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FLOWER'S LETTERS FROM THE ILLINOIS—JANUARY 18,
1820—MAY 7, 1821

Reprint of the original edition: London, 1822

LETTERS

FROM

THE ILLINOIS,

1820. 1821.

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE ENGLISH SETTLEMENT
AT ALBION AND ITS VICINITY, AND A REPUTATION OF
VARIOUS MISREPRESENTATIONS, THOSE MORE PARTICULARLY
OF MR. COBBETT.

By **RICHARD FLOWER.**

WITH A LETTER FROM M. BIRKBECK ; AND A PREFACE
AND NOTES BY BENJAMIN FLOWER.

*Thou shalt bless the LORD thy GOD for the GOOD LAND which he hath
given thee:—beware that thou forget not the LORD thy GOD.*

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

DIVINE COMMANDS.

London;

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By C. Teulon, 67, Whitechapel.

1822.

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Price One Shilling

Letters from Lexington and the Illinois, 1819; containing a Brief Account of the English Settlement in the latter territory, and a Refutation of the misrepresentations of Mr. Cobbett.

PREFACE¹

Two of the following letters have before appeared in a respectable periodical publication, in which the editor has impartially inserted the communications of writers of different opinions, on the subject of emigration;² but as they may be said to be a continuation of former letters, and connected with those now for the first time published, I have thought proper to insert them.

Readers who are desirous of forming just opinions on this subject, are requested to bear in remembrance the

¹ This pamphlet was seen through the press by Benjamin Flower (1755-1829), a brother of the author; he also contributed the Preface and the concluding Notes. Benjamin had started in life as a London tradesman; but having failed, travelled for several years on the European continent as agent for a Tiverton firm. Being in France during much of 1791, "the most innocent part of the revolution," he became imbued with some of the ideas of the French revolutionists; and although not a revolutionist in England, he entered the lists as a Radical pamphleteer, bitterly attacking the English government for engaging in war with France. Richard, a man of substance, and although a Radical rather moderate in his views, was largely concerned in establishing the Cambridge *Intelligencer*, a Radical organ. Benjamin was chosen editor, and became widely known as a controversialist, Cobbett being one of his especial *bêtes noires*. In 1799 he suffered six months' imprisonment in Newgate and the payment of a fine of £100 for libelling the bishop of Llandaff, a political opponent. When released, he married a young admirer, set up as a printer, and conducted the *Political Register* (1807-11). He wrote a life of Robert Robinson, a famous Baptist minister and hymn writer, prefixed to editions of the latter's works (Harlow, 1807, 1812), also several pamphlets on political and family matters. He was esteemed for his honesty and courage, but the vehemence of his temper largely nullified his influence. Two of his daughters became well known as musical composers — Eliza Flower (1803-46) wrote several political hymns, and Sarah Flower Adams (1805-48) was the author of "Nearer to Thee," often wrongly attributed to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe.

A review of the pamphlet here reprinted will be found in the *London Quarterly Review*, xxvii, p. 71.— ED.

² *Monthly Repository*, August and October, 1820.— B. FLOWER.

precise stations described in the following pages. However unworthy or base may have been the motives of certain writers, who have grossly calumniated the English Settlement, there are others, [iv] to whom it would be uncandid to impute such motives, but who are chargeable with misrepresentation, which appears to have arisen from their not having considered that the spots they are describing are not those described by others; and that, of course, it is not fair to charge others with statements they have never made.

I have publications before me in which Mr. Birkbeck and my brother are charged with unfairness in their statements, because they do not apply to the situations the writers had chosen, one of which was fifty, and the other four hundred miles from the English Settlement. There are at the Illinois as in almost all other countries, situations pleasant and unpleasant, healthy and unhealthy, and that emigrant does not act a very wise part, who fixes on a station unless he had carefully examined it himself, or at least had the recommendation of some intelligent friend who would scorn to mislead him.

Emigration to America, after all that has [v] been written on the subject, and the various advantages it certainly presents to different classes of society, is an affair of such importance, that those who propose it should seriously reflect on the turn of their own mind, their disposition, habits, circumstances, &c. Some who have emigrated to America find themselves as unhappy there as they were in their own country. Those who are averse to labour, fond of luxuries, and whose minds are rivetted to the artificial distinctions of society in Europe, have found to their cost, that America is not the country for them; and unless they can learn wisdom, and form resolution sufficient to alter

some of their habits, and if not to despise, to regard with indifference most of those distinctions, they can never be reconciled to Republican manners and institutions. Respecting a few persons of this description at the Illinois, one of the principal settlers exclaimed:—"What are such people come here for?"

For the Notes to the following letters, with "all their imperfections on their head," I am [vi] solely responsible.— I am not without apprehensions that there may be even candid readers, who may think that in my *Reflections on Infidelity, Civil Establishments of Religion, &c.* I have somewhat wandered out of my way: to such readers I beg leave to offer a word or two by way of apology. True religion, I consider as the most important concern of life; and were I, when reflecting on the state of society which too generally characterizes this globe, even its most civilized parts, and on the various follies and vices which have so sadly deformed mankind — on the adversity of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked,— were I not, amidst such reflections, supported by divine consolations, suggested by a firm belief in the *Being and Providence of God*, and of the truth of the christian system which assures us that "all things shall be subdued and reconciled to HIM," I should indeed be "of all men the most miserable;" and, as I am firmly persuaded that the success of the gospel is not more hindered by open infidelity than by [vii] the corruptions of christianity, I have from the circumstances which are stated in the following letters respecting the state of religion at the Illinois, thought proper to express myself on the subject with my usual freedom. So little has been done towards the restoration of primitive christianity in this country for the two past centuries, although there has been of late, an unusual bustle in the

religious world,—so inveterate are the evils resulting from STATECRAFT and PRIESTCRAFT united, that although I believe with a firm and unshaken faith, *that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*, I confess my ignorance as to the period, and the means by which those glorious events predicted in the sacred writings will be accomplished. I cannot however but indulge the hope that mankind will, by observation and experience, under the blessing of heaven grow wiser; and that in the formation of new settlements, many of the evils referred to, may with proper care be avoided. With this hope, I [viii] have endeavoured to give a helping hand, however feeble, to those who have at heart the best interests of their fellow creatures.

For the language I have made use of in exposing bad men, and more particularly a notorious political impostor, who when indulging his deep-rooted prejudices and violent passions, cares not how he throws off the common feelings of humanity, or sets truth and decency, or the principles of honour and honesty at defiance, scarce any apology is necessary. Should any one think my language too strong, I might plead the example of some of the greatest and best men in different ages; but I shall confine myself to that of the sacred writers. The prophets and apostles, yea, our Saviour himself, when describing the COBBETTS of *their* day, have used much stronger language than I have done; and if it be a duty at any time to *rebuke sharply*, or as critics inform us the words should be rendered, with *a cutting severity*, or *cutting to the quick*, it is when we have to do with men of such a description.

[ix] In conclusion, I ask I hope no great favour in claiming on behalf of Mr. Birkbeck, my brother, and myself, that

credit for our statements, until they are refuted by evidence, to which persons who have little character to lose, cannot lay claim; and that we may on the present occasion obtain belief when we have nothing to contradict us but the confident language of a man "known to be wholly indifferent to truth;" and who has, in the compass of three months only, for his scandalous libels on private characters,—on one of those occasions for having invented the atrocious charge of FORGERY against a former associate — most deservedly smarted in a court of justice. Should I, however unintentionally, have committed any mistake, I shall deem myself bound to acknowledge it.

B. F.

Dalston, Jan. 16th, 1822.

P. S. Mr Cobbett somewhere remarks — "That he would sooner join the fraternity of *gypsies* in this country than the settlement at the Illinois." This is not so extravagant as some of his assertions, as he has proved himself pretty [x] well qualified, in one respect at least, for a member of that fraternity; namely, by his numerous *gipsy* prophecies. To select one class only:— How frequently has he in terms the most unqualified and confident, predicted that the Bank of England would *never* return to cash payments; how frequently has he fixed the *period* beyond which it was impossible for bank-notes to preserve their value! Perhaps he had in his eye the accomplishment of his favourite plan,— a general forgery of those notes, as the grand means of bringing about his predictions. Notwithstanding the complete failure of those predictions, (and I could produce numerous instances of similar failure) he, although apparently sadly mortified, goes on with his prophecies, and renews the

senseless and injurious advice to the farmers, which he has been giving them for many years past, but which he knows, alas! they cannot follow — to hoard up the gold “because in two years it will buy twice as much land as it will buy now!” It was not many months since he gave them the same advice respecting silver, assuring them “that a bundle of silver would *shortly* prove a mine of wealth.”—*Address to the Farmers*. (*Register Dec. 15*). In which publication Mr. C. has, in his language applied to Mr. Webb Hall, so justly drawn his own picture, that I hope the farmers will keep it constantly in view.— “The truth is, Mr. [Cobbett] is a conceited man with a great deal of loose and indistinct stuff in his head; and, having great power of front, he puts the stuff forth without hesitation. A modest man may be a weak man and yet not deserve our contempt; but impudence and folly joined claim as much of contempt as man can bestow.”— If the farmers can swallow such “stuff,” they have indeed, what Dr. South [xi] calls an “iron digesting faith,” and should the Jesuits visit this, as they are now visiting other countries, they will doubtless consider Mr. Cobbett’s boasted “disciples” as well prepared to swallow down the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*!

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I

Albion, Illinois, Jan. 18, 1820.

DEAR SIR,

MY whole family, I think enjoy, since we have been here, much better health than in England, and we have enjoyed the fine Indian summer, which has lasted full two months, of most charming temperature, the thermometer varying from 70 to 75. We had only two wet days in November, and one sudden change to 35 degrees; the weather in December was equally fine till Christmas-day, when we had frost and snow much as in England, and since that time some very cold days, the thermometer being below freezing, 22 degrees. We have now milder weather, but frost and snow on the ground, and the thermometer again at freezing, but gently thawing.

Our settlement has been remarkably healthy, and every thing is going on tolerably well. You [10] will say *tolerably well* has a suspicious sound; I will therefore allude to that term in future, and state the inconveniences as well as the pleasures of the autumn. We have experienced considerable inconvenience from drought, and been obliged to draw water by carriage to the town, as the wells did not supply the inhabitants with a sufficiency, and the people, like the Israelites, murmured at us, the town proprietors, as much as ever that stiffnecked people did at Moses. I had no rock to strike, or power to raise water by miracle of any kind, and therefore applied industry and perse-

verance to make up this deficiency, and offered to supply them with fine spring water at a quarter-dollar per barrel, from a most delightful spring, found on my son George's estate, only eight feet deep, and inexhaustible. I had nearly two miles to draw it, but I lost nothing by my contract, and murmuring was allayed. This want of water would have been a serious objection to our settlement if it had been local, but it has been an unusual drought throughout the whole of the Western country, such as has been rarely experienced, and we have been much better off than the people of Kentucky: it has also awakened our energies, and within half a mile of the town an excellent well has been opened, besides two [11] others at a mile and a half, so that no lasting want has been known, only a temporary inconvenience suffered.

I am rather particular on this subject, as report had spread that our town had broke up, our people scattered, and disease prevailed for want of water, all which was notoriously false; and through mercy, I think there have been fewer deaths in the number of inhabitants than in any part of England.

Another inconvenience from this drought was, the burning of the prairies much earlier than usual. There is a grandeur in this scene almost indescribable and somewhat alarming. We see whole prairies, containing thousands of acres, like a sea or lake of fire ascending; columns of smoke so affect the air, that it is a complete fog, and painful to the eyes; but after a few days all is over; the sky clear, and the air serene, but our herbage is gone. At this season the cattle go into the barn: we pay a herdsman to look after them, and if the weather is not immoderately wet, they come out as fat as sheep from coleseed, and afford profit to the grazier. Our bullocks, which were

bought at sixteen or seventeen dollars last year, are now selling at Albion Market, from twenty-eight to thirty-one dollars each, paying nearly cent per [12] cent, for nine month's keeping; thus we are this year principally graziers, having two hundred acres enclosed, and more enclosing. George will have a fine farm opened, an excellent garden and young trees, and vegetables of the most luxuriant growth.

It ought not, however, to be concealed that we are much in want of farming labourers; we with difficulty get a regular ploughman, and a ploughboy is still a scarcer commodity; and till we can get our prairies once broken, and go with two horses without a driver, ploughing will be difficult to be performed. Our people put on the independent airs of Americans, without either their natural or noble independence, which disdains any thing like servitude; but, as if delighting to teaze us gave them great pleasure, they quit their work suddenly and without reason; but we greatly counteract this by keeping them out of employ, and our money in our pockets, and pay the Americans who come out and are always migrating for a job of work, and then return to their farms. We are also, in many instances, destitute of female servants, but then we have plenty of helps, or *charwomen*, who will come and work by the day or half-day, and then return to their families. My wife has managed this business [13] admirably well: observing their disposition, she hires them by the hour, sees well to them for the time being, and generally gets a usual day's work done in a few hours. This occasional assistance, in addition to the services of Mrs. C. who we brought with us, and a woman servant, makes us comfortably served.

On the return of Christmas day, we invited our party as

at Marden, my late residence in Hertfordshire: we assembled thirty-two in number. A more intelligent, sensible collection I never had under my roof in my own country. A plentiful supply of plumb pudding, roast beef and mince pies were at table, and turkeys in plenty, having purchased four for a dollar the preceding week. We found among the party good musicians, good singers; the young people danced nine couple, and the whole party were innocently cheerful and happy during the evening. The company were pleased to say I had transferred Old England and its comforts to the Illinois. Thus, my dear Sir, we are not in want of society; and I would not change my situation for any in America, nor for *disturbed* or *tumultuous* England.

My efforts to assemble the people to public worship have been successful; our place is well attended, from forty to fifty people, [14] and amongst our congregation we often number a part of Mr. Birkbeck's children and servants. Our singing is excellent; our prayers the reformed Unitarian service. The sermons which have been read are from an author I never met with in England, Mr. Butcher; they are, without exception, the best practical sermons I have ever seen. Our Library-Room is well attended in the afternoon; the people improving in cleanliness and sobriety, recover the use of their intellectual faculties, and interest themselves in moral and christian converse.

When I arrived at Albion, a more disorganized, demoralized state of society never existed: the experiment has been made, the abandonment of Christian institutes and Christian sabbaths, and living without God in the world has been fairly tried. If those theologians in England who despise the Sabbath and laugh at congregational

worship, had been sent to the English settlement in the Illinois at the time I arrived, they would, or they ought to have hid their faces for shame. Some of the English played at cricket, the backwoodsmen shot at *marks*, their favourite sport, and the Sunday revels ended in riot and savage fighting: this was too much even for infidel nerves. All this also took place at Albion; but when a few, a very few, [15] better men met and read the Scriptures, and offered prayer at a poor contemptible log-house, these revellers were awed into silence, and the Sabbath at Albion became decently quiet. One of its inhabitants, of an infidel cast, said to me, "Sir! this is very extraordinary, that what the law could not effect, so little an assembly meeting for worship should have effected." "Sir," said I, "I am surprised that you do not perceive that you are offering a stronger argument in favour of this Christian institute than any I can present to you. If the reading of the Scriptures in congregation has had such efficacious and such wonderful effects, you ought no longer to reject, or neglect giving your attention to its contents, and its excellent religious institutions."

Thus, my dear Sir, my efforts for the benefit of others have been greatly blessed. I appear at present more satisfied with my lot, because I appear to be more useful than ever: in England all my attempts at usefulness were puny compared to what they are here. Many people here openly express their gratitude to me as the saviour of this place, which, they say must have dispersed if I had not arrived. This is encouraging to a heart wounded with affliction as mine has been, and is urging me [16] on to plans of usefulness. A place for education, a Sunday-school, and above all, a Bible-society, if we increase, shall be my aim and endeavour. I have already abundant testimony

that God will bless his word, and if the rest of my life should be spent in such useful employment, my death-bed will be more calm than if I had been taken from life before I had arrived at this period of utility. You will, I trust, be able to appreciate the station Providence has placed me in, and feel pleasure at this communication.

My house, which is nearly finished, is a comfortable one, and can boast a roof that neither Hertford nor Marden could. It stands the most drenching rains and drifting snows without letting in any wet. I described it in my former letters; and while I am satisfied with the comfort it affords, the Americans behold it with surprise.

You would have been much amused if you had been with us a few weeks since, when I had a visit from Captain Burke,³ a sensible and intelligent backwoodsman. He paid me a short visit, put off his business that he might fetch his wife, which he did; we thought we saw through the plan; he returned with her the next day, and we felt disposed to gratify their [17] curiosity. "There wife," said he, "did you ever see such fixings?" He felt the paper, looked in a mirror over our chimney-piece which reflected the cattle grazing in the field before the house, and gazed with amazement. But turning from these sights to the library,—“Now,” said he to my wife, “does your old gentleman” (for that is my title here) “read those books?” “Yes,” said she, “he has read most of them.”—“Why if I was to read half of them, I should drive all the little

³ Captain Jeremiah Birk shared with Daniel Boone and many other pioneers in the Western wilderness, the feeling that life in a settlement was too crowded. Emigrating from Tennessee, he lived with his family alone on the prairies until the arrival of the English settlers. He obtained his title of captain by commanding a company of scouts along the Canadian frontier during the War of 1812-15. Illinois becoming too thickly settled to please him, he soon moved across the Mississippi River.—ED.

sense in my head out of it." I replied that we read to increase our sense and our knowledge; but this untutored son of nature could not conceive of this till I took down a volume of Shaw's Zoology.⁴ "You, Mr. Burke, are an old hunter, and have met with many snakes in your time. I never saw above one in my life; now if I can tell you about your snakes and deer, and bears and wolves, as much or more than you know, you will see the use of books." I read to him a description of the rattle-snake, and then shewed him the plate, and so on. His attention was arrested, and his thirst for knowledge fast increasing. "I never saw an Indian in my life, and yet," said I, "I can tell you all about them." I read again and shewed him a coloured plate. "There," said he, "wife, is it not [18] wonderful, that this gentleman, coming so many miles, should know these things from books only? See ye," said he, pointing to the Indian, "got him to a turn." In short, I never felt more interested for an hour or two, to see how this man's mind thirsted after knowledge; and though he dreaded the appearance of so many books, he seemed, before he left us, as if he could spend his life amongst them.

Our library is now consolidated; and that the kind intentions of yourself and others may not be lost, and that your names may live in our memories and be perpetuated to future generations, I have conveyed all the books presented to us, in trust to the proprietors of the town, for the use of the Albion Library; writing the names of the donors in them; and in my next letter I shall, *pro forma*, be able to convey to you our united thanks for the books presented.

⁴ George Shaw (1751-1813), the well-known English naturalist. His great work was *General Zoology*, or *Systematic Natural History* (London, 1800-26), which after his death was extended to a total of fourteen volumes.—ED.

Our little library is the admiration of travellers, and Americans say we have accomplished more in one year, than many new settlements have effected in fifty—a well supplied market, a neat place of worship, and a good library.

LETTER II

Park House, Albion, June 20, 1820.

I HAVE not written many letters to my friends in England, because I was determined not to state any thing on presumption, or of mere opinion, but only matters of fact, which must stand uncontradicted, and bear the test of examination.

I proceed to state to you the circumstances which we are now in; and you will my dear Sir, feel satisfaction at my being able to give you the pleasing account, that, after nearly a twelvemonth's residence, there is no foundation for reasonable complaint. Every workman or artificer has abundance of employment at a price that will procure him a plentiful subsistence; and at this time our little town is amply supplied, with not only the necessaries of life, but even its luxuries. I have a comfortable habitation, containing four rooms and a hall on the ground floor, and five chambers above; two wings are added which contain kitchen, china closet, dairy, and an excellent cellar. My farm produces, as it did at Marden, good beef and mutton, with abundance of [20] poultry, eggs, milk, cream, butter, and cheese. I am quite at home again, and am writing to you surrounded by the same library standing in the same relative situation, in my large easy chair, and enjoying every earthly comfort. I have the happy absence of tax-gatherers, and am never galled with tithe or poor-rate collectors.

Our settlement, thank God, is remarkably healthy, and my family and self have never enjoyed better health than in the situation which some of your reviewers and critics call "the swamps of the Wabash." There is no situation in the habitable globe in which less sickness and fever have taken place in the given period of twelve months, and the evil reports that have been spread about, applied only, in a small degree, to the large party of settlers who, on their arrival, took shelter in the woods, finding none of the conveniences prepared for them which they had reason to expect. All is going on here to the full as well as can be expected or hoped; and if the British settlement does not prosper, it will be the fault of the *settlers* only.

As to religion, the form of it is now regularly attended to by many, and all have the [21] means of assembling on the Sunday at our small but neat place of worship. We read the *Reformed* or *Unitarian* Liturgy, the *Scriptures*, and *Sermons* from our best English authors. Our place of worship is likewise our library-room. Religion in the outward form is by no means ostentatious, notwithstanding which, we have a large portion of good, sober and industrious people amongst us, who, I trust, by a virtuous example and keeping alive religious feelings, will be ultimately successful in preserving true religion amongst the people of the Illinois.

But to return from spiritual to temporal concerns: I imagine you asking,— Are there then no inconveniences? There are. We have not a sufficiency of female servants, on account of the frequency of marriage, which is constantly depriving us of those we have; and although I have hitherto been well off, yet I am fearful we may be as others are, inconvenienced for want of them. Boys for either plough or house work are scarce, but the entire absence of

pauperism more than amply compensates for these privations. How much I regret that more of the overflowing population of England cannot find [22] their way here, exchanging their poverty for plenty of employment and good fare.

We have East and West India produce in abundance; silks, crapes, &c. such as you in England only can procure by a breach of the laws. On the first day that I dined at the tavern which I had just finished building in Albion, I drank bottled porter as cheap as in London, and had fine English salt at half the price I paid for it in England. Thus I find I have escaped the ruinous system of taxation which has reduced so many thousands to beggary or the workhouse, and so many of the middling classes to a state of pinching want, whom I have seen shivering through the winter over a few coals called a fire, because their limited means would not afford a cheerful blaze.

A great advantage in settling in the Illinois, rather than many other parts of America, is the state of society amongst us. Most of the persons who emigrate here, are those who have diminished their former fortunes; persons who have received good education, but are unable to sustain their stations in England. There is no arrogance in saying our circle of society is far superior to that in most of the villages in our native country. Except the parson, the [23] squire, and the principal farmers, what is the society of many of the English hamlets but rude and uncultivated? Here it is different; for within the circle of a few miles, there is more good company (I mean well-educated persons) than in the same circle in most parts of England.

We frequently find superior education and intelli-

gence among the sons of the plough and the axe, to those in like situations in England. A person lately offered me his services to split boards for me: we agreed for price. I observed a correctness in his pronunciation and manner of speaking, apparently far above his situation. I attended him to the woods; he had with him two younger men than himself. The first singularity that appeared was, after taking off their clothes, (having first ground their axes) a nail or two were driven into a tree, on which were hung handsome *gold* watches. These men were well educated, understood geography, history, European politics, and the interesting events that now so much excite the attention of mankind. I went into my field the other day, and began a conversation with my ploughman: his address and manner of speech, as well as his conversation [24] surprised me. I found he was a colonel of militia, and a member of the legislature; he was indeed a fit companion for men of sense; and where will you find persons of this class in England with equal intelligence?

Of the particular news of this place, there is one piece of intelligence that will surprise you; the author of "Letters from the Illinois," (Mr. Birkbeck) has opened a place of worship at Wanborough; he officiates himself, and reads the *Church of England Service*, so that Wanborough is the seat of *orthodoxy*, and our place stands, as a matter of course, in the ranks of *heresy*?

There is an opinion prevailing amongst many in England, that the marriage ceremony in America is considered lightly of, and but loosely performed; but there never was a greater mistake. A minor cannot marry without the consent of his or her guardian or parent. A license must be applied for at the county court, and a declaration accompanying it from the parent, that it is with *his* consent.

This license is taken to a magistrate who performs the ceremony, that is, the legal part of it, at either his own house or that of the parties; which is simply asking if they are willing to become man and wife, and their answer of consent. This is registered at the magistrates, and recorded by him at the county court: if [25] either neglect to make this register, a heavy fine is the punishment of their negligence, and the marriage is considered illegal. This is legal marriage in the Illinois; but both the magistrates inquire of the parties, and the law allows of any addition of a religious kind, that they may choose, and we adopt the vows of the marriage service of the Church of England, which are as solemnly put and answered, as if performed by a person in canonical habits before the altar.

Marriages here take place so frequently, that *we* are certainly in want of female servants; even our Mrs. C., who lived with us upwards of twenty-five years, and is turned of fifty, has not escaped; she is married to a Mr. W., having first refused Monsieur R., an Italian gardener, of very polite manners, and who may be said to have seen a *little* of the world, as he marched from Italy to Moscow with Bonaparte, back to France, and proceeded from thence to this place: he was tall and majestic in person, made very elegant bows to *Madame* C., and spoke English enough to assure her he had the highest esteem for her, and would marry her to-morrow if she would consent; but all in vain, plain *John Bull* [26] carried the day. We have had ten or twelve marriages within three or four months. This, I think, is settling the Illinois pretty fast, and a good proof that *Cobbett* has not, as he threatened, 'written us down;' nor is there any sign of abandonment, but a good prospect, of increase of population, even if emigration should diminish.

We hear news from England sufficient to appreciate the wretched situation of our native country, and the disturbed state of Europe in general. We see, or think we see most plainly, the phial of God's wrath pouring forth on guilty nations; and England, notwithstanding its pulpit flatterers, in the church and out of the church, is tasting of that wrath. It appears to me that we have great cause for gratitude in escaping divine judgments, and finding an asylum where we may, I hope, rest in peace.

I see, on looking from my window, the golden harvest waving before me; a beautiful field of wheat, the admiration of the country, the first fruit of my son's industry in this kind of grain.

My wife and family enjoy excellent health, and spirits, and had not the Almighty hand [27] smote me in my tenderest part, by sending his awful messenger to call my dear son William away,⁵ the days of my emigration would have been the happiest of my life.

R. F.

LETTER III

March 26, 1821.

As to the settlement in general, I consider it most prosperous, making, comparing it with many new ones, the most rapid strides to comfort and prosperity: our little town, now the capital of the English Settlement⁶ has a store which supplies us with luxuries. A market with abundance of meat, poultry, and vegetables, so that persons with very limited incomes might live here in comfort.

⁵ William Flower, second son of Richard, died at Lexington, Kentucky, apparently of heart disease, in the winter of 1818-19. See George Flower's "English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois," in *Chicago Historical Society Collections*, i, p. 131.—ED.

⁶ Albion was made the county seat of Edwards County in 1821.—ED.

A person with 100 per Annum would be in affluence, which you will say is owing to the cheapness of provisions;⁷ and freedom from tythes, taxes, poor's rates, &c. The labourer or mechanic who is steady, can work himself into plenty. [28] We are relieved entirely from the dreadful state of pauperism witnessed before I left England. My wife, with others of our acquaintance, have not had such good health for twenty years past. Mrs. Flower rides twenty miles a day, on horse back, with ease. I wish you could visit my old servant T. S. on one of the pleasantest situations in the world, with his nice garden, his cows, pigs, and poultry about him; his wife and children contented and happy. Perhaps were you to come suddenly upon him, eggs and bacon with a hastily got up chicken might be your fare; but if you gave him a day's notice, you would see a haunch of venison, or a fine cock turkey on the table. How long would Tom have fagged in England, although he had double his wages, before he could have possessed himself of two hundred acres of good land, and been placed in such affluence. Here, indeed, it may be truly said that the hand of the diligent maketh rich. We have here and there an idle person, but Providence has given them an industrious help-mate; and I know two instances of females earning from six to eight dollars a week by their needles; enough for them to keep comfortable tables.

I have felt great satisfaction in never having [29] invited any one to emigrate, and still greater in finding those who came here out of regard to my opinions, in such situations of ease and comfort, as not only to contribute to their own happiness, but to add greatly to mine. I may say that those who have asked and taken my advice have

⁷ Flower's Letters from [Lexington and] the Illinois, 1819.— B. FLOWER.

succeeded to their wishes; and in all cases which have come to my knowledge, where affairs have been conducted with industry and tolerable discretion, they have occasion to be thankful for the change they have made from the old world to the new. Our population increases. We want in particular more tailors and shoemakers: any one understanding the coarse earthen-ware manufactory would meet with great success.— I have just finished a flour mill on an inclined plane, which has given fresh spirit to agriculture. Distilleries are also building. It is a happy circumstance that while industry is attended with certain success, vice, drunkenness, and idleness are no better off than in Europe; the effect of this will be to give the virtuous that natural ascendancy over the vicious which they ought always to have. We read in the newspapers of all the bustle you have had about your queen;⁸ but if it ends without the people regaining their long lost liberties, between the [30] collision of the different factions, you will only be worse off; and if the regaining of those liberties will not rouse the people to the same exertions for themselves as they have made for their queen, we must smile at their oppressions and say they deserve them.

LETTER IV

Park House, Albion, Aug. 20, 1821.

DEAR SIR,

SOME of my letters, written in 1819, appeared through the medium of the press; and some of the English Reviewers, after a candid criticism, observed, that they should be

⁸ Flower here refers to the excitement in England in favor of the Queen, upon George IV's attempt to divorce her. See Walpole, *History of England*, i, pp. 573-606.— ED.

glad to hear from me at some future period. Several other persons also have expressed a strong desire to have an account of our *present* situation and future prospects. In compliance therefore, with their wishes, I most cheerfully resume my pen, with the assurance that what I have written may be relied upon as an impartial and candid statement of facts.

Various are the reports which have been circulated in the private circle, and by means of the press, concerning the state of this settlement; [31] and great has been the anxiety which many friends have expressed on our account. It is my purpose therefore, to examine the principal reports which travellers have given of us.

When any one returns to England, though he may have visited us but a few days, he obtains a credence far above those who have only hear-say reports to communicate; whether his visits were made during the winter, amidst rains or snows, or in the summer, when an unparalleled drought pervaded the whole western country. Is so transitory a view to be considered as a just description of the soil, the climate, the advantages or disadvantages of the British Settlement in the Illinois? Surely not. I am informed even of some accounts which have been written from settlements above fifty miles distant from us, where circumstances are so very different, that they bear no resemblance to the situation in which we have located. These statements have been brought forward in opposition to the indisputable facts which have been given by us, and they no more apply to this place, than a description of the lowlands of Essex and Lincolnshire can apply to the high and dry situations of Shooter's-hill or Blackheath. I therefore request the reader's [32] attention to a few observations on the various reports which travellers

have circulated of the *English* settlements at the *Illinois*.

I must first be allowed to remark on the want of competency of some very confident writers to form any judgment of our real situation; they appear to be wholly unacquainted with the history of the new settlements, and from this defect are unfitted to form a right judgement of our comparative and relative advantages. Hence the incongruous and contradictory accounts which have been given of our soil, climate, and agricultural concerns. Of the many who have visited us there are two individuals whose reports I hear gain some credence amongst my country men; I shall therefore confine my attention chiefly to the accounts they have given of us, and then examine those reports which have been raised from deep-rooted enmity and determined self-interest. These, with a brief account of our present situation and future prospects shall be the remaining subject of this letter.

One of these travellers visited us when the snows were melting, and the rains descending: he reports us to be dwelling upon the swamps of the Wabash; and our lands to be so wet that they are unfit for either cattle or sheep to [33] thrive on; and on that account unsuitable for the purposes of an English farmer.

Another passed through our country in an unparalleled drought, and reported us to be in a sad situation for want of water. There was some degree of truth in this, but a very partial degree, owing to his not stating the circumstances of the case. *Our* town is situated very high, and till we had experienced some drought we knew not that we should want to dig deep for water, and of course could not provide for an exigency that was not known to exist. "*Dig deep*" I have said; but one hundred feet is thought, by a western American to be a vast and dangerous enter-

prise; we have however with us Englishmen who have been far into the bowels of the earth in England, and have no sort of fear of there not being abundance of water in Albion; already have we experienced the benefit of these exertions; but while our dry-weather traveller was reporting our inconveniences, he should have stated it was an unusual season which pervaded the whole of the western country: that Kentucky and Ohio were worse than the Illinois; and that in Indiana, in the best watered districts, springs, rivulets, and wells were exhausted. Such an instance has never before occurred [34] during the memory of the oldest inhabitants. The same person (who I know would not willingly give a false account) has stated that so short was the water that we were obliged to send our cattle into Indiana.— That our herds were in Indiana is very true, but that they were sent there on account of want of water, is equally untrue. We have in Indiana about twelve miles distant, some high ground in the midst of low land, subject to be overflowed; on this low ground grows the most luxuriant cane, springing to an extraordinary height; the tender shoots of which, affording excellent food for cattle, we send them in the winter season, with the exception of milch cows and working oxen, to fatten. Our custom is somewhat similar to that of the farmers of the upland districts in England, who send their stock into the fens of Lincolnshire to fatten on coleseed and superabundant grass. So we dispose of our herds when the winter draws to a close. To this may be added, that the cane in the low river bottoms, growing naturally is the most luxuriant pasturage for summer feeding: and as we only pay the expense of the herdsman, the food either there or in the cane costing nothing: and the herdsman living there we leave our herds; so it was true that they

[35] were in the cane, but were not sent there on account of the want of water. When this person reported that there was shortness of water amongst us, he should have added, that fine wells were no rarity in the vicinity of Albion; that he drank as fine water from our well as he ever tasted in his life; and that from the grounds of Richard and George Flower, Albion, and even a part of Wanborough were supplied.

It will therefore appear that this person, as well as many others, told the truth, but very partially, and not the whole truth, and on that account are not to be depended on. At the very time he was visiting us a person from Kentucky, assured us that we were better off than they were at Kentucky and Ohio.*

Another person who visited us on purpose to examine and spy out the land of evil report, went back to Baltimore and brought his family, stating in his travels that he had not met with such good water as at this place. This same traveller has reported our soil to be poor, and our inability to raise a sufficient quantity of provisions for ourselves, and that we are still dependant on the Harmonites: in this he only shews his [36] want of knowledge of the history of new settlements and their progress. Every person knows that the second year is the most unprofitable: the first year being spent in building and fencing, little produce is raised: but then all settlers of property bring a supply with them to make up for this certain deficiency; but capital being somewhat exhausted, and an increase of population still continuing, must of necessity keep a new settlement short of self-supplies; but when to this was added an extraordinary drought, is it a matter of surprise that the crops should in some degree have been scanty;

* See *Note A.*— B. FLOWER.

but at the time I am writing, almost every thing these travellers have said of the Illinois, is happily reversed: they are the remarks of very superficial observers; though they may be in some degree true at the moment they were written, they are no fit representations [of] the Illinois; either as to its soil, climate, or general character; could I but set these very travellers down here at this moment, how would their astonished senses give contradiction to their own accounts!

We have now what the Americans tell us is a usual specimen of the seasons of the Illinois. Frequent rains, with the heat more moderate than the last year. Agriculture is beaming forth [37] in its glory. If some of our travellers to whom I have alluded were now here, they would see some of the finest wheat crops their eyes ever beheld: they would witness the most luxuriant crops of natural grasses, now gathering for the supply of winter food; also fine plants of artificial grasses well set in our inclosures; they would acknowledge that the corn crops were as abundant, or more so than any they had before witnessed in the United States; but as they are not here I must inform you that our corn crops upon good tillage have the appearance of from sixty to eighty bushels; and in some instances the Americans, who are the best judges, say one hundred bushels *per* acre. If this is the usual season of the Illinois, which can scarcely be doubted, as it answers the character given by those longest resident, then is the Illinois one of the finest countries under heaven for human beings to dwell in; one of the most delightful given to man for his residence.

Another traveller has stated that the Illinois is in general low and swampy, but that Mr. Flower's family, with one or two others, had placed their houses upon rising ground.

This gentleman must either be naturally or willfully [38] blind. He might have found, within a circuit of five miles round Albion, numerous pleasing elevations, all so inviting that the beauty which they presented to the admiring eye of the settler, would be the only difficulty in the way of instant decision.

Then comes another objector, armed with an *unanswerable* question?—"But what will you do with your produce?" This objection only needs to be examined to be refuted. The answer is, that for the present our home market will take all we raise, and if our population increases in future as it has done during the present year, and the probability is that, it will increase much faster, no foreign market will be wanted for ten or a dozen years to come. Our infant town has taken root, and is growing luxuriantly. It has increased one hundred in the number of inhabitants since last September, and its vicinity has added seventy to their number. Our mill is at work, and can grind the produce now raised; and a distillery and brewery will shortly be at work, so that the surplus of several years will not raise more than a sufficiency for the population. We have also in the settlement some small plantations of tobacco, hemp, and cotton, articles which we [39] at present import; it will therefore be a work of some time to raise a sufficiency for our own consumption.

Another article of produce is wool. Since I have been here I have turned my attention to an important object which engaged much of my attention in my native country—the breeding of sheep, and have succeeded to the utmost of my wishes and expectations. My flock consists of about four hundred sheep and lambs; and although the first winter there were unexpected difficulties to encounter, I can assure my countrymen that it has been more healthy

this last year than any I ever had, or ever heard of in England; but as I intend giving an account of my success in this branch of agriculture in some future letter, it will be sufficient to say, that although I can grow in the Illinois a profitable export, at present its produce is wanted, and all that can be raised for years to come, will be wanted at home. We have therefore not only a market for our extra produce around us, but we have also a foreign market at New Orleans, and through it to the market of the world. If it be said that owing to our situation, we labour under peculiar disadvantages, all is reduced to the price of land carriage, of about nine miles to the Wabash, [40] at sixteen cents per hundred pounds. If therefore it is said that our surplus produce cannot be disposed of, it is not applicable to local circumstances alone; but to all America. Whenever the United States in general can dispose of their produce advantageously, the Illinois can do the same; and we are more contiguous to navigation than the great proportion of the interior of America.

The report which has injured us most is the want of that blessing, without which all that this world can give is but of little avail—*Health*. Reports of sickness which never existed, and of deaths which happily never took place, have been most industriously circulated; the fact is, that there has seldom been a new settlement which has suffered so little loss by death; or which has been so free from sickness. The number of deaths has been in the ratio of four in ninety-five each year, and this is a smaller number than in most places in the habitable globe, where the records of such events have been preserved. Many of its inhabitants have with myself, enjoyed far better health, than in their native country; so that I may safely conclude, after two years residence, with the information

of those who were here a year and a half before me, that [41] there scarcely existed in the habitable globe, a place where the inhabitants have enjoyed so large a share of this invaluable blessing.

As to our future prospects they are truly flattering, in the probability of increasing population, now the clouds and mists which malignity has spread abroad are disappearing, before the light of truth, as the mists of morning disappear before the light and the heat of the sun: the well-grounded hopes of future harvests, arising from the rich abundance of the present; the perseverance and industry of a large portion of our settlers; the excellent materials for building, and the increasing number of fine wells of water, all present a most encouraging and delightful prospect.

Another testimony in favour of our situation is, that some of our countrymen who have settled in other places, have visited us, expressing their surprise and regret that they had been the dupes of false reports, and had stopped short of the Illinois. While others more prudently came down from Cincinnati, and even Baltimore to visit this land of evil report, minutely examined for themselves, returned to bring their families, and are contented with their lot.

Another remark was made by certain writers, [42] that although we had improved our situation as to animal enjoyments, we had sacrificed intellectual pleasures, because I stated, in one of my letters, that there were no book-sellers here, and that the necessary business which could not be avoided in a new settlement, left us but little time for reading. Hasty conclusion! Many of us brought out ample libraries of our own, and we have also a standing library in our little town; which is supplied with news-

papers and periodical publications. Those who emigrated to the Illinois were not altogether illiterate; a majority of them were quite of a contrary description; and as to agricultural knowledge, there are very few spots on the face of the earth, where it is so much concentrated, as at the Illinois, having farmers from almost all the different counties in England. There are likewise, several American, Dutch, and French farmers, gardeners, and vine dressers in our neighbourhood.

The reports of the wickedness and irreligion of our settlement, with a view to prevent individuals from joining us, have been industriously spread far and near. That there is a diversity of character in every part of the globe, will not be denied; that this diversity exists here is equally true; and that a portion of its inhabitants [43] is of an immoral cast, will be as readily admitted; that we have not left human nature with its infirmities and propensities behind us is equally a fact; and even if it should be admitted, that unhappily, a larger portion of the dissipated, the idle, and the dissolute are to be met with in new countries than is usually to be found in old ones, yet we have the same antidote for these mischiefs:—the *light shining in a dark place*. We have public worship and ample supplies of sermons from pious practical preachers, from the Catholic to the Socinian Creed,¹⁰ which are read on the Sabbath. But above all we have the *incorruptible seed of the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*; and it is with pleasure I can assure my readers, that there is an increasing congregation, and I trust, increasing religion amongst us. But if it was otherwise, surely this

¹⁰ Socinianism was belief in the tenets or doctrines of Faustus Socinus, an Italian theologian of the sixteenth century, who denied the trinity and divinity of Christ, affirming that Christ was a man divinely commissioned.—ED.

should be rather an argument for persons of religious zeal to join us, who have emigration in view; *to come over to Macedonia and help us*, rather than shrink from such a task. At least it is not apostolic or evangelic feeling that would draw a different conclusion.

When I was at Philadelphia a lady of the Society of *Friends* addressed me most emphatically on the subject:—"Wilt thou, friend [44] Flower, take thy family to that infidel and wicked settlement in the Illinois? Thou appearest to be a christian; how wilt thou answer to thy God for endangering the precious souls of thy dear children?" Madam, answered I, my destiny appears to be in the Illinois settlement; and rather than turn from thence on the account you have mentioned, you have furnished me with a forcible argument to proceed. I trust I am as you have supposed a sincere christian, and as it is my special duty to go where reformation is so necessary, I will endeavour to perform it, and hope for the blessing of the Most High. It is for us to use the means. We know who it is to command success in our present state and future prospects.¹¹

It may be worth while to make a few remarks on the characters, situations, and apparent motives of some of those persons by whom we have been misrepresented and reviled.

The first class that opened their batteries of illiberal abuse, were the ministerial and hireling writers in England.¹² The emigration of Englishmen, in the Illinois it appears did not please the masters whom these writers serve; and this is sufficient to account for *their* [45] con-

¹¹ See Note B.— B. FLOWER.

¹² Regarding the attitude of the English government, at the time, towards emigration to America, see Preface to the present volume.— ED.

duct: as usual, they were not very nice, in the means they made use of. Private characters were assailed indiscriminately, and motives imputed to the emigrants which never entered their minds. The grand reason for emigration was to escape that overwhelming system of taxation which had diminished the property of the emigrants, and threatened if they staid much longer, to swallow up the whole. Their conduct has proved their discernment, and justified their proceedings.

How many of my brother farmers have lost their all! How many have been added to the list of paupers since we left our beloved country, newspapers and private letters, agricultural meetings and parliamentary proceedings and reports, sufficiently declare. Happy had it been for many others, if they had accompanied us: some who have followed us have lamented their indecision, and have felt the fatal consequences of their lingering in their own country. The motives and views of this first class of revilers, is too obvious to need fa[r]ther notice.

Another writer, who is, or rather who was once popular, whom I met at New York, passionately expressed his determination *to write us down*: amongst much false reasoning which [46] he made use of for this purpose, it is greatly to be feared he also cared but little for truth; and I have often wondered what could be his motive? Whether he had some other settlement at heart; or whether he wished to keep all emigrants near him to persuade them to enter into his grand plan of inundating England with forged Bank of England notes!!—One thing however is decidedly clear; that he knew nothing about what he was writing; and our present success, surrounded by so many comforts, is a sufficient proof he did not do us all the harm he intended. Were he to ride over our fine prairies, viewing

our flocks, herds, and corn fields, such ocular demonstration of the falsehood of his statements would be to him a sufficient mortification.¹³

But there is another class of men of a very different sort; those who were raising rival settlements, in various parts of America, and who had lands for sale: who longed to stop the cash which seemed to be pouring into the lap of the Illinois. It was natural for them, as human nature is constituted, to attempt to arrest its progress; they therefore joined the hue and cry against the Illinois, and spread reports [47] of sickness, starvation, famishing for thirst, frequent deaths, and the consequent abandonment of our settlement. In this they in some instances succeeded, and as I have before hinted, some have visited us who speak of their having been *entrapped*, and express the deep regret that they did not join us. Facts however soon began to dispel the illusion: one gentleman brought his family to Cincinnati, several families visited Baltimore, who notwithstanding the evil tidings that they had heard ventured, although with fearful apprehensions, to the English settlement: but singular as it may appear to our calumniators, after a most minute investigation into our situation and circumstances, in the autumn of the year they could not find a sick person throughout the settlement: nor was the drought which certainly inconvenienced us, peculiar or local; it raged throughout the western country. They were satisfied, and went to fetch their families, who are now residents amongst us to their entire satisfaction. It is no wonder then, that the falsehoods and calumnies which have been so industriously spread, are at length found to be such; and that the character and motives of the persons who have assailed us are duly appreciated:

¹³ See Note C.— B. FLOWER.

and, as a consequence of these and [48] other circumstances one hundred individuals have joined the town of Albion, and about twenty have settled in its environs since last August.

Notwithstanding all I have stated, I would not have my countrymen consider me as inducing them to emigrate, without serious and due consideration of their own circumstances; but rather consider me as advising them if they do emigrate to America, to come and unite with us in the Illinois; resting assured that what I have stated is truth — *impartial truth*.

It is a trial of no mean sort to quit one's native country, and separate ourselves from those for whom we have the sincerest friendship and regard. The privations however of a first settlement are at an end: we may now indeed say "the way is smoothed for them;" and it rests with us who are now settled to be prosperous, contented, and happy. It is equally our duty and our interest, to consider well the blessings we enjoy at this place of abounding plenty. Many of you my countrymen, can look back on the frightful abyss of pauperism and starvation which you have escaped, and should lift up your hearts in gratitude to God for his mercies vouchsafed to you. Forget not who it is that has preserved your lives and prolonged [49] your days; blessed you with so much health; preserved you *from the arrow that flieth at noon day; and the pestilence that walketh in darkness*. Remember that it depends upon your virtuous endeavours, how great, how good, and how happy the settlement in the Illinois shall be. Eradicate the stain which report has cast on your moral and religious characters; and may your example be such as to influence the formation of character of this place; that your *ways may be ways of pleasantness, and all your paths*

be peace. Remember that without virtue happiness cannot exist. Let future generations rise up and call you blessed; so that you may, on your departure from this life, rest satisfied that your emigration to the Illinois proved the means of your increasing welfare and happiness in time and eternity.

R. F.

[50] EXTRACT OF A LETTER, FROM
MR. BIRKBECK

Wanborough, May 7, 1821.

SIR,

REGARDING the abuse which people have indulged in about my undertakings, and my accounts of them, I find little difficulty in taking it quietly. I have spent four years in this country, and now every day furnishes fresh proofs of the correctness of my early impressions, so complete as to excite a degree of astonishment at my good fortune *in conjecturing rightly*, and occasionally something of self-congratulation, under the hope that partial friends may give me a little credit for sagacity.

A statistical account of this country, by the time I had finished it, and long before it could reach you, would need correction. Satisfied as I am, to a degree of occasional exultation, with the condition of my own farm, and my prospects as an American cultivator, so rapid and certain is the progress of improvement, that I should not be flattered by your reading, six months hence, an account of its present state. Besides, enough has been already written to shew the *candid* public that all our [51] reasonable expectations are satisfied: for the rest, who *enjoy* our imaginery reverses, and rely more on the superficial accounts of such people as C. F. &c. who have never seen

the country, or if they have seen it, are incapable of judging, it really is a waste of labour to write for *them*. Those wretched people who indulge their malevolence in personal abuse are unworthy of my notice. It would indeed be to our advantage, and is the only harm I wish them, that their ignorance and their prejudices should continue, lest they should follow us.

We are on the eastern limits of a country differing essentially from all that has hitherto been cultivated in the United States. The people to the east of us are incapable of imagining a dry and rich wholesome country, where they may enter at once on fine lands prepared for cultivation, without the enormous expence of time and labour in *clearing*, which has been bestowed on every acre between this and the Atlantic. The inhabitants of the old States are profoundly and *resolutely* ignorant of the advantages of our prairie country. Books are written in the east to prove the wretchedness of the prairies, by persons who have never approached them within five hundred miles; and English writers of the same [52] description, some with names and some without, can obtain more credence than is granted to me, from that description of readers. On the whole, I do not think it worth while to undertake the conviction of these people. The settlers here *who prosper*, that is to say, those who possess good morals and common discretion, will, in course, tell their experience to their friends and connections in England, and invite them to follow their example; these again will invite others. This is now going on in all directions. Some *write* for their former neighbours or the residue of their families, others push back to the old country, to conduct them out. Numbers who come to try their hands at a *new* settlement are wholly unfit for *any* place in this world,

new or *old*, unless it be to supply the requisite quota of evil, which in this imperfect state, adheres to all places. These are the people sometimes most likely to be heard, whilst those who go on well and wisely are little noticed. Their *adventures* are at an end: they "keep a pig" and live happily. A volcano is a fine subject when in action, but the interest ceases with the eruption. At some future day,—some "still time, when there is no room for chiding," should my life be spared, I may lay before my countrymen a statement [53] of our condition: but the suitable time, I think, is not yet. It is, however, a pleasing office to transmit to an intelligent friend an occasional sketch of the settlement; and to receive, as I have from you, and I hope you will repeat the obligation, a return of liberal communication.

The various attacks upon my reputation will be repelled, *surely*, though perhaps *slowly*, by time. Among my neighbours, who are now numerous, their effect has ceased already. The accuracy of my statements become daily more evident, and my errors are found to be on the opposite side to *exaggeration*; a style which I dislike: it is offensive to my taste, as well as my moral feelings: is not a written lie to the full as abominable as one that is spoken?

The telescope which you have had the goodness to procure for me is an object of pleasant anticipation. This climate is favourable for astronomical observations, and it will add to our rational amusements. I shall therefore be obliged by your forwarding it as before directed, as soon as convenient.

M. B.

END OF THE LETTERS

[55] NOTES¹⁴

[*Note A, page 139.*]

The following Remarks respecting the want of water, and the account of the English settlement at the Illinois, are taken from a most entertaining, interesting, and elegant work, lately published, and of which a *second* edition is in the press. I here insert them, as they tend to confirm the correctness of the accounts published by Mr. Birkbeck and my brother, and contain some excellent advice to emigrants.

“You have expressed in your late letters, some curiosity regarding the condition of the English settlement, in the Illinois, adding, that the report has prevailed that those spirited emigrants had been at first too sanguine, and had too little foreseen the difficulties which the most fortunate settler must encounter. This report, I believe, to have originated with Mr. Cobbett, who thought proper to pronounce upon the condition of the farmer in the Illinois, in his own dwelling upon Long Island. Feeling an interest in the success of our countrymen in the West, I have been at some pains to inform myself as to their actual condition. The following statement is chiefly taken from the letters of two American gentlemen, of our acquaintance who have just visited the settlement; they inform me that its situation possesses all those positive advantages stated by Mr. Birkbeck; that the worst difficulties have been surmounted; and that these have [56] always been fewer than what are frequently encountered in a new country.

“The village of Albion, the centre of the settlement, contains at present thirty habitations, in which are found a bricklayer, a carpenter, a wheelwright, a cooper, and a blacksmith; a well supplied shop, a little library, an inn, a chapel, and a post office, where the mail regularly arrives twice a week. Being situated on a ridge, between the greater and little Wabash, it is from its elevated position,

¹⁴ As already explained in note 1, *ante*, the writer of these Notes was Benjamin Flower, brother of the author of the Letters.—ED.

and from its being some miles removed from the rivers, peculiarly dry and healthy. The prairie on which it stands, is as exquisitely beautiful; lawns of unchanging verdure, spreading over hills and dales, scattered with islands of luxuriant trees, dropped by the hand of nature, with a taste that art could not rival — all this spread beneath a sky of glowing and unspotted sapphires. The most beautiful parks of England, would afford a most imperfect comparison. The soil is abundantly fruitful, and of course has an advantage over the heavy timbered lands, which can scarcely be cleared for less than from twelve to fifteen dollars per acre, while the Illinois farmer, may in general clear his for less than five, and then enter upon a more convenient mode of tillage. The objection that is too frequently found to the beautiful prairies of the Illinois, is the deficiency of springs and streams for mill seats. This is attended with inconvenience to the settler, though his health will find in it advantage. The nearest navigable river to Albion is the Wabash, eight miles distant: the nearest running stream, that is not liable to fail at Midsummer, the Bonpaw, four miles distant. The stock of water in ponds for cattle, was liable to run dry in a few weeks, and the settlement apprehended some temporary inconvenience from [57] the circumstance. The finest water is every where to be raised from twenty to twenty-five, or thirty feet from the surface, these wells never fail, but are of course troublesome to work in a new settlement.

“The settlement at Albion, must undoubtedly possess some peculiar attractions for an English emigrant, promising him, as it does, the society of his own countrymen, an actual or ideal advantage, to which he is seldom insensible. Generally speaking, however, it may ultimately be as well for him, as for the community to which he attached himself, that he should become speedily incorporated with the people of the soil: many emigrants bring with them prejudices and predilections which can only be rubbed away by a free intercourse with the natives of the country. By sitting down at once among them, they will more readily acquire an accurate knowledge of their political institutions, and learn to estimate the high privileges which these impart to them, and thus attaching themselves to their adopted country, not for mere sordid motives of interest, but also from feeling and principle, become not only *natu-*

ralized, but also *nationalized*. I have met with but too many in this country, who have not advanced beyond the former. I must observe, also, that the European farmer and mechanic, are usually far behind the American in general and practical knowledge, as well as enterprise. You find in the working farmer of these states, a store of information, a dexterity in all the manual arts, and often a high tone of national feeling, to which you will hardly find a parallel amongst the same class elsewhere. His advice and assistance always freely given to those who seek it, will be found of infinite service to a stranger; it will often save him from many rash speculations, at the same time that it will dispose [58] him to see things in their true light, and to open his eyes and heart to all the substantial advantages that surround him."

*Views of Society and Manners in America, in a series of Letters from that Country to a Friend in England during the years 1818, 1819, 1820. By an Englishman, 8vo.*¹⁵

The above as the reader will notice, was written two years ago, since which the settlement, as appears by the letters now published, has considerably increased, and for the time it has been established, is in a very flourishing state.

[Note B, page 145.]

The address of the worthy female, one of the Society of *Friends* to my brother, respecting the "infidel wicked settlement at the Illinois," proceeded from that principle of fear for the interests of christianity, which an enlightened christian, by which I mean one who understands the principles, imbibes the spirit, and follows the example of the primitive christians, need not indulge. To all sincere christians who may have indulged similar fears, may be applied

¹⁵ The last word of the title should be *Englishwoman*. The author, Miss Frances Wright, was born in Dundee, Scotland (1795) and at an early age became interested in sociological questions. She came to America in 1812 and made one of the earliest attempts to solve the slavery problem; but her practical experiment in employing negro labor on a Tennessee plantation ended in failure. Removing to New Harmony, she conducted, with the assistance of Robert Dale Owen, a socialistic journal. From 1829 to 1836 she lectured throughout the United States, being one of the earliest women lecturers on the American platform. Returning to Europe, she married M. Darusmont (1838), and did not again appear in public life.—Ed.

what the Psalmist remarks of certain pious persons of his day, who appear to have been placed in a *very* "infidel, wicked settlement;"— "*There were they in great fear where no fear was.*" (Ps. liv. 5.) Infidelity, or unbelief in the divine mission of Christ; a rejection of those grand truths, essential to the salvation of a lost world, where the gospel can be read and examined, as it may easily be in the present enlightened age — enlightened, with respect to the means of instruction for the attainment of knowledge the most important,— is so inexcusable, that I know not how any man, even if his capacity be below mediocrity, and more especially any man whose capacity [59] is above mediocrity, can, remaining an unbeliever, rationally hope to escape the awful sentence pronounced by our Saviour: — "*He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life: — he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" (John iii.) Passages as equally applicable to unbelievers of the present day, as to those of old, as the evidences of christianity are equally bright and convincing as in our Saviour's time, if not more so. We have no such gross prejudices to combat as the Jews had, as no persons are so stupid as to expect a temporal Messiah, to imitate those grand pests of society, who, in all ages, have ravaged the world — despotic kings, and wholesale murderers commonly called conquerors! And if we have not the evidence of sense, the personal presence of Christ, we have *a more sure word of prophecy*, not of a temporary nature, but more suitable to succeeding ages, even to the end of time,— the fulfillment of Divine predictions. Men who after reading the various relations of travellers of the first reputation, concerning the fall and present state of ancient states and cities, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, &c. can reject the evidence of the truth of revelation arising from such a source, may be pronounced without breach of charity, wilfully blind. If it be said, there is no general rule without exceptions,— I allow it, but only so far as there may be exceptions to other important general rules: for instance, that justly called the *golden rule*, delivered by our Saviour in his sermon on the mount. But let it be seriously recollected, that the very word *exceptions* implies the generality of the rule, and that the man cannot be very wise, who endeavours to persuade himself, that he shall, in the great day of final account, be included in these exceptions. For myself, I [60] must profess, that after some acquaint-

ance with several of our principal infidel writers, English and foreign, I have never met with any who dared meet the distinguishing evidences of christianity fairly; and that in general, the description of writers alluded to, have been men whose moral conduct has been so defective, as to afford just reason to apprehend they were not sincere inquirers after truth. The infidel public may safely be challenged to answer, not only the writings of Locke, Newton, Lardner, Paley, &c. but even some of our shilling or sixpenny pamphlets. Let any unbeliever exert his energies in refuting that admirable tract entitled — *An Answer to the Question, WHY ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?* by the late Dr. Clarke of Boston, in America, of which there have been published numerous editions, but to which, if an answer has been written, I will thank any person to inform me, and where it can be procured. But so long as the enemies of revelation consider misrepresentation, arising from wilful ignorance, sneering, jesting, and ribaldry, lawful weapons to effect the purpose they have at heart — the destruction of christianity — I shall certainly suspect they do not possess that indispensable qualification in all inquiries concerning revelation, — *an honest and good heart*, and that of course they are not sincere in their inquiries; but let all such men take warning from the numerous declarations in scripture concerning the rejectors of the gospel, as they will most assuredly find, that with respect to threatnings, as well as promises, *it is impossible for God to lie!*

Should it be asked, — How is it that so many men of talents, and who may possess qualities, which may render them in different ways, and to a certain degree useful to the world and ornamental to the social circle reject christianity; various [61] causes may be assigned. I must confine myself to a few. The principal reason is assigned by the divine author of Christianity: — *This is the condemnation; light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* — The love of applause in favourite circles is assigned by the same authority as another reason. Our Saviour demanded of the Pharisees, — *how can ye believe who receive honour one of one another, and not the honour which cometh from God only.* They rejected our Saviour's doctrines because they loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God. — How often has pride determined men to reject truths the most important? The doctrine of the cross, although the brightest display of the wisdom

and power of God to the world, is to the *carnal* man, that is the man whose belief and practice are determined by worldly motives, *foolishness*. The remark of Dr. Priestley on this subject, deserves the most serious attention of men, who are by their talents and learning, elevated above the rest of the world. "Learned men have prejudices peculiar to themselves, and the very affectation of being free from vulgar notions, and of being wiser than the rest of mankind, must indispose them to the admission of truth, if it should happen to be with the common people!"

Although if the opinions I have expressed be true, they want not the sanction of the learned, yet knowing the influence of names, I will in their support add two, who although men of very different opinions, are by their respective admirers, considered *masters in Israel*. The first is Dr. Johnson who, as his biographer Mr. Boswell informs us, remarked on this subject,— "*No honest man could be a deist; for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of christianity. Hume owned [62] to a clergyman, in the bishopric of Durham, that he had never read the New Testament with attention!*" Another example of the truth of Johnson's remark is the famous Thomas Paine, who in a work misnamed "the Age of Reason," but which is a disgrace to any man possessing his reason, at the very moment of pretending to criticise the bible, and of glorying in having destroyed its credit, acknowledged "that he had not read it for several years!" This may, in part at least, account for the numerous misstatements and falsehoods which deform his pages. This work has been the more injurious to society, as thereby the author lost much of that fame he had justly acquired by his admirable, and popular political writings, but to which the world has since shewn a comparative indifference.

To Dr. Johnson's opinion I only add that of Mr. Belsham, who in his *Calm Inquiry*, &c. observes: — "The Unitarians acknowledge that the scriptures were written for the instruction of the illiterate as well as of the learned, and they believe — that ALL *which is essential to doctrine or practice is SUFFICIENTLY INTELLIGIBLE even to the meanest capacity.*"

From these premises I conclude, that there is little danger of the spread of that *absurdity of absurdities* — INFIDELITY, where it is not supported by more plausible reasons than are contained in the

writings of its votaries; but it is with pain, that I am obliged in justice to the subject to add, that its principal support has been the corrupt systems and lives of its professors.— Those ANTICHRISTIAN CHURCHES under whatever denomination, and in every country under heaven, which have been established by the civil magistrate:— THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE, which has displayed its brazen front *in the temple of God, exalting itself above all that is called God*; robbed [63] the great head of the church of his peculiar prerogative, the sovereignty over conscience; and plundered countless millions of their rights and properties, thus turning the church into *a den of thieves*,— These ecclesiastical corruptions constitute a more formidable argument against christianity, although by no means an honest reason for rejecting it, than the writings of the whole infidel world united.¹⁶

¹⁶ A modern divine gives us the following curious description of the Church of England.—“The governors of this society form a kind of aristocracy respecting the community at large, but each particular governor in his proper district is a sort of monarch, exercising his function both towards the inferior ministers and laity, according to the will of the supreme head of the church.”— *The English Liturgy a Form of Sound Words; a Sermon delivered in the Parish Churches of St. Benet, Gracechurch Street, &c.* by George Gaskin, D.D.

How any man, with the New Testament before him, could possibly call such an *aristocratical* and *monarchical* church, one “formed according to the will of the Supreme Head,” when he well knew that it was diametrically opposite to the letter and spirit of the most solemn, particular, and repeated directions of the Great Head of the Church on this subject:— “*Call no man your master on earth; one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren, &c.*” — I shall not stay to inquire; but it may amuse the reader just to observe how this clerical pluralist exercises “*his junction towards the laity*,” and more especially as it relates to *tythes*:— that species of property which was first voluntarily given by the people for various benevolent purposes, but of which they were afterwards robbed by the clergy, who appropriated them to their own sole use. How they are sometimes raised, even in the present enlightened age, I lately discovered in a catalogue, at a sale of pawnbroker's unredeemed pledges, where, amongst other names and descriptions of property, I read as follows:

“*Lots sold under a distress for tythes due to the Rev. Dr. Gaskin, Rector of the United Parishes of St. Benet, Gracechurch Street, of St. Leonard, Eastcheap, [and of St. Mary, Newington.]*”

Then follow eight lots of writing paper, silver table and tea spoons, &c.

“*The following sold under a distress for tythes due to the Rev. Mr. Parker, (son in law of Dr Gaskin) Rector of St. Ethelburga.*”

Then follow five lots of yellow and mottled soap!

Whether the body of the clergy, who have for so many ages been supported

[64] But as America is not disgraced with an established church, supported by penal laws, the work of statecraft and priestcraft united, infidelity has, in that country, lost [65] its chief support, and cannot, to any extensive degree, flourish. Let that favoured quarter of the globe carefully preserve her only establishment — LIBERTY AND EQUALITY, and her religious interests are safe. Christianity left to itself will, by its own internal excellence, and by the lives of its sincere professors, have *free course, and be glorified*.

The English settlement in the Illinois already affords an illustration of the truth of these sentiments. In the first stage of its

by these and by other means scarcely less obnoxious, come nearer to the description of the primitive apostles and pastors for independence, disinterestedness and benevolence, or to that description predicted by one of them of those who should come after him, — *grievous wolves not sparing the flock*, I leave to the reader to determine.

Dr. Gaskin, I was informed, ranks amongst the clergy who have arrogated to themselves the epithet *evangelical*; but I have since been informed otherwise; and I am inclined to believe, as those do who best know him, that he is *not* an evangelical clergyman!

I cannot help expressing my surprise that my countrymen will not, on this subject, take a hint from that great and liberal minded statesman, the late Lord Chatham, at the commencement of the American war, when our debt and taxes were not *one fifth* of what they are at present. His lordship in a speech in the House of Lords, turning to the right reverend bench, exclaimed, — “Let the bishops beware of war; for should the people be pressed for money, *they know where to look for it!*” It is a pity that amidst so much nonsense, with which the nation is pestered at our agricultural meetings, and in agricultural reports, and so much injustice as is proposed for relieving the public, by Mr. Webb Hall on the one side, Mr. Cobbett and others on the other, such as new corn laws, and breaking public faith, &c. ruining thousands by the reduction of interest of the national debt, our real resources should not be even hinted at. Is there no patriot to be found in either House of the Legislature following the excellent example of Mr. Hume respecting *state* abuses, who will recommend, “*An inquiry into the nature and amount of our church revenues?*” Would christianity suffer if a Bishop of Winchester, or a Bishop of Durham, had not 30 to £40,000 a year! or if our overgrown church revenues in England, and more especially in that still more oppressed country, Ireland, where the bishoprics are in general richer, and many thousands are wrung from a long oppressed and impoverished people, not unfrequently in places where little or no duty is performed, were inquired into? Let Britain look at the church reformation which has taken place in France, and is now going forward in Spain and Portugal, the abolition of tythes, and the resumption of the useless and hurtful revenues of the church, and blush at her *bat* and *mole*-like stupidity! — B. FOWLER.

infancy, reports, as it appears by the remonstrance and admonitions of the female *friend* at Philadelphia to my brother, have been industriously and widely circulated, of its being a "wicked infidel settlement;" where "a christian parent" could not "answer it to his God for endangering the precious souls of his dear children!" Three years have scarcely passed since this solemn warning was given; and what is the present state of this "Infidel settlement?" The friends to Christianity have exerted themselves, and although without the assistance of *Priests*, or even *Reverends* of any denomination, two places within the distance of as many miles, have been erected for public worship; one on the moderate candid *Unitarian* plan,— I mean that which according to the only accurate import of the word includes in its communion, all christians who dissent from that contradiction in terms — "THREE divine PERSONS in ONE GOD:" — The other for the members of the Episcopal Church of England, which in America, by losing its antichristian sting, has lost its principal deformities; and what deserves peculiar notice — the service in the latter is read by the very person who was supposed to have been the chief promoter of infidelity! — A third chapel is now erecting for the use of the Calvinistic baptists. These different denominations, with any others [66] which may hereafter appear, have only to follow the example of their brethren throughout America; to meet in civil society, as friends, perfectly equal as to political, civil, and religious rights, no one allowed to have any ascendancy over the other, christianity will then triumph, and infidelity will be ashamed to shew its face.

To the excellent admonitions on the subject of religious and moral conduct with which my brother concludes his letters, I cannot help adding my ardent hopes, that as the English settlement appears to be increasing in prosperity, and to present an happy asylum for those, who from various circumstances, are induced or compelled to emigrate from their native country, the inhabitants will prove an example of that true religion and virtue, which constitute the only sure foundation and preserver of states and communities: — my wishes are equally ardent, that as christians, they would not only avoid the errors of antichristian established churches, but of those which although professedly dissenting from them still retain a strong attachment to many of their follies. Primitive christianity, how

seldom is it aspired after! The unnecessary division of christians into clergy and laity; the distinctions of dress, habits, and titles, so calculated to please the fancy of our grown babies in the christian church; the objectionable manner in which christian pastors are too frequently ordained and supported:—these with other follies which might be mentioned, all innovations on the simplicity and purity of the primitive churches will at the Illinois, it is hoped, be avoided. Let the English seriously recollect, that in their native country priestcraft prevails, not only in the established church, but in different degrees amongst those who dissent from it, where I fear it is increasing; and that those who are distinguished for their [67] attachment to *weak and beggarly elements*, are in general equally distinguished for their indifference to the grand principles of LIBERTY, for their servility to the ruling powers, and for their support of that ruinous system of war and corruption, which has so peculiarly disgraced the British nation for the past sixty years.—May the office of pastor of a christian church be no longer deemed a *trade*, but let every christian teacher aspire to the honour of being equally independent with the apostles and pastors of the primitive churches, who are chiefly if not wholly dependant on their own exertions in the pursuit of some honest calling. May all denominations, uniting with each other in the bonds of christian friendship, no longer consider their peculiar explanation of doctrines as necessary to christian communion. May their only grand essentials be, *sincerity in the search of truth, and honesty in practising it*. Thus may they, in the full enjoyment of political, civil, and religious liberty *go on unto perfection*.¹⁷

¹⁷ That I may not be misunderstood, I beg leave to remark, that I intend no reflection on those who may have been educated solely with a view to the ministry, and of whose habits we cannot expect an alteration. It is an evil attending the present system, that while men of very moderate talents, and judging by their conduct, who have made no great advancement in the christian life, who possess a few superficial qualifications which captivate the ignorant and unthinking, are living in luxury, there are men of fine talents, and transcendent virtues, who are living in comparative poverty. The grand error is the mechanical transformation of youths into ministers at seminaries, instead of their being brought up to some trade or profession in which their independence might rest on themselves.

I have, on this subject, expressed myself more at large in the MEMOIRS OF ROBERT ROBINSON, prefixed to his Works. See also an excellent Sermon in his incomparable VILLAGE DISCOURSES, entitled, "*Any one who understands Christianity may teach it*." And another in the Posthumous volume of his works, entitled, "*The Corruptions of Christianity*."—B. FLOWER.

[68] [Note C, page 147.]

Mr. Cobbett's former calumnies respecting the English settlements in the Illinois were amply refuted by Mr. Birkbeck and my brother, in two pamphlets, published in 1819, and to neither of which, although he has alluded to a private letter, since written by the former, and inserted in a provincial paper, has he dared to reply. He has however, had the effrontery in a late *Register*, (July, 7th, 1821,) not only to repeat those calumnies, but to invent others still more atrocious; and as the parties concerned are five thousand miles distant, I deem it my duty on the present occasion, to add a few observations to those of my brother, that the character of the calumniator may appear in its true colours, and that my countrymen may no longer be the dupes of a man who has so frequently deceived them.

This writer has in his rage against the settlements at the Illinois, not only shewn his usual disregard of truth and decency, but thrown off the common feelings of humanity. Yes! — This marble-hearted reprobate has impiously dared to reproach an affectionate,—a peculiarly warm-hearted father with the death of a favourite son. Addressing himself to Mr. Birkbeck, he states as follows: — “As to English farmers, yours, or any like yours, is the *very worst spot* they can go to.” Of the falsehood of this assertion, the reader has before him demonstrative evidence. Then, alluding to Mr. William Hunt and his qualifications for farming, the writer adds: — “With great sorrow I heard of his untimely end, from one of those terrible fevers that never fail to haunt new settlements for years. One of Mr. Flower's sons is *dead also*, in the bloom of life. Now, had Mr. F. followed *my* advice given him at New York; if he had purchased a farm or two on the Atlantic side, *this son would in all probability have been alive!*” [69] To this atrocious paragraph I reply: — *It is false* that “terrible fevers haunt the English settlements” more than is common in either England or America. I am well acquainted with some who were born, and had previous to their emigration, lived in one of the finest counties in England, Devonshire, who were not unfrequently subject to fevers in general, but to such “terrible fevers,” as had nearly terminated their earthly existence. These very persons have lately written me, that during a twelvemonth's residence near Albion, succeeding a long and fatiguing voyage and journey, they had been less subject to fevers, and have enjoyed better health than when breathing their native air. As to the climate in

general, its healthy state has, after four years experience, been proved, by the evidence of persons, whose characters for veracity more particularly, are as superior to that of their calumniator, as light is to darkness.— *It is false* that Mr. W. Hunt was brought to an untimely end by “a terrible fever.” At the moment I am writing I have a gentleman at my elbow, who during his late residence at the Illinois was well acquainted with Mr. H. and with the circumstances attending his death; and he has authorized me to state:— That Mr. Hunt’s disorder was a common pleurisy, attended with but a slight degree of fever; that he was fast recovering; but as is not uncommon in other countries, not taking proper care of himself, and negligent in following medical advice, he had a relapse which terminated fatally.

It is false, that my amiable and excellent nephew *died also* in consequence of one of those “terrible fevers.” Being intimately acquainted with the circumstances of his case, from the very best authority I assure the reader, that his death was occasioned by a common complaint [70] in all countries, and to which young people are more peculiarly subject: a cold, caught on a journey, (it is not necessary to detail the particulars) which, without any alarming symptoms of fever, terminated in a decline, and as is frequently the case in such disorders, suddenly, when his parents and family were flattering themselves he had nearly recovered. Thus has Mr. Cobbett impiously represented an affecting visitation of Providence;— a visitation common to every spot on the habitable globe,— as a judgment inflicted on my brother for not following *his* advice, although he *forgot* to add, that this advice was enforced with a denunciation, clothed in his favourite phraseology, “I’ll be d—d if I do not write down Birkbeck and his settlement.”¹⁸— Thus has he strove to transpierce the heart of a father, and to tear open a wound, which time, a flourishing situation, with those ample means of enjoyment with which the favour of providence has surrounded him, together with those “strong consolations,” which a true christian only can feel the force of, was healing; and I trust, that the same supports will enable him to triumph over the fiend whose deadly aim has been to send him a mourner to the grave.

Mr. C. warns my brother and his family “to retreat in time,”

¹⁸ Flower’s Letters from the Illinois, 1819, p. 32.— B. FLOWER.

which if they do not, he dooms them for their lives "to pass their days principally amongst the fellers of trees, and the swallows of whiskey." After the reader has attended to the evidence respecting the state of society at the English settlements, in the pamphlet before him, (I might refer him to additional respectable evidence) it is only necessary to warn Mr. C. in return, should he again cross the Atlantic, and take it into his head to reside at the Illinois, to be careful to leave his vicious habits of [71] *swearing* and *lying* behind him, as he will otherwise find not only English society, but even the society of "fellers of trees, and swallows of whiskey" too humane, too civilized, too virtuous to be very fond of *his* company.

The *hypocrisy* of Mr. Cobbett, in his professions of respect for Mr. B. and my brother can only be equalled by his *falsehood*. His inhuman attack on the latter I have already noticed; and his eagerness in the same *Register*, to expose and misrepresent private matters with which the public have no concern, for the sole purpose of making mischief, must be too obvious to its readers to require farther notice. I might quote from a subsequent *Register*, the manner in which he has endeavoured to ridicule both my brother and Mr. B. but it is too contemptible for a reply.

Mr. Birkbeck, in the letter quoted by Cobbett observes, "I suppose you have seen Cobbett's attack on me, and laughed at the ridiculous posture in which he has contrived to place me." On this Mr. C. indignantly demands — "Pray Sir, by what rule known amongst men, are you justified in imputing to me *an attack* on you. I addressed to you two letters while I was in Long Island, dated in the latter part of the year 1818: — now throughout the whole of those letters *there is not to be found one single expression to warrant* this charge of having made an attack on you; from one end to the other I speak of you with the greatest respect." Of the *sincerity* of these professions the reader will judge, by a short extract or two from the letters referred to. "It is of little consequence," observes Mr. C. "what wild schemes are formed by men who have property enough to carry them back; but to invite men to go to the Illinois, with a few score of pounds in their pockets, and to tell them that they can become farmers with those pounds, appears to me to admit of no other apology [72] than an unequivocal acknowledgment that the *author is MAD!* Yet your fifteenth letter from the Illinois

really contains such an invitation. This letter is manifestly addressed to an *imaginary* person, it is clear that the correspondent is a *feigned* or *supposed* being. It is, I am sorry to say, a mere trap to catch poor creatures with a few pounds in their pockets." Mr. Birkbeck in reply, after stating that his letter was not addressed to an "imaginary person," but to one with whose circumstances he was intimately acquainted, a relation by marriage, adds:—"You have posted me over England and America as *mad*, as a *simpleton*, and a *boaster*, and in one or two instances as *something worse*. *So great a liberty with truth, you say, never was taken by any mortal being*; and having made the discovery, you are in great haste to conclude your letter to me, *that your son William might take it to England with him, and publish it there six months before I could hear of it!*"—So much for Mr. Cobbett's *sincerity* in his high professions of respect for Mr. B. his *veracity* in declaring he made "no attack on him," and that his letter, "*was not written to be circulated in Europe!*" It is a pity that he did not adduce his ever-memorable denunciation against Mr. B. and his settlement uttered a short time before he wrote his letters, as an additional proof of his *sincerity* and *veracity!*¹⁹

The *conceit* of this writer is as intolerable as his other vicious qualities. Speaking of the House of Commons, he thus expresses himself:—"I am well aware of all the feelings that are at work in that assembly with regard to me and my writings. I have not mock modesty enough, to pretend not to perceive the power that I have in the [73] country; and it is out of the power of that assembly to disguise from me that they are well aware of the extent of that power. Neither am I ignorant of the power that I have with regard to *their* actions, and of the great reluctance that they have to suffer the public to perceive that they feel the effects of any such power. I manage my matters adroitly: but the power I have, and the power I will have; and this I repeat it, the public know full as well as I do; and I only state the facts here in order to let those who grudge me the power know, that the possession of it gives me great satisfaction." How *adroitly* this bankrupt in fortunes and character has "managed his matters," the *London Gazette* and our courts of justice have recently

¹⁹ Cobbett's Register, July 7, 1821. Birkbeck's Letters, printed for Ridgway, 1819, second edition.—B. FLOWER.

afforded ample evidence; and should he profess modesty, that it will be "mock modesty," no man will dispute: as to the rest of the paragraph, surely the ravings of the poor bedlamite, with his crown of straw, brandishing his straw scepter, and fancying himself a king, appears rationality itself compared with this display of bloated pride and intoxicated vanity! What particular *power* this writer possesses over the country, or over parliament, I know not: that he may impose upon some people by his acknowledged talents as a writer, whose style is so well calculated for the lower classes more particularly, and by his confident assertions, I do not deny; but in justice to Mr. C. I must observe, that I do not believe his powers for wickedness are so gigantic as he has laboured to persuade us they are. How often has he boasted of his power at any time totally to ruin the Bank of England by his favourite project of a general forgery of bank notes; and which he could easily put in execution at any time; but notwithstanding he proves his *good wishes* on the subject, he has not had that [74] confidence in his own marvellous powers, as to risk his neck in the acquisition of that *exaltation*, which the attempt to put such a project in execution would most assuredly be his reward!

Mr. Birkbeck has drawn a most correct miniature likeness of his grand enemy, in describing him as a man,—I copy the sentence as printed by Mr. C.—"KNOWN to be wholly indifferent to truth." This description is so terribly galling as to provoke him to give additional proof of its justice. How numerous are the proofs,—how vast the evidence which might be collected from his writings! How many of the most useful and ornamental characters, and of the greatest and best men in the political, social, and literary world has he not libelled! It is not only Birkbeck, and Flower, but Waithman, Burdett,²⁰ [75] and Fox, Priestley, Franklin, Locke, and Addison,

²⁰ In my Mr. C.'s treatment of Sir Francis Burdett, INGRATITUDE seems the crowning vice. The benevolent and patriotic baronet, deceived by him as many others have been, lent him a large sum of money, which just as he was setting out for America he declined paying, under the pretext that as government had by their oppressive measures injured him, he did not consider himself bound to discharge his debts till it suited his convenience! Sir Francis, alluding to this letter, remarked, that he did not know whether such a principle had ever before been acted upon, but he believed it was the first time it had ever been openly professed! As those letters are I find, very imperfectly recollected

with many others whom this general libeller has calumniated. But to wade through his innumerable pages, and to collect the numberless proofs of the truth of this statement would be a more Herculean task than that of cleansing the Augean stable. To the number of his *Register* already quoted I must confine myself: and indeed *that* may be produced as a fair specimen of many others. Many years since, and early in his political career, he poured forth his abuse on Dr. Franklin; the fit has lately revisited him; and it has happened to him, to use the language of St. Peter, when describing similar characters of his time, *according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again*. Speaking of this friend of his country, and of the world, Mr. C. observes:—“Dr. Franklin’s maxims are childish, if not trivial; a still greater number of them are false, *the whole tenor of them tends to evil*, for it constantly aims at strengthening selfishness, and at enfeebling generosity.”—Yes reader! such is the description of the luminous pages of this illustrious American philosopher, statesman, and patriot, and which abound equally with lessons of philanthropy and prudence, enforced by his own example, and which have instructed, improved, and adorned, not only his own country, but almost every civilized spot on the habitable globe.

But although there is much more offensive matter in the *Register* I have quoted, I must draw to a close. Mr. C. on some subjects shews considerable talents and industry, and he might have been useful to society, had he confined himself to his peculiar forte,—

by many of Mr. C.’s readers, if he will reprint them in his *Weekly Register*, they will consider it as a favour.

Mr. C. commenced his notice of the worthy baronet by reviling him, and all men of his principles; in his usual style he afterwards veered about to the opposite point of the compass, and panegyricised him in the highest terms; but although he had partly gained his ends, finding that he could not completely transform Sir Francis into one of his tools, and by his means, accomplish his darling, but uniformly defeated project, of procuring a seat in the House of Commons, he in his rage, and under that prophetic impulse with which “The angel he so long has served,” not unfrequently inspires him, pledged himself that in the course of a few months he would so expose the baronet, as to hurry him to his fate:— *That of committing suicide, and of being buried in a cross road, with a stake driven through his body!* If Dr. Young’s sentiment—“He that’s ungrateful has no crimes but ONE” be correct, Mr. C.’s character appears to have reached its climax.—B. FLOWER.

ferretting out [76] public abuses, and making every class understand their nature. It is indeed to be lamented how little he feels himself, what he has made others feel. But, as there is no system, men nor measures, but he has equally panegyrised and reviled, as it has suited his caprice, or weathercock opinions; his own conduct has, in a great degree, destroyed the effects of the best parts of his writings. — But as he has lately turned his attention to that best of books,—the bible,—which he has frequently sneered at, and reviled the successful exertions of those who have extended its circulation;—as his prolific pen has lately produced SERMONS, in which he has displayed his usual energies, I will not despair of him; and I hope he will take in good part my friendly and concluding hints. I will help him to one or two subjects for his succeeding sermons. The first shall be—THE SIN AND DANGER OF PROFANE SWEARING, from *Exodus xx. 7. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.* The other,—GOD'S ABHORRENCE OF FALSEHOOD, from *Prov. xii. 22. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.* No man is capable of doing these subjects more ample justice; and I will promise him that, as I have distributed *some* of his writings, I will so exert myself respecting these proposed sermons, as that he may add to his recent boastings of their extensive sale. It is impossible that in reading and studying the Bible, he can prevent it from *flying in his face*, and I most sincerely hope his reflections will terminate in his repentance and reformation: that he may no longer remain in the *gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*; but that it may be his fervent prayer to God,—*That the thoughts of his heart may be forgiven him.*

FINIS



