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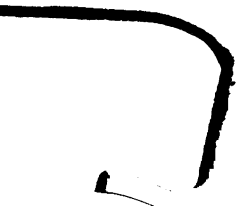
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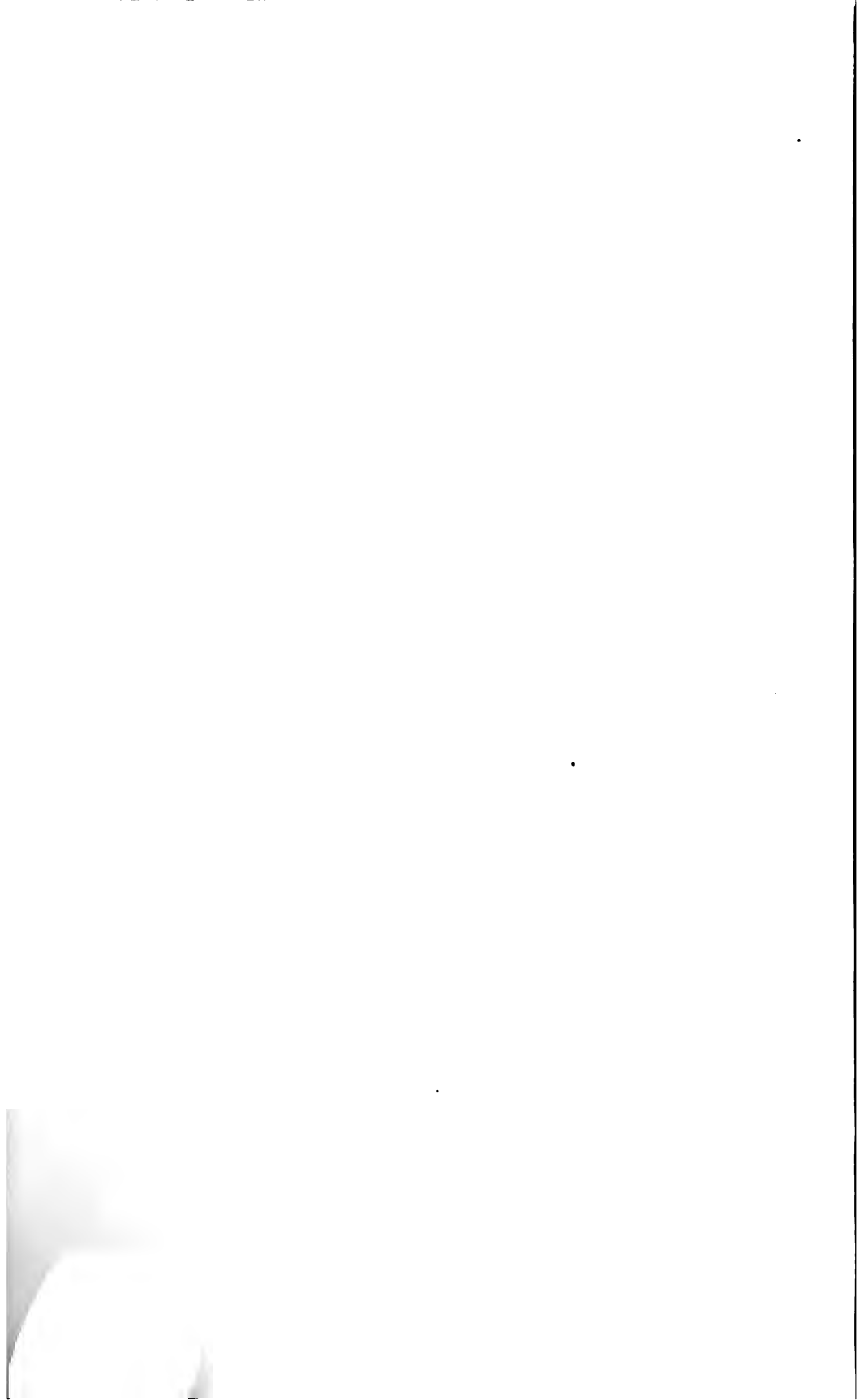
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FORD COLLECTION.

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE,

OR,

LETTERS

TO

A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN,

RETIRED FROM PARLIAMENT:

ON THE SUBJECT

OF SOME OF THE

LEADING CHARACTERS AND EVENTS

OF THE PRESENT DAY.

---

L O N D O N :

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

1793.

PRICE THREE SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE.

N. B. P.

III

Political



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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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**T**HE writer of the ensuing Letters feels it his duty to apologize to the public for any appearance of egotism, into which he fears the necessity, arising from the nature of epistolary correspondence, of expressing himself in the first person, may have unfortunately betrayed him. He is the more inclined to do this, because aware how peculiarly offensive egotism is to others, and conscious that few men are less justified in the indulgence of such a weakness than himself.

Much of what has been written on the affairs of France, was committed to paper on the occurrence of the first Revolution. The second Revolution, and the subsequent events which took place in that country, called for additional remarks. These unexpected changes may have produced some seeming inconsistency in the judgment which the writer at different times ventured to pronounce upon the subject. But no man, on similar occasions, can do otherwise than form such a judgment as existing circumstances appear to justify; and this is all that the writer has attempted. If, however, he has been guilty of seeming inconsistency in his *judgment on facts*, which have varied their appearances with a celerity that has exceeded belief, and baffled all conjecture, it is some satisfaction to reflect, he has been guilty of no inconsistency with regard to *general*  
las

## ADVERTISEMENT.

*principles.* Whatever may be said of his style of composition, which he fears deserves the charge of being too often feeble and diffuse; and whatever may be objected as to the propriety of many of the topics selected for speculation, several of which, however they might have been the objects of curiosity at the moment when they employed his pen, are now gone by; he feels himself under no necessity to vindicate the *tendency* of his work, which, he trusts, invariably breathes a free and honest spirit, and a sincere attachment to the sentiments of  
Public and private Virtue.

July 30, 1793.

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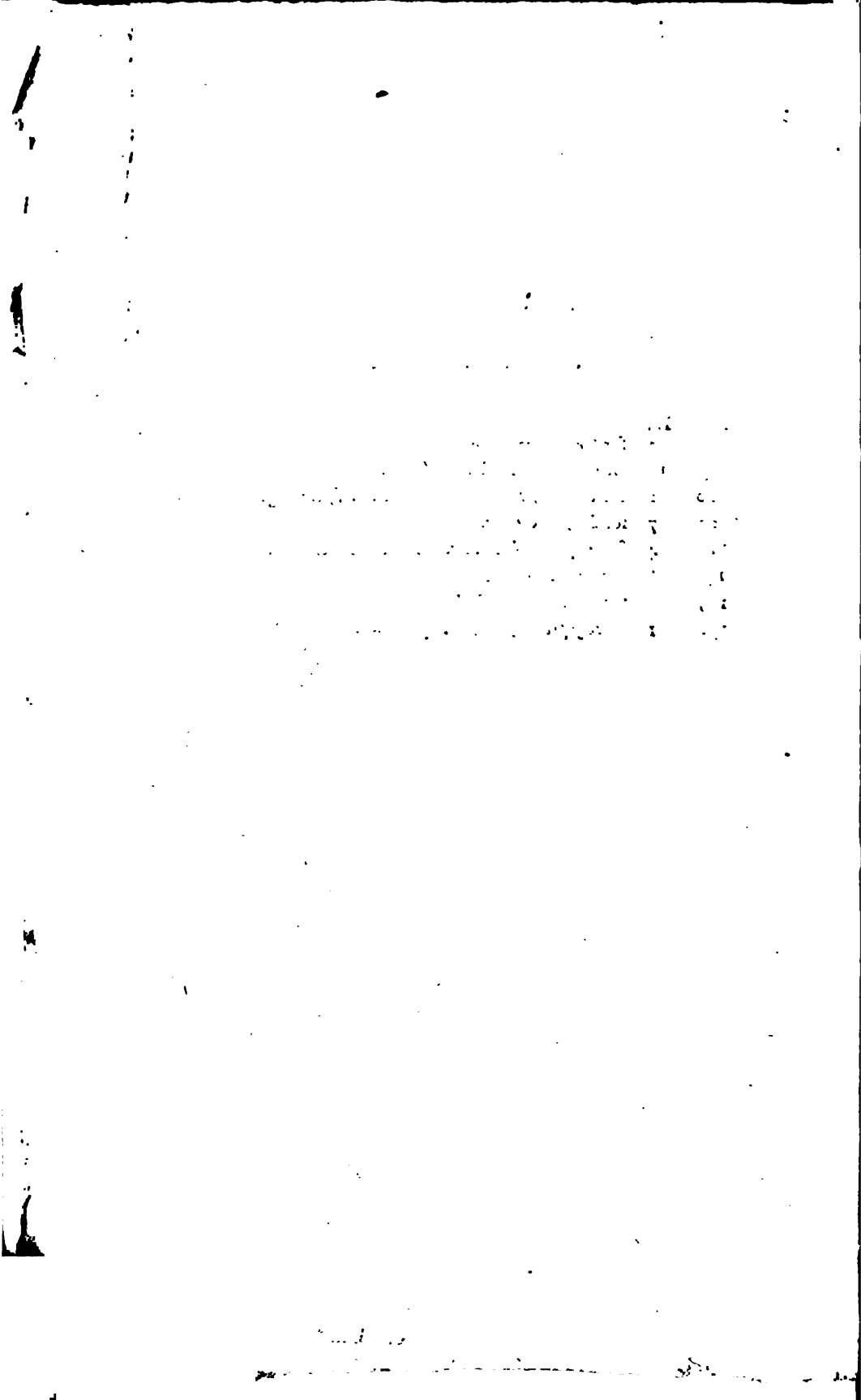
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Page.	Line.	
1	3	for <i>Orerry</i> , read <i>Orrery</i> .
3	18	for <i>probation</i> , read <i>approbation</i> .
20	2	for <i>coined by the cunning</i> , read <i>coined by cunning</i> .
27	7	for <i>has</i> , read <i>have</i> .
116	4	for <i>our political, &amp;c.</i> read <i>our own political, &amp;c.</i>
149	8	for <i>evil</i> , read <i>vice</i> .
169	8	for <i>and unjust</i> , read <i>than unjust</i> .
171	2	for <i>they proceed</i> , read <i>they proceeded</i> .



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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

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LETTER I.

*Duty of a Member of Parliament—Systematic Parties, for the Conduct of Government, unnecessary—Remark of Lord Orrery confirmed by Experience—Advantages of political Integrity illustrated—Corruption of the Vehicles of public Intelligence, by parliamentary Parties, deplored.*

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SIR,

**A**FTER having dedicated many of your earlier years to Parliamentary pursuits, and quitted the anxious toils of public life, for the mild scenes of rural retirement and the peaceful enjoyment of domestic comfort, it is natural that the rage for political discussions which now prevails throughout the Kingdom, and has reached even your residence, should have awakened your curiosity, and induced you to wish to learn the sentiments of a friend, who, however inconsiderable in himself, lives in the bustle of the town, relative to such events as more immediately pass before his eyes, and at

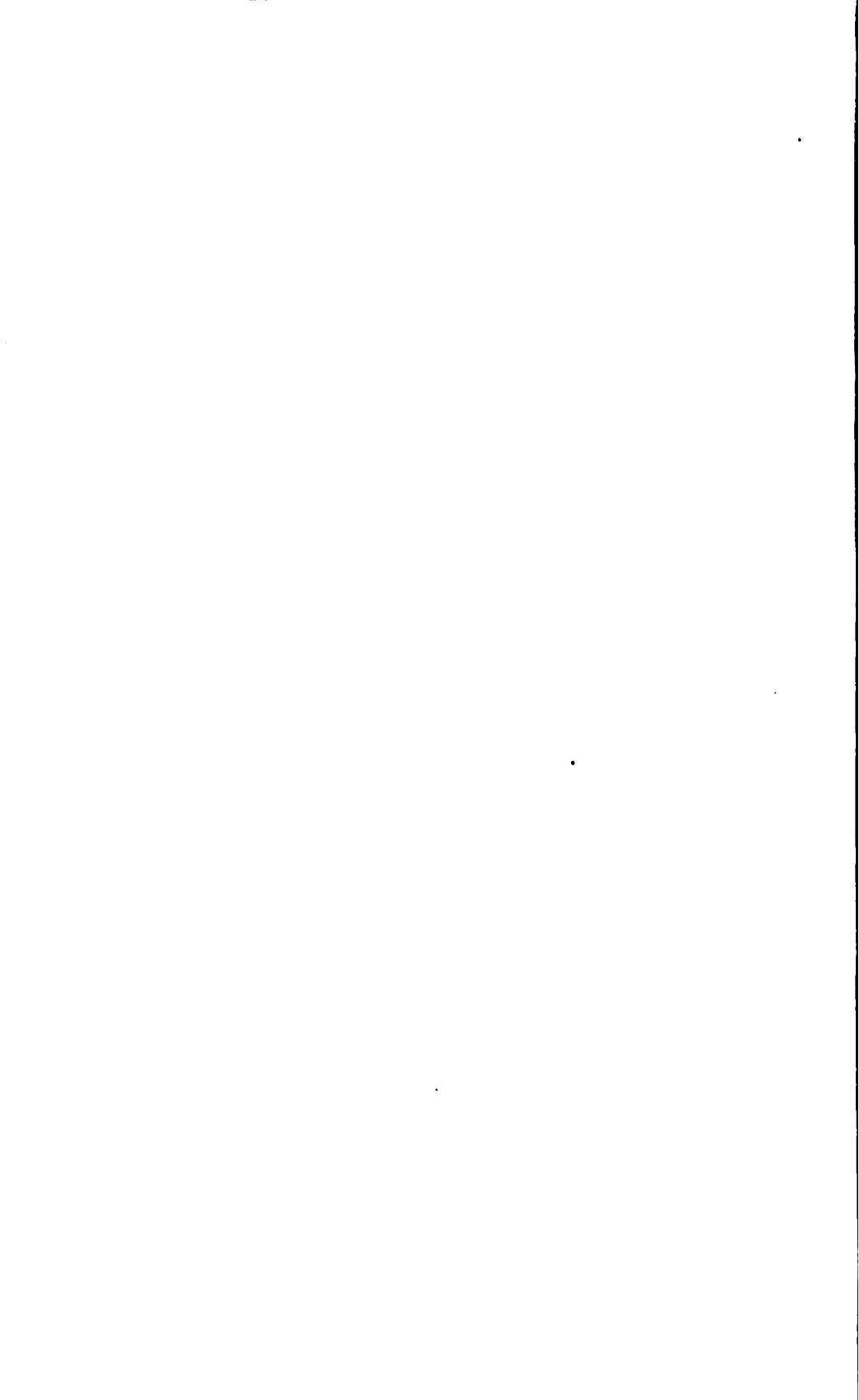
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III

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and an Opposition, not arising from particular exigence, and acting merely from principle, but evidently founded on a settled plan of systematical resistance. Abuses like these, proceed from the total carelessness of Members, in general, to the duties of their situation, and their disregard, if not contempt and scorn, of the public welfare. All men, who become the component parts of a Legislative Assembly, are placed in a station of life, which, more than any other, calls for the utmost purity of intention and of conduct. There appears, it must be confessed, an imbecility in the human character, which makes us naturally submit our minds to the direction of a man of intrepidity and genius, who leaps forward into public life, and cries out to the crowd, who gaze upon him with astonishment, "I am your leader: Pursue my steps, and be happy!" But it is no less inexcusable for a Member of Parliament to yield implicitly to the guidance of any person, under an idea of his possessing more abilities, and knowledge, and power of determining on what is just, than himself, than it is for him to suffer his own integrity to be gradually subdued, in consequence of an habitual observation of the degeneracy of others. The suggestions of every man's mind, are sufficient to distinguish betwixt right and wrong; and, if I may so express myself, to point out to the elements of moral action: for the principles

tiples of public, as of private, virtue, are few, and simple, and obvious to the meanest capacity. But these principles must be often abandoned by such as form party attachments. Lord Orrery, when stating to his son the necessity of an Englishman's being well versed in politics, says, " He must choose his own party, and he must stick to the choice; *Non revocare gradum*, must be his motto; and Heaven forgive you, my dear son, if the *gradus*, now and then, enforces you to act against self-conviction!" \* The frequency of this evil, indeed, every Session of Parliament sufficiently evinces; when an hundred instances repeatedly occur, on both sides, and afford so many melancholy proofs that Members, who, in their political capacity, would serve their friends, must betray the public; and that the cause of their Party can be aided only by acting in opposition to the interest of their Country.

There are, it must be confessed, two motives which carry to the minds of men very powerful justifications for submitting their parliamentary conduct to the direction of others. One is, the hope of filling the first Offices of the State, for the purpose of becoming objects of greater importance in the public estimation: The other, an idea of proposing useful measures with

\* Orrery on Swift. Letter xvii.

effect, by the assent and assistance of the party they support. With regard, however, to the latter of these motives, it may be observed, that the very circumstance of being a party-man, is sufficient to raise adversaries to the proposer of the most serviceable plan that can possibly be offered, and that no individual is so likely to carry his point, as he who is known to be actuated solely by principles of private integrity and public justice. Nor is the former motive less erroneous than the latter. Integrity and talents, in this country, will always be sufficient to obtain that high estimation, which a gentleman of honest pride, and conscious merit, would wish to acquire; an estimation superior to any that can arise from hereditary claims, or the dignity of office; and where integrity or talents are wanting, the greatest honours serve only to render native insignificance the more conspicuous, and vice more glaring. Look to the most eminent Statesmen of this country, and ask your own mind, whether their character has dignified their rank, or their rank alone given lustre to their character? And whether such a man, for example, as Mr. Fox, would not carry his own fame along with him in whatever situation he might be placed, or whether he could derive increase of splendour, from the mere adventitious circumstance of being Minister of this country? No, Sir; trust me, that *talents* alone will always fix a man in that  
high

high rank of society, which great minds feel to be their natural destination; but that *talents* united with *integrity*, though the union, too frequently, deprive the possessor of the gaudy favours of Ministerial patronage, will attract sentiments in the public mind, infinitely more honourable than any which could possibly be produced by the highest artificial distinctions. Indeed, that those who even want the qualifications necessary to procure eminence to party men, are yet, by the aid of acknowledged purity of intentions, rendered objects of great importance, is evident from the example of Mr. Hufsey and Mr. Drake. The first of these gentlemen, without any brilliant endowments of nature, or extensive acquisition of political knowledge, and gifted only with plain common sense, recommended by no very prepossessing style of delivery, enforces as much attention, on every important point, as the Minister himself, or the leader of the Opposition; and I have known his wish, for the postponement of particular parliamentary proceedings, assented to by Mr. Pitt, though adverse to his original intention, at a time when some of the most conspicuous characters, on the Opposition bench, had, in vain, exerted their great abilities to prove the necessity of such a measure. Mr. Drake, just likewise, though a perfect gentleman and polite scholar, exhibits in his speeches a whimsical eccentricity of ideas, and an unnatural combination



of good sense with absurd imagery, that might, perhaps, rather injure, than aid, the cause of a party; yet never does Mr. Drake rise, to deliver his opinion, but the whole house manifests the most perfect silence. While such deference is paid to mere intentions admitted to be honest, and to conduct evidently directed by no other principle than that of justice, what man, deceived neither by the suggestions of others, nor by a perverse and crooked judgment of his own, would not infinitely prefer this honourable tribute of public respect, to all the pompous, but empty, distinctions of rank and title? Or what man, who felt and acted as a legislator ought, if such marks of esteem were even totally withheld, would not infinitely prefer the calm testimony of his own conscience, to the highest honours of the State, or the loudest thunders of popular applause? Such conduct alone can confer true dignity on the character of a Member of Parliament, and secure to his declining years, and last moments of life, the most exalted of all blessings—a Mind fraught with satisfaction;—a Memory that brings with it no other feelings, than those of cheerfulness and peace.

But it is idle, my dear Sir, to continue this long, and, I fear, tedious eulogium on the performance of duties, which You never neglected, when in a situation to fulfil them, and of which,

no man, at this moment, can more amply enjoy and estimate the pleasing reward. I shall, therefore, hasten to a conclusion of this Letter, and proceed with pleasure, in my next, to satisfy your queries with regard to the prominent characters and circumstances of the present day; subjects on which, in your retired situation, you can reap no other intelligence than such as the Newspapers, that you order to be remitted you from London, can afford. But Newspapers, as to political speculation, must not always be trusted, as *most* of them are, in this respect, notoriously corrupted:—a painful reflection to those who consider the great public utility of these diurnal publications, when conducted on proper principles! The office of a Newspaper Editor is extremely important; and, if universally sustained as it ought to be, would rank high indeed in point of respectability: for the Editor of a daily Print may be justly considered as the great director of public opinion and public judgment. It, therefore, becomes him never, intentionally, to mislead those who thus repose in him their generous confidence. To relate domestic and foreign occurrences, or to gratify the world by a daily publication of ingenious literary compositions, is the least part of his duty. As, on the one hand, he ought to disdain contaminating his columns with personal detraction, so ought he, on the other, to feel that he is the guardian of

the people's rights, and, resisting or upholding the measures of legislators and statesmen, according to his sense of their rectitude or danger, to suffer his paper, on political subjects, to be influenced only by the strictest *truth* and *impartiality*. Thus would he render himself a check on the occasional injustice of both parties, and a benefit to mankind. The extensive circulation, indeed, of a daily Print, affords the most effectual means of disseminating just principles and a right view of things; and, surely, when the power of performing a public good is great, the greater is the criminality of its perversion.

Excuse me for thus dwelling on the subject of Newspaper publications. It is natural that I should do so, when they were once incidentally mentioned, because I think their universal circulation renders them objects of great public importance, and because I sincerely wish well to such an engine of universal knowledge; and it is still more natural that I should feel concern at the prostitution and misconduct of many of them—for I admit the existence of some few exceptions—because I fear that the legislature may at last take advantage of these errors, produced by their own corruption, to stab the liberty of the Press, through the sides of Newspaper publication. And whenever this shall be attempted, by the aid of additional checks and  
 impediments

impediments on the direction and sale of these useful vehicles of diurnal intelligence ;—whenever the means of so constant a watch on the measures of bad Ministers, are thought proper to be silenced by Parliamentary shackles ;—we may, from that moment, date the period of our civil bondage, and justly consider the stab, thus given to the Freedom of the Press, as a mortal stab to the Liberties of this Country!

I remain, dear Sir, &c.

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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

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LETTER II.

*Present State of Eloquence in this Country—Rapid Review of the merits and public character of our best Parliamentary Orators: Mr. PITT, Mr. DUNDAS, Mr. BURKE, &c. Mr. FOX, Mr. SHERIDAN, Mr. WYNDHAM, Mr. GREY—Lords THURLOW, STORMONT, LOUGHBOROUGH, STANHOPE, and LANSDOWNE—Digression concerning Mr. HORN TOOKE,*

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SIR,

ELOQUENCE, the peculiar product of a free State, is, perhaps, at the present time, more carefully and more generally cultivated in this country, than at any former period. In point of oratorical excellence, indeed, the modern annals of Great-Britain may justly vie with the most celebrated æras of Grecian or Roman History. If Athens could, at one time, boast her DEMOSTHENES, we have no less reason to glory in our Fox; and if Rome could, at another, derive

derive splendour from the abilities of her CICERO, we may proudly produce his equal, for animated rhetoric, in the son of the illustrious CHATHAM. That two men, so eminent in their respective ranks of parliamentary eloquence, should flourish at the same period, and in the same country, is a circumstance not to be expected in the common course of human events; but when it is added, that our Senate likewise produces other characters, who rise, in different lines of oratory, to great beauty and perfection, we may, indeed, consider ourselves as living in an age when Nature has been highly liberal of her choicest gifts, and Art more than usually successful in her best attainments.

In the loose, rambling style of letter-writing, it is of little consequence, dear Sir, whom I adduce as the first example, in proof of this assertion. But, as the Minister may be deemed, politically speaking, the first man in this country, and as you had retired from public life before the present Premier entered into it, it were, perhaps, most regular and satisfactory to begin with a delineation of the style and manner, in which I shall not totally overlook the person and political character, of Mr. PITT. Imagine to yourself, then, Sir, a tall and rather ungraceful figure, with a boyish ~~shabby~~ face, that derives its chief expression from an austere and thoughtful brow. If  
personal

personal appearance were the sole title to public recommendation, such an individual would, perhaps, have no very powerful plea in his favour; but, in this country, it is by more intrinsic and valuable qualities, it is by spirit and talents only, that men can expect to acquire an honourable rank, or a distinguished character. Without such qualities, indeed, Mr. Pitt, very unequally aided by his friends, had, long since, been overpowered by the acknowledged abilities of his political adversaries. But he saw, betimes, where *THEIR forte*, in speaking, lay, and assiduously cultivated that species of talent which his natural good sense directed him to make *HIS OWN*. Their's was powerful reasoning; his, accordingly, was elegant language; their's was vigour; his, grace; their's, vehemence; his, dignity. The system *they* founded on strong sense, *he* sapped by pathos; the assertions *they* brought forward with bold conviction, *he* evaded by prudent caution; the errors *they* committed, through intemperate rashness, *he* opposed and overthrew, by all the power of ready detection, violent exaggeration, and repeated triumph. In the beginning, however, of his political career, Mr. Pitt boasted few advantages from Nature. A ready flow of words; without ideas sufficient to embody them, and a pronunciation, graceful, yet confined only to one key, were the peculiar characters of his parliamentary eloquence. But,

as raw and undisciplined troops, by frequent skirmishes with an enemy versed in the arts of contest; soon learn their manœuvres and their weaknesses, so did *he*, with admirable judgment, avoid what he discovered detrimental to its own purpose, in the conduct of his opponents; select for his imitation, whatever in them appeared an ornament and a grace; and, by the aid of unwearied care and culture, rear on this solid ground-work, a manner of his own, highly impressive, and extremely beautiful. As he became more experienced in public business, the variety of incidents that daily occurred, and the lights which frequently arose from the observations and reasoning of the other party, furnished matter for his own mind to work upon, and called forth arguments for his own language to decorate and dignify. Thus has Mr. Pitt gradually arrived to that power of mind which he at present possesses; and perseverance, practice, constancy, and attention, have brought to perfection those fruits, of which Nature had once given but a sparing promise, by a few gay, and gaudy, blossoms. His manner, indeed, at present, is graceful, animated, and dignified: elegant in his action, distinct and emphatic in his enunciation, correct and flowing in his language, and ingenious and able in his reasoning. One merit for which he is peculiarly conspicuous, is the perfect mastery he has over his passions, when it might be supposed that the

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severity



severity or injustice of his adversaries, and the general indignation which their harangues frequently excite against him, would throw him entirely off his guard. On these occasions, he always rises perfectly collected, and retaliates invective with dignified warmth, or disarms resentment by irresistible pathos, without suffering himself to be overcome, or hurried into any imprudence by excess of feeling, or violence of passion. Under Mr. Pitt's Administration, however—whether from a laudable wish of improving the finances, and rescuing the credit of the nation; or from a desire of supplying such expences as are constantly incurred from the fatal necessity, according to the present false system of politics, of increasing the means of corrupt influence—it cannot be denied that a concern for the revenue seems to have superseded all regard for the liberty of the subject, and that taxes have been imposed on the people of this country, extremely partial and oppressive. Hence, are his abilities more frequently employed in varnishing measures, that, in their own nature, are likely to become unpopular, by specious and plausible sophistry, than in maintaining their justice by fair and candid argument; hence, is he reduced to the necessity rather of resting on the confidence of the House for their support, than of courting their examination; and hence, is he too often obliged to silence doubt and enquiry,

enquiry by no fairer means than the lofty and imposing language of ministerial authority. The occasion that called forth Mr. Pitt's most distinguished efforts, was the Regency business; at which time his abilities had been brought to their due maturity, and, whatever be our opinion of the rectitude of his measures,\* he, at least, maintained those measures with great firmness, notwithstanding the violent resistance from Opposition, and displayed, in their defence, uncommon powers of animated debate. The subjects that exhibited his conduct to *least* advantage have been the Negotiations with Spain, and with Russia. But, with regard to the latter of these points, if there has been any act in the public life of Mr. Pitt, that ought to be selected as peculiarly entitled to praise, it is that of having given up his intentions, when he discovered that they were wrong, and disbanded an armament, though already fitted out, rather than persevere in measures which seemed obnoxious to the sense of the Nation,

Popularity, however, is, too often, the child of caprice. Political characters frequently enjoy it most when they least deserve it; and lose

\* I know that the sentiment, in favour of Mr. Pitt's conduct in that business, is almost universal. This, however, does not convince me that such sentiment is right, nor prevent me from holding the opinion I formerly maintained, See a Pamphlet entitled, "Free Thoughts on his Majesty's Recovery."

it in consequence of some senseless watch-word, coined by the cunning, and circulated among the people, with currency proportioned to their ignorance of the little real value of so base a counterfeit. "The multitude (says Roscommon) are always in the wrong," and a small degree of observation is sufficient to convince us that this is the fact almost in the unlimited extent asserted by the poet; but especially in political matters; and, as the people do not seem to have been peculiarly happy in the application either of their praise or censure of the conduct of this Minister, I shall not wonder if his next, and irrevocable loss of popular favour, were to arise, less from his own misconduct, than in consequence of some misconception in the public mind, or of some misrepresentation by the arts of party. From the friends, however, of civil, and, especially, of religious establishments, Mr. Pitt may expect the continuance of attachment and support; as he has manifested himself inimical to the repeal of the Test and Corporation-Acts, with a firmness that, at this moment, cannot but excite the gratitude of those well-wishers to the privileges of the Established Church, who conceive that such a repeal would tend to subvert the Constitution of this country.

One of the most powerful and useful advocates in Parliament, in favour of the measures of our present

present minister, is Mr. DUNDAS. The general distrust of principle in a man who sides with every Administration, and appears to have forsaken his party, when they lose their power, has tended much to derogate, in the public opinion, from a just estimate of this gentleman's abilities. But Mr. Dundas is, certainly, a very bold, fair, and forcible speaker; and his political conduct is, perhaps, more offensive than that of other party-men, only because it is more manly, and because he avows, in the face of day, the system which they more corruptly and fatally carry on in secret. I would not recall to your mind the memory of a man, of whom you must still have some recollection, but that, according to good report, he is greatly improved since the period when you remember him in Parliament. He has almost entirely divested himself of that provincial accent, which, as a speaker, operated, formerly, so much against him; and, though loud, rapid, and impetuous, in his utterance, he meets every question with a manly fairness, and, allowing to his adversaries their own premises, breaks through the most pressing difficulties, and, with great vigour of mind, draws from them inferences directly contrary to those, which, *prima facie*, carry the strongest evidence in their favour. Such powers are, no doubt, a valuable acquisition to any party; and, from the abilities of Mr. Dundas, it is no  
injustice

injustice to say, that Mr. Pitt's Administration has derived its best support.

Mr. Pitt has, indeed, by no means, derived equal support from the other members of his Party. I merely allude to that support which arises from the power and influence of public speaking. The manner of Mr. BEAUVOY is, indeed, highly polished, and the language extremely elegant; but his speeches appear to have been so equally laboured throughout, that they lose vigour by unvaried sweetness, and tire the ear, without arresting the attention. Mr. WILBERFORCE, likewise, possesses considerable talents; but though this worthy Member votes with the Minister, from a sincere opinion of the general rectitude of his measures, he does not step forward so often as to justify me in denominating him a party-man, or to praise him as eminently aiding the measures of Administration. Lord BELGRAVE, so far as to delivery, is an admirable speaker, and, if his matter answered to his manner, would deservedly rank high for parliamentary eloquence. Unfortunately, however, for his Lordship, he has *ideas* yet to acquire; his speeches, however graceful, being little better than a verbose expansion of intellectual nothingness. Mr. RIDER promises best of all the rising Members on the ministerial benches, and was deservedly complimented by Mr. Fox at the conclusion of the negotiation with

with Spain, when the papers relative to that business were withheld from the examination of the House of Commons, for the only able speech that had been delivered in favour of that measure. When his vivacity shall have been properly tempered by time, he will, no doubt, become eminently useful to the Ministerial party. There are some few other young members of considerable promise, who lend their aid to the present Administration; but none who have displayed their powers so often as to enable me to attempt an estimate of their merit, or, at present, of sufficient consequence in political life, to render any statement either interesting or necessary.

With regard to the Opposition, it is needless to present you with a detail of the character and talents, as an Orator and Statesman, of their leader, Mr. Fox. You, my dear Sir, paid a tribute of admiration to his abilities, long before I ever witnessed their exertion. But as it were, indeed, absurd to pass by such a character without mention, it is proper to remark that his eloquence still preserves many of the characters by which I remember it to have been distinguished, when the American war gave a very different complexion, from the present, to the face of public affairs. He was then bold and violent, in his measures, as in his reasoning; and manifested a vigorous and determined Opposition to the conduct of the Ministry.

Ministry. If Mr. Fox's manner differs, in any respect, at the present moment, it is that his notions are even more enlightened by experience, and that the asperities of his mind are worn away. He rarely descends to personal attack ; but still exhibits the same dauntless spirit, the same zeal for liberty, and the same fallies of unexpected and masterly reasoning. The style and manner, indeed, of this speaker, form a very striking contrast to the style and manner of the Minister. Each exhibits excellencies, for the most part, of a very different nature from the excellencies of the other. Mr. Pitt's oratory is distinguished by graceful action and correct language. Mr. Fox by no means excels in the first quality, and frequent inaccuracies of expression, committed in the warmth of speech, often prove him to be too negligent of the latter. Mr. Pitt's enunciation is distinct as audible: the delivery of Mr. Fox, when arguments press most upon his mind, peculiarly rapid and impetuous. The one speaks according to the soundest dictates of his head, the other appears governed by the impulse of the feelings of his heart. Mr. Pitt exhibits powerful abilities : Mr. Fox displays uncommon genius. Mr. Pitt persuades : Mr. Fox convinces. The eloquence of the former is distinguished by animation, dignity, and pathos: that of the latter, by energy and fire. With a figure as much contrasted as that of his adversary, Mr. Fox does not  
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even experience any disadvantage from a very corpulent habit of body, but irresistibly interests] his hearers in the cause he undertakes, even where that cause is least favourable to their prejudices; and, engaging with earnestness, in whatever his feelings lead him to defend, reminds us of Quintilian's description of Pericles, "who was said to speak in thunder and lightning."

If we wish to turn to the unfavourable parts of Mr. Fox's character, we shall find this Statesman, like every other, who has either presided at the helm of Government, or conducted a formidable Opposition, rendered the object of a variety of accusations. These, for the most part, as they were unfounded in justice or truth, outlived not the resentment and malice that first produced them. But the circumstance that pressed hardest on his popularity, was his memorable Coalition with the late Lord North. It was said, indeed, that Mr. Fox's quarrel with that Minister, arose in consequence of the American War, and that it had been folly to continue at variance, when such War existed no longer: but the public mind revolted at the idea of so sudden a friendship succeeding so violent an hostility, and concluded that the sole object of both parties, must have been the gratification of their own interest and ambition. To those who are well versed in the Parliamentary History of Great-Britain, this Coalition will appear no uncommon incident, nor

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any very violent breach of public and private principle; and there were not then wanting vindicators of an act, which, however repugnant to the general principles of conduct between man and man, they thought justifiable where *parties* were concerned, and where a great and important interest was at stake. But their efforts were overpowered by the general outcry; and the arts of a rising party, it may naturally be supposed, were not wanting to foment and aggravate the popular indignation.

The most culpable part, however, of Mr. Fox's public character, in my opinion, is his conduct with regard to the Middlesex Election, which, in perusing the circumstances of the case, appears to me to have been in direct defiance of every principle of liberty, and which the exertions of the greatest orators in Parliament, and the literary powers of a Johnson without doors, in vain attempted to varnish over with a colourable excuse. All the excuse that can be offered for Mr. Fox's conduct, is, that he was then but young in his political career, and that being a member of Administration, he might think it incumbent on him to defend, without exception, all the measures of government: Such is the accursed system of governing by Party! Most other young men, however, would have constantly pursued the same course they first adopted: while Mr. Fox evinced a contrary conduct; and, disdaining

disdaining to submit to the direction of others; his abilities soon marked him out for the head of a party.

Mr. Fox is, at present, accused of democratical principles; and his avowed wish for the Repeal of the Test-Act, and exultation at the triumph of Liberty in France, has served to strengthen and encourage that opinion. So far as a regard for the rights of mankind, and the happiness of every class of citizens, extends, I believe this conception to be perfectly just: but no man who considers how much Mr. Fox is surrounded with friends deeply concerned in the interest of the *Aristocracy*, and what obligations he fancies himself to owe to the support of the families of Cavendish and Bentinck, can, for a moment, suppose it probable that he will ever venture to infuse too strong a tincture of democratic principles into the government of this country. His desire, so cordially expressed, of seeing all sects, whatever be their religious opinions, admitted to equal rights and privileges in the State, even if it should be totally indefensible on the grounds of political expedience (for it certainly is not on those of abstract justice) has evidently arisen from feelings of liberality. Liberal feelings, indeed, are the most striking traits of this gentleman's character. He is violent, because his passions are strong;—and those passions are generally employed on adequate objects. To

the same source may be traced his love of pleasure, of which tolerable advantage has been taken by the literary agents of his adversaries, But the extreme violence of his temper, and those dashing habits which had marked the greatest part of his parliamentary career, are now mellowed down into more amiable and estimable qualities; and so far even has his mind operated on his features, that, without professing myself an adept in the science of Lavater, I think a man must indeed want penetration, who, on the first sight of his countenance, does not judge Mr. Fox's disposition to be that of perfect benevolence and philanthropy. It cannot, however, be denied that his political conduct, even at present, manifests too determined a plan of indiscriminately opposing Ministry, and, consequently, of sometimes opposing where opposition is undeserved; an error that necessarily results from the favourite and fatal system of proceeding according to the views of party, rather than of acting from general principles of legislation. But whatever be the errors of Mr. Fox, we cannot number among them equivocation, concealment, or disguise, of any sort; and, whether his opinions be favourable or repugnant to our own, must certainly allow him the praise of always speaking as he thinks, and of proving himself, without exception, the most manly and decided character in the British Parliament.

Mr.

Mr. Fox, on the whole, has somewhat more reason to feel grateful for the exertions of his friends in Parliament, than the Minister; and among other able assistance, can boast support no less powerful than that which results from the splendid talents of a SHERIDAN. The eloquence of this gentleman, may, indeed, be ranked equal to that of our first speakers, and, though he exhibit not the perfections of a Pitt or a Fox, in the peculiar excellencies of the oratory of each, his style is more richly varied, and, on all subjects, he claims no less attention than either. His eloquence, which, when not too familiar and easy, obtains, from an impassioned tone and manner, a mastery over the feelings of his hearers, is distinguished by a vein of strong sense, recommended and adorned by language always animated and elegant, and frequently poetical and flowery; and an uncommon keenness of wit, and facility of combining ludicrous and opposite images, give peculiar poignancy to sarcasm when folly or arrogance appear to demand it. With such talents, we may fairly conclude that Mr. Sheridan cannot but have received very large and liberal offers from the present Administration. It must, indeed, betray a deplorable ignorance of parliamentary politics to suppose the contrary: But it does not appear that he has been ever moved by such offers,

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or that any consideration has tempted him to desert his party. Consistency, indeed, has been the peculiar characteristic of Mr. Sheridan's public conduct: while others have veered about, as the pestilential gale of interest directed, he seems to have remained firm, and unshaken from his first intentions: and as he came into Parliament an admirer of the British Constitution, and a friend and supporter of Mr. Fox, so has he never disgraced his political conduct by forgetting the one, or by abandoning the other. With an innate hatred of oppression, and generous enthusiasm in favour of rational liberty, Mr. Sheridan's mind is said to be highly accomplished, and his disposition marked by great and noble qualities. With such perfections, however, no man is more generally rendered the object of traduction and slander. Many of our party-publications teem with the most personal and the grossest libels on him; and it is almost impossible to enter any mixed or large company, but, whatever acrimony may be bestowed on other public characters, the most illiberal part of the abuse is studiously applied to this gentleman: though, on examination, it will be perceived that scarcely the slightest ground of censure is to be gathered from this indefinite invective, which can amount to a single article of fair and honest crimination. Of such circumstances

stances, it will not be very difficult to trace the cause; when we consider the acuteness, and the pointed satire, with which Mr. Sheridan detects and exposes the political vices of Administration. Hence has every engine been set at work to run down his credit with the public; and we cannot wonder, when unfortunate habits of carelessness and procrastination mark the censurable features of this gentleman's character, that the natural indolence of Mr. Sheridan's disposition, should tend to produce, in addition to his public, many private enemies. Every man who meets with neglect, feels himself lessened in his own opinion; and so malignant is human nature, that, however lenient we may feel towards the perpetrators of the most profligate crimes that can injure society, we are by no means equally inclined to forget and forgive those who prove the means of mortifying our personal self-importance.

Mr. Sheridan, besides his political acquirements, has frequently proved himself to possess a very elegant and tender vein of poetry; and, as a dramatist, is justly deemed the first comic writer of his age. His *Rivals*, *School for Scandal*, and *Duenna*, sparkle with as much elegant wit, as the *Comedies of Congreve*, at the same time that they are destitute of *Congreve's* profligate morals and disgusting obscenity. But as Mr. Sheridan has long since forsaken

forfaken the Muses, it is to be feared that he either suffers his indolence to repress his powers; or has caught the contagion of Congreve's weakness; and deems it disgraceful to be considered as a dramatic writer. If the *first* be the cause of his in exertion, it is indeed to be lamented, and he may, in some measure, be arraigned as criminal for neglecting those powers which might so effectually be employed in the amusement and amendment of society: If the *second*, it is a piece of affectation, beneath the level of so manly an understanding. No character can surely claim a greater degree of personal respect from society; than that of the able Writer who dedicates his faculties to worthy purposes. Hume gives the preference to the Statesman; yet surely if this position be admitted, it will not be denied that even the honours of the Statesman receive additional dignity and beauty from the laurels of Literature. But the justice of Hume's assertion appears, to me, extremely disputable: Every man's claim to personal respect ought to be proportioned to the extent of his public services; and Statesmen, at the best, can but benefit their country, while Men of Letters benefit mankind.

Next to Mr. Sheridan, Mr. WYNDHAM merits mention as an able speaker in favour of the measures of Opposition. Mr. Wyndham, however,  
does

not possess many of the essential qualities of a real Orator. In his parliamentary speeches, he appeals only to men of sound judgment, and not to the mixed multitude, and convinces the understanding, rather than affects the passions. Correct and fluent in his language, he is acute, subtle, and logical, in his arguments; not easily followed by vulgar comprehensions; and even by vigorous minds, less easily refuted. His mode of reasoning is conducted according to the syllogistic form of the schools, in which he is uncommonly expert; and he pursues a long train of well-arranged ratiocination, better than any other Member of either House.

Mr. GREY is, at present, but a young man, yet, if we may judge from the specimens he has already given us of his Parliamentary abilities, he promises, at some future period, to become one of the most splendid characters in the British Senate. His style is correct, emphatic, and animated, and his *forte* lies in exciting emotions of sympathetic indignation against those measures which he himself so warmly reprobates. If my description of Mr. Pitt's oratory shall have conveyed clear ideas to your mind on the subject, you cannot form a more just conception of the eloquence of Mr. Grey than by likening it with that of the Minister. In tones, utterance, and action, they are much the same, and, if any  
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difference can be marked out between the peculiar merits of each, it is that Mr. Pitt, when he pleases, sways the pathetic passions of the audience with greater skill, while Mr. Grey chiefly excels in animating their resentment. The language, likewise, of Mr. Pitt, is more beautified by elegance, that of Mr. Grey more strengthened by terseness. One most favourable point of Mr. Grey's public character, is his zeal for Parliamentary Reform; and it is to be hoped, that, as the object is great and virtuous, he will despise all consequences, and strenuously exert himself, both within doors, and without, for its attainment.

There are, no doubt, many other Members of the House of Commons, in the interest of Opposition, of great promise; but those whom I have already mentioned, have given sufficient proofs of their oratorical powers to merit being numbered among the most eloquent men in the British Parliament: and it were useless and unsatisfactory to seek for farther examples, on either side, from those who may have manifested considerable talents, on particular occasions, but who have not signalized themselves, as speakers, often enough to justify me in giving a decided estimate of their respective merits.

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The Upper House (as it is called) falls far short of the House of Commons, in point of oratorical excellence. Yet there are, certainly, characters, though their number be small, who deservedly rank high, as able and masterly speakers. Of these, it may be observed, that the measures of the Minister hitherto derived their great support from the manly sense, and dignified delivery, of a THURLOW; and now derive it from the correctly argumentative, though not very extensive, abilities of a GRENVILLE. On the other hand, the cause of Opposition receives its best aid from the polished language, and elegantly arranged arguments, of a STORMONT, and the pointed, forcible, and luminous oratory of a LOUGHBOROUGH, Lord STANHOPE, likewise, may be considered as an able speaker, since his eloquence is distinguished by energy, and his observations by originality and vigour. In the opinion of a common observer, indeed, the appearance and manner of this nobleman must operate to his disadvantage; but those who well consider his Lordship's conduct, and examine deeper than the surface of things, will rank him as a man not only of science and strong understanding, but of liberal opinions and pure patriotism.

The Marquis of LANSDOWNE may well be numbered among the first characters of the House

of Peers, not merely for his talents as an Orator, but as a Statesman who has formerly sustained the high character of Minister of this country, and whose opinions in Parliament are now listened to with the most anxious attention. His Lordship, certainly, is a character of great weight; and his knowledge in the science of politics, no less than his situation, deservedly place him in such high esteem. As an Orator, he is distinguished by a dignified warmth of utterance, and a captivating elegance of language. As a Politician, even his *private* character produces some testimonies in his favour, since he is said to maintain, at very great expence, for his own satisfaction and information, a correspondence in every Court of Europe. Hence, from his early knowledge of important foreign intelligence, his Lordship may well prove an object of great consequence, either as a friend or enemy, in the eyes of any Minister. It is, however, conjectured, from the neutral course which the Marquis of Lansdowne has, of late, adopted in Parliament, that he has some faint hopes of forming a party to himself, and of again aspiring, should affairs take any turn that may favour the attempt (which, in the various unexpected changes of events, is not impossible) to the office of first Minister of this country. But this Nobleman, whatever be his influence in Parliament, wants that essential advantage to a public character, which

which both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox enjoy, though in different degrees—the esteem and favour of the people. Though the motives of most statesmen be the same, the purity of his Lordship's seem peculiarly to be questioned; and a certain indecision of character, obliquity of conduct, and evasion of an explanation of direct opinions on great and important subjects, have naturally operated, in the public mind, much to his prejudice. Free-men love that those who are likely to become the guardians of their civil liberty, should, *unequivocally*, avow their public principles.—Lord Lansdowne, however, merits great praise for the encouragement and patronage which he bestows on the votaries of philosophy and science; a conduct the more noble, as such characters are not very well qualified to requite those favours by any adequate political services. Men, fixed in the habits of patient and regular enquiry, and accustomed to dispassionate investigation into the component principles of things, to repeat and vary unsuccessful experiments, and to weigh, with care, opinions, which, after having been adopted for some time, are obliged to be abandoned for others, are not calculated to prove very useful to parties in a State, but rather shrink from the rude and busy face of public life, to the tranquil bosom of silent retirement. To such men, however, it is thought the Marquis of Lansdowne's protection

is not alone confined; and, if we may credit the important rumour of the day, his Lordship's influence is the spring which actuates the conduct of Mr. HORNE TOOKE without doors. To me, however, there appears to be but little ground for an assertion, which, most probably, arises only from the propensity of mankind to attribute the proceedings of every public character to interested motives. Mr. Tooke, with limited connections, narrow fortune, and an evident desire of inspiring a spirit of independence in the people at large, is not the most likely object to serve the purposes of an ambitious individual in Parliament. What may be this gentleman's intentions, I know not, but I really believe them to be honest; and, judging from what little I can learn of his character, from facts, I think his mind too upright and spirited to submit to the shackles of the will of any man whatever. He is decried as inconsistent, and has frequently excited the indignation of others, when he has rudely attacked those characters whom he once defended. But at the same time that his personal attacks are sometimes acrimonious in the extreme, I believe Mr. Tooke to have always maintained his principles with perfect consistency, and to have abandoned particular men and parties only when he thought they deserted those very principles, after having professed, and affected, to maintain them. If Mr. Tooke were to avoid an  
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offensive appearance of personal malignity in his political contests, and rather to think of measures than of men, he would render himself less liable to severity of censure, than, in this respect, he so amply deserves: but when we reflect, on the other hand, that he has *always* been strenuous in the cause of liberty, that his quarrels with every character of weight and influence in Parliament, are totally irreconcilable with his private interest, and that all parties join in decrying him; it will appear evident that he must be swayed by manly and disinterested motives, that he must have too many enemies not to be a great and good man, and that, therefore, he deserves the approbation of every honest member of the community.

Requesting that you will excuse this short, and unavoidable digression,

I remain, dear Sir, &c.

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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

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LETTER III.

*Reasons for having omitted to mention Mr. BURKE—Importance, in a political and philosophical light, of the FRENCH REVOLUTION—Of the different Principles, considered as the basis of Civil Authority—Brief History of the REVOLUTION in FRANCE, to the Formation of the Constitution and its Sanction by the King.*

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SIR,

I HAVE obtained my object, should my last Letter have conveyed to your mind tolerably clear ideas of the peculiar styles and excellencies of the first Orators in the British Parliament. But you think that I have been guilty of an omission, by neglecting to notice so distinguished a character as EDMUND BURKE; and I will readily confess, that a narrative, which professes to give even a rapid review of the prominent personages in public life, were imperfect, indeed, if it should pass by a name, so distinguished in the ranks of literature and politics,  
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without praise, or without attention. To speak of him as a writer, had been turning aside from the original intention of my strictures, and I thought it needless to mention him as an orator, since your memory must still retain some idea of his peculiar merits, too strongly marked by his manner, to be soon forgotten. You must still remember the extravagance of his action, the wild exuberance of his fancy, the vehemence of his passions, and the weakness of his judgment. His forced utterance; and attitudes, *outrès*, and almost *grotesques*; must, even now, present themselves to your imagination. You behold him, no doubt, *this* moment, hurried beyond the bounds of reason and justice, by the impetuosity of his anger; and know not whether to be most astonished or delighted, *the next*, with the rich colouring of the pictures of his fancy, the prompt illustration of his subject, by terms and circumstances readily drawn from literature and science, and the felicity of the appropriation of his classical allusions.

In a subsequent part of your Letter, you assign, as the chief reason for having noticed so material an omission, the wish you entertained of learning my sentiments on the conduct of Mr. Burke, relative to an event, which has, of late, engaged his greatest powers, as well as on the event itself, unparalleled in the annals of human

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history,



history, viz. the FRENCH REVOLUTION. I confess, that an additional motive for then inducing me to avoid any allusion to that gentleman's name, was my intention of adverting to his merits, at least incidentally, when the subject of the great change in the manners and government of a neighbouring people should employ my pen on some future moment. And, flattered as I feel by your request, I cannot do less than dedicate one letter entirely to the consideration of an event so worthy of philosophical contemplation, so new to the eyes of the most experienced politician, so interesting to the feelings of all neighbouring nations, and so pregnant (as I think) in its final consequences, to the remotest communities of mankind.

I do not wonder that you should have paid less attention to the circumstances of that Revolution than you now think they must naturally have demanded. Situated as you are, the means of authentic and impartial information, with regard to a political occurrence of this nature, are not readily attainable. Nor can I less wonder that you should hesitate to avow the sentiments, which it becomes you to avow, while, even among the small circle of your country friends, opinions are so various and contradictory; because I know that you suspend your judgment, whenever you feel not perfectly acquainted with the facts on  
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which that judgment ought to be founded. With me, however, who deem the simple, general fact sufficient to justify a decision, there cannot exist the shadow of a doubt upon the subject. France had long been ruled by an arbitrary and oppressive government. The whole body of the Nation (some very trivial number, indeed, excepted, who were personally interested in maintaining the ancient system) determined to be free, and, on the ruins of the old government, erected such an one, as, in their opinion, was most liberal, and best suited for the purposes of national happiness. The question, therefore, is, Whether a *whole Nation* are, or are not, justified in resisting and dissolving a government which they consider as tyrannous and oppressive, and in establishing another in its stead? And to this question, I do not see how any man, who will divest his mind of habitual prejudice and interested motives, can forbear to answer in the affirmative. For from what principle can any government derive its authority, but the consent of the People? It may be said, with some writers on civil polity, that it derives its authority from *Force*: but Force (unless we were to speak of the Force of reason and virtue) is, surely, a vicious ground for any authority whatever; and, even allowing the basis to be just, the assertion, when applied to the case of France, tells in favour of my opinion; for the Force of

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those,

those who had hitherto submitted to the former government, proved superior to the Force of the men who governed them; otherwise, they had failed in their endeavours to effect a Revolution. Many persons there are, likewise, who maintain, that the right of those who command is ordained of God, and that civil government has its existence in HIS WILL, and, therefore, claims our unqualified subjection. But they who hold this language, without admitting restriction of circumstances, either meant to impose on the understandings of others, or do not see the end and danger of their argument. Is vice ordained by God? Are public grievances ordained by God? Can it be the will of God, that a government, which is hostile to the freedom and felicity of his creatures, should ever disgrace the Earth, while there exists integrity and power sufficient to root it up, and to destroy it? These were the evils of the ancient Monarchy of France; evils which must always prevail, when a Nation at large are tempted to revolt: and it is a pitiful attempt to sustain the falling fabric of despotism and bigotry, by referring its existence to the "Will of God." Such means of silencing immediate resistance, not only incapacitate the human faculties from generous exertions in times of civil danger, but lead to an impeachment of the moral attributes of the Supreme Being. What was the fate of those, who, under the former system in France, chanced to render politics the subject of their conversation

converſation and enquiry, let the Annals of that Government, proclaim in the dark and bloody records of her miſerable victims. And can a ſyſtem of civil Adminiſtration, which depends, for its exiſtence, only on fraud and cruelty, be ordained of God? Rather ought we to aſſent to the converſe of the propoſition of thoſe who would enforce paſſive obedience to the ruling powers, by referring them to the divine Will, and aſſert that no Government whatever, though permitted for a while, *can* be ordained of God, or ſanctioned by his Will, but that which, in its principles, comes neareſt to his own Nature; that which dares challenge investigation; that which diffuſes freedom, tolerance, and juſtice; that, in ſhort, which is founded on the wiſe and immutable principles of TRUTH and BENEVO-  
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As it will, however, prove ſatiſſactory to your mind, to be informed of the chief occurrences which led to the French Revolution, and of the means by which it was accompliſhed, I ſhall trace, in due order, thoſe intereſting events. The deſultory ſtyle of epiſtolary correſpondence, will not admit a Narrative, involving every circumſtance incidentally or remotely connected with that Revolution; but the leading facts will ſuffice for our preſent purpoſe, and theſe I ſhall ſtate with all the fidelity and truth, though not  
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with the necessary amplitude and elegance, of an Historian.

I know not whether we ought to attribute the fact to the special interference of Providence, or, perhaps with more reason and more philosophy, to consider it as the necessary consequence of the established order of things; but certain it is, and it cannot have escaped every attentive observer of human life, that injustice of all kinds, however successful for a time, always reverts, at last, with redoubled vengeance on the miserable heads of those who first promoted, or afterwards maintained it. Such was the case with the Government of France, which having been long since founded on the basis of tyranny, was doomed, at last, to incur the punishment of its own evil, by seeking to gratify its ambitious views in the very means which, finally, proved its overthrow. France, subject to the principles of despotic Monarchy, had, for a considerable period of time, been equally distinguished for the oppression of her people, and the restless ambition of her Court in the extension of foreign Conquests. The encouragement of letters was necessary to maintain the splendour of the Monarchy, and, as it is the peculiar property of great minds to act only for the general good, that genius which had been  
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first encouraged for the basest purposes, was exerted for the noblest, and, indifferent to all private regards, and personal consequences, deemed its labours best employed in the virtuous office of *enlightening the People*. As their situation convinced them of the evils of slavery, their writers taught them to sigh for the dignity and happiness of freedom: and the insidious conduct of their Court towards this country, in the American War, tended to bring to a crisis, the operation of such principles. The effect of this War could be nothing else than to import from America those sentiments of independence which the troops had naturally imbibed there, and, at the same time, when it thus tended to confirm the people in just and liberal sentiments, it rendered their humiliated situation the less tolerable, by subjecting them to those heavy burthens which were necessary to defray the enormous expences thus incurred. Oppressions, likewise, of another nature—the abuses of office, the arrogance of the Aristocracy, the corrupt administration of public affairs, all grown excessive from long and unresisted practice, were more galling at a moment when the nation was distressed by the scarcity of provisions and the want of pecuniary resources. The variety of arbitrary and oppressive actions of powerful individuals, excited some little fermentation among the people, and induced the Parliament of Bourdeaux to remonstrate to the King. The

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Provincial Parliaments were, at that time, the only organ by which the general sense of injustice could be officially expressed: and the spirited conduct of the Parliament of Bourdeaux was admired and applauded by those of Aix, Toulouse, and Grenoble. The remonstrance, however, contrary to expectation, was received graciously, and the evils of which it complained, were shortly afterwards redressed. A general correction of abuses seemed to be approaching; a reform of the Clergy was talked of; and many great grievances were held out as intended to be remedied. But the Meeting of the Clergy ended to the complete dissatisfaction of the inferior orders; and promise of a redress of grievances seemed, from the event, to have been held out only as a lure to induce the Parliaments \* more readily to consent  
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\* "The French *Parlemens* are only Courts of Justice; that of Paris was instituted in the same manner, and for the same purposes, as the *Aula Regis* was, afterwards, in England, viz. for the administration of public Justice, and for deciding the differences between the King and his Barons: it was in consequence of the Judgments awarded by that Court, that the King proceeded to seize the dominions of those Lords or Princes against whom a sentence had been passed, and when he was able to effect this, united them to the Crown. The *Parliament* of Paris, as do the other Courts of Law, grounds its judgments upon the *Edits* or *Ordonnances* of the King, when it has once registered them. When these *Ordonnances* are looked upon as grievous to the Subject, the Parliament refuses to register them; but this they do not from any pretension they have to a share in the Legislative Authority; they only object that they are not satisfied  
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to enregister some edicts for new taxes, which, at a moment of difficulty, like the present, were not likely to prove very popular; or to lessen the national odium, of attempting to evade their effects, by calling a general Assembly of Notables. Parliament, indeed, had already proved themselves unwilling to sanction the farther imposition of very oppressive burthens, by exercising that portion of power, which, though contrary to the principles of an absolute Monarchy, had been allowed constitutionally to reside in them, for the purpose, no doubt, of giving the requisite formality to the measures of Administration. And M. Calonne, who had before him a multiplicity of political objects, among which was a New Edict for the augmentation of the Poll Tax, already so much reprobated, feared that the office of enregistering would be refused, in this instance, as in others, especially when it was so evident that the circumstances of the Nation called for the retrenchment of public expences, and not for an increase of public burthens.

that the *Ordonnance* before them is really the will of the King; and then proceed to make remonstrances against it: sometimes the King defers to these; or, if he is resolved to put an end to all opposition, he comes in person to the *Parliament*, there holds what they call a *Lit de Justice*, declares that the *Ordonnance* before them is actually his Will, and orders the proper Officer to register it."—DE LOLME.

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Such were the chief circumstances of France in 1786; and her prospects at the commencement of the next year were more sad and gloomy. The extreme scarcity and dearness of provisions, and of every necessary article of life, rendered the people highly discontented with their situation, and the measures of the Court tended neither to diminish their sufferings, nor to soothe the awakened emotions of resentment. The Notables were assembled, for the purpose, according to M. de Calonne, of rescuing the Nation, not by new taxes, but by oeconomy: and a variety of objects, some of them important, were pointed out by the King for their deliberation. It shortly appeared, however, that the real end of this convocation was only to force those measures, which the spirit of the Parliaments could not suffer to be carried according to customary usages. But whether their dissent to many of the questions proposed had excited disgust, or whether they had agreed to so much as might answer the original purpose of the measure; the Assembly was shortly afterwards thanked and dismissed by the King, without having gone through half of their intended business. It was immediately previous to that event that Mirabeau was forced to fly, in order to avoid the effect of a Lettre de Cachet; and that M. Calonne, having been disgraced, received his dismissal, and was exiled to his estate at Annonville. The Parliament of Paris were ordered

ordered, by the King, to enregister certain Edicts agreed on by the Notables, to which requisition they consented, except with regard to one for establishing a duty on stamped paper, which not only met with strong opposition, but produced a remonstrance addressed to his Majesty. The Parliaments of Bourdeaux and Rouen were no less refractory on the subject of another of the Edicts, relating to the exportation of Corn. To the remonstrance of the Parliament of Paris the answers were contemptuous and laconick, and therefore the Members remonstrated again, and absolutely declared it as their opinion, that his Majesty ought to yield to the general wish of the Nation, and rescue the public affairs from ruin, by convening the STATES GENERAL. The Parliament was immediately summoned to Versailles, where the King held a Bed of Justice ; at which, having expressed his disapprobation of their conduct, he ordered the Edict and Declaration for a stamp-duty and land-tax to be transcribed on their registers, which was done accordingly. The next day the Chambers assembled, and resolved the registering to be null and void. Some reforms were about this time began in the King's household ; and the Parliament shortly afterwards issued an edict, giving the force of law to the stamp-duty and land-tax ; but repealing another impost. On this they were banished to Troyes ; but the conveyance of the Members

from their own houses, was so sudden and secret, and the measure itself so unjust, as greatly to exasperate the people. Government were alarmed at the public feelings, and, Parliament being recalled, the seat of Justice was again transferred to Paris. New arrangements were made in the Ministry, from a thorough sense of the great change which was becoming more and more evident, in popular opinion, from the former fervility of national character to sentiments of manly independence. His Majesty, according to the determination of Council, met his Parliament, and carried with him two Edicts to be registered: one, concerning a Loan; the other, relative to the re-establishment of the Protestants in their ancient civil rights. Nay, so far did this conciliating spirit extend, that permission was given for them to deliver their sentiments without restraint. A warm debate accordingly took place, in the course of which his Majesty not having been used perhaps to warm debates, and thinking that he had suffered this to last long enough, felt himself fatigued, and, rising, ordered the Edict for the Loan to be enregistered. The Duke of Orleans protested against the measure; but his royal Brother persisted in his order, enforced the registering of the Edict, and quitted the Assembly. This was, no doubt, concluding with violence, a business, which had commenced with candour; and in order that the catastrophe might not prove incomplete, the Duke of Orleans was  
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the next day exiled, and two other Members who had objected to the enregistering were committed to prison. The Parliament, therefore, having in vain sent a deputation to his Majesty with a petition in favour of their banished and imprisoned Members, declared the resolution entered on their books to be expunged, and met to deliberate on the Edict in favour of the Protestants. Nothing on this subject, however, was determined, and they again attempted to obtain the return of the three exiles by another remonstrance, declaring, that what they required was not a matter of favour, but their *right*. His Majesty, as may be supposed, expressed strong displeasure at these proceedings.

The Parliament of Paris sent another Remonstrance to the King, on the subject of their exiles, the Protestant establishment and Lettres de Cachet. \* Receiving a peremptory refusal on the first head, they held out against registering the Edict in favour of the Protestants, till, with the

\* It is impossible to read the events which led to the French Revolution, without recollecting the speculation of Blackstone on the subject. "That the absolute power, says this great man, claimed and exercised by a neighbouring nation, is more tolerable than that of the eastern empires, is in a great measure owing to their having vested the judicial power in their Parliaments, a body separate and distinct from both the legislative and executive: and, *if ever that nation recovers its former liberty, it will owe it to the efforts of those Assemblies.*" BLACKSTONE'S COM. Book 1. Chap 7.

extension of religious freedom, they could obtain a mitigation of civil slavery by annihilating that most disgraceful power of remorseless tyranny, the issuing of *Lettres de Cachet*. The Parliament of Rouen at this time remonstrated against paying a tax, called the *twentieths*, and declared it impossible, that they should consent to any Bill but by the consent of the people lawfully assembled. The Protestant Edict, however, at length, after some struggle, passed in the Parliament of Paris; but without any concession to their other request, for *Lettres de Cachet* were almost immediately afterwards issued against two Members of the Parliament of Grenoble (both advanced in years, and greatly respected) for having expressed their opinions with more frankness than prudence. This excited no gentle murmurs in Dauphiny; and the discontents in the province of Bourdeaux were so alarming, that troops were sent to quell the disturbances. The Duke of Orleans was thought proper to be recalled; but, with that wavering irresolution which marks a feeble and inconsistent mind, the King at the same time held a Bed of Justice, in which he abolished the power of the Parliaments, except so far as regarded their mere judicial capacity. The eloquence of M. d'Epresmenil in resisting the influence of the Court had endangered his life; and though he avoided assassination by escaping through the croud in disguise, during the tumult which these measures excited,

cited, even the feat of justice did not the next day prove a sanctuary from official violence: he and another Member were taken from thence by virtue of two Lettres de Cachet, and carried off into immediate exile, in the sight of the populace.

The general ferment excited among the people, the distressed and ruinous state of the finances, the universal execration of the oppressions interwaved in the texture of the French Monarchy, the impossibility, under the the difficult circumstances of the case, of conducting the public affairs according to the system of the established government, rendered it evident to all parties, that the Nation could be saved only by a change of its political Constitution. The great object of Court policy, therefore, was, to prevent the institution of a liberal government, in which the people would enjoy their just rights in the exercise of the important duties of legislation. In order to effect this purpose, the King held a Bed of Justice, and, having taken from the Provincial Parliaments the power of enrolling Edicts, stated, that, in a great kingdom, it was necessary there should be one Monarch; one System of Laws, and one Court for enregistering and enrolling those laws; and declared his determination in favour of the revival of a Supreme Court to be invested with those powers, formerly called, *La Cour Pleniere*. The idea of such a Court, which  
was

was formerly nothing more than a splendid Aristocracy, a gaudy veil for concealed tyranny, excited general alarm; and the Grand Assembly of Parliament met the next day, and represented to his Majesty, that their silence in his presence, was not to be considered as an acquiescence, but that, on the contrary, they wholly disclaimed taking any part in the sittings of the Court! Several of the Nobles, likewise, men of ample fortunes, and of the first families in the kingdom, were disinterested enough to follow their example. The Parliament was again convened; but his Majesty giving them to understand, that he persisted in his determination, they met in the evening at Versailles, and delivered in a Memorial, protesting against such arbitrary proceedings; and the consequence of this step was, that the guards were instantly summoned to protect the Palais, that sacred mansion of the laws, round which the populace walked, and expressed, by the eloquence of solemn silence, the grief which they felt for the treatment of their Magistrates, and the manly resentment which was brooding in their mind, and which afterwards served, perhaps, as the great stimulative to bring their political principles into action.

The people in other parts of the kingdom, hurried on by the madness of their passions, proceeded even to acts of violence. The Count  
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de Perigord was expelled the City of Toulouse, for attempting to enforce the King's commands; and a great part of Brittany, and of several other provinces, were in open rebellion. The Members of the Parliament of Rouen, confined in their houses for having protested against the invasion of their rights, at last submit to take their seats in the new-projected Court, but are afterwards exiled for declaring infamous all such as shall accept a place in that tribunal: and those of Paris, Grenoble, Bourdeaux, &c. continue without abatement their vigorous opposition. Even the Clergy, in their triennial Assembly, having remonstrated concerning the impossibility of contributing a sum which had been exacted of them, terminated their Memorial, by requesting the King to convoke the States General; and they obtained for answer, that, as soon as convenience would allow, they should be convoked.

A negotiation, therefore, was pretended to be set on foot to form a new Administration: but it shortly appeared, that the object of this measure was merely to gain time, and appease the popular discontents. The attempt was vain; these discontents increased; the cause of the Nobles of Brittany, whose remonstrance produced their imprisonment in the Bastile, was attempted to be revenged by the people on the Intendant of *Normandy* who saved his life by flight; and the



the resistance in Dauphiny was more determined than ever. Additional conciliatory measures were accordingly adopted by the King, who suspended the re-establishment of the Cour Pleniere, and again promised that the States General should be assembled. A complete change of Ministry ensued ;\* and, notwithstanding the deplorable scarcity of provisions, the minds of the people were elevated with some degree of satisfaction, in hopes of likewise experiencing a change of measures. After some ineffectual attempts, therefore, to frustrate the measure, the Notables were assembled, for the purpose of determining on the mode of convoking the States, and decided on that according to which they were convened in 1614, when their numbers were in equal proportion, and they voted in different orders. It was, however, finally agreed, that they should consist of twelve hundred Members; 600 of whom were to be chosen by the Commons, 300 by the Clergy, and 300 by the Aristocracy.

M. Necker's report, on the restoration of the State, having been adopted, and sanctioned by a Resolution of Council, the States General assembled, in May, 1789. This Assembly had

\* The Archbishop of Sens was dismissed, and M. Necker placed at the head of affairs.

been

been long wished for by the nation, not in order that the States might sit in different chambers, and vote as separate orders, but that they might thus enable themselves to unite, in one grand representative body, for the purpose of erecting a government on such principles as they thought most calculated to promote general happiness. To this happiness the old Constitution of the States could have only been pernicious. The patronage which the Nobility necessarily enjoyed with regard to Church benefices, must have irremediably influenced the Chamber of the Clergy; and the Nobles, nursed in prejudices against the common people, and attracted by nearer ties to Royalty, as the fountain of Honour, had felt equal deference in favour of the Crown; so that with the powers of the Clergy, the Nobility, and the King, all combined in one interest, and pressing against the paltry share of legislation allotted to the Commons, a government would have existed like a pyramid with its point undermost, a monstrous monument of ignorance in political architecture, and destitute of the symmetry with which mixed governments should ever be reared, and which has been so often admired in the theory of the British Constitution. On the Convention, therefore, of the States, several conciliatory measures were proposed for the union of the three Chambers into one, for the purpose of deliberating and voting

there in common : but this the Nobility and Clergy refused, and claimed to themselves the right of superior and exclusive privileges. Messages constantly passed from one Chamber to another without effect ; and the Commons, anxious to obtain their object, suspended the operation of public business, by remaining, for a while, in silent and alarming inactivity. At length, however, they determined to hold no farther conferences, and, inviting all those of the other Chambers who were favourable to the interests of the people, declared themselves legally constituted the REPRESENTATIVES of the NATION. It was then decided in the Chamber of the Clergy, that they should verify their powers in common with the third estate, and a majority accordingly went and joined them. The same step was likewise taken by a considerable number of the Nobility. To this measure, the King did not appear at first much averse, but shortly afterwards a Declaration was issued, prohibiting the meeting of the States for a few days, and notifying his Majesty's intention of then going in person to hold a Royal Sitting. In consequence, however, of some informality in this proceeding, the Members repaired to the hall at the usual hour of meeting, and *found the doors locked, and surrounded with a guard of soldiers.* After a few minutes consideration on the high road, they adjourned to the Tennis Court at Versailles, and  
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having there passed the day in deliberating on this measure of the King, engaged themselves by an oath, never to separate from the National Assembly, till they had established, on some solid basis, a Constitution for their Country.

The patriotism which was animated by this incident, received an infusion of fresh spirit from the high and imperative decision of the *Royal Session*. By the declaration of the King, not only was the distinction of orders sanctioned, but those orders were enjoined to vote separately in all great questions respecting the Constitution. The suppression of *Lettres de Cachet* was referred to the State, thus constituted with ability of resisting the national wish by permitting their continuance; and the Monarch was the only person to whom the good of the people was to be confided. The Assembly were therefore ordered to quit the Hall, and attend the next day in their separate Chambers. The Tiers Etat yielded not obedience to this mandate, but after some minutes passed in mute astonishment and indignation, motions were proposed and carried, expressive of their determination to persist in their former resolves, and of their personal inviolability. The Commons met again the next day, when the Duke of Orleans joined them with more than forty of the Nobles; men of the first families and characters in the country: and two hundred of the Clergy  
likewise

likewise attended, who subscribed to the oath, and assented to the resolutions of the Assembly.

The arbitrary proceeding of the King, in holding, at such a moment, and with so menacing an air, the Royal Session, not only tended to concentrate in one body, all the Members of the three Estates, whose principles induced them to favour the general wishes of the nation, but enraged the populace without doors. Had a single gun been fired at a moment of such tumult; a Civil War must inevitably have ensued; but happily the French and Swiss Guards refused to act against the Nation. The Guard du Corps declined all service but that of protecting the person of the King, and a regiment of Hussars which was brought to replace them, declared that they would not fire unless they should be first attacked. The same disposition was found in all the troops throughout the kingdom.

In this situation of affairs, the King thought it prudent to send a Letter to the dissentient Members of Notables, urging them, without delay, to unite and deliberate with the Clergy and the Commons. The injunction had its effect, and all parties appeared to be happy and contented. But this turned out to be a measure calculated to lull the people into a fatal security; and Paris was shortly surrounded with Foreign Troops.

Troops. The Assembly remonstrated ; but as the King stated, that his motive for such conduct, was none other than the desire of promoting public tranquillity, they were contented, and proceeded to the great work of establishing a new Constitution. The Court, however, were alarmed, and manifested measures of determined hostility. Ministry were displaced ; a body of Cannoneers were planted round the City ; and an immense number of mercenaries summoned to their vile trade of wholesale murder. But the soldiery participating in the general patriotism, and still farther attached to the Nation by an increase of pay, which had been recently voted in the Assembly, laid down their arms, and declared that they would not fight against their fellow citizens. The people, exasperated, by these appearances, at the treachery of their Court, flew to arms : nothing could resist their energy : Broglio and his troops were dispersed, the Bastille was attacked and demolished, and the Governor, with others, whose conduct on the occasion had been marked by peculiar baseness, fell a sacrifice to the vengeance of the multitude.

Louis XVI. ~~at one moment~~ hastened to conciliate the affections of the Assembly. He deplored the tumults which then disgraced the capital, declared that he had been misrepresented,

mented, and protested that he wished the settlement of the Constitution on such principles, as could afford satisfaction to all his subjects. The Assembly, who had sternly saluted him on his entrance, with the words *Vive la Nation!* suffered him not to depart without the exclamation of *Vive le Roi!* And they took measures to quell the violence of the populace without doors, who had perpetrated several acts of personal cruelty on the most odious of their oppressors, by proclaiming it criminal to punish any man otherwise than by Law, and stating their intention of speedily forming a tribunal for that purpose.

The National Assembly now began their important labours, and, instead of resentful persecutions of their enemies, or arbitrary and bloody proscriptions, published a Declaration of the *Rights of Man*, as the ground-work and basis of all equitable government. They next proceeded gradually to dissolve the principles and forms of the old Constitution, previous to their erection of another; by suppressing seigniorial tribunals, and the exaction of tythes; and abolishing the exclusive right of the chace, and the unjust claims of privilege. The vast bodies of vagrants from other countries, who had advantaged themselves of the situation of France, in hopes of there experiencing circumstances more favourable to the gratification of their laziness and their crimes, were

were paid to depart, and the Assembly having thus more effectually secured the tranquillity of the State, cheerfully resumed their labours. They established perfect toleration, and decreed their own permanence as a legislature, and the King's suspensive *veto*. At this moment, however, new and unexpected circumstances arose to interrupt their proceedings and distract their Councils. The King refused his sanction to the articles of the Constitution, and a tumult took place at Versailles, arising from the behaviour of some officers of the *Gardes du Corps*, who had given a feast to the new regiment of Flanders, in which their Majesties being present, they had torne off and trampled under-foot the National Cockade, and committed several other enthusiastic acts of equal imprudence. These circumstances were sufficient to convince the Assembly, that undue means were actively and fatally exerted upon the royal mind, which, if not prevented, must inevitably tend to the destruction of all their measures; and that the public safety could only be obtained by securing the King's residence in Paris. La Fayette, therefore, at the head of the City Militia, attended by a large body of people of all descriptions, proceeded to Versailles, and persuaded their Majesties to suffer themselves to be conducted to the Capital. That some accidental outrages should have been committed, by a populace so mixed and tumultuous, was to



be expected; but with regard to the main-business of conveying the King and Queen to Paris, I know not that their conduct was disgraced by any act of personal insult whatever. This object accordingly obtained; the Assembly resumed their important labours. They decreed, that all ecclesiastical property was at the disposal of the Nation (on condition of providing, in a suitable manner, for the expence of divine worship, the support of its Ministers, and the relief of the poor); they framed a plan of Territorial Division, calculated for the organization of Provincial Assemblies: they resolved on the suspension of Provincial Parliaments, and an undisguised publication of the Pension List: they formed several important Financial Regulations, and gradually reared that Constitution, which I may safely assert, however imperfect in some parts, to be the most simple, useful, and honest government, that under the peculiar difficulties of the moment, the integrity of man could possibly have constructed. The extreme folly of the attempt of their Majesties to fly the kingdom, and rather to deluge their country in blood, than allow it to enjoy the blessings of a free government—an attempt that was so unexpectedly frustrated—neither checked their zeal, nor stimulated their resentment. The Constitution was formed and presented to the King. The  
 Monarch

Monarch accepted it, and ratified his acceptance by a sacred and public Oath to maintain it inviolable : and the Assembly dissolved, to give way to their successors, crowned with the applause of millions, and crowned, indeed, with that reward, which is still more glorious than the applause of millions,—the manly consciousness of having dedicated two years of almost unre-mitted labour, to the diffusion of knowledge, dignity, and happiness, among so great a portion of mankind.

But wishing you to draw your own conclusions from these events, I will trespass for the present no longer on your attention, and shall make such farther observations as occur to me on the subject in my next.

I remain, dear Sir, &c.

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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

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LETTER IV.

*Exultation at the triumph of Liberty in France—View of Edmund Burke's conduct—Remarks on the chief of his objections—A speculative Atheist may be a man of pure morals—On the literary defenders of the French Revolution—Moral beauties of the New Constitution—Reflections on the events of the tenth of August, National Convention, &c.*

SIR,

YOU seem satisfied with the accuracy of my review of the Revolution in France—so far as accuracy can be expected in a review so rapid—but think that I have not been equally impartial; and therefore you resist my claims to the character of a just Historian. I fear that I deserve your censure, and confess, that, with whatever intentions of impartiality I might have began my narrative, I could not avoid feeling occasionally interested in the course of the relation, and applying partial epithets to those circumstances which appeared to convey examples of uncommon

uncommon disinterestedness, and to originate in principles of unaffected patriotism. Some little colouring of praise has indeed been bestowed where facts appeared really to demand it; but though I may have thus far evinced a mind not free from partiality, I have by no means proved unfaithful or untrue in the statement of the facts themselves. Every man *must* be affected with strong feelings of one sort or another, who contemplates so sudden and complete a change in the manners and customs of the French; and I think that I ought not to be censured when I acknowledge myself unable to regard such an event without enthusiasm. I boast not nerves of iron. Twenty-five millions of human beings, whom we have long been in the habit of despising as the patient slaves of the most shameful tyranny and oppression, are awakened by peculiar circumstances to a sense of their humiliated situation, and determine to be free: they assert their rights, and they are free. Can I, with indifference, behold so vast a portion of mankind, after having been degraded to the most abject state of brutal servitude, restored to their proper degree in society, as moral beings? Can I, without exultation, reflect, that one of those countries, in which religious intolerance has frequently rioted in blood, and political villainy triumphed over her miserable victims, should at last be redeemed from error, and that the light of reason should have

have dispersed all the darkness and the horrors of Bigotry and Despotism ?

That such an event should meet with enemies in this country, was naturally to be expected. It was to be expected that those men who derive any advantages from the existence of abuses in our own system of political establishment, would raise a clamour against a Revolution which unhinged every prejudice that sanctions what is wrong, by directing the public attention to what is right, in the principles or practice of government. But it certainly never was expected, that the admirers of the late measures in France would meet their vehement antagonist in EDMUND BURKE. It was not expected, that the warm champion of political liberty would desert his cause, and act in hostility to his former principles, at the moment when that liberty became more honestly asserted, not in "bold swelling phrases," but in manly actions. It was not expected that *he*, who to his other titles of intellectual merit, affected to add that of the liberal and enlightened Philosopher, would deplore as calamitous, an event which tended to extirpate a vicious government, the foundation of almost every other vice and misery, and secured the happiness of millions, by substituting in their favour a Constitution founded on the sentiments of freedom

dom and humanity. But in men who are versed and hackneyed in the arts of party and parliamentary intrigue, we are not to look for much political consistency : and Edmund Burke, by his declamatory pamphlet on the French Revolution, has added to the number of lamentable examples, which afford triumph to the envious, and consolation to the stupid ; by proving to what vile purposes great and shewy endowments are too frequently exerted, and by bringing down to the level of public contempt, a character rendered conspicuous by knowledge the most extensive, and abilities the most splendid.

The end of Mr. Burke's pamphlet was to render the subject of the French Revolution and its fundamental principles, odious to the people of this country. For the accomplishment of this purpose no artifice, no sophistry, no misrepresentation, has been unessayed. All is complaint, outcry and invective. He begins with ridiculing the Revolution Club, and the character and conduct of the late Dr. Price : he proceeds to explain the principles of the British Constitution, and attempts to prove that the people of this country never were supposed to have any right to change their government. The French, he declares, possessed the elements of a good Constitution in their old States : the Parliament of Paris have deceived the King, and all is anarchy and confusion.

confusion. " France indeed affords an afflicting spectacle : Its laws overturned ; its tribunals subverted ; industry without vigour ; commerce expiring ; the revenue unpaid, yet the people impoverished." The inferior clergy are then attacked, as men who regard all property with envy ; the nobles who joined the revolutionists are men, who sacrifice ideas of dignity to the vile ambition of working with ignoble means for the subversion of Monarchy ; and those great and glorious luminaries of literature and science, who have so highly contributed to adorn and enlighten the seventeenth century, are a literary cabal, who have conspired the destruction of all just government and the abolition of Christianity. The robbery of the Church is next inveighed against ; the deceit of the representatives of the States General, who fraudulently pretended to wish for a reform and not a revolution ; the dissolution of the Parliament and the corruption of the soldiery. The remainder of the book is made up of a complex account of the French Finances.—Such is the substance of Mr. Burke's celebrated pamphlet, in which he has displayed all the beauties of his luxuriant imagination, but in the perusal of which the attention is cloyed by too uniform an appearance of gaudy grandeur, at the expence of clearness and method. His language is swelling and declamatory ; but, loaded with metaphor, it is frequently more turgid

turgid than sublime; and his reasoning participates rather of the nature of sophistry than of fair and honest argument. There is a just dignity in many of his moral sentiments, yet even this excellence is to be lamented, as it serves only to render the despotic principles of the book more imposing and dangerous. Too much vehemence of passion prevails throughout: and where a man pays no regard to moderation in his strictures, we have reason to fear that he will pay none to justice. That, in the course of the French Revolution, some circumstances might have occurred which irresistibly call for censure, no impartial man can deny; but Mr. Burke, in his application of degrading epithets, regards no bounds of discrimination and decency. All, with him, has been factious, base, impious, villainous, detestable: and admitting no shades of guilt, every character, every incident, connected in the chain of causes and effects producing and involving this great event, must fall before him, overwhelmed by the raging torrent of his frothy declamation. Our prejudices and feelings are constantly appealed to, rather than our understandings: And it is not indeed uncandid to assert, that the pamphlet in question ought rather to be considered as a fine piece of declamatory composition and impassioned eloquence, than as the useful vehicle of solid instruction; and that it will long exist as a monument of its author's

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thor's weakness of judgment and brilliancy of genius.

Mr. Burke's book, however, is so well known, that at this time it is almost useless to attempt to give you even a general idea of its merits ; and, after the various and able replies that it has called forth, for me to attempt an answer to its contents would perhaps appear presumptuous and idle. Yet still, though I would wish to avoid such an imputation, I cannot pass by the subject without troubling you with a few remarks. Mr. Burke says, that the French had the elements of a good constitution in their old States : but they certainly had *not* the elements of such a Constitution in those States, because the Clergy, instead of operating as an order in balance against the other orders—according to that counteracting principle which is generally considered as essential in mixed governments—would naturally be thrown into the scale of Monarchical and Aristocratical influence, in consequence of owing their patronage to the Crown and the Aristocracy of the country ;—an event which would not be more prejudicial to the Tiers Etat, than degrading to the dignity of the Clergy themselves. We are next told, with much invective, that the Parliament of Paris deceived the King. Without insisting on the truth of the assurances of that parliament, I cannot help lamenting, that Mr. Burke's detestation of insincerity should be  
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of so partial a nature, as to induce him thus bitterly to notice one instance of the Parliament having deceived the King, and to pass by the many instances in which the King deceived the People. Another example of the disingenuousness of this great writer, occurs in the artful manner in which he fastens the stigma, of such acts of violence as were committed by the Mob, on the National Assembly, When, did a Revolution of such consequence take place, \* In which so little blood was shed as in that of France? A Revolution is naturally supposed to involve in it extreme violence: and in the present case, some instances occur of acts of great and atrocious cruelty; yet these acts, few indeed in number, were committed by an ignorant rabble, whom, in the moment of revolt, it was impossible to restrain, and who owed their barbarity to the inhuman executions they had been accustomed to behold, and to the principles which they had imbibed under the tyranny and oppression of the former government. The conduct of the National Assembly, though uniformly determined, was equally distinguished by mildness, equanimity, and mercy. Mr. Burke's violent declaration that the laws were overturned, and the tribunals subverted, could have as little effect with

\* When I say this, I do not include the shocking events of the tenth of August. Those events formed a second revolution, and took place at three years distance from the former.

thinking minds, as the remainder of the same period, in which he displays the poverty of the revenue and of the people. The seigniorial and other tribunals, and the laws of the old Monarchy, were certainly abolished; but they were abolished only, as Mr. Burke well knew, for the purpose of establishing in their place the simple and unincumbered principles of justice, and the equitable process of Trial by Jury. The dissolution of Provincial Parliaments was the necessary effect of substituting other Courts of Justice, and of the existence of the National Assembly.—Nor is it any good argument in favour of the old system to say, that the Revolution did not, like a Magician's wand, banish, in a moment, from the face of the country, that poverty and distress in which the revenue and the people were involved: All that the revolution could effect, was to reduce the unnecessary expences, and to put the public affairs in such a train that the nation should, at last, recover from her indigence.

The charge against the representatives of the States General, for having pretended to wish for a *Reform*, not a Revolution, may be just; and if so, it was disingenuous to assert one thing, when they meant to execute another: but there is much more reason to believe it unjust, since, however some persons might avow an intention of correcting the vices of the State by the mild measure of reform,

reform, we can scarcely suspect it possible that the nation in general, groaning under a government so vile in principle as their old Monarchy, could conceal their conviction of the necessity of a thorough Revolution. The corruption of the Soldiery, by raising their pay, I cannot defend on any other grounds than by saying, that, critically situated as the Assembly then were, and avowedly persecuted by the Ministry, they were reduced to the necessity of opposing this stroke of well-timed policy, to the secret and dangerous machinations of their opponents.

But the grievances which chiefly excite the horror of Mr. Burke, are, it seems, the annihilation of Titles, and the disposal of Church Property. With regard to the first of these, the Nobles in general had not only rendered their order detestable by arrogance and injustice, but had proved by their claim of exclusive privileges, at the meeting of the States, and by their ostentation of contempt towards the *Tiers Etat*, that no liberal form of government *could* be carried on while titles were suffered to exist. If we consider the question upon general grounds, nothing will be more evident, than that as titles derive their value only from public opinion, when they are once considered by the people as frivolous and useless, they really become so, and degrade rather than dignify those who bear them. It is sufficient,  
indeed,

indeed, to say, that they were deemed, on the present occasion, incompatible with the nature of that free State which the French were about to establish; and whatever might be the eagerness of the Aristocracy at large to continue the foolish finery of such distinctions, we see that many of the most ancient and noble families in the kingdom were the first to relinquish them, and to glory in coinciding with the good sense of the Nation.

Whatever energy Mr. Burke may have exerted for the purpose of rendering the disposal of Church Property an object of general execration, it certainly could not have been expected, at the time of a complete National Revolution, when every other part of the old system was so essentially changed, that the Church alone would be exempted from the general lot. The necessity of a more equal distribution of salary, and the universal toleration held out by France to all religions, peculiarly demanded a new constitution of her own Church establishment; and situated as she then was, she could ill afford that, while her people was impoverished, a race of luxurious Ecclesiasticks \* should prey upon her vitals. She therefore

\* I do not believe, that this expression will be considered as unjust, by those who properly consider the general state of the French Church before the Revolution. The inferior orders of  
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therefore found it necessary to confiscate the Church Property, or rather, she withdrew into her own hands the *emoluments annexed to the OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS of the established religion*; and no rational being can seriously suppose that she had not a right to do this, and that the means by which the State paid the Clergy to preach the doctrines of its established religion, were actually the personal property of the individuals so paid. The necessity of so violent a measure may be justly lamented; but let us not forget that all those, who would otherwise have been immediate sufferers, were allowed an honourable compensation. More could not have been done in favour of the individuals who were affected by the

the Clergy, who industriously performed the duties of their profession, and — starved, are certainly to be exempted from the imputation of deserving so harsh an epithet. *Their* situation, I think, was considerably amended by the Revolution; and perhaps, the change has produced a greater sum of good, than of inconvenience, to the whole order. A writer on the subject says, that by the decree of the Constituent Assembly, the salary of the poorest Member of the Church was not suffered to be less than 50*l. per annum*, and that of the richest, not more than 400*l.* Let us add to this act of general justice, the power of contracting marriage, the greatest social happiness of life, which was before withheld; and I think the condition of the French Clergy has been on the whole much meliorated by the change of national affairs.—In making these observations, I certainly am speaking without any reference to those barbarous proscriptions which took place in the course of August and September last, by which such numbers of unfortunate men were obliged to fly their country.

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change; and to have attempted less, I am ready to allow, had been the extreme of narrowness, cruelty, and injustice.

Mr. Burke repeatedly brands the National Assembly with the epithet of *Atheists*, and he knows, that when he does so, he is irresistibly appealing to the passions of the multitude, who decide more from impulse than reflexion, and are animated by fanaticism in proportion to their ignorance. How far the philosophical infidelity of several Members of that Assembly may have extended, I cannot determine; but it is evident, that such infidelity had thriven with the greatest luxuriance under the bigotry of their former instructors. If the truth of any article of faith were as demonstrable as a problem of Euclid, all mankind would be of one religious profession; but since this is not the case, we ought to adopt such a system for our own creed as best satisfies our conscience, but have no right whatever to impeach the character of others, because they happen to have imbibed different opinions. This rational ground of toleration, applies not only from sect to sect, but ought to extend to infidels, and even to Atheists—I mean not blasphemers nor profligate, shallow men, who, to calm their own consciences, pretend to laugh at a principle which would otherwise alarm them, but Speculative Atheists—whose opinions, so far as they appear erroneous, may justly be deplored

deplored as a misfortune, but ought not to be branded as a crime. If I ask ninety-nine men out of an hundred, what is their opinion of speculative Atheism? they will either ridicule it as the effect of idiotism, or speak of it with abhorrence: yet the fact is, that speculative Atheists have generally been studious, retired, and inoffensive men, whose minds, elevated above the rank of common intellect, have pursued enquiries into subjects too grand for the limited sphere of human faculties to embrace, and, involved in metaphysical intricacies which mortals cannot solve, have ended in a disbelief of the existence of God, the original cause of all things. Puzzled by the extreme difficulty of conceiving how any Cause can possibly have been self-existent, and yet forced to admit the necessity of some such principle, or to re-trace causes to *their* causes without end, they have adopted Nature as their self-existent subject, and imagined this hypothesis to possess most truth, because possessing most simplicity. They have conceived matter to act by its own energy; that its atoms, whirled about in perpetual motion, having passed through almost all possible changes and modes of existence, fell at last into the present regular distribution of principles and harmony of parts; that as right principles fix and cement the fabric they produce, the system has endured for some thousand years, and may endure for ever; that

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the power of vegetation and production, are properties inherent in matter; and that the world is too full of evil and misery not to render it more reconcileable to believe the eternity of matter, than the existence of a God who can suffer mankind to be so unhappy. Such opinions must doubtless preclude the mental pleasure arising from the contemplation, in his works, of a Supreme Intelligence, the source of truth and goodness, the Universal Parent of all animated Beings: But such opinions are by no means incompatible with pure intentions, and a strict discharge of the duties of life. Those who have imbibed them, may conceive that there is a wide difference between professing such a speculative system, and producing practical mischief by the commission of positive evil; they may hold sacred the moral obligations of mankind, and believe that, as the rectitude of physical principles can alone maintain the existence of Nature, so is the rectitude of moral principles necessary to secure their own well-being and the happiness of society. The examples indeed of Spinoza, Hobbes, Bayle, and Hume, prove that it is possible for speculative Atheists to be men of peculiar innocence of manners, and integrity of conduct. \*

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\* When I say that a speculative Atheist may be a good man, I do not mean to compliment the system of speculative Atheism, but

If the National Constituent Assembly of France, however, *were* Atheists, I see not how their infidelity could have any connexion with the propriety of their opinions on the principles of government. But I doubt the fact; and deem it absurd to suppose, for a moment, that an Assembly, or the majority of an Assembly, consisting of Deputies freely chosen from so large a Nation as France, should happen to be made up of Atheists! If one or two Members have avowed such unqualified infidelity, their avowal was merely the consequence of the freedom allowed by the New Constitution to the declaration of speculative opinions, and is infinitely more desirable than that hypocrisy with which their sentiments would have been veiled, while they operated with greater secrecy in the production of converts, under the old organization of the State. But we cannot expect that

but merely to write the truth, such as it appears from an unprejudiced view of facts. I know that it is the custom of many well-meaning persons to brand Atheists as monsters of wickedness; and they think that, by doing so, they serve the interests of religion. But all falsehood defeats its own end: And the consequence of this conduct is, that those who from their youth perhaps have been habituated to such a doctrine, may be afterwards drawn, by some of the necessary connexions of life, into the company or acquaintance of a philosophical infidel, and learning that his *morals*, both in theory and practice, are good, they may from the impulse of indignation, at the discovery of one falsehood, reject the whole system of religion, which it was intended to fortify, as a tissue of falsehoods also.

Mr. Burke will very readily withdraw a charge which he finds so convenient to his purpose ; and we shall be again told, that the object of the Assembly was nothing less than the total abolition of Christianity. Yet a small degree of consideration will prove the folly and falsehood of this supposition : the people at large would not bear such a violation of their natural feelings,—so grievous a tyranny upon their minds. The National Assembly, therefore, if just men, would not think of hazarding an experiment which by exciting popular indignation must tend to the subversion of their favourite principles ; and if unjust, their very profligacy had rendered them cautious of an act that must have opened the eyes of the people, and disabled them from imposing any longer on their good opinion. That perfect toleration of religious sentiments, and freedom of enquiry, which they have so liberally sanctioned, *must* end in the universal reception of eternal Truth : this is the final result of all liberal and continued discussions ; and it is paying a poor compliment to Christianity, indeed, (the most benignant and pure of any of the numerous religions upon the earth) to suppose that this result can possibly prove inimical to its interests and its existence.

Thus are the objections which have been formed against the French Revolution, trifling indeed,

indeed, when individually considered, but heaped together, by the able industry of Mr. Burke, they rise to mountainous importance, and strike the superficial observer with amazement and terror. Insecure in their property and persons, subject to the capricious determination of arbitrary power, liable, on every occasion of private resentment, to be rendered the victims of the hatred of those whose rank in life enabled them to take advantage of the cruel arts of Court policy, the bulk of the French Nation, as beings susceptible of pain and pleasure, surely had ample reason to be dissatisfied with the effects of their former Government:—as rational beings, they might well abhor the principles of that system (when once their minds were induced sincerely to reflect on the subject) which could produce such practical evils. The grand question, therefore, on which the justice or injustice of their Revolution must be decided, is this: *Have the people of any country a right to change their form of Government?* And to this question, I think, every man, not superstitiously attached to forms, because they have been long established, nor tinctured by a sordid principle of selfishness, because he derives some contemptible exclusive benefit from them, will answer positively in the affirmative. In order to justify this assertion, it does not appear necessary to enter into the origin of Governments, after the example of the greater part  
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of those who maintain the principle for which I contend: both because I think their conclusion erroneous, and because I conceive every declaration on the subject to be merely conjectural; societies having been too barbarous and unenlightened when Governments were first established, to be able to transmit pure and regular records of such establishment to their posterity.— It seems erroneous, however, on the ground of probability only, to suppose that all Government was originally founded on “ a compact between the governors and the governed;” for that principle implies that the governors, previous to their existence in that character, possessed a power separate and distinct from that of society, by which they were enabled to enter into a contract, and to become a party, whose consent must be necessary to dissolve the relation that subsists between them. The different forms of Governments, I conceive, in the early ages of the world, to have been chiefly produced by fortuitous causes. The natives of one region, influenced by the small extent of territory or numbers, or dreading the loss of their freedom from the molestation of hostile neighbours, or some other circumstance, might choose to regulate their affairs by meeting on terms of general equality, and thus constitute a DEMOCRATIC form of Government. Those of *another* place, might yield to the Councils of a select number,  
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who were deemed best able to guide them, and who, either elected to, or assuming, that power to which perhaps their age, experience, or other venerable or useful qualities might best entitle them, became, in the highest sense of the word, an ARISTOCRACY. Those of *another*, whose situation forced them frequently into hostile encounters with surrounding nations, might choose that man as their Ruler in Peace, whose personal prowess and spirit had most frequently led them on to success in War; or he might himself usurp the supreme power; and hence perhaps a MONARCHY arose. And in other countries, which had undergone the devastations of deluges or earthquakes, the alarm excited in the minds of the remnant that survived these natural revolutions, might induce a few artful men to take advantage of the general weakness, and, pretending to hold secret intercourse with God, to exalt themselves to the solemn office of Ministers of the divine will, and thus establish a THEOCRACY.—It is, therefore, impossible even from conjecture to adduce, as a fact, the existence of any particular principle, concerning the origin of Government, which can be applied to the question of *Government in general*; and we have no reason to affirm, that systems of civil regulation actually *were* at first founded either on mutual compact between the governors and the governed, or on popular agreement. But though we can-

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not justly affirm that such principle has formerly existed, we may fairly conclude that the principle of popular agreement *ought* to exist; and that all Governments are more or less just, in proportion to the strength or weakness of its prevalence. The object of all honest Government is, not the benefit of the few, but of the many; not the personal advantage of those who govern, but the happiness of the Community at large: hence, as the Community at large are the only proper judges of what conduces to their own happiness, an *honest* Government will exist on no other basis than that of popular agreement, and can, therefore, last no longer than the duration of that agreement; and when it fails to answer the end for which all just Government was designed, it is not only the *right*, but the *duty* of the People, to change it to such a form as can best contribute to their general satisfaction. On two principles only can all Government be founded, viz. on force, or on popular agreement. That which exists not *with* the popular consent, exists *against* the popular consent, and such Government is a Government of force. All force is usurpation, and usurpation is injustice. The war against injustice is the common cause of mankind: and willing as we all are to run down an unfortunate individual, who, in his own petty sphere of action, is misguided enough to hope for happiness in the exercise

exercise of injustice or vice, by what sacred ties are we not bound to resist that grand comprehensive system of injustice, which, arising from the principles, mingles in the operation, of an oppressive and tyrannous form of civil Administration ?

But it is idle to answer, in this detultory manner, the newly-adopted principles which Mr. Burke himself, in his former Writings and Parliamentary Speeches, has confuted with such energy and beauty, that we need only refer to those passages, and, turning to their author, exclaim, in Scripture phrase, " out of thy own mouth, Hypocrite, will I condemn thee !"—Still more needless is it, since he has started a subject of too much magnitude and importance, not to have already called forth the powers of the first literary characters in this country. Hence the opportunity offered to Paine to turn the subject of public grievances from France to this Country, and, with the rude grasp of coarse, but manly, indignation, to tear away the curtain that mysteriously concealed from the public eye, those tricks of State which the public purse has so liberally contributed to support, and to expose to ridicule that Aristocracy which can continue to exist no longer than while it continues to be respected. Hence the exertion of the masterly, but more cultivated, powers of a Macaulay Graham,

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ham, and the elegant and classic labours of a Mackintosh. The ablest pens have indeed been employed, on this occasion, in vindicating the cause of Truth and Liberty. The Bishop of Llandaff, Dr. Priestley, Williams, Holcroft, Rous, Barlow, Boothby, Piggot, and Merry; and as the female sex, claiming respect as much from their talents as their beauty, are among the first to admire all that is truly noble and virtuous, we may add the amiable and judicious tributes of eulogium from the pens of Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Woolstonecraft.— From such a discussion, the general diffusion of clear principles of Society and Government may finally be expected: but for the *practical event* of that discussion, Mr. Burke will have to answer to his own conscience. If the practical event be neither more nor less than a rational reform of the Parliamentary Representation of this Country, *he* will merit no thanks for the original intention with which he disseminated his vile principles on the affairs of France: if it be a scene of turbulence and blood-shed, to him in a great measure may be referred the cause, since *he* was the Savage who first threw the Hatchet. I should be sorry to apply any illiberal epithet to the public character of Mr. Burke, who, with all his errors, must ever be considered as a great man; and who, in his late political conduct, has, I believe, been actuated by

by violent passions, and not by views of sordid selfishness. But, ought violent passions to regulate a discussion of such importance? Ought they to disgrace a mind of such magnitude? Can we view the effect of those passions, in the present instance, without indignation? Who that bears about him an honest mind, can endure that genius should be exerted to enforce despotism, to sanction falsehood, and to destroy every sentiment that breathes a love of Liberty? Liberty! without which life itself is not worth possessing. Liberty! the source of all that is dignified and noble in human nature. Liberty! for the support of whose cause every great and good man would bleed and die!

That the Revolution in France should have been attended by any scenes of violence and cruelty, must be lamented; yet, in the course of this whole event, grand as it is, there has not been one-half of the tumult and bloodshed which was occasioned amongst us in the year 1780, in consequence of a prejudice the most contemptible, and without the probability of obtaining any rational object whatever. If we turn to the fair side of the picture, and contemplate the advantages arising from the event, we shall see only such as are highly conducive to the happiness of the people.—*Lettres de Cachet* exist no more; the *Bastille* has been razed to the ground; and pu-

nishment by *Torture* is abolished. The inferior orders of the people are relieved from the infamous extortion of *Farmers-General*. *Liberty of the Press* is established; freedom granted of *passing to and from the Country*; no civil rights denied to such as conscientiously profess *Religious Opinions*, different from those prescribed by the State; and justice is impartially administered in consequence of the institution of *Trial by Jury*. Instead of the fatal splendour of the former Government, and the tyrannous distinctions by which the higher orders kept the multitude in slavery, we have seen a Constitution founded on the equitable principles of fraternal Union. Mild as are their laws, the French have agreed to punish the sale of a vote by death; and thus corruption, the support of most other Governments, is, in this, as far as human means can accomplish, happily excluded. The responsibility of Ministers, is real, not nominal. The sitting of the National Assembly continues only for two years, and then a dissolution gives place to Members entirely different from the former, by which, as all men have a chance of becoming a component part of the Legislative Body, whatever absurdity and error may at first be produced, a manly spirit of rational liberty is universally maintained; and, in the course of a few years, every class of people will become perfectly enlightened. An Assembly of Revision will

will then take place, in order to examine into the effects of the present system of Government, for the purpose of reform or change, as shall appear necessary; and as every Citizen will be competent to consider the subject, and will feel it to be connected with his dearest interest, whatever errors may be discovered will be then corrected, without danger of violence or tumult.

On contemplating this system and its fundamental principles, it is impossible not to be struck with the contrast between the French Revolution, and the Revolutions which we have been accustomed to read of in ancient History. Formerly any violent change in Government was effected for the purpose of placing some ambitious man on the throne, or at the head of public affairs. The change, in the Government of France, has been produced by the Nation; and the very principle of the new system, by which Members are precluded from sitting in the Assembly during the existence of two Legislatures together, is a death-blow to all private views of personal ambition. The authors of that principle, animated by a noble enthusiasm, seem to have spurned all selfish considerations, and consulted only the good of the people. It is ungenerous, that their incessant and arduous labours for the accomplishment of this object, should have been rendered a subject  
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of ridicule and abuse: it is unjust that, at so critical a period, the dark machinations of foreign Courts should have been set to work in every mode to alarm and distract the nation: it is cruel in the extreme, that the French—when every circumstance of peace is necessary to enable them to emerge from the difficulties produced by the vices of the former Government, and to secure permanency to the present—should have been forced into a war with the combined forces of so many infernal despots. No matter! Under whatever disadvantages they may at present labour, however their imprudent confidence may at first have subjected them to defeats, whatever disgrace may have been incurred by the conduct of the dastardly and disaffected, who have contrived to become incorporated with their army, I have no doubt of their final triumph, over all the hostilities and all the accursed arts of foreign despotism. Let them prove exemplary in punishing those amongst themselves who tarnish the lustre of their proceedings by acts of cruelty: wherever they conquer, let them be guided, in their conduct towards the vanquished, by that spirit of divine benevolence which distinguished their celebrated Manifesto! Let them act thus, and rely on the energy of rectitude for success!

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## P O S T S C R I P T.

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MUCH of what I have written respecting the beauties of the New Constitution of France, might, perhaps, with propriety, be obliterated, the various unexpected events that have since happened having annihilated that Constitution. But the principles of justice are always praiseworthy, however they may for the moment be violated; and as the second New Constitution, if modelled by real philosophers, may be expected, in its general principles, to bear some similitude to the former, I shall not erase the passages in question. The events which have since occurred, have, indeed, in part, been strange and shocking: during two days only, the inhuman atrocities of Paris have produced more scenes of blood-shed than had occurred in the whole course of the preceding Revolution. The human mind revolts at perusing details of such extreme cruelty. Even those who, animated by an exalted love of civil liberty, had hitherto been tremblingly alive for the success of the French cause, were tempted to spurn so noble a principle, when they saw its splendour sullied by  
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the cruelties of the 10th of August, and the 2d of September. They were humbled with grief and shame, and joined in the general exclamation, that when Revenge could thus triumph in carnage, there could be no real *Liberty*. The spirit of liberty is a humane and tolerant spirit; daring in the assertion of rights, of which Warriors and Kings, those children of ignorance and violence, have hitherto bereaved mankind; but scorning as much to oppress as to endure oppression: abhorring all persecution and carnage; and delighting only to do good, and to diffuse such noble principles as can alone civilize, dignify, and bless mankind.

It is a debt, however, which we owe to justice, to examine before we condemn; and, in candidly tracing effects to their causes, we must confess, that the series of provocations which the French Nation had received from the arts of the Court party, had risen to a climax sufficient to extenuate, though certainly not to absolve, the guilt of the vindictive atrocities of popular resentment. The same circumstances which extenuate their guilt, involve proofs of the absolute necessity of suspending the royal authority, and of recurring to the will of a National Convention. Let us not forget, that scarcely had the Constituent Assembly dissolved, and the people felt happy in the possession of a system of equitable

equitable laws, than every art was exerted, internally and externally, to harass and divide them. The correspondence of an assemblage of emigrants on the frontiers, with disaffected and corrupt individuals in the Departments, and the efforts of fanatical Priests to inspire their hearts with an abhorrence of the New Constitution, required specific Decrees for their suppression, which the King refused to sanction. Treaties and leagues, hostile to France, were formed by foreign powers, which excited neither His indignation nor His notice ; and when it was evident, that a system of connivance between the Court of the Thuilleries and the Emigrants, was about to be detected, and that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, being accused, fled, the impending rupture between the Court and the People was hastily averted by the choice of men, of acknowledged patriotism, for Ministers. The successor of Leopold now threw off the mask, and stating various causes of complaint, expressed his determination of trying the force of arms : the King was at last necessitated to propose war, which was immediately decreed. Hungary, by her conduct, obliged France to declare hostilities ; and nothing was now more evident than the danger of the delay of preparations, which had been neglected in consequence of the refusal of the Royal Sanction. Aided by these combined forces ready to act against France, and

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by agents within the Country, who used every artifice to inflame the weak, and corrupt the profligate, the King believed, or was taught to believe, that all farther disguise became unnecessary; and, at one and the same time, the Patriotic Ministers were dismissed, discord was sown in the armies, and those of the priesthood who, while they could gratify private views, were not ashamed to disgrace their profession, renewed with redoubled vigour their diabolical machinations. These circumstances, and the success of the enemy in their first contests, rendered it apparently necessary, for the safety of the Country, that a camp should be formed round Paris, and measures adopted to repress the dangerous activity of the Priests—but the Decrees which were passed for this purpose, the King set aside by his suspensive veto. It had been the error of the Constituent Assembly, that in framing the Constitution for their Country, they had overlooked the probability of events which had since taken place, and not provided against the emergencies of War: they had granted the King a suspensive *veto*, by which the will of the Legislative Body was set aside for four years; and Louis XVI. at this critical period, advantaged himself of a power which the Constitution had so fatally granted him, to render null measures, of which the safety of the Country called for the immediate execution.—

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Another circumstance happened much about the same time, to aggravate, in the public eye, the criminality of this measure. The King's body guard; which had been formally dissolved, experienced the countenance and protection of Royalty. The enraged and distracted populace flew to the Palace, and surrounded the King, who having declared himself in safety among them, and amused them by wearing those favours which were considered as insignia of patriotism, was relieved by the presence of Petion, by whom the populace were induced to disperse. A Proclamation was immediately issued; Prosecutions commenced against those who had rendered themselves, by their conduct in this tumult, obnoxious to the Court; and Petion, the popular Mayor of Paris, was suspended. Whatever censure and responsibility had before personally attached to *Ministers*, it was impossible now not to distrust the *King*. His whole conduct had been a violation, sometimes of the spirit, sometimes of the letter, of the Constitution. The Constitution had pronounced the abdication of the King, if he did not, by some formal act, declare his opposition to enterprizes against the Nation, undertaken in his name. The Emigrant Princes had in his name raised money, and levied troops; and conscious of this fact, at the time when the recent occurrence of the Court had exasperated the people, the

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Assembly could not do less than make a declaration that *the Country was in danger!* Petitions from the Departments claimed the deposition of Louis XVI. and the Legislative Assembly meant to have weighed well the circumstances before they came to any decision ; but they found that they could no longer trust to the public patience. The populace marched with a threatening aspect towards the Palace of the King, who immediately sought an asylum from their resentment among the Representatives of the Nation. Nor were the facts which I have already stated, the sole grounds of discontent. The Constitution had expressly declared, that no foreign guard should be charged with defending the residence of the King ; but the people observed, with concern and anger, that in spite of such legal prohibition, this office was allotted to the Swiss Battalions. It was easy to foresee that this violation of law must finally produce mischief ; and no effort, by reports, motions, and discussions, had been neglected in the National Assembly, to apprise the King of his danger, some months before a positive Decree was necessary to be issued, demanding their removal. Their Commander, supported by Ministry, exacted the amendments of that Decree : it was amended : Jealousies and hatreds, in the mean time, continued fermenting between the Swiss Guards and the People, the latter of whom, armed and assembling in bodies,

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almost threatened actual hostility, and it was thought necessary to send a deputation from the Assembly, which proceeded towards the Palace, in the midst of the citizens, for the purpose of reconciling those animosities, and preventing their effects. The Swiss Guards held out the sign of amity, and when the Citizens, delighted and astonished at this promise of reconciliation and peace, ran towards them with joy beaming in their countenances, those treacherous ruffians fired upon them from masked batteries:—fury succeeded to transport in the breast of the populace: a desperate contest took place between both parties: the Swiss, overpowered by superior numbers, and almost all of them butchered, the carnage that ensued was dreadful. In the midst of these tumults the National Assembly, while the shot were flying through the windows of their Hall, took the Oath to maintain Liberty and Equality, or to die at their post. In declaring their determination to save their Country, they saw but one mode—that of recurring to the will of the People, expressed through the organ of a National Convention, and of pronouncing the suspension of the King.—The popular fury, however, had not exhausted itself on the 10th of August, that day rendered so memorable by the treachery and slaughter of the Swiss Guards, for the 2d of September was disgraced by scenes of greater violence and barbarity. The mis-

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taken, but honest, feelings of Fayette, who had protested against the measures lately adopted, taught the people to suspect the fidelity of their Generals: News was brought of the siege of Verdun, by the Duke of Brunswick; and it was added that 4000 men, sent to assist that place, had been cut off, by the treachery of their leader. A Decree was issued by the Community of Paris; the tocsin sounded; and a multitude cried out, "To arms!" The alarm and indignation of the people, on the report of this news, was farther aggravated by the art of a faction who had chiefly promoted these insurrections, and, by inflammatory speeches, wound up their feelings to a pitch of savage madness. "We are still betrayed, cried some; we are to be butchered like sheep! If we must be butchered (exclaimed others) we will sell our lives dearly. But before we attack our external, let us wreak our vengeance on our internal, enemies." The horrid proposal was adopted; the populace flew to the Abbaye and different prisons, where the refractory Priests and other prisoners were confined, and inhumanly butchered them: all was proscription, persecution and slaughter: Not merely obnoxious individuals among the Priesthood, but the whole orders to which those individuals belonged, including numbers of just and worthy men, found their safety only in flight: A sanguinary spirit of revenge stalked through

through the streets of Paris, spreading terror and desolation.

Over such crimes, humanity must weep ! but let it not be forgotten that the French had just grounds for resentment ; and if that resentment urged a considerable number of them to barbarity, we ought not to impute, as disgraceful to the national character, an effort which proves disgraceful only to the old despotism of the country. Horrid as are the massacres of the 10th of August, and the 2d of September, instead of giving up a whole Nation to scorn for the cruelties of two days, we may rather wonder that their conduct, since the first Revolution, has not consisted of an incessant series of slaughters, in consequence of the treacheries they have had to encounter, and the sanguine spirit they might be expected to have imbibed, from a long familiarity with the dungeons, tortures, and racks, of their ancient Government. In judging, therefore, of the misconduct of the people of France, let us weigh their provocations with their actions. What people, struggling for the noblest of all objects, civil Liberty, could have been studiously opposed and thwarted by more cruel impediments ? What people, in the infancy of their New Constitution, could have had to contend with greater difficulties ? Avowed enemies on the Frontiers : secret enemies perpetually  
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about the Court: Ministers constantly betraying them: the King faithless to his engagements: Agents, hired to corrupt the profligate, by bribes and promises, and to impose on the weak by false and alarming impressions, circulated through the medium of the Prefs. What people could more frequently have forgiven the machinations of insidious despotism, against all that was dear to them, all that they thought necessary to constitute their happiness? But human feelings cannot be sported with for ever. The passions that have calmly submitted to injury after injury, may at last be aggravated to madness: and an insurrection of those Parisians who were the immediate witnesses of Court treachery, must finally have been expected.— The insurrections of the populace of Paris, on the 10th of August, and the 2d of September, were produced by a concurrence of circumstances, the force of which it was impossible to resist; and the cruelties that attended them, were, doubtless, aggravated by the unbounded licence which sanguinary spirits derive from such occasions, to mingle in the mob, and indulge in committing the most detestable barbarities. These massacres, however, disgraceful as they were in themselves, may possibly have been the means of preventing more dreadful massacres by the other party: But with whatever abhorrence we may view the subject, we ought not to feel lukewarm in  
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the cause of Liberty, because some of its assertors have done wrong; nor disclaim a grand, general principle, because it may have been partially disgraced.

These insurrections, and the suspension of the Royal Power, have formed a second Revolution in France; and the National Convention has decreed, that the Government shall be a Republic. Much better had it been if the first Constitution could have existed unimpaired, till the sitting of the Revisional Assembly, who might then have established a perfect Republic, or modified the system anew, according to their experience of its errors and its dangers. But all hopes of proceeding on so regular a plan, were frustrated by the perpetual treacheries of the Court Party; and, in my opinion, the abolition of Monarchy in the National Convention has been, considering the imperious nature of the circumstances, an act of absolute necessity. If the relative duties of life, which, under the dissolute manners of the old despotism, became generally despised, should be held sacred, I had deemed it, even abstracted from the circumstances that produced it, an act, not only of absolute necessity, but of perfect wisdom and virtue. We may lament the fate of Louis XVI. a man, to speak dispassionately and justly of him, of mild manners, who might have

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proved consistent in his conduct, and still continued the idol of the Nation, had not his character been marked by a mental imbecility, which perpetually rendered him, though not perhaps a despot in himself, the willing tool of despotism: but while we commiserate the sufferings of one man, who, however exalted his rank, can be only an atom in the general scale of human existence, let us not for a moment place *his* individual welfare in competition with the welfare of MILLIONS! (In saying this, I speak only in reference to the loss of his Crown.) The Constituent Assembly had granted him all the power that Kings ought to have, and an immense revenue: but this power was exerted in the protection of obnoxious characters, or the encouragement of plans fatal to Liberty; while the wealth intended to support the splendour of his Throne, was lavished to aid the Emigrants in their plans against the Nation: and how can we expect, that, with such a Monarch, France could have hoped for peace or safety? France, indeed, has suffered too much from the vices of Kings, not to abolish them altogether: and what right have we to condemn her for the act, if she thinks that an Executive Council will answer all the purposes of Royalty, without producing any of its dangers; and, that it will render the Government less expensive, at the same time that it precludes the

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the pageantry of a race of beings, who never want men about them to pamper their passions, and to persuade them to prefer, as a distinct interest, the authority and grandeur of their Throne, to the solid good of the People! What may prove the merits of the New Constitution, about to be established for France, it is impossible to say, till the Committee appointed to frame it shall have finished their important labours; but judging from the great integrity and talents of the men who are employed in that important office, we feel reason to expect the adoption and execution of a system of liberal Government and equitable Laws.\* It affords much pleasure to observe, that the Convention, in their early sittings, expressed the utmost contempt of those characters, who distinguished themselves by countenancing proscription and blood-shed, during the troubles of August and September; that they recommended to their Generals, whenever successful, to act with friendship and fraternity towards the people whom they might chance to conquer; and have already given proofs of encouragement to Literature and the Arts: but, in God's name, let them not continue to sully the lustre of those

\* One of the enlightened Decrees of the National Convention, has invited all intelligent persons in other Countries, to favour the Committee with their plans and opinions on this subject—a certain proof that, generally speaking, they have only the real interest of the people at heart.

proceedings, by the vile treatment by which their former Monarch seems now to be persecuted. Till Louis XVI. was no longer an object to be dreaded, their opposition to his ill-directed authority was just and meritorious; Now that he has lost his Crown—now that he is within their power, every personal injury will be cruel and detestable. He has, I have just heard, been brought to the bar of the National Convention, and answered their interrogatories with conciseness and ability: but why interrogate him at all? or, why try him? unless to justify their own conduct; to develop circumstances which shall open the eyes of other Nations to the conspiracies of their Courts; and finally, to pardon the object of their impeachment? They ought to forget the errors of Louis XVI. in consideration of the prejudices of his education; they ought to forgive them, since they have proved so favourable to the cause of Liberty; and with regard to the man, they ought either to banish him with a pension for the support of himself and his family, or generously to make him a Citizen of the Republic, and to tell him, that the Citizen of a Free State, was a nobler character than the Monarch of a land of slavery. Instead of this, he seems at the present moment to be treated with a rudeness and indignity which most shocks those whose exultation at the fall of despotism in  
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France, led them to form the brightest hopes of the triumph of humanity; and, which justifies a fear that he is destined to fall a victim of disgraceful vengeance. If this event should happen, it will be evident to thinking men, that those sanguinary spirits who fomented the late massacres in Paris, have continued to acquire a dangerous influence in the National Convention: and the real friends to the liberty of France will be disappointed indeed, to see the leaders of that Convention, without power to prevent so infamous a deed, and to punish with severity its diabolical instigators. When Brutus slew Cæsar, he performed a glorious action, since he attempted to save his Country by the destruction of a man who had arrived at a dangerous pinnacle of greatness: but for a people to destroy an unhappy being, whom, having found it necessary to dethrone, they see prostrate at their feet, without power, and without danger—to dash the lion's brains out with a Club, after they have rendered him tame and harmless, by plucking out his teeth, and cutting off his nails—is the unmanly bloody action, of cannibals and cowards. I speak freely on this subject. No man reveres the principles of the Revolution of the French more than I do; but let not the fair trophies of freedom be stained with blood! France has made a glorious and successful struggle for her ancient liberty; but  
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the principles of liberty itself, unless restricted by the salutary regulations of moral rectitude, may be pushed to such an excess as to degenerate to licentiousness, anarchy, and murder; and what avails it that that Nation has thrown off the despotism of Kings, if she bows to the despotism of the passions; or that she has reared the standard of Republicanism, if she suffers the commission of a crime which is as remote from the manly character of a Republic, as Hell from Heaven!

But I trust that my fears are groundless, and that it is from a vile party only, whom the majority of the Convention disclaim, and will shortly punish, that disgraceful violences can be expected. As an opportunity has been presented to Louis XVI. to detect all forgeries calculated to injure him, by presenting to his examination the obnoxious papers sanctioned by his signature; and as his request respecting the aid of Counsel has been granted, I think that it is the intention of the ruling powers of France to save the life of that unfortunate man, in spite of the ruffian-attempts of violent and ignorant demagogues; and to suffer his trial to take place, for no other purpose than that of doing justice to the people of foreign Countries, by declaring the dark conspiracies, which may be thus disclosed, of scepter'd despots against their liberty.

berly. Trusting to these expectations, I will not judge too harshly of the National Convention, in consequence of some rigorous measures that the momentary influence of a violent, though, I trust, small faction among them, may have induced them to execute, but, I will rather flatter myself, that their general conduct will be propitious to the interests of genius, philosophy, and virtue. May they resist with firmness every unprincipled attempt to distract the Country by internal divisions! May they swear never to sanction the vices of ambition, by entrusting the Sovereignty of the Nation into the hands of individuals, desirous to usurp the supreme power, whether for themselves, under the title of Emperor, Dictator; or, in conjunction with others, as a Triumvirate.

*It may prove the policy of such characters to excite repeated tumults, and to over-awe the Assembly of the Nation by the menaces of bodies of armed men, in hopes that the people at large, tired and harassed by continued insurrections, may at last be glad to throw themselves under their protection, and to give up the cause of Universal Liberty as a compensation for the security they hope from the gratitude of tyrants: And what matters it that France has disclaimed the obnoxious title of King, if she bow her head to regal tyranny under another name? But I trust that such fears are vain: that no society will harbour men detestable*

testable enough to prefer their own paltry gratifications to the public good : and that the mass of the people, who, I am told, are animated by a more than Roman Spirit, are too unanimous not to rise superior to all the arts of any possible faction at home, as well as the more avowed attempts of foreign enemies, to destroy their independence.

*If the Laws of the Republic prove worthy of so moral and free a form of Government ; if a Constitution be speedily established, on liberal, but not impracticable principles, for the enforcement of order, France will not too precipitately have condemned titular distinctions and State-pageantry, as calculated only to amuse and impose upon the mental imbecility of more barbarous ages ; but, on the contrary, her two Revolutions will have been only successive purifications through which she has passed, in order to arrive at that state of political perfection which must inevitably secure her future happiness and glory.*

But Mr. Burke reproaches the assertors of Liberty in France, as a race of ATHEISTS. I have already said, that though the charge may have applied to some few characters, I disbelieve it in the extent implied by Mr. Burke : But if they *be* Atheists, they are certainly the most wonderful Atheists ever recorded. Speculative Atheists, like all speculative men, might be expected to prove too mild and quiet, to become  
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active instruments of any efficacy in a National Revolution :—yet these men have been the decided leaders of the people. Practical Atheists, like all wicked men, would have sought to gratify their passions, by aspiring to the regal power : yet these men seem to have existed only for the Nation, not for themselves ! If they be Atheists, they seem peculiarly protected by that GOOD BEING, whose existence they have denied. Strange, indeed, have been the actions of the Atheists of France ! In their First Revolution, they declared against the vice of War : In their Second Revolution, after having been forced into a War with some of the most formidable despots of Europe, they have declared—not destruction, not death—but fraternity and friendship to the people of those countries which they may chance to conquer. Still more strange have been the successes of the Atheists of France ! The soldiery, whose force would have destroyed their early efforts ; the soldiery, who had been trained to the principles of military despotism, refuse with one accord to fire upon their fellow-citizens. The King, who had taken every precaution to fly at the critical period when the first Constitution was forming, is discovered after he had proceeded a great part of his journey, and brought back to Paris ; and thus, by his subsequent conduct, prevented the people from placing the Crown on the head of any

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any other branch of the Royal Family, by irresistibly convincing them of the dangers of royalty. The early attempts of the Emigrant Princes to induce the Monarchs of the Continent to undertake a political crusade, are, at the moment when their efforts must have proved fatal to France, totally unsuccessful. When their attempts at last succeed, and the diabolical preparations of Foreign Courts are ready for operation—an operation which would then have ruined the armies of France, scarcely organized and disciplined—the time of year, and other unavoidable circumstances, throw them back, till France herself can dare to defy them. When their armies enter France, and, giddy with first successes, declare by Manifestoes their intention of executing *a terrible revenge*, they experience a stern and unexpected resistance at Thionville, and, weakened by vain efforts and disease, they are forced to retreat from the attacks of the French, with loss of men, disgrace, and shame. Such have been the successes of the **ATHEISTS** of France: successes which force me to believe, that as the cause of the People is the cause of Truth and Virtue, it is blessed by the peculiar protection of God. He who heeds not points of faith, nor speculative opinions, nor modes of worship, has proved propitious to this race of Atheists; and while this race of Atheists, as Mr. Burke calls them, act from integrity of intention,

intention, He will continue propitious to them, and the Combined Armies and hellish artifices of every Court in Europe, will not prevent them from proving finally victorious, and spreading the sacred flame of Liberty all over the Earth.

I cannot wonder, that different people in this Country should behold, in very different lights, the French Revolution. Some men, of a very benevolent tone of mind, are actuated too much by the amiable feelings of their hearts, and detest the general principle on which that event was effected, in consequence of the impressions received from particular instances of attendant barbarity. Others, not naturally insensible to the principles of justice, view things on a narrow scale, and think, not so much of the general advantage to the Nation, as of the partial degradation of this or that character; they can feel for the dignity of Kings, but they cannot feel for the acquisition of happiness to the general mass of People. Others are naturally of a despotic disposition; they make a tacit compromise with the civil power; they connive at the tyrannies of Governments, provided they may themselves be tyrants, in their own little circle, over their wives, children, and domestics; and conceive that men, in certain official situations, may consider as their own property

the rights of their fellow-creatures—a swinish multitude, in whom true patriotism is faction, and a resistance of the abuses which they pay to support, rebellion. Others derive from our political Constitution certain exclusive benefits, of which they dread the loss, if the example of France should be imitated in this Country. The *Clergy*, for the most part, condemn a system of Government which appears to disclaim the incorporation of a particular Church Establishment. \* The *Law* are alarmed at a precedent which threatens the annihilation of mysteries and quibbles, and, founding a system on clear and intelligible principles, affords to the oppressed a speedy and cheap administration of justice. The *Army* regard, with abhorrence, that progress of reason which will teach man-

\* When I speak in this manner of the spirit of different professions, I certainly express myself generally: and am well aware that there exist particular exceptions. I have the satisfaction of enjoying the friendship of several worthy Clergymen of the Established Church, whose opinions in disfavour of the Revolution in France, I am convinced, originated in purer motives than those which I have generally ascribed to the order. I could likewise mention some few characters in the Law, whose intentions in condemning the affairs of France ought to be exempted from censure. But these are only particular exceptions: and I still assert, that the *general* spirit of all establishments, professions, and corporations, is a fordid, contracted spirit, acting solely in reference to the prefer-  
 vation of some exclusive privilege, appropriate to itself, rather than from an enlarged view of things, and a love of the public good.

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kind to avoid the miseries of War, to despise the military profession, unless its members prove themselves to possess the feelings of Citizens, and to consider that, on all other grounds, a professed foldier is nothing else than a professed murderer. The *State* tremble, lest men should be taught no longer to approach the abuses of Civil Administration, "with *pious awe* and *trembling solicitude*," in consequence of the successful efforts of the French people, who dared to think that their Government was intended not to oppress, but to protect them; and therefore, took into their own hands that sovereign power which had been exercised by others so unworthily. But the unhappy prejudices which serve as the basis of such fears, will be removed in time, and, posterity will do justice to the French Revolution, and contemplate with admiration and awe, an event, the blemishes of which will be overpowered and lost in its general splendour.

Should the French Republic succeed, and its Citizens derive peace and happiness from an impartial Administration of mild and equitable Laws, the practical principles of politics will have assumed a new aspect, and the example of France will, doubtless, have a powerful influence over the conduct of other Nations. We shall have witnessed the success of a grand experiment,

ment, viz. a Government founded on goodness, that will either induce a reform in those States which are intrinsically good, but disgraced by abuses, and a complete subversion of those of which the principles and the practice are despotic ; or finally, render all the Governments of this little Globe, Republics, divided from each other by sections, less for the purpose perhaps of national distinction, than that of universal convenience. At any rate the spirit of political amelioration must prevail ; and with the amelioration of Governments, that also of morals and of manners. Mankind will at last throw off the bondage of ignorance and error. Governments will be endeared to the People, because evidently proceeding from *their* will, for *their* good : they will encourage, instead of the titles and distinctions of ostentatious folly, Arts, Sciences, and Literature : they will grant equal protection to all Religions, not shew partial favouritism to any one particular sect : they will disclaim War. Differences of religious opinions, if any such differences should exist, instead of embittering life with personal hatreds, will unite in good will and friendship, the members of every religious sect, who will feel that they are all brothers, and that their various modes of worship are but various ways of testifying filial piety towards their Universal Father. All will be cheerfulness and peace.

Men

Men, rising superior to the wants and vices of luxury, voluptuousness, and pride, will relinquish an anxiety for their own paltry gratifications, for the greater pleasure of benefiting each other : they will exchange that mutual contempt, which distinguishes and disgraces the various ranks of life at present, for mutual esteem and friendship, and the human heart will beat with joy at the sight of a fellow-creature. Life will no longer prove a tragic puppet-show. All the earth will smile under the mild reign of Civil and Religious Liberty : Philosophy, rescued from indigence, and exploring and revealing the mysterious laws of nature, will benefit society by discoveries, not yet imagined : and mankind, emerging from the Cimmerian darkness of despotism and ignorance, shall enjoy the bright days of perfect virtue, wisdom, and happiness.

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LETTER V.

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*Inadequacy of the National Representation, admitted by the first characters in Parliament—Duty of a Reform lies wholly with the People—General suggestions on the subject—Remarks on some of the opinions of Junius.*

SIR,

THE subject of the Revolutions in France, naturally leads my attention to the necessity of a Reform of the National Representation in the British Parliament. Animated by the pure spirit of patriotism, and conscious of their rights, it might have been expected, that after the impression made on their minds by the first of these Revolutions, the slightest incident in their favour would have taught the PEOPLE of *this Country*, either to emulate the efforts of France, or to preclude the possibility of

of similar events among themselves, by a timely remedy of the abuses by which their own Government is confessedly disgraced. An incident in their favour, not trivial, but great and important, did occur. The names of characters, high in Office, were brought into a Court of Justice, and into the House of Commons, under a positive charge of *corrupt interference* in the last Westminster Election. It is not my business to advert to the particulars of the enquiry into that subject which took place in a Court of Justice. The Law has already passed its decision. But I will venture to say, that so far as the business was developed in the House of Commons, it presented nothing but the appearance of a total contempt of public principle in our Legislators, and of a systematic plan to destroy the just exercise of the rights of their fellow-citizens, by every art of political corruption. The Debate was, indeed, calculated to afford pain to every honest mind; and whether we regard the vile and paltry tricks to which it proved men in power willing to condescend, in order to secure their parliamentary interest; or the very indecent circumstance which attended its conclusion, it could not possibly have any other effect on the opinion of the People, than that of diminishing their natural respect towards those who legislate for them in the character of Members of the House of Com-



mons. At the conclusion of the Debate, Mr. MARTIN (whose independence, openness, and integrity, entitle him to more honour than the misguided admiration of the multitude ever lavished on the worthless heads of their most favourite Orators) observed, that, "painful as the discussion had proved to his feelings, it afforded him some satisfaction, to think that it would open the eyes of the public to the corruption of their Representatives, and convince them of the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform." To this observation no reply was made: This disgraceful charge revolted the mind of no man: By no man was it indignantly repelled: The only emotion that it excited was—shame to tell!—a *general burst of laughter*. The question was put, and the House adjourned. Such conduct might characteristically belong to a gang of thieves, who, having been detected in their illicit practices, attempt to justify their villainy by impudence, and, with the brazen front of low insolence, glory in avowing that which they find they no longer can conceal: But it certainly could not have been expected from the dignity, the wisdom, and the integrity of a British Legislature. All this, however, produced no salutary consequences in the conduct of the people without doors. No Meetings were held, and no measures were adopted,

adopted, \* on the subject of an abuse, which, violating the sacred rights of men, it might have been feared would have aggravated general

\* I mean, no Meetings on an independent principle. I recollected, the opposition party *did* advertise a Meeting, to take the business into consideration; and I then hoped that the electors would spurn the invitation, and disdain to become the instruments of one party, in their attempt to worry the other, on the subject of an abuse which they knew to be practised by both; and of which *they*, the electors, were the accessories, and the victims. But, No: instead of taking the consideration of the business into their own hands, and leaving those who had insulted them by their invitation, to dine, and form their Resolutions by themselves, a considerable number did actually attend, and swallow this degradation to their dignity, as Citizens (who ought not to want to be told by *party-men* how they are to act) as complacently as they did their meat and wine. Abject, degraded beings! Unworthy of the title of Citizens, or of Men! How can you expect that you should not be played on by your rulers, when you so implicitly submit to their impositions? How can you hope that even your parliamentary favourites will fail to despise you, when they see that your occasional service is not the affectionate tribute of Independence, but the ready submission of a mean and servile spirit?

When the Writer puts these interrogatories, he would by no means degrade the Electors of Westminster, for befriending any set of political men whom they may have reason to esteem. The election of Mr. Fox, as the object of their choice, has generally done honour to their judgments and their hearts: But let them, even in manifesting their well placed kindness, draw a line between those occasions which will prove that they are *Men*, and those which will prove that they are *Slaves*. It had ever been pleasing to the writer of these letters, to behold so great a character so warmly befriended by the Electors of Westminster, but it is disgusting to see beings, cast in the same mould of humanity, aid and approve, with the indiscriminate willingness of sneaking dependence, rather than with the appropriate testimony of applause friendship.

indignation to tumult and outrage. The fact was, that the people were, in general, too personally acquainted with the nature of the evil, to feel surprisè at its promulgation, and they could not conscientiously assemble for condemning a corruption, which they all knew Ministers had, time immemorial, been in the habit of indirectly practising, and of which they had too frequently experienced the immediate and pernicious advantages, not only from every Administration, but every Opposition, also.

No Englishman who wishes well to his Fellow-citizens and his Country, can resist the mingled emotions of regret and scorn, when he reflects on the state of National Representation in Parliament. I shall not here touch on the principle of those Writers, who say, that every Government is unjust, except that which is simply representative: but I cannot help thinking it hard, indeed, when the national representation is graciously allowed to make only *one-third* of the British Government, that every manœuvre should be used by the powerful and wealthy men of both parties, to poison the sources of popular election—sources, in themselves both partial and narrow—and thus to render that representation defective! The House of Commons is the democratical part of the British  
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Constitution, and ought therefore to be distinguished by the features and character of a Democracy. But such can never prove the case, unless the popular branch of the Legislature be rendered a real, not a nominal, representation of the people. The *rights of Electors* ought to depend on *some simple, general principle*: their choice to be perfectly free and unbiassed: and the objects of that choice selected chiefly from the middle rank of life. Thus would the interest of Arts, Merchandize, Manufactures, and Trade, be involved in that of Government, the tie of union between the Nation and its Representatives be drawn closer, and the effects resulting from the deliberations of Members chosen according to honest principles, and blending their views with those of their constituents, prove favourable only to national happiness and welfare! It is the opinion of Montesquieu, that public virtue is the soul of a democracy; as necessarily as that moderation is the proper principle of an aristocracy, and honour that of a monarchy. As our Constitution consists of these three forms of Government balanced against each other, it is impossible, if either of them loses its peculiar character, that it should actually be the form of which it bears the name; and, that the Constitution in practice, should prove any thing else than a mere mockery of its theory, and an insult on the people who live under its Administration.

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Such is undoubtedly the case at present, since the House of Commons is not a real representation of the people: but if those principles, which I have laid down as necessary to regulate Parliamentary Elections, were adhered to, that House would prove a real representation of the people, and it would necessarily be animated by the characteristic principle of a Democracy, Public Virtue, because its Members would feel, that political integrity was personal gain. But on what rotten ground is the system of Parliamentary Representation at present erected! Every art is exerted by the aristocracy of the country, to corrupt and over-awe the popular elections. In one borough, the determination of a wealthy inhabitant, who hopes for indemnity in the gratitude of great friends, and whose power and patronage enable him to exert an irresistible influence over the minds of his less opulent neighbours, regulates the popular choice, and some worthless, or perhaps detested, character, is thus rendered the successful candidate. In other places, elections are carried on by an unwarrantable act of tyranny, still less varnished over by the appearance of mildness: the voters are coolly told by the steward of their powerful landlord, whom they are to nominate, and those who dare evince any independence of principle, are ejected their tenements. In others, the borough is acknowledged to be personal property ;  
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its representation is even sold by the lordly despot to the highest bidder; and the poor slaves of electors, rather than be turned out of doors and starve, are forced to resign their rights for ever. And in others, where they are free from those disgraceful shackles of evil bondage, every art is exerted to corrupt their integrity: There appears to be a contest between the candidates, for the palm of superior extravagance in offering, and between the voters, for that of greater meanness in accepting, bribes:—and reminding us of the shepherds of all the pastoral poets, from Theocritus and Virgil, down to Philips and Gay, it is so difficult to decide the victory, that if one party deserve a Crook, we ought in justice to bestow a Pipe upon the other.

The voters think that they have gained their object, if they have added a few guineas to their purse for the present moment, and seem to have no idea how wretchedly they ought to expect to be governed, when their governors owe their power to such base arts; and how natural it is, that those who can prove villains in order to become legislators, will become legislators for the purpose of proving villains. Weak, unhappy men! not to know that political vices, like all others, will return some day upon the heads of the guilty; that you will soon be obliged to refund the profits of your corruption,

corruption, with heavy interest; and that the party (either already in power, or expecting to be so) who may have supplied the means of public corruption, will, undoubtedly, by additional burthens, amply remunerate themselves for the vast sums which have been absorbed in the vortex of avarice and meanness!

These abuses have afforded some writers an argument against the principles of popular election: but their argument against the principle, derived from its abuse, is unjust. The abuse does not proceed from a democratic, but an aristocratic, principle; not from the people, but from those powerful and wealthy individuals who corrupt them. The people know that they have no real share in the Government of the Country; and they think that for supporting a mockery they may as well be paid. Let the House of Commons be a true representation of the country, formed on democratical principles, and, as the people will know their rights, and feel their dignity as citizens, the evil must fall to the ground. If we admit a contrary principle, and say that those enormous abuses are inseparable from a Democracy, it will be wiser to have no House of Commons at all; and for the interested individuals of our two parties, who presume to talk as if a Parliamentary Reform depended on *their* will, to pronounce fairly that

that the British Government, shall, in future, consist only of the Monarchy tempered by the hereditary Aristocracy; or that it is deemed expedient to allot to the Crown the nomination of the House of Commons.

No man, I think, will venture to affirm, that the grievances which I have stated, respecting the practical business of elections, ought to exist; and their existence therefore calls loudly for a reform of the system of National representation. That such is the opinion of our first statesmen, is evident from the records of the British Parliament. In the years 1782 and 1783, Mr. Pitt declaimed against the corruption of the House of Commons, and strenuously insisting on the necessity of an equal representation, as the only mode of alleviating the misfortunes of the country, brought forward the question of parliamentary reform; though without effect. He again brought it forward in 1785, but lost it by a great majority: a circumstance not very pleasing to those, who had looked to Parliament for a redress of their grievances, and were aware, that the influence of the Minister can secure a majority to any question which he wishes to carry. In the course of these propositions, Mr. Pitt had been strongly supported by Mr. Fox, the late Sir George Saville, and the Duke of Richmond. The agitation of this question had been chiefly produced by Associations, established in the year



1781, in many parts of the kingdom, for promoting so laudable an object, which declared, by public Addresses, their strong sense of the *disgraceful venality* of the present representation. Sir George Saville and Mr. Dunning wrote a letter to the Yorkshire Committee, seconding their intentions, and unequivocally charging the House of Commons with the grossest corruption. Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, Colonel Fitzpatrick, and General Burgoyne, most cordially co-operated with the Yorkshire Delegates, and declared, that nothing short of a real representation in Parliament could stem the torrent of political corruption. The public addresses from Associations were reprobated by some Members—no doubt very *disinterested* men—in Parliament; but Mr. Burke defended them, though he did not adopt their ideas on Parliamentary Representation.\* Yet these Gentlemen think it prudent at this time to hold very different language. Mr. Burke appears to consider all rational reform, as dangerous innovation. Mr. Pitt deems the present to be *not the proper time* for such a measure; he said so, when the late Mr. Flood brought it forward, long before any fears were entertained concerning insurrections; and Mr. Fox, yielding perhaps, to the bias of party friendship—alas! that so great a mind will not

\* See these facts placed in a very lively and striking light, by Major Scott, in his "Letter to Mr. Burke."

burst the ties of private sympathy, when subjects, calculated for the public good, are in question!—Mr. Fox has coincided in the same doctrine. And the Duke of Richmond,—wielding arms against an host of foes, is willing to over-awe the measure, by taking the lead in the most expensive military preparations. Thus it is that ambitious men, while out of office, affect a zeal for the cause of truth and liberty: but no sooner have they taken possession of the seat of power, than all their virtuous professions are abandoned, the abuses of which they formerly complained become too favourable to their present purposes not to be perpetuated, and the people are taxed, to suppose a base system of political corruption, while their parliamentary leaders, whom, in the hour of honest simplicity, they had fondly deemed the alleviators of their misery, feel as little for their distresses, as brutal carmen or hackney coachmen, for the sufferings of the animals which they drive—animals, so much more generous and noble than themselves!

But it is perhaps a circumstance, finally favourable to the interests of the People, that those in whom they confide should invariably, when they become capable of exerting every effort in their favour, abandon the cause, and that however severely they may have inveighed against

the inadequacy of parliamentary representation, yet, from the moment in which they can grasp the reins of government, their great care is to secure the maintenance of that wretched system. It teaches them not to be too lavish in their applause of any political character, till he has proved that he deserves it; and that, as *Parliament* cannot be trusted with their confidence, in the redress of a grand political evil, they are the more bound to seek for justice in THEMSELVES. Most fortunate is it, that their hopes of obtaining a reform of their own representation through the medium of Parliament, has been constantly unsuccessful; since men, whose interest is shaken, if once such a measure takes place, could never be expected to provide a liberal and adequate remedy. The inadequacy of the measure itself, however, could not prove greater than the impropriety of the principle, of such a measure proceeding from such a source. *Parliament* have no right, they can have no right, to effect a parliamentary reform. A body, which is so defective as to be deemed scarcely competent to the office of just legislation without reform, can never be competent to the exercise of powers so extensive as those, which are necessary to redress its errors and supply its deficiencies. Parliament is not the private property of the individuals, who, at this or that time, happen to compose it: It is the concern of the people, it is instituted for their good, and to  
*them*

them alone belongs the power of its reform. But thank God! men begin at last to see their rights, and, notwithstanding the success of momentary efforts to keep them in the dark, will assert them. The reform of their representation, will, as soon as the present artful clamour against insurrections, shall have subsided, become the sole object of popular attention; and it is our duty to hold out such lights as our views of the subject can afford to the honest part of the community, for the purpose of assisting them, to discover the principles which they ought to consult in the execution of a task so important, so arduous, and so beneficial to the interest of themselves and of posterity.

But whatever degree of attention the subject of Reform may claim, I am aware, that there still are many men, who will not admit its expediency at the present moment. Some persons, who either enjoy offices and emoluments under government, or are members of our different corporations, imagine, that such a measure may shake their personal interest or authority: others, not in the habit of thinking for themselves, are misled by the outcry against reformers, so artfully excited by both parties in Parliament: and others, acting from honest intentions, think it right, that they should set their faces against that which may excite tumult,  
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and introduce innovation. None of these characters will I condemn, especially those of the latter description ; but I will venture to affirm, that they all act more or less from mistaken principles, and that, if they will attentively examine the subject, discarding passions and prejudices as much as possible from their minds, they will see the prudence and absolute necessity of co-operating in the work of Reform. That our Parliamentary Representation is inadequate, cannot be denied ; for the People are not admitted to a general and free choice of their own representatives. That there exist abuses in the general administration of affairs, which none ought to redress but the People, is equally apparent ; because the continuance of those abuses tend to the advantage of both parties in Parliament. Particular grievances may be opposed in Parliament with success : they, sooner or later, cease to be necessary, and sooner or later, are, therefore, remedied. But any general corruption that Ministers may introduce, is seldom, or never, extirpated : for when those who opposed its introduction, are admitted to the government of the Country, they feel an equal interest with their predecessors in office, in continuing the same dishonest system : and, it is from this cause—it is from the frequency of engrafting general abuses into the plan of government.

ment—that our Constitution has been gradually changed, and is totally different in practice from what it appears in theory. An additional argument in favour of the necessity of reform, arises from the fear so evidently betrayed on the occasion, by those who compose our Parliament. The members cry aloud against every wish on the subject that may be framed by **THAT PEOPLE** who honour them, by suffering them to be their legislators, and to conduct their affairs. What ground can there possibly be for these fears and these menaces, if, conscious that an examination into their political conduct, with a view to reform parliamentary abuses, can redound only to the credit of the present system? Indeed, Sir, every step that is taken in an enquiry of this nature, proves, that the People *must* do their duty, and cordially unite to correct the corruptions of that government which they pay so dearly to support.

The plea, which the honest and well-meaning part of society, who, at this time, condemn a parliamentary Reform, most strenuously urge in defence of their opinion, is founded on the dangerous consequences which may arise from the measure at the present moment. But the deep sense which they have of the justice of this objection, appears to me to have been produced, rather by the general impression which its apparent tendency has  
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make more their minds, than from any conviction,
 thinking that a national enquiry was its
 propriety and time. Let us then fairly ex-
 amine the political circumstances of the present
 moment, and see the probable consequences of
 an union of the nation to effect a parliamentary
 reform in fact a revolution. A general fermenta-
 tion has been some time excited in the minds of
 men: and a strong desire, that whatever grie-
 vances they suffer, may be redressed, by enabling
 the House of Commons to become their real re-
 presentatives, in favour of enforcing the corrupt prin-
 ciples to which it is confined at present, to ren-
 der this branch of the Legislature a more in-
 strument of opposition, a body, as it were in its de-
 votion to the will of the Crown, as it appears to
 be strange: that all regard to the interest and
 happiness of the People. If this be the fact, I
 would not wonder to see the House of Commons
 as ready to do what it appears to be the
 general wish of the Kingdom. For the exam-
 ple of France it is true, has diminished the
 spirit of a number of persons in this country;
 a party already exists who are desirous of a further
 encreas'd power: and if any attempt to
 make it more be refused, in this matter it is de-
 sired we had eyes not the revolution, but
 the eyes we show of the British Government.
 This then is a very serious matter: an entirely
 willing to admit: but it is the subject of

this party that I owe my firm persuasion of the necessity of an immediate reform. This party is at present but small ; it is not equal, even to that of the *objectors* to Reform, and it is trivial indeed, compared to the aggregate number of those who are *favourable* to the measure. But though their number be comparatively trivial, their intention appears to be ardent, and their conduct determined. If means be taken to prevent a rational Reform, the wish for a Revolution which they so loudly assert, will appear justifiable ; for it will be a plausible argument, to urge, that the system, which will not admit of a correction of its abuses, must be radically bad, and ought to be totally changed. If we *refuse to unite* in so important a task as that of rational Reform, they will be enabled to act alone, and their self-directed energy may meet with too much success : If refusing to unite in that important task, we determine to *resist their efforts* towards subversion, what can possibly be expected, but scenes of tumult, anarchy and blood ? In either case, our Constitution will be shaken to the center, and those to whom it affords advantages, must expect soon to bid farewell to the continuance of places which they hold ; or the farther existence of the Corporations to which they belong. The only plan therefore, that it is wise for moderate and honest men to adopt, is to join in their views,



so far as regards a Reform in the National Representation, and to subdue their power of executing farther projects, by swallowing up *their* numbers in the superiority of *their own*. If the citizens of this country unite, in order to recur to the first principles of Government, if an union of all those parties be cheerfully effected, viz. of those who decidedly wish for a Reform, of those who object to it from a mistaken idea of its danger, and of that smaller, but dangerous body, who are desirous of nothing less than overturning the Constitution: as every question will inevitably be carried by a majority, the two greater parties must absorb the smaller one, and thus render its intentions of no effect. This, I will assert, to be the language of one, who wishes not for tumult but for peace. All the first characters in office, all the political luminaries of both sides of the question, and their satellites, know, that what I have advanced is true, and when they exclaim, (as they have done for several sessions of Parliament, previous to the present alarm at the danger of insurrections) that *this is not the proper time for Reform*, they merit the execration of their country. While the people are tolerably contented, these *interested* politicians can have the baseness to attempt to excite a ferment, by crying aloud, that the representation of the country is defective, and ought to be reformed; but no sooner

sooner does conviction awaken the minds of the public to the same sentiment, than this is declared not the proper moment for such a measure. Thus it is, that Statesmen trifle with the feelings of that nation, which honours them with its ill-placed confidence ! What time *can* be so proper, as when the people begin to be generally discontented ? But these honourable men profess to fear, that at such a moment, some violent change in the Constitution will be effected. They know, all the time, that, according to the common process of natural causes, it will not ; they know, that the *general* sense of the nation is strongly against any radical change of an established Government: but they are perfectly aware, that their own pertinacity must finally produce such an event ; for the people will, *at last*, wholly reject a system, which is rendered the tyrannous sanction to corruption. No matter to *them*. Provided it serves *their* purposes as long as possible, why need they dedicate one thought, one effort, to give uniformity and strength to the crooked, tottering pillars, of our venerable Constitution ?

The only conduct, which well meaning and prudent men can adopt at this time, is, I repeat it, cordially to co-operate with those, who wish to effect a Parliamentary Reform ; to hear and

compare the plans which are proposed for that purpose ; and when their minds shall have investigated the subject, to act together with that firmness, but moderation, which the importance of the business demands. The difficulty, however, of this business, will by no means prove equal to the importance, provided we attain clear ideas of the nature of our object. The evil which requires redress, consists of the partial state of National Representation, the absurd qualification of electors, and the necessary evil to which septennial Parliaments are liable of being influenced by the Crown, and independent of the people. The object, therefore, that we wish to accomplish, is, *to render the Representation of the people more general ; to found the qualifications of Electors on some general and rational principle ; and to shorten the duration of Parliaments.* In order to accomplish this object, it is necessary that we examine into the principle on which the idea of representation is founded, and we shall find it, speaking abstractedly, the right of *every man in the country* to be represented in Parliament, and therefore, the power of every such man to vote in favour of that person, whom he desires to appoint as his representative. This principle accords with the spirit of the British Constitution : but since it cannot be *literally* acted upon, we are obliged to have a recourse to a legal fiction, and to suppose the fact, making our practice, however,

ever, accord with the principle as nearly as the possibility of the case will allow. The grievance under which we now labour, arises from this circumstance, that the principle is scarcely at all regarded, and that, though it were impossible for every man in the country, actually to give his vote at Parliamentary elections, yet the power of voting might be much more equally diffused among the people than it is at present. Common sense, as well as common justice, may teach us, that, consistently with the principle, EVERY TOWN in the KINGDOM ought to be freely represented, and EVERY INHABITANT to have the power of voting, *so far as the practicability of the process can possibly extend.* The ideas which I shall suggest, will not be found to overstep the boundaries of that practicability.

It has been the chief project of almost all our popular reformers of Parliamentary Representation, from the celebrated Lord Chatham, down to the late Henry Flood, to increase the number of Knights of the shire, and Junius, in his letter to Mr. Wilkes, has termed this project admirable. To my mind, however, it appears too partial and hasty a method of finishing the business. An addition of this nature would neither give representation to those towns, which for their extent, population, and manufactures, require to be represented; nor would it tend to  
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lay open the local sources of representation in sufficient variety and number throughout the country. It would, perhaps, be better, that no increase of Knights of the shire should be made, but that their present number should remain, that all the market towns (the insignificant ones excepted) should send representatives, and that when a considerable number lay near each other, two or more should be collectively represented. Supposing that two candidates be nominated for each place, the number of Members of the House of Commons may, by this means, be made to amount to about seven hundred: a number, when chosen upon honest principles, too considerable to be corrupted.

With regard to Rotten Boroughs, surely the plan of Parliamentary Reform were pitiful indeed, which could suffer their existence! All Boroughs, under the influence of the Crown, or at the disposal of individuals, ought to be disfranchised. I am aware, that Junius warmly protests against this principle,\* and his authority on the occasion has been quoted by those, to whose advantage it has tended. But no authority ought to overbear our sense of justice, and before we decide with Junius on the present subject, we may fairly ask, who this Junius is? That

\* See his Letter to Mr. Wilkes on the subject, dated the 7th of September, 1771.

the writer who so successfully adopted that signature, has displayed brilliant talents, and a perfect knowledge of the Constitution of this country; every man must admit; but was he independent of every party bias, and political interest? the tenor of his letters proves that he was not, and judging from this circumstance, it is not uncharitable to suppose it very *possible*, that when Junius, who on so many occasions proved the ardent assertor of liberty, thought proper to disapprove the cutting away Rotten Boroughs, he had a private stake in the existence of some Rotten Borough himself? The ground, however, on which Junius rests his objection, is, that such a measure would be equivalent to robbing the parties concerned of their birthright; to which I can only answer, that an hereditary exclusive share, in the representation of the elective part of the British Government, ought to be the *Freehold*, and the *birthright* of no man whatever. Nothing but the pressure of peculiar circumstances can justify those measures, apparently illegal, which are termed acts of state necessity; but surely, if acts, of such a nature be ever justifiable, it will be in the present instance. State necessity is urged as a plea for issuing press warrants, which have been frequently recognized and admitted by Parliament, and there are judicial opinions given in their favour by Judges of the first character; but shall this plea be urged, to justify the sei-

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sure of persons from their houses and families, for the purposes of war—that wholesale trade of human butchery!—and shall it not be suffered to operate in favour of the petty injury that individuals may suffer by the disfranchisement of Rotten Boroughs, in a cause so important to society as the reform of their representation? That injury would of course be indemnified by an adequate compensation. When Junius, however, asks, “if the majority of the House of Commons can disfranchise ten Boroughs, why not twenty? why not the whole kingdom? why should not they make their own seats in Parliament for life?” he proposes questions that are perfectly constitutional and just. The majority of the *House of Commons*, the majority of *both Houses*, though the consent of the Crown be added to sanction the deed, can have *no* right to interfere in such a subject. The disfranchisement of Rotten Boroughs, like the rest of the business of Reform, must be effected by the majority of the **PEOPLE**, and it is *they*, who will cheerfully indemnify the possessors of such Boroughs, for any diminution their property may sustain.

The *justice* of the legal principles, on which the qualifications of electors now depend, will not bear examination. It is time that principles which derive all their authority from an abject  
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veneration of the absurd and tyrannous relicks of feudal barbarism should exist no longer. It would therefore be proper, entirely to abolish the distinctions of freehold and copyhold, *so far as they affect the power of voting in Parliamentary elections.* To allow *every citizen without exception* to vote, were indeed a wild attempt, however right in theory; but it would be both practicable and rational to grant that privilege to all householders, residing in places entitled to the right of election, and paying taxes of fifty shillings and upwards. These voters, taken in the aggregate, I would denominate GENERAL ELECTORS; and their office should be to choose PARTICULAR ELECTORS from among themselves, with whom alone should reside the right of polling for Members of Parliament. In order more clearly to carry on this process, which is copied from the mode adopted in France, divisions into equal departments, consisting of a certain number, as a *thousand*, might be made of the general electors, and, out of every *hundred*, *ten* might be chosen, for the purpose of proceeding to the election of the Candidates. Thus would most of the householders in the kingdom stand a chance of being in the number of *particular Electors*, and at the same time possess the certain power of voting as *General Electors*.

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Having rendered the representation of the people more fair, and founded the qualifications of electors on an impartial equitable principle, the next step would be to restore the old period of the existence of Parliament for three years. Other regulations might likewise be adopted, such as the infliction of some capital punishment on those Candidates and Electors, who either give or receive a bribe ; \* and the allotment of *five hundred pounds per annum* to every Member of the House of Commons, as a salary for his agency of the public business. This last regulation, instead of laying heavy on the purses of the public, would prove a very considerable saving, since Members of moderate fortunes, and many such there are at present in the House of Commons, needing no secret supplies from those who had otherwise corrupted them, would prove too independent to vote for measures which they knew to be adverse to the public good ; or to consent to taxes which were not only burthensome, but unnecessary and unjust.

By such measures alone can we expect to purify from its abuses, the British Legislature. By

\* I know it will be said, that Laws on the subject of bribery at Elections, &c. already exist. If we examine, however, into the real fact, we shall find that these laws are inadequate to the purpose.

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such measures alone can our national representation be rendered too extensive and too independent to be easily corrupted, and while its decisions shall be necessarily regulated not by *party*, but by *principle*, the present system of government will take root firmly in the hearts of a happy people, who having reason to love and respect their Parliament, will become more and more alienated from the possibility of wishing well to a *Revolution*.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

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LETTER VI.

*Revolutionists defended as to their abstract principles---Why dangerous---Our present mixed form of Government adapted to the national character---All our Parliamentary abuses owing to the want of a systematic corrective---What that should be, proved from the analogous case of other corporations---Plan of a permanent Constitutional check, &c. &c.*

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S I R,

**M**Y chief motive in so ardently wishing for a Parliamentary Reform, is, by removing the grounds of popular objection to the present frame of government, to remove likewise the most justifiable plea that may be urged in favour of a Revolution. If the arm of power be raised for the punishment of those who shall endeavour to redress the inadequacy and corruption of parliamentary representation, it will naturally be exclaimed, "Perish the system which sanctions public injustice, and will not permit the people

ple to correct the abuses of their own Legislature!° But the present system of British Government appears to me, to be adequate to the dissemination of many advantages to the people, if properly corrected; and even were its errors enormous and irremediable, I should grieve at any sudden and violent effect to accomplish a Revolution: since the attempt might not prove successful but by the previous destruction of thousands; and if unsuccessful, would afford a plausible pretext for establishing the sternest despotism. I adopt this opinion from a consciousness of the acrimony and violence to which the minds of many are too subject in the course of political contests; from the belief that the Revolutionists are far exceeded in number by those who wish well to the present Constitution (and the opinion of the majority ought always to prevail); and from a fear of the danger that would arise, owing, not to those who are sincere and honest in their political professions, not those who wish favourably to the public good, but to the injustice of that class of men, who are ever ready to side with any party from corrupt motives, and, professing political principles with a zeal, only proportioned to their want of it, stick at no mischief by which they can secure their private ends. Of the intentions of the persons themselves, who by their writings, or their conversation, prove the sincerity of their wish for the accomplishment of a Revolution, in this country.

country, I am willing to entertain the highest opinion. Whatever be their errors, I am convinced that they mean well ; and are by no means those *daring factious* characters, which I have heard them termed in most of the daily prints, and in other publications under the direction of the two parties in Parliament. The few of these daring factious men whom I have met with, I have found to be persons amiable for their moral excellence and their liberality of spirit ;—persons of a mild, benevolent disposition, and whose great and sole object has been the happiness of human nature. Shocked at the miseries arising from an artificial form of government, which to them appeared to absorb every source of wealth and independence from the honest and hard-labouring classes of the community, for the support of its own grandeur, it is not their factious, but their benignant spirit, that induced them to wish for the demolition of such a government, in order to alleviate the miseries it produces. They think it hard, that the most useful members of society should have their industry taxed to maintain the needless pageantry of a Court : they think, that nature has admirably created every distinction among men, that is necessary in the business of life, such as genius and dulness, industry and idleness, vice and virtue, and that the artificial distinctions of rank, instead of benefiting mankind, beget contempt and arrogance on the one hand, and envy and meanness

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on the other: they think, that of contraries only one can be good, and the rest must be bad; and that therefore, of a Legislature, consisting of distinct and contrary orders, one must be right, and the rest being consequently wrong, ought to be abolished: they think that, being all human beings, all of the same kindred, possessed of the same organs, and regulated by the same affections, it is contemptible and base to sink below the level of our fellow creatures, or to affect to stalk above it; and that the only natural, useful, and just civil constitution, is founded on a system of political equality, and conducted on the principles of fraternal union. Man, they affirm, would then become the friend of man, the grand source of taxes and oppressions by which millions of beings are rendered the tame machines, in the work of human butchery, of ambitious villains, would be at an end, since the comfort of all would cease to be sacrificed to the artful projects of a few. Applying these principles to the case of Great Britain, they deprecate a Constitution which they consider instead of being free, as the more dangerous tyranny, because of an imposing and specious appearance. The House of Commons alone they would deem sufficient to the purposes of Legislature, if that House were a free and fair representation of the people: but they see that it is not so; they see that it is a mere Aristocracy, and that under the pretence of being a Democracy,  
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and requiring a political balance, it is rivalled by another Aristocracy, termed the House of Peers. They deem it extremely unjust, that this ARISTOCRACY of NOBLES should prove a constant body of *self-representatives*, when the representatives of the PEOPLE (the highest character in a free country) are very properly dissolved at the end of every seven years, and fresh returns made to parliament: they declare it to be absurd, that the accidental circumstance of high birth should entitle any order of men to take a share in the Legislature of the country, and to act in the important office of judges on the property of others in cases of the last resort, without any previous proofs of integrity and wisdom; and they feel it to be a burlesque and mockery on human reason, that those exclusive privileges should belong to men, who, dressed in stars and ribbons, and distinguished by ostentatious high-sounding titles, affect to be a superior race of mortals, and are stiled Nobles; whereas there cannot exist any real nobility except that which consists in a virtuous elevated mind. The Crown likewise they view, not as the mere Executive Power of the Government, which it ought to be, but as the concentration of all the political powers, executive and legislative, in the person of one individual. Instead of enjoying the proper office of dignifying the decrees of the Legislature, by giving them sanction and efficacy, they see the representation

tation of the executive branch of our Constitution possessed of the prerogative of rejection also; and they feel with extreme concern, that, if even the other parts of the government were founded on an upright principle, all its intentions might be frustrated by the caprice or turpitude of a weak or wicked individual, since, after the houses of Lords and Commons have been deliberating on any measure for a month together, the King is suffered to refuse his assent, and the polite despotism of *Le Roi s'avise* annuls even the most virtuous and most wise proceedings of two houses of national legislature. When they contemplate the British Constitution in this light, they are shocked at the praises which are bestowed on it by the *bonest* statesmen of both parties in Parliament: they say, that trial by jury is the only part of our system which fairly deserves the name of liberty, the only civil right which is granted to the people: but they seem evidently to believe our political Constitution, *i. e.* the organization of our Government in general, to be a mass of artifice and corruption; that it is a concealed tyranny, a state puppet-show, calculated only to deceive and govern the people: the grand absorber of national treasure; a specious and contemptible fabrick of splendid imposture!

The truth of the *general principles* of Revolutionists, considered in the abstract, cannot be



denied : but it appears to me a sufficient answer to the application of these principles to the British Constitution, to say, that that Constitution, owing to its mixed form, is admirably adapted to the various passions and prejudices of the people, and that if its theory be but a little corrected, and its practice rendered conformable to its theory, it will be found to be a very estimable Constitution. All governments will perhaps have some defects, and, if the abuses in our system be great, it is possible, that those abuses may be corrected without any violent and rash change of the form and principles of our Constitution. The Aristocracy, if kept within its proper sphere, and not suffered to pervade and swallow up the rest of the Legislature, will be found perhaps to be less exceptionable, than it is generally painted. In the present imperfect state of things, some Aristocracy, however objectionable in its abstract principle, may be useful : If the pride of high birth be a prejudice, it may be a virtuous prejudice, as inspiring a conscious elevation of mind, which raises a man superior to the practice of dishonourable actions ; an Aristocracy of birth may therefore be more useful and dignified than an Aristocracy of wealth ; and brilliant talents may frequently feel a livelier incitement to render essential services to the state from the hopes of ambition, than they possibly could from disinterested feelings of public virtue. Let the  
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passions and prejudices of men be gradually subdued by the progress of truth, and we may expect such parts of their government as depend on those passions and prejudices to be relinquished : and when philosophers shall have enlightened the minds of the common people, and moralists have reasoned them out of the contrary vices of meanness and pride, and produced that equanimity among them which scorns either to submit to, or adopt, the imposition of titles, then will the Aristocratical distinctions in this country sink to nothing. But as we are by no means arrived at that period, it would ill become us to encourage any effort to destroy our Constitution, which is sanctioned by the approbation of a majority of the people, and which, if both its theory and practice be perfected, will prove the source of great and valuable blessings to the nation.

The only evil which could possibly be apprehended would arise from the supreme and arbitrary power of Parliament. That the Legislature is a power "superior to all the other powers established by law," is a truth which no rational man will contradict ; but that its power should be *unbounded* and *uncontrolled*, is an evil which ought not to exist, and from which have arisen all those abuses that now call so loudly for reformation. We know, that Parliament has passed the most absurd and unjust laws in former times ; and that, with a

bigotry and baseness, the more unpardonable, because the more inconsistent with the rational and tolerant temper of the present age, it still suffers them to remain on the statute book. We know that Parliament may now frame the most absurd and unjust laws, without responsibility or control. Parliament, by means of the power of the majority of the Minister of the day, may, if it please, institute another star-chamber; Parliament may abolish the liberty of the press, or it may at least appoint inspectors of literature to read all works intended for the press, and to grant, or withhold, at discretion, their licence for publication. Parliament may expel from the kingdom, all dissenters from the established system in religion or politics: Parliament may punish every individual, who is obnoxious to the existing administration, by imprisonment or confiscation of his property. All this Parliament *may* do, according to the present state of things, without being subject to any appeal, to any redressing power whatever. Nay more, should any particular administration wish to awe the people into slavery, Parliament might decree, that Fortresses should be established in every town in the kingdom, for the purpose of defending his Majesty's subjects against disaffected and factious men, and no notice would be taken of such a measure by the People; unless perhaps that of a citizen's taking his children, on a summer's Sunday, to see the fine new fortress that was building

building to guard him and them against the attempts of wicked rebels; and perhaps if some quiet individual were mildly to suggest the possibility of danger to the liberties of the people, arising from their being thus subject to military law, a rabble, inspired by loyal zeal for the Constitution, might pull his house down, and it would be well if they did not tear him to atoms, for a vile and desperate innovator! Such is the power of Parliament, from which there is no appeal, unless it be to their future condescension, by afterwards petitioning them to do away that injustice, which it would be contrary to their own exclusive interest to remove, and which having been once established, would be considered as making part of our sacred Constitution! Such is the same submission with which men must consent gradually to part with all their freedom, when torn from them piece-meal by the tyranny of Parliament! Yet submissive as they are to individual abuses, when those abuses have accumulated to a certain extent, popular rage becomes as ungovernable, as popular submission had before been abject; and a government which might have proved excellent, had it been calmly and steadily purified from its accidental corruption and oppression, falls the victim to a blind and indiscriminate fury. How then shall we correct the evil? By placing some check upon the power of Parliament, and by giving civil rights to the People. The [pos-  
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session of civil rights would inspire the people without doors with a dignity of mind, and a care for the principles on which all Governments should be conducted, that would prove an effectual barrier against abuse; but the people of this country are suffered to enjoy no civil rights,\* independent of the licence of Parliament, and all the rights which they do enjoy are considered as acts of grace. Let us then see, whether we cannot invest the people with civil rights, and whether it be impossible to form a permanent body, acting upon the principles of those rights, that shall prove a check upon any pernicious operations of the power of Parliaments, and, by regular and rational reforms, prevent the probability of Revolutions? and whether this body cannot subsist consistently with the genius and spirit of the British Constitution!

All corporations were originally instituted for some public purpose: such as the advancement of learning or trade, or the benefit of particular societies or communities. But as corporations are liable to abuses in consequence of the errors and passions of the individuals who compose them, the law has established it as a principle, that those bodies politic shall be subject to visitations at

\* See this point admirably treated by that able and independent writer, David Williams, in his Lectures on Political Principles.

stated times, or otherwise, by the founders, their heirs and assigns, in order to enquire into and correct every deviation from the end of their original establishment. \* It will excite some surprise, however, to reflect, that while this principle prevails in every other case; while the Corporations of our two Universities, while the Corporations of our cities and towns, while all the Corporate bodies, acknowledged by law, are thought to have been founded on principles so important to the public interest, not to render it necessary that they should be liable to visitations, that Corporation which is most important to their interest, and in consequence of the errors of which the greatest danger must inevitably arise, the BARRISTERS' PALMISTRY is the only one which is excluded from a restriction so beneficial and so wise. This is no doubt a great defect in our Constitution, owing to the injustice of Ministers, who have ever thought, that by keeping the people in ignorance of their rights, or preventing the exercise of them,

\* "Corporations being composed of individuals, subject to human frailties, are liable, as well as private persons, to deviate from the end of their institution; and for that reason the law has provided proper persons to visit and enquire into, and correct the irregularities that arise in such corporations, either sole or aggregate, and whether ecclesiastical, civil, or eleemosynary. With regard to all ecclesiastical corporations, the ordinary is their visitor, &c. With respect to all lay corporations, the founders, their heirs or assigns, are the visitors, whether the foundation be eleemosynary, &c. &c." BLACKSTONE'S COM. B. I. ch. 18.

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they could act with less fear of real responsibility: and to this defect alone has been owing the regular progress of those abuses which call for Reform, and which seem almost to have provoked the probability of a Revolution. It is our duty, therefore, to enquire into the nature of the institutions of other Corporate bodies, and then to proceed on analogous principles to form a power capable of visiting the British Parliament, which, without restricting the fair exercise of the authority of that Parliament, shall perpetually secure to the people their rights, by operating as a regular control against any instance of its injustice.

The same persons who are the founders (or on their decease, their heirs and assigns) are justly considered as the only proper visitors of Corporations, because they know the object of their own institution, and can best determine whether that object has been neglected. The law of this country has thought it right to make the King the founder of Civil Corporations, of which he is virtually the visitor, and of which the abuses are remedied by the interposition of the Court of King's Bench: but as the King cannot be the founder of Parliament, of which he forms only a component part, who is the founder of that Corporation? The PEOPLE are its founders. The authority of Parliament, unless that Parliament be an usurpation which ought to be destroyed, flows

flows from *their* consent, and with *them* it remains, to form a body, in order to visit the conduct and rectify the abuses of their Legislature. But since it would be impossible for every individual in the kingdom to bear his part in this important business, as many persons might be chosen as the practicability of the measure would allow, and elections conducted on principles similar to those which I have before deemed necessary for the fair choice of representatives in Parliament, might produce a competent number of citizens, throughout the kingdom, to sit and act as a **GRAND ASSEMBLY OF CONSTITUENTS.**

We know that it was the opinion of Mr. Locke, and indeed that of Burlemaqui, and all the great men who have written on the subject of civil policy, that the right of correcting the abuses of their government resided in the people. For want, however, of some organ by which they could regularly express their sentiments, abuses have rarely been checked at their onset, nor has the right of the people been exercised but by the dangerous measure of national revolt. This is a remedy much too violent, and though it may subdue the disease, generally destroys the patient also. The method, however, which I have proposed, would preclude popular violence, and so far from being an innovation of the British Constitution, partakes of its form and spirit, and



is nothing more than the restoration, or rather supply, of that which is defective in it, and to the want of which are owing all our present disorders. By the adoption of this plan, the wishes of those who are interested in the maintenance of the present form of government will be gratified, since all men, raised to a state of moral dignity, by the possession of their natural rights, will prove better citizens and more attached to the Constitution under which they enjoy them; and even the spirit of extreme Democracy will be conciliated, and less anxious to abolish the titles and rank of our nobles in Parliament, since in *this* Assembly, representing the body of the people in its constituent capacity, all ought to be equal; and it would be improper, that any man, of whatever rank, should derive the smallest influence from such distinctions. The principle on which I would propose this plan to be executed, would be, that all persons residing in towns sending Members to Parliament, and paying taxes of 20 shillings per annum, should be entitled to vote as *General Electors*; that those General Electors should be divided into hundreds, and that every hundred should elect ten out of their number to act as *Particular Electors*, and that every thousand of these Particular Electors, should choose five from among themselves, to be deputed to the GRAND CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. By these means about three thousand or less would be

be finally nominated throughout the kingdom. The election for the formation of this Assembly might be distinguished from Parliamentary Elections, by the appellation of the *Grand General Election*: and the time of its undertaking might be at the end of every third Legislature. The body thus returned should review the past conduct of their late rulers, correct the errors of their Government, and refer to the ensuing Parliament their sense of what has been unjust in their imposts, or the other measures of their predecessors, and what conduct they would recommend to them to adopt: their sittings might be limited to the duration of three months, in order that they might not retard the business of the Legislature: and they might be restrained from acting on any mischievous principle by the imposition of an oath, not making them profess any belief in mystical opinions, not binding them in words to the preservation of the present Constitution, whether right or wrong, which are acts of base tyranny in any state, but simply obliging them to give a solemn assurance, that they would act, according to the best of their intentions, for the public good. This would prove an effectual bulwark to the British Constitution, so long as its adaptation to the moral state of the people could render it improper to be changed; and would prevent needless Re-

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volutions, since the party who desire such events, instead of producing mischief by any actual efforts, would be forced to yield, not to superior violence, but superior numbers, and would sink *to nothing* amidst the vast majority of contrary opinions, to whose decision they must necessarily submit.

It is doubtless our duty, in the first place, to effect a reform of the representation in Parliament. I have already delineated some general outlines of my ideas, at least, of the nature of reform; and the quarter from whence it should come I have repeatedly asserted to be, the *People*. For Parliament to menace the public, and presume to take such a business into their own hands, is as great an absurdity and usurpation, as it were if any man, whose domestic affairs were dishonestly conducted, should think to change his household; and the servants, whose peculations were thus to be remedied, should say to him—"Sir, you grow very impertinent and dangerous, and we desire you not to meddle in affairs of such importance, but to rely on our justice, in taking your grievances at a proper time into consideration." How then can it be practically undertaken by the People? I should think, that the most constitutional mode would be, by the Corporations of different towns instructing deputies from their  
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own bodies to meet and confer with those of other Corporations on the subject: but we know that these municipal establishments, like all other establishments holding exclusive privileges, wink at the abuses of that power by whose sanction they enjoy immunities which are withheld from their fellow-citizens. Another plan might be, by the constituents of borough-towns, &c. deputing a certain number from their respective bodies for the same purpose: but this, I fear, would strengthen, rather than remove, the evil, since this weighty office would be entrusted in a great measure to the residents of Rotten boroughs, and to those very citizens, whose implicit submission to the proprietors of such boroughs has considerably tended to prove the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform. I wish the adoption of one of these methods could prove efficient, since either of them so indisputably accords with the general principles of our Constitution; but as neither of them can be regarded with any prospect of success, the only mode that remains is the co-operation of parochial associations, instituted throughout the kingdom for so desirable an object. It will prove to the advantage of every freeman of this country cordially to join in the attempt. Fears may be entertained respecting the security of private property; but let it be considered, that property is insecure only when respectable and honest men keep aloof, and a mere

mere rabble are left to act from their own impulse, which is naturally that of a lust for plunder. Let men of property, let men who have a stake in trade and commerce, instead of giving a pretext to the mob for violence, cheerfully unite their efforts in favour of a reform, and let them adopt determined measures for the prevention of danger, and they may rest assured they will experience no violation of their property.

But the late example of France is adduced by our subtle politicians, and endeavours are made to intimidate us from correcting the abuses of our own government, lest we should share the misfortunes of our neighbours, and experience a lamentable scene of tumult and bloodshed. Trust me, Sir, the example of France has no reference to the subject. *We* wish, a small body excepted, for a Reform: the *French*, a very small body excepted, desired a Revolution. The errors of our government are specious, though dangerous errors, and, generally speaking, *We* have enjoyed too considerable a portion of liberty, to aggravate us, on the accession of our just share, to acts of barbarity: but the lower orders of the French were naturally hardened, and driven to exercise a desperate cruelty on their oppressors, by the scenes of legal inhumanity which they had been accustomed to behold, under their ancient government, and the horrid despotism which

which they had so long endured. The subject of France, therefore, is totally irrelevant: and we are to attend only to the abstract question of right and wrong, with respect to ourselves. Our system of government is defective and corrupt; it ought to be corrected; it belongs to us to correct it: and we must do our duty.

Among other reasons alledged as adverse to the propriety of amending the popular representation, by statesmen who conceive that they, and not the people, have a right to undertake such amendment, it is said, that no Petitions have been received by their Constituents on the subject. This is indeed adding insult to injury: but I trust that, however justly the Constitution may have prescribed the process of *petitioning* in other cases, the people will prove, that they possess too much sense and spirit to petition, for a redress of their wrongs, those who have wronged, and who must always find it their interest to wrong them.\* It is their own business to reform their own Parliamentary representation, and instead of sending sneaking petitions, in a case like the present, it would better become them to issue out manly Proclamations. Such a measure however I would not wish to see executed, but such a measure would better become the dignity of the

\* I find that I have been mistaken in the fact, notwithstanding the rectitude of my principle. Petitions are at this time, presenting to Parliament in considerable numbers.

People

People without doors, than the business of Petitioning.—I know that well-meaning and respectable men, composing those classes of life that are involved in Trade and Commerce, will be inclined to neglect a subject of such importance, from an idea, that it is too difficult for their understandings, and that they ought to leave it to the consideration of wiser heads. But this is a mistake. The crooked system of cunning and violence, which is generally distinguished by the name of politics, or political wisdom, may elude the comprehension of plain and honest minds: but the establishment of a fair and general representation of the people depends only on a regard to the dictates of common sense, and the principles of justice, and is not beyond the capacity of scarcely any person. Do those who are thus distrustful of their power to accomplish this business, reflect, that by deserting their duty they subject themselves to the power of their rulers in Parliament, who are most unfit for such an office, because most interested in patching up a specious and delusive system of Reform? But they think themselves inferior in the execution of such a task, to those experienced and practised Politicians. Fatal diffidence! Are they not equally men? constructed with the same organs? blessed with the same common understandings? equally capable of forming a right judgment, in a simple, though important, affair of this kind? and essentially

tially different in no other circumstance than in that of finding it their advantage to act throughout the business with integrity ?

I know that government would wish to prevent, by all its influence over the press, and all its power over the law and its respective officers, the execution of such measure: but it were no less impolitic and unjust in them to adopt any line of conduct, which, at a time like the present, could set at variance the Parliament and the People. Too much, in my opinion, of this incautious conduct has been adopted already. No sooner are writings published on the general subject of politics, and the errors of our government pointed out, with a view to their correction, and to such changes as the authors conceive likely to produce an amelioration of the condition of mankind, than the scourge of the law is brandished, and we are told, in a loud tone, that the authors deserve the severest punishment as libellers of our excellent Constitution. Hence the late prosecution of Mr. Paine. But is this wise conduct ? If our Constitution be really excellent, which with proper correctives it will prove, what libels can hurt it ? or at least, will not the legal notice of libels render them more general objects of public attention ? A man, like Mr. Paine, might be repeatedly prosecuted, but if determined to continue writing, especially if he thought it a duty which he owed to his species, to

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disseminate



disseminate principles which appeared to him, however erroneously, to be true and virtuous, the prosecution of the man would not check the farther publication of his opinions. Even the circumstance of imprisonment would afford him better opportunities to write, and stimulate the public with greater curiosity to read; and while his *body* might experience confinement in a dungeon, his *mind* would be circulated all over the kingdom.

No sooner were the public disposed to attend to the ideas of such writers, than a Proclamation was issued, presuming to interfere with and direct their opinions, calling on Magistrates to be vigilant in the suppression of seditious practices, and holding out encouragement to informers to send the names of disaffected persons to one of the principal Secretaries of State. To say nothing of the impropriety of a Proclamation encroaching on the office of the law, which, of itself, is always open to the cognizance of what is wrong, I would ask, if it was not imprudent in Government thus to expose their fears, and by endeavouring to over-awe the people from acting as they thought proper in respect to a Reform of their own representation, to exasperate popular resentment? It is true, that loyal Addresses were poured forth from an hundred quarters, felicitating his Majesty on the object of his gracious Proclamation: But it by no means appears to me, that those addresses expressed the sense of the country

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at large. They proceed only from Corporate bodies dependent on the present system, and from meetings composed for the most part of people who came prepared to vote such Addresses. Those persons in whom this State Paper excited contempt or indignation, kept aloof, that they might not be marked out as obnoxious characters; but I suspect and fear, that, if the real sense of the country had been taken (at the time) instead of addresses of thanks, the Proclamation of the King would have been almost universally answered by Proclamations of a different nature from the people. No sooner were men disposed to form associations to consider the subject of a Parliamentary Reform, and to increase in the commission of that *horrid crime*, the celebration of the first Revolution in France, by which twenty-five millions of our fellow-creatures, from abject slavery, had been raised to a state of exalted freedom, than camps were talked of, and the people were attempted to be intimidated by a race of red-coats, whose profession is that of bearing arms against their fellow citizens.

It is the peculiar characteristic of despotism, that when calm and rational enquiry is set on foot on the subject of government, to refute it, not by reason and truth, but by chains, gibbets, and the cannon's mouth. Such arguments are certainly decisive, and though they may not

persuade, never fail to silence. Military force, however, will prove a bad engine of parliamentary power, when men shall sincerely begin to effect a Reform of their Representation; for if the people are united and determined, nothing can withstand them. The energy of conscious rectitude must prevail. The greater part of the soldiery too, connected by ties of relationship and amity to a part of their opponents, would desert their cause. The only event, indeed, that could result from such provocation, would be, that popular zeal, worked up to an excess of resentment, would not be content with the first object of its intention, the correction of the errors of the established system of government; it would destroy that system itself:—a circumstance, which (as I think our mixed form of government is admirably calculated for the present mixture of passions in the character of the people) I should much lament, even though a bright and glorious system of political equity were to rise like a Phoenix from the ashes of the old Constitution; for political improvements are hazardous, where they are so bold and rapid as to outrun the progressive wisdom of a people.

With regard to the question of writings, it is certainly the avowed opinion of many sensible men, that the severest punishment ought to be inflicted on the authors of works decrying or condemning the established form of Government.

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To my mind, I confess, the fact appears far otherwise. Government involves too many concerns, it is productive of too great a degree of human happiness or misery, not to claim our strictest attention; and it is only by pointing out whatever the subject presents of a defective appearance, that we can hope to remedy the most dangerous errors. It is, however, thought a liberal principle in our Legislators to assert, that the Press is a check on the conduct of men in power, and that writers are at liberty to attack the particular measures of Administration, or those of their opponents; but that the Constitution itself ought, by all good citizens, to be deemed sound and inviolable. What is this but to say, in other words, that "We, as contending parties, will enable the people to render the press an instrument in our hands, for waging war against each other, to serve our own political purposes; but we will on no account whatever, suffer them to scrutinize the system by which we are sanctioned in our plunder." The cant term *good Citizens*, we know to be always applied by politicians, to those who are patient and quiet subjects of the Government, however oppressive, under which they live; but he alone is a truly good Citizen, who endeavours to render his fellow citizens happier; and as much of the misery of life proceeds from the injustice of the established forms of Government, and the annihilation of that injustice can only be obtained by unveiling it

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to popular inspection, a good Citizen will be more likely than any other man, odd as the expression may appear, to publish libels against the Constitution of his country. Most political Constitutions will happen to contain some degree of evil, either from the nature of their principles, the abuse of their practice, or the change of the circumstances and temper of the times : and it is only by the occasional remedy of that evil, that such Constitutions may be gradually advancing towards perfection ; and He merits the title of a good Citizen, who freely diffuses his sentiments on the nature of that evil with a view to its expulsion, and to the improvement of the Constitution. If those sentiments be erroneous, they will be refuted ; if just, their dispersion will benefit mankind. Private libels may be truly said to demand the severest punishment, because the security of moral character is a great incentive among men to moral conduct, and the community cannot derive any advantage, sufficient to justify the pain that has been given to the feelings of the individual, but on the discussion of all public subjects, as they affect the community at large, there ought to be no restriction whatever. We have a right to canvass the merits of all Constitutions which we pay taxes to support : We have a right to enquire into the truth of all religions which are solemnly presented to us as the dispensations from Heaven : And no Government is or can be free, which, instead of restraining, does not *invite* the people

people to speak and write their sentiments on all such subjects, without reserve, without enmity, without fear. Discussions of this kind must end in the triumph of Truth, and however detrimental they may prove to the interests of particular individuals, they cannot but eventually promote the cause of general justice and general happiness.

In stating the sentiments contained in these letters, whatever *innovations* of customary forms I may seem to have proposed, I trust, that I have suggested no measures which militate against the genius and spirit of the British Constitution: and when I use this indefinite expression (so often applied by our Legislators, as sounds signifying nothing) I would be understood to mean, that I have suggested only such plans as are analogous to the principles and forms established by law, and peculiar to the political organization of the kingdom. I have expressed a wish that our *parties* in Parliament were broken up: I have urged the necessity of a Reform of the National Representation in Parliament, and have given the outlines of such principles as appear to me to be those on which that reform should be conducted. I have proposed the idea of a Grand Revisional Assembly, which, by periodical corrections of Parliamentary abuses, will keep our political system sound and pure, till the latest period of its possible existence, and will then safely conduct it

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to any farther degree of excellence that may suit the circumstances of the times, and the wishes, interests, and conviction of the whole country.

If the manner in which I have treated the principles of Monarchy and Aristocracy, while writing on the subject of French affairs, appear incompatible with what I have afterwards said in their favour, in discussing the merits of the English Constitution; the inconsistency will be found more apparent than real, by those who consider, that in the first instance I took the opportunity to regard those principles in an abstract and philosophical light; and that in the second, I dwelt on the relative excellence resulting from a happy adaptation of them to local incidents, and the manners of the people. Men of thought and observation do not want to be told, that circumstances of expediency may give relative excellence to that which, in itself, is very remote from absolute perfection.

On the subject of the first Revolution in France, I have expressed great exultation. When I cease to exult in such a cause, I do most sincerely hope that I shall cease to live! With respect to the second Revolution, the praise that I have bestowed, has certainly been qualified with some mixture of doubt and apprehension. After having abolished the old despotism, and reared on its

its ruins, a Constitution, the most wise and virtuous that had ever been instituted by human reason and integrity. I dreaded the danger of overturning so equitable and beautiful a system: With some remnant, perhaps, of that licentiousness of manner which peculiarly distinguished the national character under the old despotism, it was a bold experiment to venture on a Republic, which peculiarly requires integrity of morals for its support, because, from the moment in which the sacred duties of life are considered with contempt, those principles are set in action, which undermine the Republic, and profligate characters aim at arbitrary power for the purpose of gratifying their passions and their appetites. At the same time that I saw the subject in this light, I could not help entertaining some hopes that I might be mistaken, that the French would cultivate manly morals suitable to so manly a form of government, and that their several efforts to throw off every system of monarchial and aristocratical principles, would only prove so many generous steps towards rescuing human nature from those evils and miseries which have been so fatally introduced among mankind by the arts of civil governments. I have freely indulged in these hopes and these fears, and how far either of them have been founded, time only can determine.

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I will not defend all that has been lately done in France; but I think, that it is more just to attribute the sanguinary acts that have disgraced the nation, to the violent faction that has long since agitated Paris, than to the French People. Louis is no more! and for an execution so base and brutal, I am not anxious to retract the expressions which I applied in a former letter to the authors of such an event, previous to its having happened. That event was evidently accelerated by the inflammatory arts of a desperate faction, but for the conduct of the French people, who suffered themselves to go along with the feelings of that faction, some allowance may be made, when we consider how many children had lost their parents, how many parents their children, in consequence of wars carried on against France, of which Louis, however innocent, was the ostensible object. Let us likewise remember, the insults which they received from powers professing themselves neutral; the menacing intimation of this court on the recall of our minister from Paris; and the foul language which had been heaped upon the whole nation by the British Parliament—and we shall the less wonder, that their exasperated feelings, receiving an additional stimulus from such ill-timed provocations, drove them to an act, which in their cooler moments, they could not have approved. To have suffered wrongs is a vile  
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pretext for committing them; and no injuries can justify the vices of a vindictive spirit. To clear dispassionate reason; nothing can be more evident than the conduct which France *ought* to have adopted: but she felt herself dared to the commission of that act which we all deplore, as if it were a point of honour and of courage necessary to be asserted, and the violent party took advantage of her feelings to urge her to it; nor was it to be expected, that notwithstanding all their apparent advances towards truth and virtue, the French people should not yet have so far emerged from those unhappy opinions, which are the chief sources of the misery of man, as to see that true honour is incompatible with injustice, and that the noblest act of human courage, is to dare to persist in rectitude, in spite of the provocations and misconceptions of all the world. If other nations had chosen to impute the safety of Louis to a fear of their own power, let those nations have prided themselves in that opinion; and if they had thought proper to say so, it had then been time for France to have drawn the sword and convinced them of their error.

On the subject of affairs in France, however, it is hazardous at this moment to pretend to offer a decided opinion. Events occur too unexpectedly, not to baffle all conjecture as to their termination. Thus much, however, as to the

subject in general, I will frankly declare: that I think, as we are engaged in a war with that nation, every real Englishman must wish us to be speedily extricated from that state of hostility, with honour; and that, as the object of the other combined powers cannot but prove fatal to the cause of humanity throughout Europe, if successfully pursued, every good and great mind must wish that *their* efforts may fail, and France be free. May her future conduct prove *worthy* of her early efforts, and may she by no glaring injustice, by no violence of domestic factions, forfeit her claim to virtuous liberty! *May she propagate her principles,\** not by the sword, not by the inhuman exploits of military heroes (as they are called) but by proving their rectitude (for it may be done) in the cultivation of the arts of peace, the prosperity of their trade and commerce, and the promotion of concord and virtue among all her citizens! If it be said, that in wishing well to the liberties of France, I wish ill to the glory of this country, since a neighbouring state cannot be free but at our expence,

\* When the Author uses this expression, which he knows to be peculiarly obnoxious, he alludes to the general principles of liberty, toleration and justice, which were asserted at the time of the French Revolution, and not those principles on which many of the mistaken zealots in the cause of liberty have too often acted. A Member of the Jacobins lately proposed that the heads of those who should dare to avow the sentiments of *moderation* should be made to roll in the dust. Principles of so sanguinary and detestable nature, the writer deprecates and abhors.

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I cordially disclaim so illiberal a policy. God never made this beautiful world, with a view that the glory of one country should depend on the depression of another. The true glory of every state consists, not in arrogantly lording it over its defenceless neighbours, but in the perfection of its own social system, and the solid advantages that it diffuses among its people. Convinced of these opinions, I cannot hesitate to declare my wish, that France, rising superior to the fatal zeal of that faction of sanguinary madmen from within, who would promote the cause of liberty by blood, and the detestable hostility of a knot of continental despots from without, may yet enjoy the blessings of a liberal government. The avarice and ambition of those crowned heads who are combined against the cause of liberty, may induce them to believe, that the welfare of one state consists in the conquest and subjugation of another : but the idea is false : unjust dominion is extravagant to support, and precarious in its tenure ; and the only real political interest, not merely of this or that particular body of men, but of the whole species, depends on the freedom and happiness of every country on the face of the globe.

Such, Sir, are my sentiments on public subjects : sentiments, which I have freely communicated, because you did me the honour to request them ; and which I would as freely publish, because I believe them to be true.

Conscious

Conscious of the integrity of the intentions by which they have been dictated, what could I have to fear from their avowal? On the precise subject of the British Constitution, I have written nothing hostile to the spirit and principles of that Constitution; and if the vigilance of informers, and the ingenuity of lawyers, could twist any passage of these letters to purposes of personal mischief to myself, the fault would be their's, not mine. No injury, I trust, that I might possibly suffer from the vices of men, which, I am persuaded, arise for the most part from their errors, would ever render me disgusted with my species, nor damp the ardour which I feel to direct the reasonings of my mind, such as they may be, to objects of public benefit. Prosecutions for doing that which is right, only prove that a man may suffer legal injuries for rectitude of conduct; and as it is our invariable duty to do that which is right, and that which is *right* in itself cannot be changed into *wrong* by personal consequences, we ought to allow no fear of personal consequences to deter us from our duty. In what I have written I have hazarded no principle which is not founded in public justice, and which I do not believe it to be the interest of society to adopt; and the consciousness of this fact would sufficiently arm me against the fear of any personal ill consequences, were personal ill consequences apparently to be expected

pected. It is in proportion as we cultivate these maxims, it is in proportion to our zeal in the exertion of our efforts for purposes of public good, equally despising the prejudices of the times, the intoxication of popularity, and the selfish narrow views of party, that we shall secure to our minds a pure and exalted degree of happiness, of which no external accidents can bereave us, that we shall become valuable citizens of the society to which we belong, and real friends to Man.

I am, dear Sir,

Your's, &c.

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THE END.

