraint, did more mischief than any books whatever. For the Revolution, as is evident, found the whole nation, those who could not read, as well as those who could, fully ripe for the change; while to those who were unacquainted with the natural progress of things, there seemed to be an instantaneous, and almost miraculous, transition, from idolizing their kings, to a contempt and detestation of kingly government, till, on farther reflection, they acquiesced in the present medium.

On the other hand, Englishmen, being used to write and to speak freely, and to have convivial meetings whenever they pleased, are generally content with giving vent to their sentiments in these ways, and never think of any thing farther. But if this outlet to their natural feelings be shut, they will certainly find some other, much more alarming, than dinners, toasts, and songs. It may be like the stopping the mouth of a volcano, the consequence of which would be the convulsion of all the country. If there is to be a revolution in this country, similar to that which has taken place in France (though our situation is such as by no means to require it) attempts to deter men by illegal violence from doing what the law does not forbid, will, I am confident, bring it on in half the time. Men, who do not like to be insulted, will at length be prepared to resist violence by violence; and from such accidental and inconsiderate sparks as these

these, a civil war may be lighted up, and consequences may follow which the wisest among us cannot foresee,

They who take any serious umbrage at such meetings as those for the celebration of the French Revolution, throw the greatest reflection on the present reign, and most endanger the present happy tranquility of it. For it is to represent it as no better than the reign of Tiberius, a reign of universal suspicion, and of real dangers arising from imaginary ones. That government must be conscious of its extreme weakness, or be actuated by the most wanton cruelty, that can seriously resent such trifling insults as these, admitting, what is by no means true, that they were *intended* for insults.

The wisest, and in all respects the best method, is to indulge men in the freest expression of their natural sentiments, and even to encourage the fullest discussion of all topics, of a civil as well as of a religious nature, in order that one opinion and one reason may combat another, and that all truth, religious, philosophical, or political, may prevail, and establish itself, without obstruction. By this gentle and generous proceeding, no convulsion will ever happen in any state. The public opinion will thus be formed gradually, and have its natural and easy operation, producing changes as they are wanted; and grievances will not be permitted to accumulate, till the mass shall be so great, as to force its way through all opposition.

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This maxim is equally true with respect to the church, or the state. If the clergy made no opposition to the encreasing light of the age, but would themselves speculate freely on every subject relating to their own situation, and that of the country, nothing would ever hurt any individual of them. Should the consequence of this free discussion, and gradual change in the public mind, be the abolition of tythes, they would not be losers by it; because, if they themselves should heartily concur in the measure, some better, and no less ample, provision would be made for them. Should they allow a revision of the public creeds, articles, and liturgy, the present subscription might be dropped, and any other alteration made, without affecting their revenues, or the general system.

Should the clergy proceed a step farther, and acknowledge that the seat of the bishops in the house of Lords (which had no other origin than the now antiquated feudal system) was unsuitable to their spiritual character; and of their own accord withdraw themselves from Parliament, it would be with a dignity which would establish them in the good-will of the people, and preserve their rank in other respects, for ages.

But by proceeding on their present plan of a dread of all *innovation*, and altering nothing, notwithstanding the increasing light of the age, they lead many persons to conclude, that they are determined to hear no reason, and that, from a regard
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to their temporal honours and emoluments only, they wilfully shut their ears to the clearest voice of truth.

By this means the whole system of the civil establishment of christianity will be suspected to be irreconcilable to the cause of religious truth, and civil liberty; and on the first great change in the state of public affairs, there will be some hazard of the country rejecting it as a nuisance, without substituting any thing in its place.

It is easy to make familiar remarks with respect to the system of civil government. A more equal representation of the commons in Parliament is most evidently wanted; and if this, and other necessary reforms, be long withheld, the whole system will be endangered, though it is not easy to foresee in what manner the danger will come, or how far the evil attending a sudden change of system, in a situation so critical and complicated as ours, will extend.

SECTION IX.

Considerations relating to Persecution, and the Consequences of it.

MANY of the *friends of the church*, as they are called, freely indulge themselves in rejoicing at the calamities of the dissenting sufferers at Birmingham, without having any idea of their being actuated by a spirit of *persecution*. This spirit, it is something remarkable, all who have ever persecuted have disclaimed; thinking their conduct abundantly justified by the disposition, and behaviour, of the sufferers; and it has almost always been pretended, that these have been punished not for their *opinions*, but for *disturbing the state*.

This was constantly alleged by all the heathen persecutors. Though the Christians were the most innocent and peaceable of men, they were considered as enemies of the Roman government, and punished as for civil offences. The Catholics also, at the time of the reformation, treated *heresy* as a thing that was dangerous to the civil power, and thus were influenced by political, as well as religious considerations. Both Philip II. and Lewis XIV. thought Protestants to be *bad subjects*, whose aim it was to make disturbance in the state, and this is precisely the character under which the

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the zealots of the church of England are continually exhibiting the Dissenters. Though it is unquestionable, that the Dissenters in the late reigns were the best friends of the family on the throne, and the clergy in general disaffected to it, wishing, and not very secretly, for the re-establishment of the Stuarts, they now have the assurance to charge *us* with disaffection. And with the idea, however absurd, that what they do is purely *defensive*, and merely to prevent injury to themselves (who they must know are placed far beyond the reach of our *power*, if it was our *wish*, to hurt them) would without remorse be guilty of every outrage upon our property, and our persons too, that the heathens and Catholics ever gave into.

Our Saviour apprized his disciples that *they who killed them would think they did God service*. Paul thought that he did right in persecuting the christians, even unto death, and the bigoted Jews in general persecuted through *ignorance*. But were they, therefore, innocent? And did not the just judgments of God overtake that infatuated nation on this very account? There is a kind of ignorance that is highly criminal, arising not only from neglect of making enquiry, which itself arises from criminal prejudice, but from a secret malignity of temper, which conceals itself under the notion of zeal for religion.

That persons frequently mistake the real motives of their own conduct, and thereby form a
wrong

wrong judgment of their own characters, is notorious. What man ever thought himself to be covetous, though all the world saw him to be so in the extreme? Or what man ever thought himself proud, and yet pride is certainly not banished from the world? Nay, did ever any man, except in reflecting on his conduct afterwards, think himself a bad husband, a bad father, or a bad master? And yet there certainly are such characters. Men always find excuses for their own conduct.

Can we wonder then, that no man ever thought himself to be a persecutor? And is it not, therefore, very possible, that the church of England may be in a high degree intolerant and persecuting, without acknowledging, or even seeing it. But the question is, whether, notwithstanding this good opinion of herself, she be not truly so, and whether she be not liable to the just judgments of God on that account. Let the members of this church examine themselves on this head; and for this purpose I shall take the liberty to furnish them with a few queries, arising from the present circumstances of things.

Did they not, previous to the riots in Birmingham, wish myself, and other opposers of the doctrine of the trinity, to be silenced by other means than by *argument*? Several of those who engaged in public controversy with me on this subject gave sufficient intimation of their wish for the interposition of the civil power, and I doubt not lamented that the circumstances of the times

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were unfavourable to such a mode of silencing us. And what is persecution, but the application of *force* in the place of *argument* ?

Did those who exclaimed the most against us so much as read our writings? It is well known that, when the question has been put to many of them, they have not only answered in the negative, but have even expressed a kind of horror at the proposal, and have strongly dissuaded others from reading. Now what is this but a proof of extreme *bigotry*? And is not bigotry the natural parent of intolerance and persecution?

Did not great numbers of the clergy express a real satisfaction in the riots, when they heard that the meeting-houses, and every thing belonging to *myself*, were destroyed; and would they have been sorry if I had perished too, manifestly illegal and unjust as this method of obtaining their end was? The clergyman who openly expressed the satisfaction he should have in burning me alive was, I am informed, one of the weaker of his brethren, but I doubt not, he expressed the real sentiments of many others*. Now every person who was not displeased with the act, is, in the eye of reason and of

* How far the ideas of some persons went on this occasion may be seen in the following paper written in a large print-hand, and found at Beaconsfield. "It is confidently reported from Birmingham and London, that should the Dissenters attempt any thing farther against the king, church, or state, they will provoke the true patriot-sentiment, and nothing less will dispense or satisfy them, but the extirpation of the whole race of Dissenters from this kingdom, or total destruction to a man."

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God, an abettor of it, and a partaker of the guilt. I therefore leave it to the consciences of the clergy in general, and at least those who class with the high church party, whether this was not their case, and consequently whether they ought not to class with persecutors. Little do many of the clergy know *what spirit they are really of*, or to what degrees of violence their principles, or tempers, would lead them. It is not necessary, in order to be persecutors, that they themselves commit acts of violence. They should be sorry for them, and endeavour to prevent them.

Persecution assumes a variety of forms, and is generally progressive. The edict of Nantes was not revoked without many previous steps, and the clergy and the court of France shewed their ill-will to the Protestants by thwarting them, and harrassing them, in many indirect ways, before they threw off the mask, and persecuted openly. Still, they did not allow themselves to be *persecutors*, because protestantism was always tolerated in France, though on hard conditions, and Protestants were never by law excluded from civil employments, at the appointment of the crown, as Dissenters are in this country. But persecution takes one form in one place, and a different one in another.

In the unquestionably persecuting reigns of Elizabeth, and the Stuarts, the Puritans were not put to death. But they were so much harrassed in

various ways, that they were glad to take refuge in the then inhospitable climes of America, a country worse than desert. But they preferred the neighbourhood of the natural savages of America, to that of the artificial, but more cruel, savages of Europe. By perseverance they conquered all their difficulties, and when the hand of oppression was stretched towards them in our own times, they nobly resisted, and conquered again in another way. The liberty of America was the proper parent of that of France; and thus, in the wonderful order of Divine Providence, has oppression, civil and religious, been the cause of a greater extension of liberty than the world had ever known before.

A less degree of persecution will now induce the descendants of those Puritans to join their brethren in America, or the common sons of liberty nearer home; either of whom would receive them with open arms. Let the governors of the country attend to this consideration, before the evil be so far advanced, as that nothing can prevent its farther progress. And rich as this country is boasted to be, in resources of all kinds, it is not, I apprehend, in so very flourishing a condition, as to venture upon such an experiment as that of the expulsion of the Dissenters from England (which would have much more serious consequences than that of the Morisco's from Spain) without greater risk than its most sanguine friends would chuse. The American war had a slighter commencement than the

the riots in Birmingham, and the animosity against the Dissenters is now more general, and more inveterate, than it ever was against the Americans. *Verbum Sapienti. Principiis obsta.*

I well know that our enemies would rejoice in our emigration*, without ever reflecting that preceding emigrations on similar accounts have never diminished the source from which they sprung. Though the revocation of the edict of Nantz drove immense numbers of Protestants from France, the number within the country was not lessened. To extirpate sectaries is not so easy a business as to extirpate offensive plants, or animals; because a man who is not a sectary to-day may become one to-morrow. With care, the whole species of ashes, or elms, for example, might be extirpated; especially in an island. But it would soon be found to be labour in vain, if oaks, beeches, and all other trees, should be converted into ashes or elms. In fact, to extirpate Unitarians, may come to be the same thing as to extirpate the human race.

A trinitarian, in consequence of reading and thinking, may become an unitarian, as was the case with myself. It is possible that even a bishop, and that bishop he who now occupies the see of St. David's, may become an unitarian. For though he some time ago declared that he had not read my

* This appears from several publications of the high church party since the riots.

History of early Opinions concerning Christ, he still may read it, and may be convinced by it. It is also within the sphere of *possibility*, that an unitarian bishop may, as he ought to do, declare himself one, and become a Dissenter. The same may be the case with those of the learned laity who have written in defence of the present church establishment*; and the conversion of such men as these may soon draw others after them.

To those who are at all acquainted with history, I need not observe that the persecution of the Protestants in France proved highly injurious to that kingdom. Men of property and of enterprize were the first to emigrate, and they soon drew others after them, and in a few years formed establishments in foreign countries, which rivalled, and afterwards eclipsed, those which they had left.

Birmingham will not forget how much it owes to the ingenuity and spirit of one man, and that man a Dissenter, the father of one of those whose property has been so wantonly destroyed. The difference between Birmingham and the neighbouring towns is almost entirely owing to the spirited example of the late Mr. Taylor. Had he been

* This may be the case with Mr. Burke himself. He is not destitute of candour, any more than of good sense, and therefore may come to see, and acknowledge, that *one* cannot be *three*, or *three*, *one*, which is our great argument; and though it may be too much to expect of him to read my *History of early Opinions*, or my *Defences of Unitarianism*, he may read my *Appeal to the serious Professors of Christianity*, or my *General View of Arguments against the Divinity or Pre-existence of Christ*, the perusal of which would not take an hour.

treated as his son has been, and carried his enterprising spirit into France, some town in that country might have been what Birmingham now is.

I shall just mention three other men now living, and all of them Dissenters, whose spirit has so much improved, that they may be almost said to have *created*, their several manufactures, from which this country already derives the greatest honour and advantage, Mr. Wedgwood, Mr. Wilkinson, and Mr. Parker. Such men as these are the *makers of countries*; and yet such men as these, if not these men themselves, would the mad bigotry of this country exult in seeing depart for France, America, or Ireland; and many would think themselves happy in being quit of them. But what will their posterity say, or perhaps themselves, a few years hence?

The French want nothing but the example of the English method, and spirit, in trade, to rival us in all respects. They are not inferior in ingenuity, or industry; and seeing the wonderful effects of large capitals employed in manufactures and commerce, and especially the ability which it affords of giving credit, they will from this time employ the money they get in trade to better purposes than the purchase of places, and titles. Having no *court* to look up to, and depend upon, they will immediately adopt our maxims, and the removal of a few English manufacturers and merchants may instantly de-

cide the difference in their favour. And what a figure will this country then make, with its encumbering debts, and enormously expensive government, without any superiority with respect to manufactures and commerce? Will pulling down dissenting meeting-houses, and dwelling-houses, with the destruction of libraries, and philosophical instruments, and drinking damnation to Presbyterians, restore the balance in favour of England? This conduct has already, in the eyes of all Europe, covered the country with shame, and may be followed by ruin; and then repentance, which has not come yet, will come too late.

Considering the great number of Dissenters in all the trading towns of the kingdom, and the number of wealthy families who are continually going from the Dissenters into the church, it may not much exceed the truth, if we suppose that one half of the wealth of the nation has been the acquisition of Dissenters. It is the opinion of many, that envy of the prosperity of Dissenters was one considerable stimulus to the mischief that was done to them at Birmingham. But the wanton destruction of wealth acquired by honest industry, is not the way to make a nation flourish, and enable it to bear its burdens.

The only effectual remedy of the evil, which has shewn itself at Birmingham, and which threatens the kingdom at large, is such as the spirit of the clergy at present will very ill brook. It is nothing
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less than making religious *toleration complete*, which it can never be said to be, so long as any man shall be a sufferer in his civil capacity on account of his religion. And since exclusion from places of trust and emolument is no less a punishment than fine and imprisonment, and is a state of ignominy, which may be felt by some in the most sensible manner; to make the toleration complete, the *Test Act* must be repealed, as well as all other penal statutes in matters of religion. All this might be done, and yet the church be left in the full possession of her creeds, her subscriptions, her revenues, the seat of the bishops in Parliament, and even the public universities, with every thing else that can be deemed necessary to the most complete *establishment* of any system of religion.

But the church of England is not content to enjoy her proper prerogatives. She is, like most other establishments, intolerant, and will not be satisfied without the degradation at least, of those who dissent from her. Dr. Johnson said, “the
“ Dissenters must not be admitted into the uni-
“ versities, because that would be to furnish
“ their enemies with arms.” But without having access to the universities, the church of England has found that we are in no want of such arms, offensive or defensive; and this jealous exclusion of us from the universities, and from other advantages which ought to be common to all citizens, is the circumstance which gives our weapons their keenest edge.

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This completion of the toleration must, in the present state of this country, be the work of administration, checking the blind and impolitic bigotry of the clergy, which it is in the power of our governors to do effectually, whenever they please. But if they go on to thwart the Dissenters, and support the high churchmen against them, the spirit of party will necessarily increase, till persecution, legal or illegal, will become extreme. However, any farther application to Parliament for this purpose by the Dissenters would only inflame matters more than ever; as the clergy are far from shewing any disposition to relent in our favour; and without the least regard to the political interest of the country, many of them would proceed to any extremity. The advantage which the country derives from this church in *spirituals* ought to be very great, to counterbalance what it may suffer by it in *temporals*.

If the state of the church of England with respect to the whole of the British empire be considered by the members of it, they will see the greatest reason for moderation, and how impolitic it must be to indulge that spirit of persecution which has broke out at Birmingham, and has manifested itself in many other places. The British empire, besides England, embraces Scotland, Ireland, and Canada, in all which countries but a small number of the inhabitants are of her communion. Were these added to the Dissenters in England, and joined to those within the pale of the church who disapprove of its system, but have not
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the courage to break their connection with it, there is little doubt, but they would make a majority of the subjects.

Besides, all who are not Dissenters must not, therefore, be numbered among the proper adherents of the established church. Because the great mass of them have no preference for it, but because it *is* the established church; and no observing person can doubt, but that if Mr. Lindsey's Unitarian Liturgy should be patronized by government, and a few of the more zealous of the clergy should not sound the alarm, not one person in a hundred would make any complaint of it.

Still less can those who attend no public worship at all, who abound in the highest and lowest classes of the community, be fairly reckoned to belong to any church; and in all large manufacturing and commercial towns, in which consist the great resources of the nation, they who attend public worship of any kind bear but a small proportion to the rest. In Birmingham, at least sixty thousand out of seventy are of this class; and of the remainder more persons attend public worship *out* of the parish churches than *in* them. In many parts of South Wales, and especially in the diocese of St. David's, I am informed that the parish churches are almost deserted, while the meeting-houses are numerous and full.

In fact, therefore, the true interest of the church of England, in the whole empire, is not great. It has

has but little hold on the minds of the people; and is supported by other means than a cordial approbation of it, and attachment to it. Her dependance is not upon *herself*, but upon the mere will and power of the crown, which may change to-morrow. It, therefore, certainly does not become her to be insolent.

In this state of things, also, it is certainly the best policy in the crown to favour toleration, rather than persecution, and to convince every part of the empire, divided as the inhabitants of it are with respect to religion, that no difference of *this* kind will have any influence in *civil matters*. But at present, this country, which used to pride itself, and with reason, on its pre-eminence with respect to *liberty*, is far behind many other nations of Europe, to say nothing of America, and discovers a disposition to recede, rather than to advance, with respect to liberty, civil or religious.

SECTION X.

The Conclusion, containing Reflections on the Power of Religion in general.

I SHALL close these Reflections with some relating to *religion* properly so called, as it has its seat in the mind, and influences the temper and conduct; and with these I particularly wish to impress my christian readers. Other persons do not need to proceed any farther, as what follows will to them be like something in an unknown tongue.

Having had a religious education, and originally a delicate constitution, I had from my early years a thoughtful and serious turn of mind. I have also ever been particularly attentive to histories of persecution, and the state of men's minds in those trying circumstances. This will appear from my publications. Several of my printed *Discourses* relate to this subject, much of my *Church History* (much more than is usual in works of that extent) is appropriated to narratives of that kind, and I made a separate re-publication, with a large Preface, of *An Account of the Sufferings of two eminent French Protestants, Monsieur Marolles and Lewis le Fevre.*

Having myself experienced something that may be called *persecution*, on account of the freedom of
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my religious principles, in my first settlement, and having since that time had much experience in religious controversy, mere *reproach*, however atrocious, never affected me much; much less, I believe, than it does most other persons; and of late years, I can truly say that it is as nearly as possible a matter of perfect indifference to me, from whatever quarter it has come. Of sufferings of this kind it is probable that few men have ever had a greater share, almost every possible kind of evil having been *said of me*, though *falsely*. But the reproach of enemies has been more than compensated by the warm approbation and attachment of friends, of which also I have had my full share, enough to encourage any man to persevere in well doing, and even to bear any sufferings on that account.

But though I had read and reflected much on the feelings of christians in a state of persecution, and never doubted but that, in ordinary cases, their joys far exceeded their sorrows, I could not *know* that they did so to the *degree* in which I can truly, and I hope without much vanity (for in this I mean nothing but the instruction and encouragement of my readers) say that I have lately found it. It is only in trying situations that the full force of religious principle is felt, and that its real energy can show itself. And firmly believing, from the doctrine of *philosophical necessity*, that the hand of God is in all events, that in all cases men are only his instruments; that under his sure guidance all *evil* will terminate in *good*, and that nothing so effectually

tually promotes any good cause, by drawing men's attention to it, as the persecution of its advocates, all that I have suffered, and all that I can suffer, has, in many seasons of the calmest reflection upon it, appeared as *nothing, and less than nothing.*

I consider this persecution (for so I shall call it, though my enemies will, of course, consider it as the punishment of my evil deeds, and even much less than I deserve) let it be carried to what extent it will, as a certain prognostic of the prevalence of every great truth for which I have contended; and this prospect, together with the idea of my being an instrument in the hand of providence of promoting the spread of important truth, by *suffering* as well as by *acting*, has given me at times such exalted feelings of devotion (mixed, as sentiments of devotion ever will be, with the purest good-will towards all men, my bitterest enemies not excepted) as I had but an imperfect idea of before. If the future peace of the country, and the safety of my friends did not require it, I would not have a single sacrifice made to public justice. Both the instigators of the late violences, and their blind agents in them, should go without any other punishment, than what, if they ever come to a just sense of things, they will sufficiently inflict upon themselves.

Admitting that our persecutors really imagined that they were doing right, and promoting the cause of truth, in their late outrages, yet the feelings of the man who *does* an injury, with whatever
view,

view, cannot be without a mixture of malevolence, in consequence of his rejoicing in that injury; a sentiment unworthy of a christian, and by which he will feel his mind debased. Whereas the sentiments of the purest benevolence easily mix with those of devotion in the mind of the man who unjustly *suffers* the injury, and who is satisfied that he is promoting the cause of truth, and consequently the best interests of mankind, by his sufferings. When, since my late disaster, I have given scope to such reflections as these, I have had sensations of joy and exultation which I should in vain attempt to describe; and in general they have immediately succeeded the most lively sense that I ever had of the injury done to me.

What I have suffered in my person is in a manner nothing, and with respect to all the common wants of nature, I have had such resources in my friends, and in those whom I did not before know to be my friends, as few persons in my situation could have found. But corporeal sufferings are not those which give men the greatest anguish. Mental uneasiness is much more dreadful than bodily pain; and the despondency of some friends, the sufferings to which others of them may be exposed, and the marks of prejudice in some whom I had not considered as enemies, have sometimes given me feelings peculiarly unpleasant. Also, the idea of my not being able, at my time of life, to replace my papers, library, and apparatus; the interruption of all my pursuits, and the uncertainty of my future prospects,

prospects, cannot but some times be painful to me. But notwithstanding this, when I have attended to the considerations before mentioned, I have even been able to rejoice that I had so much to lose; since without some sacrifice of this nature, I should not, in reality, have sustained any loss at all, and consequently should have had nothing to boast of. This, I own, is a sentiment that is not of the most exalted nature, but I hope it is innocent; and as part of my *real feelings*, not improper to be mentioned, among my other sources of consolation.

So fully am I persuaded that more good than evil will result from what has happened to me, that, were it in my power, I would not be restored to my former situation. Had the late events not happened, I should, of course, have wished, and prayed, for continuing as I was. For no man, I believe, ever thought himself more happily situated than I did. But Providence having now declared itself, I acquiesce, and even rejoice in the decision.

As to the theological works which I had in view, one of which was to trace the origin, and ascertain the nature, of *Antient Idolatry*, in order to demonstrate the value of revelation, another to continue my *Church History*, to the present times; a third to publish my *Notes and Paraphrase on the New Testament*, and a fourth, to complete what I had undertaken of the *New Translation of the Scriptures*, I conclude, either that these works were not wanted, or that they will be better done by other hands.

If life, and the proper means, be continued to me, I shall resume, at least, some of them, as well as my philosophical experiments; and if not, I shall console myself with this verse of Milton;

“ They also serve, who only stand and wait.”

I am ready and willing to labour, and to the utmost of my ability, whenever my task shall be given me.

I hope also that I shall not be much condemned for deriving some consolation from the thought, that though my library and apparatus be destroyed, I made some considerable use of them while I had them, and therefore that I have not lived in vain. Of this consolation my enemies cannot deprive me; nor, if my life be continued, and my affairs be in any measure re-established, will any thing that I have yet suffered, damp my ardour in fresh pursuits; and having the advantage of years and experience, I may yet live to serve, not my country in particular, but mankind, and the world, of which I am now become more a citizen at large.

As to continuance of life, I was never very anxious about it. My writings shew that I do not consider *death* in itself as any great evil; and a violent death, which is all that men can inflict, is not, in general, so much to be dreaded as many diseases. Persecution is not to be courted by any christian. Death is never to be sought, but to be avoided; and no man can tell how he shall behave in any very new and trying situation. But I trust that the
same

same principles which have supported me hitherto will carry me through any trials that may yet remain for me.

I have often amused myself, and my friends, with recounting my several migrations, which, though never of my own seeking, have been more numerous than those of any of my acquaintance; when I always said that, having now obtained a happier situation in all respects, than I ever had before, I hoped I should never remove any more, and that I did not even wish to be, in any respect, happier than I was, in this world. In every change of situation, I used to say, the difficulty of my removing had been increased by the accumulation of my books and philosophical instruments; but that, at Birmingham, my library and apparatus were become so considerable, that it was absolutely impossible for me ever to remove to any other place. But now I am light enough, and can move with more ease than ever, ready, at a moment's warning, to go wherever it shall please divine providence to call me.

In general, the mind of man soon recovers its usual level, whatever it has been; scenes of prosperity or adversity only making a temporary impression upon it. Since, therefore, I have hitherto enjoyed a good share of uniform chearful spirits, without being subject to the extremes of elevation or depression, I have little doubt but that the same

happy state of mind will accompany me through whatever may yet remain of life.

Moreover, the same good providence which has accompanied *me*, will, I doubt not, accompany my children, who, being educated in good principles, will, I trust, have no less ardour of mind than I have had in every laudable pursuit that shall be within their reach. In this case I shall not be sorry to have been their parent, though they should be exposed to greater sufferings than I have been called to endure, in an equally good cause; and they will not be ashamed of their father, who has set them the example of it. Lastly, having acted a worthy and generous part in life, in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue, I shall hope to meet them, and my other christian friends, in a better world, where we shall have nothing to fear from open violence, any more than from secret theft.

STRICTURES.

STRICTURES ON A PAMPHLET

INTITLED,

Thoughts on the late Riot at Birmingham.

[Printed for John Sewell, Cornhill.]

SINCE the preceding *Appeal* was sent to the press, there has appeared a pamphlet intitled *Thoughts on the late Riot at Birmingham*, written evidently by a high churchman (though in an *Advertisement* prefixed to it, he says he has “no party views, or intolerant spirit) which abundantly justifies all that I have advanced concerning persons of that description. It is, in fact, nothing less than a declaration of war against all Dissenters, who shall presume to write any thing against the established church, threatening us with utterdestruction. With us writing is turbulence, and such turbulence as will authorize open hostility of every kind. Such is the unavoidable inference from the following passage, p. 52.

“ It is not too late for the Dissenters to recover
 “ the character of peaceable citizens, which they
 “ have lost by their late political interference. It was
 “ thought that many of them sinned against the peace
 “ of the public through inadvertency, and that they
 I 3 “ only

“ only wanted some instructive *fact* to convince
 “ them of the tendency of what they were about,
 “ and to incline them to shew themselves the harm-
 “ less professors of a peaceful religion. Such a
 “ fact has happened, and the nation is waiting to
 “ see what effect it will have on them. If it is such
 “ as to shew that they have erred through want of
 “ consideration, an act of oblivion is ready to be
 “ passed on all their former misconduct. But if
 “ the same restless and turbulent spirit is still seen
 “ working among them, farewell candour, forbear-
 “ ance, and concord. There will be an extinction
 “ of all the charities that christianity inculcates be-
 “ tween the different persuasions, and hostilities will
 “ commence, that will probably never end till the
 “ one has effected the destruction of the other.”

What could Dominic himself have said more to
 his purpose, at the head of his crusaders? And what
 have we done more than the persecuted Albigenſes
 did to provoke this violence? What have we done
 more than the primitive christians, or than the re-
 formers from popery did, in their time, that is,
 write in defence of our principles, and with a view
 to this, expose those of our adversaries, and al-
 most universally when they were the aggressors, and
 we were treated in the most insulting manner? For
this all candour is professedly abandoned, and de-
 struction threatened.

At length, then, we are come to an issue. And
 since with us resistance would be in vain, and in
 our

our opinion unchristian, we must bear all the malice of our enemies, or abandon the country. For we shall never abandon the defence of our principles as we have hitherto done, that is, by *writing*.

According to this writer, Dissenters must neither write about religion nor politics. "As to the improvement of the constitution," he says, p. 49, "leave it to other hands." *This*, then, is a thing that we have no interest in. Consequently, we are already to be considered as no better than *aliens*, which is another reason why we should go to some country, where we may be treated as *citizens*.

Inconsistently enough, however, with the declaration of hostility quoted above, this writer says, p. 22, "The unitarian Dissenters are not yet of sufficient consequence to give any apprehensions." Why then all this rage, and bustle? Is the British lion so tormented with a fly? Have the high church people burned our meeting-houses and dwelling-houses, with every thing belonging to us, without the excuse of having something to *fear* from us? What then would they do if we gave them real cause of fear?

In the opinion of this writer, and all of his party, it was I who was the proper cause of the riot, and of all the mischief that was occasioned by it. "Tis you," says he, p. 16, in his sarcastic way, "meek divine, peaceable philosopher, that did, in fact, set the populace afloat, and bring it down

“ upon a crouded town, like a destructive engine,
 “ that threatened general devaftation. In vain,
 “ therefore, you feek to fhift off the blame of this
 “ event from yourfelf, by endeavouring to fix it on
 “ others. The country confiders *you* as the prin-
 “ cipal caufe of the mifchief, and the utmoft that
 “ candour itfelf can fay in your behalf is, that per-
 “ haps you did not intend the confequences, and
 “ are, independent of the loffes you have fuftained,
 “ fincerely forry that they happened.”

From reading this, any ftranger would natu-
 rally conclude, that it was I that raifed the rioters,
 and headed them, but that afterwards they turned
 upon myfelf; and not that they were raifed and in-
 ftigated by my enemies, and that I was their firft
 victim. On the idea, however, that I was the
 aggreffor in this bufinefs, and taking it for granted,
 that I muft fee it in the fame light as himfelf, he is
 furprized, p. 3, 17, to find nothing of *penitence* in
 my *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. But
 what have I to repent of? Is it my writings, in
 defence of truth and liberty? I am fo far from
 repenting, that I glory in them, and in the fame
 circumftances, I would have done the fame; and
 while I am capable of writing at all, I fhall con-
 tinue to write in the fame manner, as opportunity
 offers. With refpect to the riot, if I repent at all,
 it muft be for the crimes of others. But though I
 cannot repent of them, I can truly fay I am deeply
 concerned for them, and defirous that thofe who are
 guilty may repent. As things are, it is enough for
 me,

me, as a christian, to forgive those who have offended me, whenever *they* repent. More than this is not required of any man. Let those then who have burned my house, or have instigated others to burn it, do their duty, and I shall be ready to do mine.

This writer himself, this abettor of the burning of houses, libraries, and philosophical instruments, as an answer to *arguments*, only pretends to find my instruments of destruction in my writings. “Curiosity,” he says, p. 16, “would prompt the people to read for themselves” (I only wish they were disposed to do so, especially at Birmingham) “where a man that was distinguished by such sentiments” (whatever, then, it was that was dangerous about me, they were but *sentiments*) “was an inhabitant. They opened one of his books, and there found that the man who had quietly enjoyed the exercise of his religion threatened the destruction of theirs.” But did not I allow to others the same liberty that I took myself; and how did I threaten others, except in the same manner as others had threatened me, viz, by writing?

In the same manner, in vindication of the justice of his charge against me as the proper author of all the mischief, he says, p. 17, “I call the whole nation to witness.” Now what can the whole nation witness besides my writings, which are open to them all, and which I sincerely wish they would all read?*

* He likewise says, p. 17, that this charge against me can be “substantiated by producing the papers of the offender.” If by *papers* be

That the whole of the turbulence this writer ascribes to me consists in nothing but my *writings*, is farther evident from his censure of my treatment of civil establishments of christianity in my *Letter to Mr. Burke*, in which, replying to an orator, who had not been sparing of his metaphors on the other side, I had made use of some which appeared to me to be applicable on mine, comparing those establishments, which were unknown in the primitive and founder ages of the church, but were introduced in a late and more corrupt state, to a *fungus*, &c. "How remote," says he, p. 18, "is this from "the language of a peaceable man." But, surely, it is not more remote from peace, than the burning of a house is from the answering of an argument. However, it is evident that, in this writer's idea, I cannot write at all, at least to any purpose, and employ either *reason* or *imagination*, without breaking the peace, and incurring the penalties annexed to that offence. I should have been happy, however, if my conduct had been considered in that light, and my enemies had contented themselves with prosecuting me in any legal method for breaking the peace. It would have been a curious trial, and would not, I presume, have ended as did the riots at Birmingham.

be meant *manuscript papers*, found in my library, when the rioters plundered it, of which this writer seems to have had the inspection, let them be produced. I have a perfect consciousness that there exists nothing of my writing, found either there, or in any other place, that can furnish just matter of crimination against me, though, as was the case with the immortal Algernon Sydney, papers so found should be admitted as legal evidence. I will not, however, answer for papers that may have been written by others in order to be found in my library, any more than for the *forged letter* that was read to the mob, to instigate them to do the mischief.

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As a farther reason why I should not have written any thing against the church (which, it seems, does not like to be molested) he alleges my *not being of it*. “This pacific divine, and philosopher,” he says, p. 6, “meddles with the concerns of a society to which he does not belong.” But do the clergy govern themselves by the same maxim? Have they never voluntarily attacked the Dissenters? Did Mr. Madan get himself admitted into any of our societies before he wrote against us? Was not he, then, guilty of meddling with the concerns of a society to which *he* did not belong, even more than myself, as he was the aggressor in the controversy. But the maxim itself is absurd. It becomes every man to defend truth, and attack error, wherever he finds it. Every man is of the society of mankind, and should not see his brethren go astray, or in any respect injure themselves, without endeavouring to serve them. Did not the primitive christians meddle with the affairs of the heathens, and the Protestants with those of the Catholics, though they did not belong to their societies? And did they not meddle with them in the same manner in which I have meddled with the church of England, viz. by speaking and writing: and many of them wrote in a much more irritating manner than I have ever done, and were universally admired for it.

Dissenters, however, have just cause of meddling with the church of England, so long as it is a *national church*, and they, as well as the rest of the

the community, contribute towards the maintenance of it. For every man is concerned to see that he has the value of that for which he gives his money. The Dissenters are much more a society with which the members of the church of England have no business to meddle, as they do not contribute to the support of our worship. According to this writer, Dissenters have nothing to do with either the *church* or the *state*, but must be passive lookers on in every thing; patiently bearing every burden that is laid upon them.

From the whole of this performance, which, whether coming from any authority or not, evidently speaks the language of all the high church party, it is evident that we are to receive blows for words, and fire and sword for argument. Let them then go to their purpose, and proceed as they have begun to burn, viz. our houses and meeting-houses, and ourselves too, if they can find us in them; for that was their intention at Birmingham. We also shall defend ourselves as we have hitherto done, i. e. with more writing, and more arguments. All men, and all animals, naturally have recourse to such weapons as they find themselves furnished with, and are most expert in the use of; and insignificant as ours may appear, in comparison with theirs, they will be found more effectual. We will say as the noble Florentine said to the French king and his officers, "Do you sound your trumpets, and we will ring our bells."

This

This writer says, p. 12, that “ as a philosopher
“ I know something of human nature, and how
“ irritable men are on the subject of their national
“ religion;” and p. 51, that my “ political ani-
“ madversions did not act merely on the under-
“ standings of men, but that they took hold of their
“ passions.” This, indeed, we have found to our
cost. But it is likewise well known that passion
predominates most where there is the greatest de-
ficiency of reason. The primitive christians also, and
the first Protestants, found that their adversaries had
passions, which they were always ready to oppose to
the dictates of reason; and that, having as little to
say for themselves, they were as irritable as the
high church party at Birmingham. But this cir-
cumstance was no sufficient motive with the pri-
mitive christians, or the Protestants, for silence,
nor will it be any with us; and if this writer, or
his friends, imagine that the riots in Birmingham
will silence us, and produce no writing, he will be
greatly mistaken indeed. I foresee a deluge of
pamphlets on the occasion, and if he had wished
that there should be no writing on our side, he
should not have published on his.

If this writer be surprized at finding nothing
penitential in my Letter to the Inhabitants of Bir-
mingham, others, will be as much surprized on
finding nothing of *commiseration* in his pamphlet,
except for the wretches whom he expected would
be executed for what they did in the business. Of
this

this he has drawn an affecting picture indeed, as of the sufferings of so many martyrs to the church, and to religion. "This riot," he says, p. 3, "will be followed with the sacrifice of many lives on the altar of public justice. Disconsolate women are soon to take their last embrace of their husbands, children to shriek at the sight of their fathers suspended before their own doors, and heart-broken parents to follow their sons to the fatal tree, some of whom, had they not been put in motion by the ferment his writings have contributed to raise, had never disturbed the peace of society. Had there been any sympathy in the heart that dictated the letter, on the events that must draw such calamities after them, there had surely been one line expressive of such a sensation. Let the reader find it, if he can." And let the reader look through this whole pamphlet, and find, if he can, any thing like such a fellow-feeling for the innocent sufferers, that he here expresses for the wicked authors of their sufferings. In a Note, however, on this passage (which I suppose he thought too eloquently written to be lost) the author is happy "to find that his ideas were not fully justified by the issue of the late assizes held at Warwick." Indeed, the incomparable behaviour of the magistrates and of the jury, and the proper representations made to the king, have happily saved this writer and his friends much of the pain which they expected from the cruel and unmerited sufferings of their *fellow churchmen*. Had our sufferings
been

been ten times greater than they have been, so much greater would have been their pious exultation over us.

I do not undertake to animadvert upon every thing that deserves animadversion in this pamphlet, but I cannot conclude these strictures without observing that, as a compliment to the church of England, against which Dissenters must not write, the author says, p. 11, “lays it any restraint on the spirit of enquiry, and how then is it hostile to the clearest truth?” Is then subscription to the thirty-nine articles at an age in which it is impossible for persons to have studied them, no restraint on the spirit of enquiry; and is not every restraint on the spirit of enquiry necessarily hostile to truth? But no man can see the darkest spot on his own forehead. Otherwise this writer could not but have been sensible of this, and many other most glaring absurdities in his publication.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

N^o I.

Copy of a Hand-bill privately circulated in Birmingham, a few Days before the Riots.

MY COUNTRYMEN,

THE second year of Gallic liberty is nearly expired. At the commencement of the third, on the 14th of this month, it is devoutly to be wished, that every enemy to civil and religious despotism would give his sanction to the *majestic common cause*, by a public celebration of the anniversary. Remember that on the 14th of July the Bastille, that "High Altar and Castle of Despotism" fell. Remember the enthusiasm *peculiar* to the cause of Liberty, with which it was attacked. Remember that generous humanity that taught the oppressed, groaning under the weight of insulted rights, to save the lives of oppressors! Extinguish the mean prejudices of nations; and let your numbers be collected, and sent as a free-will offering to the National Assembly.

But is it possible to forget that your own Parliament is venal? Your Minister hypocritical? Your Clergy legal oppressors? The reigning Family extravagant? The Crown

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of

of a certain great Personage becoming every day too weighty for the head that wears it? Too weighty for the people who *gave* it? Your taxes partial and excessive? Your representation a cruel *insult* upon the sacred rights of property, religion, and freedom?

But on the 14th of this month, prove to the political sycophants of the day, that You reverence the Olive Branch; that You *will* sacrifice to public tranquility, till the majority *shall* exclaim, *The Peace of Slavery is worse than the War of Freedom.* Of that moment let Tyrants beware.

N^o II.

My Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham.

My late Townsfolk and Neighbours,

AFTER living with you eleven years, in which you had uniform experience of my peaceful behaviour, in my attention to the quiet duties of my profession, and those of philosophy, I was far from expecting the injuries which I and my friends have lately received from you. But you have been misled. By hearing the Dissenters, and particularly the Unitarian Dissenters, continually railed at, as enemies to the present government, in church and state, you have been led to consider any injury done to us as a meritorious thing; and not having been better informed, the means were not attended to. When the *object* was right, you thought the *means* could not be wrong. By the discourses of your teachers, and the exclamations of your superiors in general, drinking confusion and damnation to us (which is well known to have been their frequent practice) your bigotry has been excited to the highest pitch, and nothing having been said to you to moderate your passions, but every thing to inflame them; hence, without any consideration

fideration on your part, or on theirs, who ought to have known, and taught you better, you were prepared for every species of outrage; thinking that whatever you could do to spite and injure us, was for the support of government, and especially the church. In *destroying* us, you have been led to think, *you did God* and your country the most substantial *service*.

Happily, the minds of Englishmen have an horror of *murder*, and therefore you did not, I hope, think of *that*; though, by your clamorous demanding of *me* at the Hotel, it is probable, that at that time, some of you intended me some personal injury. But what is the value of life, when every thing is done to make it wretched? In many cases, there would be greater mercy in dispatching the inhabitants, than in burning their houses. However, I infinitely prefer what I feel from *the spoiling of my goods*, to the disposition of those who have misled you.

You have destroyed the most truly valuable and useful apparatus of philosophical instruments, that perhaps any individual, in this or any other country, was ever possessed of; in my use of which I annually spent large sums, with no pecuniary view whatever, but only in the advancement of science, for the benefit of my country, and of mankind. You have destroyed a library corresponding to that apparatus, which no money can re-purchase, except in a long course of time. But what I feel far more, you have destroyed *manuscripts*, which have been the result of the laborious study of many years, and which I shall never be able to re-compose; and this has been done to one who never did, or imagined you any harm.

I know nothing more of the *hand-bill*, which is said to have enraged you so much, than any of yourselves, and I disapprove of it as much; though it has been made the ostensible handle of doing infinitely more mischief than any thing of that nature could possibly have done. In the celebration of the French Revolution, at which I did not attend, the company assembled on the occasion, only expressed

their joy in the emancipation of a neighbouring nation from tyranny, without intimating a desire of any thing more than such an improvement of our own constitution, as all sober citizens, of every persuasion have long wished for. And though, in answer to the gross and unprovoked calumnies of Mr. Madan, and others, I publicly vindicated my principles as a Dissenter, it was only with plain and sober argument, and with perfect good humour. We are better instructed in the mild and forbearing spirit of christianity, than ever to think of having recourse to *violence*; and can you think such conduct as yours any recommendation of your religious principles in preference to ours?

You are still more mistaken, if you imagine that this conduct of yours has any tendency to serve your cause, or to prejudice ours. It is nothing but *reason* and *argument* that can ever support any system of religion. Answer our arguments, and your business is done; but your having recourse to *violence*, is only a proof that you have nothing better to produce. Should you destroy myself as well as my house, library, and apparatus, ten more persons, of equal or superior spirit and ability, would instantly rise up. If those ten were destroyed, an hundred would appear; and believe me, that the church of England, which you now think you are supporting, has received a greater blow by this conduct of yours, than I and all my friends have ever aimed at it.

Besides, to abuse those who have no power of making resistance, is equally cowardly and brutal, peculiarly unworthy of Englishmen, to say nothing of christianity, which teaches us to do as we would be done by. In this business we are the sheep, and you the wolves. We will preserve our character, and hope you will change yours. At all events, we return you blessings for curses; and pray that you may soon return to that industry, and those sober manners, for which the inhabitants of Birmingham were formerly distinguished.

I am your sincere well-wisher,

London, July 19, 1791.

J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o III.

*An Account of the Origin of the Riots in Birmingham,
from a Newspaper called the THE TIMES.*

Tuesday, July 19, 1791.

BY every account which has arrived from Birmingham, and from authenticated facts in corroboration of what we have already asserted, it is an indisputable truth, that the motives which occasioned the havoc already made among the Dissenters at Birmingham, and which is still in continuance, solely sprung from the loyalty of the people, and the utter abhorrence in which the principles of a republican system of government are held by the public at large.

The public were determined before they proceeded to violence, to have some further proof of the intention of those commemoration men. The hand-bill might be a forgery,—or might be an insidious scheme to raise a mob for the purpose of plunder;—they therefore waited until they heard what was said at table—how the political complexion of the company would manifest itself,—and whether any thing more than a mere scene of commemoration conviviality was intended.

They had indeed their suspicions, and those suspicions, after the first course were realised, by the following toast being drank;—

‘DESTRUCTION TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.—AND
THE KING’S HEAD UPON A CHARGER!’

The inhabitants, and they were almost to a man respectable housekeepers and manufacturers, who waited outside the Hotel to watch the motions of the Revolutionists within, no sooner had this treasonable toast made known to them, than LOYALTY swift as lightning shot through their minds, and a kind of electrical patriotism animated them to instant vengeance. They rushed into this conventicle of treason, and before the second course was well

laid upon the table, broke the windows and glaffes, pelted and insulted thefe modern reformers, and obliged them to feek for fafety in immediate flight.

An inflammatory bill in Doct̄or Priestley's hand-writing was found among his papers, and has been tranfmitted to the Secretary of State....The Doct̄or is at Kidderminfter, to which place it is faid the populace mean to follow him. His doct̄rines, they avow, were meant to fubvert the Conftitution.

Mr. Parker, a very eminent attorney, is the perfon who fent up the inflammatory and treafonable paper found in Priestley's houfe, and in the Doct̄or's own hand, which it is thought is a full ground for profecution.

N^o V.

Mr. Ruffell's Letter to the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.

SIR,

BEING in London, and feeing in *The Times* of yesterday the moft atrocious calumny that was ever laid before the public, I feel it my duty immediately to contradict it in the moft pointed terms. I do therefore declare, that the narrative of the Birmingham Conftitutional Dinner is materially untrue; and that the account given of the *first Toast*, in *The Times*, is a moft flagrant falfehood. It was, *The King and Conftitution*.

The Meeting broke up without the leaft riot or difturbance.—That the public may judge, whether the proceedings of the day, and the Toasts, were or were not reprehensible, the following true narrative is now produced, the authenticity and truth of which I will vouch for.

The

The proceedings of the day were preceded by an advertifement in the Birmingham Chronicle, published that morning, of which the following is a copy:

Birmingham Commemoration of the French Revolution.

Several Hand-bills having been circulated in the Town, which can only be intended to create distrust concerning the intention of the Meeting, to disturb its harmony, and inflame the minds of the people; the Gentlemen who proposed it, think it necessary to declare their entire disapprobation of all such Hand-bills, and their ignorance of the authors.—Sensible themselves of the advantages of a free Government, they rejoice in the extension of Liberty to their neighbours, at the same time avowing, in the most explicit manner, their firm attachment to the Constitution of their own Country, as vested in the Three Estates of King, Lords, and Commons: Surely no *free-born Englishman* can refrain from exulting in this addition to the general mass of human happiness. It is the cause of *humanity*, it is the cause of the people.

Birmingham, July 13, 1791.

In the morning, however, after this was published, many rumours of the probability of a riot were brought to the friends of the Meeting; and as there was too much reason to think that means had been used to promote one, they determined to postpone the intended Dinner, and accordingly agreed to put it off, and prepared a hand-bill for that purpose, of which the following is a copy:

Intended Commemoration of the French Revolution.

The Friends of the intended Festivity, finding that their views and intention, in consequence of being misconceived by some, and misrepresented by others, have created an alarm in the minds of the majority of the town, and it is thought, endangered its tranquility, inform their neighbours that they value the peace of the town far beyond the gratification of a Festival, and therefore have determined to give up their intentions of dining at the Hotel upon this occasion; and they very gladly improve this renewed opportunity of declaring that they are to this hour entirely ignorant of the Author, Printer, or Publisher, of the inflammatory Hand-bill circulated on Monday.

This was sent to the Printer; but before he had composed it, Mr. Dadley, the Master of the Hotel, attended,
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in consequence of having the Dinner countermanded; and represented, that he was sure there was no danger of any tumult, and recommended that the Dinner might be had as was intended; only proposing, that the gentlemen should take care to break up early, and then all danger would be avoided. This measure was then adopted, and orders given to the Printer to suppress the hand-bill. Accordingly there was a meeting of eighty-one gentlemen, inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, at the Great Room in the Hotel, where they dined and passed the afternoon with that social, temperate, and benevolent festivity, which the consideration of the great event, which has diffused liberty and happiness among a large portion of the human race, inspired.

The following Toasts were drunk, and were agreeably intermixed with songs, composed and sung by some of the company.

1. The King and Constitution
2. The National Assembly and Patriots of France, whose virtue and wisdom have raised twenty-six millions from the mean condition of subjects of despotism, to the dignity and happiness of freemen.
3. The Majesty of the People.
4. May the New Constitution of France be rendered perfect and perpetual.
5. May Great Britain, Ireland, and France, unite in perpetual friendship, and may their only rivalry be the extension of Peace and Liberty, Wisdom and Virtue.
6. The Rights of Man. May all nations have the wisdom to understand, and the courage to assert and defend them.
7. The true Friends of the Constitution of this Country, who wish to preserve its spirit, by correcting its abuses.
8. May the People of England never cease to remonstrate, till their Parliament becomes a true National Representation.
9. The Prince of Wales.
10. The United States of America. May they for ever enjoy the Liberty which they have so honourably acquired.
11. May the late Revolution in Poland prove the harbinger of a more perfect system of Liberty extending to that great Kingdom.
12. May the Nations of Europe become so enlightened as never more to be deluged into savage wars, by the mad ambition of their rulers.

13. May the sword be never unsheathed, but for the defence and liberty of our country, and then, may every man cast away the scabbard, until the people are safe and free.

14. To the glorious memory of Hampden and Sydney, and other heroes of all ages and nations, who have fought and bled for liberty.

15. To the memory of Dr. Price, and of all those illustrious sages who have enlightened mankind on the true principles of civil society.

16. Peace and good-will to all mankind.

17. Prosperity to the town of Birmingham.

18. A happy Meeting to all the Friends of Liberty on the 14th of July, 1792.

It is but justice to the liberality and public spirit of an ingenious Artist of this town to mention, that he decorated the room upon this occasion with three elegant emblematic pieces of sculpture, mixed with painting, in a new stile of composition. The central piece was a finely executed medallion of his majesty, encircled with a glory, on each side of which was an alabaster obelisk; the one exhibiting Gallic liberty breaking the bands of despotism, and the other representing British liberty in its present enjoyment.

A truly respectable gentleman, a member of the church of England, was Chairman—others of that profession were of the company, nor was a single sentiment uttered, or, I believe, conceived, that would hurt the feelings of any one friend to liberty and good government, under the happy constitution we are blessed with in this kingdom.—I aver this to be a true and just representation of the proceedings which have been so scandalously misrepresented in the Paper above-mentioned; and am,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

WILLIAM RUSSELL.

London, July 20,
1791.

N^o V.*Mr. Keir's Letter to the Printer of the Birmingham and Stafford Chronicle.*

MR. PRINTER,

AS I find that many grofs falshoods have been circulated through the country, in order to inflame the minds of the people concerning the meeting held laſt Thursday, to commemorate the French Revolution, I will beg leave to ſtate what I myſelf have had occaſion to know reſpecting that ſubject.—Some gentlemen in Birmingham had propoſed by an advertisement in the newspapers, to hold a meeting of the friends of liberty and of mankind, at the Hotel, to commemorate the French Revolution, in the ſame manner as was done in London, and many other parts in the kingdom. Two days before the time appointed for this meeting, a very reſpectable gentleman called on me, and ſaid he came to tell me, that it was the general wiſh of thoſe who intended to meet, that I ſhould be their chairman on the occaſion. I accepted the compliment, and promiſed to come to Birmingham to attend, never conceiving that a peaceable meeting, for the purpoſe of rejoicing that twenty-fix millions of our fellow-creatures were reſcued from deſpotiſm, and made as free and happy as we Britons are, could be miſinterpreted as being offensive to a government, whoſe greateſt boaſt is liberty, or to any who profeſs the chriſtian religion, which orders us to love our neighbours as ourſelves.—We accordingly met and dined with the greateſt peace and harmony, and after drinking ſome toaſts, expreſſive in the firſt place of our loyalty to our own *King* and *Conſtitution*; and in the ſecond place, of our joy at the happineſs which the French have acquired by their new *Conſtitution*, we diſſolved the meeting entirely, in the greateſt order, between five and ſix in the evening,

evening, and quitted the Hotel, every man retiring separately to his home, or to his private affairs. I returned to my house in the country, nor knew of the disturbances till next day. The meeting in London was conducted with the same decorum, nor has there been an instance, as far as I know, in the many similar meetings throughout England, of the smallest irregularity attempted by them. Now, Mr. Printer, as actions are the best interpreters of men's intentions, it is evident that the malicious insinuations, that these meetings were intended to disturb the peace and government of the country, have been by the event proved to be false and groundless.

I have lately heard that it is reported that we drank disloyal and seditious toasts. Now the very first toast that was given was, *The King and the Constitution*. I do not know any words in the English language expressive of greater loyalty; and one of the last was, *Peace and goodwill to all mankind*, which cannot easily be interpreted to excite people to tumult. I shall hereafter publish a list of all the toasts, which were altogether in the same spirit of loyalty, peace, and charity.

A second report is, that Justice Carless was insulted and turned out of the room. The fact is, that Justice Carless never was in the room, and therefore it is not easy to conceive how he could be turned out. I will add, that I have not the smallest doubt, that if that gentleman had come, he would have been received with due respect.

A third false report was, that a seditious hand-bill had been distributed by the members of the meeting, on some preceding day. A seditious and truly infamous hand-bill had been distributed, it is true, but by whom written or distributed is not known. It is heartily to be wished that the persons concerned may be discovered, and punished according to law. As soon as the gentlemen of Birmingham, who had concerted the Commemoration Meeting, saw this hand-bill, they perceived that the effect, and perhaps the intention of it, was to inflame the mob against them,

them, and they immediately published in the Thursday's newspaper, an advertisement declaring their disavowal of this hand-bill, and their own loyal attachment to the *King, Lords, and Commons*. They also sent hand-bills with copies of this advertisement all over Birmingham. It was not possible for them to do any thing more effectual to prevent any bad effects from this seditious paper, or to rescue themselves from the calumny of their being the authors of it.

The last false report that I have heard relative to that meeting is concerning Dr. Priestley's behaviour there. To this I suppose it will be sufficient to answer, that *Dr. Priestley was not present*.

These are all the reports which I have heard, but I doubt not there may be many others, of the truth of which every man of common sense will judge from what I have said of those which have come to my knowledge. Nevertheless, these false reports are all the pretences for the late horrible riots; but the event shews that they were only *pretences*, and that the Dissenters were the true object of the fury of the mob, as many of those gentlemen who have suffered from the riots were not present. For the business of the Commemoration meetings had nothing to do with religious distinctions, and were in other parts composed of churchmen, catholics, and dissenters. It is true, that in Birmingham, the majority were Dissenters; but it is evident that they did not wish it to be distinguished as a party meeting, when they did me the honour to chuse me as their chairman, who, it was evident, must have conformed, in order to qualify myself for the commissions which I have held in the army, to all the formalities prescribed by the Test Act, and who never was present in a dissenting meeting above once or twice in England; although I have the greatest regard for the dissenting individuals whom I know, among whom are several of the late unfortunate victims, men as peaceable, respectable, and loyal as any in the kingdom. But as the subject of the
 commemoration

commemoration meeting was quite unknown to the ignorant part of the people, it gave an opportunity of raising any lies that were necessary to inflame the mob to execute their horrid purposes.---But that the proceedings of the meeting were innocent, peaceable, and honourable, and also free from every subject relative to religious parties, I solemnly affirm. I am, Mr. Printer,

Yours, &c.

JAMES KEIR.

West Bromwich July 20, 1791.

N^o VI.

Copy of a Letter to me, printed in a column opposite to my own Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, and thrown into many houses in London with the title of SELF-MURDER, OR THE DOCTOR TRIED AND CONVICTED BY HIS OWN EVIDENCE.

SIR,

YOU have appealed to the public in vindication of your conduct, and lamented your losses with the feelings of a man; they are great, because in one respect irreparable.

But whilst I join with the public in regretting the destruction of your philosophical property, it pains me to aver that you have not proved your political innocence.

You and your friends have been charged as enemies to the present system of Government: let us examine how you attempt to disprove that assertion

You say, that your friends met to express their joy at the French Revolution, and to intimate a desire that an improvement should take place in our constitution.

Does

Does the inference to be drawn from this, prove you, and those of your persuasion, to be friends to the present established Government?—Surely not.

By celebrating the French Revolution, you give your sanction to the system adopted in that country. If you did not sanction, you would not celebrate; and by besiring an improvement, at the same moment, in the British constitution, you declare yourself inimical to our government in its present form. He who is inimical to any matter, cannot be a friend; and the opposite to that character is, of course, an enemy. Your letter has afforded me these premises, and the conclusion is fairly drawn, from that which is fully established.

It is not your religious, but your political sentiments which are thought dangerous to the state. The Presbyterians certainly approve the conduct of that usurped authority which decollated the unhappy CHARLES. Our constitution considers that bloody act of common-wealth tyranny, to be a martyrdom. The difference in political sentiments on this great point, can therefore never be reconciled. It is as opposite as monarchy and republicanism can make it. Were I to ask you, if the doctrine laid down by Mr. Paine in his *Rights of Man*, coincided with your principles?—you would certainly say that “it does.” You cannot successfully controvert that assertion.

Now, Sir, this publication of Mr. Paine’s is a gross libel upon the spirit and letter of the British constitution, and as it is received into your community as a political truth, and that in approving such doctrine, you and your friends cannot disapprove the French Revolution, I wish to know what sort of amendment you would make to the British government.

You have made a distinction in your letter, between the constitutional subjects of Great Britain and your sect, You divide them by saying, “our cause,” and “your cause.” The constitutional subjects’ *cause*, is the present government in church and state,---your cause must
be

be the opposite to that;---and therefore it is some other kind of government in church and state; and though you have not directly said that you ever attacked the state, you fairly acknowledge to have given our church a BLOW:— Your words are, “The church of England, which you now think you are supporting, has received a greater blow by this conduct, than I and all my friends *have ever aimed at it.*” This is a direct avowal that you and your friends have aimed a blow at our religious rights.

Do you call this *peaceably* following your studies as a minister of the gospel and a philosopher?---No, Mr. Priestley, it is such kind of turbulent conduct that has brought you and your friends into the present situation.

Had you, Sir, and those of your persuasion, quietly attended the duties of your respective stations, and left the Protestant church and the British government to the care of those who are appointed by the constitution, as Representatives of the people, to guard and protect them; you might have enjoyed that ease, happiness and peace which every good subject is entitled to expect from the excellence of our laws, and the honour and integrity of those men who compose the three branches of the legislature.

July 20, 1791.

JOHN CHURCHMAN.

N^o VII.

Copy of a Hand-bill distributed in London the day after I arrived there.

DR. PRIESTLEY is a damned rascal, an enemy both to the religious and political constitution of this country, a fellow of a treasonable mind, consequently a bad christian: for it is not only the duty, but the glorious ambition, of every good christian to *fear God and honour the King.*

N^o. VIII.

N^o VIII.

*Copies of two Hand-bills distributed among the
Rioters.*

Birmingham, July 16, 1791.

Friends and Fellow Countrymen,

IT is earnestly requested that every *true friend* to the *Church of England*, and to the laws of his country, will reflect how much a *continuance* of the present proceedings must injure *that Church* and *that King* they are *intended to support*; and how highly unlawful it is to destroy the rights and property of *any* of our neighbours. And all *true friends* to the town and trade of Birmingham, *in particular*, are intreated to forbear *immediately* from all riotous and violent proceedings; dispersing and returning peaceably to their trades and callings, as the only way to do *credit to themselves* and *their cause*, and to promote the peace, happiness, and prosperity of this great and flourishing town.

.....

Birmingham, Sunday, July 17, 1791.

*Important Information to the Friends of Church
and King.*

Friends and Fellow Churchmen,

BEING convinced you are unacquainted, that the great losses which are sustained by *your burning* and *destroying* of the houses of so many individuals, will eventually fall upon the *county at large*, and not upon the persons to whom they belonged, we feel it our duty to inform you, that the damages already done, upon the best computation that can be made, will amount to upwards of *One Hundred Thousand Pounds*; the whole of which
enormous

enormous sum will be charged upon the respective parishes, and paid out of the rates. We, therefore, as your *friends*, conjure you immediately to desist from the destruction of *any more houses*; otherwise the very proceedings of your *zeal* for shewing your attachment to the CHURCH and KING, will inevitably be the means of most seriously injuring innumerable families, who are hearty supporters of Government, and bring on an addition of taxes, which *yourselves, and the rest of the Friends of the Church*, will for years feel a very grievous burthen.

This we assure you was the case in London, when there were so many houses, and public buildings burnt and destroyed in the year 1780, and you may rely upon it, will be the case on the present occasion. And we must observe to you, that *any further* violent proceedings will more offend your King and Country than serve the cause of Him and the Church.

Fellow Churchmen, as you love your King, regard his laws, and restore peace.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

Aylesford

E. Finch

Robert Lawley

Robert Lawley, Jun.

R. Moland

W. Digby

Edward Carver

John Brooke

J. Carless

B. Spencer

H. Gref. Lewis

Charles Curtis

Spencer Madan

Edward Palmer

W. Villers

W. W. Mason

N^o IX.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Address of the High Bailiff, Clergy, and other principal Inhabitants of the Town and Neighbourhood of Birmingham.

“ *May it please your Majesty,*”

“ WE, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the High Bailiff, Clergy, and other principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham, deeply sensible of your Majesty's paternal care of all your subjects, beg leave most humbly to approach your royal throne, with hearts full of gratitude for the recent instance of that care which your Majesty graciously condescended to afford us during the late riots in this place, by commanding such particular attention to be paid to our security, and directing such ample relief for our necessities.

“ Rejoicing also in every opportunity of testifying our loyalty to the best of Sovereigns, and our firm attachment to that noble fabric the constitution of this country, the envy of all other nations, as it is the glory of our own; We cannot neglect this occasion of pledging ourselves to support your Majesty's illustrious house, and to defend that happy constitution both in church and state, against every attempt at innovation, at the risk of every thing dear to us.”

 N^o X.

The Address of the Dissenters to the King.

“ Most Gracious Sovereign,

“ WE, your Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Protestant Dissenters in the town of Birmingham, beg leave to approach your Majesty in a moment of serious affliction and concern, arising not only from our recent aggravated sufferings, but from our painful apprehensions lest the calumnies of our enemies should influence your royal mind, and insinuate suspicions of our loyalty and affection.

Assured

Affured not of our innocence alone, but of our unalterable attachment to your august person, and to the succession of your Royal House, we respectfully claim your Majesty's continued protection and favour, and beg leave most earnestly to assure your Majesty, we have no thoughts of disturbing the Constitution. We are the descendants of those to whom (as the annals of our country will testify) the Revolution, which secured to your illustrious house the crown of these kingdoms, was greatly indebted. The civil constitution of our country is our pride and our glory; which we have been taught from our infancy to revere, and which we would die to preserve. Indeed, Sire, though deeply afflicted by the late riotous devastations, and by the want of energy in the civil power, yet we speak from hearts that are actuated by the love of law, of peace, of order, and good government. Sensible of your Majesty's goodness, in the vigorous measures which have been adopted for suppressing the outrages, which a lawless banditti were spreading through this place and its environs, we offer you the warmest tribute of our gratitude, for the happy deliverance we have experienced, by the wisdom of the measures planned by your Majesty's ministers, and by the energy and promptitude with which they were so successfully executed.

We feel ourselves deeply thankful to your Majesty, for this very beneficial and decisive instance of your royal attention; and likewise to your great goodness, in the measures which have since been adopted, for discovering and bringing to exemplary punishment, as well the instigators, as the perpetrators of the late atrocious violences; and we firmly and dutifully rely upon your Majesty for the continuance of it, as well as for the exercise of that candour and magnanimity, which will resist the calumnies of our enemies, and continue to us that protection, favour, and confidence, to which we know ourselves justly entitled.

That your Majesty may long reign in peace and glory; that your royal honours may for ages continue to descend

to your latest posterity; and that the happiness of Britain may prosper and improve itself under their auspicious influence, is the honest wish and fervent prayer of, Sire,
Your Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects.

N^o XI.

From the Committee of Dissenters.

WHEREAS it now appears, that among other insidious and unwarrantable practices made use of during the late riots, to delude the populace, and instigate them to acts of violence and destruction, letters were forged, charging the Dissenters with a treasonable design to overthrow the present happy constitution of this kingdom, and pretending that the whole body of them were combined together, and had appointed to assemble on the 16th of August, "to burn the churches, blow up the parliament, cut off the head of the King, and abolish all taxes:" And whereas it is now well known, that such forged letters were pretended to be found among the papers of the Rev. Dr. Priestley, and William Russell, Esq. and the words above quoted formed part of one of the forged letters which were brought and read by two persons on horse-back at Showell-green, the house of Wm. Russell, Esq. whilst the same was in flames, in order to instigate the rioters to further acts of violence: Notice is hereby given, that the Protestant Dissenters of Birmingham, in addition to the reward of One Hundred Pounds, graciously offered by his Majesty for discovering the instigators of the late horrid violences, will give a further reward of One Hundred Pounds for the discovery of the person or persons who wrote the said forged letters, or any one of them, so that he, or they, may be convicted thereof, and brought to punishment.

THOMAS LEE, Junior,

Secretary to the Committee of Protestant Dissenters
Birmingham, Aug. 22, 1791. in Birmingham.

N^o XII.

Copy of a Letter addressed to the Bishops, and Members of the House of Commons, mentioned in page 20, of this work.

SIR,

AS I am informed that a *printed paper*, containing *Extracts* from the Preface to one of my late publications, viz. *Letters to the Rev. Edward Burn*, has been sent by some enemies of the Dissenters, probably by some of the clergy of this town, to every Member of Parliament, and also to all the Bishops, and that it made a very unfavourable impression with respect to the question before the House, on Tuesday the second instant, it will not, I hope, be deemed impertinent, to shew you how much you have been imposed upon by it. For had the *Extracts* been given together with what is *connected* with them, they would have appeared in a very different light indeed. The following paragraph, from p. 15, I give as a specimen of the whole, printing what has been selected in the *Roman* character, and what immediately follows it, but which has been omitted, in *Italic*.

“ Whether I be more pleased or displeas'd, with their present violence, let them” (the clergy) “ now judge. The greater their violence, the greater is our confidence of final success. *Because it will excite more public dis- cussion, which is all that is necessary for our purpose.*”

In the same Preface there is the following *Note*, p. 12, which is in perfect agreement with the tenor of all my writings on the subject.

“ It has always been my opinion, that Dissenters should not accept of any civil offices for which the majority of their countrymen have pronounced them disqualified, but patiently acquiesce in their exclusion
“ from

“from them, till it shall please God, in the course of
 “his providence, and by means of our peaceable repre-
 “sentations and remonstrances, to open the eyes, and en-
 “large the minds, of our countrymen, and thereby give
 “them more just ideas of the natural rights of men, and
 “the true interests of their country.”

To a person of any sense of *honour*, whatever be his *political* or *religious principles*, no remarks of mine can be necessary to shew the unfairness of this proceeding. Whoever it be that could give those extracts as a just representation of my principles, must have *meant to deceive*, and therefore would not scruple to have recourse to any other *artifice* to gain their point. The paper was sent off in a private manner, and too late to be discovered and counteracted; but when the same, or any similar question, shall again come before the House, I hope you will remember whose conduct has always been open and manly, and whose was insidious and deceitful.

I am,

Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

Birmingham,
 MARCH 4, 1790,

J. PRIESTLEY,

N^o XIII.

*Copy of a Letter from M. Condorcet, Secretary to the
 Academy of Sciences at Paris, to Dr. Priestley.*

Sir, and most illustrious Associate,

THE Academy of Sciences have charged me to express the grief with which they are penetrated at the recital of the persecution of which you have been lately the victim.

They all feel how much loss the Sciences have experienced by the destruction of those labours which you had prepared for their aggrandisement. It is not you, Sir,
 who

who have reason to complain ; your virtue and your genius still remain undiminished, and it is not in the power of human ingratitude to forget what you have done for the happiness of mankind:—they only ought to be unhappy, whose guilty conduct has led their reason astray, and whose remorse has already punished their crimes.

You are not the first friend of liberty, against whom tyrants have armed the very people whom they have deprived of their rights. These are the only means which they can make use of against him, whose disinterestedness of mind, whose elevation of soul, and whose purity of conduct, equally shelter him from their seductions and their vengeance.

They calumniate such a person when they can neither intimidate nor corrupt him ; they arm prejudices against him, when they dare not arm the laws ; and that which they have done in regard to you, is the noblest homage that tyranny dares to render to probity, to talents, and to courage.

At this present moment a league is formed throughout Europe against the general liberty of mankind ; but for some time past another has existed, occupied with propagating and with defending this liberty, without any other arms than those furnished by reason ; and these will finally triumph.

It is in the necessary order of things, that error should be momentary, and truth eternal. Men of genius, supported by their virtuous disciples, when placed in the balance against the vulgar mob of corrupt intriguers—the instruments or the accomplices of tyrants—must at length prevail against them.

The glorious day of Universal Liberty will shine upon our descendants, but we shall at least enjoy the *aurora* ; and you, Sir, have contributed not a little to accelerate that happy event by your labours, by the example of your virtues, by the indignation which all Europe feels against

your persecutors, and by the interest and the admiration which a misfortune has excited, that, although it may wound, cannot subdue your soul.

I am, with an inviolable and respectful attachment,

Sir, and my very illustrious associate,

Your humble and most obedient servant,

Paris, July 30, 1791.

CONDORCET.

N^o XIV.

Dr. Priestley's Answer.

SIR,

I AM more than consoled for my losses, in finding that the Members of the Academy of Sciences have done me the honour to interest themselves in my affairs, and especially in observing that the friends of philosophy are, what they ever ought to be, the friends of general liberty. With us there is an example of the enemies of the one being also the enemies of the other. Having always been an avowed advocate of public liberty, civil and religious, which led me to write in defence of your late glorious Revolution, the great body of the Clergy in this country, and many of those who call themselves the friends of the King, have long been my enemies; and in accomplishing my ruin, they have not spared the instruments of that *science*, my application to which gave some degree of weight to my labours in another field.

But do not, Sir, suppose that *these* friends of the Church and of the King are the English nation. They are no more than a faction, whom a failure in the way of argument has rendered desperate. The sober part of the nation think more justly, and equally disapprove their maxims, and the methods they take to enforce them. The English nation in general respect the French; and, though too many of them are at present under a temporary delusion, will vie with you in every thing truly liberal, in whatever

whatever can contribute to the honour and happiness of the country at home, and to its living in peace and goodwill with all its neighbours, and especially with yourselves, whose exertions in favour of universal liberty, and universal peace, will for ever endear you to us.

Assure my brethren of the Academy, that, honoured by their choice of me for an associate, and by their generous sympathy on the present occasion, I shall not fail, while my life and my faculties are continued to me, to resume my philosophical pursuits, and endeavour to shew our common enemies, that a genuine love of science, and of liberty, is inextinguishable, except with life, and that unreasonable and wicked opposition tends to animate, rather than depress, the mind that is penetrated with it.

In perfect confidence that whatever is *true and right* will finally prevail, and that every mode of opposition will only contribute to their more complete establishment, I subscribe myself with respect,

Sir,

Their, and your, very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o XV.

An Address from the Members of the New Meeting to Dr. Priestley.

Rev. and dear Sir.

WE the afflicted and forrowing members of the New Meeting Society, in the midst of the anguish and anxiety which is inseparable from our present calamities, have greatly regretted that we could not before this day assemble together, to confer upon the deplorable situation of our congregational affairs, and the measures necessary to be pursued in consequence of our persecutions. Being now met together for this purpose, we immediately embrace the opportunity of addressing ourselves to our well
beloved

beloved pastor, and beg to assure you how tenderly and affectionately we sympathize with you in the present season of severe trial and affliction, and that, in the spirit of christian love and affection, we most tenderly condole with you under your personal unmerited and painful sufferings.

Little did we conceive that the exemplary diligence with which we have seen you for the space of eleven years inculcate upon us, and our children, every thing that was good and virtuous, could be followed by such a dreadful catastrophe as we now feel and contemplate. Whatever misconceptions our neighbours may have unhappily adopted respecting your various publications, we dare appeal to them, and we testify to the world, that your pastoral labours have uniformly tended to every thing that becomes the christian, or can adorn the man, to a sincere and fervent piety towards God, and to peace and universal goodwill to all mankind, without any distinction of sect or party.

You have uniformly taught us to respect the government under which we live; and in the devotional service of every Lord's day have never failed to offer up our united prayers for the Divine blessing upon the King, his Royal Family, and all that are in authority under him; so that from whatever cause it may be that you have been marked out for persecution, and for the grievous calamities to which you are still exposed, we are sensible it cannot originate in any part of your pastoral labours, which all those strangers who have occasionally joined us (without some of whom scarce a Lord's day has passed) must witness as well as ourselves, have been conducted in the true spirit of the Gospel, in a spirit of love and peace, and though distinguished by an ardent desire to promote the cause of truth, yet still more uniformly directed to inculcate the great and primary duties of sincere piety towards God, and universal benevolence towards all mankind.

Accept, dear Sir, our unfeigned testimony to your exemplary diligence, your eminent abilities, your unremitted
zeal,

zeal, your distinguished humility, your unquestioned sincerity, and your uniform love of peace, christian forbearance and moderation; and permit us to assure you how affectionately and tenderly we sympathize with you under your present sufferings, and how sincerely we wish their removal. And although you are not immediately returning to us, yet we look forward with pleasure to those happier times when you may resume your pastoral labours here with safety and satisfaction.

In the mean time we earnestly recommend you to the Divine protection and favour, imploring him to watch over, to guide, and bless you, and in due time, to restore you to us, who are, in the bonds of christian love and affection,

Rev. and ever dear Sir,

Your sincere and affectionate friends,

(Signed in the Name and at the unanimous request of the
Congregation)

Birmingham, August 2, 1791.

W. RUSSELL.

N^o XVI.

THE ANSWER.

My Christian Brethren,

YOUR affectionate Letter has given me not only consolation, but joy. I rejoice to see the effects of those principles in which it has been my business, and that of my excellent Colleague to instruct you; and the situation in which we now are, is peculiarly adapted to try their force, and to shew the world that religion is not a business of mere speculation, but that it is capable of supporting the mind, and directing the conduct, in the most trying circumstances.

I rejoice that after being an example to other congregations of purity of christian doctrine, and excellence of discipline,

line, you are now an example of patience and fortitude in suffering; firmly maintaining the principles for which you suffer, and yet preserving your good-will towards the authors of your sufferings; not forgetting that there is the hand of God, as well as that of man, in every thing that befalls us; and praying that God would forgive your enemies and turn their hearts.

Be assured that in the height of my sufferings I would not (even without any respect to futurity) have exchanged my feelings with those of our persecutors, in the moment of their greatest exultation over us; for I never lost the feelings of pity and benevolence towards them, while I was the object of their hatred and execration, I have even found, as I doubt not yourselves have also done, that these christian sentiments are more easily exercised in great trials than in little ones, as they more effectually call forth the principles from which they proceed.

I rejoice that you are about to re-establish the affairs of our society, and I only wait your summons to assist you in that necessary work. Your call will be to me an intimation of my duty; and then committing my life to him who gave it, and who will not suffer it to terminate unreasonably, I will instantly attend you, and resume the functions of the office with which you have honoured me. I know no satisfaction equal to that which has ever accompanied the discharge of such duties as those I owe to you.

Let what we have mutually suffered teach us the uncertainty of every thing in this world, and the value of those principles which enable us to look beyond it, and not only to bear, but to rejoice in, tribulation; to esteem it an honour to be "counted worthy" to bear reproach, to incur loss, and even to lay down our lives, for the pure faith of the Gospel. May your tribulation work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, even that hope which maketh not ashamed.

Finally,

Finally, may God preserve and keep you. May your sufferings be for the furtherance of the Gospel here, and add to your crown of glory hereafter.

I am, my christian friends,

In the firm faith and hope of the Gospel,

Your affectionate Pastor,

London, August 4,

1791.

J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o XVII.

An Address from the Young People belonging to the Congregation of the New Meeting to Dr. Priestley.

Honoured Sir,

THE common principles of humanity would, after what has recently occurred, incite us to communicate our feelings to you. But we feel urged to it by far greater motives. We have seen the great apostle of civil and religious liberty driven from among us. We have seen the precious labours of a great part of his life destroyed by a lawless mob. We have seen his apparatus and library share the same fate. We have seen this valuable member of society in the greatest danger of falling a victim to popular fury; and not yet having persecuted him sufficiently, we are frequently hearing the vilest invectives against him, who is so highly deserving of our gratitude for his personal and unwearied efforts to enlighten our minds on the great subject of religion, and whose philosophical labours have been so justly extolled throughout every part of the civilized world. To attempt a description of what we feel on reflecting on these circumstances would be as difficult as it would be painful.

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To assure you that we feel extremely for you, would be supposing you unacquainted with us. But, Sir, there is one circumstance which much heightens our sorrow, we cannot think of your abilities without respect, we cannot feel the effects of your labours without indulging an ardent wish that we may still continue to experience the happy effects of your instructions. But when we recollect the indignities you have felt, the trials you have had to support, and the irreparable loss you have sustained; our fears are alarmed lest such complicated distress should lead you to seek an asylum, which, Sir, to our inexpressible sorrow, Birmingham hath not afforded you. On the other hand, knowing the christian dispositions you possess, and the knowledge you have of the human mind, we are convinced that many palliatives will suggest themselves, which, to a mind like yours will have considerable influence.

Young as we are, we cannot but hope, and expect, that the flame which ignorance and bigotry have kindled, will be soon extinguished by an increase of knowledge, and that genuine christianity will so far take possession of the hearts of our fellow townsmen, that they will look upon the persecution you have suffered at their hands, as a sin against the purest of the gospel precepts. Many, very many, we trust agree with ourselves in wishing your return. Indulge us then, kind Sir, in this fond hope. Should it, however, be delayed, may we shew our mistaken neighbours, that, although Priestley is gone, he sowed good seed before his departure, that it fell into good ground, and that it now flourishes in the blade and promises a plenteous harvest. May we prove it to them, that argument armed with fire and faggot may produce a temporary shock, but that it finally strengthens our cause, that it forces us to feel the great justness of it, and produces actions natural to such a conviction; we trust we shall always follow your great example in candour and moderation, not losing sight of that christian fortitude you have so uniformly displayed since we have had the happiness of your residence among

us. Accept, dear Sir, our warmest expressions of gratitude for the great and lasting services you have rendered us as christians, as members of civil society, and as citizens, and be assured it is with the greatest respect we subscribe ourselves,

Honoured Sir,

Your affectionate Pupils.

(Signed, One Hundred and Twenty-one Names.)

N^o XVIII.

THE ANSWER.

My Young Friends,

I COULD not read your very affectionate Address to me without tears of joy. You were ever the most pleasing part of my charge, and this Address is a proof that the affection I had for you, and the pains that I took in instructing you, have not been thrown away. Your example will encourage other christian ministers who hear of it to follow mine. The great object of my Lectures, in all your Classes, was to give you a just knowledge of the principles of religion, as the only solid foundation of proper sentiments and good conduct, and I shall want no consolation under my unmerited sufferings, while you continue to feel, and to act, as you do.

The unsettled state of the Congregation, and the consequent discontinuance of our Lectures, you will consider as a trial of the principles you have already acquired. Give a proof of their strength by a steady attention to every means of improvement that is yet in your power. The enemies of our christian liberty have destroyed an excellent Library provided for your use; but your zeal and liberality will supply you with resources of the same kind; and let the more opulent among you assist those who
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are lefs ſo. Re-peruſe the works which I compoſed for your uſe, and ſuch others as can be re-purchaſed of thoſe which the enemy has deprived you of. Shew them, that by deſtroying books, they cannot deſtroy the effects of reading them; that the love of truth, of virtue, and of liberty, which you have imbibed, can never be eradicated, and that lawleſs power can never ſubdue fixed principles.

What I more particularly wiſh, in your preſent ſituation, is, that thoſe who are the beſt inſtructed among you would ſupply my place, in undertaking the inſtruction of others; and many of you, I am well ſatisfied, are ſufficiently qualified for it; and aſſure yourſelves of the Divine bleſſing on the weakeſt well-meant endeavours.

Young as you are, I truſt you are too well eſtabliſhed in chriſtian principles, to have your faith in a wiſe ſuperintending Providence at all ſhaken by the calamitous events which have been permitted to befall us. Chriſtianity did not loſe, but gain ground by perfecution. It is a ſtate excellently adapted to recal to our minds, and to ſtrengthen our regards to, our future and better proſpects, while it looſens a dangerous attachment to the things of time and ſenſe.

The ways of God are unſearchable by us. But be aſſured, that nothing can materially harm you, if you be followers of that which is good. If I be reſtored to you, which is my moſt ardent wiſh, our mutual ſatisfaction will be doubled by this interruption; and if not, it will add to the ardour of your wiſhes, as it does to mine, to meet you where the violence of the adverſary can never ſeparate us any more..

I am, my young Friends,

In the faith and hope of the Goſpel,

Your affectionate Paſtor,

J. PRIESTLEY.

London, Auguſt 12, 1791.

N^o XIX.

From the Members of the New Meeting.

Dear and Rev. Sir,

THE affectionate terms in which you accept our letter of condolance, and the assurance you give us that it afforded you consolation and joy, have caused us a lively satisfaction. Your desire to concur with us in our endeavours to re-establish the affairs of the congregation has awakened our anxiety for the season when we may urge your return to Birmingham; and although that period has been thus long protracted, yet we think it our duty to remind you, that we exercise a chearful reliance upon your kind declaration, that you only wait our summons.

The sincere affection we bear you, and the conviction we possess of the value and importance of your life to the cause of truth, and the world at large, will not permit us to consent that you should be exposed to any unnecessary hazard on your return hither before the time of tranquility and safety. Prevented by these motives, and these alone, from requesting in the most affectionate terms, that you would resume in person your pastoral charge, we assure ourselves that the interval they occasion, will not be permitted to operate, in any sense, to our disadvantage.

Our endeavours to procure a suitable place to assemble in for public worship, until our own is rebuilt, though not altogether so successful as we could wish, will not be discontinued till the object is fully attained: in the mean time, we have the pleasure of assembling in Carr's Lane each Lord's day, with our brethren and fellow-sufferers of the Old Meeting congregation; and we learn with unspeakable satisfaction, that the junior part of our society, profiting by your advice and correspondence, are already assembled in regular classes, and are conforming to your wishes, in endeavouring to continue the important

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business

business of religious instruction among themselves, agreeable to the plan you established; so that your labours are still flourishing among us, even in our present state of dispersion and persecution; and we hope and trust it will not now be long, ere your own judgment, and that of your friends, will concur in affording us a renewal of those personal exertions by which we have heretofore been so much edified, and from the continuance of which, we promise ourselves so much future advantage.

We rejoice in the continuance of your health, and in the frequent accounts we receive of your uninterrupted cheerfulness, and offer our fervent prayers to the Almighty that your eminent abilities may long be spared, and your health and cheerfulness be prolonged with them. With sentiments of the sincerest respect, we remain with unalterable attachment,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Your much obliged

And very affectionate friends and servants,

Birmingham, September 5, 1791.

N^o XX.

*From the Young People belonging to the Congregation
of the New Meeting.*

Dear and respected Sir,

PERMIT us to indulge our feelings in again addressing you. When assurances of gratitude and attachment are not necessary, there is a gratification in expressing the prevailing sentiments of the heart; and when you, Sir, are the object, we feel no common ardour. We have too much confidence in your goodness, and have had too many proofs of your affectionate regard to our happiness, to imagine you will think us troublesome.

We

We have received your affectionate and animating letter. Our tears spoke our feelings. We cannot express them,—language is feeble and inadequate. But we will bind your instructions to our hearts. While we remember whose pupils we have been, we cannot act unworthily. We can never sufficiently express our sense of the obligation you have conferred upon us, but we dwell upon the subject with too much pleasure to omit any opportunity of renewing it. To you, Sir, we are indebted for the desire of improvement. You have given us habits of employing our leisure hours in the cultivation of our understandings, in pursuits that afford delight and advantage, and which are calculated to raise us higher in the scale of being. The love of virtue you have implanted in us by precept and example. We will guard and cherish it; and while we enjoy the fruits of it, our souls exulting shall bless you. You have deprived adversity of its sting, and have enabled us to extend our views with satisfaction beyond the world, by impressing our minds with the strongest evidence of the great truths of christianity. These advantages, Sir, we have received from you. We feel their importance, and will diffuse them as far as our influence extends. It shall be our grand object to endeavour to follow your example in a firm adherence to what we believe to be the cause of truth; in preserving our minds open to conviction, and in the cultivation of fortitude, patience and charity. We have indeed no slight trial of the latter, when we behold the enlightened and benevolent friend of all mankind, whose life has invariably exhibited, and whose instructions have ever enforced, the practice of every mild and gentle virtue, treated with a cruelty which would disgrace a barbarous age. But we will remember our principles, the principles, Sir, we have imbibed from you, and will say in the language of philosophy and of christianity, Deluded men, we pity you,--- May your hearts be turned, and your errors forgiven.

Your sufferings, Sir, have been great, but we have much consolation in knowing that your mind is still greater. The man who can review a life like yours, and say it has been mine, possesses the noblest sources of joy. You have formed to yourself a sanctuary which no storm can reach. The venom'd dart must rebound and wound the breast which aimed it. While the vices of mankind present a melancholy picture to your view, and call forth emotions of sorrow, in a heart benevolent as your's, you will remember how many have been made virtuous and happy by your means, and that no lawless power can destroy the works you have given to the world, or prevent their operation in promoting the best interests of man.

The violence of a mob, or those who chose to act by such instruments, can only give additional lustre to a character known, admired, and revered by the wise and liberal in every part of the civilized world. But eminent talents and distinguished virtue, seldom fail to excite in narrow and interested minds, the despicable passions of envy and fear; and the ignorance of mankind affords, alas! an ample field for them to work upon. The page of history which the recent event is destined to fill, will exhibit a strong contrast in human nature. Posterity will pause with astonishment when they find that the same age which witnessed your generous exertions in the cause of truth and of mankind, produced such savage ferocity. Happy would it be for many if the cloud which will hang over their memories were the dark veil of oblivion. But the brightness of your character will render the deformity of theirs conspicuous.

Your proposal that the classes should continue to meet has given us much satisfaction. We shall all rejoice in any occasion of giving or receiving instruction. We hold the advantages we have received too dear to neglect any opportunity of extending and improving them. We have this day met to consider of the best means of carrying it into execution. The different circumstances under
which

which we now assemble cannot fail to impress our minds in a very powerful manner: but we trust they are impressions which will have a favourable influence on our future lives. We have requested Mr. Blythe to supply your place in the senior class till your return, and when he is desirous of it, we shall willingly relieve him from the fatigue of reading. Mr. Hawkes we have requested to give us his presence in the noon class, and to take only so much of the business of it upon him, as is agreeable to himself; since many of us will gladly give him any assistance in our power. They have in the most affectionate manner complied with our wishes, and next Sunday the three classes, recommence in their usual form, every thing previous to their meeting being settled.

We have had a very full meeting, and many who were obliged to be absent have requested to put their names to this address as a testimony of their gratitude for your kind letter. But we hope, Sir, the time will soon arrive, when you may again appear among us in the same venerable and endearing character in which we have so often beheld you. To be separated from you is an evil we are ill-disposed to bear. We will hope this trial is not in reserve for us. Should infatuation, however, extend so far, our enemies shall find that they can never separate you from our hearts; that our gratitude and attachment has a basis too strong for them ever to shake, and that the mind is property which no iniquitous power can reach.

With sentiments of the warmest gratitude and veneration,

We are,

Sir,

Your affectionate pupils,

(Signed with 145 names)

Birmingham, August 22. 1791.

N^o XXI.

From the Members of the New Meeting Congregation.

Birmingham, Oct. 22, 1791.

Dear and Reverend Sir,

WE, the Subscribers and Members of the New Meeting Society, being assembled together for the purpose of conferring upon the rumour of an unexpected impediment in the way of your return to us, desire to assure you of the deep and poignant concern these rumours give us. The bare apprehension of your leaving us is deeply affecting to us all. Sudden and violent as was the first onset of the persecution and troubles with which you and ourselves were lately assailed, we saw it necessary that you should retire for a season, and we not only acquiesced in your retirement, but rejoiced in your enjoying that safety at a distance which a deluded populace appeared to deny you here; but the thought of these violences operating to the final dissolution of our happy connection, as pastor and people, is really more distressing to us than all our other sufferings and calamities, multiplied and severe as they are, and we cannot but sincerely and earnestly deprecate such an event.

Indeed, Sir, we can truly assure you, that there is no plea to be urged, there is no assurance to be given, there is no inducement to be offered, by a people whose hearts are full of veneration, respect, and gratitude, which we cannot, which we do not now urge and offer to you as the genuine dictate of the most ardent, sincere, and fervent affection. We cannot describe how much our feelings are interested; we cannot tell you how earnest, how sincere, and how fervent our desires are for your return, and how much our best affections are moved upon this truly important and interesting occasion: but we know we may safely rely upon your own feelings to do us justice: we know you will feel for us, and also for those who are the

the dearest to us, when we intreat you to recollect your invaluable usefulness among them, and the happy fruits which have been already seen to result from your exemplary assiduities and labours there. But we will forbear; for although we would be serious and earnest, we would not be importunate. We shall, therefore, urge you no further—We know your candour, we trust your goodness, and would rely upon your well known serious and pious mind for the acceptance of this our sincere and well meant application.—Persuaded you will not deem it an intrusion, we offer no apology. On the contrary, knowing and feeling ourselves that it is the dictate of a pure affection and ardent attachment, we doubt not but you will receive it as such, and that, as it is the genuine result of our zeal and sincerity in the most important of all concerns, it will operate with you accordingly.—Hoping that you may speedily return amongst us, resume your pen with renewed vigour, and your labours with increasing success, we remain, with the sincerest affection, respect, and attachment,

Reverend and ever dear Sir,
Your friends and fellow Christians.

N^o XXII.

*To the Members of the New Meeting Congregation
at Birmingham.*

London, Oct. 8, 1791.

My Christian Friends,

I NEVER felt myself in a more painful situation than the present, in consequence of sitting down to answer your two most affectionate Addresses, inviting me to return to the exercise of my ministry among you, after having been driven away by lawless violence.

Not only on my leaving Birmingham, but some time after my arrival in London, I had no idea but that of a temporary

retreat ; thinking that the violence of party spirit, having had its triumph, would be satisfied, and that perhaps, repentance succeeding, I might resume my functions with more advantage than before. But every account that I have received having represented the spirit of party as more inveterate than I had imagined it to be, so that, in all probability, my return would only inflame it, and in consequence of this, my situation, if safe, would be uncomfortable, and perhaps hurtful, it is my deliberate opinion, that it will be better for some other person, less obnoxious to popular prejudice, to take my place, and that I may be more usefully fixed in London, or its neighbourhood.

I hope I need not assure you, that it is with the greatest regret that I at length, after much hesitation, have come to this resolution, in forming which, considerations of a more private nature, but to which no man is, or ought to be, wholly insensible, have likewise had their influence. Never, I believe, was any christian minister more happy in his situation than I have been with you. My sentiments concerning you are not only those of respect and affection, but of pride. It has been my boast, that no congregation that I have been acquainted with, was so candid, so well informed, and so ready to adopt whatever their ministers recommended to them for their edification, and that, in consequence of it, your regulations were the best adapted to form intelligent and serious christians. Our example was looked up to by other and distant congregations, who were excited to form themselves upon our model. I had, also, perfect liberty, which few dissenting ministers have, to follow all my favourite pursuits, of every kind, and to preach and write without the least hazard of giving offence, whatever I thought proper. I had, therefore, no other wish than to live and die among you.

But as I hope the good that has been done will never be undone, owing especially to the almost unprecedented zeal, and excellent spirit, of the young people among you,
whose

whose Addressees will for ever endear them to me, and whose example, wherever it is known, must contribute to instruct and warm others, I have the less regret in now signifying my intention of resigning my pastoral charge, but not till I have seen your affairs in some measure re-established, and some prospect of your being able to do as well without me: and as some time must be fixed, I mention Christmas next.

As soon then, as you shall have provided a place in which I can officiate, I shall with peculiar pleasure resume my functions among you, and continue them, till the time abovementioned; and if it please God that I should die in your service, I shall not (seeing no apparent cause of apprehension, such as would justify my flight from my proper station) think it will close unseasonably with respect to myself, or the world.

I am,
My friends and fellow christians,
Your affectionate pastor,
J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o XXIII.

From the Congregation of the New Meeting, Birmingham.

Birmingham, October 24, 1791.

Rev. and dear Sir,

YOUR truly interesting letter of the 8th instant has deeply affected us. We are grieved to an excess at the separation it announces, and the apparent necessity of our acquiescing in it; and in "your own deliberate opinion, that it will be more for the general good to have some other person fill your place here, and that you may be more usefully employed in London or its neighbourhood." It is with the most painful reluctance that we yield to this truly humiliating conclusion,
without

without importuning you with our intreaties, that you would reconsider it, and resume your first purpose of speedily returning to us. But seeing it your deliberate judgment, and knowing the circumstances which surround us; we patiently resign our wills; and urging you no farther, most devoutly pray our heavenly Father, that your prospect of greater usefulness may be realized; that many souls may yet be added to your faithful ministry; that your glorious career of usefulness and benevolence may long be continued, and that your final removal from it to the realms of light may be serene and happy.

You will permit us to add, that the apprehensions which we have been recently informed some of our wisest and best friends entertain for your safety, should you prosecute your intended return to us, necessarily compel us, to make a farther sacrifice of our anxious desires to see you here. We are, indeed, truly sorry to abandon the prospect of your promised return, though it is but for a few weeks; but we should be wanting in affection towards yourself, and in respect to the general good of mankind, were we not to attend to these apprehensions. Indeed, Sir, we speak very sincerely, when we declare that we bear you too sincere and fervent an affection, that we have too great a value for your peace and safety, are far too anxious for your preservation from insult, to consent, that you should upon the present occasion expose your person to the hazard of it. Give us leave, then, with hearts full of respect and affection, to intreat you to forego for the present, your purpose of visiting us as our pastor, and let us repeat the assurance conveyed by our first letter, that when the season of perfect tranquility and safety approaches, we shall most cordially hail your return to us for any period your other important connexions and engagements may admit. In the mean time, anxious to maintain an intercourse with you, and desirous of your aid and concurrence in our choice of a suitable person to assist your worthy coadjutor, the Rev. Mr. Blythe, we request

request that if you know of any gentleman whom you think suitable for us, and whom you have reason to expect would wish for such an establishment, you will favour us with your nomination of him. We are, with the liveliest sentiments of gratitude, respect, and affection,

Dear and Reverend Sir,

Your truly affectionate friends and fellow christians.

N^o XXIV.

From the Congregation of Mill-Hill Chapel Leeds.

Leeds, August 14, 1791.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

WE, the Protestant Dissenters of Mill-Hill Chapel in Leeds, cannot rest satisfied in a silent sympathy with you on the losses you have lately incurred from the violence of party rage.

While all the sincere friends of rational liberty and good order are roused to an honest indignation, by outrages which have disgraced our country in the eyes of enlightened Europe, we, having had the happiness of being under your pastoral care, feel a personal interest in your welfare. And as, from this intimate connexion with you, we have had a better opportunity of becoming acquainted with your real character than many others have enjoyed, we the more readily embrace this opportunity of bearing our special testimony to its exemplary excellence. An interval of more than eighteen years has not effaced from our memory the good principles you inculcated upon us, and the affectionate care which you uniformly manifested for our advancement in every virtue. It was, in a peculiar degree, the object of your attention, to impress upon the minds of the young such sentiments as are best calculated to produce the peaceable and useful citizen, in all
the

the departments in life, which many of us, who were then only rising to maturity, and are now the heads of families, gratefully acknowledge. We also recollect with pleasure, that when you instructed us in the reasons of a Protestant dissent from the established church, you were careful to guard us against the rancour of an intolerant spirit, and to form us to the genuine temper of that divine religion, which enjoins peace on earth, and good will towards men. And though you always esteemed it your duty to oppose what appeared to you the erroneous opinions, and superstitious practices, of individuals, or bodies of men, you were so far from entertaining a hostile disposition to their persons or property, that you were solely actuated by a regard to their best interest; for which, however, they might think you mistaken, they ought to have felt themselves obliged. Rejoicing in the support which you derive from the ample resources of your own mind, especially those which are the result of a good conscience, and earnestly wishing you every good,

We remain,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Your affectionate friends.

.....

N^o XXV.

From the Protestant Dissenters in Great Yarmouth.

Yarmouth, July 29, 1791.

Reverend Sir,

WE, ministers and members of the three denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Great Yarmouth, beg leave to express to you the interest we take in the late calamitous events which have befallen you. Differing in various matters of opinion, we all agree in warm admiration of your high abilities, your zealous researches after christian

christian truth, and your distinguished exertions in the cause of civil and religious liberty. These qualities, which have made you the peculiar mark of the vengeance of bigotry, render your safety and welfare proportionably dear to us.

Whilst we lament your losses, not only as those of an individual, but of the public, we receive a consolation in the magnanimity with which you have borne them, and in the testimony this event has given to the world of the difference between the temper and conduct of those who support a good cause, and of those who oppose it.

What will be the final result of so atrocious an act we presume not to pronounce; but one good effect from it we think we can foresee, that of drawing closer the bands of union and amity amongst all the different bodies of Dissenters, who must henceforth feel that they have a common concern in each others welfare and security.

We request you to convey our cordial sentiments of condolence to your fellow sufferers, and remain, with sincere esteem, and every good wish,

Reverend Sir,

Your Friends and fellow Christians.

N^o XXVI.

*To the Members of the New Meeting Congregation,
Birmingham.*

My Christian Friends,

IT adds not a little to my affliction, occasioned by my violent exclusion from a congregation to which I have so much reason to be attached, to be deprived of the satisfaction I promised myself from my proposed visit to you, and doing what might be in my power towards your future settlement. But I am more concerned on account of the reason you assign for it; as it argues

argues a continuance of that malignant persecuting spirit which has been the cause of all our sufferings. What must be the government of a country, nominally christians, in which such outrages against all law and good order cannot be restrained, and in which a man cannot be encouraged by his best friends to come to the discharge of the duties of a peaceable profession, without the apprehension of being insulted, if not murdered.

Do not, however, think that any thing strange, or new, has happened to us. The enemies of the primitive christians frequently set loose a licentious populace upon them, when they did not think proper to proceed against them by law; and for this purpose they raised such calumnies against them as made them be considered as the very pests of society. I trust you are so well grounded in the principles of your religion, as not to be discouraged at *this*, or any thing else that has befallen us. Though the enemy has burned our places of public worship, and lighted the fires, as I have been informed, with our bibles, they cannot destroy the great truths contained in them, or deprive us of the benefit of our Saviour's declaration, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake."

Be assured that, from the interest I take in your welfare, I shall not fail to mention to you any person that I may hear of, who shall appear to me proper to succeed me. Hoping that you will soon be provided with such a person, and that in consequence of being built up in our holy faith, we shall have a happy meeting in a better world, for which all the discipline and trials of this life are excellently fitted to form us, I am,

My Friends and fellow Christians,

Your's affectionately,

J. PRIESTLEY.

ADDENDA

ADDENDA.

IT may be amusing to some of my readers, to see the following account of the riots at Birmingham, written on the spot, and at the time, by a member of the establishment, in letters to a friend of his near Maidstone in Kent, and published in a *Supplement to the Maidstone Journal*, for Tuesday, July the 19th, last, as it shows with how little feeling, or sense of impropriety, some persons can relate the most atrocious actions, in the full view of all their enormity, when they are well wishers to the *cause* in which they are performed. The mistakes and exaggerations in this account are also amusing. I would likewise observe that Mr. Walter, the printer of the paper called THE TIMES, assures me that his account, false and malignant as it is, was written by “ a gentleman “ of great respectability, at Birmingham, and of “ large commercial concerns.” But this kind of *respectability* does not always give liberality of sentiment, just notions of right and wrong, or proper feelings.

N^o I.LETTER I.*Thursday Evening.*

“THE deists here, after their utmost endeavours, fat down eighty-two. The mob encreasing in number and silence, they broke up in less than two hours—their names will appear in white letters and black paper. Some of them were rudely handled. Priestley durst not appear, the enclosed paper* inflamed much. I cannot think we have any thing to fear; we must be blind indeed, provided the kingdom is as flourishing as Birmingham, for we are richer, and our trade better than ever.”

.....

LETTER II.*Sunday Noon.*

“TO remove your fears on our account, I send you the particulars of our commotions: on Thursday evening the zealous assembled in St. Philip’s church-yard, and broke a few windows at the Hotel; Dadley appearing, declared himself attached to high church and king. It was settled for their leader to examine his house, and not a disaffected person being there, they went to the New Meeting, which was soon in flames; then to the Old Meeting, but they first desired the charity children to be sent to their homes;—they were informed the houses on each side belonged to loyalists, whose property they are as cautious of as possible: therefore to preserve whatever belonged to them, they gutted the Old Meeting, laid the wood in a pile in the Meeting-yard, and burnt it there; then took the bricks down with care, which employed them

* Alluding to the seditious hand-bill.

them all night: a party was sent to secure Dr. Priestley, who escaped very narrowly: his house with every thing they could find fell a victim to the flames, they then destroyed Mr. Ryland's house, late Baskerville's; then Bordesley, then Mr. Hutton's. I went by desire of our neighbour Cooper into Hutton's house, to request they would not fire it, as many loyal people would suffer. They knew me, shook me heartily by the hand, and promised me *no fire*, which was observed. I am confidently informed that a woman bringing a candle was knocked down; they then went to Mr. G. Humphrys's, Mr. W. Ruffell's, and Mosely Hall, where they waited for the tenant, Lady Carhampton, removing her effects, they then destroyed the house as they had done those of the preceding persons, They are still in the country: their objects are the Meeting-house at Withwood-heath with the teacher's, Coates's at the Five-ways, late Wesley's, and Lady Wood; and they declare, that unless Priestley is delivered to them, no Dissenters shall escape. On Friday five hundred gentlemen began cudgelling them, and drove them, but this only made them more outrageous, and we have now no hopes of quieting them but from the military; the same day, they gave notice by their bellman, that every house that had not high *church and King*, written upon it, would be destroyed.

“No money, or any thing else has any influence, nor have they been diverted from any one of their attempts; they seem to move quite systematically, and say, they are only doing what their enemies would have done by them. We are, I consider, quite safe; the only inconvenience we have felt, has been from a few stragglers, who have taken the advantage of the times, in extorting money, but the *loyal* mob, yesterday, as soon as they were informed of it, sent a party, who beat them severely, and they are at present dispersed.

“P. S. I am informed they are now at Edgbaston, in consequence of their finding a letter of Dr. W. at

N

Ruffell's

Ruffell's; they now say they regard no persuasion, every enemy to high church shall fall."

.....

Mr. Ryland's house, which has been burnt down, was set fire to on account of his son's having assisted in the escape of Dr. Priestley, whom the mob have pursued in different directions. Should the Doctor not be able to elude their vigilance, it is much to be apprehended that they will murder him, as he is considered the mischievous author of all the treasonable hand-bills that have been circulated about the town, and which first produced the riot.

The Methodists and followers of the Countess of Huntingdon have been all protected. In the beginning of the riots the mob went to some of their houses, and questioned them concerning the doctrines which they professed, and on their declaring for *church and King*, they were assured that they should remain unmolested. The church people walk about as usual, without the smallest apprehension of danger.

The Hotel belonging to *Dadley*, where the Revolutionists dined, has been only damaged by the windows being broken, the mob refusing to pull it down, because he was a churchman.

Mr. Humphrys, whose house at the turnpike was pulled down, offered the mob 4000 and afterwards 8000 guineas if they would desist; but they declared that money was not their object, and that they pulled down his house because they considered him as a principal person concerned in the inflammatory hand-bills; perhaps too for his ridiculing the national church by building a cow-lodge in the form of a chapel.

A letter dated Sunday night at eleven o'clock, says, "Unless some soldiers arrive early to-morrow morning,
we

we are in very great apprehension that every Dissenter's house in Birmingham will be destroyed, and with them, no doubt, many other houses which were never intended. Near one hundred houses have been set on fire and pulled down, and about sixty more are marked for the purpose of being burnt or destroyed. At nine o'clock last night it was computed that the damage already done amounted to 250,000*l*. Those which we have mentioned belong to principal people."

N^o II.

An Address to Dr. Priestley, agreed upon at a Meeting of the Philosophical Society at Derby, Sept. 3, 1791.

SIR,

WE condole with yourself, and with the scientific world, on the loss of your valuable library, your experimental apparatus, and your more valuable manuscripts: at the same time we beg leave to congratulate you on your personal safety, in having escaped the sacrilegious hands of the savages at Birmingham.

Almost all great minds in all ages of the world, who have endeavoured to benefit mankind, have been persecuted by them; GALILEO, for his philosophical discoveries, was imprisoned by the Inquisition; and SOCRATES found a cup of hemlock his reward for teaching "there is one God." Your enemies, unable to conquer your arguments by reason, have had recourse to violence; they have halloo'd upon you the dogs of unfeeling ignorance, and of frantic fanaticism; they have kindled fires like those of the Inquisition, not to illuminate the truth, but, like the dark lantern of the assassin, to light the murderer to his prey. Your philosophical friends, therefore, hope that you will not again risk your person among a people, whose bigotry renders

renders them incapable of instruction: they hope you will leave the unfruitful fields of polemical theology, and cultivate that philosophy, of which you may be called the father, and which, by inducing the world to think and reason, will silently marshal mankind against delusion, and with greater certainty overturn the empire of superstition.

In spite of the persecution you have sustained, we trust that you will persevere in the exertions of Virtue, and the improvements of science. Your fame, already conspicuous to every civilized nation of the world, shall rise like a phoenix from the flames of your laboratory with renovated vigour, and shine with brighter conuscation.

R. ROE, Secretary.

N^o III.

THE ANSWER.

London, Sep. 19, 1791.

Gentlemen,

I FEEL myself greatly encouraged in my present sufferings from the effects of bigotry, by the sympathy expressed by you, and by other liberal friends of science here and abroad.

It will be a new thing in the world if any thing truly valuable lose credit, or have a less rapid spread, in consequence of persecution. If any thing will bear to be viewed, and examined, it must derive advantage from whatever draws attention to it; and such, I am confident, is the cause in which I suffer.

In consequence of this, far from being discouraged, I feel myself more animated than ever; and I am at this very time setting about the re-establishment of my philosophical apparatus, and resuming all my former pursuits.

Excuse me, however, if I still join theological to philosophical studies, and if I consider the former as greatly superior

superior in importance to mankind to the latter. But as these different pursuits have never yet interfered with, but have promoted, each other, be persuaded that this will continue to be the case.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

The person high in office, after declaiming against me in the manner mentioned p. 58, added, "As to Paine, he is no *Dissenter*, and therefore we cannot take *him* up." On this I leave my reader to make his own remarks, and some of a sufficiently serious nature cannot fail to occur to him.

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AN
APPEAL

TO

THE PUBLIC,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

The Riots in Birmingham,

PART II.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A LETTER FROM W. RUSSELL, ESQ. TO THE AUTHOR.

✓
BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. F. R. S. &c.

SED QUÆ CAUSA GRAVIS, QUÆ TRISTIS ORIGO RUINÆ,
FORSITAN IGNORAS. EGO NUNC VERISSIMA PAUCIS
EXPEDIAM.

PETRARCHÆ AFRICA.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.

1792.

THE PREFACE.

THE facts advanced in the former part of my *Appeal to the Public relating to the Riots in Birmingham* having appeared to myself, and my friends, incontrovertibly true, I did not, at the time that I wrote it, expect that I should have any occasion to trouble the world with another publication on a subject which to myself must be sufficiently disagreeable. But as not only have those facts been denied, but much additional censure been reflected upon me, and the Dissenters, by the clergy of Birmingham, who have employed the pen of Mr. Burn, I find myself under the necessity of engaging in a controversy, the termination of which I do not see. For I think myself bound in honour, and in duty to my fellow-sufferers, not to withhold whatever shall appear to me to be proper for our common vindication.

Let our enemies, then, dispute our facts, and advance their farther calumnies. I shall not fail to reply to them, till the Public shall be in possession of all that is necessary to form their judgment on a subject that certainly interests the whole community. For, if any one set of men may be insulted and oppressed with impunity on account of their religious persuasion, if neither the common courts of law, nor the cool opinion of their countrymen, will do them justice, another set may, in their turn, be exposed to the same, and an all-grasping and domineering hierarchy may crush us all. It behoves us, then, seriously to consider our situation, and let our enemies consider theirs. And the case of persecution for religious principle is no new thing in the world; we have but too many precedents before us to determine our judgment, and direct our conduct.

It will be observed, and, I doubt not, to our prejudice, that but few *names* appear in this narrative of facts. But, considering the great prevalence of a violent party spirit among the more wealthy and powerful in the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham, and

and how much it will appear that some persons have already suffered in consequence of giving evidence in favour of Dissenters, and being otherwise friendly to them, it would be unjustifiable in me to expose them to farther injury without very particular reason. Every name, however, that is alluded to in this work is ready to be produced if necessary. If, in any very particular case, I should decline giving my authority, I can only pledge my own veracity for *having* a sufficient authority, which my reader will believe or not, according to his idea of my moral character. Except a very few, all the facts I have mentioned, are contained in *affidavits* voluntarily tendered; and many more, I doubt not, will appear when it shall seem to be safe to the parties. However, those affidavits which tend most to criminate particular persons have already been recited by Mr. Whitbread, and others, when an inquiry was moved for in the House of Commons into the causes of the riot. Knowing, therefore, what is laid to their charge, it behoves them to take the proper method of removing the imputations under which they lie. A good account of the debate on this subject may now be seen

in the *Parliamentary Register*, published by Mr. Debrett. From perusing *this* our countrymen will form their own judgment, whether there was sufficient cause for public inquiry, and whether the members of the House of Commons acted as the representatives of the Dissenters as well as of the other inhabitants of the country, and whether they were disposed to inquire into, and redress, wrongs done to *them*.

The plan, and proper origin, of the riot has not yet been discovered; and many persons begin to suspect, as Dr. Parr, in his truly liberal publication, has hinted, that it had a higher origin than Warwickshire. There were predictions in London of what would be done at Birmingham. But, if any person in power should wish to oppress us, we ascribe it to the incessant accusations of our enemies, especially among the clergy; and time will shew that those accusations are mere calumnies, assertions destitute of all foundation in fact.

No blunder is absolutely impossible in some politicians; but I can hardly think that, at this day, any statesman could hope to
avail

avail himself of the prejudices of the majority of a nation to intimidate and crush the minority, when his ultimate views were really hostile to the liberties of all, such policy is so easily seen through; and it would be nothing less than insanity to endeavour to intimidate by a *mob*, the excesses of which it may be impossible to restrain, and which, once encouraged and excited, may soon take a different, and even opposite, direction. In no country in Europe is a mob so much to be dreaded as in this, for in no country in Europe are the populace so ignorant, so unprincipled, so prophane, so improvident, so licentious, and so much disposed to every species of violence short of murder. If our government be so excellent as it is boasted to be, how came this great and formidable evil to exist?

In general this extreme ignorance and profligacy are to be found in manufacturing towns, where the poor are taught nothing besides their particular art or trade, and where they have no leisure, or means, of acquiring general knowledge; where they work part of their time, and spend the rest in the alehouse, wholly improvident with re-

ſpect to futurity, in this life or another. This neceſſarily forms the moſt degraded ſtate of human nature. But for this great evil the government, in church or ſtate, ſhould provide ſome remedy.

Much pains has particularly been taken to repreſent the Unitarian Diſſenters, among whom I claſs myſelf, as diſaffected to government, in order to make our ſufferings the ſubject of leſs regret, as if the chaſtiſement we have met with, though not legally inflicted, was nothing more than we deſerved; when in reality our tenets have no relation whatever to any thing of a political nature, nor have we interfered in politics more than other perſons.

Among other calumniators, Mr. Burke particularly diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his invectives againſt us in the Houſe of Commons; but he only diſcovered his utter ignorance of our principles and conduct. As ſome evidence that the Unitarian Diſſenters are the enemies of the conſtitution, he alleged the toaſts that were given at the firſt annual meeting of the Unitarian ſociety, none of
which,

which, however, were at all disloyal, or breathed a spirit unbecoming Englishmen,

Mr. Burke was ignorant that the *Unitarian Society* by no means represents the Unitarians of England, being nothing more than the association of a very few of them for the purpose of distributing books, and certainly are not one in a thousand of the Unitarians in England. That society has no political object whatever, and the toasts were quite an accidental thing, owing to the company of some strangers, who chiefly suggested them at the time, none of them being provided beforehand; and it was not the intention of the society to continue the custom.

Unitarianism bears no relation to any system of politics, and in fact there are Unitarians among the friends, as well as the enemies, of what is called *government*. There are great numbers of them in the church of England, as well as out of it; and there are many professed Unitarians who object to the forming of any society, so far are they from wishing to make themselves conspicuous, or from being of a factious and turbulent disposition.

Unfavourable

Unfavourable as the present times are to Unitarians and Dissenters, they may change in our favour, and even in a short space. Events are powerful and speedy instructors, and produce important changes in the sentiments of whole nations, as we have lately seen both in America and in France. This is an age of revolutions, and should teach the High Church party in this country not insolence, but moderation.

At all events men should do justice, whatever their own future situation may be; and it is only justice that the Dissenters of Birmingham ask of their countrymen. But they have not yet found it, except with respect to the demolition of the new meeting house; though all damages done by rioters should be most amply repaired by the society, which is constituted for the very purpose of preventing, or redressing, the wrongs of individuals. It is notorious that the courts of law have by no means given us complete indemnification. We trust, however, there is still so much justice in the nation, that our representatives will, on cooler reflection, do for us what was done for the sufferers by the riots in 1780, and

and punish those who may be proved to have been chargeable with a neglect of duty.

It will be proper in this Preface to give some account of *Mr. Ruffell's Letter* to me, which is subjoined to this part of my Appeal, and of those articles in the *Appendix* which are not mentioned in the course of it.

Mr. Ruffell thought himself at one time particularly called upon to vindicate himself and his brethren from the accusation of the High Church party in the reply of Mr. Burn, especially as he knew that I wished to decline writing any more on the subject. But finding that this was impossible, I desired him to throw some part of what he had written, (containing such particulars as he was best able to speak to) into the form of a *Letter to me*, to be subjoined to my work. And I think myself happy in this, and in every opportunity of appearing in company with a man to whom I owe so much, in whose society I have had so much true enjoyment, from the mutual communication of similar sentiments; and whose separation from me I consider as one of the most unpleasant consequences

sequences of the riot. But we are all at the disposal of one who knows where to place us better than we do ourselves.

Having, in my former Appendix, given several *Addresses* to me, those who were pleased with *them* will not be displeased to see added to them that from the *Dissenters and Delegates of the Dissenters in England to the sufferers in the Birmingham riots*, with the Answer. In the Gentleman's Magazine there were several sneers at me on account of there being no Address to me from any Dissenters in London; and it was insinuated that no such thing having taken place, the Dissenters in general were far from approving my conduct, or condoling with me on the occasion. This Address, being a full answer to those insinuations, was sent by a friend of mine to the printer of the Magazine, but it was neither inserted, nor any notice taken of its being sent. I hope Mr. Nichols will not in future pretend to *impartiality* in his conduct of that work. I could not have a stronger testimony to the propriety of my general conduct as a Dissenter than this Address, and the answer; and it is a particular satisfaction to
me,

me, that all the denominations of Dissenters concurred in it.

I ought also to observe (and the remembrance of it will give me pleasure as long as I live) that the first congregation to which I preached after the riot was one of Calvinistic Baptists at Amersham, and at the unanimous request of the minister and people. The Sunday following I had invitations to preach to two other Calvinistic congregations. One good effect of the riot has been to promote this liberal spirit, so becoming all denominations of Christians. Though we differ in many things, and lay suitable stress on those points of difference, we are sensible that the articles about which we are all agreed are of infinitely more moment; and on these I can with pleasure enlarge, without hurting the feelings of any Christian whatever.

No. XIV. will shew how far Mr. Burn's assertion concerning the cause of Mr. Curtis's declining to attend a funeral in company with Mr. Scholefield *only* left he should afterwards do the same with *me*, is from the truth. Now that I have left them the same low bigotry continues,

continues, and is openly avowed by them. And No. XIII. will show the extreme malignity of some of the High Church party since the riot.

The account from Stourbridge, No. XIX. shows that the same illiberal spirit of the High Church party extended to the neighbourhood of Birmingham, and existed there long before my coming among them, and also its continuance and increase since that time. The spirited and excellent publications of Mr. Field shew that the same despicable spirit prevails at Warwick; and I doubt not every other town in that neighbourhood could furnish a similar history; so effectually have the clergy infused their own spirit into the members of their church; and nothing surely can be more disgraceful in this enlightened age. The bigotry of the Roman Catholic clergy was never greater, or more intolerant, than that of the clergy of the church of England in that part of this protestant country, and all bigotry is founded in ignorance. Their narrow education, and other circumstances, easily account for the whole.

The letter relating to the destruction of

my library, was written by a person who I had heard was on the spot, and I imagined had been present at the beginning of it, having, though a member of the church of England, gone thither to save what he could of my property, and especially my books and manuscripts. This letter furnishes the most unexceptionable evidence of the savage and brutal fury with which those worse than Goths and Vandals were instigated to destroy every thing belonging to me.

Mr. Carpenter's letter will exhibit a specimen of the sufferings of those whose names do not appear in any list of sufferers. I wish that more such accounts may be collected before the particulars be forgotten. As yet this country has but an imperfect idea of the magnitude and extent of this mischief. In due time I hope that all the world will have an opportunity of seeing it; and let our enemies indulge themselves in the contemplation of it if they feel themselves so disposed. I hope it will be the last gratification that they will have of the kind. Indeed, their wrath is as great, as if *they knew that their time was short*,
Rev.

Rev. xii. 12. This violence will only precipitate their ruin.

Their best policy would be moderation, and a hearty concurrence in the repeal of the impolitic Corporation and Test Acts, which I hope no Dissenter will ever trouble the country with petitioning for any more. I never proposed any application to the legislature for that purpose, and I trust all the Dissenters will now feel as Paul did when he had been unjustly imprisoned. Let the country do away its own disgrace, and provide for its own greater security, by doing us justice.

Posterity will judge between us and the High Church clergy of this kingdom, not only who have been the best friends of the liberties and true interests of the country, but even of the reigning family. It was the fulsome flattery, and abject principles of the clergy that chiefly contributed to precipitate the Stuarts to their ruin, and they are acting the same part at present. They taught Charles II. to behave with the most indecent ingratitude and treachery to the Presbyterians, who were the
true

true authors of his restoration, and they are dictating the same ingratitude to the present reigning family, to which the Dissenters have ever been most zealously attached, while the clergy were almost universally disaffected.

These are facts that lie on the very surface of the English History, and yet the clergy have the assurance to charge *us* with disaffection. If there be any disposition towards it, it is what their violence and injustice have driven us to. There are others, we trust, who can better distinguish the *signs of the times* than they, and who will not again sacrifice the interests of the nation, and the constitution itself, to their bigotry, avarice, and ambition.

Many of the facts introduced into this part of my *Appeal* will be found to be the same with those that are mentioned, and spiritedly remarked upon, by Mr. Edwards, in his *Letters to the British nation*, as well as alleged by Mr. Whitbread and others in the House of Commons. I should not, however, have thought it necessary to have made so

many of the same observations with Mr. Edwards, if this part of my Appeal had not been printed before I saw his last Number. I earnestly recommend this last Number of his Letters, as containing several more particulars than had come to my knowledge.

I cannot omit this opportunity of congratulating my late congregation on the acquisition of two such valuable ministers as Mr. Edwards and Mr. Jones, whose first and truly excellent discourse to them is now before the public. They have, in a great measure, verified my prediction, in my *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*; and the increasing numbers and spirit of the Unitarian Dissenters in that town must have already convinced the bigoted High Church party there, that they have been far from gaining any thing by the riot, or by my expulsion from the place. Such has ever been, and such, from the nature of things, must always be, the effect of intolerance and persecution. But bigotry will neither read nor reflect, so that to this dæmon, equally furious and blind, the instructive page of history is unfolded in vain.

Mr.

Mr. Burn charges the Unitarians, p. 102, with “inviting the aid of persecution.” If we have given the invitation, the High Church party at Birmingham have been as ready to give as we to ask, and have thereby given us the assistance that we found we wanted. And though Mr. Burn says, as a proof that I have not been *persecuted*, that “I have not suffered as a Christian;” my case is so far common with those who are usually termed *Protestant Martyrs* in the reign of queen Mary, in this country, and of Philip II. and Louis XIV. abroad: for none of them suffered as Christians. We have this, however, in common with the proper Christian martyrs, that we equally suffer *for conscience sake*. “Much less,” adds Mr. Burn, “has it been made to appear that the *clergy* were accessory to his misfortune.” When I wrote the former part of this Appeal, I did not consider them as accessory to it, but now, in a certain sense, I do so; and they are called upon either to vindicate themselves, or to bear the imputation; and they will, no doubt, do that which they will find the easiest to them. If it be true, as they now pretend, that *they* lament the riot in

Birmingham (which the total failure of their object may now perhaps lead them to do) numbers of their brethren in many parts of England do not. I could enlarge greatly in my evidence of this, if it were prudent so to do. No other event in modern times has shown so decisively what spirit the High Church clergy of this country are really of. It is the spirit of church establishments universally, and truly *Anti-Christian*.

I deferred the printing, and after that the publication, of this work, which was composed in August, with a view to give my readers an account of the complete termination of every thing relating to the riot in Birmingham; hoping that the very inadequate compensation that was awarded us would have been paid at least before this time. But finding this to be still delayed, and that there is no near prospect of the business being dispatched, though the term fixed by the law for this purpose is expired, (it being now nearly a year and a half since the disaster, and eight months since the cause was heard) and many of my friends and my enemies too call for the work, I have consented to withhold it no longer.

I shall close this preface with repeating what I have observed more than once in the course of the work, viz. that depending, as I necessarily must, on the information of others, with respect to the *facts* introduced, or alluded to, in it, it is very possible that I may have been misled. But I wish to give our adversaries an opportunity of exculpating themselves, if they can, from the charges brought against them; and certainly they are under obligation to me on this account; it being always an advantage to know what our adversaries say, and believe, concerning us, as we may then either defend ourselves, or neglect the accusation, as we think proper.

CLAPTON, Jan. 1, 1793.

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ERRATA.

- Pref.* p. xii. l. 7, for *Dissenters*, read *Delegates*.
P. 5, l. 8, for *or*, read *as*.
26, l. 10, for *and, as* read *or, as*.
32, l. 7, (b.) for *members*, read *member*.
61, l. 12, (b.) read *the king has sent us word*.
63, l. 12, read *a toast*.
63, l. 18, dele *perhaps at the same time*.
81, l. 1, (b) for *assert*, read *insert*.
104, l. 10, (b.) for *Rosé*, read *Hope*.

N. B. (b.) Signifies *from the bottom of the page*.

AN APPEAL

T O

THE PUBLIC,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

THE RIOTS IN BIRMINGHAM.

PART II.

SECTION I.

*Introduction, and of the exaggerated Charges in Mr.
Burn's Reply.*

I DO not remember that I ever entered upon any composition with so much reluctance as I do upon this, though not in the least from any apprehension of not being able to acquit myself to my own satisfaction in it. Indeed, in this respect, no task ever appeared to me more easy and inviting, as I dare say my impartial readers (and some such I hope to find) will be sufficiently convinced as I proceed. But I wish to look back as little as possible to an unpleasant scene, excepting in such a manner as to derive benefit from my reflections upon it. Being, however, loudly called upon

by the clergy of Birmingham, who have employed the pen of Mr. Burn, and who sanction his performance, I find myself under a necessity of vindicating what I advanced in my *Appeal* on the subject of the riots in that town.

I long entertained hopes that this might be unnecessary; on account of the candour with which my *Appeal* was written; and, circumstanced as I was, it would naturally be concluded, that I would be as guarded as possible with respect to all the facts that I had occasion to introduce; and as I had no vindictive feelings, I imagined that, considering what I had suffered (more in some respects than most persons now living could be made to suffer) I wrote in such a manner as my enemies themselves would think to be temperate. And, indeed, I have the satisfaction to find, that not only my particular friends, but many who were not previously disposed to be my friends, thought that the temper with which I wrote was not unbecoming a Christian. Notwithstanding this, the clergy of Birmingham express a very different idea of my performance, and it is on nothing but an appeal to *facts* that the propriety of what I advanced before, and of what I shall now advance in defence of it, must depend.

What I have had most occasion to complain of, ever since my writings have drawn any degree of attention upon me, has been unfounded calumny,
 flanders

landers of the most malignant nature, of which no evidence could be produced, but to which confident assertion procured credit. One of these, respecting my converting Silas Dean to atheism, is acknowledged in this *Reply* to my Appeal. That stories grow by passing from one hand to another, and that by this means mere suppositions come to be considered as undoubted facts, is not uncommon; and it is not easy to ascertain the degree of guilt in any of the relaters. But to be charged with asserting the very contrary of what a writer does assert, and in the very publication replied to (which is of course immediately under the eye of the person who professedly replies to it) is much more extraordinary, as it argues such a force of prejudice as the evidence of a man's own senses will not remove; and there are more, and more striking, instances of this violent prejudice in Mr. Burn's reply to my Appeal, than I have seen in any piece of controversial writing whatever. If he ever had read my work, he had quite forgotten the contents of it at the time of his writing, and could never have compared the two together. I shall, therefore, do it for him, and let the reader judge between us.

Mr. Burn says, p. 41, the great object in the narrative part of my work was "to criminate the clergy," and that I most evidently do this, p. 3, "without discrimination." Now I do not know how it was possible for me to discriminate more

expressly than I have done in the account that I gave of the conduct of the clergy; calling some of them *my friends, engaged in the same cause*, Preface, p. xxiii. and even acknowledging, p. 68, that some of them were “among the first to afford me substantial assistance.” If, therefore, I had anywhere censured the clergy in general, it ought to have been understood with this limitation, which had been sufficiently expressed before. But I think it will be found that every separate passage, if the scope of it be attended to, is sufficiently guarded, and conveys no censure on the clergy as a body, but only on certain descriptions of them. Mr. Burn should, at least, have quoted some passage in which this censure seems to be general, and unqualified; but he does no such thing, contenting himself with asserting it, without producing any evidence of it at all.

The picture that he represents me as having given of the clergy of Birmingham in particular, has no existence but in his own imagination, which, with respect to exaggerated charges, is sufficiently fruitful. “Dr. Priestley’s account of the clergy, &c.” he says, p. 47, “is of that kind which makes the worst things he can say of them probable. The idea of the present clergy of Birmingham,” p. x. “will but exhibit the detested image of a junto degraded by their vices from the rank not of ministers merely, but even of men. Either the clergy of Birmingham,” p. 11, “have forfeited their rank
“ in

“ in society, and their claim on its protection, or
“ Dr. Priestley has, in the face of his country, in-
“ curred the guilt of accusing the innocent, on the
“ ground of invented facts, and of giving plausibi-
“ lity to the composition, by the affectation of can-
“ dour and christian meekness. It is not permit-
“ ted,” p. 101, “ to the clergy of Birmingham,
“ thus publickly arraigned, or the abettors of the
“ late riots, to throw in their mite of concern at the
“ outrages that have been committed on property,
“ on the feelings of individuals, on general science,
“ and on the plainest dictates of humanity. These
“ are interests in which, if our accuser may be cre-
“ dited, we can feel no concern. It seems, in the
“ opinion of Dr. Priestley, that to be, and to act,
“ as a man of principle in the established church,
“ deprives a man, by a kind of professional neces-
“ sity, of every claim to the character of humanity,
“ and levels him at once to the condition of a
“ brute.”

Now this frightful idea of the clergy of Birmingham is as far from having any countenance in my *Appeal*, as it is from my thoughts. I never had, or expressed, any worse idea of them than that some of them were *bigots*; and there are many very honest and worthy men, of whom it cannot be denied that they are so: i. e. persons who are so fully persuaded, though without reason, of the truth of their own principles, that they think much too ill

of those of others, and are thereby led to support their principles by methods which cannot be justified.

With respect to the riot, the worst that I ever thought, or expressed, concerning the clergy of Birmingham, was that some of them had represented the Dissenters in general, and myself in particular, in such a light, as, considering the previous state of men's minds in that part of the country, could not but tend to inflame them against us, and prepare them, though unintended by themselves, for the outrages that were committed afterwards; and of this I shall presently produce ample proof. If I have said any thing more than this, let my words be quoted, and their sense ascertained. But all that the reader has yet seen in the above extracts are the words of Mr. Burn, and not mine.

Mr. Burn, however, says, p. 124, " the blame
 " must, as usual, fall upon persons of better condi-
 " tion, and among these the clergy must of course
 " be regarded as principals in the guilt of the
 " above horrid transactions." But what is still
 more unaccountable than this, he says, p. xiii.
 " he has commenced a regular attack upon four
 " clergymen by name, whom he accuses, by the
 " most direct implication, as having been the chief
 " movers of the popular tumult and outrage, as
 " incendiaries, and pillagers of houses, &c. &c. If
 " the clergy," he says, p. ix. " whose names have
 " been

“ been brought forwards on this occasion really are,
“ or should even be suspected to be, the wretches
“ which Dr. Priestley represents them, their guilt
“ must form an anomaly in the history of crimes.”

Now I have been far from accusing any clergymen whatever as principals in promoting the riot; and what Mr. Burn can mean by saying that I have “ commenced an attack upon four clergymen by “ name,” I am utterly unable to guess. I do not know that I have mentioned four of the clergy in any view, and certainly not as promoters of the riot; and yet two of them, Mr. Curtis and Mr. Madan, make a separate defence of their conduct, as if they had been formally arraigned. It is easy to answer accusations invented on purpose to be answered; but of what consequence is this, except to those who are imposed upon by the exaggerated and false representation, reflecting blame upon the accuser, instead of answering the proper accusation? In all that I have quoted from Mr. Burn, he has only added to that *calumny* with which I have been already sufficiently loaded, and I publicly call upon him to vindicate himself from this charge.

I must, however, acknowledge that Mr. Burn's reply to my Appeal, considered as written with their concurrence, gives me a much worse opinion of the clergy of Birmingham than I was disposed to entertain before. It bears too evident marks of real

malignity. It shews the unrelenting temper of those who have done an injury; and on the whole, if I had my choice of the two (harsh as is the censure implied in what I am going to say), I had rather go out of the world with the disposition of the brutal but ignorant rioters, than with theirs.

It is equally untrue, and unjust, in Mr. Burn to insinuate, p. iv. that I represented Mr. Madan as “an unprincipled savage;” in consequence of which some persons, he says, “having conceived this idea of him, were astonished when they were assured, that the urbanity of his manners, and the benevolence of his character, rendered him universally respected.” For certainly, this is the very idea that I myself have given of Mr. Madan in my *Familiar Letters*; and my observation on it is, that if such men as he can be so inveterate an enemy to the Dissenters, where are we to look for candour, or justice? For any thing that appears to the contrary, Bonner and Gardiner might be polite, and even good-natured men.

Mr. Burn seems to have imagined that my idea of himself and his brethren is such as he has conceived of *me*, and this is shocking enough. But, ill as I have been used, I think much better of them, and even of the rioters themselves. In my next section I shall inform my reader what that idea is, and for this I shall not, like him, produce a picture from

from my own imagination, but quote his own words. It is not a little remarkable that, though Mr. Burn professes to write an answer to my Appeal, he expressly quotes very little of it, but replies to something which he gives his reader to understand is contained in it, but which it will be in vain for him to look for there. Many, however, will read his Reply who will neither read my Appeal, nor this defence of it; and with such readers his method of writing will answer well enough. This is not the way in which I treat Mr. Burn, or any of my opponents. Whether my replies be sufficient or not, at least I let my reader see what it is that I reply to, and in their own words. Of this fair method this defence of my Appeal will be a specimen.

When Mr. Burn says, p. 34, that in his Reply to my Letters to him he answered my *arguments*, but passed by the *abuse*, he quotes nothing, but leaves his reader to suppose that I had written something that might be termed *abuse*. I wish his readers would look into those Letters. They will be much at a loss to conjecture what it is that Mr. Burn meant to represent in that light. But I suppose that any thing that gives pain, from the difficulty of answering it, Mr. Burn will call *abuse*, as a libel is said to be no less a libel, though it be ever so true.

In that work of his to which my Letters were an answer, he thought himself at liberty to give the

most unfavourable idea of my sentiments, evidently calculated to excite the resentment of his readers against me, ascribing to me the worst designs, as well as the grossest mistakes, and yet in *him* this must not be termed abuse. Though my only object in every thing that I wrote about the person of Christ was to ascertain what the testimony of the apostles concerning him really was, and I constantly appealed to their testimony as decisive, he strangely represented me as denying the *infallibility of their testimony*, which he undertook to defend against me; and with as little pretence, though it served to excite an alarm at my principles, he described them as leading to all vice and wickedness. But there are readers with whom any representations from a clergyman, in such a cause, will have weight,

Abusive as Mr. Burn represents my polemical writings to be, I have never yet charged any of my opponents with bad intentions, or questioned the goodness of their understandings; but I have always imputed their mistakes to *prejudice*, the effect of early impressions: and if my own opinion, as I must suppose, be right, and consequently those of my opponents be wrong, what less offensive hypothesis could I frame for it?

One would think that Mr. Burn had never read my Appeal, to which he professes to reply, all his charges are so totally void of truth, or so shamefully exaggerated.]

exaggerated. Speaking of my observations on the address to the rioters *as friends and fellow-churchmen*, he calls it, p. 63, “ a transaction most shamefully
“ represented by the author; and that, in consequence
“ of the imposition contained in Dr. Priestley’s state-
“ ment, this transaction was brought forward in par-
“ liament.” “ It is remarkable,” he says, p. 65,
“ that the obvious policy of seeming to coincide in
“ sentiment with a mob, for the purpose of influenc-
“ ing their opinions, and controlling their conduct,
“ should have been actually construed into a real
“ design of promoting and inflaming their vio-
“ lence.” After calling the rioters *the synagogue of Satan*, he says, p. 69, “ If there be any thing
“ doubtful remaining, it must appear to every im-
“ partial observer, to be the integrity of that man’s
“ motives, who can thus, to answer a purpose, make
“ churchmen of rioters, and in the same breath too
“ in which he declares it to be questionable whe-
“ ther such miscreants can be said to be of any
“ church.”

Now all that I have made of this circumstance was to shew that the rioters were considered as churchmen, and that their object was the destruction of Dissenters. I believe, indeed, and I shall prove, that there was positive encouragement given to the rioters by churchmen of better condition, but I do not say that their design in this particular

part of their conduct was to promote and inflame their violence. Certainly, however, to address them without giving any intimation that what they had hitherto done was wrong, was not likely to prevent their proceeding farther.

SECTION II.

Of Mr. Burn's Accusation of me, and his challenging me to defend myself.

LET us now see what kind of language Mr. Burn makes use of in his Reply to my Appeal, which he will, no doubt, say contains nothing that can properly be termed *abuse*.

Speaking of what I say of the clergy of Birmingham, he calls it, p. 99, "a malignant hypothesis." In p. 84, he speaks of "the unequalled malignity and injustice of my representations." He calls the language I hold with respect to my enemies, p. xv. "the most complete insolence, and abuse, that malignity itself could have suggested." According to him, p. 100, I am "an accuser of the innocent, not merely without sufficient evidence, but in open defiance of the most palpable and uniform series of facts." Of my

my *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, he says, p. 39, "it was as great an outrage upon character, as the conduct of the rioters was upon property."

One of the most curious insinuations of Mr. Burn is his representing me as so overbearing, that it was an offence, p. 77, in the clergy of Birmingham to think for themselves without my permission. This is the more extraordinary, as he says, p. 37, "No man has done more than I have to invite, and even to provoke discussion." Would I have done this, if the controverting of my opinions had been so very offensive to me? But while Mr. Burn quotes nothing, and only gives his own idea of me, and of my writings, he has no check upon him besides his own discretion. I will venture to assert, that all who are really acquainted with me will say that Mr. Burn's account is the reverse of my character.

But the most injurious of all Mr. Burn's insinuations are those by which he would give his readers to understand, that my writings are calculated to disturb the peace of the country, and that I am intending something more than the mere discussion of theological or political questions. Of the Preface to my Letters to him, he says, p. 27, "it is written with more freedom, in the opinion of many, than is practically consistent with the intire peace of the country." This was also the object of the

Extracts that were made from the Preface, which were sent to all the bishops and members of the House of Commons, as every thing in that Preface that shewed that my only object was free and calm discussion, was omitted, and the other passages were so put together, as to be calculated to excite alarm.

With the same unfairness Mr. Burn represents my *Letter to Mr. Pitt*, p. 21, as “menacing, “and insolent, most unconstitutionally infringing “upon freedom of debate; a personal invective, “and not an answer to arguments. It was,” he says, p. 19, “a fair development of what I would “be at, and in the judgment of sober men marked “with some degree of precision the boundary of “my ambition.” Now as few men write more intelligibly than I do, it is very easy to see the extent of my views, in that, or in any other of my publications; and this has always been to state my own opinions on any subject, and to invite the fullest discussion of them. What can be my *ambition*, when I plead for abolishing all civil establishments of religion, as hostile to the genius of it, and a burden to the state; and when I claim nothing for myself but what I equally plead for all persons without exception? Besides, in all my proposals for the reformation of the greatest abuses, I expressly say that I would have no man disturbed in his present possession, but that the retrenchment should affect the successor only. Is this ambition? Is it not the greatest moderation?

But

But in me nothing can be moderation. It must be ambition, or something equally bad.

Perhaps the most perverse of Mr. Burn's constructions of my writing, is his inferring from what I have said of the French "having no court for the nobility and clergy to look up to, and to depend upon," that I consider it, p. 30, "as the duty of Englishmen to renovate this part of their constitution, which lodges the government in the hands of an individual;" that is, that it is my wish, and I doubt not; he would add, that it will be my endeavour, that there be no king in England. It is very fortunate for me that I never wrote a Roman History: for had I expressed any approbation of the conduct of the Romans in banishing the Tarquins, Mr. Burn's inference of my antipathy to all kingly power would have been much stronger, as they left no hereditary power in the country; whereas there still is a king in France*, though not such a king as the nobility or clergy can look up to for much emolument. Mr. Burn can see no medium, at least in me, between retrenching exorbitant power, and taking it away entirely. At all events, I must be represented as a republican; and with many republicanism is synonymous to every thing that is dreadful and de-

* This was written before the revolution of the 10th of August, which, in the circumstances of France, was a happy and necessary completion of that of the 14th of July.

testable, perfect anarchy and confusion, to say the least.

It is generally deemed fair to interpret particular expressions in one part of any person's writings by his declared sentiments in others of them. Now in my political writings, which however are not numerous, I have again and again praised the English constitution, as consisting of the three estates of King, Lords, and Commons. What candour or justice, then, is there in supposing that I wish the subversion of it? I thought it necessary to premise these observations, which demonstrate a disposition in Mr. Burn and the clergy of Birmingham, with whose concurrence he wrote, to put the worst construction on every thing I say or do, which, if I may adopt their language, is an outrage on character similar to that which the rioters committed on my property.

Let us now come to the examination of the *facts* which I have advanced, the evidence for which is so loudly called for by Mr. Burn. And surely, if there be any thing wrong in producing this evidence, that is, what I take to be such, the blame must lie with those who called for it. With respect to accusation unsupported by facts, Mr. Burn expresses himself very properly, though without reflecting to whom his censure applies. "If a character," p. 26, "must
at

“ at any rate be defamed, nothing in the world can
“ be so convenient for the purpose of invented ca-
“ lumnny, as an appeal to anonymous report. The
“ introduction of anonymous report,” p. 25, “ whe-
“ ther true or false, into this serious argument, is
“ more than impertinent; it is insidious.”

Mr. Burn's challenge of me to produce authorities for what I have advanced is such as becomes a diligent inquirer after truth, and one who would not shrink from it. “ If,” says he, p. 26, “ the
“ doctor would convict by evidence, we invite him
“ to the proof of his charge. Let him,” p. 59,
“ produce instances from the conduct of the upper
“ class of people, whom he thus gravely accuses.
“ He is, no doubt, in possession of the facts.” With respect to what I said of some of them being concerned in the insults offered to me, he says, p. 35,
“ Let him then come fairly to the proof, or let
“ him expunge all illiberal insinuations from the
“ list of his charges.” When I said that the clearest facts shew that there was more than remissness on the part of many persons of better condition, and that nothing they did shewed a real disapprobation of the conduct of the mob previous to the destruction of my house, Mr. Burn says, p. 67, “ Then
“ produce them. On this subject,” he says, p. 95,
“ be explicit, sir;” and “ of this assertion he pro-
“ duces no evidence.” This is the most material article in the question that is now before the Public,

and therefore I shall endeavour to do what Mr. Burn challenges me to do, viz. to support what I have advanced, by an appeal to facts.

Mr. Burn insults me, p. 81, with not having “proceeded against the magistrates legally, but contented myself with venting my spleen in tolerated slander.” But the history of the assizes at Worcester and Warwick, and of what passed in the House of Commons itself, will, I hope, justify us in not appealing to the laws of our country in such a case as this. Though, however, we have no prospect of success *there*, we shall venture to appeal to a higher and more respectable tribunal, “our countrymen in general,” as Mr. Burn quotes my own words in his motto, “the world at large, and especially posterity.”

I have not, in my Appeal, said much of the conduct of the clergy of Birmingham: Mr. Burn, however, supposes that I have; and on that supposition he says, p. 103, “Dr. Priestley stands forward as the accuser of the clergy of Birmingham, and he is now called upon as publicly by one of that body, either to substantiate, or retract, his charge. The author of this reply,” he says, p. 103, “will not shrink from the inquiry. He invites it. If there be any one motive that influences him more than another in this affair, it is the hope that, by promoting this discussion,

“ in vindication of the character of the innocent, he
“ may at the same time assist Dr. Priestley and the
“ Public, in a clear and full detection of the guilty.”
I shall be much obliged to him for this assistance.

With respect to what I have said of the passions of the lower order of the people being inflamed by the preaching of the clergy, Mr. Burn says, p. 38, “ We do aver from our own practice, from the
“ practice of our brethren in general, prior to the
“ late unhappy affair, that this representation of the
“ conduct of the clergy is not a true one. For the
“ truth of this declaration we can cheerfully appeal
“ to the constant experience of our hearers.” This is sufficiently bold; and I shall answer the challenge, not by appealing to Mr. Burn’s hearers, but to printed documents, sermons preached at the time, and now extant. *Litera scripta manet.*

Thus publicly and boldly called upon, I shall proceed to the vindication of what I have advanced in my Appeal; first with respect to what passed previous to the riot, and the probable cause of it; then what took place during the riot, and subsequent to it. I only request an impartial attention to such facts as I shall produce; and it must be considered that, not having been myself a witness of what I shall relate, I must necessarily depend upon the testimony of others; and as in this I may,

through misinformation, be mistaken, I sincerely wish to hear what may be alleged on the other side. I cannot wish to be misled myself, nor would I knowingly mislead others; and the press is as open to my opponents as it is to myself. After this it will be in the power of our readers to judge whether I be what Mr. Burn, p. 106, calls me, “a public slanderer,” or not.

SECTION III.

Of Events previous to the Riot, and of the more distant Causes of it.

THAT there existed in Birmingham, and in all that part of the country, a strong spirit of party, exceedingly unfavourable to Dissenters, is evident from a variety of circumstances; and, independently of any that I have mentioned, it must appear probable from the history of those counties in this respect, given at length in an excellent pamphlet lately published, entitled, HIGH CHURCH POLITICS, in which it is shewn that the neighbourhood of Birmingham was the head quarters of Dr. Sacheverell; and that, in the reign of George I. several meeting houses were destroyed by rioters

rioters in that town, and others in those parts. The facts that I mentioned in proof of the existence of this party spirit, and that it was far from originating with me, or being promoted by me, Mr. Burn has attempted to invalidate. But let the reader judge with what effect.

One of the instances that I mentioned was that the clergy refused to walk in funeral processions with dissenting ministers. I observed that Mr. Curtis refused to do so at the application of Mr. Scholefield. This Mr. Burn insinuates was not on account of his objecting to doing this with dissenting ministers in general, or Mr. Scholefield in particular, but with myself only; “left,” as he says, p. 4, “he should be led to act officially with one
“ whose opposition to the doctrines and discipline
“ of the church of which he is a member, had car-
“ ried him into excesses, in his apprehension, in the
“ highest degree illiberal and indecent. Of this
“ class he justly considered Dr. Priestley. With
“ him therefore he could not consistently act upon
“ such an occasion; and for this reason solely he re-
“ fused to comply in the instance produced by the
“ Doctor.”

But this instance of bigotry in the clergy of Birmingham appeared before I went thither. More than forty years ago Mr. Wearden, curate of St. Philip's, expressed his concern that he could not walk with

Mr. Blythe at the funeral of Mr. Ruffel's grandmother, having, as he said, received orders to the contrary from Mr. Vyse, who was then the rector.

In 1770, Mr. Dovey, rector of St. Martin's, refused to go into a mourning coach along with Mr. Blythe at the funeral of Mrs. Webster; and after the funeral he said to Mr. Webster, that "when the
 " Dissenters wished their own ministers to attend
 " their friends to the grave, they had better not in-
 " vite the clergy of the establishment."

After this Mr. Webster, having the direction of the funeral of Mr. Haddock, omitted to invite Mr. Dovey, and also to send the hatband, scarf, and gloves, which it had been usual to give the attending clergyman. Unwilling to lose these perquisites, Mr. Dovey sent to inform Mr. Webster, that, though he did not choose to attend the funeral along with the Dissenting ministers, he did not mean to refuse what was usually given on those occasions. Mr. Webster, however, very properly withheld them.

At the funeral of Mr. Stephens of Deretend, Mr. Austed refused to ride before the hearse along with the dissenting minister, and haughtily bade him ride behind the hearse.

At the funeral of Mr. Gilborne, when Mr. Dovey
 refused

refused to walk in procession with Mr. Bourn, a man of activity and spirit, the following pleasant circumstance happened: Mr. Dovey meeting the corpse, and finding Mr. Bourn walking before it, directed him to walk behind. Mr. Bourn not complying with this order, Mr. Dovey endeavoured to outwalk him, but Mr. Bourn, being as nimble as he, kept up with him, till, the Rector quickening his pace, they both fairly ran for it, till they got to the church door. Mr. Dovey was so much offended, that, after the funeral, his pride getting the better of every other consideration, he sent back the hatband and scarf, and even the pins that had been used on the occasion.

These instances certainly show that the refusal of the clergy of Birmingham to walk in funeral procession with dissenting ministers did not arise from any objection they had to myself in particular, as Mr. Burn intimates; but from an absurd bigotry of long standing in the place; and I believe hardly known in any other part of the kingdom.

Besides, if Mr. Curtis had so violent an objection to myself in particular, why did he come to hear me preach, or meet me at the committee of the library, of that for the abolition of the slave trade, and on other occasions, on which he always behaved to me with great civility? And at the time that he refused to walk with Mr. Scholefield, which, Mr. Burn says, was solely on my account, he gave a reason which

affected all dissenting ministers; and I had not then done any thing to make myself more obnoxious than I had when he came to hear me. I am also credibly informed that Mr. Curtis himself, on reading my Appeal, declared that I had given a just account of his conduct, that it was the bigotry he found in the place that led him to act as he had done, and that he had not himself any objection to walking with dissenting ministers at funerals. How this is to be reconciled with his giving his sanction to Mr. Burn's Reply is no business of mine.

Another instance of the High Church bigotry of the town of Birmingham that I mentioned, was the subscribers to the Sunday schools having rescinded a law which permitted the children to go to any place of public worship that their parents chose. On this Mr. Burn says, p. 66, "It has happened, " unfortunately for his purpose, that either through " misinformation, or a settled plan of perverting and " rendering odious the conduct of others," (and this is the turn that Mr. Burn generally chooses to give to all my accounts of things) " he has totally " misrepresented this plain business. The fact," he says, p. 81, " was that the law was never rescinded " at all;" and after giving a detail of pretended proofs to the contrary, he says, p. 12, " Let Dr. " Priestley, by facts, confute this statement if he " can." He also says, p. 9, " To rescind the above " law, was an act for which no committee was com-
 " petent

“petent, and there, unquestionably, never was a general meeting held for any such purpose.” Mr. Riland, another clergyman, says, p. 106, “I have no doubt but that your representation” (writing to Mr. Burn) “is perfectly right, and his” (mine) “is totally wrong.”

Though this reply of Mr. Burn was written with the concurrence of Mr. Curtis, it is now clearly proved that my account is strictly true. A general meeting of the subscribers to the Sunday schools was held (though Mr. Burn says there unquestionably was not) without any previous notice of the business that was to come before them. When it was proposed to rescind the law, the votes were equal, and Mr. Curtis, being in the chair, decided in favour of rescinding it. The evidence of the rescinding is a public advertisement in the Birmingham newspaper, immediately after the transaction, as was noticed by Mr. Scholefield, with proper observations with respect to the dependance there could be on other bold assertions in Mr. Burn’s reply. This will be found in my Appendix, No. I.

I do not say that even this palpable falsehood was a wilful one, as Mr. Burn, or Mr. Madan, would not scruple to say with respect to me; but it argues such a defect of memory as may be hereafter quoted as one of the most remarkable things of this nature in the history of the human mind. It is the
more

more so, as, when Mr. Burn himself applied to Mr. John Lawrence for his subscription, and was refused on account of the rescinding of the rule above mentioned, Mr. Burn immediately said to a person who accompanied him, "I told you how it would be. I am sorry for it;" he himself having disapproved of the conduct of the High Church party in this business. Indeed I never considered Mr. Burn as a bigot; and, as having been both a Methodist and a Dissenter, rather a friend to both. The fact above-mentioned was related to me by Mr. Lawrence presently after it happened.

The defect in the memory of Mr. Curtis is as remarkable as that of Mr. Burn; and that two men should labour under the same defect, with respect to the same thing, is more extraordinary still. For he was not only chairman at the meeting in which the rule was rescinded, and decided the question himself; but when, after this, he called upon Mr. Punfield for his subscription, he was refused, and was informed that it was for the same reason.

That this conduct in the subscribers to the Sunday schools arose from the most contemptible bigotry, no person of the least degree of liberality will deny; and that this bigotry was of long standing in Birmingham, in the opinion of Mr. Curtis himself, was evident from the following circumstance, which I shall relate from my own recollection. When a friend

friend of mine was going to that meeting of the subscribers, at which it was agreed to permit the scholars to attend whatever place of worship their parents should choose, he was joined by Mr. Curtis; and talking about the business of the meeting, Mr. Curtis, who was then a friend to the proposal, said he was afraid they should not be able to carry it, "there was so much of the *old leaven* yet remaining "in Birmingham." I have no doubt but Mr. Curtis would have acted with the liberality becoming a person of a dissenting family, if he had not found so much of what he properly termed the *old leaven* in Birmingham. That he had not the fortitude to act agreeably to the natural dictates of his own mind, by which it would have been in his power to expel that old leaven, is much to be lamented. My house and meeting house would have been standing, and I should now have been at Birmingham, much more agreeably employed than I am at this moment.

When Mr. Scholefield published a copy of the resolution of the subscribers to the Sunday schools rescinding the rule above mentioned, and which Mr. Burn, Mr. Riland, and, in effect, Mr. Curtis also (by joining in the sanction of the other clergymen of Birmingham to Mr. Burn's Reply) solemnly declared never to have been rescinded at all; Mr. Burn does not acknowledge the plain inference from the fact, viz. the existence of a spirit of High Church bigotry in Birmingham, independently of any

any thing that I could have done to excite it (and it was with this view that I mentioned it at all) but only desires of his readers, what they would certainly do without his desire, that “that part of his statement, &c. may not be considered as weighing any thing in his general argument against me.” What was it but a degree of bigotry of the most extravagant kind to rescind a rule by which the scholars were permitted to attend public worship where their parents chose, when in no one instance had any of them, in fact, attended any other worship than that of the Church of England.

The bigotry of the church people at Birmingham appears, perhaps, more clearly in their conduct of a charity school which has been established there upwards of forty years; not only as it is a rule in the institution of this school, that no children shall be admitted that are not of the established church, but that they shall not be bound apprentices to any Dissenter. Nay, in two instances, the managers of this charity even refused to accept of the subscriptions of Dissenters voluntarily offered them. Both Mr. Lakin and Mr. Peyton, to their great surprise, had their money rejected.

I consider it as a proof of High Church principles, unfavourable to civil and religious liberty, that the centenary celebration of the revolution in 1688, was not attended by any of the clergy of Birmingham;

ham, and they did every thing in their power to render it unpopular. Their favourite toast of *Church and King* was objected to. The meeting was attended by a Catholic clergyman, and the Dissenting ministers.

The last instance I shall mention of the existence of a high party spirit in the clergy of Birmingham is, that one of that body, of a more liberal turn, when he left the place, declared it was on that account, and that for this reason he could not live in comfort in it.

This extreme bigotry is not peculiar to the town of Birmingham, but extends to the neighbouring counties. As a curious instance of this, I shall observe, that Mr. Mould, of Meafham, near Ashby de la Zouch, refused, the last year, to officiate at the funeral of a child of John Bancroft, a Dissenter; and declared, that no Dissenter should be buried by him. In consequence of this, the child was put into the grave without any thing being said at the place; and the mother was so much affected, that she was taken home very ill. It is happy that this clergyman has not the keys of the gates of heaven, nor wholly those of the grave.

That I saw, lamented, and endeavoured to allay, this party spirit in the town of Birmingham, by persuading the Dissenters to give up the disposal of the civil offices

offices, is well known to all my acquaintance, though Mr. Burn is incredulous on the subject. "This," he says, p. 16, in his insulting manner, "considering the
 " Doctor's natural diffidence of power, and the ex-
 " treme readiness which himself and principal friends
 " have ever discovered in giving up authority once
 " obtained, must appear a very probable, as well as
 " interesting story. It is, however, strictly true. To
 mention no more, Mr. Ruffel, Mr. G. Humphrys,
 the two Mr. Hunts, and the three Mr. Rylands,
 who thought as I did on the subject, will bear me
 witness, as well as others, who were not Dissenters. I
 may add all my particular acquaintance, without ex-
 ception, know that I constantly blamed the Dissen-
 ters for keeping that power in their own hands.

That the Dissenters of Birmingham were not so attentive as they might have been to retain the power they once had, appeared in their conduct with respect to king Edward's charity school in that town; the governors of which were once Dissenters, and it was in their power to have admitted no other among them; but they always chose to take some of the principal of the church people to act with them. It happened, however, that at one particular meeting, at which those church people made a point of attending, while some of the Dissenters were absent, they took that opportunity of choosing another churchman, by which they became the majority; and from that time, except in the single case of Mr. Ruffel, they

they have never chosen any Dissenter into their body, and have repeatedly declared they never would. Let not then the church people at Birmingham upbraid the Dissenters with a love of power.

I had a view to the bigotry of the town of Birmingham, and hoped to succeed in allaying it, by means of the public library, in the establishment of which I particularly interested myself; as that would necessarily bring the reading and thinking part of the town better acquainted with each other. The annual advertisement, which was drawn up by me, and which was continued for some time by the High Church party, after they gained the ascendancy they now have in that library, but which they have since dropped, I shall insert in the Appendix, No. II.

With respect to the business of the library, in which it was not possible for any man to act with more liberality than I did, Mr. Burn says, p. 14, “ We never saw great talents so degraded by party considerations as in the conduct of Dr. Priestley in some part of that business.” But, in his usual manner, he does not say what those parts of my conduct were. As a small pamphlet, which I published on occasion of a motion to prevent the purchase of books of religious controversy, will give the reader some idea of the spirit with which I acted in this business, I shall give the whole, or a considerable part of it, in the Appendix, No. III.; and let

Mr. Burn, if he pleases, republish the pamphlet which one of the clergy wrote on the occasion, and signed M. S.

What it is that Mr. Burn alludes to, when he says that I degraded my great talents, I believe it will not be very easy for any person, acquainted with the facts, to conjecture. Had I, as Mr. Curtis did, openly canvassed the subscribers for the purpose of getting a committee to my mind, I should indeed have degraded my talents, whether they had been great or small; but it is well known that all my proceedings were fair and candid. The harshest thing that I said of the clergy who withdrew from the library because my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* was voted into it, was that their conduct was childish. The subscribers seem to have thought as I did; for though Mr. Curtis, in the note he wrote on the occasion, expressed his wish, “that all the members of the church of England would follow his example;” not one of them, except the clergy, did so.

Another childish and paltry instance of bigotry, in some members of the church of England on that occasion, was striking out the title of *Reverend* prefixed to Mr. Scholefield’s name and mine in the list of the committee. A subscriber found the ink with which the rasure had been made, not quite dry; and inquiring who had been in the library, was informed that only Mr. Curtis and Mr. Lloyd, a Quaker,

Quaker, had been there. Being interrogated on the subject, they both denied having done it. If notwithstanding this, Mr. Curtis was generally believed to have done it, the fault is not mine. As little regard has been paid to his most solemn affirmation by Dr. Parr, a brother clergyman.

Without the least regard to truth Mr. Burn speaks of me, p. 21, as having been “ adopted the champion and leader of the whole body,” (viz. of Dissenters), “ in the business of the application to parliament for the repeal of the corporation and test acts;” and he adds, that “ after organizing the whole body of Dissenters, and bringing them to act as one man, their future conduct in this affair was to be governed, as unquestionably it has been, and especially in this, and the neighbouring counties, by the maxims of his policy.”

In all this Mr. Burn shews his utter ignorance of this whole business; and, though he pays no regard to what I have before said on this subject, viz. that I had very little to do in it, he should have procured information from some other quarter, and have mentioned his authority. Of the many *letters, resolutions, &c.* relating to this affair, that were drawn up at Birmingham, I did not write one. I attended but few of the meetings even there, and though I attended one at Nottingham, it was because I had business of my own in that place. I assisted, indeed, in drawing up the resolutions that were agreed

upon there, but said little or nothing at the meeting. Indeed, it is well known that I am very backward to speak in public; being, on several accounts, especially a tendency to stammering, unfit for public speaking.

On the failure of this application to parliament, Mr. Burn says, p. 18, "Circumstances did arise which tended extremely to expose the true temper and views of Dr. Priestley, and to sink him prodigiously in the opinion of his townsmen." I wish Mr. Burn had said what those circumstances were, and I now call upon him to name them. I had no views that were peculiar to myself, or that were not common to all Dissenters; and what I did to promote those views was nothing peculiar to myself, and less than was done by many others; not a hundredth part, I may venture to say, of what was done, and ably done, by Mr. Walker of Nottingham, not to speak of others. Indeed, it is well known that I was never solicitous about the object. But it is Mr. Burn's manner to make general assertions without appealing to any specific facts, capable of being scrutinized.

The discourse which I preached and published on this occasion I called "the most calm and moderate that ever was written on a political subject." This Mr. Burn does not deny; but as nothing good can come from me, he gives it the following turn, p. 23. "They perceived, indeed, that his gird at the
" minister

“ minister had taught him circumspection, and that
“ his wounds received in the encounter being
“ yet fresh, he fought cautiously; but the true de-
“ sign of this piece of management was too pal-
“ pable to be mistaken.” In this he alludes to my
Letter to Mr. Pitt, by which that minister might
receive a wound, but it will not be easy to find the
scars of any that I received. If I had wounds, they
did not prevent my continuing to fight on (if I
must pursue Mr. Burn’s metaphor) and what I
wrote afterwards in my *Answer to Mr. Burke*, and
my *Familiar Letters*, betray no diminution of vigour
or spirit. But that the temper with which I deli-
vered and published that sermon was not artfully
assumed for the occasion, as Mr. Burn insinuates,
but habitual to me, will appear from what I wrote
respecting the same subject in one of the earliest of
my publications, viz. my *Address to Protestant Dis-*
senters as such, a part of which I shall for this
purpose insert in my Appendix, No. IV.

Mr. Burn would in vain charge *me* with even
alluding to facts that I am not prepared to authen-
ticate. With respect to the report of my convert-
ing Silas Dean to atheism, Mr. Burn says, p. 26,
“ Will he oblige the public with the names of some
“ of those clergymen in the town and neighbour-
“ hood by whom this account was so industriously
“ circulated?” Now I doubt not Mr. Burn knows
much more of this business than I do. I will men-

tion, however, that Mr. Swainson of Rowley, and a clergyman dining at Stratford, both strongly recommended the pamphlet in which that story was published, as did Mr. Curtis at the library room in Birmingham. The person who heard him is ready to attest it.

Let the reader judge from these particulars whether I have given a false account of the temper of the members of the established church in Birmingham in general, or of that of the clergy in particular. It was the extreme of bigotry, the same that had existed in the place long before I went thither, what I in vain endeavoured to allay, what exists there at present in as great violence as ever, and will I fear continue a long time; for it appears to have been greatly inflamed by the late riot.

SECTION IV.

Of the predisposing Causes of the Riot.

I CONSIDER the view that was perpetually exhibited of the Dissenters, and especially of the Unitarians in general, and of myself in particular, by the clergy of Birmingham, and others who occasionally preached in their pulpits, as a principal predisposing cause of the riot; as they necessarily led the people to consider us as the very pests of society;
from

from which the wish, and the endeavour, to exterminate us, as such, was but too obvious and natural. Mr. Burn, in what I have already quoted from him, strongly denies the fact. But there is evidence of it now existing in the printed sermons of Dr. Croft and Mr. Madan, which are well known to have been in the same strain with many others delivered in the pulpits at Birmingham while I resided there; and it will not be supposed that what they have printed was less guarded than what was not.

Mr. Madan, who says that his discourse was published "at the request of many before whom it was delivered," which is a proof of *their* party spirit, as well as of his own, speaks with particular approbation of the sermons of Dr. Croft, and Mr. Clutton; the latter of which he laments was not printed, and which I remember to have heard spoken of as peculiarly violent; as the sermons of Mr. Curtis were also said to be. The reader may therefore judge of the inflammatory tendency of these sermons of the clergy in general, by the following extracts from those of Dr. Croft and Mr. Madan.

They both agree in representing the principles of the Dissenters as "unquestionably republican." "Those of the Socinians," which Mr. Madan speaks of as evidently gaining ground, he says, p. 10, "are certainly no less dangerous to the state than the tenets of popery." Both these preachers re-

present our principles as not only theoretically, but practically seditious. Of the sentiments of Dr. Price, Dr. Croft says, p. xii. "They spread jealousy and
 " discontent through the kingdom, and were little
 " short of blasphemy. The Dissenters," he says, p. 33, "wish to destroy the whole fabric of our
 " constitution." Mr. Madan also represents us as no better than *king killers* in general. "Is there no
 " reason," he says, p. 13, "to receive with suspi-
 " cion their declarations of reverence to the govern-
 " ment, and of loyalty to the king, however plau-
 " sibly and spontaneously announced, when the
 " amount of that reverence has been exactly ascer-
 " tained by the woful experience of republican ty-
 " ranny, and the extent of their loyalty has been ex-
 " actly delineated by the blood of a king." He also says, p. 8, that he "always regarded our prin-
 " ciples as pointedly hostile, and dangerous to our
 " happy constitution."

When he was called upon by me to defend these strange and injurious aspersions, which are in contradiction to all history, and even to recent facts, and especially to all my principles, as contained in my writings; he appeared willing, indeed, to except from his charges the more moderate, or Calvinistic Dissenters, but by no means myself, and others whom he terms "the more violent Dissenters;" and in vindication of what he had advanced concerning the king killing principles being still retained by the
 Dissenters,

Dissenters, he says, p. 35, that "principles are a long lived generation;" and insinuates that therefore, they must now exist somewhere among us. "These principles," he says, p. 22, "are still at work." When I appealed to my own peaceable behaviour, he replied, p. 16, that "Guy Fawkes would have done the same;" plainly suggesting a comparison between him and me.

Both Dr. Croft and Mr. Madan represent in a most extravagant light the very innocent object of the application of the Dissenters to parliament for the repeal of the corporation and test acts, and they intimate, that so far from giving us more liberty, it were to be wished that we could be deprived of some of the privileges that we now enjoy. Mr. Madan alarms the public by calling the business of this application a "great constitutional cause." The possession of offices, which we plead our right to a participation in, he says, p. 12, would be "incompatible with the safety of our civil government;" and he speaks of our third application as "an extraordinary subject, now a third time obtruded upon the legislature."

Dr. Croft says, p. 36, "It would be fatal to religion, if the legislature should by any act of indulgence declare all opinions innocent. It is unfortunate," he says, p. xiv. "that the right of voting at elections, and of sitting in parliament, can-

“ not be taken from the Dissenters. It would be
 “ desirable,” p. 30, “ to exclude from the British
 “ senate all those who are led away by their plausible
 “ arguments, and to caution every British youth
 “ against their civil and religious maxims of go-
 “ vernment.” He particularly says, p. xi. that
 “ if the Unitarians were restricted from speaking in-
 “ decently of the doctrine of the Trinity, and if they
 “ were enjoined upon certain pains and penalties, it
 “ might be deemed persecution by them, but could
 “ not be thought a hardship by others.” Mr. Ma-
 dan also says, p. 9, “ Are we not justly upbraided
 “ with a passive and supine conduct, in a cause of
 “ the most interesting and sacred nature ?”

Of my own character nothing more injurious could be insinuated than was done by Mr. Madan. He describes me as a man of extraordinary talents, indeed, but as actuated by *malevolence*; and how else would he have described Satan himself? “ When
 “ I see,” he says, p. 26, “ your blindness in any
 “ point of history, I much suspect it to be wilful;” which is to represent the worst principle of my conduct as, in all cases, more probable than any other. What must the inhabitants of Birmingham, who justly respected Mr. Madan more than any other clergyman in the town, think of the Dissenters in general, and of myself in particular, when we were described in this manner, and when the account was introduced with such uncommon solemnity,

p. 2, as given “ from the settled principles of his
“ heart, as he hoped for mercy from the God of
“ truth?”

To what can we compare this conduct of the clergy, but (to adopt that metaphor of mine which has been so much carped at, and misrepresented,) laying gunpowder, not grain by grain, but by handfuls, in that magazine which exploded on the 14th of July? For what outrage must not many of the common people, who read none of my writings, but heard them spoken of by the clergy as highly dangerous, and unfit to be read by them, have been prepared, when for years together they heard the Unitarian Dissenters in general, and myself in particular, pointed at as the enemies of their country, ready on the first opportunity to overturn the government under which we lived, and even to embrace our hands in the blood of our sovereign? Could they help concluding that the persons who described us in this manner wished to have us destroyed, that it was even meritorious to destroy us; and when in any case the *end* is thought to be just in itself, the propriety of the *means* will be less attended to? If violence be employed to gain any end, there are thousands in all parts of this country ready to join in it, without any regard to the end, but merely for the sake of mischief and plunder. It is an army ready to act on the side of any whom they think they can serve with impunity to themselves.

It is, therefore, in this sense, though in this only, that I accuse the clergy of Birmingham, and especially Mr. Madan, as having been the promoters of the riot; and if it should terminate in that destruction with which I am still threatened, I shall charge them with being the cause of my death.

The methods that were taken to excite the populace of Birmingham against the Dissenters, previous to the riot, were various, and but too successful. Among others, I shall only mention one, as a specimen of ingenuity as well as of the malignant party spirit, which prevailed in the place, while nothing was done by us but what was calculated to allay it. The following paper was much circulated in Birmingham two years before the riot.

“ To those factious and republican spirits, who
 “ are at this time insidiously endeavouring to un-
 “ dermine the grand bulwark of our most excellent
 “ constitution, a plate of their *Coat of Arms* is de-
 “ dicated, by a friend to *church and king*.

“ *Blazoning of the Dissenters Coat of Arms.*

“ Field fable. A dissenting magistrate sits with
 “ a table before him, holding in his right hand a
 “ pen, in his left hand a serpent. On his shoulder
 “ sits a toad dictating to him. Over his head is a
 “ pair of scales broken, Or within, and argent. One

“ hornet and six wasps, representing the seven united
“ congregations. Crest, the head of Janus, party
“ per pale, fable, and or, before a thorn and a thistle,
“ issuing proper. Motto. *To him we owe our power.*

“ *Supporters.*”

“ Fraud represented with the body of a woman,
“ with a double face young and old, presenting the
“ most fascinating to the unwary objects her prey.
“ Her attributes are an angle rod, with a fish caught,
“ and in her left a serpent. She is always described
“ with the legs and claws of a vulture, and the tail
“ of a scorpion. Deceit is represented by an elder-
“ ly matron gayly dressed, holds a mask before her
“ face, and on her breast two hearts, black and red,
“ denoting the necessity of an external appearance
“ to cover the designs of a corrupt mind.”

N. B. There is some incorrectness in this copy;
but I have not seen any other.

SECTION V.

*Circumstances previous to the Riot, and more im-
mediately connected with the Cause of it.*

SEVERAL circumstances, previous to
the riot, show that some such thing was ex-
pected by the High Church party, while no Dif-
fenter, though exposed to the mischief, apprehended
any such matter. A clergyman dining at the An-
chor, at Worcester, July 13, said that, “ If there was
“ any

“ any dinner at Birmingham the next day, something would shew itself at night, and that it was then brewing.” A person of Birmingham said,]
 “ there will be the devil to pay at the Hotel to day. There are about two hundred Presbyterians met there, but we are ready for them, and shall be their masters yet.”

Mr. Burn represents the dinner at the Hotel, and the hand-bill, published a few days before, as the true causes of the riot. “ The promoters of the dinner,” he says, p. 51, “ were chiefly Dissenters; and as the design of that meeting was strongly suspected, those gentlemen became the object of popular resentment.” But that both the dinner and the hand-bill, were the mere pretences for the violences that were committed, is evident from the cry of the time, which had no relation to the dinner. Had the sufferers been obnoxious as having been concerned in the dinner, those of the church of England, who joined in it, would have been doubly so, as men who had deserted their friends, and joined their enemies; but no member of the establishment, though present at the dinner, suffered at all; and the only sufferers were that very description of men against whom the popular resentment had been excited several years before, viz. the Unitarian Dissenters in general, and myself in particular, whether we were present at the dinner, or concerned in promoting it, or not.

Of the principal sufferers, who were ten in all, only three were at the dinner, and their houses were the last that were destroyed. On these striking facts no comment favourable to Mr. Burn's hypothesis can be made.

Mr. Burn says, p. 52, that "the effect which the hand-bill might produce on the lower orders, was very justly and seriously apprehended." Now it is to the last degree improbable that any serious effect was ever apprehended from it. All that it invited to was the celebration of the French Revolution; yet he strangely says, p. 47, "The object of it was, in the apprehension of the populace, nothing less than the immediate overthrow both of Church and State." This famous hand-bill is still extant, and has been published a thousand times more by the enemies of the Dissenters than by their friends; and if it had really been calculated to do much mischief, it must have appeared long before this time.

At any time before the riot it was exceedingly difficult for any Dissenter to procure a copy of the hand-bill, while it was circulated with great industry among church people. If the magistrates really apprehended a riot from the effects, either of the hand-bill, which few Dissenters had seen, or from the dinner, which, however, few proposed to attend, why did they not prepare to oppose it by swearing more constables,

constables, and using other precautions directed in the Riot Act ?

If the governors of this country had really thought this hand-bill capable of doing any harm, would they not have sent soldiers to Birmingham, to be in readiness for the occasion ? A copy of the hand-bill was in the secretary of state's office three days before the dinner, and that was time enough for the purpose. Would it have been published at full length in the Gazette ? Or would Mr. Dundas have recited it in the House of Commons ? This publication, and many other publications of it, clearly shews that no body ever apprehended any danger from it, and that the stir that was made about it was only to throw an odium upon Dissenters, who were represented as the authors of it.

A letter of Dr. Tatham's, in which the anniversary of the French Revolution was called an *illegal. and unconstitutional act*, and which was eagerly circulated in Birmingham before the dinner, contributed much more to the riot than this hand-bill.

The suspicion of the fabrication of this hand-bill has now generally fallen upon the person alluded to by Mr. Burn and Mr. Dundas. It is well known to all our friends that I had no connexion with that person, and that he was least of all likely to be governed

governed by my advice. This, however, I will say for him, that though he thought freely on the subjects of government and religion, he was as far from any thing properly seditious as Mr. Burn himself. I believe him to be an honest and well meaning man, though I never thought him the most prudent. It is to the disgrace of this country that such a person was under the necessity of leaving it.

At the time of my writing the Appeal, I had not the least suspicion of this person being the author of the hand-bill, and, therefore, thought it as probable that it might be written by some of the High Church party, for the use that they actually made of it, as by the Dissenters who suffered in consequence of it. And certainly, they who forged letters for the purpose of exciting the rioters to do us mischief, were *capable* of doing *this* with the same view. The one was not more wicked than the other. Admitting, however, that a Dissenter wrote this celebrated hand-bill, and that it was as heinous a thing as our enemies represent it; it was only the work of one man, for whose conduct no other person is responsible. No person concerned in the dinner had the least knowledge or suspicion of it at the time, as appears by their public advertisement.

Depending upon such accounts as were given me, with respect to transactions at which I could not be present myself, I had said that, besides the dinner at
the

the Hotel, there were other dinners on that day, of persons of better condition, who did not rise so soon, or so sober, as those who celebrated the French Revolution, and that the riot commenced at the breaking up of these companies. "This," says Mr. Burn, p. 58, "is, to say the least, an idle fiction." "The magistrates," he says, 59, "dined at one of our inns on that day, and for the express purpose of being on the spot, in case their interference should be found necessary, in order to keep the peace."

Now I do not find, on farther inquiry, that there was more than one such dinner as I have described, viz. of *persons of better condition*, the rest being of the lower orders, though not all of the lowest, whose assembling, whose horrid execrations, and whose intoxication, Mr. Burn cannot deny. But that the other dinner, though attended by the magistrates, answers sufficiently to my description, there is evidence enough.

The High Church party who dined at the Swan tavern in Bull-street, if I be not misinformed, used the most horrid execrations, drank damnation to the Presbyterians, and prophesied what dreadful havoc would be made. A person who heard this persuaded those who dined at the Hotel to disperse; and then returning to the company at the Swan, said, "Gentlemen, your sport is spoiled, the company is breaking up;" and this seemed to mortify them exceedingly.

That

That the magistrates themselves, and no doubt other persons of their party, were either intoxicated, or worse, at the breaking up of this meeting, the facts I shall presently relate abundantly prove. If they seriously meant to *keep the peace*, their measures, were very ill laid, and certainly had no success. To pretend that they feared a riot from the friends of the revolution dinner is too absurd to be alleged. They were not of that class of people; and there was no dinner, or preparations for any dinner, except at the hotel.

Among other circumstances that indicated a design in the High Church party to promote a riot, I mentioned a report of some shops being shut up, that the workmen might be at liberty for that purpose. Of this Mr. Burn says, p. 51, “ If any instance of the kind does really exist, it has eluded our research.” He adds, that “ many churchmen took pains to keep their men in the shops.” Of this I have no doubt. The generality of the Church people in Birmingham were far from favouring the rioters, nor have I ever given that idea of them. The promoters of the riot were a few, but certainly all of them churchmen.

The state of the town of Birmingham is still such that it is not easy to procure positive evidence against any rioter, or favourer of the riot; nor can it be deemed extraordinary that I should in some

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instances

instances have been misled by the exaggerated reports of the time, when I wrote my Appeal. Whether, however, I wrote without *some* authority, let the reader judge from the following circumstances. Mr. Ruffel remonstrating with one of the rioters at his own house, he said, "What would you have us do? We cannot work, for our masters turned us out of the shop on Thursday morning, and declared we should not enter it again all the week." The name of the man was Patric, and he said his master was a buckle-maker.

It is possible also, that the Dissenters might get the idea of the persons excluded from the shops being more numerous than they were, from the following circumstance, viz. that a little after nine o'clock, on the 14th of July, Mr. Carles, after saying to the rioters, "Come, my boys, huzza," added, "if they turn you out of work, I will employ you." What he meant by that language he best knows himself. It is, I own, more probable that his meaning was, that if the Dissenters should turn any persons out of their shops for having been concerned in the riot, he would endeavour to find employment for them.

That too many, though far from the majority of the church people in Birmingham, favoured the riot, and did as much to promote it as the shutting up their shops, though they might not do that specific thing, is sufficiently evident; and therefore *this* could

could not of itself appear improbable; and that great numbers of the common manufacturers were well enough predisposed for the riot is evident from the following circumstance. On the 13th of July a churchman talking about the intended dinner, said, “ I have got fifty hands in my shop, and if I was to
“ go to them to-morrow, and say, My lads, your
“ church and king are in danger, they would turn
“ out every man of them, and break every window
“ in the hotel.”

Another circumstance that I shall mention is one that I own I do not perfectly understand; but as it has been mentioned as some evidence that even Mr. Curtis himself expected a riot, that in it recourse would be had to fire, and that he did not wish such fire to be soon extinguished, I shall relate it, that Mr. Curtis may have an opportunity of exculpating himself.

The keys of the fire engine were taken by him out of the custody of the person who usually kept them, and delivered to a Mr. Brooke, a clerk in his own church, who, when he was applied to for them, as the rioters were demolishing the old meeting, said, that he had orders to let nobody have them. At length, however, an order was procured from the churchwarden, who expressed much surprize that this should be necessary; when Mr. Brooke (finding that he could not refuse them) said, “ If you
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“ must have them, you shall, but they will do you
“ no good;” which was actually the case, the engine not being suffered to play on any but the neighbouring houses.

What makes this story the more extraordinary is, that it appears from Mr. Curtis’s own account that, in the course of that night, the clerk went to the vestry, and there wrote a letter, which he sent by a special messenger to Mr. Curtis, to inform him that, at the order of the churchwarden, he had delivered the keys of the engine. Does not this look like anxiety to make an apology for having done what he knew would not be pleasing to his superior? It behoves Mr. Curtis to explain this extraordinary conduct with respect to the fire engine, with which it does not appear that he had any thing to do.

That something was concerted by the High Church with respect to the Dissenters previous to the dinner is evident from this circumstance, that a Dissenter, but not known to be one by Mr. J. Green, a busy and not very discreet man, going to him about business the day before the riot, received for answer, “ I have not time to settle your account
“ now, the damned Presbyterians give me so much
“ trouble. There are gentlemen now at my house
“ consulting what is to be done with them.”

SECTION VI.

Circumstances attending the Commencement of the Riot.

I SHALL now proceed to relate some circumstances which immediately preceded, and accompanied the riot, at its first breaking out; and I think they will sufficiently prove not only that there was no exertion on the part of the magistrates, or any of the principal church people in the town, to prevent the riot; but that, not then knowing how far it would proceed, many of them were well-wishers to it. I may, no doubt, be deceived; but all the particulars that I shall mention have been voluntarily declared upon oath, and the reporters are now ready to attest them in any court of judicature, whenever they are called upon to do it. However, let our enemies have an opportunity of vindicating themselves: they have the same access to the Public that I have, and will have a much more favourable hearing.

When the company were going to the hotel, and the mob were throwing at them, the justices, who were present, took no notice of it, and did not endeavour to disperse them. Between seven and eight o'clock Mr. Carles and Dr. Spencer were in the midst of the mob, in passing from the hotel to-

wards Bull-street, and seemed to encourage them by bowing and nodding to them. When some of the mob came out of the hotel, where they had been to look for those who had dined there, one of the magistrates, standing upon the steps, took off his hat, waved it round his head, and huzza'd with them, but made no attempt to check them for a quarter of an hour, while the witness was with them. When one of them was haranguing the mob on the steps of the hotel, the other stood behind him, laughing heartily, and hiding his face with his hat.

When the windows of the hotel were nearly demolished, one of the justices cried, "Well done, my lads, well done, my lads. We will do what we can for you; and if I had it in my power I would make you all drunk." A little after nine he said to the mob, "Do no mischief, or murder; and if you are taken up in a right cause, and brought before us, we will acquit you:" and he shook hands with several of them. One of the rioters asked the justices, if they would give them leave to shake a little powder out of Dr. Priestley's wig: and to this they made no answer, but laughed, took off their hats, waved them three times, and huzza'd. One of them said, again "You are all hearty fellows; if I had it in my power I would make you all drunk." A boy saying, "Damn them, seize all the Presbyterians," one of them put his hand

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on the boy's head, and said, "Well done, my hearty
" chicken: thou art a damned good cock;" and
laughed. The mob laughed with him, and huzza'd,
crying, *Spencer for ever.*

The most serious charge against one of the magistrates is the following: while the rioters were throwing at the windows of the hotel, he said, "My
" friends, do not revenge yourselves upon this man,
" who gets his living by making dinners for gentlemen. If you wish to be revenged upon *them*,
" go to their meetings." On this the mob cried,
" To the new meeting; the justice will protect us." They were so near him, that he must have heard them. A young man of my congregation told me before I left my house, that he was standing close by one of the magistrates when the rioters mentioned going to the new meeting, and that he said nothing to restrain them.

While the same magistrate was walking up Bullstreet some of the rioters followed him, and among them was a woman, who cried, "Damn all the
" Presbyterians in the town;" but at this the magistrate only laughed. Being incommoded by the crowd, one of the justices bid them not follow him. On this they cried, "Where must we go?" He answered, "Go down to the meeting to the others." They then went to the new meeting, and joined those who were destroying it. He also said to them

at the same time, "Do no other mischief than pulling down the meetings, and I will stand your friend as far as lies in my power." Afterwards, when one of the rioters, who was demolishing the new meeting, was told that he would be hanged for it, he said, "No; for justice Carles sent us down hither."

"It is but justice," says Mr. Burn, p. 121, "to Mr. Brooke, at that time under sheriff, acting with the magistrates, and since deputed by the hundred as their sole solicitor on the trials, to observe, that no individual appears to have risked more by his personal exertions during the riots than himself." I have no objection to admitting this with respect to Mr. Brooke, or any other person, after the riot had proceeded farther than they wished, in consequence of which they might think they had particular reason to be apprehensive for themselves; but the question is, how they behaved at the commencement of the riot; and at that time there is clear evidence of several persons having given them too much encouragement.

The mob being assembled before Mr. Brooke's house, which is very near the hotel, a person in a green coat addressed them in a low voice, desiring them to go from thence, and saying, that if they would go to the new meeting, he would order a hoghead of ale for them when they came back. They asking

asking him for something in hand, he appeared to give them money, having put his hand into his pocket. Of this circumstance there are two witnesses. But previous to this he asked a young man who was in the crowd, whether he thought they knew him. He then held up his arm, and pointed towards the new meeting, and they immediately cried, "To the new meeting;" whither they went, and in five minutes few were left behind. Before this, when the mob were breaking the windows of the hotel, Mr. Brooke came out of his house, and Mrs. Brooke being apprehensive of some mischief to him, the rioters said, "We will not hurt Mr. Brooke; we will pull down any house Mr. Brooke has a mind." This, however, they might have said with respect to a person with whom they had had no previous communication.

SECTION VII.

Of the Conduct of the Magistrates, and others, after the Commencement of the Riot.

THE facts related in the preceding section sufficiently prove that there was no disposition in the magistrates, or the high church party in general, to check, but rather to promote, the riot at its commencement. Other facts as clearly prove that this disposition continued till the destruction of both
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the meeting houses, and of every thing belonging to me. When the rioters proceeded to attack the houses of Mr. Ryland and Mr. Taylor, there is no doubt that the greatest enemies of the Dissenters were alarmed, and wished to suppress the rioters; but having encouraged them before, they were at a loss how to proceed, and at all events were determined not to have recourse to *fire-arms*, though there was no doubt but that *this* would have been effectual in any period of the business. After the positive encouragement given to the rioters, the reason of this conduct was evident.

Several of the circumstances that I shall now mention also clearly shew that the proper object of the riot was *the Dissenters*, and nothing relating to the dinner, or the French revolution. The handbill, also, which had no relation but to the French revolution, would have been as much forgotten as the dinner, had it not been for the idea of its being written by myself or some other Dissenter. Those things had sufficiently answered their purpose, and the mob proceeded on its natural and original principle, the bigotry of the church people against the Dissenters. In what follows I shall first relate the circumstances that respect the conduct of the magistrates, then that of the clergy, and afterwards that of other persons.

About five o'clock in the morning of the 15th, when the rioters were destroying my house, one of
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the magistrates rode up to it, raised his arm, and beckoning to them, said, "Come hither, my good hearty boys." When they were gathered round him, he bade them take off their hats, and huzza, which they did, and he did the same several times. He then said, "I commend you for what you have done, and will protect you for it. No fire; return to your work." They huzza'd, and when he was gone, they returned to the house, and continued to demolish it, crying, as my son, who heard them, said, "Spencer for ever." The reason he gave why he would not have them hurt the house was, that it belonged to Mr. Lloyd, a quaker. It had lately belonged to him, but had been sold to Mr. William Humphrys.

Between nine and ten the same day the other magistrate coming along *Dale End* in a chaise, and the people gathering round him, he took off his hat, waved it out of the window, and cried, "*Church and King for ever, my lads.* Be true to your cause; stick to your cause. Be of my determination, to lose the last drop of blood in your bodies: it is my determination to lose the last drop of mine. Do not leave these Presbyterian dogs a place standing." He then huzza'd again, crying, *Church and King*, and the mob did the same. At two o'clock, however, on the same day, when Mr. Ryland's house was burning, he said to the rioters, "You have gone past what you were ordered."

“ dered.” Both the magistrates saw a man seized for carrying off three bottles from Mr. Ryland’s house without taking any notice of it; and the man was set at liberty.

That the rioters took it for granted that the magistrates favoured them there can be no doubt; though it is natural to suppose that, liking the business, they would make the most of every circumstance of that kind. Some of the rioters being taken into custody at Hay-hall, the residence of Mr. Smith, others came, as they said, by order of Mr. Carles, to demand their release, saying they did not come to do any damage to the house.

At my house the rioters said, “ The justices
“ will protect us; we shall not be hurt; we may do
“ what we please, but not burn the house.” They
repeatedly said in the course of that night, “ We
“ wish we had the doctor locked up in one of the
“ rooms, we would burn him alive; or if he had
“ come to the hotel, we would have killed him.”

Mr. Carpenter, of Woodrow, at some distance from Birmingham, meeting a party of the rioters who did not know him, said they were going to burn his house by orders from justice Carles. On his remonstrating to them, they persisted in saying they had justice Carles’s orders for it, and down it should come. On Mr. Carpenter applying to Mr. Carles

Charles afterwards for the assistance of the soldiers, he insulted him, by asking him if he ever knew an honest Presbyterian on the Lickey? his house being on a hill so called. He was not only refused the soldiers for whom he applied, but could not obtain leave to seize any of the rioters without them.

That the rioters had been led, by some means or other, to imagine that what they did was agreeable to government, is as evident as that they thought they were pleasing the magistrates. Soon after the riot, one man was heard to say to another, "Well, if any body is hanged for it, the king may fight for himself another time: for I am sure nobody else will fight for him." At the time that the rioters were demolishing the old meeting, one of them said to another, "This is not right;" but the other replied, "Nay, but the king has sent us, and if we do not do it, he will soon lose his crown." On the Saturday, when the rioters were hunting some ducks, and were talking of the soldiers coming, one of them said, "What if they do, they will not hurt us, as we have been fighting on their side. The justices are for us. Did you not see how they laughed?"

That the magistrates were determined not to have recourse to fire arms, though this appeared to be the only effectual method of quelling the mob, was evident from the beginning to the end of the business;

ness; and that they should not have done this, if they had been conscious to themselves that they had given no encouragement to the rioters, I cannot well conceive.

In the afternoon of the fifteenth, Capt. Maxwell proposed to Mr. Carles to collect all the soldiers in the town, and head them himself, saying he had no doubt but that he should be able to put a speedy stop to the riot; but Mr. Carles turned from him with strong marks of disapprobation in his countenance. Mr. Ruffel, as early in the business as possible, applied to Mr. Carles to send for a military force to quell the mob, and likewise proposed to head any number of men furnished with fire arms. He wrote to him to desire that twenty men might be sent to assist in the defence of Mr. Humphrys's house. But no request of this kind was ever listened to, and at twelve o'clock on Saturday he received a note from Mr. Carles, informing him that both himself and Dr. Spencer were determined upon pacific measures. Mr. Hutton's servant having pricked one of the rioters with a bayonet, and the party afterwards coming before the justices, Mr. Carles remarked, and Dr. Spencer acquiesced in it, that he had no right to use arms, except the other person had been armed in the same manner.

That any of the *clergy* of Birmingham had the least concern in the riot, or were at all well-wishers

to it, I was far from having any idea at the time of writing my Appeal, though Mr. Burn has more than insinuated this. I only thought they had contributed to raise the spirit which produced the riot. Circumstances have since occurred which, I own, do lead me to think that Mr. Curtis was not wholly innocent. At least, whatever might be his meaning, his behaviour contributed not a little to encourage the rioters. One circumstance I mentioned in a preceding section, and two others I shall recite here.

Being with a party of the rioters opposite to St. Martin's church, he thanked them for what they had done in protecting the church and the king. He then took off his hat, joined in three huzzas, and wished them to follow him, which they did.

On Friday, as the mob were returning from the destruction of Mr. Ryland's house, Mr. Curtis harangued them at the top of Temple Street, saying, "We thank you, my brave fellows, for the zeal you have shown for the church and the king. You have now sufficiently punished your enemies, and we beg you will disperse, and go peaceably about your business." Being thanked for what they had done, they might think that they could not be blamed for doing a little more.

Mr. Curtis, willing to appear friendly to the Dis-

fenters, during the riot, now says in Mr. Burn's pamphlet, p. 90, " During the riots my house
" at Solyhull was open to a Dissenter and his
" family, and the children of another family were
" literally clothed by Mrs. Curtis." That Mr. Curtis had a real good will to many individuals among the Dissenters, I have no doubt, and that he wished the destruction of any of us I do not believe.

But there was little to boast of in his conduct in the case to which he refers. The Dissenter that he received into his house was old Mr. Smith of Hay Hall, a man universally respected, and who, I believe, has no enemy; so that he ran no risk in receiving him. Conscious, however, that he himself was not very popular in his parish, and that many persons might wish for a pretence to do him mischief, at Mr. Curtis's own request, Mr. Smith removed to the house of Mr. Eyre, another clergyman of the place, who was ready to run all risques in protecting him. There, and not at Mr. Curtis's, Mr. Smith slept; and the next day, to the great concern of Mr. Eyre, Mr. Smith was induced, from the alarm of the neighbours, to remove.

As to Mrs. Curtis literally clothing the children of a family of Dissenters, I have no doubt of her readiness to do it in a case of real charity. But it will not be supposed that, in *this* case, she could look
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for no recompense except *at the resurrection of the just*, when it is known that these children were those of Mr. Taylor. They had gone out during the riot with the maid servant who attended them, and were brought to the house of two ladies, who lived not far from Solihull. These ladies, being unmarried, had no change of clothes for children, and therefore they sent to Mrs. Curtis to borrow some while their own were washing, and she supplied them. It would have been very extraordinary, indeed, if she, or any other person, who had children's clothes in the house, had refused such a request as this.

When the rioters were demolishing the new meeting, another of the clergy is said to have encouraged them by saying, "Well done, my lads. When you have done here, go and pull down their houses too."

Mr. Burn says, p. 94, "Mr. Lawrence (a clergyman in Birmingham) and another gentleman exerted their utmost endeavours to save the Doctor's laboratory." That Mr. Lawrence was no rioter, and did not himself assist in the destruction of my property, I readily acknowledge. But it does not appear that he took any pains to restrain the rioters when they were demolishing the house. On the contrary, they considered him as their friend. Mr. Lawrence was also observed to be reading several of my MS. papers, and to put them

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into his pocket. What he did with them afterwards does not appear. He must have known that, being my property, he ought to have returned them to me, or to my friends. If they were letters, he ought not, as a man of honour, to have read them at all.

In what light the rioters considered Mr. Lawrence, may appear from the following circumstance. When he went to the house the second time, in the morning of the fifteenth, the rioters at my house repeatedly said that Mr. Lawrence had been there, that they were sure he thought they were doing right, for he laughed at them, and they would be damned if they would not go on. Some of them took him by the hand, crying out, "The curate of the new church. By God. By God." They continued to surround him, and to shake him by the hand near half an hour, while he only desired them to loose him, but expressed no disapprobation of their conduct.

At the same time that, in my own vindication, I mention these particulars of the conduct of some of the clergy of Birmingham, with the greatest satisfaction I do justice to Mr. Darwell, who was indefatigable in his exertions in favour of Mr. Jukes, and I believe of other Dissenters.

That the rioters considered the clergy as being favourable to them, may easily be inferred from every circumstance,

circumstance, which shewed that the Dissenters, as such, were the object of their malice. When Mr. Ryland's house was burning one of the magistrates, pointing to the church, said, " You see your church, you have done your best for it. Do not do any more. We are much obliged to you; you see your strength," &c. &c. Mr. Carles said to Mr. W. Ryland, and two other Dissenters who were following him in the street, on the fifteenth, that they must not come after him, for as they were known to be Dissenters, it would only irritate the mob, and make them more violent; but when he came to the inn where Mr. Carles had promised to meet him, he found the door shut against him.

That other persons besides the magistrates and the clergy were favourable to the rioters, and approved of much of what they did, appeared from several circumstances. On the fifteenth, about noon, Mr. J. Green said, " We are satisfied with what is done, and now I wish they would give over, for they have done enough." On the same day the gentleman in the green coat, one instance of whose conduct has been mentioned before, being at the house of Mr. Ryland, pulled off his hat, and huzzaed to the rioters, saying, " Gentlemen, I applaud you for what you have done, but stop here. This is private property. Though these are the men who wish to overturn the constitution, we have other means of redress."

“ redrefs.” The mob, however, continued to destroy the house.

At Sparkbrook turnpike three gentlemen being on horseback, were conversing very familiarly with the rioters, while my house was burning; when one of them said aloud, “ My lads, you see your power; “ you see that if any attempt is made against the “ government of this country, you have it in your “ power to quash it.”

That some persons above the condition of the common rioters were deeply concerned in the business, appeared from many circumstances, besides those that are mentioned in my Appeal. The forged letter, which was read at my house, in order to instigate the mob to do me mischief, is alone a proof of this, and a copy of it will appear in my Appendix, No. V. When I was at Warwick, at the time of the assizes, I received a summons from our opponents, the hand writing of which could not be distinguished from that of this forged letter. I have no doubt myself who the writer of this forged letter was, though no legal proof can be given of it.

Another forged letter was read at Mr. Ruffell’s house, a copy of which could not be procured, but the following account of it is given upon oath. Two men were on horseback while the house was burning,

ing, and one of them read a paper, which he declared he had found in the house, purporting that “ the Presbyterians intended to rise, to burn down “ the church, blow up the parliament, cut off the “ king’s head, and abolish all taxes.” The paper was signed *E. Jeffries*, No. 24, *St. Thomas’s Street, London*. The 16th of August, they said was the time fixed for the insurrection. The person who read the paper said, “ Damn it, you see they “ would destroy us. It is right that we should “ crush them in time.”

They had also another letter, which one of the persons present said was to know how many forces Mr. Ruffel could collect by the tenth, and that they should be ready to join in concert with their friends in Scotland. This letter was said to be signed by the steward of the Revolution society. He that had this letter said, “ Damn them, we will destroy “ every Presbyterian’s house in England.” A stranger, who was present, saying that some of the rioters would be hanged for what they were doing, one of them answered, “ How can they hang us, “ when the justices set us agait?” Being asked what justices, he said, “ Master Carles and Master “ Spencer, and I must do the justices’ work, and by “ God I will go to the pay table to night, for I “ have worked damned hard. Wont you, Tom?” Tom answered, “ And by God will I.” The per-

son who read one of these forged letters was so described as to be well known in Birmingham.

The following circumstances also shew that there were promoters of the riot among persons of better condition, and that they disguised themselves for the purpose. While the New Meeting was destroying, a person was there who had the appearance of a gentleman, his linen being fine, and with ruffles tucked up. He was very anxious to have the meeting-house consumed, and stood two hours viewing it. The same person was seen at Mr. Ruffell's, but differently dressed, and on horseback.

After the rioters had entered the Old Meeting, a person was seen in the gallery, who had the appearance of a gentleman, but who endeavoured to disguise himself with a great coat, the cape of which he buttoned up as high as he could, and his hat was brought down very low. Three or four persons came up to him, and conversed with him in whispers. One of the rioters, knowing the witness, aimed a blow at him, so that he left them.

At Moseley Hall also a person was seen above the lower class with a riding coat buttoned up to his chin, and which covered a great part of his head and face. He went about in a deliberate manner, giving orders, which were obeyed. There were several persons

sons dressed like gentlemen at Mr. Humphrys's, but especially at Mr. Russell's, encouraging the rioters, laughing at them, and saying they served the Presbyterians right, for they deserved it. The last circumstance that I shall mention with this view is, that a lady, in a mixed company, unwarily said, "I very often laugh to think what a figure our three dons would cut, one in a waggoner's frock, another with his face blacked, and the other with his hair cropped." But a hint being given that a Dissenter was in the company, she proceeded no farther.

SECTION VIII.

Circumstances subsequent to the Riot.

HAVING considered what passed previous to the riot, and during the continuance of it, as a proof that it originated in the bigotry of the High Church people against the Dissenters, I proceed to what passed subsequent to it; and it will sufficiently appear that the same malignant spirit continued to actuate many persons in Birmingham, in its vicinity, and indeed through the whole kingdom; so that the news of it was far from being so displeasing as it ought to have been.

The conduct of the magistrates, which has been shown to have been so criminally remiss, to speak in

the most favourable manner, could not but have been known to the generality of the people of Birmingham, and yet at a public town's meeting, "certainly," says Mr. Burn, p. 80, "one of the most numerous, unanimous, and" as he adds, "respectable, ever convened at Birmingham, called for the express purpose of thanking our magistrates, there did not appear any one fact that would justify them in withholding their warmest acknowledgments from those gentlemen."

That any public meeting should be called to thank persons whose conduct was so culpable, as that of Mr. Carles and Dr. Spencer, involved all concerned in that meeting (though I believe a small part of the inhabitants of Birmingham) provided they were acquainted with the circumstances above mentioned, in the guilt of the riot. Mr. Burn himself, by joining in this approbation, voluntarily takes his share in this guilt; and I should not otherwise have thought of charging him with it.

A proof of bigotry, and of an approbation of the riot, similar to that which is implied in the thanks to the magistrates, is the reward that was given to Mr. Brooke, in making him sole solicitor to the hundred. To this lucrative office he was recommended by lord Alesford, "for the zeal that he had shewn in the cause of the Church and King." A club has since been formed in Birmingham, intitled,

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The Church and King Club, of which Mr. Brooke is secretary.

Mr. Burn would insinuate, p. 67, that my conduct, in criminating the High Church party in Birmingham, is condemned by those Dissenters who in a public advertisement thanked those members of the establishment who had exerted themselves in their favour. As many of them certainly did so, those thanks were well deserved, and proper. “But from this,” Mr. Burn says, p. 68, “it sufficiently appears, that Dr. Priestley, in his insidious management of this business, acts as much in opposition to the avowed opinion of the respectable body of Dissenters in Birmingham, as he has done to the clearest dictates of candour and truth.” This, indeed, is true: because it does not yet appear that I have in any instance acted contrary to the dictates of candour and truth. I should myself have cheerfully concurred in that address of thanks, and I now acknowledge myself under much obligation to several members of the church of England for assisting in saving part of my property, and to Mr. Vale in particular, for materially assisting me in my escape. But how is this inconsistent with other members of the church of England being concerned in promoting the riot? Because some, or the majority of any class of men, are worthy persons, does it follow that others of them may not be even deserving of the gallows? Such, however, is the reasoning of
Mr.

Mr. Burn, and a specimen of the best of his reasoning in this pamphlet.

That there was a great willingness in some of the principal members of the church of England to criminate *me*, and thereby in some measure to justify the riot, appeared from many circumstances. The following look at least that way. Mr. Carles and Mr. Bond (a justice of peace sent down by government) went on Saturday, July 23, to Mr. Hawkes of the Grove, who had some of my books and papers, and demanded a sight of them. When they had examined many of them, they ordered him to send them to them the next day; but afterwards sent him word, that he did not need to do it.

But the same disposition appeared much more strongly by Mr. Curtis reading some of my MS. papers, and sending them, as he acknowledges himself, to the secretary of state; when seeing what I had already suffered, infinitely more than the sentence of the law, if I had even been convicted of sedition, he ought not to have looked into them. Or if he had, and had thought that they might tend to criminate *me*, he should have sent them to myself. Such conduct, though, as he was incapable of it, he may have no conception of the thing, would have been magnanimous, and have done him great honour.

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The secretary of state has been guilty of equal meanness and injustice in keeping those papers from me, whose property he knows them to be. He also knows, though Mr. Curtis was probably ignorant of it, that I am not answerable for what other persons may write to me; and surely I cannot be expected to be the wretch that would divulge any thing sent to me in confidence, to the writer's prejudice.

Though copies of these papers, which I understand are *letters*, written to me by an acquaintance, are circulated among the clergy, I do not find (and what I know of them is from the testimony of a friend, who was permitted to read them, but not to take a copy) that they contain any thing more than such free reflections on administration as perpetually occur in the public newspapers, and indeed such as it is allowable in Englishmen to write and to publish, whenever they think the conduct of ministers of state to be weak or criminal. I hereby call upon the person who detains these letters from me to make them as public as he pleases.

The gross calumnies against the Dissenters in general, and myself in particular, invented and circulated in justification of the riot, are another proof of the malignant spirit that prevailed in the town of Birmingham, and that was the proper cause of it. Of this kind must have been the report of my
dining

dining at the Hotel, haranguing the mob out of the window, and drinking *the king's head in a charger*. It is remarkable that this account, which must have been a malicious fabrication, was the first that was transmitted to London, in order to be inserted in the papers there; and the printer of *The Times* assured me, that it was sent to him by "a respectable person in the mercantile line in Birmingham."

It was currently reported of young Mr. Humphrys, that he had declared his wish "to wade up to the chin in churchmen's blood." This was confidently asserted by Mr. William Gem of New Street, Birmingham; and when he was charged with it, he acknowledged the fact, but said he was drunk when he said it. Mr. Humphrys's spirited advertisement in the public papers on the subject may be seen in my Appendix, No. VI.

Two calumnies of this complexion are retailed by Mr. Burn, p. 113; one that a Dissenter said, that "kings were expensive things in this country;" which, however, is certainly very true; but it was interpreted in the worst sense, or tending to sedition. The other was, that another Dissenter, being applied to to pay a church levy, said, "he should not pay many more." But both these stories were probably no better founded than that respecting Mr. Humphrys, or that of my dining at the Hotel and drinking

drinking the king's head in a charger. Mr. Witten was probably the person alluded to as having made the last of these declarations to Mr. Collins the collector. But when he applied to Mr. Burn, he refused to name his accuser, and Mr. Collins denied that Mr. Witten made use of the language ascribed to him, and that what he did say was only jocosely.

Mr. David Blair is understood to be the person alluded to as having said that kings were expensive; but though he also waited on Mr. Burn, he declined saying the conversation referred to him: so that in both these cases Mr. Burn himself must be considered as the inventor of the reports. The person who was probably Mr. Burn's informer, if he had any, was one who, passing by Mr. Blair on the 14th of July, called after him and said, "So you are going to the Hotel, I find;" and added, "I wish you were all blown up together;" to which nothing at all was replied by Mr. Blair.

What stronger proof can be given of this bigotry and malevolence, which appears to have been the proper cause of the riot, than its thus driving men to invent and propagate known falsehoods, in order to make the Dissenters odious? They who thus show that they wish to make the Dissenters appear the proper objects of the riot, may well be suspected of having fomented it.

The

The profane practice of drinking damnation and confusion to the Dissenters is another proof of a violent party spirit, and though instances of it may be unknown, as he says they are, to Mr. Burn, the charge is unquestionably true; and I have no doubt that the practice is still continued and increased. I myself perfectly remember a Dissenter relating to me a conversation he had with Mr. Carles, who said to him, and not long before the riot, "Though in my cups I do sometimes drink damnation to you, I would not hurt a hair of your heads." Whatever he might think at the moment, it appears that his good will, or rather his no ill will, to the Dissenters, did not continue long.

When I was at Warwick, at the late assizes, several persons in the Public Hall cried aloud, "Damn him, there is the cause of all the mischief;" and one man, an attorney in the place, followed me a great way in the public street, then pretty much crowded, and when I was accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Berington, Mr. Galton, and Mr. Keir, three as respectable men as the county can furnish, damning me in the most vociferous manner, and expressing his earnest wish that I had been burned in my house. A toast publicly given and drank with great festivity at the same time was, "May every revolution dinner be followed by a hot supper." What can be a clearer proof than this, that the
same

same spirit which prompted the riot still continues without any abatement, and, if not restrained, would soon produce another? There were serious apprehensions of one while I was at Warwick, and one of the judges, I was informed, was not a little alarmed on that account.

At Birmingham a member of the establishment lately complained to one of my congregation there, of being obliged, when in company, to drink *Church and King*, and damnation to the Presbyterians.

Mr. Burn calls what I have said of the clergy having been the first to calumniate the Dissenters, and to place the conduct of the mob in the most favourable light, p. 72, “ a gratuitous assertion, without even the pretence of evidence.” “ What evidence,” he says, p. 74, “ has Dr. Priestley to produce, that they have not done so,” viz. been the first to preach moderation.

That Mr. Madan preached a very proper sermon after the riot, I have been informed. It was becoming him as a christian minister. But this was not the case with Mr. Curtis. One of his constant hearers was so much offended at a discourse of his, delivered about the same time, that he declared that “ if he had been influenced by it, he “ must have been a ruffian.”

Among

Among other instances of bigotry, and probably that of some of the clergy at Birmingham, I have been informed that a brick, taken as hot as it could be well handled from the ruins of the new meeting-house, was carefully packed up, and sent to the author of several works, which sufficiently discover his high-church principles, and that on a paper which accompanied it, was the word ΑΔΗΛΟΣ, which, being in Greek, must have been written by a scholar, and therefore probably a clergyman of the place. I was further informed, that he was advised to send this brick to the archbishop of Canterbury. Whether he did so or not, I have not heard. Thus have the bigots exulted in the success of their enterprise. But the ruins of that building will plead against them with much more energy than all the sermons that could ever have been delivered in it, had it been left standing.

I had observed that the clergy should have offered us the use of their churches till our meeting-houses could have been rebuilt. On this Mr. Burn says, p. 75, 76, “ The offer of the churches to the Dis-
 “ fenters must have come after my letter to the in-
 “ habitants of Birmingham, and must have been
 “ offered as a compensation for injuries done to the
 “ Dissenters, whom they were conscious they never
 “ injured.” It cannot be denied, however, that

we were injured, and no doubt by churchmen; for they were not Dissenters who demolished the meeting-houses. And where would have been the impropriety of some members of the establishment repairing the injuries done to us by others? Would this have been any confession of their guilt? This is curious reasoning, indeed. However, the meeting-houses had been in ruins a week before my letter reached Birmingham. Had the idea then occurred to any member of the establishment? At that time I was far enough from having the least idea of any of the clergy promoting the riot, and therefore could not mean that they should do any thing as a compensation for injuries which they had done to us, and their compliance with my proposal would have tended more to exculpate them from any approbation of the riot than any thing else that could have been devised. That I had no very bad opinion of the clergy of Birmingham at the time of the riot, will be evident from a letter which I wrote, to be addressed to them the day after that to the inhabitants in general. I was, however, dissuaded by my friends from sending it to the printer, they being of opinion that it would not answer any good purpose: but I shall assert it in my Appendix, No. VII.

SECTION IX.

Observations on the Proceedings in the Courts of Judicature on Occasion of the Riot.

NOTHING, perhaps, shews a more general approbation of the riot, though the approvers were by no means the majority of the church people, than what passed relating to the trials which followed. Every possible difficulty was thrown in the way of procuring evidence against the rioters, and every thing was done to screen them from punishment. Also, all that men could do was done to prevent the sufferers from receiving the poor compensation which the law provided for them. It argued some consciousness of guilt, that it was considered as a great point gained by the High Church party when the House of Commons refused to make any inquiry into the cause of the riot, and when the ministry gave no encouragement to the prosecution of the magistrates, and other promoters of the riot. What have innocent persons to dread from the consequences of inquiry into their conduct? Let the reader attend to the following facts, and draw his own inferences from them.

A subscription was made to defray the expence of defending the rioters at the assizes. A letter was drawn up by some of the clergy of Birmingham, addressed to the judges on the circuit, begging them

to make a distinction between those of the rioters whose object was mere plunder, and those who acted from a pure but blind motive to serve their Church and King. One of the clergy, who mentioned this, said he admired the letter, and had signed it himself. Whether it was owing to this measure, or others of a similar tendency, it is a fact, that no persons have yet been punished merely for being concerned in the riot, but because they were the pests of society on other accounts. Consequently, nothing has been done to deter others from committing a riot on the same account.

Much pains were taken to make Mr. Job Harvey, the evidence against Hands, or Hammond, (who was condemned for firing the house of Mr. Ryland) say something favourable concerning him when he was re-examined before Mr. Bond; and though all that he could say was, that he had heard some of the persons present say, that he was pulling up the boards to let the rioters out from below, and his own proper evidence did not go so far, Hands was pardoned. Such were not the proceedings with respect to the riot in London.

Shuker, who had been condemned for firing Mr. Ryland's house, abused J. Elwall, who had been one of the witnesses against him, in a shocking manner, striking him on the head with his cryer's bell, demolishing

lifting his fruit-stall, &c. &c. by which he lost more than fifty shillings. When he applied for redress to Dr. Spencer and Mr. Carles, it was a long time before they would take his evidence, on the pretence of his not being able to produce a good character. When this was done, in the most satisfactory manner, the justices still would not sign any warrant against Shuker, but contented themselves with admonishing him not to insult Elwall any more, on which Shuker behaved in the most insolent manner, and continued to threaten him.

The same Elwall was also grossly insulted by one Davis, and others, on account of his evidence; being burned in effigy before his own door, and his family kept in a state of alarm several nights together; and he was not able to get any warrant from Mr. Carles, to whom he applied for protection. He also applied, but in vain, to Dr. Spencer, after Davis had threatened to murder him in a fortnight's time.

Though there is an act of parliament to indemnify those who suffer by riots, and though on other occasions it has been so construed as to afford real relief, such was the spirit that actuated our enemies, and so successfully did they exert themselves, that it has been ineffectual in our case. The law was the very same with respect to us and the Catholics in 1780; but the issue of the trials was very different. All the

the sufferers in London obtained ample redress, and the rioters were rigorously punished. Money was even issued from the treasury for the relief of the sufferers immediately, and long before they could have received any in the usual course of justice.

In the very same year in which the riot was at Birmingham, there was another at Sheffield, and Mr. Wilkinson, a clergyman, was a considerable sufferer. But at the same assizes in which we met with every difficulty that could be thrown in the way of our claims, and consequently received a very inadequate compensation, Mr. Wilkinson recovered the whole of his loss, and had even more offered him than he chose to accept; being, as he thought, more than the real amount of his loss. In his case, the hundred made no opposition to his claim, while in our case nothing was spared to defeat our application for redress.

Justice and equity evidently require that losses by riots should be most amply made good, because double and treble recompence in a pecuniary way cannot indemnify the sufferers; and because the great object of all civil government is protection from lawless violence. It was, no doubt, the intention of the law-makers to give ample compensation; but the act of parliament admitted of much latitude of interpretation, and in its literal construction was not calculated to give us relief. When

this was perceived, nothing was more reasonable than that the country at large should be taxed to supply the deficiency, and the inhabitants of the place, which had been disgraced by the riot, should have promoted an application to the legislature for our farther relief. But so far was this from being the case, that a committee was appointed by the hundred in which the riots took place, for the purpose of defending themselves against our claims; and they executed their trust so effectually, that they even put the hundred to considerable expence to do it. It is even supposed that, notwithstanding their success in this measure, by which they reduced our claims between one fourth and one third, the hundred will have little, if at all, less to pay than if our claims had been allowed in their full extent, and no opposition had been made to them.

I shall take this opportunity to state my own case, which was similar to that of all my fellow-sufferers.

My own wish, which I expressed to my friends, was to employ no lawyer in my cause, but simply to carry into the court a statement of what, to the best of my recollection, I had lost in the riot, and leave the country to make me whatever compensation they should think proper. In this method, however, I was told that it would be impossible for me to receive any compensation at all.

I therefore

I therefore consented to do what the other sufferers did upon the occasion, getting estimates of what I had lost by sworn appraisers, and other competent judges of the different articles; and the difficulty and irksomeness of doing *this*, especially in the multiplicity of articles in my particular case, my own recollection being uncommonly imperfect, is not to be described; without considering the *time* which it took up, which no stranger to the business will readily believe.

To save some time, trouble, and expence, I proposed to the Committee who acted for the hundred, by a clergyman, and a particular friend of mine, who was well acquainted with several of them, to request that appraisers on their side might meet appraisers on mine in London, and agree on the amount of the loss. But this reasonable request was refused. I, however, repeated it in as respectful a letter as I could write to the Committee a little before the trial, but with no better success; though in that letter I mentioned my former application, and assured them that all the appraisers had been instructed by me, as they would all bear witness, to charge too little, rather than too much, for every article; but that I would willingly abide by the opinion of their own appraisers. I also mentioned my original wish, to have employed no lawyer to plead for me, and my having declined to avail myself of the service of Mr. Erskine, or any

other able counsel that I should choose, which my friends proposed to be at the expence of; and that I should content myself with such counsel as the other sufferers would employ, and which usually attended that circuit. The judge, apprehensive of some disturbance on account of my cause, expressed his wish that it might be settled by arbitration. To this proposal I immediately signified my hearty consent, and my willingness to abide by the decision of the foreman of the jury, though a high churchman, and a person with whom I had no acquaintance. The judge, I was informed, was pleased with this, but it was not accepted by the opposite party. Consequently the cause took its regular course.

My books were estimated at 432l. 15s. 6d. my philosophical apparatus at 605l. 17s. my manuscripts at 370l. 15s. and my household goods, including whatever could be appraised by a common appraiser in my library and laboratory, as shelves, &c. &c. &c. 1277l. 6s. The whole was 2686l. 13s. 6d. But this was far from being the whole of my loss, or of the indemnification that I was entitled to receive, on the idea of being replaced as I had been before on the same spot, which, in equity, ought to have been the rule of proceeding in the case.

Nothing was charged for the carriage and package of such things as could only have been pro-

cured from London, or other distant places; which in my case could not have been less than 40l; nothing for damage to books not materially mutilated, or injured, but which will make the books that were preserved (about 2000) of less value, if ever they be sold, by, I should suppose, 50l. Nothing was charged for the recovery of goods dispersed by the rioters, which, to myself or my friends, could not, I think, have been less than 40l. Nothing was charged for *pamphlets*, which I think must have been worth 10l. While I was at Warwick I recollected articles in my laboratory, not mentioned in the inventory, worth about 20l. Now that I am resuming my experiments, I recollect many others as I find the want of them, and I expect to do so for some time to come. The amount of these I should conjecture to be about 20l. more. The lease of my house, which had risen much in value after I took it, was worth at the least 100l. If to this be added the expence attending my flight from Birmingham, my removal to London with my family, and the carriage of the goods I recovered, which would necessarily attend my settlement in a place so distant as London, which can hardly be estimated at less than 100l. the amount of the articles not charged in my estimate, will be 380l. and will make my whole loss to be 3066l. 13s. 6d.

In this estimate nothing was charged for my MSS. more than the money that would have been given

given for them by a bookfeller in case of my death. My sermons, for instance, were only charged half a guinea apiece, though the sermons of a living preacher ought, in equity, to be charged much higher. For I would observe on this occasion, that because the law can give no recompence for any injuries besides *money*, money is often given when the damage is by no means of a pecuniary nature; and there can be no reason why this should not have been done in my case.

When we were at Warwick, and found we had to encounter the most determined opposition of our enemies, who came prepared to litigate every article, and that the law itself, rigorously interpreted, as it would be, was not calculated to redress our wrongs, we all reduced our claims much below our first estimates*. Mine, including that for my house, which I had on lease, (estimated together with the loss of rent, appraisements, &c. &c. at 1426l. 3s. 3d. and which, though not properly mine, was by the rules of law claimed in my name) was reduced from 4492l. 16s. 9d. to 4112l. 16s. 9d.; and the verdict I obtained was 2502l. 18s.; of which I could not do better than allow my landlord 1000l. besides giving up my lease. Consequently, I was,

* Previous to this I had employed a person in Birmingham to estimate the household goods; and his estimate, which was considerably lower than that of the London appraisers, was brought into Court.

exclusively

exclusively of costs, really a loser, notwithstanding the verdict in my favour, 1563l. 15s. 6d.

The amount of my law expences at Birmingham, Warwick, and London, though the estimate of my books and instruments was made by persons who charged nothing for their trouble, was very near 850l. while the costs allowed was only 493l. so that in this article my loss was 357l. which makes the whole amount of my pecuniary loss to be 1920l. 15s. 6d. besides being driven into a less pleasing and much more expensive situation than I was in before. In this country then, the government of which is so much boasted of, it has not been my fate to receive either protection, or redress, and all my fellow-sufferers may say the same.

We do not complain of the intention of the law, or of the disposition of the judges, but of the unabated malice of our enemies, and the influence they had on the country in general. They spared no means to prevent our having any redress, and our sufferings were so far from softening them, and exciting any degree of compassion, that the greatest sufferers were exposed to the greatest insults. I hardly know an instance of any men deserving better of any town than Mr. Russell and Mr. Hutton, men of the most disinterested public spirit, and indefatigable in public business; and yet they were

the persons on whom the extreme of malice and gross abuse chiefly fell. But such, in all ages, and in all countries, has been the fate of great and active worth.

There was something particularly, and most unreasonably hard in the case of Mr. Hutton. Mr. Ruffell and myself were become obnoxious on account of our religious principles, and therefore, in the eye of bigotry, received only *the due reward of our deeds*; but, in this respect, Mr. Hutton *had done nothing amiss*. He suffered the extreme of injustice himself, for nothing but his unwearied endeavour to procure justice for others.

For the best use of great talents for public business, and of a higher kind than Mr. Hutton attended to, I have not yet known any man superior to Mr. Ruffell, hardly any that, in all respects, I think to be his equal; and the malice of his enemies is in full proportion to his talents and his virtues. With respect to damages in the court, he came off better than Mr. Hutton.

To return to this subject, our adversaries not content with the counsel that usually attended the circuit, at a great expence employed Mr. Hardinge, the Queen's solicitor, who to serve them neglected his duty as a judge on the Welch circuit, and who spared
nothing

nothing to inflame the court and the jury against us; quoting not only in my cause, but in those of the other sufferers, passages from my writings calculated to represent me as the pest of society, and unworthy of protection or of recompence. The first judge, Baron Thompson, endeavoured in vain to check his violence, and therefore Baron Eyre, it is thought, came down on purpose; but though he did it in the causes of the other sufferers, when my own cause came before the court he was permitted to declaim against me and my writings (of which he appeared to know nothing more than the extracts with which he had been furnished for the purpose of his abuse) without any restraint, though there was nothing properly before the court but the estimate of damages occasioned by the riot; and if I had been guilty of sedition, I ought to have been accused as such, and suffered the penalty of the law.

The legal proof of the articles of my loss was peculiarly difficult, from the nature and multiplicity of them; nothing of the kind having ever, as I believe, come before a court of judicature before. It was deemed necessary that I should prove my having been in possession of more than a thousand different articles, and at the time of the riot. One friend or other could have attested my having had most of the instruments, though not the chymical substances;

substances; but it was necessary they should all be present in court. Their certificates in writing (and for this purpose I came provided with them, in the hand-writing of Dr. Heberden and others, who at different times had made me presents of them) were rejected as no legal evidence; and when a number of articles in my laboratory were classed together, the opposite counsel diverted themselves and the court, exposing their own ignorance, just as so many Goths and Vandals would have done. My own leading counsel was as little qualified to defend me, being equally ignorant of philosophy, and declaring in court that he had not read any of my theological or political writings.

The judge, though no chymist, was willing to make allowance for the singular difficulty in my cause, as both the catalogue of my books, and the index of substances in the laboratory, were destroyed, together with the books and instruments; and had any regard been paid to his opinion, considerably more would have been awarded me. On what principle the jury proceeded is best known to themselves, but I believe that very little was allowed for my books, because many of them were destroyed in another hundred, whither they had been conveyed by my friends, though the destruction began at my own house, and they did not say what claim I had on the other hundred.

In

In general I thought the judge impartial in summing up the evidence ; but in some respects, considering the manifest disposition of the jury, it tended to give too much colour to their injustice. The catalogue of my library being destroyed, together with the library itself, I could only make out a list of the books that were wanting from my own recollection of them, my friends not being able to attest their knowledge of more than a few of them, such as they had occasionally seen or borrowed, though the number of the books lost was sufficiently ascertained. " This enumeration," said the judge, " coming from the plaintiff himself, and not proved by any witness, I was bound to reject evidence of that kind, and could not suffer it to be received." Mr. Payne, my witness, had set a value upon 440 other volumes, which were proved to be missing (though I could not myself pretend to recollect what they were) by supposing them to be of the same value, one with another, with books of the same size in what remained of the library. This, the judge said, was " no measure of value at all, as it was impossible so to estimate books ; and therefore he found himself bound to reject that evidence ;" adding, however, that " as the plaintiff could not have been supposed to have collected trash, the jury might, *if they thought proper*, make some addition to the sum, upon the ground of damage to the library." But, disposed as they evidently were, they were sure to allow nothing on this account.

I have heard of a judge deciding very differently in a case not much unlike this of mine.—A boy had been robbed of a seal which had contained some precious stone, of the nature and value of which the boy himself was wholly ignorant, being only able to produce the socket in which it had been set. The judge, however, observed, that the case should be interpreted *in damnum fraudatoris*; and he directed that the boy should receive the value of the finest diamond that would fill that socket, because the stone *might* have been of that value.

Mr. Hardinge also (whose virulent declamation the judge himself observed might, for any thing that appeared in court, be mere calumny) should not have been suffered to proceed as he did, since it could only tend to prejudice the minds of the jury against me, and indispose them to do justice. His abuse of me was exactly similar to that of Mr. Wedderburn's (now Lord Loughborough) on Dr. Franklin at the privy council, when the cause before the court related to the conduct of the governor of the province. It was a day of great triumph for the court party. But had they any reason to exult in it ten years from that time? As little reason may the *Church and King* party in this country have to exult in the riot at Birmingham, and the assizes at Warwick, ten years from that event.

I was

I was present at that memorable abuse of Dr. Franklin, being accompanied to the privy council by Mr. Burke: he smiled, and shook me by the hand, as he went out of the room; and the next morning he observed to me, that the things for which he had been so grossly insulted were, he believed, among the best actions of his life, and such as he should do again in the same circumstances. I can truly say the same with respect to every thing that has been most virulently urged against me.

On the whole, it is evident that, by whatever rule the jury at Warwick went, they allowed me little or nothing for my books, philosophical instruments, or manuscripts, as the sum that was awarded me would do little more than re-furnish the house as it was before. They refused to say what they allowed for the separate articles of my loss, except on account of *the house*, which I was under obligation to rebuild. For this, which was not mine, it was thought by some that the allowance was ample enough, being 957l. 18s.

This detail I thought necessary to go into, in order to explain the consequences of the riot, and the state of our laws, and of the actual administration of them in my case, that those who think it a proper object may provide a more effectual remedy for a similar evil in future time.

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I must

I must add, that though the mischief was done more than a year ago, I have not yet (Nov. 1, 1792) received any part of the compensation awarded me, and yet I have been obliged to advance the whole expence of the law-suit; so that, if any allowance be made for the interest of money, my pecuniary loss will be considerably greater than I have stated it to be. If I had not been assisted by my friends, I could not have prosecuted my right at all, and therefore must have gone without any redress. And so much trouble and expence have attended this business, that in case of any other misfortune of the same kind (from which I am far from considering myself as exempt) my present determination is to sit down with the loss, and not to trouble the country on the subject. The law, as now administered, may do all very well for churchmen, but I have found by experience that it is not calculated to protect Dissenters, as such, or to procure a redress of the wrongs done to *them*.

SECTION X.

Of the Approbation of the Riot, and the Extent of High Church Principles, which were the Cause of it, in other Parts of the Kingdom.

THE spirit of party, intimately connected with the approbation of the riot in Birmingham, is even now far from being confined to that town or neighbourhood, especially among the clergy. One of the most speaking and curious instances of this is the following. A clergyman, distinguished by his writings, requested another clergyman, who was going to Birmingham, to procure him a quantity of ashes from the ruins of the meeting in which I had preached; and the request was complied with. What an excellent *Protestant Dominic* would this clergyman make!

So far were the clergy from being moved to any thing like compassion by what I had suffered in the riot, that immediately after this their calumnies were doubled, and their cries for farther vengeance upon me became louder than ever. An instance of this is an extract from the Shrewsbury Chronicle, signed ΟΥΔΕΙΣ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΣ, which may be seen in the Appendix, No. VIII.

This virulent paper was, however, very ably answered by a person whose signature was *An enemy to intolerance and persecution*, though he avowed religious sentiments very different from mine.

Mr. Burn seems to doubt the truth of what I said of a clergyman calling our sufferings in an Aflize sermon *wholesome severity*. "Had he," he says, p. 73, "been a Birmingham clergyman, we have no doubt his name would have appeared." I do not see why I should be more backward, or more ready, to mention his name on this account. But the sermon is now published, though without the name of the author, which was Allen, who resides at or near Illford. The expression in the sermon as now printed is not the very same that was reported, but to the same purport. He was, however, properly reprimanded for what he delivered by the judge and the counsel afterwards.

That the same spirit which prompted the riot in Birmingham pervaded very distant parts of the country, the following is a curious instance. During the riot at Birmingham some officers were in conversation at Dulot's library at Brighthelmstone, when one of them was overheard to say (on its being suggested that it was probable his regiment would be sent to Birmingham to quell the rioters) that he hoped if his men were sent thither
that

that they would not hurt a hair of any of the rioters heads.

Another officer (supposed to be of the guards) was heard to declare at Crawford's library at Bright-helmstone, that it was to be lamented that Dr. Priestley had escaped; and that, if he had been at Birmingham, he would have gone through the fire, at the hazard of *losing a limb*, but that the Doctor should have lost his life. I am persuaded, however, that the disposition of those particular persons is far from being that of the generality of British officers: they have, I trust, better notions of the British constitution, and of that British liberty which they are appointed to defend.

The idea that was generally, and most assiduously, propagated concerning me, and the tendency of my writings, by those of whom the best that can be said is, that they knew nothing of either, may be conceived from an *epitaph* that was written for me, as was supposed, by some person at Exeter, and which, for the amusement of my readers, I shall insert in the Appendix, No. IX.

The person who transmitted this curious piece to a friend of mine adds, " The virulence of the above
" is nearly equalled, if not surpassed, by what I
" have been informed are the sentiments very fre-
" quently uttered by the dissipated and the profane

“ bigots of Bristol, and in all parts of the king-
 “ dom, viz. for the first sentiment at table, *Damna-*
 “ *tion to Dr. Priestley, and success to the Birmingham*
 “ *mob, or Damnation to Dr. Priestley, and destruction*
 “ *to his writings.*”

Hereafter it will perhaps not be believed that such barefaced misrepresentation and calumny, so entirely void of all foundation, could be published in a country in which the means of better information almost obtrudes itself. Such pains, however, has been taken to represent me as an infidel with respect to religion, and a most pestilent member of society, that I doubt not a great majority of the people of this country actually consider me in that light, the avowed enemy of God and man. But this will not be thought extraordinary when it is considered how great a proportion of the information of Englishmen is derived from the public newspapers, and how many of them have abounded with paragraphs exhibiting me in this light from some time before the riot, and to this day. I am tempted to give a specimen of this which fell into my hands by accident, and I presume it is only of a piece with hundreds of others; but I reserve it for the Appendix, No. X.

That some persons must make it the interest of the proprietors of the newspapers to procure, and insert, such articles might be concluded à priori.

But

But an acquaintance of mine, being desired to settle a difference between two of these proprietors, saw a list of names of persons to be abused, and among them was mine. Of what class of newspapers this was I need not say.

Such an unfair advantage, taken to prejudice the minds of the people against particular persons or parties, is a circumstance that calls loudly for public inquiry, and punishment, by the representatives of the nation, who ought, as far as possible, to provide for the protection of the character, as well as the property, of every individual of the society.

The latter part of this paper relates to an impudent falsehood that has been much circulated, though it reflects disgrace upon the late Dr. Johnson, and not upon me, viz. that when I was at Oxford, he left a company on my being introduced to it. In fact, we never were at Oxford at the same time, and the only interview I ever had with him was at Mr. Paradise's, where we dined together at his own request. He was particularly civil to me, and promised to call upon me the next time he should go through Birmingham. He behaved with the same civility to Dr. Price, when they supped together at Dr. Adams's, at Oxford. Several circumstances shew that Dr. Johnson had not so much of bigotry at the decline of life, as had distinguished him before, on which account it is well known to all our

common acquaintance, that I declined all their pressing solicitations to be introduced to him. It were to be wished that the church of England would resemble Dr. Johnson in growing milder and more tolerant in its old age; but, on the contrary, like most other aged persons, she seems to grow more peevish and obstinate.

I do not know, however, whether, on the whole, the general prevalence of the High Church party in this country is more clearly manifested than by its having pervaded societies of *philosophers*, with whom, in that capacity, I certainly did not stand ill.

I observed in my *Appeal*, that the only society, not professedly formed on the principle of civil or religious liberty, that had addressed me on occasion of the riot, was the philosophical society at Derby, whose Address I inserted in my Appendix. It still stands a single instance of the kind. Mr. Rose, a clergyman, and member of that society, was, however, so much offended at it, that, without the knowledge of the society, he published an account of the manner in which it had been done, calculated to defeat the effect of it. The other members of that society had the spirit to resent it properly, and to exclude him from the society. I shall insert his *Advertisement*, and the *Answer of the society*, in my Appendix, No. XI. and XII.

The philosophical society at Manchester had not the same liberality. Though they had not only done me the honour to make me one of their members, but had presented me with fifty pounds to assist me in defraying the expence of my experiments; yet when it was proposed to address me on the destruction of my laboratory, and it was proposed that nothing should be contained in the Address that should imply any approbation of my civil or religious principles, the motion was negatived by a considerable majority.

One of the reasons alledged at Manchester against the proposed Address was, that none had been sent to me from the *Royal Society*. Many persons have expressed their surprize that I had no letter of condolence, or even pecuniary assistance, from that body, to which I hope I have been no disgrace. I have even been insulted by the High Church party on this account. Had it been a clergyman of the church of England who had been a member of that body, and whose laboratory had been destroyed by rioters, whether his labours had contributed any thing or nothing to the stock of philosophical knowledge, his case, I doubt not, would have been considered by the opulent members of the society, or the patron of it. But I was too well acquainted with the political principles of that society to expect any thing of the kind in *my* favour. Had I been a second Newton, and what I am, and cannot help be-

ing,

ing in other respects, viz. an Unitarian Dissenter, my expectations from that quarter would not have been higher.

I had sufficient evidence of this in the rejection of Mr. Cooper, though originally recommended by Mr. Kirwan, Dr. Crawford, Mr. Watson, and Mr. Watt, as well as myself. As Mr. Cooper's general abilities appear by his publications to be of the highest order*, and his acquaintance with philosophy and chemistry was well known, it was evident that his rejection could not have been owing to any thing but his religious or political principles, with which a philosophical society had no concern. So confident was I of the merit of Mr. Cooper, and of the sufficiency of his recommendation, not by *gentlemen members*, but by scientific persons, that I had not entertained the least doubt of his election, and was never more surprised than when I heard that it did not take place.

Thinking that a philosophical society might, on reconsideration, repent of having rejected a man so recommended to them, Mr. Cooper's friends thought it right to propose him a second time; and to the former signatures of his certificate the following were added, viz. Mr. Boulton, Mr. Wedgwood, and Sir G. Staunton; and as it had been

* See his *volume of Tracts*; his *Essays* in the *Memoirs of the Manchester Philosophical and Literary Society*; and his *Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective*.

objected

objected before, that the members of the society in Manchester, where he resided, had not signed his certificate, they now all joined in it, viz. Mr. Bayley, Dr. Percival, Dr. White, and Mr. Henry. Notwithstanding these additional signatures, when the day of balloting came, he was rejected by a much greater majority than before.

The ten who signed Mr. Cooper's certificate (without arrogating any thing to myself, who first proposed it to him) are unquestionably among the first in the list of members for reputation as philosophers; and if about as many more were added to them, the rest are, I do not say improper members, but such as the philosophical part of the world has not yet heard much of. When this is considered, and that Mr. Keir, and other truly effective and distinguished members of the society, would have signed Mr. Cooper's certificate if they could have said, that they had *personal knowledge* of him (which the rules of the society require) I do not feel myself disgraced for having recommended him; nor does he for being rejected.

It has since been objected to Mr. Cooper, that he is concerned in a manufactory; but when he was first proposed, his profession was that of a barrister at law, though his pursuits were then chiefly literary and philosophical. Having sufficient leisure, his knowledge of chemistry induced him to join in a bleaching
manufactory

manufactory on the new principles. On the whole, I cannot help considering the rejection of Mr. Cooper, recommended as he was, by the Royal Society as a most decisive proof of the influence of High Church principles in this country on a body of men who might be expected to be the most liberal. Mr. Cooper, though originally educated at Oxford, now classes with Unitarian Dissenters: he has given noble proofs of his public principles, and his public spirit, and he has been stigmatized by Mr. Burke.

It were to be wished that the Royal Society would make some more explicit declaration of the proper qualifications of their members. Some time ago an excellent naturalist, Mr. Raspe, was expelled for breaking the eighth commandment, of which it was not known before that the members of the Royal Society were the guardians. This would not, however, have been perhaps so much amiss, if the fact had been proved: but the expulsion had too much the appearance of a royal mandate. Who can tell but that other members may be proposed to be expelled for breaking the seventh, or even the tenth commandment? Mr. Cooper's moral character, however, is irreproachable; so that his disqualification must be of another kind. At least he cannot be charged with a breach of the first commandment.

In these remarks on the Royal Society I mean no reflection on any particular member, and least of all

all on the president, who in several important respects fills his station in a manner highly honourable to the society and to himself. This is an opinion that I always maintained, when several of my particular friends thought differently. If the society must be both philosophical and royal, I do not know where we could find a more proper president.

I am happy to be able, by the assistance of my friends, to have in some measure replaced my apparatus, and I am now resuming my experiments. I have, indeed, lost more than a whole year, besides, in some respects, the result of the labour of several years; but while I live, I shall continue my experiments as I have formerly done; and if any thing worth the notice of the public should occur to me, I shall communicate it through the channel of the Royal Society, provided they will receive my papers. I shall not quarrel with the institution on account of the present administration of its affairs. The times may change, and that circumstance may change with them.

In this almost universal prevalence of a spirit so extremely hostile to me and my friends, and which would be gratified by my destruction, it cannot be any matter of surprize, that a son of mine should wish to abandon a country in which his father has been used as I have been, especially when it is considered
that

that this son was present at the riot in Birmingham, exerting himself all the dreadful night of the 14th of July, to save what he could of my most valuable property; that in consequence of this his life was in imminent danger, and another young man was nearly killed because he was mistaken for him. This would probably have been his fate, if a friend had not almost perforce kept him concealed some days, so that neither myself nor his mother knew what was become of him. I had not, however, the ambition to court the honour that has been shewn him by the national assembly of France, and even declined the proposal of his naturalization. At the most, I supposed it would have been done without any *eclat*; and I knew nothing of its being done in so very honourable a way till I saw the account in the public newspapers. To whatever country this son of mine shall choose to attach himself, I trust that, from the good principles, and the spirit, that he has hitherto shewn, he will discharge the duties of a good citizen.

As to myself, I cannot be supposed to feel much attachment to a country in which I have neither found protection, nor redress. But I am too old, and my habits too fixed, to remove, as I own I should otherwise have been disposed to do, to France, or America. The little that I am capable of doing must be in England, where I shall therefore continue, as
long

long as it should please the supreme Disposer of all things to permit me*.

It might have been thought that, having written so much in defence of revelation, and of Christianity in general, more perhaps than all the clergy of the church of England now living; this defence of a *common cause* would have been received as some atonement for my demerits in writing against civil establishments of Christianity, and particular doctrines. But had I been an open enemy of all religion, the animosity against me could not have been greater than it is. Neither Mr. Hume nor Mr. Gibbon was a thousandth part so obnoxious to the clergy as I am; so little respect have my enemies for Christianity itself, compared with what they have for their emoluments from it.

As to my supposed hostility to the principles of the civil constitution of this country, there has been no pretence whatever for charging me with any thing of the kind. Besides that the very catalogue of my publications will prove that my life has been devoted to literature, and chiefly to natural philosophy and theology, which have not left me any leisure for factious politics; in the few things that I

* Since this was written, I have myself, without any solicitation on my part, been made a citizen of France, and moreover elected a member of the present Conventional Assembly. These, I scruple not to avow, I consider as the greatest of honours; though, for the reasons which are now made public, I have declined accepting the latter.

have written of a political nature, I have been an avowed advocate for our mixed government by *King, Lords, and Commons*; but because I have objected to the ecclesiastical part of it, and to particular religious tenets, I have been industriously represented as openly seditious, and endeavouring the overthrow of every thing that is *fixed*, the enemy of all order, and of all government.

Every publication which bears my name is in favour of our present form of government. But if I had not thought so highly of it, and had seen reason for preferring a more republican form, and had openly advanced that opinion; I do not know that the proposing to free discussion a system of government different from that of England, even to Englishmen, is any crime, according to the existing laws of this country. It has always been thought, at least, that our constitution authorises the free proposal, and discussion, of all theoretical principles whatever, political ones not excepted. And though I might now recommend a very different form of government to a people who had no previous prejudices or habits, the case is very different with respect to one that *has*; and it is the duty of every good citizen to maintain that government of any country which the majority of its inhabitants approve, whether he himself should otherwise prefer it, or not.

This, however, is all that can in reason be required of any man. To demand more would be as absurd as to oblige every man, by the law of marriage, to maintain that his particular wife was absolutely the handsomest, and best tempered woman in the world; whereas it is surely sufficient if a man behave well to his wife, and discharge the duties of a good husband.

A very great majority of Englishmen, I am well persuaded, are friends to what are called *high maxims of government*. They would choose to have the power of the crown rather enlarged than reduced, and would rather see all the Dissenters banished than any reformation made in the church. A dread of every thing tending to *republicanism* is manifestly increased of late years, and is likely to increase still more. The very term is become one of the most opprobrious in the English language. The clergy (whose near alliance with the court, and the present royal family, after having been almost a century hostile to them, is a remarkable event in the present reign) have contributed not a little to that leaning to arbitrary power in the crown which has lately been growing upon us. They preach up the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance with as little disguise as their ancestors did in the reigns of the Stuarts, and their adulation of the king and of the minister is abject in the extreme. Both

Appeal discover the same spirit; and any sentiment in favour of liberty that is at all bold and manly, such as, till of late, was deemed becoming Englishmen, and the disciples of Mr. Locke, is now reprobated as seditious.

In these circumstances, it would be nothing less than madness seriously to attempt a change in the constitution, and I hope I am not absolutely insane. I sincerely wish my countrymen, as part of the human race (though, I own, I now feel no particular attachment to them on any other ground) the undisturbed enjoyment of that form of government which they so evidently approve; and as I have no favour to ask of them, or of their governors, besides mere protection, as to a stranger, while I violate no known law, and have not this to ask for any long term, I hope it will be granted me. If not, I must, like many others, in all ages and all nations, submit to whatever the supreme Being, whose eye is upon us all, and who I believe intends, and will in his own time bring about, the good of all, shall appoint, and by their means execute.

Mr.

Mr. Russell's Letter to Dr. Priestley.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE somewhere read that to argue with a person while he is in a passion, is just as wise as to hold a lanthorn to a blind man. The opponents of myself and of my patriotic companions, on the 14th of July 1791, have evidently been under the most unreasonable phrensy that ever disgraced this nation; and had we been willing to feed it by returning the abuse and calumny that was so outrageously poured upon us, we might have retorted long ago. But as our appeal is to the calmer passions, it appeared necessary to wait till the season of fury was over, and we could hope that the still small voice of truth would be listened to. However the time for a full reply to Mr. Burn's most extraordinary performance is, in my opinion, now come, and I fear any farther delay will be an injury to the cause for which we are suffering. I rejoice therefore to hear that you are preparing a second part of your Appeal, not doubting but that this insidious publication will have a full share of your notice, and be exposed as it deserves.

This leads me, as a friend to society, to lament, and I do it very sincerely, that any of the clergy should think abuse of the Dissenters is now the road to preferment, and that so many concurrent circumstances should almost compel others to think so too. However, while we pity those whose minds are thus debased, and who can disgrace the talents that they possess by such an unworthy prostitution, the duty we owe to ourselves and to the community, calls upon us to guard against the consequences, by detecting their misrepresentations and exposing their falsehoods.

I presume you will recollect the satisfaction both of us received some years ago when Mr. Burn first met us on the library committee, and I well remember the pleasure you expressed in the hope that he would prove an agreeable acquaintance. Little did I then imagine he could prove the virulent enemy to us both, which his Reply to your Appeal shows him to be. As to myself, though I have very frequently been in company with him since that period, I never received, or apprehended, the least incivility from him before the publication of this last pamphlet, in which I see with concern and surprise that I am made the subject of some of those malevolent sarcasms by which the book is distinguished. I cannot therefore but be anxious to engage your notice of them, and to have you informed of what I have to say in reply; and as I am in possession of a variety

of information relating to the subject of the riots, and connected with his book, I will detail some of it to you, that you may give the public such part as you think worth notice.

I have often been at a loss to account for the wide extension of the extravagant spirit of declamation and outrage upon the occasion under which we are suffering, and am surpris'd that Mr. Burn should so readily come forward to join in it, because I was inform'd that he thought well of the French revolution in the early stages of it. Surely then he should have shewn some consideration for those who still hold his former opinions, as it is possible they may not have the same reasons for abandoning them which have operated upon him. Much do I wish that he had attended to this, and to his character as a minister of peace, which ought to have prevented him from becoming an advocate in a scene of party discord, and a partizan in a business which has not only interrupted the safety and harmony of society, but disgrac'd the community in which it was transacted. However, as he has thought fit to become the champion of bigotry and the Don Quixote of the High Church party, and I think his motives cannot be mistaken, I sincerely hope he will not be suffer'd to triumph in his knight errant expedition.

The first part of his Reply, which I feel myself

particularly called upon to notice, relates to the advertisement respecting the hand-bill, which he and his friends have endeavoured to represent as one cause of the riots that followed, but which I verily believe would have no more contributed to them than the letter I am now writing to you, had it not been industriously circulated by them, and thereby rendered subservient to their own purpose of creating a disturbance. That hand-bill Mr. Burn tells us was sent to the minister by the magistrates. What more then was necessary for them, or for any one else of the party at Birmingham, to do with respect to it? and if nothing uncommon was meditated, why call out the clergy upon the occasion? Surely the advertisement which followed, offering the 100l. reward, would have been deemed sufficient without their interfering, or without any other signature than those of the magistrates. But I knew on Wednesday the 13th of July, that several others were added: for as I was riding into town on that evening, I accidentally met Mr. Charles on horseback, who immediately stopped, and addressed me as usual, in a very friendly manner, acquainting me with the advertisement which had been agreed upon, telling me that 100l. reward was offered to any one that would discover the author of the hand-bill, and adding that he had heard we denied any knowledge of, or connection with, the author, and that as he considered me as the ostensible

sible person for the party I belonged to, he had been much inclined to send the advertisement to me, that I might add my signature, but that upon second thoughts he had declined doing it, from motives of delicacy, not knowing how I might feel such an application.

For this friendly attention I made my acknowledgments, and added, that I thought myself obliged by his delicacy, but could assure him that I knew no more of the author than he did, nor had I the smallest suspicion who it was, and therefore sincerely wished he had sent me the paper, as I should have signed it without hesitation. To this he replied, that he was glad to hear me say so, and wished he had sent the advertisement, for he was sure I was his friend, and, let what would come, he would not hurt the hair of the head of myself or any of the sect I belonged to. This led me to say that possibly it might not be too late for me to add my name even then, and that if he approved it, and would give me leave, I would send Mr. Swinney orders to affix my name to the advertisement, and I would cheerfully pay my proportion towards the expence, should the offer be successful, and the 100l. paid in consequence of it. To this he freely assented, and added, that he wished I would, for I was his friend, I had been his friend, and, let what would happen, he would not hurt a hair of my head, no, he would not hurt a hair of my head, or of any of the sect that I belonged to.

The tone in which these words were repeated, and the attitude in which he rode, whilst repeating them, shewed me that he had been drinking, and (as usual) gone something beyond the bounds of temperance. But as he appeared very capable of riding home, I left him, not being at that time impressed with the same idea of the significance of these remarkable words that I have been since.

After reflecting on what had passed, and the condition of the person with whom I had the conversation, I was in doubt whether sending my name to the printer would not be deemed an intrusion by the other Gentlemen who had signed the advertisement. In consequence of this, as you will no doubt recollect, I called at Fair Hill, and consulted you as a friend, when you admitted the reasons I had to hesitate, but, upon the whole, thought with me, that it would be best for me to send my name, which I accordingly did by a note to Mr. Swinney, telling him that, in consequence of a conversation with Mr. Carles that evening, since the advertisement relating to the hand-bill was sent, I had been invited by him to add my name to it, that I had given my assent, and accordingly requested and authorised him to add it to the others already given in. Mr. Swinney's return to this note was a printed newspaper, which I received soon after nine o'clock, and which proved to me that he was much forwarder with the impression of his paper than I had

had any apprehension of; and also that the opportunity I thought myself in possession of was passed.

This circumstance, however, leads me to remark, that I gave an incontrovertible and renewed proof of my disposition as to the author of the hand-bill; and it also makes it very evident that some scheme had that day been talked of, and that the repeated declarations, that not a hair of our heads should be hurt, was the consequence of it*. These words have very frequently and forcibly occurred to me since the riots happened, and I have had an opportunity of observing the direction in which the proceedings were conducted. It is now well known to me that a meeting had then been previously held at the house of a "*Church and King*" partizan for the purpose of considering how to punish these "*damn'd presbyterians.*" These were his own words. It is well known to me that the rioters very frequently and publicly declared, that they had the justices' protection. It is also well known to me, to yourself, and to many others, that they had a regular list of the devoted houses. Nay, much more than this is known to me and others, though not yet made known to the public; but I trust it will in due time, and that it will appear to every one, that the Dissenters, so far from being such factious, turbulent, and

* An association for burning our houses and places of worship might admit of a condition that our persons should be safe.

restless characters as they have of late so frequently been represented, have acted with a degree of forbearance and patience unparal- leled in any similar instance. You well know it has not been for want of evidence that prosecutions have not been commenced, but because the Dissenters committed their cause to government, and expected redress from thence.

The next insinuation of Mr. Burn which I am concerned to notice is, that respecting the offer the Dissenters published of a reward of 100l. to any person who should discover the author of the hand-bill. This, he sneeringly observes, was not advertised, but was “*confined to a few corners of the streets in the town.*” Here again I must lament his want of candour or veracity, for his assertion is untrue. This offer was not confined to a few corners of the streets; it was printed with a type of the largest size, and upon paper in proportion; and particular directions were given that it should be pasted up in every part of the town where the proclamation, which offered the same reward, was put up. Nay more than this, it was also pasted up in the public streets at Worcester and Warwick, with the concurrence of the solicitor to the treasury, as soon as the assizes commenced. It is true that some insidious wretches very frequently pulled down these papers in Birmingham, as they did the king’s proclamation, which offered 100l. to any one that would discover

cover

cover the authors and abettors of the riots. But that does not prove that either the one or the other had not been put up publicly, and very generally too.

I proceed now to the invidious charge in p. 54 and 55, aimed at myself through the means of Mr. Dadley, the master of the hotel. And here again it is necessary to expose Mr. Burn's want of attention, or else his wilful exaggeration of facts. In giving his pretended extract from my letter, he says, p. 54, " Mr. Dadley, it seems, recommended that " the dinner might be had as was intended—he was " sure there was no danger of tumult, provided the " gentlemen broke up early; and, on this representa- " tion, orders were given to the printer to suppress " the hand-bill, and Mr. Dadley's measure was " adopted."—Now, if you turn to my letter in the appendix of his own book, you may see that the words " and on this representation" are not in my letter, as he has quoted them; nor do I call it Mr. Dadley's measure. Surely after such wanton, unprovoked attacks upon private characters as his illiberal pages exhibit, he should have had a little more regard to circumspection. Mr. Dadley's "*solemn deposition*," for such Mr. Burn calls it, and such he would have the world suppose it to be (though it does not appear to me to have been made before any person authorised to take it), is contradicted by the testimony of every individual who was present at the conversation it alludes to; and I am fully persuaded that

Mr,

Mr. Dadley would not have interfered on the occasion at all, had he not been solicited by some of the leaders of the High Church party. To such miserable subterfuges and meannesses does party spirit carry men whom, in every other character, I can respect and esteem. Mr. Dadley has suffered so much that I pity him; and I have cheerfully joined with my patriotic compeers in giving him solid proof of it. But I shall not, in return, put him upon maligning others, or exposing himself by becoming the tool of a party, which it must be allowed is extremely ungenerous to require of a man in his situation of life. Against his single testimony I now place that of the three gentlemen present, who on the 1st of May last wrote to me the following note:

“ DEAR SIR,

“ Mr. Burn having introduced into his Reply to
 “ Dr. Priestley's Appeal Mr. Dadley's account of a
 “ conversation which he says took place on the
 “ morning of the 14th of July, with a view to in-
 “ validate your account of the transactions of that
 “ day, we think it right to declare that the repre-
 “ sentation there given is not a just one of what
 “ passed between us.—Mr. Dadley was expressly
 “ desired to tell us if he had the same reason to ap-
 “ prehend a disturbance as when we saw him on
 “ the Monday evening, to which he replied, that
 “ he had not, and that he then had no fear respecting
 “ it,

“ it, as he had heard nothing further about it. We
“ are fully persuaded that you could not have, in
“ giving your account, the most distant idea of
“ fixing any odium upon Mr. Dadley, or intending
“ to make him a party in the dinner. Mr. Dad-
“ ley was never considered as any way more con-
“ cerned in the transactions of that day, than when
“ he was preparing any other public dinner for the
“ various meetings held at his house.

“ We are, very respectfully,

“ Dear Sir,

“ Your much obliged and obedient servants,

Birmingham,
May 1st, 1792.

WILLIAM HUNT,
HARRY HUNT,
JOHN LAWRENCE.”

To this let me add, that I wish to ask Mr. Burn, How long it has been the business of the clergy of Birmingham to watch over the concerns of the publicans there? If I have traduced, injured, or offended Mr. Dadley, pray what have Mr. Burn and his associated brethren of the cloth to do with it? If any explanation was necessary between Mr. Dadley and myself, it surely might have been easily settled without this public, and I must say impertinent attempt to calumniate me, which, though more malevolent than his insinuations of modesty and diffidence, is not less so than his insidious attempt to represent the dinner as the cause of the riots. To his sneer about modesty and diffidence I reply, that an honest

honest man who has no other object than the public good, ought not to feel the diffidence of those who have venal purposes, selfish ends, or party views, in their public attendances. It is, however, entirely owing to an infirmity in my hearing, that I am not only obliged to place myself near the chair at public meetings, but to keep there, if I would contribute my mite towards promoting the general good. And that I have uniformly been governed by that object, and by that alone, in all my numerous and almost unceasing attendances upon public business, I now dare to aver, even in the face of the phrensy and intemperance with which myself and my friends are pursued.

Thus much for the impertinent attempt to represent me as assuming more than is becoming me. I will frankly confess, the character contained in another of his sarcastic sneers, gratifies me very highly, that of your "*zealous friend*." To be called the friend of Dr. Priestley, and to enjoy an intimacy with him, is an honour that I prize beyond estimation. And I rejoice in that zeal and activity to which this intimacy has led me, because it has ever been founded in benevolence, and had public usefulness for its object.

The friends of Church and King, as they call themselves, have burned my house, and driven me from the place which it had been my study to improve

prove for twenty-eight years successively, where I had fixed my earthly residence, and fondly imagined I had secured a retreat for the decline of life. But though I am thus deprived of my habitation, and driven from the spot in which I delighted, my principles are in every respect the same as before the riots. I am, and will be a truly independent man, a “zealous friend” of truth and liberty. I will still strive to attain the equal rights of a citizen, to which I know myself entitled; and I will always avail myself of every opportunity of serving the cause of truth and liberty.

The note at the bottom of p. 56 of Mr. Burn's Reply is, I presume, to be read as a declaration of Mr. Dadley's. But this (as well as my declaration in p. 55, of dining by myself, which is printed in italics) is so ambiguously expressed, that much attention is necessary to preserve the connexion. To the latter I do not deem it necessary to make any reply. But, to expose the former, and shew the incorrectness of the additional note above mentioned, I wish you to give the public the following declaration, which was signed soon after Mr. Burn's Reply appeared, and will shew that it was Mr. Dadley's windows only that were mentioned, and about which any apprehensions were entertained. The declaration Mr. Burn gives by Mr. Dadley, and that of all who were present at the time he refers to, is as follows, and I have contrasted it with that of all the gentlemen who were present at the time he refers to:

Mr. Burn's note, p. 56, containing Mr. Dadley's declaration. *Declaration of Mr. Russell, &c.*

“ On the Monday preceding I had informed Mr. William Hunt, Mr. Harry Hunt, Mr. William Russell, Mr. George Humphrys, and Mr. John Lawrence, who were met at my house that afternoon, that it was then generally thought, if the dinner should be had, it would create a general disturbance in the town. In answer to which they all promised to indemnify me, provided any damages or loss should ensue in consequence of the dinner being had.”

“ On the Monday evening previous to the 14th of July, when we were at the hotel, Mr. Dadley informed us that he had been told by a gentleman, that if the dinner was held at his house his windows would certainly be broken. We pressed Mr. Dadley to give the name of this gentleman, as there seemed no doubt that if it so happened, this prophetic gentleman would either be the accomplisher of his own prophecy, or the employer of others for that purpose. Mr. Dadley, for reasons best known to himself, absolutely refused naming him. Mr.

Dadley

“ Dadley also mention-
“ ed that he had heard
“ a very exceptionable
“ hand-bill had been
“ circulated in the town,
“ but which not one
“ of us had at that time
“ seen.

“ WILLIAM RUSSELL,
“ GEORGE HUMPHRYS,
“ HARRY HUNT,
“ JOHN LAWRENCE,
“ WILLIAM HUNT.”

I cannot but think that two positions advanced by this declaration are worthy of attention, viz. that the parties in question had no idea of any indemnification but what related to Mr. Dadley's windows, as he never so much as mentioned any other object of apprehension; and that we had not on Monday evening any of us seen a copy of the famous hand-bill, of which we have since heard so much. Mr. Dadley, as I have already observed, has received a substantial proof of our sympathy, and found us superior to the little subterfuge of sheltering ourselves under a plea that our promise extended to his windows only, although we never gave him any other. I pity Mr. Dadley, and wish he had suffered less. I never intended to hold him up

as the cause of having the dinner; and therefore wish my letter written in London had been more guarded in that particular. But the extreme hurry in which it was penned, and the assurance which, immediately upon my return home, I gave Mr. Dudley of my intentions respecting it, would, I am persuaded, have satisfied him entirely, had he not been goaded on by the High Church partisans to let them use his name as they have done. All my acquaintance well know that I never concealed my singular exertions in promoting the dinner; and had I conceived that there had been any thing illegal or unjustifiable, either in the dinner or the toasts, I should scarcely have personally avowed myself an advocate both for the one and the other, to his majesty's ministers, and delivered them the original list of toasts, as it was transcribed for the press. But the fact really was so; and this list was in their hands when the infamous libel in the paper called *The Times* was published*.

It was this circumstance, and this alone, which

* This libel, as published in the *Times* on the 19th July, was as follows, viz. "By every account which has arrived from Birmingham, and from authenticated facts in corroboration of what we have already inserted, it is an indisputable truth, that the motives which occasioned the havoc already made amongst the Dissenters at Birmingham, and which is still making, solely sprung from the loyalty of the people. The public were determined, before they proceeded to violence, to have some further proof of the intention of those commemoration men; they therefore waited until they heard what was said at table. They had, indeed, their suspicions; and those suspicions, after the first course, were realised by the following toast being drunk, "Destruction to the present government—and the king's head in a charger."

occasioned that extreme hurry which I see Mr. Burn had been acquainted with previous to the publication of his book; and has treated with a want of candour on the occasion which I hope it will never be in the power of any man to lay to my charge. Be this as it may, the libellous paper in *The Times* above mentioned, was published on Tuesday the 19th of July, when under an expectation of another audience of the ministers, and receiving from them my list of the toasts on the afternoon of that day, my answer to it was promised for Wednesday's paper. I was, however, disappointed in the expected audience with the ministers on Tuesday; but although I had an appointment, and attended on Wednesday, yet I could not return from the Treasury till near two o'clock, and I knew the answer must necessarily be written, and be delivered at the printer's by three, if it was to appear in the paper of that day, which I had engaged it should. Nay, so much was I pressed for time upon my return from the ministers, that though I hastily wrote, I could not transcribe, the letter, but was obliged to hasten with it myself to the printer's in its rough state, that I might enable the compositor to set it for that day's paper. Now, whatever Mr. Burn may do, I think every candid person who recollects the time and circumstances in which I wrote, will feel little difficulty in making due allowance for any inaccuracy which appears in a letter written in such a short and truly *agitating* period.

I will therefore rely upon this candour, and go on to observe, that in p. 118 Mr. Burn criticises, with his usual acrimony, upon the toasts, and gives an addition to the 9th toast, "The Prince of Wales." I have no objection at all to this addition. It was, however, added by the chairman, and is not in the original list. But the explanation that respectable gentleman has already given the public upon this subject renders it needless for me to say any more.

As to the meeting breaking up without the least riot or disturbance, which, by way of emphasis, Mr. Burn again prints in italics (see his book, p. 120), I repeat the assertion I made before, "that it did so." I again aver it to be true, and being called upon for proof, I refer to the company that dined, with a very small exception. I am obliged, however, to make that, because I was repeatedly told, and informed you of the same long ago, that one man was sent by the party to the dinner purposely to insult yourself, and by that means begin a riot within doors, which was happily prevented by your not being at the dinner as they expected.—It is true two of the gentlemen who came from a distance, and on horseback, went out at the back door, as the readiest way to their horses, and I believe were afterwards followed by some of the mob; but neither myself, nor the company in general, who went out together at the front door, met with any rioters, or the least annoyance in
leaving

leaving the hotel; and in repeatedly walking the streets some hours afterwards I did not perceive any disturbance, nor the appearance of any; neither did I ever hear of those two gentlemen, who went out at the back door, being molested till some time after Mr. Burn's book was published, and occasioned conversation upon the subject. My own opinion is, that no disturbance would have happened, had not uncommon measures been used to promote it.

In reply to what Mr. Burn advances respecting the short address I took the liberty of adding to our chairman's, upon the breaking up of the company, I say, that if any part of it was lost through the "perturbed state" of the company, as he reports, it is more than I know of. I certainly did lament to them that the people out of doors were so much misled as to be brought to insult us as we came to dinner; but I uttered every word I wished to say upon the subject; and nothing which I should be unwilling to repeat again at any time. I shall only add further upon this topic, that the parties who dined together at the hotel on the 14th of July, may with the utmost propriety appeal to the whole tenor of their conduct, both before and since the riots, for the refutation of the various calumnies which have been industriously circulated against their views in holding that meeting.

As to the criminality of that convivial meeting, it is presumed that this will not be advanced by any one, even in the paroxysm of passion. But as Mr. Burn chooses to describe this dinner as the cause of the subsequent riots, it may be observed, that as the chairman was a member of the establishment, and many others of this class attended, if this dinner was the irritating cause, how came it to pass that the first object of the rioters should be a meeting-house where Dr. Priestley preached, who had nothing to do with the dinner? With more propriety still it may be demanded, what was the reason that those gentlemen who were publicly known to have been the first and most active in promoting the dinner, were the last to suffer in the depredations committed? Mr. John Ryland, Mr. Hutton, and Mr. Taylor, were none of them at the dinner, and yet so violent was the fury against the last, that it was currently reported, and believed among the mob, as well as others, that every mill and farm-house which were known to belong to him were threatened; and of a list which contained seventy-two or seventy-three houses that were marked to be destroyed, it is known that the number belonging to this gentleman formed a very large proportion of the whole; whilst myself, though amongst the first at the dinner, was one of the last that suffered. And how is it to be accounted for, that, of twelve houses that have been destroyed,
only

only three of the whole number belonged to gentlemen who dined, and not one to any member of the establishment?

Here I think it may be proper to observe, that I have supported a public character in the town of Birmingham for more than twenty years, and have ever been disposed to distinguish myself as a friend to the public interest of the community. In this character it was that I felt myself impelled to promote the dinner on the 14th of July, on the principles both of humanity and of commerce. I have sufficiently declared myself a friend to humanity in the hand-bill that preceded the dinner. It did not seem politic to give the commercial reasons to the public. But I now state, that, as a friend to the town, I thought myself particularly called upon to promote the dinner, because I well knew that the trade it enjoyed with France, which was one of its most valuable branches, was in danger of suffering very materially from the spirit of discontent which the commercial treaty had very generally occasioned in France. And because I well knew that the patriotic popular party there were so much affected by this spirit of dissatisfaction, that they were forming associations, and by their example promoting the disuse of English manufactures.

I also knew that this circumstance had alarmed

some of the first commercial characters in Birmingham. I thought nothing so likely to do away this threatening evil as to testify, in a season of conviviality, a friendly disposition towards this, the first nation in Europe, by rejoicing in its emancipation from despotism, and in its resolutions to live in peace with all mankind. I thought nothing more likely to promote a spirit of concord than applauding their declaration, that they would never go to war any more for the sake of conquest. I have always thought peace and commerce very closely connected, and therefore conceived it my duty, as a sincere friend to both, and as a good citizen, to rejoice publicly in this solemn harbinger of both to this country. But when it appeared that my views and those of my friends were misrepresented by some of our neighbours, and misconceived by others, we who were concerned in promoting the dinner joined in publishing an advertisement which ought to have satisfied every reasonable person of our attachment to our present constitution at home; and which would no doubt have done it, had not many calumnies been circulated, and much exertion been made to prevent it by those who are the real authors and abettors of this mischief*.

Had

** Birmingham Commemoration of the French Revolution.*

Several handbills having been circulated in the town which can only be intended to create distrust concerning the intentions of the meeting, to disturb its harmony, and inflame the minds of the people,

Had there not been particular measures used at Birmingham, the dinner there would no doubt have passed over in peace, as it did in every other place in the kingdom where they were held. In no place whatever was the commercial part of the community so much interested in celebrating this festival as at Birmingham. The value of the commerce of France with this town and neighbourhood should not be publicly estimated. When the late commercial treaty was pending, the minister was particularly solicited to prevent any calculation of its value being made, lest its magnitude should be communicated to the French, and impede the treaty. I can assert, however, from the best authority, that one house alone (which was among those that were most desirous of promoting the dinner) has exported to France to the amount of some millions of the manufactures of the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham. Yet, extraordinary as it may seem, in a town thus interested has the only disturbance of the festivity of this memorable day been found. Through the whole kingdom besides all was peace: and yet that it

people, the gentlemen who proposed it think it necessary to declare their entire disapprobation of all such handbills, and their ignorance of the authors. Sensible themselves of the advantages of a free government, they rejoice in the extension of liberty to their neighbours, at the same time avowing, in the most explicit manner, their firm attachment to the constitution of their own country, as vested in the three estates of King, Lords, and Commons: surely no *free-born Englishman* can refrain from exulting in this addition to the general mass of human happiness.—It is the cause of *humanity*;—it is the cause of the people.

Birmingham, July, 13, 1791.

would

would not be so here, several persons besides the gentleman Mr. Dadley mentioned, it now appears, ventured to foretel before the day arrived. The industrious circulation of Dr. Tatham's inflammatory letter, which was distributed gratis in the public houses of the town, the advertisement which was published with the words "Incendiary refuted" at the head of it, the impertinent insult of an anonymous bigot who advertised, that he would publish a list of the names of those who dined at the hotel upon a black page in white letters, though all of them were measures manifestly calculated to promote a disturbance, they would, I believe, have been ineffectual, if the magistrates had not continued in town, and seen without resisting some among the mob insult the gentlemen as they came to the hotel to the dinner; and if other principal gentlemen too, who placed themselves upon the steps of Mr. Brooke's house, the very next to the hotel, had not been seen to encourage rather than discountenance the people. Without some extraordinary exertions to mislead the people they could not possibly have taken offence at any thing that was said or done by the parties who met and dined.

The advertisements that preceded the dinner were as explicit as could be penned. The toasts and the songs, too, were such as the people would, I am persuaded, have most cheerfully encored, had they been
been

been left to follow the dictates of their own honest hearts, and to consult their own feelings only. Nay, not a man among the High Church party itself, I should think, could have refused to join in the closing lines of the song that was prepared for the occasion, which were :

“ Let each loyal Briton then joyfully sing,

“ The blessings of freedom, and long live the king.”

Is this language inconsistent with the public professions of attachment to the constitution held out in the advertisement? Is it not sufficiently declaratory to amount of itself to a full proof to every impartial person, that the meeting has been basely calumniated, and that it has only been used as an ostensible occasion of persecuting and vilifying the Dissenters? And yet what is it that has been alleged against them? Many indeed have been the frivolous charges against yourself, who justly stand so conspicuous among us; but against the body of Dissenters what do all the charges that have been offered amount to?

Mr. Madan has sedulously endeavoured to give a ferocious alarm founded upon our proceedings to obtain a repeal of the test laws. But that gentleman's apprehensions were totally groundless. Had we entertained any unbecoming or illegal intentions, we should not have regularly published our proceedings to the world; but this has been our practice. No resolutions,

resolutions, as far as I ever knew, or heard of, have been formed at any of those meetings but what are before the public. I will venture to add, there are none passed upon the late attempt, but what are in every degree equalled in spirit and firmness by those which were passed upon former occasions, in prosecuting the attempt to obtain relief from the penalties to which Dissenters were subject for keeping schools, in which, though repeatedly unsuccessful at first, we were at last happy enough to be redressed.

If Mr. Burn and his brethren have any instances of disloyalty to charge us with, any acts of disaffection to the state to accuse us of, let them bring them forth; let the charge be made. When the advertisement expressing our loyalty and attachment to the government of this kingdom was published on the 14th of July, what was further necessary to prove us good citizens? Was it becoming us, who were conscious of none but upright motives, and undisguised actions, to be deterred from an innocent purpose by a dread of the machinations of those who we were told had been secretly plotting mischief against us? Surely not.

After expressing myself thus unreservedly upon real facts, you will easily imagine with what feelings I read Mr. Burn's modest insinuation of the activity of the magistrates. He says, p. 44, "They
" staid

“ staid in town for the express purpose of interposing their authority, *should any attempt be made to break the peace.*” If it was so, why did they not interfere when they both heard and saw the notorious insults offered to some of the gentlemen as they went into the hotel? What did they do in this, the supposed origin of the business? What did they, when in the evening they saw the two meeting-houses and your house destroyed? Did they make any extraordinary constables, or enter upon any other spirited opposition? No: while the meeting houses were still burning, and the mob destroying your furniture and your house, they both returned home, and went very peaceably to bed; and when two respectable gentlemen went over to them at my request early the next morning, one of them expressed much anger at being called out of his bed. And yet the “ diffident” Mr. Burn very modestly represents the merit of the magistrates as approved and sanctioned by one of the most numerous and respectable town meetings that was ever convened in Birmingham, and says the only proof of delinquency on the part of the magistrates was their want of success*. A striking proof, indeed, this scene affords of the *faithful discharge of their duty!* as Mr. Burn declares it; and, that he may not lose the full emphasis of the words, he prints them in italics. I confess, however,

* Will Mr. Burn say that the magistrates were neither of them intoxicated with liquor, in the course of the first evening of this interesting and disgraceful event?

that, before this scene of outrage, I never heard of an instance wherein a magistrate "*faithfully discharging his duty,*" in quelling a mob, when addressing the rioters, whom he found in the very act of pulling down a house, should desire them to "*take care not to hurt one another.*" And yet this is one among many other proofs furnished upon the present occasion. I think it renders all others superfluous. Otherwise many more equally in point might be mentioned, as well as the following singular fact, viz. that throughout the whole of the late scene, though the justices personally attended at your house, and at several other houses, whilst the rioters were destroying and burning them, the Riot Act was never once read, or even attempted to be read*.

But probably you may have already been informed of this through another channel. I will not therefore detain you any longer, for I fear you must already have thought this letter too long. But as in writing it I have not been actuated by any desire of criminating others, or retorting their malevolent calumnies, I hope you will excuse its prolixity, or any little degree of warmth that may appear in this attempt in justification of myself, to which I have steadily endeavoured to confine my remarks. For after all that I have suffered, and am still suffering, I can truly say that I am more dis-

* A striking contrast this to the repeated readings of this Act when the brothels were in danger.

posed to pity, than to criminate the authors and abettors of it. Their season of reflection, I hope, is approaching, and I would by no means retard it by any irritating reflections. I therefore most cheerfully close this letter with my best wishes for the restoration of that peace and good neighbourhood which reigned amongst us at Birmingham previous to this truly unexpected and cruel interruption of it; and I am confident nothing will be wanting to promote it that can *consistently* be required at the hands of the Dissenters.

Believe me, with more respect, gratitude, and affection, than I can express,

Dear Sir,

Most sincerely and truly yours,

Birmingham,
Aug. 20, 1792.

WILLIAM RUSSELL.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

*The Rev. Mr. Scholefield's Advertisement relating to the
Sunday Schools at Birmingham.*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.

SIR,

AS Mr. Burn, in his reply to Dr. Priestley's Appeal, hath, in the most confident and even exulting manner, charged the Doctor with a gross and culpable mis-statement of facts, in relation to the Sunday Schools in this town, and asserts, that the resolution of allowing the children of Dissenters to attend their own places of worship never was rescinded; you will be doing an act of justice by inserting the following paragraph, copied from the Birmingham Gazette, dated October 2, 1786, and greatly oblige,

Your humble servant,

RADCLIFFE SCHOLEFIELD.

“ Public Office, Sept. 26, 1786.

“ *At a General Meeting of the Subscribers to the Sun-
day Schools in Birmingham, held here this Evening,*

“ REV. MR. CURTIS IN THE CHAIR.

“ IT being represented to this meeting, that several gentlemen have threatened to withdraw their subscriptions to the Sunday Schools, in consequence of an

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“ alteration

“ alteration of the general rules made at the request of the
 “ Dissenters, on the 10th of March, 1786: Re-
 “ solved, that the resolution granting that request (which
 “ the Dissenters themselves have not availed themselves of,
 “ and adhered to as they engaged) be rescinded; and that
 “ in future the rules, as they originally stood, be steadily
 “ attended to.”

Who ought not to have been ignorant now?

See Burn's Pamphlet, p. 11.

P. S. As you, sir, frequently admit original essays, or extracts from other authors, you will probably indulge me with room for a few reflections upon the foregoing extract, and Mr. Burn's extreme negligence and inattention in respect to it.—What was meant in the resolution, by the Dissenters having not availed themselves of it, or attended to it, as they engaged? I believe they are wholly uninformed to this day. Perfectly satisfied with having removed so illiberal a restriction (a restriction unknown in any place I have heard of, where the Establishment and Dissenters had united in support of Sunday Schools, and a confirmation of what Dr. Priestley has observed concerning the unhappy spirit prevailing in this town), I never heard of their giving themselves any farther concern about it. I much question whether a Dissenter ever recommended an object, much less insisted upon their attending a place of worship among the Dissenters; if they did, I have no doubt of their being attended to by their patron. Of this I am firmly persuaded, that the rescinding of the resolution was the primary cause of setting up Sunday Schools amongst themselves, as separate from the Establishment. In Sheffield, I am informed, the subscriptions go all into one flock, from whence the masters and mistresses of the distinct societies are regularly paid, and why the same
 plan

plan could not have been adopted here (except the spirit had prevailed which Mr. Burn so confidently denies to have an existence) I leave the public to form their opinion and judgment.—How Mr. Burn could have been ignorant of a fact so easy to be proved must be left to him, and he can best explain. From his ignorance however in this instance the public will be ready to infer that his coadjutors (in whose defence he writes) have left him, as we say, in the lurch, or that, however he blames Dr. Priestley, as a false accuser of the brethren, he is the first person upon whom (from a certain undeniable fact) the character can at present rest. They will likewise be enabled to judge what degree of credit is to be given to the other parts of his performance, which, I have no doubt, are either in whole, or in part, capable of the same refutation; but, as Mr. Burn calls upon Dr. Priestley himself, to him I shall refer the farther part of the business, only observing, that even Mr. Burn's friends may now be ready to exclaim, and he himself feel in part the force of the exclamation in the words of Juvenal:

*Seu tu magno discrimine causam,
Protegere affectas, te consule, dic tibi quis sis.*

Ere thou attempt weak causes to support,
Be sure, be very sure, thou'rt able for't.

Creech's Translation.

No. II.

*Extract from the original Advertisement relating to the
Public Library at Birmingham.*

Birmingham Library, Dec. 9, 1789.

LEST any person should mistake the nature of this library, it is thought proper to give the following general account of it.—This library is formed on the plan of one that was first established at Liverpool, and which has been since adopted at Manchester, Leeds, and many other considerable towns in the kingdom. The books are never to be sold; and, from the nature of the institution, the library must increase till it contains all the most valuable publications in the English language; and from the easy terms of admission, it will be a treasure of knowledge both to the present and all succeeding ages.

As all the books are bought by a committee of persons annually chosen by a majority of the subscribers, and every vote is by ballot, this institution can never answer the purpose of any party, civil or religious; but, on the contrary, may be expected to promote a spirit of liberality and friendship among all classes of men without distinction.

No. III.

An Address to the Subscribers to the Birmingham Library on the Subject of Mr. Cooke's Motion, to restrict the Committee in the Choice of Books, with a View to exclude Controversial Divinity.

MR. COOKE'S MOTION.

MANY of the Subscribers to this very useful institution are much concerned to see a spirit of controversy creeping into the library, by the purchase of so many books in religious disputes; books of no real use, and after the present moment mere lumber: they are read but by a particular few, and do not answer the purpose of the original intention, which was to collect a body of useful and instructive literature for the use of posterity, as well as the present time.

Doctor Priestley, the learned author of many of the books, is of that spirited and generous turn of mind, and has the success of this library so much at heart, that, if he thought them necessary or proper, he, as the writer, would present them.

It is requested that the committee will at present order no more of those books until the sense of the whole subscribers shall be known at the next general annual meeting.

It is likewise proposed to the next general annual meeting to make a motion for a law to exclude in future all books of *controversial divinity*.

To the Subscribers to the Birmingham Library,

GENTLEMEN,

AS this motion (which I have not been able to prevent being brought before you, at your next general meeting) appears to me to be of considerable consequence, affecting one of the first principles of the constitution of our library, viz. restricting the committee in their choice of books, and I am particularly appealed to in it, I take the liberty to address you on the subject, and to give you my reasons why I think it highly improper that it should pass into a law. I choose to do it in this manner, because it is well known, that on several accounts, nothing can be discussed with advantage in a large assembly; and by this means you will have an opportunity of considering the matter coolly, and of being better qualified to vote with judgment on the question.

When you have attended to my reasons, be assured, that I shall acquiesce in your determination, whatever it may be. The library, injured as I cannot help thinking it will be, by the proposed change in its constitution, will still be of great value to the town and neighbourhood, and deserving of the encouragement of all the friends of literature. And, though overruled I shall not even be out of humour with any of the subscribers, and least of all with the institution itself. For the greater distinctness, I shall digest what I have to propose to your consideration under separate heads, and I beg your dispassionate attention to each of them.

I. The object of the institution is to provide a stock of such books as any of the subscribers may wish to read, or to consult. All other libraries of this kind throughout England

land are, I believe, upon the same liberal and extensive plan, no subjects whatever being excluded.

It has, indeed, been said, that it is contrary to the original design of the institution to admit books of *religious controversy*. But I desire to see the evidence of this. Your printed *laws*, and also your *periodical advertisements*, which were all drawn up by myself, say nothing on the subject. If we look back to the history of the library, we shall find two epochas, viz. the first institution, in the year before I came to Birmingham, and in the year after, the new modelling of its constitution according to the plan of that of Leeds. Those who were concerned in the first plan say, that when it was proposed by some person to exclude books relating to the three professions, the motion was absolutely rejected. The new modelling of the constitution was, in a great measure, made by myself; and I am sure it was not my intention, or that of any who acted with me, to exclude interesting publications of any description whatever.

II. The proposed regulation is unnecessary. For if any evil whatever exist in the conduct of the library, the constitution of it is such, as that a sufficient remedy is always provided in the method of choosing the committee, since they are annually chosen by the subscribers at large. Nothing, therefore, can be wanted but more *attention* in the subscribers in choosing the committee, and in the committee when they are chosen. It is always deemed wrong to alter a regulation that is generally useful for the sake of a particular inconvenience. The time may come when the subscribers in general shall change their opinion, and then they will wish for an administration, like the present, which will always change with themselves.

III. The committee should consider themselves as representing the subscribers at large, and, without consulting their own inclination, endeavour to oblige as many of them

as they can, and *all* if possible. It has been the custom to order books which it was well known could interest only a *few* of the body. But it was thought that even a few had a right to be gratified, if it could be done without a disproportionate expence.

IV. The readers of theology among the subscribers to this library are more numerous, and more respectable, than the author of the motion imagines, and they think they have a right to be gratified even to a greater extent than they hitherto have been; considering that, of perhaps seven or eight hundred pounds that have been expended in the purchase of books, the price of all the publications objected to has not been five pounds. As far as I can judge, the principal controversy to which those books relate is not likely to produce many more expensive publications, and another controversy, equally interesting, may not arise in many years.

V. It has been said that, by the introduction of books of controversy, the Dissenters only will be gratified. This is by no means true; many members of the church of England being as much friends to free enquiry (and wishing to have the means of promoting it in this library) as any Dissenters. But admitting this to be the case, it should be considered that the founders of the institution were all Dissenters; as they have been, I believe, of almost every institution of the same nature through the kingdom. Some respect is, therefore due to them, and to their liberality, in purposely constituting the library in such a manner, as that their particular influence must necessarily be excluded, whenever they should be, as they now are, a minority.

VI. Books of controversy have, farther, been objected to, as being of a *temporary* nature. But it has been the constant custom to buy any books, or pamphlets, on interesting subjects, however *temporary*. And it is desirable that

that this library should be a repository for things of this kind, as they are often curious, and persons have occasion sometimes to look back to them.

VII. The controversy that I am now carrying on with the learned defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, grows every day more interesting, especially as it has gained the attention of the two universities. The publications relating to it are, I believe, in most, if not *all*, the libraries of the same nature with this; and it would be very extraordinary indeed, if they should be excluded from this of Birmingham only, where it may well be supposed that more attention will be drawn to them. My controversy with the Jews also promises to be highly interesting, as it actually engages the attention of the Jewish nation in all parts of Europe, and is the only one that ever has done it.

VIII. The works that have been chiefly complained of, viz. the *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, and that of *Early Opinions concerning Christ*, are not of a *temporary* nature, but a collection of materials, which will be useful in future time, if they be of any use at present. In the former of them, there are not more than *two* articles, out of a great number, that can give the least offence to any Protestant who is not a Calvinist. And one part of it is a defence of Christianity, in answer to Mr. Gibbon, whose history is in the library.

IX. It is observed in the proposed motion, that if I had thought my own controversial writings proper for the library, I would have presented them to it. In answer to this I must say, that I should very readily have made a present of them, but that I thought it would be objected to, as a method of obtruding them upon the library. I also imagined that it was not the *price* of the books, but the *books* themselves, that were objected to.

So far, however, have I been from being forward to introduce

introduce books of religious controversy, that for two years I prevented the introduction of my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* into the library. This at that time gave offence to many, and it was said, that my motive for it was to promote the sale of the work in the town. At the same time I repeatedly said in the committee, that, whenever the funds of the society should be sufficiently ample (as they now certainly are) I should have no objection to publications in any interesting controversy, provided the choice was impartial, so that no favour was shewn to any one party more than to another.

When the above mentioned work was ordered, it was entirely unknown to me, and much against my will, by members of the church of England. A particular friend of mine (Mr. Ruffell) being present, and knowing my wishes, voted against it. I will add that it is very possible I might have used my endeavours much longer to keep out of the library every book of this nature, if it had not been for the unreasonable offence that was taken at the ordering of that work, by several of the clergy, their intemperate, and, I will take the liberty to say, their childish behaviour, on the occasion. Whether this change of my conduct, in these circumstances, was natural or justifiable, I appeal to the feelings of any man. I never took any measure to introduce any publication of mine except the *Letters to Dr. Horne*, &c. when they had been rejected, and the answer to them admitted, which I thought an uncandid and unfair proceeding. I also recommended the *Theological Repository*, of which I am the publisher. But this was necessary to the controversies already introduced. It is, besides, a work open to all parties. It contains several articles against Socinianism, and many others that must give the greatest satisfaction to all the friends of Christianity, of every denomination.

When

When my work, contrary to my wishes, was introduced, I proposed *Dr. Horsley's Answers*; and I have constantly voted for every thing written against myself.

X. They who have objected the most to the introduction of books of controversy are the *clergy*, no doubt thinking such books improper for the perusal of the subscribers to this library. But they distributed a pamphlet, entitled, *A Preservative against Socinianism*, to all who were confirmed at the late visitation. And, if controversial treatises be proper for the perusal of boys and girls, or of their parents, they certainly cannot be improper for the subscribers to this library. This conduct looks as if they were not controversial treatises in general that they objected to, but those only in which their peculiar opinions were opposed; and that they could not decently decide against those on one side of the question without rejecting *all*. I would not be uncandid; but I appeal to all that are candid, whether this be not the most natural construction of their conduct, and whether it does not betray a suspicion of the influence of reason and argument, and a dread of free inquiry.

XI. Others hate *religious controversy* because they hate *religion*, having no belief in Christianity. These will vote with the friends of the established church, whatever it be, in all such questions as these, but on very different principles. If there be any such among us, they ought, in decency, to decline giving any vote at all. Otherwise their conduct will be the same with that of the dog in the manger. They will neither read any books relating to religion themselves, nor suffer others to read them.

XII. No objection was made to several books of controversy before my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* was voted into the library, such as *Mr. White's Sermons*, and *Mr. Howes's Observations on Books*, which are all controversial.

troverfial. And both thefe writers are among my antagonifts.

XIII. The committee will be unfpeakably embarrassed by diftinguifhing books of controverfy from others, and many works, highly valuable on other accounts, are in part fo. If controverfy be *wholly* excluded, we muft even have no Reviews, and no Gentleman's Magazine.

Under the defcription of *religious controverfy* may fall many publications which the fubscribers in general would wifh to fee. If, for inftance, Mr Gibbon fhould refume his attack on the evidences of Chriftianity, and an Englifh bifhop, as has been the cafe, fhould undertake the defence of it, muft fuch interefting publications be excluded from fuch a library as ours, becaufe they are *religious controverfy*? In fuch a cafe as this (and many other fuch might be mentioned) the law would either be repealed, or, which is always a bad thing, would be explained away, and evaded.

This is a *fuppofed* cafe, but I fhall mention two *real* ones, to fhew how improper, if not impoffible, it will be for any committee to act as the friends of the motion would have them. At one of our late meetings a clergyman whom I truly refpect propofed to us *Father Courayer's Declaration of his laft Sentiments concerning Religion*; and certainly a publication of fo much curiofity, and fo much talked of, was highly proper for our library. Accordingly it was voted unanimoofly. But it is, in fact, a book of *controverfial divinity* (which is fo much the bugbear at prefent), for the author gives his reafons for all his opinions, efpecially on the fubject of the *Trinity*, and appears to have died an Unitarian.

On the other hand, at our laft meeting, the fecond part of my *Letters to a Philofophical Unbeliever*, which I fcuple not to fay is one of the moft valuable of all my publications,

tions, and the most proper for the library, was rejected, though it is a custom (and I believe was never departed from before) to admit all *continuations* of works once voted in without any balloting at all, not to say, that, in other similar institutions, it is a rule to receive any publication of a subscriber, whatever it be. I was present, and declined giving any vote on the occasion; only observing, that the book did not relate to the doctrine of the Trinity, and therefore that they did not need to be afraid of it. Fear, however, the fear of some lurking mischief, prevailed. No *reasons* were given, but a sufficient number of silent and decisive *votes*.

XIV. Some persons are, or affect to be, alarmed lest this dispute should break up the library. I have no such apprehensions. It is so well constituted as to be able to bear much more than this. Should the subscribers at large, after mature consideration, not only admit the motion, but repeal the most fundamental law of the constitution, by throwing out of the library any of the books that were regularly voted into it, I shall acquiesce; trusting that in due time good temper, and good sense, will resume their natural influence. For, though *prejudice* may have more apparent strength, and act with more violence, *reason* has better stamina, and will outlive it.

As some things are best illustrated by comparisons, I hope no offence will be taken at the following. Suppose a number of gentlemen agree to have an annual public dinner, and appoint stewards to conduct the entertainment. These officers, considering the number, and consequently the different tastes, of those for whom they have to provide, besides such substantial boiled and roasted meat as suit every body, and also fish, venison, and turtle, which many like, but seldom see, may think proper to add a dessert, consisting of ices, syllabubs, sweetmeats, &c. and likewise
think

think it not amiss, on such an occasion, to introduce such things as *olives*, &c. which, though not generally relished, *some* fancy.

If, on seeing this dessert, any of the company should say, “ I dislike these olives, and wish they might not be introduced;” would he not be thought very unreasonable. If he should say, he was confident that not one tenth part of the company would taste them; might it not be said, that even a tenth, or a much smaller proportion, of the company, had a right to be obliged in such a trifle. He might say, that olives were unwholesome, and unfit for any body to eat. But might it not be replied, that neither himself, nor any body else, was obliged to eat of them, and that others ought to judge for themselves. If he should say, “ But my money is expended on this absurd article, which I think a great hardship;” it might be replied, that the money of the rest of the company was expended on things that were agreeable to himself, and, perhaps, only a few others.

He might add, “ olives will do my wife, or my children, hurt, and I would not bring them into temptation.” But it might be replied, “ Sir, you must take the best care you can of your wife and children. This is not the only place in which they will be in danger of seeing olives, or hearing of them.” Perhaps, heated by the altercation, he might add, “ If these abominable olives be admitted, though they should not cost a groat, I and my friends will absolutely kick down the table, demolish the furniture of the room, and prevent any body from dining here any more;” would not a sensible friend tell him, that if this was a point on which he laid so much stress, he would do well to decline being of the party, and avoid all public dinners, where he would always be in danger of meeting with these offensive olives.

I would be far from insinuating by this comparison, that books of religious controversy resemble such a trifle as *olives* in a desert, except with respect to the small *expence* attending them. Religious truth is, in itself, invaluable; and that the investigation of it is as pleasing to an ingenious mind as that of any philosophical truth, I appeal to those who are acquainted with both. Others cannot be competent judges in the case. They despise what they do not understand.

I shall conclude this address with observing, that it is merely as a friend to the library, and the reputation of it (which I really think will be materially affected by any measure that would restrict the committee in the choice of books) that I wish to prevent the motion from passing into a law. As the author of the publications principally objected to, I should be most gratified by their being excluded altogether, as this circumstance would draw much more attention upon them, and make them more generally read than they would otherwise be.

Submitting these observations to your candid attention,

I am, Gentlemen,

Your humble servant,

Birmingham,
Aug. 14, 1787.

J. PRIESTLEY.

——— *Si quid novisti rectius istis
Candidus imperti.*

No. IV.

*Extract from the free Address to Protestant Dissenters,
as such.*

IT is also natural for the Dissenters to wish well to every mild administration, which secures to them their privileges, and opposes the attempts of a bigoted and headstrong multitude, of clergy or laity, to oppress them. For the same reason, too, when the country, by its established laws, favours the interest of the Dissenters, so that they have a *legal right* to their privileges, they naturally consider *their country, and its laws*, as their guardians, and will strenuously oppose all the encroachments of the prerogative on the constitution, and on the rights of the subjects in general. For they must be sensible, that the established laws of a free community must be a better security for their privileges than the will of any single man whatever. They have too much at stake to be willing to hold it on so precarious a tenure.

It also clearly follows, from the same principle of *self-interest*, independent of gratitude, that the more indulgence Dissenters meet with from the government, the stronger will be their attachment to it. Though, therefore, it should seem proper to the legislature to give a preference to one mode of religion, by a legal provision for the maintenance of its ministers, it is clearly for its interest to attach all Dissenters to it, as much as possible, by a participation of *civil privileges*; and it is both injustice, and bad policy, in civil governors, to debar themselves from the service of men of ability and integrity, and, at the same time, to alienate their affections, by such an *opprobrious exclusion* from civil honours.

Yet, though I think it right that these things should be
publicly

publicly said, that they may have weight with those whom it may concern, far would I be from encouraging the least tendency towards disaffection in the Dissenters to the present constitution of England. Imperfect as it is, and hard as the present laws bear upon us Dissenters in some respects, our situation in England is, upon the whole, such as we have great reason to be thankful to divine providence for, being abundantly more eligible than it would be in any other country in the world; and it is not so desirable to obtain even a just right by clamour and contention, as by the continuance of a prudent and peaceable behaviour.

This may convince our legislators, that we are deserving of their indulgence. Men who harbour no resentment, though under a restraint, of the injustice and unreasonableness of which they are fully sensible, must be possessed of generosity enough to be capable of the most grateful and firm attachment to the hand that frees them from the restraint. If a man have magnanimity enough not to bear malice against an enemy, much more will he be susceptible of a generous zeal for his friend.

Besides, though, from a regard to the honour and interest of our country, it is to be wished that Dissenters might be admitted to all civil offices of honour and trust, in common with others, their fellow-subjects, who have no better title to them in other respects: yet a person who should consult the interest of the Dissenters only, as a body of men who separate themselves from a principle of *religion*, without regard to the interest of the community at large, might, perhaps, hesitate about taking any steps to procure an enlargement of their privileges.

Professing a religion which inculcates upon us that we are *not of this world*, but only in a course of discipline, to train us up for a better, it is worth considering, whether a

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situation,

situation, in which more scope would be given to ambition, and other passions, the tendency of which is to attach us to this world, is to be wished for by us. Should not a Christian, as such (though he should by no means secrete himself from society, or decline any opportunity of serving his friend, or his country, when divine Providence seems to call him out to the sphere of active life) be content to pass unmolested in the private walks of life, rejoicing, as his master did, in doing all kind offices to his fellow-creatures, without aspiring at civil power, and those honorary distinctions, with which the hearts of the men of this world are so much captivated, and, very often, so fatally insnared.

As our Lord warned his disciples, that *the world would love its own*, and would hate them, because they were not of the world; and that he who would follow him, must *take up his cross* to do it; is it not, *cæteris paribus*, more probable that we are these disciples, when we suffer some degree of persecution, and are rather frowned upon by the powers of this world, than if we had free access to all the emoluments of it? Certainly such a situation is far more favourable to our gaining that superiority of mind to the world, which is required of all Christians, whatever be their station in it. We know that, *if persecution should arise on account of the word*, we must be ready to forsake houses, lands, relations, and all the endearments of life, rather than make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience; and that, in these trying times, if we deny Christ, he will also deny us. Then he that would save his life shall lose it, and he only that is willing to lose his life, shall save it to life eternal. This, Christians, is the tenure on which we hold all the blessings of the gospel.

Now, if this be the temper to which we are to be formed, whether persecution should actually arise, or not, what
kind

kind of a situation should we (from the knowledge we have of human nature) prescribe, as the most favourable for the purpose? Certainly, not one in which we should have nothing to bear or to suffer, and where every thing should be just as we could wish it. A mind accustomed to this treatment would be ill prepared for encountering the various hardships of the Christian warfare, in a time of persecution. In a situation in every respect favourable to the pursuits and enjoyments of this life, it would not be easy for a man to attain to any thing like a satisfactory conviction, that he had the proper temper and disposition of a Christian. Habits of mind are not acquired by *putting cases* (which, however, persons would little think of doing, when the cases were not likely to occur) but by actual experience and feeling. A habit of caution can never be given to a child by admonition only. It is by frequent hurts that he learns to take care of himself. So likewise courage and fortitude are acquired by being frequently exposed to pains and hardships, by exerting our powers, and feeling the benefit of such exertion.

All these things duly considered, a man who entertains the truly enlarged sentiments of Christianity, and is sensible how momentary and insignificant are all the things of this world, in comparison with those of a future, will, in proportion to the influence of these views, be less impatient of the difficulties and restraints he may lie under in a civil capacity. He will more easily acquiesce in a situation not perfectly eligible, when he is prepared even to bear the greatest sufferings that can befall him in this life with Christian fortitude, patience, and resignation; at the same time that the benevolence of his heart is always ready to take the form of the most generous patriotism, whenever there occurs a clear and great cause to exert it. If a true

Christian be conscious that he is engaged in a good cause, he, of all men, has the least reason to fear *what man can do unto him*, and therefore he is more to be depended upon, in any critical emergence, than any other person whatever.

A Dissenter, then, who is so *upon principle*, who has, consequently, the justest notions of the nature and importance of civil and religious liberty; who is, on many accounts, thoroughly sensible of the blessings of a mild and equal government, and, therefore, heartily attached to the interest of that constitution which allows him the rights which he values so highly; whose mind is prepared to bear *irremediable* hardships with patience, but whose active courage, in cases in which the great interests of his country call him to exert himself, may be depended upon, is a very valuable member of civil society. Such a man will scorn the mean arts of court intrigue. If he can gain his laudable ends, and be admitted to his natural rights, as a loyal British subject, by fair and open means, he will not despise it; but he will rather continue to suffer unjustly, than prostitute his interest to a corrupt, profligate, and oppressive administration.

No. V.

*Copy of the Forged Letter found at my House,
16th July, 1791.*

DEAR DOCTOR,

I AM now provided with every thing necessary, and will be ready at the time appointed to assist in endeavouring to attain that long looked for by us, and root out the constitutional men who have wielded the shield against our rights as free-men, and trust you will also exert yourself,

self,

self, and get all our friends to be ready at the same time, to make the grand push. In expectation of that and success,

I am, dear Doctor,

Your true friend,

WILLIAM RUSSELL.

London,
May 2, 1792.

No. VI.

Mr. Abel Humphrys's Advertisement relating to the Calumny of Mr. William Gem.

TO THE PUBLIC.

MR. WILLIAM GEM, resident with his father in New Street, in this town, having had the effrontery to assert some time ago in public company, at the Dog Inn, in Spiceal Street, that—"meeting at Lady Well Baths the young Messrs. Humphryses, one of them had, in his presence, expressed a wish to wade up to his chin in churchmen's blood, and that he, irritated at such an expression, instantly knocked him into the water," together with other particulars, equally unfounded, but tending to give an air of plausibility to his tale, they find it necessary thus publicly to expose his character, that they may defend their own.

Upon the earliest intimation of the existence of the report, having traced it through its various channels, and found Mr. Gem its sole author, one of them waited upon that gentleman, and demanded an explanation. He without hesitation confessed himself the fabricator of the calumny, begged pardon, and pleaded intoxication. This at that time they deemed sufficient; but on perceiving the prevalence of the report, that it had even become the topic of conversation in alehouses, and in manufactories, they

found it necessary again to wait upon that gentleman, in company with a very respectable attorney, and to require that his apology should be public. This reasonable request, though he again acknowledged the criminality of his conduct, he refused to comply with, and it is this refusal which now constrains them to proclaim him to the world an unprincipled calumniator.

So cruel and unmerited an attack upon the characters of young men would, at all times, be infamous; but when made upon the characters of those with whom he was totally unacquainted, in whose company he had never been, and the sons of a man already the victim of popular delusion, its infamy is extreme.

Inhuman must be the heart that could conceive the idea; but what language can define the man that could premeditatedly ascribe it to the innocent?

At another time they had perhaps trusted to their known characters to repel the charge; but in the present season of alarm, when party spirit eagerly nurtures every wicked defamation, in justice to themselves, and to the body to which they belong, they are bound to expose the defamer who can thus wantonly worry their innocent reputation.

For self and brothers,

ABEL HUMPHRYS.

Birmingham,
June 19, 1792.

No. VII.

*Copy of a Letter intended to be addressed to the Clergy
of the Town of Birmingham.*

GENTLEMEN,

I WOULD address you by the title of *my brethren in the Christian ministry*, if I did not think it might offend you, and the object of this address is not irritation, but

but peace. As you, and the most zealous friends of the established church, now see the fatal consequences of harsh language, and harsh measures with us, I am willing to think you will have no objection to trying a different conduct. The dreadful effects of *violence* should teach you *moderation*, and urge you to express this moderation in the clearest and least equivocal manner. Then a lasting peace may be established, and from this your cause will be a greater gainer than ours.

In the last eleven years, in which you have shewn a disposition peculiarly hostile to the Dissenters, they have increased in an unprecedented proportion. Not less than ten new congregations of Dissenters, or Methodists, have been formed in that time. Two places of worship are at this time building, and another is intended. We are only looking out for a proper situation. In the mean time, though your places of worship are but five, those who attend public worship in them are little, if at all, increased.

But let hostilities cease, though we are gainers by them. It is for your advantage that they should; and as a sure pledge of reconciliation, good will, and friendship, generously allow us the use of your churches, till our meeting-houses can be rebuilt. We contribute to the support and repairs of them as much as yourselves, and this is but a small advantage in return. It has been long ago dearly purchased by us. We shall not interfere with your hours of worship. We shall not profane or defile them. We will preach in *them the gospel of peace*, and we will bless and pray for you in them. If any thing can ensure the continuance of your church, it will be such lenient measures as these.

The thing that I propose is far from being new in the Christian world. There are churches in several parts of Germany alternately occupied by Catholics and Protestants, ever since the Reformation, and no inconvenience what-

ever, but much good, has arisen from it. When one of your churches was rebuilding, the Dissenters of the place lately offered the members of the establishment the use of their meeting-house, and the various denominations of Dissenters, who differ from one another in sentiment as much as they do from you, make no difficulty of accommodating one another on such occasions. The use of the new meeting-house, now in ruins, was given to the Independents when, on a particular occasion, they wanted a place larger than their own; and whenever it shall be rebuilt, I will answer for its being at your service, or that of any other denomination of Christians whatever.

Believe me, that this or some other measure, that shall shew the decrease of bigotry, is absolutely necessary for the peace of the town, and the good of the country. It is necessary on the part of the clergy in general, and of the court too. By the manner in which our late applications for the repeal of the test laws were rejected, more than the rejection itself, the country at large has taken up the idea, that the Dissenters, and especially the Presbyterians, and Unitarian Dissenters, are odious to government, and that all connexion with them is to be shunned by the friends of the church and of the king; an idea which may have the most fatal consequences.

What must be the feelings of a set of men, conscious of no crime, but who consider themselves as the best citizens, and when industry, peaceable behaviour, and loyalty, have been approved at all times, but especially since the abdication of their enemies the Stuarts, and who were always deemed the best friends of the family on the throne, finding themselves now regarded in a different light, and as it were *proscribed* by the government under which they live? And what must be the sentiments of others towards persons in this situation? It is like setting a price upon our heads, and
 inviting

inviting the mob to insult us, as of late they have done in almost all parts of England.

It is highly necessary, therefore, for the peace of the country, (which, as its burdens and difficulties increase, requires the united strength of the whole, to enable it to bear them) that the bishops, and the court itself, should take some measures to convince the public that they consider us as worthy not only of protection, but of confidence. The late riots will give them a good opportunity of doing something that shall have this tendency, and their concurrence in the repeal of all penal laws in matters of religion would not hurt, but greatly strengthen, the establishment, and abate the animosity of all sects; who would, with infinitely less reluctance, contribute to the support of a religious system which left them access to all civil privileges, and did not set a mark upon them, as people *not trust worthy*.

By all means, let the present opportunity, in some way or other, be improved in favour of future peace and harmony. Such another will never, I hope, be given us. Otherwise, no man can tell what may be the effect of the animosity which through all England will be increased by it. Our discussion of particular doctrines may go on as before. Inquiries into religious truth have no tendency to break the peace of society, even though writers should not always conduct themselves as becomes scholars and gentlemen. Do you, the clergy of the established church, do your part in this *work of peace, and labour of love*, and our governors will be more ready to do theirs. For it can only be to oblige the church, that the Dissenters have been frowned upon as they have been. Let us, mutually weeping over the dismal scene that is now before us, embrace as brothers, whose eyes are opened, and who will not again suffer them to be blinded by our common enemy, *party spirit*,

spirit. I call this a common enemy, because it is hostile to our common Christianity, and is too apt to affect us all.

My own principles and conduct, though they are conspicuous enough in my writings, have been industriously misrepresented. But without looking back to the past, let us mutually sign an *act of oblivion*, and hope for better times in future. I love my country, notwithstanding all the defects in its constitution, which I therefore earnestly wish may be removed. And such reforms as are easily practicable, and by which all parties would be gainers, would for ever remove the necessity, and with that the present dread, of any great *revolution*. While this country is tenable for me, I shall think myself happy to stay in it. When it is untenable, I thank God that others, and those not undesirable ones, are ready to receive me, and especially I trust a country more distant, but infinitely preferable to them all. Hoping to meet you there, notwithstanding we may now and then *fall out by the way*, I am, from my heart,

Gentlemen,

Your well wisher, and

A friend of peace,

J. PRIESTLEY.

London,
July 20, 1791.

No. VIII.

Extract from a Letter inserted in the Sbrewsbury Chronicle, Sept. 14, 1791.

For the *Sbrewsbury Chronicle*.

MR. PRINTER,

SINCE Dr. Priestley continues to breath out his threatenings against the establishment of this country, and to diffuse his prognostications of the speedy downfall of what
what

what he has blasphemously called, “ The idolatrous Worship of JESUS CHRIST;” and since long experience evinces that arguments the most demonstrative, drawn from the only source whence man can derive any knowledge of Divine things, are all thrown away upon him: I submit it to the consideration of those whose immediate duty it is to watch over the Christian religion, as part of the fundamental law of this realm, Whether it be not incumbent on them to put the statutes in force against him as a Blasphemer of GOD, and a disturber of the peace? Had this been done a few years ago, it is plain from the declarations of the rioters lately executed at Warwick, that the depredations, which they so outrageously, unlawfully, and wickedly committed, had never taken place. Can any time be better for the Attorney General to take such a notorious delinquent in hand, than the present; when it is evident that a *legal* prosecution for his repeated blasphemies against GOD, and threats against the establishment, would be grateful to an undoubted majority of all ranks of people, notwithstanding his vain boasts to the contrary?

“ Seditious, which used formerly to hide its trains of mischief in caverns, under ground, now brandishes its torch in broad day-light: and the policy of the age (too deep for *me* to understand) leaves it to itself, and waits to see what it will do; and when the streets are in flames, tries to put out the fire as well as it can; and disperses a lawless multitude with blood and slaughter; which might have been restrained and saved by a timely execution of the laws.”—*Jones's Sermon, at Bury St. Edmunds, May 31, 1791, p. 10, 11.*

There is scarce one publication of Dr. Priestley's, either on a *theological* or *political* subject, that will not furnish copious matter whereon to ground an information; or indictment.

Sept. 14, 1791.

ΟΤΑΒΕΙΣ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΣ,

No. IX.

*An Epitaph written for me by some Person in the West
of England.*

Near this Place lies the BODY of
JOSEPH FUNGUS, LL. D. F. R. S.

And, strange as it may appear,
This FLAMING INCENDIARY,
Owing to the Clemency of a mild Government,
DIED A NATURAL DEATH.

In him *Sedition* hath lost its most *zealous* and *indefatigable* Friend; the *World*, an *imperious* and *turbulent* Member of Society; and the *Dissenters from the Established Church*, a *furious* and *indiscreet* Advocate, who did irreparable Injury to their common Cause. He was a professed *Enemy* of every *System of Government*, and an *avowed Friend* to *Anarchy* and *Confusion*. Led by extreme *Vanity*, and the *Imbecility* of abstract Reasoning, to think he was capable of raising a *Storm violent enough to tear up the Establishment of his Country by the Roots*; he wanted *Penetration* to discover that the *same Hurricane*, by taking a contrary *Direction*, might sweep away his own "*baseless Fabrick, and leave not a Wreck behind.*" His Publications were numerous, among which, his *Treatises on Natural and Experimental Philosophy* discover considerable *Abilities* and great *Application*; but his *religious*, or rather *irreligious Tracts*, abound with such *Arrogance*, *Egotisms*, and *unpardonable Indecencies*, that *Charity* will not suffer the candid Part of Mankind to suppose that any *Christian Society* will ever sanction them,

them. He was altogether a man of such an *ambitious* and *reflects* Disposition, that *Heaven* and *Earth*, beholding his Presumption in endeavouring to unite in his own Person the Characters of *Lucifer* and *Cromwell*, disclaimed him; which coming to the ears of *his black Friends* on the other Side of the *Stygian Lake*, they unanimously elected him HIGH PRIEST in the Temple of their GREAT MASTER.

THIS MONUMENT was ERECTED
By a considerable Number of *principled* and dispassionate
DISSENTERS, who, preferring the peaceable Enjoyment of *real Property*, to the infamous Idea of *living on Plunder*, or the *chimerical one of equalizing all Ranks and Orders* of Men, thought it *their Duty* to publish and perpetuate their entire Disapprobation of

GUNPOWDER JOE's Political Conduct,
And their utter Abhorrence of his
UNCHRISTIAN DOCTRINES.

No. X.

*A Letter addressed to the People of England in the
Public Advertizer for Saturday, Aug. 18, 1792.*

Quos JUPITER vult perdere, prius dementat.

WHOLE nations may become insane, planet-struck, as well as individuals. God Almighty often delivers up whole nations, as well as individuals, to the depravity

vity and flagitiousness of their own vitiated feelings, the greatest calamity that can possibly befall them. Had the French exhibited on the stage of the world no other proof of their having lost their senses, and of their being under the immediate flagellation of Heaven, (*'tis God, not man alone, that precipitates the torrent of disasters over France at the present tremendous moment*); had they given no other proof of their insanity but the late public deification of that abandoned systematical professional infidel, Voltaire, and their more recent panegyric on Dr. Priestley, of prophane and blasphemous memory, the stupendous magnitude of this folly would have demonstrated and justified the propriety of taking out the statute against the whole body of the nation. Whoever made a panegyric on Judas, but Lucifer the father of darkness? What Roman ever praised Catiline, but his colleagues Lentulus and Cethegus? Whoever called the two incendiaries, Tyler and Straw, honest patriots, but Thomas Paine? Who ever thought John the painter a worthy candidate for fame, but an English Jacobine? Doubtless there is such a thing as decency, as propriety, as consistency of conduct: was it decent, was it acting like rational beings, to hold up two such callous dogmatical *profligates in opinion*, as Voltaire and Priestley, as examples of excellence, as models of wisdom, as patterns to be followed? Why call the one Socrates, and the other Fenelon? Was not this most egregious prostitution of language, most flagrant abuse of words? Socrates and Fenelon were the shining ornaments, the bright luminaries of the age they lived in; they were public blessings; they were the great apostles of virtue, delegated by heaven to instruct and meliorate the world with the salubrious doctrines of truth. They preached nothing but goodness, and universal philanthropy; and were themselves illustrious examples of the important lessons they taught. But what doctrines

do our modern philosophers preach? Why, they very gravely tell us, and with a confidence as if they really believed it, that revelation is nothing but a solemn imposture, that the gospel is a fable of the first magnitude, the Saviour a fantastic idol, a phantom of imagination; they maintain and prove it as clear as any proposition in Euclid, (if you will believe them) that the *soul is mortal*, that the golden promises of religion are idle dreams, fantastick delusions, to catch weak unenlightened minds.

These sanguine and laborious emissaries of darkness preach the black creed of infidelity with as much zeal, and assiduity, as the apostles preached the creed of salvation. The apostles were not more ardent to propagate and disseminate the great truths of Christianity, than these men are strenuous and indefatigable in their endeavours to abolish them. But with this signal difference, reader, God evidently co-operated with the apostles in the first promulgation of the gospel, and demonstrated their divine mission by signs, wonders, and splendid miracles; but who co-operates with Voltaire and Priestley in their indefatigable efforts to abolish the gospel? Beyond a doubt the great enemy of mankind, the father of sin, is with them tooth and nail. They have likewise most strenuously combating in their cause the whole tribe of ancient and modern unbelievers, the great mass of atheists, freethinkers, and libertines, existing in the world, the vast herd of recently corrupted and adulterated Socinians; add to these the whole crew of modern philosophers and metaphysicians, (the tarantulated Humes and Rousseaus of the day); all these militate against revelation, litigate the great truths of Christianity, with as much rancour and acrimony as Voltaire and Priestley. They have, moreover, most strenuously combating in their cause vain presumption, impudent assertion, dogmatical opinion, licentious assumption, un-

blushing misquotation, wilful misrepresentations of authors; all these co-operate with Voltaire and Priestley in propagating the black creed of infidelity. Will you praise these men then? Did they make a proper use of the talents God had so pre-eminently gifted them with? No, they prostituted their abilities to the most depraved and most flagitious purposes. They pointed, emulously pointed the great gun of their intellect, the whole artillery, the whole battery of their faculties *against the very God who gave it them*. They stretched every nerve of their souls to degrade and extirpate the great fundamental truths of religion; they laboured morning, noon, and night, most anxiously to persuade the *world to cease to be Christian*, and once more to *become Pagan*, to relinquish revelation, and once more adopt the religion of nature. This *par nobile fratrum*, this *indefatigable yoke* of infidels have practised every logical knavery, manœuvred every subtle literary fraud. They have exhausted the whole proteuism (if we may so speak) of chicane and finesse, in endeavouring to explode and abolish the soothing doctrine of redemption, the grand panacea of the gospel, the only infallible antidote against the common unavoidable ills of life, the *noblest cordial* in the gift of heaven. This golden nostrum, my countrymen, revealed to you by our Saviour, these lettered bravos, these fierce insulting Goliaths of argument, these wilful murderers of the repose of the world, want to rob you of. In order to accomplish their infernal purpose, they put the gospel upon the bed of Procrustes; if the text is too *short*, they *lengthen* it, if too *long*, they curtail it; if neither will answer the point, they boldly *amputate*, totally *annihilate*, and swear it is spurious. Are *these men* then *blessings* to the world? Are they of benefit to mankind? No! they are curses of the first magnitude; they are great national calamities, calamities more dreadful than nature's worst calamities,

mities, far worse than plague or earthquake; these only kill the body, the perishable part of man, but the doctrines of those men infallibly kill the soul, the immortal part of man, that is, they poison it, and prepare it for everlasting perdition. Drink one drop of the Lethe of their creed, and you are lost for ever. You are transmuted—you are changed—you instantly forget your God—you forget you are a man—you *materialise* the God, and you *brutalise* the man—you are lost to every honest glow of the heart, dead to every generous manly sensation; in short, you are as *literally a beast* as if *really touched* with the *wand Circean*. To lump, accumulate, and centre every curse in one, you are a Paineist in your political, and a Priestleyan in your religious creed. Could heaven, in the plenitude of its ire, inflict a heavier punishment on you?

You, my countrymen, have avoided the rock the French have so miserably split on; you are so far from consecrating and embalming books of blasphemy and treason, as the French have done, that you have most signally, and most pointedly, expressed your abhorrence and detestation of both, in reprobating in the most public manner the works of the Paines and Priestleys of the age.—You have demonstrated to all Europe, with a blaze of loyalty almost unexampled in the annals of history, your love and attachment to your king and country. You have stood boldly forward in the face of the day, the strenuous champions of the noblest cause that ever warmed and animated the heart of man. You have demonstrated to all the world, in the most splendid manner, with an effusion of honest zeal that will do honour to your feelings to the latest posterity, that *you will no longer suffer your constitution to be defamed, your religion to be blasphemed, nor your king to be calumniated* by a gang of impostors, who impudently presume to call

themselves Englishmen. Can that man be an Englishman who labours incessantly to destroy the civil and ecclesiastical establishment of the country? It is true, you have shewn most noble, most manly resentment, against the turbulent incendiaries of the times. But remember, my countrymen, Paine and Priestley still live; their works are not yet buried:—one rotten sheep, they say, will pollute a whole flock; a little leaven will agitate and ferment a large mass; two turbulent haranguing soldiers have been known to make a whole army mutiny. Beware of these men, my countrymen! One of them, in spite of the penal statute, will sell you blasphemy enough for two-pence to contaminate and blast a whole county, and the other treason enough for sixpence to convulse and dismember a whole kingdom. What then is to be done with these callous, hardened delinquents? What further marks of public detestation would you wish to fix on them? The grand jury of Middlesex (as was observed in the letter preceding this) presented the posthumous works of Bolingbroke as public nuisances. Why not then, my countrymen, present the works of Paine and Priestley as public nuisances? Are they not nuisances of the first magnitude, of the most dangerous tendency? Contain they not doctrines declaredly inimical to church and state? declaredly subversive of both? Present them, then, at the next grand inquest of the nation, at every county assize in the kingdom, and insist on their being burnt by the hands of the common hangman, in token of your abhorrence—boldly declaring to the world, as hath been observed before,—that *you will no longer suffer your constitution to be blackened and reviled, your God to be blasphemed, nor your King to be calumniated with impunity.*

Cirencester.

CAUSIDICUS.

It

It is reported in Eusebius, “ that the apostle St. John going
 “ one day into a public bath, saw Cerinthus there, one
 “ of the first opposers of the Divinity of the Saviour,
 “ and depravers of the gospel. The apostle instantly
 “ retreated at the sight of so abandoned an infidel, with
 “ the strongest marks of abhorrence and indignation in
 “ his countenance.” Dr. Johnson being on a visit to
 Pembroke College, Priestley’s arrival was announced;
 the moment Johnson saw him enter, he retired with the
 greatest precipitation, impressed, no doubt, with the same
 ideas as the apostle at the sight of Cerinthus. On the
 above anecdotes the following lines are built.

JOHN saw Cerinthus in the bath; he saw
 The monster, and lo! instant did withdraw,
 Dreading lest heaven should sudden vengeance send,
 To crush the wretch who durst the Christ offend;
 To crush the wretch who durst the *Christ deny*,
 And God the *Father* in the *Son* defy.
 Johnson *saw* Priestley, *saw*, and big with ire,
 Behold! the good old man with speed retire;
 Fearing, no doubt, some sad tremendous doom,
 With such a rank blasphemer in the room.
 Th’ apostle and the sage both felt the same;
 What honest Christian can their conduct blame?

CAUSIDICUS.

No. XI.

Copy of an Advertisement in the Birmingham Newspaper, relating to the Address to me from the Philosophical Society at Derby.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Derby, Oct. 3, 1791.

AN address to Dr. Priestley having been inserted in Mr. Pearson's paper, as agreed upon at a meeting of the Philosophical Society in Derby, Sept. 3, 1791; it is thought expedient by some of the members, who were not privy to the address, who cannot approve of it, and who think it improper a few individuals should publish their own sentiments as those of the society at large, to inform the public, that the same was agreed to, and fabricated by only five members of the society out of thirty-seven; and that in consequence thereof, at the General Annual Meeting, on Saturday, October first, the following resolution was agreed to: That in future no act of publicity shall be carried into effect, except at an annual meeting, or at a monthly one, a fortnight's previous notice being given of the business to every member of the society.

No. XII.

An Answer to the preceding by the Society.

SIR,

AN advertisement, misrepresenting a transaction of the Philosophical Society at Derby, having been inserted in a late newspaper, it is judged proper to refute it by a statement of the following circumstances.

I. That

I. That all business of the society, viz. the electing members, ordering in books, and enacting new laws and regulations, has been constantly, since the first institution of the society, transacted at the monthly meetings.

II. That of thirty-seven members, thirteen only are resident in the town, and that the address to Dr. Priestley was voted unanimously at a regular monthly meeting, at which was present the usual number of attending members, and that as it contained no reference to the doctor's *political opinions*, and even recommended to him to decline those theological controversies which seem to have provoked the vengeance of his adversaries, it was conceived that no man of a liberal mind would object to the congratulating him on his escape from the violence of an enraged mob; and that there could be no member of a *philosophical* society who did not regret the demolition of his valuable laboratory and manuscripts; and on that presumption they judged it unnecessary to delay till another month, a measure which, from the relation in which Dr. Priestley stands to all philosophical societies, seemed peculiarly and immediately proper on the present occasion.

III. That at the half-yearly meeting on the first of October, Mr. Hope was the only person who expressed a disapprobation of the address, declaring that his reason for doing it was his differing from Dr. Priestley in political sentiments, adding, that no man could respect the doctor's religious and philosophical opinions more highly than himself.

IV. That, when the late proposition was made for giving a fortnight's notice previous to all public transactions of the society, so far from its being understood to be a censure on the address, (as is very disingenuously insinuated in the advertisement referred to) the gentleman who moved the proposition, prefaced it by declaring that he intended

nothing less than a disapprobation of the measure; for so desirous was he of expressing his respect to Dr. Priestley as a philosopher, and his abhorrence of all persecution as a man, that he felt a singular mortification at having been precluded from signing the address, by not having received previous information of such a circumstance being intended; and that on that account alone he was induced to propose a regulation for similar occasions which might occur in future.

The members of the philosophical society, resident in and near Derby, having been summoned to an extraordinary meeting, *expressly* to take into consideration the advertisement in the Derby newspaper, of which the Rev. Mr. Hope avowed himself to be the author,

It was resolved unanimously, by ballot,

That the Rev. Mr. Hope having, in defiance of the resolution made at the last general meeting, committed an act of publicity, by printing in the Derby newspaper the resolution of the society without its knowledge or consent, and having in his advertisement insidiously misrepresented an act of the society, and Mr. Hope having been this day fully heard upon the subject, and not having explained his conduct to the satisfaction of the meeting, It is the opinion of this meeting, that he be desired to withdraw his name from the list of the society.

Derby,
Oct. 10, 1791.

R. ROE, Secretary.

No. XIII.

*A Description of an Allegorical Medal published at
Birmingham since the Riot.*

This Day is published,

DEDICATED TO ALL REVOLUTIONISTS IN THE BRITISH
DOMINIONS,

AN ALLEGORICAL MEDAL

1791-2.

O B V E R S E.

THE demon or evil genius of the 14th of July, is displaying her democratic standard; the flag contains a king's crown, furrounded with drops of blood, alluding to the regicide of the last century. On the top is a cap of liberty, the mistaken idea of which is the source of all her enormities. The young fiends she cherishes proves her prolific wickedness, which illustrates this motto:

“OUR FOOD IS SEDITION.”

.....

R E V E R S E.

A Viper in the grass;—this character cannot be better illustrated than where history proves that his subtilty brought misery on all mankind. He here partakes of the blessings of heaven and earth, at the same time, in secret covert, is premeditating destruction against the very cause of his comfort. The motto,

“NOURISHED TO TORMENT,”

shews the restless ingratitude of a corrupt and disloyal heart.

No. XIV.

An Account of the Clergy of Birmingham refusing to walk in funeral Processions with Dissenting Members since the Riot.

IN this present month of October 1792, the Rev. Mr. Scholefield was requested by the surviving relatives of one of his hearers (of the name of Thomfon) to attend at the funeral, to which he readily assented, but enquired at which of the churches the corpse was to be interred, and whether the clergyman had been apprized of the intention of the family respecting the invitation given to himself. These questions were put to the daughter of the deceased, and before she had replied to them, the son came in, who had just then been to the Rev. Mr. Young, lecturer of St. Paul's Chapel, (where it was intended to inter the corpse) and his report was, that when he gave Mr. Young an invitation to attend the funeral from the house of the deceased, he very readily assented; but, upon being told that Mr. Scholfield was expected there, and that it was hoped he would have no objection to going in the same coach with him, he said, at first, that he did not know, but after a very short pause, added, "the clergy of the town had come in general to a resolution not to ride or walk with any Dissenting Minister at a funeral."

This declaration from Mr. Young is the more remarkable, as he has rode in the same coach with Mr. Scholefield upon a former similar occasion.

No. XV.

Extract of a Letter written to me by a Person who was in my Library during the Demolition of the House, in Answer to one in which I had requested his Evidence concerning it.

Birmingham, March 5, 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I DEEM it right thus immediately to inform you, that I did not arrive at your house till after the destruction of the library. The road for half a mile of my approach was strewn with your books, the mob were carrying others away, and there was not above twelve octavos on the shelves when I entered the room, the floor of which was totally covered, two or three inches deep, with torn leaves, chiefly manuscript. The books that I saw collected at the top of the field behind the house with part of the furniture, were those, I presume, which were the only ones saved.

 No. XVI.

An Address of the Dissenters and Delegates of the Dissenters in England, to the Sufferers in the Riot at Birmingham.

To the Protestant Dissenters of the Town and Neighbourhood of Birmingham, who suffered from the Riots which happened in the month of July last.

WE, the assembled deputies and delegates of the Protestant Dissenters of England, in the name of the numerous and respectable body of our constituents, feel it
incumbent

incumbent on us thus publicly to testify our astonishment and horror at the outrages which you have experienced from an ignorant and misguided multitude, and our respect for that manly fortitude with which you have supported these unmerited sufferings.

While however, as sustaining one common character, we are anxious to pay this sincere tribute of affectionate and fraternal sympathy to all our injured brethren, we are persuaded that we shall gratify alike your feelings and our own, when, waving our various speculative and especially our theological differences, we desire to express our peculiar concern on the account of that distinguished individual, whom the rancour of this cruel persecution selected as the first victim of its rage.—Deeply convinced of the importance of truth, we unite in admiring the ardour which he has ever discovered in the pursuit of it; as freemen, we applaud his unremitting exertions in the great cause of civil and religious liberty; as friends to literature, we are proud of our alliance with a name so justly celebrated as that of Dr. Priestley; and we pray the Almighty Disposer of events long to continue to us and to the world, a life which science and virtue have contributed to render illustrious.

We rejoice in the thought, that, though loaded with calumny and overwhelmed by violence, you have not yet been disgraced by one serious imputation of a crime; and it is therefore reasonable to confide in the justice of your country for an ample reparation of the wrongs you have sustained.—But, in proportion to your innocence, the infamy of these proceedings falls with accumulated weight on the authors and the perpetrators of such mischief; nor can we avoid observing in the circumstances of this transaction evident symptoms either of some gross defect in our general system of police, or of the most supine and culpable negligence in those whose immediate duty it was to have protected

ted the places of public worship, as well as the lives and property, of their fellow-citizens; and we trust that the executive government, which exerted so much laudable activity to repress the disorders on the first notice, will proceed more fully to vindicate its own dignity and the national honour, by seriously inquiring how it came to pass that they were permitted to rise unchecked to such a height of destructive fury.

Whatever may be the event, we desire to assure you of our warmest affection, of our steadiest support. Although in this instance the storm has fallen on you alone, we all feel ourselves to have been equally within the aim of the spirit which directed it; nor shall we ever attempt to elude similar violence by meanly abandoning the common cause, or deserting our brethren in the hour of distress.

Our adversaries betray little acquaintance with the character and principles of the men whom they presume to insult and vilify, if they imagine that the spirit of the Dissenters is to be subdued and broken by the means which have been employed at Birmingham. Such measures can only tend to cement more closely our bond of union, and to invigorate our efforts to procure the repeal of those invidious and injurious laws, by which we are held forth as the proper objects of suspicion and insult to the unthinking vulgar.

Persuaded that we have never merited those absurd and malicious imputations by which ignorance and bigotry have always attempted to excuse illegal violence, we boldly appeal for our justification to our general conduct, whenever on great national emergencies we have been drawn forth to action. We cannot point out any other criterion of our principles as a body, than the uniform tenor of our public conduct. We know that on such occasions we shall be found ever to have shewn the most affectionate and invariable

riable attachment to the constitution of this kingdom, as settled on the principles of the glorious revolution, on which alone depends the title of the present august family to the British throne; and on this fair and open ground we challenge any class of our enemies to a comparison.

But although we have no wish to conceal our sentiments, yet maintaining, as we shall never cease to do, the equal right of every citizen to all the common benefits of society, we apprehend that to call on us to purchase protection, safety, or even the good opinion of our fellow-subjects, by any avowal which the law does not require of all, or by any silence which it does not universally enjoin; is an assumption of superiority, which liberal minds will disclaim, and to which, conscious of no inferiority but in numbers, of no guilt but the love of liberty and of our country, we see not the smallest reason to submit.

We trust that our countrymen will at length discover that it is not our fault if some degree of discontent be ever the effect of oppression. We shall not relinquish the attempt to convince them, that civil distinctions founded on religious differences, are the real source of the disturbances which have so frequently arisen among contending sects in the same community; and we flatter ourselves that Britain, which formerly took the lead in religious toleration, will not be the last nation in the world to acknowledge the just claims of religious liberty; but that the day will arrive much sooner than those imagine, who reflect not on the present aspect and tendencies of human affairs, when the good sense of our country will admit us to that equal rank for which we contend, and when all shall cordially concur to efface the stain which the late outrages have fixed on our national character.

Signed by the unanimous order of the meeting,
 King's Head, Poultry, EDW. JEFFRIES, Chairman.
 London, February 1, 1792.

No. XVII.

The Answer by the Sufferers.

To the Deputies and Delegates of the Protestant Dissenters
of England, assembled in London.

Birmingham, April 22, 1792.

GENTLEMEN,

WE the sufferers by the late riots in the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham, were highly gratified by the reception of your affectionate address, and though local circumstances and considerations have retarded our acknowledgment of it, we have not been the less sensible of its value, or unmindful of the return it so forcibly demands from us. Though we were never so sensible of the value of our common faith as at this trying period, though its invigorating principles were not before this æra either justly known, or fully experienced; though we have derived continual support, as well as unspeakable satisfaction and comfort from them, yet we confess they receive fresh energy from the friendly sympathy, and the truly Christian spirit, which you have manifested upon this trying occasion.

We rejoice that, notwithstanding all the opprobrium our malicious adversaries are endeavouring to cast upon us, you have the firmness and generosity to step forth and acknowledge us as brethren. We rejoice that at the very instant in which our common principles are made the subject of general censure and ridicule, your truly respectable body has given public testimony to their efficacy, and generously acted upon them, by thus holding out to us the right hand of fellowship. Persecuted, and injured as we have been, and still are, an address of sympathy and condolence from so
respectable

respectable a body as the assembled deputies and delegates of the Protestant Dissenters of England, sent in the name of your numerous constituents, gives us a satisfaction we cannot describe, and affords a prospect which reanimates our spirits and revives our best hopes. Fully persuaded of the truth of our principles, of the justice of our cause, and conscious of none but benevolent views in our public efforts, we are determined to persevere in support of those great truths which have been too long concealed from the world.

The honourable mention you make of that noble individual who has done so much to enlighten the minds of his countrymen, as well as to extend science, was by no means the least pleasing part of your address. Nothing but the personal safety and happiness of him, at whose praise even the tongue of scandal is forced to be silent, could have in any degree reconciled us to his loss. We esteem him as the friend of the whole human race, and as an honour to his country; but the world knows not his value; his country is insensible of his worth. The full effect of his strenuous exertions in his pastoral duty alone cannot at present be computed. It will be more and more felt, and acknowledged. In the space of eleven years he has erected a monument more substantially founded than the pyramids of the East, and inscribed it with characters which shall survive the wreck of nature; we mean in the minds of youth enlightened and improved by his instructions.

There is a time coming, and we trust it is at no great distance, when the foolish and ignorant persons who perpetrated those dismal acts which you lament, and which we cannot think upon without horror, will be sensible of their folly. Posterity will stamp an anathema on them. The broad blot of this infamy must also remain to tarnish the annals of our country. History must relate, that

at the close of the eighteenth century the most virtuous and useful members of the community of Great Britain, were oppressed and persecuted without sympathy from the multitude, and that a most distinguished individual met with opprobrium and insolence from a country which he had endeavoured through life to serve in every way that benevolence, science, and uprightnes, could point out. To have our names transmitted to posterity with his, as those who have incurred reproach for their firm adherence to the principles of civil and religious liberty, is an honour which we did not anticipate, but of which we would not be deprived.

Be assured, Gentlemen, that we shall cheerfully concur with you in your endeavours to obtain the repeal of all penal statutes in matters of religion, hoping that unanimity in the grand principles of liberty and truth will unite the common body of Dissenters, and that they will persevere in their endeavours till those intolerant and unchristian statutes, which have so long been a disgrace to our code, shall be expunged from it.

We remain,

Gentlemen, &c.

Signed in the name, and with the unanimous concurrence
of a general meeting of sufferers,

WILLIAM RUSSELL.

No. XVIII.

An Account of the Alarm and Loss of Mr. Carpenter of Woodrow, in a Letter from his Brother.

W. RUSSELL, ESQ. DIGBETH, BIRMINGHAM.

Woodrow, near Bromsgrove, May 9, 1792.

SIR,

THE first intelligence we had of the riots in Birmingham, was on the 15th of July, but being extremely busy in haymaking, we paid but little attention to it, thinking the civil power would soon restore every thing to peace and order again. However, on the following evening several of our neighbours who had been at Bromsgrove, came to inform us that the Woodrow was in the list of proscribed houses, and that my eldest brother's life was threatened. This alarmed us; but my brother, not choosing to trust to these reports, went to Bromsgrove to gain more authentic information. He returned about eleven o'clock, and informed us that the reports seemed but too true, that many of the lower class of people in Bromsgrove seemed very much disposed to rioting, some of them calling after him as he rode along the street, saying, that the meeting-houses should come down the next day, and cursing the Presbyterians with the utmost bitterness.

At twelve o'clock we were surprised by a post-chaise driving to the door; it contained Mr. and Mrs. Benton, the nurse maid, and several children: they came to beg a night's lodging, as they durst not stop any longer so near Birmingham, either in their own house or with their friends; and so precipitate was their flight, that they were obliged to bring
the

the children out of bed with only their night clothes on— Poor little innocents! it was a distressing sight to see them, and still more distressing not to be able to afford them a safe asylum: for, on hearing our dangerous situation, Mrs. Benton thought it most prudent to go farther on. Brother Thomas, myself, and a neighbour, then went to the top of the Lickey, from whence we could plainly see a large house in flames towards Birmingham; this proved but a poor consolation, and we returned home with heavy hearts. At six o'clock on Sunday morning we dispatched two messengers, one to Bromsgrove, the other to Birmingham. The latter returned about eleven o'clock with an account that a large party of the rioters were gone to burn Kingwood Meeting, and from thence they would proceed to the Woodrow. My brother also returned from Bromsgrove with similar information. I immediately took our most valuable papers and writings, and buried them in a neighbour's garden. It was also thought most prudent to remove part of our furniture; but where to take them was the question, as our neighbours, though many of them were willing, durst not take them in, for fear of bringing a mob after them, and thereby endangering their property. After a short consultation it was thought most advisable to send it to Kidderminster. We immediately packed up our plate, linen, beds, books, &c. &c. and sent off three waggon loads (including a quantity of wool) in the afternoon. At the same time my mother, sister, and youngest nephew, went to Boar-cote, where they found an asylum at the house of Mr. Cox, who treated them with the utmost kindness. We sat up all night, (indeed we had never a bed left in the house, had any of us been disposed for one) and kept a strong guard both in and around the house.

On Monday morning we had information that the rioters were dispersed in parties around the country, committing

various depredations; and that the soldiers were too few in number to leave Birmingham in pursuit of them.

Parties of people from Broomsgrove and its vicinity went to join the rioters; and about one or two o'clock a number of people from this neighbourhood collected together upon Round Hill, half a mile from the Woodrow, to be ready in all appearance to join the rioters when they came. In this party were several who had been heard to threaten brother John in the most violent manner. Things wearing such a serious aspect at this time, we thought proper to remove the remainder of our household effects, which we conveyed into the fields, and hid among the corn, or buried in the earth. Brother Thomas and myself also removed our wheat and flour from the mill. A very violent shower happily dispersed the people on Round Hill, and also prevented the Birmingham rioters from coming forwards.

About nine o'clock in the evening a gentleman rode to the Woodrow, and said he had left a body of the rioters on the top of the Lickey marching towards the Woodrow, their number uncertain. Brother John then determined to defend his house, and desired his men to prepare for action; but at length, from the excessive importunity of those about him, he gave it up, and left his house for the first time, with the melancholy prospect of never seeing it again. He had not rode more than a mile before he fell in with fifteen or sixteen rioters with blue cockades in their hats, and armed with bludgeons. On my brother's inquiring where they were going, several of them answered, *to burn Mr. Carpenter's house, according to orders from justice Cuthbert.* My brother perceiving they did not know him, said, Why, I thought Mr. Carpenter was a good sort of a man, why should you wish to burn his house? The answer was, he may be a very good sort of a man for all we know,

know, but *we have justice Carles's orders*, and down it shall come. On being asked for what reason, they said, *for being at the hotel*. My brother then told them they had better go to Bromsgrove, and get something to drink, and some more gentlemen coming up, and giving the same advice, they thought best to follow it.

The next morning (Tuesday), on their return from Bromsgrove, they called at the Woodrow to beg something to drink, and, while brother Thomas went to draw some beer, they attempted to go into the house, but our men prevented them. After pillaging several of the poor people's houses as they went along, they stopped at a public house about two miles from the Woodrow. Brother John returned home about half an hour after the rioters went away; and, as soon as he heard where they were, set off to Birmingham to procure some soldiers, and take them prisoners. In the mean time a Mr. Lane, who said he was a constable from Birmingham (and who, as I am since informed, died through excessive fatigue in the zealous performance of his duty), called at the Woodrow, and, on my informing him where the rioters were, said he would go and take them if I could get some resolute people we could depend upon to go with us. I immediately rode to Bromsgrove, and called several of my friends together, whom I found willing to join us; but as no member of the established church would go with us, it was given up for fear of giving offence. My brother returned from Birmingham in the evening, and gave the following account of his interview with the justices. On his introduction he informed them that a party of the rioters had been at his house that morning, and came, as they informed him, the preceding evening, by the order of justice Carles, to burn his house down; and, as he knew where they were, begged the favour of half a dozen light horse to secure them: but

this request not being granted, my brother offered to take them without the assistance of the military, if it met with their approbation: but their approbation was not given. Mr. Charles asked my brother if he knew ever an honest Presbyterian about the Lickey? My brother said he did not come there to talk about religion, he wished to prove himself a good citizen, and thought he was doing his duty by endeavouring to secure a set of lawless villains who were plundering the innocent inhabitants of the country. My brother was asked if he was at the hotel on the 14th of July?—Yes. What toasts did you drink?—Several; the king, for one. We don't believe it.—It is true. Will you swear it?—Yes. Dr. Spencer then offered him a bible for that purpose: my brother was going to take it, when the Doctor changed his mind, and put the book down.

It is inconceivable the fatigue we underwent, and the anxiety we felt during the riots. On the Monday I was on horseback, reconnoitring, &c. near fifteen hours, and wet to the skin through two great coats, and was at last so overcome with fatigue that I could scarcely sit on my horse. Brother Thomas put on his boots on Sunday morning, and did not pull them off till Wednesday night. My mother and sister were in continual fear lest brother John should lose his life, as it was so repeatedly threatened. We estimate our loss in damage, loss of property, expences, &c. at near 60l.

I am, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

WM. CARPENTER.

P. S. A man whom we sent to gain intelligence on the Sunday, fell in with the rioters at Mr. Wakeman's house near Kingswood: he saw the general, as he was styled, pull

pull a paper out of his pocket, which seemed to be a list of houses, and, on looking over it, said, "that house was to come down; but, as Mr. Wakeman had behaved so well, it should stop a little longer, but that they would come back, and pull it down before the next morning."

No. XIX.

An Account of the High Church Spirit which has long prevailed at Stourbridge.

AS the violent High Church spirit which produced the riot at Birmingham has been generally ascribed to me, I have taken some pains to inquire into the state of some of the neighbouring places in that respect; and thinking that from *Stourbridge* (which it is something remarkable I never was at except in once riding through it) to be as much to my purpose as any, I shall give it, as collected from different persons, whose accounts, I have no doubt, may be depended upon.

The Presbyterian church at Stourbridge was founded by Mr. Foley, an ancestor of the present Lord Foley, the members of which church first assembled in his house for public worship. This house has since been converted to an inn, and the room now called the Old Assembly Room was the room used for that purpose. Mr. Foley's domestic chaplain (a Mr. Flower) was their pastor

for many years. About this time the said Mr. Foley erected a large building for the reception of sixty poor boys, whom he directed should be clothed in a blue uniform, lodged and boarded in the house, and taught reading, writing, and merchants' accounts; and that afterwards they should be placed out with a small premium to such trades, and to such masters, as the boys and their parents should approve of. This good man lived to see his benevolent design carried into execution; and, having amply endowed the charity with considerable estates, it has continued to this day to answer the ends for which it was intended, as many opulent tradesmen now living, who were educated there, can with gratitude testify. For several years last past the feoffees of this institution have not permitted any Dissenter to take a boy from the school as an apprentice.

A Dissenting tradesman now living, who had an apprentice from thence about thirty years since, applied for one some years afterwards, and was told by the feoffees, that his request could not be complied with, as it was their determination that no Dissenter should have a boy from that school.

A gentleman of Bewdley, now living, applied about ten years since for an apprentice: the first question the feoffees asked him was, whether he was a Dissenter, and, upon replying in the affirmative, he received the same answer*. Knowing that the founder of the institution was a Dissenter, one would have thought that the principles of common integrity would have prevented them from such a shameful perversion of the intention of the donor: but, where bigotry supplies the place of charity and candour, shame is

* I have frequently heard that the feoffees are equally careful in preventing the children of poor Dissenters from gaining an admittance into the said School.

generally

generally discarded, and every profession of virtue is little more than a tinkling cymbal.

Owing to the mismanagement of a former steward, the feoffees were some years back much involved in debt, and were obliged to take long credit with goods bought for the use of the house, so that nothing induced many tradesmen to continue to supply them but the expectation of their being better customers in future, which the stewards always assured them would be the case in a few years. A Dissenting tradesman of Stourbridge, who had supplied them for many years, and with whom they usually took a credit of two or three years, was informed about eight or ten years since by the then steward, who called to discharge the account with the said tradesman, that he had orders from the feoffees to go elsewhere for the goods in future. The tradesman being naturally desirous of knowing the reason of their leaving him, after having done business with him for so many years, was importunate with the steward to be satisfied on that head, to which (after much hesitation) he replied, that they did not wish to do business with Dissenters. Upon this the tradesman desired to know how this objection never occurred to them before, which was fully explained by the steward, who said, that formerly they were obliged to get goods where they could, but that now, as several leases of estates had dropped, their finances were in such a state that the feoffees were enabled to pay ready money for all the goods they bought, and, therefore, were determined now to buy of no Dissenter.

It is worthy of remark that one of the present feoffees has, or formerly had, in his possession a bust of the late pretender; and that his father was one of a party, whose usual practice it was at their convivial meetings to fall upon their knees before the said bust, and drink each of them

their first glass to the restoration of the Stuart family to the throne of these kingdoms. These are the men who, with matchless effrontery, would now persuade the nation that they are the only true friends of the constitution*.

After the death of Mr. Foley, the congregation of Dissenters met for public worship in a meeting house in the Coventry street; and about the year 1702, the High Church party assembled, and by violence tore up the pews and pulpit, which they burnt with the minister's bible, in the midst of the market. This atrocity the court very properly noticed, brought the perpetrators thereof to punishment, and ordered the place to be new pewed, the expence of which was paid out of the treasury. I have heard of no absolute violence exercised against the Dissenters of that town since that period; but, until the present rector of the parish, of which Stourbridge is a part, came to reside there, a stiffness and unkindness on the part of the Episcopalians was observable towards them. Two circumstances which happened in one family will tend to satisfy any person of the truth of this remark.

A clergyman of the parish having been invited to the funeral of a Dissenter, and observing, upon his being introduced into the room where the bearers were assembled, that Mr. Edge, the Dissenting minister, was one of the party, left the house in anger, and sent his clerk to apologize for his conduct by saying that, "as he could not ride
" with Mr. Edge, if they would send his hatband and

* The enmity of this gentleman to the Dissenters may in some measure be accounted for. An ancestor of his having by will left a large sum of money to the father of the said gentleman, IN TRUST, to be divided among the indigent Dissenting ministers of the midland counties; and he having thought fit to apply the same to his own use, the associated body of ministers in London undertook the cause, which was at length brought before the Lord Chancellor King, who awarded the money to be applied as the testator directed, and the whole of the costs (which were considerable) to be paid by the trustee.

“scarf, he would meet the corpse at the church.” The hatband and scarf were very properly refused, and he was obliged to bury the corpse without them.

Another clergyman of the parish being invited to a funeral in the same family, and having an equal dislike to ride with the Dissenting minister, had the art to disguise that dislike until he had procured his hatband and scarf, and till the procession was ready to move, when he galloped through the town before the hearse to the astonishment of the spectators. The names of these clergymen were Brown and Male, and the facts are perfectly in the remembrance of many persons now living: but it is justice due to Mr. Male to say that he lived to see the folly of his conduct, and afterwards became a very liberal man.

As was hinted before, the intercourse between the people of the Establishment and the Dissenters of Stourbridge was much increased by the present rector settling among them. Soon after he came he requested to be admitted a member of a reading society belonging to the Dissenters, which had been established near forty years, and of which the Dissenting minister was the president; his admission was followed by that of many gentlemen of the church, and the frequent meetings to transact the business of the society tended very much to rub off that stiffness which had before been observable in their conduct towards each other. Upon the resignation of the Dissenting minister another Dissenter was chosen president; and the same unanimity continued to prevail until the society was dissolved for the purpose of forming a different institution.

The Dissenters were thus led to suppose that the former hatred of them by the Church was done away, and they were pleading themselves with the persuasion, until the breaking out of the riots at Birmingham completely con-
vined

vince them of their mistake. For no sooner did the news reach Stourbridge, but the most violent invectives were poured forth against the Dissenters by the same persons who had before professed so much liberality and kindness towards them. Every thing was said which could tend to stir up the minds of the people; the circulation of the handbill was charged upon a Dissenter, the report was propagated with great industry, and they heard from all quarters that their meeting house, and the houses of the Dissenters, would be levelled with the ground. The public houses were several of them filled with men who were ready to embark in the diabolical business; and, had it not been for the vigilance of an active magistrate, God only knows what would have been the consequence.

Thus disappointed, they evinced their determination to injure their Dissenting brethren, by withdrawing their custom from the shops of Dissenters, some of whom find their business much decreased. One tradesman, who had been in the habit of supplying many of the first families in the neighbourhood with goods, lost, immediately after the riots, thirty families who had for years had ledger accounts with him, besides many other ready money customers, and yet could never hear of the least charge which they had against him, except that of his being a Dissenter.

Some time before the Birmingham riots, the minister of a congregation of Dissenters at Cradley, near Stourbridge, interested himself in procuring a subscription for building a meeting house at a place called the Lye-waste, about a mile and a half from Stourbridge, a very populous neighbourhood, where the people are extremely ignorant, and where there is no place of worship of any denomination. The said minister, and the minister of the congregation at
Stourbridge,

Stourbridge, had engaged to preach alternately when the place should be erected, without any salary, actuated by no other motive than the desire of doing good. Having procured a sufficient subscription for the purpose, they applied to a gentleman of Stourbridge for land to erect the building upon, who readily told them they might have which ever part of his estate they chose; in consequence of which the land was measured out, and a price was fixed on it by an appraiser, which price was agreed to by both parties; an attorney was sent for, who received instructions in the presence of both to prepare articles of conveyance; and bricks were drawn upon the spot for the building: yet, notwithstanding all this, he afterwards refused to let them have any part of it. After the Birmingham riots, other gentlemen who had land at the Lye-waste were applied to, but they all refused to sell their land for such a purpose. After this the minister of Cradley waited upon the rector of the parish, and assured him that he had no intention of disseminating any peculiar doctrines, that his only motive was to serve the best interests of his neighbours, and that, if the people of the establishment would subscribe towards building a church, he would abandon his design, and assist them in theirs: but this good young man has been unable to accomplish either; and the money now lies unemployed, and the poor of that district uninstructed.

Some months previous to the Birmingham riots, the Stourbridge Dissenters had engaged a London minister to preach a charity sermon at their meeting house, on the second Sunday in August (which was soon after the riots happened); and it is a little remarkable that the rector of the parish advertised a charity sermon to be preached by himself in his own church, *on the same day*, though no charity sermon had been preached in that church

church for some years before. As the notice was short, the sermon was advertised by handbills distributed through the parish, in consequence of which the church was extremely crowded; and, though it was professedly a *charity* sermon, the greatest part thereof consisted of invectives against the Dissenters of Stourbridge and Cradley, and of charges against the managers of their Sunday Schools which had no foundation in fact. The Dissenters not being present, could only hear this account from those liberal churchmen who heard the sermon, and who were much disgusted with the virulence of the preacher. Some Dissenters of both congregations waited upon the rector to deny the charges, and to satisfy him of their untruth—this they were enabled to do; upon which he acknowledged that he had made them upon the testimony of a woman of dissipated character. However he promised to contradict what he found he had asserted without good foundation, and to do it in every company where he had an opportunity; but whether he has performed his promise or not, has not yet come to the knowledge of the Dissenters. However the Dissenters have it now in their power to bring serious charges, and to establish them as facts, against the managers of the Church Schools. They can prove that a minister residing in the parish threatened a poor washerwoman with the loss of her employment in his family, if she did not take her child from the Presbyterian School. And yet it is well known in the parish that the Dissenters instruct the children of their schools in no other than the common doctrines of Christianity, in which all Christians agree. These are some of the scandalous proceedings of those who call themselves the disciples of him who went about doing good.

The interest of several sums of money is annually distributed

tributed to the poor of the parish in bread and cloathing, and lately the rector of the parish, and the minister of the chapel, have been accustomed to interrogate the paupers who apply for the said donations, respecting the church to which they belong; and those who are found to attend the Presbyterian meeting-house lose the benefit of the said charities.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

After p. 52, add—The behaviour of one of my maid servants affords a pretty strong presumption that some mischief was designed me on the fourteenth of July, and that she was apprized of it. She asked leave to go and see her friends some days before, and desired to stay a few days after that time. When she went, she desired the servant boy to write to her “if any thing happened.” She not only was not solicitous about the clothes she lost, but evidently dreaded being obliged to attend the assizes. When she was subpoenaed, though on the part of our opponents, she endeavoured to evade it, by denying her name; and she either actually went to Ireland, or her friends pretended that she did, so that she could not be found at the time. Some of her connections were with the High Church party, and from some of them it is not improbable she received a hint that it would be better for her to be out of the way. Many other persons in the last century appear now to have had the same apprehensions, without anything of this, however, coming to my knowledge, or the knowledge of any person acquainted with me, or of any such thing being done in my life.

P. 52. l. 16. Read—*and that he does not appear that he had any part in it.*

P. 55. l. 2. Read—*that it was a good cock.*

P. 59. l. 16. Read—*on Sunday to their magistrate.*

P. 72. l. 2. from the bottom. He has also been made steward of the manor.

P. 82. l. 7, (b.) Whatever else may be objected to my conduct, it cannot be said that, after the example of my adversaries, I ever shrunk from an investigation into the part I had acted. The day that I arrived in London I desired Mr. Russell, who had to wait on the King's ministers, to inform them that I was in town, and ready to answer any questions they might choose to put to me relating to the riot; and when the inquiry into the cause of it was proposed in the House of Commons, my friends were authorized by me to say, that I wished to be examined on the subject at the bar of the House. But in neither of the cases were my wishes gratified.

T. 83. l. 6. (b.) Besides, this was not the only fact of which he was convicted. He was seen knocking out the window frames, and beating things to pieces, and he made a fire of the boards he had pulled up. See the Trial, p. 146, &c.

P. 92. l. 6. (b.) This, however, was only with respect to that part of his loss which Mr. Russell claimed in court. In reality he was probably a loser to a greater amount.

P. 100. *At the close of the second paragraph add—*This Mr. Allen was the clergyman who fought a duel with a Mr. Delaney, and killed him. He may perhaps send *me* a challenge; but Dissenting ministers do not fight duels.

P. 121. To the note add—Will he do us the favour to say what sum was subscribed by this most respectable meet-

ing to pay for the presents they so generously voted, and will he have the goodness to tell us how soon afterwards a sufficient addition was made to it to defray the cost of them, and when the plate was presented to these worthy magistrates?

P. 127. l. 4. (b.) dele, *and that of all who were present at the time he refers to.*

P. 132. l. 5. (b.) dele, *and I believe even afterwards followed by some of the mob.*

P. 142. Note, read, when the brothels, and Mr. Brooks's house, were in danger in May last.

P. 143. l. 7. Read—*which, notwithstanding the party spirit which has so long governed some bigots among us.*

Till the whole of this part of my *Appeal* was printed off, I never read the *Letter* addressed to me on my *Address to the subscribers to the Birmingham library*, No. III. of this Appendix, by SOMEBODY M. S. printed in 1787, and generally ascribed to Mr. Clutton, a clergyman in Birmingham, whose sermon on the subject of the Test Laws Mr. Madan laments was not published. Having had a copy of this *Letter* sent me, I have had the curiosity to read it through, and have been not a little amused with the scurrility with which it abounds; and for the amusement of my readers, as well as to give them a specimen of the spirit which actuated the Birmingham clergy, and to enable them to judge of the tendency of their writing, and no doubt of their preaching and daily conversation, to inflame the minds of the common people against me, I shall quote some passages from it. But I wish that my

readers would first peruse the *Address* which occasioned this extraordinary Letter, and also my *Appeal to the Professors of Christianity*, to which it alludes.

According to this Mr. Clutton, I am, p. 25, “ a deluded visionary;” “ a proud and haughty scorner,” p. 4; and “ a secret assassin,” p. 19. He accuses me both of “ daring opposition, and subtle stratagem,” p. 21; of “ covered artifices to deceive the unwary,” p. 1; and likewise of “ outrageous bellowing,” p. 25.

My *Appeal to the Professors of Christianity*, he calls “ poison, and an engine of sedition,” p. 5; consisting of “ plausible, but treacherous reasoning, subtle sophistry, nay, “ a murderous pamphlet,” p. 17.

With respect to my general character, I am “ a public nuisance,” p. 38. and “ must not expect to go unhorsewhipped.” I have “ forfeited all indulgence, and “ must expect every species of deserved retaliation, that “ those who have been injured by me, their friends, and “ allies, can inflict,” p. 44.

My “ attachment to Christianity,” he says, p. 13, is “ ideal;” for I am “ sunk into the gulph of deism,” p. 36. He advises me to “ go to a free country,” (meaning, I suppose, either France or America) “ which has no laws, no rulers, no religion.” “ There,” says he, p. 40, “ you “ may give the reins to your reason, gratify your appetites, “ and let loose all your lusts.” But whether I go to this country or not, “ a hideous gulph,” (by which he evidently means hell) “ is gaping for me, and my followers,” p. 39.

Besides more such language as this, which, as coming from a clergyman, must not be termed *abuse*, he introduces a long epitaph for me, p. 13, of which the following is an extract.

“ The assumed meekness and simplicity of the dove,
 “ hiding the guile and subtlety of the serpent, smoothed his
 “ wrinkled front. The honey dew of rhetoric flowed from
 “ his tongue, and became the unsuspected vehicle of the
 “ poison of asps. Reason, he said, would teach us how to
 “ weaken the authority and force of scripture, &c. He
 “ beseeched us, for the credit of the human race, for the
 “ sake of truth, of conscience, and our immortal souls, to
 “ pay divine honours to his goddesses, &c. &c. &c.”

It is some consolation to think, that whether I be able to find a grave or not, my enemies have already taken care to provide me with a sufficient number of epitaphs.

T H E E N D.







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An appeal to the public, on the subject

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