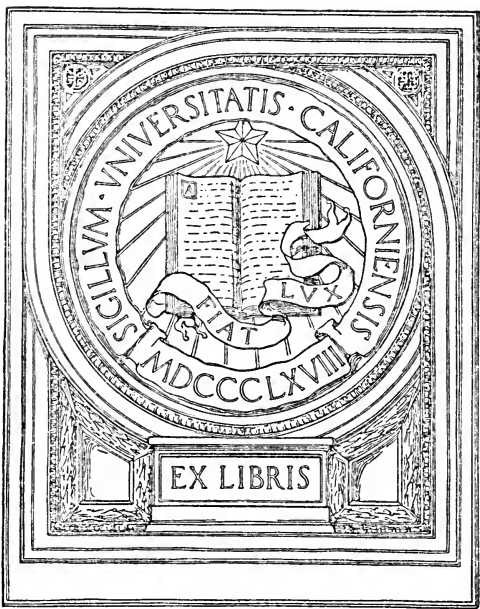


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LETTERS

TO THE

N H A B I T A N T S

O F

NORTHUMBERLAND

AND ITS

NEIGHBOURHOOD,

*On Subjects interesting to the* AUTHOR,  
*and to* THEM.

PART I.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L. L. D. F. R. S. &c.

— *Nunquamne reponam?*  
*Juvenal.*

NORTHUMBERLAND:

Printed for the AUTHOR by ANDREW KENNEDY.

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TO THE  
INHABITANTS  
OF  
NORTHUMBERLAND  
AND ITS  
NEIGHBOURHOOD.

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LETTER I.

*Of my Situation as an Alien.*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

WHEN any person becomes an object of more suspicion than he wishes to lie under, he naturally appeals to those who have had the best opportunity of knowing him; and if they be satisfied with respect to his conduct, it is the best means of satisfying others. This unpleasant character of a *suspected person*, hostile to the country in which I live, aggravated by the consideration of its having afforded me protection when I could not live with comfort, or even with safety, in my native country, you well know I have borne for some time.

I think it barely possible for a man who has, in the five years that I have been among you, done so little of an offensive nature, to have become the object of more suspicion and rancour than I have incurred. The most popular writer in this country, and who receives the greatest countenance from the persons in power, says, "I hope I shall see the malignant old Tartuff of Northumberland begging his bread thro' the streets of Philadelphia, and ending his days in the poor house, without a friend to close his eyes." The curse of Ernulphus in Tristram Shandy does not exceed this.

In order to keep as clear as possible, and as free from suspicion, with respect to the politics of this country, I did not chuse even to be naturalized, and the President, to whom I mentioned my objection to it, much approved of my resolution. But I find that this precaution has not availed me any thing.

Being an *alien*, the President has been again and again called upon to carry into execution against me the late act of congress respecting aliens. It has been said, that "if what I have done passes unnoticed by government, it will operate as the greatest encouragement that its enemies have ever received. They will say, and justly too, that tho' the President is armed with power, he is afraid to make use of it, and that the alien law is a mere bug bear."

I hope, however, to convince you that such an order would be cruel and unjust; for that I am not so very dangerous a person as this writer and his party suppose.

That I may conduct this address to you with some regard to method, I shall first consider what is objected to me from what *I am*, and then from what *I have done*. After this I shall tell you what I *think*, both with respect to your government in general, and the late administration of it, with the reasons on which my opinions

opinions are founded; and thus you will know better than you can do at present what to think of me, and of my accusers too. In doing this I shall, with Pope,

—————pour out all myself as plain,  
As honest Shippen, or as old Montagne.

In the first place, then, I am to consider what is objected to me from what *I am*. In some respects neither praise nor blame will attach to what a man *is*, because it was not in his power to have been any other. It will not, for instance, be objected me, at least as an unfavourable circumstance, that I am a native of England, even by those whose greatest boast it is that they are native Americans. Nor shall I be censured for saying, what I always have done, and what with great truth I repeat, that I am proud of my native country, and am as sincere a well wisher to it as any American can be to this country. It does not depend on ourselves, but upon our parents, and upon God, who assigns to every man his proper station and duty, where we shall be born.

But of what importance is it where I was born, or whence I came; whether I dropped among you from the clouds, or rose out of the earth. Here I am. Here is my family. Here is my property, and every thing else that can attach a man to any place. Let any person only view my house, my garden, my library, my laborer's *y*, and the other conveniences with which I am surrounded, and let him withal consider my age, and the little disposition that I have shewn to ramble any whither, and say whether any person among yourselves, or in the United States, could remove with more difficulty, or with more loss, than I should do. And yet there are great numbers who would think no more of an order to send me out of the country (which it is in the power of the President to give, and even without deigning to give me a hearing) than if I was a pauper, without

without house or home; and they would rejoice as much in it as if I had been a burden to the district.

It is surely, also, as probable that I shall have a real attachment to a country, and the government of it, to which I came *voluntarily*, and from a preference of them to any other, as if I had been a native, and consequently had had no choice in the case. Is it supposed by my adversaries that I have any predilection for England, or the government of it, merely because I was born there?

If I am an alien myself, my sons are naturalized; and must not a father feel for them? Can he be an enemy to the country to which they belong?

You will smile to hear my accuser say that I live in "*ashed*, which I dignify with the name a *house*;" when you know that, with respect both to convenience and elegance, it is superior to any house in the county, and excepting Philadelphia, and its neighbourhood there are perhaps few that are equal to it in the whole State. It would be a better founded objection to say, that its appearance is too Aristocratical for the habitation of a Democrat. My library and philosophical apparatus are, without boasting, superior to any thing of the kind in this country, and of much more value than my house.

He also says that, "like Mr. Vaughan, I shall leave this country in dudgeon the moment I can do it with a prospect of living elsewhere with safety and in ease." You who know the provision I have made for spending my days with comfort here, are better judges of the probability of this than any person at a distance can be. Mr. Cobbet's account of myself, and my conduct, in his pamphlet on the subject of my emigration, has just as much of truth in it as his account of my house and my intentions.

It is, however, most seriously objected to me that I am a *French citizen*, and have adopted. *French principles*;

*principles*; and in the opinion of many persons those principles are truly diabolical, so that I might as well have come to you from the infernal regions. This I feel to be dangerous ground; but having undertaken to give you the best account that I can of what I *am*, I shall, if you will have the courage to follow me, venture upon it in my next Letter. In the mean time, I am,

My Friends and Neighbours,

Your sincerely,

J. PRIESTLY.

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LETTER II.

*Of French Citizenship, and French Principles.*

My Friends and Neighbours,

IN my last I promised to consider what is objected to me as a *Citizen of France*. This I find to be an accusation of a very serious nature. For on this account alone it is taken for granted that I *must* be an enemy to this country, which for some time past has been in a state nearly bordering on open hostility with France. Mr. H—— considers it as a sufficient proof of Mr. Cooper's being inimical to this country, that, on a late occasion, he was supposed to have acted in concert with *me*; as if I was not only avowedly hostile to this country myself, but must necessarily communicate

municate the same hostile disposition to all persons who have any communication with me,

But, my friends, hear a little reason on this subject. You have heard a great deal that is not reason, but mere passionate declamation upon it; and especially attend to the circumstance of the *time* in which I was made a citizen of France, and the occasion of it. It was simply as a well known friend of general liberty, in consequence of my having written in defence of the liberties of America, as well as those of France, and as one who had suffered in the cause.

Consider also that at that time there was no suspicion of a war between England and France. The French king was then living, the constitution of France was then reduced to a limited monarchy resembling that of England, and other Englishmen, and among them Mr. Wilberforce, a fast friend of Mr. Pitt, were made citizens of France. He was distinguished in this manner on account of his taking the lead in the measures that were adopted for the abolition of the slave trade. It was also, I believe, at the same time that your General Washington received the same compliment; and surely you do not for this suspect *him* of being your enemy.

In these circumstances it is very possible that any native American might not have thought it at all disreputable to have been made a citizen of France, obnoxious as the character happens to be at present. I certainly consider it as an honour to me, and think that I have more reason to be proud of it than of being a *native* of any country whatever. I wish I had done more to deserve it.

But it is alleged by those who wish to make the most of every circumstance that can be construed to my prejudice, that, besides being a citizen of France, I was elected a member of the Conventional Assembly, appointed for the purpose of framing a new constitution

tion for that detested country and this implies a nearer relation to it. To this, also, I plead guilty. I was elected in a great number of the departments of France, and was informed that I should have been elected in many more, but that it was well understood that I certainly should be in others. I should have been elected for the department of Paris, if it had not been for the opposition of Robespierre, who very properly objected to it, as not fit for any foreigner. I saw the honourable proposal in the same light. I was pleased with the compliment, but declined the office; and what could the proudest native American have done more? These circumstances, I am willing to think, will be deemed to operate as some extenuation of my offence.

Consider, also, the change that has taken place with respect to *opinions*, as well as other things, in the last five years among yourselves. When I came to this country, in the year 1794, I found the people in general in unison with me on this subject. On all public occasions, *Success to the arms of France* was never omitted among the toasts that were drunk. Complaints were at that time universally made against the insolence and injustice of the English, and even an open rupture with England was generally expected. There was no complaint of *French principles* then, tho' they were the same that they are now. They were universally considered as the principles of *general liberty*, and the same with *American principles*, that is *republican*, in opposition to *monarchical*. The change, therefore, that has taken place is not in *me*, but in the people here; and considering that old men do not easily change their sentiments, or attachments, if I must change, you must allow me more time, and this I cannot pretend to fix; but I shall be as expeditious as I can.

If by *French principles* be meant the principles of the *French government*, I do not see where they differ

in any thing that is essential from those of your own. In neither of the two constitutions are there any hereditary honours or powers. All offices are elective, and for a moderate time. In both there are three distinct powers, an executive, a senate, and a house of representatives; tho' not called by the same names, or connected in quite the same manner; and in neither of the countries is there any form of religion established by law.

The great outline of the two constitutions is therefore the very same. In some other things they differ, as in their executive there are *five* persons, and in yours only *one*. But which of them is best adapted to answer its end experience only can decide. Tho' each has its peculiar advantages, as in a future letter I may shew, and I am disposed to give the preference to that of this country; yet as far as I can see, either of them may do very well, and whatever is found to be inconvenient in either of them may be changed at a proper time. So great an agreement as this might be expected to lay a foundation for friendship, especially as the French nation, with whatever view (which it does not behove any state to scrutinize very narrowly) gave you material assistance in asserting your liberties, and then followed your example in asserting their own; changing their monarchical government for a republican one.

The most opprobrious appellation with which those who call themselves *Federalists* reproach us, as a consequence of our adopting French principles, is that of *democrats*. Democracy, they seem to think, the greatest of all crimes, and the persons chargeable with it not fit to be tolerated in any regular government. But my friends, pray consider what *democracy* really means. It signifies nothing more than *the government of the people*, or a constitution in which the people chuse all their magistrates, and in which the magistrates are accountable to the people, or their representatives, for their conduct



duct in office, which is exactly the constitution of this country. Every man, therefore, who is not a democrat is an enemy to this constitution. What strange and arbitrary meanings our enemies may annex to this word I cannot tell, nor do I believe they know themselves; but I have not yet met with any democrat who used the word in any other sense than that which I have now given to it.

Our enemies will tell you that by democracy we mean a state of anarchy and confusion, a government by mobs, and an equalization of all property. But can any of you really believe that a person of my small property would wish for such a state as this, or that a person of my age would like to scramble among the strongest of you for what I could get. If that was to be the case, I should expect to be very soon turned out of my house, and left to starve among you. If you can be made to believe this of us, you are easily imposed upon indeed, and might be made to fear lest the sky should fall, that fire might be set to your river, or that an army of French cannibals may cross the Atlantic in a fleet of balloons, land on the blue mountain, and eat up all your children for their first breakfast. For these are not more improbable than the other.

As by democracy we mean a government of the *people*, and not of the *mob*, so by *equality* we mean an equality of *rights*, and of power both to acquire property, and to keep it; the equality that actually exists in this country. This has been explained so often that our enemies must know it to be our whole meaning.

You are angry at the French for their captures of your ships, as you were before at the English on the same account, and I believe you had reason in both cases. But do not lay the blame on French or English *principles*, but on the administration of the countries. The French themselves are far from approving of the  
conduct

conduct of all their rulers, and still less of all that are employed by them. Why then must I be supposed to approve of all the atrocities of Robespierre, with which I am continually charged, merely because I am an adopted citizen of France. I condemn them as much as you can do, and hope they will not occur again. I find, however, that, in the opinion of some, I must bear the blame of all that has been done in France, even since I have had no communication with that country, or knowledge of what passes in it, and perhaps of all the crimes that may be committed there after I am dead.

But they who are the loudest in their exclamation against French principles, appear to me to know nothing of any principles of government. For it is impossible to reprobate the general principles of the French government, and not include those of the American government in the same censure. It may, therefore, be fairly presumed that they are dissatisfied with this government, and wish to overturn it. This would give me the greatest concern. I came hither from the preference I gave to it; and any material change in it would certainly, old as I am, drive me away again. With your immortal Franklin, I say *Where liberty is, there is my country*. Of the American constitution, I therefore say, *Esto perpetua*.

I am, &c.

*LETTER*

## LETTER III.

*Of my Right to treat of Subjects of civil Policy, and the Advantages I have had for acquiring Knowledge of this Kind.*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

HAVING considered what is objected to me on account of what I *am*, I proceed to what I have *done*; and indeed this is of much more importance than the other. For what does it signify what any man *is*, or what character he sustains, if he do nothing in consequence of it. But it is urged against me that I have not been an idle spectator of what is passing; for that I actually busy myself in the politics of the country, and with these it is said I have nothing to do.

Before I inform you what I *have done*, or what I have *not done*, give me leave to observe that, tho' I am an *alien*, I cannot allow that I have no right to have an opinion with respect to the government of the country in which I live, or to express my opinion, in words or in writing, if I be so disposed.

Can any man, whose person and property are in any country, be wholly unconcerned about the conduct of its affairs. Tho' a man may be a mere *passenger* in a ship, must he be content to see it suffer, or sink, and not give his opinion how it might be saved, because he is not the *owner*, the *captain*, or any *officer* on board acting under him. I have heard, indeed, of a man who when he was alarmed with the cry of fire in the house in which he was sleeping, said "what is that to me, I am only a lodger. But his conduct is not generally thought worthy of imitation.

When

When Dean Swift, who was an Englishman residing in Ireland, wrote about the politics of that country, and by his *Drapier's Letters* prevented the circulation of Wood's halfpence, was there any complaint of his interference on account of his being a *foreigner*? And had I done any thing pleasing to those who now complain of my conduct, their complaints would not have been heard. Do the same persons complain of the writings of Peter Porcupine, who, as an alien, stands in the same predicament with myself? Had I, like him written any thing in praise of the measures of administration, I might have done it without any censure, as well as he.

On the principles of my accusers, had I discovered a certain method of preventing or curing the yellow fever, or of destroying the Hessian fly, I must not have divulged it because I am an alien. But if I be at liberty to do *good*, it must be what I myself deem to be good, and in my own way also, and with respect to all subjects indiscriminately, that of politics not excepted. Another must not think, judge, or act, for me.

If I had nothing at stake in the country (and I have much more than thousands of native Americans) is it possible for a man to see any company, in which, from the present interesting state of public affairs, there is hardly any other topic of conversation than politics, or read your newspapers, in which topics of this kind are continually discussed, and form no opinion about them; and if he have an opinion, can he forbear to let his acquaintance know what that opinion is. when perhaps they are inquisitive, and wish to know it.

I have another apology to make for the conduct that is objected to me. Having never had much capacity for the more *active* pursuits of life, I had from very early years a turn for *speculation* on every subject  
that

that has become before me; and they have been very various, as my writings will shew. Among them *politics*, in such a country as England, could not be excluded, any more than *religion*, or *philosophy*. And being now old, and of course less active, I am more disposed to *think*, and, having more experience, I presume I am rather better qualified for it than ever. Have the candour, therefore, to bear with my thinking, and with my talking and writing too, as you do with respect to other old men, tho' you should be of opinion that what I think, speak, or write, is not so much to the purpose as you could wish it to be.

As I own I am sometimes disposed to think, and to speak on the subject of politics, as well as on other topics, you must excuse my vanity, if I imagine that I am in some measure not unqualified for it. At least I have, in the course of a very various life, had the means of acquiring some political knowledge.

I was seven years in the family of the Marquis of Lansdown, which was altogether a political house, where I daily saw, and conversed with, the first politicians not only of England, but from all parts of Europe. And, independent of that connexion, I have had more or less intercourse with most of the political living characters whose names you have heard mentioned, and with many that you have not heard of. Besides the principal politicians of England, both in and out of the ministry, I was personally acquainted with some of the most eminent in France, both before and since the revolution; as Mr. Turgot, Mr. Neckar, Mr. Brissot, Mr. Pethion, and the Duc de Rochefcault, who was my constant correspondent from the time that I was in France to that of his unfortunate death.

I am sensible that what I am now saying will have the air of boasting. But if, as Solomon says, there be

*a time*

a time for all things, my present situation may justify it in me, as a similar one did in the apostle Paul.

Tho' my writings, as you may see by the catalogue of them, relate chiefly to theology, philosophy, or general literature, some of them are political, especially my *Essay on the first principles of government* and my *Lectures on History and General policy*, which are read in some of your colleges. As well for the composition of this work, as to enlarge my knowledge of the subject, there are few political publications of much note that I have not read, and with several of the later and the most eminent writers on subjects of policy I was personally acquainted, as the Abbe Raynal, and Dr. Adam Smith, the author of the celebrated treatise on the *wealth of nations*. If, therefore, I have no knowledge of the subject of politics, it has not been for want of the means, or the opportunity of acquiring it.

I should hardly have been thought of as a proper person for a member of the conventional assembly of France, chosen in what are reckoned the best times of their revolution, for the express purpose of forming a new constitution of government for that country, if I had not had some character for knowledge of this kind. My knowledge of theology, or chemistry, would not have recommended me to that situation.

Your President, with whom I am well acquainted when he was ambassador in England, and with whom I corresponded from that time till he was advanced to his present situation, will excuse me if on this occasion I quote his authority. Having in one of my publications declared my preference of one of his political maxims to that which was maintained by Dr. Franklin, he says in one of his letters, that he considers it as "a compliment which he holds very precious." With Dr. Franklin, who was as much a political as a philosophical character, I was intimately acquainted many years.

His

\* occasionally

His letters to me would have made a very large volume. Three of them he has published in his miscellaneous works.

Notwithstanding these advantages which I have had for public information, and the observation and experience of a long life, many of the young men of this country, being *native Americans*, think themselves, I doubt not, much wiser than I pretend to be, and will make very light of any opinions of mine. Be it so. It is in the order of Providence that succeeding generations should grow wiser than the preceding ones; and if the youngest of the native Americans will teach me any thing, I shall not think myself too old to learn.

The great principles of sound policy are not, in my opinion, above the comprehension of young men, and even such as have not had the advantage of a learned education. The circumstances that contribute to the flourishing state of a country, which is the proper object of all civil policy, are easily known, and the operation of them in all particular cases would be as easily understood, did not prejudice and passion mislead men's judgments. But in consequence of this, the schemes of some of the most profound politicians have brought nations to the very brink of ruin. What is it that has been effected by the great politicians of Europe in the last century, besides involving their respective countries in a state of perpetual war? When has peace been made, but when the people were so exhausted that war could not have been carried on any longer? And in consequence of these violent exertions, are they not all loaded with debts which neither the present nor any future generation will ever be able to pay, and which must hasten the period of *bankruptcy*, and *revolution*, which they so much dread. Can you contemplate all this and call it *wisdom*?

Since, however, the subject of politics has not in itself any greater difficulty attending it than even young  
men

men may surmount; and since it is chiefly *passion* that misleads men's judgment with respect to it, it is surely the less presumption in old men, whose passions are generally more under the command of reason than those of young men, to think and write upon it.

I am, &c.

#### LETTER IV.

*Of what I have done with Respect to the Politics of this Country.*

*My Friends, and Neighbours,*

THO' I have not been prevented by any peculiar difficulty that there is in the subject of *Politics*, or by the supposed impropriety of an alien attending to it, from taking a part in your political differences, I have had other views and pursuits; and having had much leisure in this country, I have done so much in other ways, that I think I can convince you that I cannot possibly have been that busy, intriguing, and dangerous politician, that I am represented to have been.

Of my publications in England, which I believe are about an hundred, very few relate to politics. My publications in this country are not less than *twelve*, all theological or philosophical, besides three articles on the *Transactions of the Society at Philadelphia*, and eleven that are printed in the *Medical Repository* at New-York; three more are sent, but are not yet printed;



printed; and I have four or five articles ready to send to the Society at Philadelphia. \*

Besides these works, I have just printed in this place a large volume intitled *a Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos and other ancient nations*. I have composed a *Continuation of my Church history to the present time*, which will make six volumes 8vo. and about as many of *Notes on the Old and New Testament*, part indeed composed in England, but destroyed at the riots in Bermingham, and recomposed here. You will please to observe that in merely writing *much*, there is no other merit than that of *industry*; a quality which I believe my greatest enemies will allow me.

Tho' I have written so much since I have resided in this place, I generally spend the greatest part of my time in my laboratory, making experiments, the object of which is not gain, but the extension of natural knowledge. Judge then yourselves whether it has been *possible* for me to have given much attention to the peculiar politics of this country.

It is true, as I have observed, that I could not help forming some *opinion* on subjects that are continually before me; and I will not deny that it accords better with my former principles and habits of thinking to take part with those who disapprove of the late measures of your government, and are generally called *Democrats*, than with those who call themselves *Federalists*, whose language and sentiments appear to

D

me

\* In philosophy I am combating the principles of the *French chemistry*; and as every thing that is *French* is now unpopular, the *Federalists* may be expected to wish me success. Of this however I am as confident as the allied powers are that they shall conquer France, and overturn its republican government, tho' at present almost all chemists in this country, as well as in Europe, are strongly attached to it.

me to be very congenial to those of the friends of monarchy, and high maxims of government, in England. My political opinions, however, I have not been forward to obtrude on others; and if the private opinions of one man, and that an alien, can shake any country, it cannot stand long.

I do not know, nor have I any reason to believe, that any one of you has changed his opinion in politics in consequence of my residence among you. Whatever be your sentiments in this respect, they are wholly independent of me. You also well know, that my opinions, have had no more influence on any of my countrymen in this place than they have had on yourselves.

Tho' what I have done in theology and philosophy may seem sufficient to have occupied me wholly, I will now gratify my enemies by informing them, that notwithstanding this, I have actually found time, both to *say* and to *do* something with respect to the politics of the day, and something which without my own voluntary confession, they could not have found out. In the *Aurora*, that respectable, as it is considered for all seditious and treasonable matter,\* for Feb. 26 and 27, 1788, there is an article of mine, which will be thought to be of a suspicious complexion, signed *a Quaker in politics*. But to save them the trouble  
of

↓ Tho' I see almost all the newspapers that are printed in Philadelphia, it is to this that I give the preference. In England I was a reader of the *Morning Chronicle*, which was then patronized by the friends of liberty in that country; but I do not think that, in its best times, it was superior to the *Aurora* with respect to just sentiment, valuable information, or good composition. The Federalists of this country, who seldom, I believe, read this paper, must be ignorant of many things that it behoves them to know. Having said this, I must expect to be made answerable for every thing that ever has been, or ever will be printed in the *Aurora*.

of looking for it, I shall reprint the whole of it at the end of these Letters. This, however, is all that I have written till the present time.

But tho' I have written nothing more than this single article myself; yet approving of Mr. Cooper's *Essays* in your Gazette, I contributed one dollar towards printing a few extra copies of one of them, before it was known they would all be reprinted in the form of a pamphlet. However, to make amends for this fault, and to shew my impartiality, and my desire to promote the free discussion of subjects of importance to the community, I here promise that if any Federalist will give as comprehensive and as dispassionate a view of what they have to advance in support of the late measures, as Mr. Cooper has done against them, I will give another dollar towards that publication. I fear, however, it will not be in the power of Mr. Cooper's antagonist to fulfil the conditions on which I make this promise. Persons writing in support of any government, being sure of protection, if not of reward, are apt to indulge themselves in intemperate language, as a mark of their zeal in the cause; while the dread of penal laws naturally makes the oppugner of them timid, and consequently more guarded and decent in his language, mindful of the Latin adage, *leniter in modo fortiter in re*.

The writer who styles himself *Massachusettsis*, gives me more merit than I am entitled to with respect to Mr. Cooper's publication, when he says that "I took great pains to circulate it, that I travelled thro' the country for the purpose, and that I was, in fact, the patron of it." The fact was, that I never saw any of the papers till after their publication, and all that I did with respect to the circulation of the extra copies was to carry a bundle of them from the printer's to the house of a brother democrat in this town, which might as well have been done by the printer's boy.

I do not, however, say this to exculpate myself from any crime. For I consider both the writing of the letters in question, and the circulation of them, as praise worthy actions. Massachusetts calls Mr. Cooper an *English Jacobin*, but this is merely a term of reproach. The principles that Mr. Cooper has maintained are clearly those of the American constitution. Whoever denies this, either does not understand those principles, or is an enemy to them; and as the subject is sufficiently intelligible, the latter is the more probable supposition of the two.

The paragraphs which this writer selects, as particularly obnoxious, I entirely approve. For certainly the man who should wish to extend the power of the President of this country beyond the bounds prescribed by the constitution, could not take better steps to gain his end than those that are pointed out by Mr. Cooper. At the same time, it is not denied, nor does Mr. Cooper deny it, that the same things might be done from other motives. But, as he observes, we have nothing to do with men's *motives*, but only with the *tendency of their measures*; and of this we must form our judgment from considering their nature, and the circumstances of the case.

For what I did in this business Massachusetts, who considers it as a crime of a peculiarly heinous nature, says "I stand charged before the great tribunal of the American people!" I do not, however, consider an anonymous writer in a newspaper as the *American people*. But whenever this people, whom I respect, shall arraign any part of my conduct by their authorized officers, in due form, I shall be ready to meet the accusation. In the mean time, these letters may be sufficient.

That I may leave nothing on my conscience relating to this subject of what I have *done*, I will farther confess that, averse as I generally am to public meetings,

ings, which are often attended with much noise, to which, from the habits of a studious life I am much averse, I was prevailed upon to join in two celebrations of the 4th of July, one of them two years ago, in a grove near this town, and this year in another near Sunbury, at both of which republican or democratical toasts were drunk, and where the late measures of administration were not praised.

If I could think that it would avail me any thing, I might perhaps plead that, if I have done mischief in some respects, I have done good in others. But with those who have no knowledge beyond that of the politics of the day, and a very superficial knowledge even of them, pounds of merit of any other kind would be outweighed by grains of political, or rather of party demerit. Let a man who is suspected of what any party terms *sedition* deserve ever so well of his country, or of mankind at large, in other respects, no more mercy would be shewn him on that account, than was shewn by Robespierre in France. Had I made discoveries in science equal to those of Newton, or had had the philanthropy of Howard, they would not have exempted me from the coarsest abuse that the English language can furnish. A detected thief, or a fraudulent forger of bank bills, would have met with more favour than has been shewn to me.

I do not recollect any thing more that I have done with respect to the politics of this country since I have come into it, except writing a reply to a virulent censure of me for holding a correspondence with a friend in France on occasion of a letter to me intercepted and published with notes in England, and republished with additional and more virulent remarks in this country. This reply I published in several of your newspapers, and I believe it gave general satisfaction. I shall, therefore, soon proceed to inform you what I really think of the political state of this country,

country, and I shall do it with perfect freedom, but with that coolness which I hope is habitual to me. I only wish that what I write may be read with the same temper. But before I do this I shall in my next make some farther observations concerning the *intercepted Letters*, and *abusive writings* in general, and those which respect myself in particular,

I am, &c.

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LETTER V.

*Of the intercepted Letters, and, of the French Revolution.*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

A GREAT clamour was made some time ago about the intercepted letters mentioned in my last. It was on that occasion that I wrote the substance of these *Letters*; but being unwilling, without more urgent cause, to appear as a *political writer*, I withheld them from the press, and contented myself with writing a short advertisement, merely in answer to a charge of being a spy in the interest of France.

To decline all particular discussions, I then observed, that I was not answerable for what any person might think proper to write to me. But this business being again brought before the public, I will freely acknowledge that my friend's letter gave me great pleasure; and the like I have received from others before and since that time, written by the same hand, and in the same spirit, tho' no two men think exactly alike,

or

or would express themselves in exactly the same manner. Mr. Stone, being a younger man, will naturally be more sanguine, and write with more warmth than I should be disposed to do. But, my friends, read the intercepted letters without regarding the *notes* that accompanied the publication, and then say what there is in them that can give just offence to any American.

Mr. Stone is a person who, together with myself, earnestly wished for a reformation of abuses in the English government, in order to prevent an entire *revolution*, which we did not think was wanted there. He now sees, or thinks he sees, that no such reformation is to be expected; and therefore wishes a revolution to take place, thinking it to be absolutely necessary for the good of the people. I own that I am now inclined to his opinion. I sincerely wish (if the genuine spirit of the original constitution cannot be revived, which would no doubt be the best for that country) for some more radical change than I have hitherto thought necessary, tho' I wish it may be effected peaceably, and without the interference of any foreign power.

Tho' during the American war it was voted, in the house of Commons, that "the power of the crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished;" it is evident that, so far from being diminished, it has kept increasing since that time; and how far it may go it is impossible to say. The forms of the British constitution are so far from being any real check on the power of the crown, as in theory they ought to be, that they are the most convenient instruments of it; the court, as is well known, always commanding a majority in the house of Commons, and being equally sure of the support of the Lords in all their measures.

Seeing that, for want, as I conceive, of a due representation of the people, a respectable class of English:

gliff citizens are frowned upon, and their situation uncomfortable, and hardly safe, I sincerely wish them relieved. My correspondent does the same, and moreover expresses his satisfaction in the progress that the *revolutionary spirit* is making in other parts of Europe, where it is still more wanted. Now, pray, what offence can this justly give in *America*, where a similar revolution has actually taken place, and where the great benefits of it are every day experienced? Why should you take umbrage at other countries following the example that you have set them?

Shocked at the enormities which have been committed in France, and which no persons lament so much as the friends of liberty in every country, it has become fashionable with many to exclaim against *all revolutions* indiscriminately, and all the *principles* that lead to them; and in the English parliament a wish has been openly expressed for the restoration of the ancient government, and the ancient religion, of France. But, surely, they who hold this language must either be avowed advocates of arbitrary power, or have forgotten the state of France before the last revolution.

No writer whatever expresses a greater dread of every thing tending to revolution than Mr. Robison, professor of Natural Philosophy in the university of Edinburgh, in his book entitled *Proofs of a conspiracy against all the religions and governments of Europe*, in which he makes me one of those conspirators. But even this writer could not help acknowledging the existence of such abuses in the government of France as were absolutely insupportable, and such as would abundantly justify the subjects of it in attempting its subversion. It may not be amiss to bring before you a part of what this writer says on the subject.

After enumerating all the causes of corruption in government, he says p. 48 “ Perhaps there never was  
“ a nation where all these co-operating causes had  
“ acquired



“acquired greater strength than in France. Oppressions of all kinds were at their height. The luxuries of life were enjoyed exclusively by the upper classes, and this in the highest degree of refinement; so that the desires of the rest were whetted to the utmost. Religion appeared in its worst form, and seemed calculated solely for procuring establishments for the younger sons of an insolent and useless noblesse. The morals of the higher orders of the clergy and of the laity were equally corrupt.—The whole nation became infidel—The misconduct of administration, and the abuses of the public treasure, were every day growing more impudent and glaring, &c. &c. In fact the king of France was an absolute monarch, and the subjects were slaves.” p. 264.

“There is no denying the insolence and oppression of the crown, and of the nobles, nor the misery and slavery of the people; nor that there was sufficient provocation for a total change of measures and of principles,” p. 301. And is not this the very thing that the French nation, now so much execrated, have done? For what, then, are they to be so much condemned?

You will observe, however, that this writer ascribes the revolution in France, in a great measure, to the example set by this country, to which it is sufficiently evident from his manner of expressing himself, that he is no friend. “Their officers and soldiers, who returned from America,” he says “imported *American principles*, and in every company found hearers who listened with delight and regret to the fascinating tale of American independance,” p. 263.

Be assured that the enemies of the French revolution are in reality no less the enemies of the American, as they both arose from the same principles. The immediate stimulus was oppression, which was unspeakably greater in France than it was in this country.

try. And if ever monarchy be firmly established in France, the liberty and independence of America will be in imminent danger. But I have no fear on the subject, I rejoice in both revolutions alike.\*

If you read any authentic account of the state of the other European kingdoms (I except, however, Denmark and Sweden) you will be satisfied that the abuses of government and the oppression of the people, are got to an extreme. Germany has long groaned under the oppression of a haughty nobility, and there have been frequent risings of the peasants to better their condition. In the time of Luther more than a hundred thousand had recourse to arms in Swabia; but wanting good leaders, and ill provided with stores and ammunition, they were soon suppressed. Both  
Spain

\* From the commencement of the American war I wished for the independence of this country, being firmly persuaded that it would be for the real advantage of England, as well as of these States, and this is now, I believe, almost universally acknowledged to be the case. I am equally well persuaded that it would be for the benefit of the people of England (I do not say for the glory of the Monarch) to have nothing to do with the dominion of the East or the West Indies. I once mentioned this opinion to Sir George Savile, adding, that it would have been much better for England never to have had the possession of Gibraltar, and that it would be good policy to give it up. He said that he had often thought so too, but that the opinion was so unpopular that he had not dared to avow it.

The late Lord Chatham was fond of foreign possessions. He was much against granting absolute independence to America, which he said was the fairest jewel in the crown of the British monarch, and his opinion had for some time great weight with the marquis of Lansdown, then Lord Shelburne. On this Dr. Price, who thought as I did on the subject, agreed with me to write our thoughts separately on the subject, and present them to his Lordship. We did so, and some time after he told me that he had shewn my paper to Lord Chatham, but that he was much offended at it. At the conclusion of

Spain and Naples, which are held by the same family, have not one half of their ancient inhabitants; and there cannot be a more certain proof of bad government than this. Their condition is little, if at all, better than that of the Turkish dominions. Portugal, is in much the same state.

Can, then, any person, any friend of liberty and humanity, himself enjoying the blessings of a republican government, wish that any part of his species should continue in this state of degradation and bondage? If not, he must partake in the generous feelings of my correspondent, and earnestly wish for their emancipation. And we may hope that, with the examples of America and France before them, other revolutions may be attended with less bloodshed than those have been.

The revolution of France would, it cannot be doubted,

the war, however, the Marquis made no difficulty of granting what he thought not only necessary, but advantageous to his country, of which he was then prime minister. Had he continued so to this day, his liberal and enlightened policy would have saved England, and all Europe, the horrors of the present, most ruinous and impolitic war.

Tho' I did not accept of a seat in the conventional assembly of France, I had at that time a correspondence with some of the leading men of that country; and believing that my opinion would have some weight, I advised the abandoning the West-Indies, and all their foreign possessions. The answer I received was that they thought as I did on the subject, but that the interest of those who were possessed of property in the islands, would prevent their doing it for the present. This correspondence was continued till the death of the king, against which I gave my advice; but a concurrence of circumstances, the principal of which was the influence of the queen, was fatal to that well meaning man. Of what passed in France after that event I had no information but from newspapers. But it seems I must, notwithstanding this, be answerable for it all.

doubted, have continued to be as peaceable throughout, as it was at its onset, \* if the king had been content with the limited power of which the first constitution left him possessed ; and had not this unfortunate prince been stimulated by others, more ambitious than himself, to recover the power that he had lost, the war, and the consequent enormities, had not taken place. To those princes, therefore, and their wicked confederacy, are all the enormities to be ascribed.

But it appears to have been the intention of providence to do more for the French nation, and ultimately for all Europe, than they ever thought of doing for themselves, tho' by means which men would not be justified in having recourse to. The national assembly, and the people of France, meant to do nothing more than to limit the power of the crown ; but God has given them a government purely republican, and representative, like that of America, without any hereditary powers or honours ; and the same benefit, I doubt not, with my correspondent, is intended for all those countries whose kings are at present confederated against France and universal liberty.

If every thing that is *true* and *right* will finally prevail against whatever is *error* and *wrong*, the cause of monarchy, always tending to despotism, cannot be supported much longer. Independently of wars, which must accelerate the great catastrophe, they all contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. The people acquiring knowledge every day, will not much longer bear what they have done. Nor is  
it

\* At the time of the first constitution, when France was a limited monarchy, ~~and~~ those who took the lead in that country would to my own knowledge, have given almost any thing for the friendship and concurrence of England, as, in their opinion, that would have ensured the peace of France, and of all Europe.

it difficult to foresee that the infatuation of the present race of kings, which is remarkably similar to that of Pharaoh, will bring on their destruction in the manner predicted in the scriptures, viz. with violence, and much consequent general calamity.

I shall on this occasion observe, that it is also a manifest error with respect to true policy in those who wish to disarm seditious publications of their sting, to publish themselves as they sometimes do, what appears to them most obnoxious in them; thinking to expose them, and to render the authors odious; not considering to whom they will appear in that light. For while they are read with dislike, and even horror, by some, they maybe read with admiration by others. The intercepted Letters, and the paragraphs selected from Mr. *Cooper's Address* are cases in point, as well as several other articles which have been inserted in the Federal Newspapers of this country. The friends of liberty rejoice to see such publications thro' any channel, and especially when it is done at no risk to themselves; and without regarding the *comments*, they attend to the *text*.

The same wretched politicians also do not consider the natural tendency and effect of the *abuse* that they throw out against the friends of liberty and the rights of man. If it have any effect, which is very questionable, it only makes us stand something worse with those with whom it is no object to us to stand well at all, while it recommends us to all those whose good opinion and attachment we really value. What is it to me to be thought ill of by the friends of *Church and king* (with the cry of which my house was burned) in England, or by Mr. Cobbet and his readers in this country. My account with them has been long settled. I am already a bankrupt in their esteem, and no new article in the account can alter the balance for or against me. My part is taken, and my reputation,

as

as far as it is an object with me, is with men of opposite principles, those who are opprobriously called democrats, jacobins, and every thing else of the kind; and to these, and especially those of that class in France, this abuse tends to recommend me.

I am, &c.

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### LETTER VI.

*Of the Style of Abuse in the Writings of Mr. Cobbet, alias Peter Porcupine.*

*My Friends, and Neighbours,*

IT is commonly said that when *much dirt is thrown, some will stick*; and on this principle I suppose it is that I have been distinguished so often by my principal antagonist Mr. Cobbet, under the signature of *Peter Porcupine*. But he appears to me to have spoiled his part by overacting it. For men may be so covered with dirt that it shall not be known who they are, nor will they be distinguished from one another, like Virgil's complimentary epithets, *fortisque Gyas fortisque Cloanthus*. Besides such coarse abuse as is implied in the words *vilain, rascal, scoundrel, &c. &c.* with which his writings abound, only marks the low education, and the low character and manners of the man that uses them. Such language is never used by gentlemen, or scholars, nor can they return it, tho' it were ever so well merited, not to say that a christian must not return railing for railing. (1 Pet. 3, 9) With  
respect

respect to them, therefore it is an unfair weapon. It is like throwing street dirt, which they cannot handle.

It was a thing of course that I should be the object of calumny ever since I wrote in defence of unpopular truths, and unpopular maxims. Indeed, I question whether any person in England (the prime minister for the time being excepted) ever had so much of what is generally termed *abuse*, as myself. It has been pouring out with very little intermission for more than twenty years, and is continued, I find, in my absence. My friends, however, say that it certainly agrees with me. For tho' I was originally of a weak constitution, my health has been improving ever since, and I never was so well as I have been since my arrival in this place, except about three months after my landing, which was before Mr. Cobbet took notice of me. They now say that, old as I am, I bid fair to outlive some of my younger oponents. That sarcastic writings should have this salutary effect, will not be thought so extraordinary, when it is considered that pepper, mustard, salt, and vinegar, have their use in a good dinner, as well as the beef and the pudding. They certainly contribute to a good digestion. But there must be some peculiar charm in Mr. Cobbet's writing, operating unseen and unknown, for I do not think I have seen more than a tenth part of his voluminous publications, and in all of them, I doubt not, he contrives to find a nich for me. I am almost as necessary to him, and as good a *subject* for him, as the king of England is to Peter Pindar. In England, however, where decency and good manners are rarely violated, my antagonists were never of this low class. But the last of the animals that had a kick at the old lion in the fable was the ass.

The profusion and variety of Mr. Cobbet's abuse argues a peculiar genius of the kind unequalled by any thing

thing that I have met with before. In the compass of only three news-papers, and chiefly in one of them, I am called "a hoary hypocrite, a malignant old Tartuff, "a lurking old *illuminatus*, a poor old wretch, a miserable perverse old man, a perverse old hypocrite, "and a vindictive, unnatural, hypocritical wretch." I am "of a factious disposition, an apostle of sedition, "a political viper, with a black rancorous heart, and "smooth tongued whining cart; a cunning sectary, an "ambitious sectary, a baffled focinian, and a Jesuit." I am accused of "falsehood and poisonous malignity, "actuated by cool and premeditated malice." I have "the craft of a sectary, joined to the hatred and malice "of a fiend. My conduct," he says "has been wicked and detestable, that I wish Great Britain revolutionized, and ruined, and indulge a wicked tho' delusive hope of seeing this wish accomplished; that I "never miss an opportunity of endeavouring to render "my countrymen the hate and scorn of the universe; "that for twenty years past I have, from hatred to my "native country, sacrificed my interest, my peace, and "my reputation, to the pleasure of injuring, insulting, and ruining it." In conjunction with others, he calls me "a villain and a scoundrel, \* and both "fool and knave. My business in this country," he says, "is of a nature most hostile to its happiness and "independence." It is no wonder, therefore, that he treats me, as he says, "with his unqualified contempt."

His pamphlet on the subject of my emigration, published soon after my arrival, contains the following, among

\* I rather wonder that the term *rascal* is not applied to me, as it is to others, in this particular paper, as well as *villain* and *scoundrel*. It is, I doubt not, frequently enough applied to me in other parts of his writings. But such near relations and companions ought not to have been so far separated.



among other falsehoods, "I had been," he says, "for many years an avowed and open enemy to the government and constitution of my country; that in my inflammatory discourses, called *sermons*, the English constitution was openly attacked; and that the doctrines there held forth were subversive of all civil and religious order;" and in his newspaper he says, "my conventicle at Hackney was a most convenient and successful school of treason. I entertained," he says, "the hope of bringing about a revolution in England on the French plan, and that I had no objection to the continuance of tythes in England, provided I came in for a share."

He says that "my public celebration of the French riots and massacres is a convincing proof of my approving them, and that my sending my son to Paris in the midst of them, to request the honour of becoming a French citizen, is another proof of the same that cannot be disputed; that I approved of the unmerciful persecution of the unfortunate and worthy part of the French clergy, men as far surpassing me in piety and ability, as in suffering; that the French constitution is my system, and that sooner than not see it established, he much questions if I would not with pleasure see the massacre of all the human race." But if all mankind were destroyed where is this constitution of mine to be established? As he has not told us where, I must suppose that he meant among bears, wolves, or wild beasts of some kind or other.

With respect to the riots in Bermingham, he says, "that "I was the principal cause of them; that the festival of the commemoration of the French revolution was to celebrate events which were in reality the subject of the deepest horror; that this riot, considered comparatively with what I and my friends wished to stir up, was peace harmony, and gentle-

“ nefs; that the magistrates used every exertion in  
 “ their power to quell the riot in its very earliest stage;  
 “ that had the rioters stopped at the destruction of my  
 “ meeting house, all had been well. In whatever  
 “ light,” he says, “ we view the Birmingham riots, we  
 “ can see no object to excite our compassion, except the  
 “ inhabitants of the hundred, and the unfortunate ri-  
 “ oters themselves; that the loss of my manuscripts  
 “ was little more than a few dirty sheets of paper, and  
 “ their destruction a benefit, rather than a loss, both to  
 “ myself and the country; that my philosophical appa-  
 “ ratus was a thing of imaginary value only, and ought  
 “ not to be estimated at its cost, any more than a col-  
 “ lection of shells, or insects, or any other *frivola* of a  
 “ virtuoso.”

“ In this country,” he says, “ there is nothing to  
 “ fear from me except my disseminating my deistical  
 “ principles.” In another place, however, he calls my  
 doctrines *atheistical*, tho’ it is impossible that they can  
 be both; and he speaks of “ the infidel philosophy of  
 “ Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, Priestley, and the rest  
 “ of that enlightened tribe.” To make the group com-  
 plete (for the *consistency* of it is no object with him)  
 he should have added some distinguished heathens, and  
 mahometans as holding the same opinions. “ When I  
 “ preached in Philadelphia,” he says, “ I gave up a  
 “ share of the pence which I was able to draw out of  
 “ the pockets of my hearers for the liberty of preach-  
 “ ing in the church of the Universalists,” of which he  
 speaks with the greatest contempt.

All this, you will observe, is mere *assertion*, with-  
 out any *evidence* whatever; and therefore my simple  
 denial (tho’ I could bring abundant proof of every  
 thing that I shall say) may be a sufficient answer.

Now I can say with truth that, in the course of  
 more than forty years, I never preached one sermon  
 that any of you would have said was *political*; nor did

I ever

I ever, in any place, or in any form, express a wish for any material change in the English constitution; and I am confident I have a more sincere respect for my native country, and for this too, than Mr. Cobbet has for any country. My writings shew that I was always an enemy of all civil establishments of religion, but thought that if there was to be one, it should be of *christianity in general*, such as exists in the New-England states; and then that the church revenues, whatever they were, should be given to all the sects alike.

When I preached at the church of the Universalists, I wished to have no collection made after service, all that was collected was given to the minister of the place; and when I preached in the hall of the university, only one collection was made to defray the expences that had been incurred. I was glad of the opportunity of doing what I thought to be *good* without any pecuniary benefit. Whether the discourses that I delivered were calculated to do any good those who read them may judge.

My son went to France before the revolution took place, and before any such thing was expected; nor was any request ever made by myself, or my friends, to be made a French citizen. The second time that he went was in order to be received into the house of a merchant at Nantes, from which place, on account of the troubles in that neighbourhood, he removed to this country.

When the anniversary of the French revolution was celebrated at Birmingham, the constitution of France was a limited monarchy, very much like that of England, and had been solemnly accepted by the king himself. Tho' I approved of that celebration, I neither projected, nor attended it. The magistrates made no serious attempts to quell the riot, but rather promoted

promoted it. \* Of the amount of my losses on that occasion I have nothing to add to what will be found in my *Appeal to the people of England* on the subject. In a pecuniary computation it was more than two thousand pounds less than the real value.

This gross abuse comes from a man with whom I never had any intercourse, whom I never offended, or irritated by any reply to his invectives, which have never ceased since I have been in the country; nor should I have noticed them now, but that I find his publications have increasing acceptance and celebrity with the friends of those who have the chief power in this country; so that since the riot in Birmingham is openly approved and praised by him and his supporters, a similar one may be apprehended here, especially if what Mr. Cobbet says be true (and I see no reason to question it) that "he has lived to see the truth of his statements, and the justice of his opinions, respecting me fully and universally acknowledged;" and since a spirit of party runs as high in this country as I ever knew it to do in England. If you believe one half of what Mr. Cobbet says of me, you would be justified, and applauded, for destroying me, as you would for killing a serpent or a wild beast.

Having advanced thus much in my vindication, I shall probably bear in silence (as I have hitherto done with respect to what is past) whatever farther abuse I may be exposed to. What other terms of reproach the English language can furnish I am ignorant of, but I shall expect very soon to find; if not, that more curious changes will be rung on those that have been so often used already, and especially his three favourite

\* I have been very credibly informed that Lady Aylesford, wife of the Lord Lieutenant of the county, conversing on the subject of the riots, said "They went farther than we intended."

vourite words, *rascal villain* and *scoundrel*. These have been so much used by him, that I imagine his printer must provide fresh types for the letters of which they consist.

If any fresh accusation be advanced, it must be that I was sent hither as a convict, for theft or robbery on the high way; but that, being favoured, I was permitted to export myself to America, rather than be sent to my friends and old companions at Botany bay; it being thought that there were already dangerous persons enow in that one place. And there will be just as much truth in this, as in any thing that has yet been advanced against me by Mr. Cobbet.

As a part of the general plan of that providence which overrules all things. I am far from complaining of the treatment I have met with in England, or in this country; especially as it has almost always attended the greatest merit, and we cannot expect to have any commodity without the tax that is laid upon it by the laws of nature. In a system in which infinite wisdom and infinite goodness are equally apparent, nothing can eventually be wrong: and toads and vipers are as necessary in the system as horses and sheep; and noxious plants as much as wholesome herbs.

I shall conclude this letter with observing that whatever I may think of the English government; I have such an opinion of the liberality, the good sense, and the good taste, of my countrymen, that I do not believe that any such a newspaper as that of *Peter Porcupine* would meet with any encouragement among the warmest friends of *Church and king* in England,

I am, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER VII.

*Of my Religion.*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

MR. COBBET calls me sometimes an *unitarian* sometimes a *deist*, sometimes an *atheist*, and always a *hypocrite*. And a great hypocrite I must, indeed, be, if, in reality, I do not believe in the being of a God, or in the truth of christianity, when I have written more in defence of those articles of faith than any other man now living, or almost that ever did live,\* and have officiated as a christian minister more than forty years.

I must also have a greater want of common sense than he ascribes to me, to maintain opinions so inconsistent with one another as those above mentioned. An atheist acknowledges no God, and no future state; deists acknowledge the former but few of them the latter, and they believe in no revelation; whereas unitarians deny, indeed, a trinity in God, but they believe in one God, the Father, and in the divine mission of Christ. They believe that he worked miracles by the power of God, that God raised him from the dead, and that he will come again to raise all the dead, and judge the world. The same man cannot, therefore, be at the same time an *atheist*, a *deist*, and, an *unitarian*.

If

\* I can only recollect one person who has written more in defence of christianity than myself, and that was an unitarian. I mean Dr. Lardner, with whom I had the happiness to be acquainted, and who, in conjunction with Dr. Fleming, was the publisher of the first of my theological writings.

If I be a *hypocrite*, in pretending only to be no atheist, or deist, while, in reality, I am either the one or the other, what have I got by my hypocrisy; when, tho' I have been a preacher, as I have observed, more than forty years, my profession has never yielded me half a maintenance; and here I get nothing at all by it. Men are not at the trouble of acting the hypocrite, and especially for so long a time, for nothing.

It is true that I do not join in the public worship of this place; but it is because I cannot join in your devotions, which are altogether trinitarian, as they ought to be while you are trinitarians. For it would be absurd to acknowledge Christ to be God, and not to render him the honours of divinity, by praying to him as an omnipresent and omnipotent Being. But tho' I do not worship with you, I have divine service every Lord's day in my own house, which is then open to every body, and where several of you occasionally attend. Now did any of you ever hear me preach any thing like atheism, or deism, or indeed any thing contrary to your own opinions? And when you have heard me *pray*, could not you join me in every word I said? If you be christians at all, I am confident you always might. It never was my custom to preach on the controverted subjects of religion, or only on particular occasions. These I discuss in my publications, in which you may see what my opinions on those subjects are, and the arguments I have to advance in support of them.

Had I been permitted to officiate in either of your meeting houses (which I should have done *gratis*, thankful for such an opportunity of being useful among you) you would never have heard from me any thing but the principles of our *common christianity*. And this will furnish topics of discourse in great abundance, and such as are of far greater importance than all the things about which we differ. The substantial duties of the christian life, to inculcate which is, or ought to be, the  
great

great end of all our preaching, are the same on all our principles ; and do I in my preaching (and I hope I may add in my practice) contradict any of these ?

We all agree in acknowledging the same books of scripture, and we profess to derive our faith from them, tho' we interpret them differently. This, surely, is not atheism, or deism. If I do not believe the divinity of Christ, it is because I do not think it to be the doctrine of the scriptures, and because I cannot help thinking that if Christ, and also the Holy Spirit, be possessed of all the attributes of divinity, equally with God the Father, there must be *three Gods*, and not *one only*, which the scriptures assert, and on which they lay the greatest stress. In this you will not agree with me ; being of opinion that, in some sense or other, *three* may be *one*, and *one three*. But you will not say that because I am not a trinitarian, I am an atheist, or a deist.

You do not call the Jews atheists or deists, because they do not believe the divinity of Moses, or of the Messiah whom they expect. They believe that Moses delivered to them the laws and commands of God ; and therefore they respect them as much as if they had all come from the mouth of God himself. I do the same with respect to all that Christ, speaking in name of God, has delivered to us. He has repeatedly said (John vii. 16, xiv, 24) that *the words which he spake were not his own but the Father's who sent him* ; that *the Father who was in him, or with him, worked the miracles which proved his divine mission* (John xiv, 10) for that *of himself he could do nothing* (John v. 30) The apostle Peter calls Christ *a man approved of God by signs and wonders which God did by him*, Acts ii, 21, and the apostle Paul says (1. Cor. viii. 6, 1. Tim. ii. v.) *To us there is one God, the Father, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

But tho' I think the clear sense of scripture, such



as is intelligible to the meanest capacity is on my side, I can easily suppose that you see things in a very different light, and that you are as conscientious in differing from me, as I am in differing from you. I, no doubt, wish that you could come to think as I do on these subjects, as you do with respect to me. This is unavoidable in us both, if we lay any stress on our opinions, and have any good will for one another. But I do not obtrude my opinions upon you, or offend you with disputation. Few of you have ever heard me mention the subject of our differences with respect to religion, and then the occasion has never been sought by me. I do not condemn those who act otherwise, but my habits are different; and tho' I have no less zeal, I take a different method of propagating my principles. I have seldom seen any good produced by disputing in conversation. It too often tends to irritate, and tho' men are often silenced in this way they are seldom convinced. But because I am not always talking about religion, do you suppose, with Mr. Cobbet, that I have none?

Mr. Adams, your President, is unquestionably a religious man, and on this account, as well as on many others, I greatly respect him. He knows me well; and do you think he would have attended me constantly, as he did, when I delivered my first set of Discourses in Philadelphia, and have consented that I should dedicate them to him, if he had known, or suspected, me to be an atheist or a deist, and consequently a hypocrite. He entertains no doubt of my being a sincere christian, tho' our opinions may not be exactly the same.

I wish we had all more religion than we have. We should then think more of another world, and make less account of this, and of all things in it, than we now do. It would give us an habitual regard to God, and his providence, respecting both individuals and so-

cieties of mankind, and especially the great and interesting events which are now taking place in the old world. Firmly believing that a wise and good providence superintends all events, and will bring good out of all evil, so that the final issue of the most calamitous events will be glorious and happy, we shall view them as they pass before us not without interest, but with more tranquility, and without ill will towards any part of the human race, even our personal or national enemies.

Whatever you may think in the prime of life, while your spirits are high, and your prospects good, the value of religion at my time of life is beyond all estimation. Without such prospects as religion sets before us the evening of life would be cheerless and gloomy, but with them it is most serene and happy; far more so than any preceding period. I am far, I assure you, from wishing to be young again, tho' I enjoyed that part of life as much as any of you can do.

On this account I regard unbelievers at the close of life with much compassion. And late converts, and nominal christians, who give little attention to the subject, are not much better. It requires *time* before the principles of christianity can be of much use in this respect. An habitual attention must be given to them, so that in every intermission of necessary business they shall, even without any effort, be uppermost in a man's thoughts, affording relief under all his troubles and cares. This state of mind cannot, in the natural course of things, be acquired in a short time. In this respect *faith* is a different thing from mere *conviction*, and admits of degrees, giving consolation and joy in proportion to its strength.

Atheist or deist as I may be considered, and attached as I am to philosophical pursuits, my chief satisfactions are derived from the daily study of the scriptures, and reflections on the momentous subjects that are there proposed to us. Religion is the only effectual support  
under

under all the troubles of life (and in saying this you know that I *may* speak from experience) as well as in the hour of death. It also tends to make men less ambitious, and to allay the heat of party spirit, which is too often the bane of good neighbourhood, and separates those who would otherwise be happy in a pleasing and beneficial intercourse. If nations, or their governors, were really christians, all mankind would live in peace and friendship with one another.

Call this a *sermon*, if you please, and let Mr. Cobbet call it *cant and hypocrisy*. Only believe me to be, notwithstanding every difference of opinion, religious or political,

My Friends and Neighbours,

your sincere well-wisher,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Northumberland, Nov. 1. 1799.

P. S. In my next Letters I shall, according to my promise, proceed to inform you what I *think* with respect to the conduct of your administration, and even the constitution itself. But as these are serious and deep subjects, they require to be treated with much caution. And these being ticklish times, it may be prudent to have a consultation of my lawyers on the business. Poor as is the *shed* which Mr. Cobbet says I dignify with the name of a *house*, I should be sorry to exchange it for such lodgings as the liberality of this country assigned to Mr. Lyon, tho' this might gratify Mr. Cobbet as much as my having a place in the poor house in Philadelphia.

SINCE

SINCE this Postscript was sent to the press the following article, reflecting on Mr. Cooper and myself, has appeared in the *Reading Newspaper* of October 26, 1799.

“*Thomas Cooper's* address to the readers of the *Sunbury and Northumberland Gazette*, of which he was Editor, having been re-published in this State, with an introduction approbatory of the piece, a correspondent wishes to know if it be the same *Thomas Cooper*, an Englishman, of whom the following anecdote is related? If it is, every paper devoted to truth, honor and decency, ought to give it a thorough circulation.”

“Not many months ago, it is said, a *Mr. Cooper*, an Englishman, applied to the PRESIDENT of the United States to be appointed “agent for settling the respective claims of the citizens and subjects of this country and Great Britain.” In his letter he informs the PRESIDENT that although he (*Thomas Cooper*,) had been called a Democrat, yet his real political sentiments were such as would be agreeable to the PRESIDENT and government of the United States, or expressions to that effect. This letter was accompanied with another from Dr. *Joseph Priestley*, who did not fail to assure the PRESIDENT, of the pliancy of his friend *Cooper's* democratic principles. The PRESIDENT it is said, rejected *Cooper's* application with disdain, and *Priestley's* with still stronger marks of surprise, saying, it is said, as he threw the letter on the table, does he think that I would appoint any Englishman to that important office in preference to an American!—What was the consequence?—When *Thomas Cooper* found his application for a lucrative office under our PRESIDENT rejected he writes in revenge the address which has appeared in print, and Dr. *Priestley* exerted his influence in dispersing this very address, which he must know was the offspring of disappointment and revenge!!!”

“The address is as cunning and insidious a production

tion as ever appeared in the Aurora, or the old Chronicle, and as for impudence it exceeds, or at least equals Porcupine himself.—*Priestley* and *Cooper* are both called upon to deny the above narrative. A recourse to the letters themselves would establish the accuracy of this anecdote even to a syllable.”

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Of the candour and justice of this representation my reader will judge from the tenor of the letters referred to, of which the following are copies.

August 12, 1797.

DEAR SIR,

IT was far from being my intention, or my wish, to trouble you with the request of any favours, tho' it is *now* in your power to grant them; and it is not at all probable that I shall ever take a second liberty of the kind. But circumstances have arisen which, I think, call upon me to do it once, tho' not for myself but a friend. The office of Agent for American claims, was offered, I understand, to Mr. Hall of Sunbury, and he has declined it. If this be the case, and no other person be yet fixed upon, I should be very happy if I could serve Mr. Cooper (a man, I doubt not, of at least equal ability, and possessed of every other qualification for the office) by recommending him. It is true that both he and myself fall, in the language of our calumniators, under the description of *Democrats*, who are studiously represented as enemies to what is called *government* both in England and here. What *I* have done to deserve that character you well know, and Mr. Cooper has done very little more. In fact, we have both been persecuted for being friends to American liberty, and our preference of the government of this country has brought us both hither. However, were the accusation true, I think the appointment

ment of a man of unquestionable ability and fidelity to his trust, for which I would make myself answerable, would be such a mark of superiority to popular prejudice as I should expect from you. *I therefore think it no unfavourable circumstance in the recommendation.* That you will act according to your best judgment I have no doubt, with respect to this and other affairs of infinitely more moment, thro' which I am persuaded you will bring the country with reputation to yourself, tho', in circumstances of such uncommon difficulty, perhaps with less ease and satisfaction than I could wish. With my earnest wishes for the honour and tranquility of your Presidency,

I am, Dear Sir,

yours sincerely,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

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SIR,

ON my expressing an inclination for the office which Mr. Hall has declined, Dr. Priestley was so good as to offer his services with you on my behalf.

Probably the office will be filled 'ere this letter can reach you : probably there may be objections to nominating a person not a native of the country : probably *the objection mentioned by Dr. Priestley may reasonably be deemed of weight in my instance.* Be all this as it may, I see no impropriety in the present application to be appointed Agent of American claims, for it is still possible I may suppose more weight in the objections than they will be found to deserve. If it should so happen that I am nominated to that office I shall endeavour to merit the character the Doctor has given of me, and your esteem. I am, &c.

THOMAS COOPER.

From

From my letter it will clearly appear that I was far from proposing any dereliction of principles on the part of Mr. Cooper. I should as soon have expected it on the part of Mr. Adams himself. I was also far from intending any affront to Mr. Adams, for whom I always had a very high esteem. I honoured him for his integrity, and respected even what I thought to be his prejudices. Besides, he was then just entered on his office of President, and had not done any thing to offend persons of Mr. Cooper's political principles.

I thought Mr. Cooper singularly well qualified for discharging the duties of the office in question, on account of his knowledge of English law and English commerce, as well as for his acknowledged ability and activity. I also thought that I was giving Mr. Adams an opportunity of serving himself, by shewing his liberality, in favouring a person whose political principles differed from his own, but in a case in which they could not interfere with them. At the same time he would have obliged a person for whom he always professed much esteem, and whom he had honoured with his correspondence and intercourse.

The following observations on the general subject of *appointment to offices*, which I wrote some time ago, will, not, I flatter myself, be thought improperly subjoined here, and may recommend themselves as of some importance to impartial persons of all parties. Let the President in question be either Mr. Adams or Mr. Jefferson.

To have the higher officers of the state, those with whom it may be proper to consult in the general conduct of affairs, as the heads of the several departments, men of the same political principles of the President, could not be complained of. But when *all* offices, even such as are merely lucrative, are confined to one party, it naturally exasperates those of opposite principles, and greatly promotes a spirit of party in the country,

try, and this may proceed so far as to hazard a civil war. It is, therefore, the part of good policy, as well as of magnanimity, to distribute all offices with as equal a hand as possible. Otherwise, instead of being the chief of the nation, a President makes himself the head of a particular party.

Should all the partisans of such a President follow his example, and employ no physician, no carpenter, no mason, no shoemaker, &c. but men of their own political sentiments; and should those of opposite principles, in self defence, do the same, it would be a state of mutual persecution on account of opinion, an endeavour to exterminate one another by starving, which approaches very nearly to an attempt to effect the same by violence. The only difference is that of taking a town by blockade, or by storm. They are alike operations of *open war*. A President, therefore, who wishes to promote the peace of the country will carefully avoid setting such an example.

ERRATA *et* CORRIGENDA.

(b) signifies from the bottom.

- |        |       |                                  |
|--------|-------|----------------------------------|
| p. 14. | l. 11 | (b) for am, read was.            |
| Ib.    | l. 9  | (b)—from that time—occasionally. |
| p. 14. | l. 5  | —public—political.               |
| 28.    | l. 2  | —onset—outset.                   |
| Ib.    | l. 7  | (b)—prevent—prevail.             |



L E T T E R S  
TO THE  
I N H A B I T A N T S  
O F  
NORTHUMBERLAND

AND ITS  
*NEIGHBOURHOOD,*

*On Subjects interesting to the* AUTHOR,  
*and to* THEM.

PART II.

---

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L. L. D. F. R. S. &c.

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*Nunquamne reponam?*  
*Juvenal.*

---

NORTHUMBERLAND:

*Printed for the* AUTHOR *by* ANDREW KENNEDY.

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MDCCXCIX.

TO

THE

SECRETARY

OF

THE

WAR

DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1918

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TO THE  
INHABITANTS OF NORTHUMBERLAND  
AND ITS  
NEIGHBOURHOOD.

---

LETTER VIII.

*Of the Innocence and Advantage of the free Discussion of  
all political Subjects*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

HAVING promised you a full confession of all my political crimes and misdemeanors, and having in the preceding Letters made a faithful declaration concerning what *I am*, and what I have *done* among you, I proceed to give you some of my *thoughts*; and tho' you might, in some measure, have guessed at them thro' the medium of my actions, I will save you that trouble, and tell you more of my thoughts than any knowledge you have of my actions could possibly have enabled the most sagacious of you to discover. But in order to do this fairly and honestly, you must excuse me if, after speaking of my own faults, I touch a little upon yours, tho' I shall do this with as gentle a hand as possible.

You must, however, consider, that tho' I may point out what appears to me to be a fault, you will, of course, be the judges in your own cause, and acknowledge

knowledge it or not as you may see reason ; and also that it is not in my power, but altogether in yours, to find the proper remedy. As a sensible Pope said to some Englishmen who were introduced to him, when he unexpectedly gave them his benediction in the usual form at parting, "The blessing of an old man can do you no harm ;" so the advice of an old man, as I am, however improper, or impertinent, cannot hurt you. My trouble in writing is not much, and yours in reading is still less.

Presuming, as I hope I may, that, after the apology I have made for writing these Letters, you will not think it impertinent in me, tho' an *alien*, to give you my thoughts on any subject relating to the conduct of public affairs (in which I am as much interested as any of you can be) I shall take the liberty to request more of your attention to some particular articles, than you seem to me to have given to them. I may also plead that this is the only way in which I can contribute to the redress of any grievance of which I may think I see cause to complain. For, being an alien, I am neither eligible to any office of trust myself, nor have I a vote for any candidate. But the lowest servant in a family, if he thinks that any thing is going wrong, may speak of it to any of his fellow servants, even to the steward, or to the master himself, whether they will attend to him or not.

Nothing, however, is more common with the friends of the administration in all countries than to consider every censure of *public measures* as an attack upon the *government* of the country, and every censure of the government as a thing hostile to *the people*. But it is without any good reason in either of the cases. Will it be pretended that all magistrates, and all ministers of state, are infallible, or impeccable? If not, they may mistake the interest of the country, or consult their own interest at its expence. May not, then, a person who  
thinks

thinks them to be either mistaken, or dishonest, and that the people at large are in danger of being injured by their conduct, point it out to his countrymen. Nay, is it not the absolute duty of every honest man to give to others the information that he has acquired himself. According to the principles of your constitution, all persons entrusted with the conduct of public affairs, how high soever you have placed them, are but your *servants*, and accountable to you for their conduct in office.

Farther, if any person should conceive that any thing in the very constitution of the government itself might be changed for the better, is he an enemy to *the people* for proposing it? It is only giving his opinion concerning what he imagines will be for their good, Tho' he be mistaken, his intention may be the best in the world, and therefore he will be entitled to their thanks.

If I were to advise you to change the whole form of your government, from a republic to an absolute monarchy, I should do you no harm, since you would be at liberty to receive or reject the proposal as you thought proper. I might say that a President like yours would make a poor appearance in the presence of a king, that kingly government has both more *dignity* and more *energy* than yours; that such a man as the late king of Prussia, or Peter the Great of Russia, would presently rid you of all traitorous and seditious persons, without troubling your courts of justice with them, which would be a great saving of expence; that such a government would keep all the country perfectly quiet; that then the lower orders of the people, having nothing to do with politics, would attend to their proper business, of agriculture, manufactures, or commerce, without distraction, and their affairs would prosper in proportion; and that those of the higher orders, the more opulent, not being obliged to give any part of their time to the study of the theory of government, would have more leisure

sure to attend to the improvement of the polite arts and science, to the glory of the monarch in the first place, and their own reputation in the second.

But if, notwithstanding all that I could urge in favour of such a government, you should prefer what you call *liberty*, in which persons of all ranks, qualified or unqualified, give the greatest part of their time to a subject which they will never understand, and still chuse to clamour, and almost fight, about endless elections of magistrates, no harm would be done. You might proceed just as you had done before.

If, in order to prevent the mischief that often arises from *competition*, I should advise that, instead of making a king of any native American, who would not soon acquire the proper disposition and habits of one, you should return to your former allegiance to the king of Great Britain, a king ready formed to your hands, who would, no doubt, forgive all that was past, and promise you the best treatment for the future, and thus become a wing of that great empire which now commands the world, and share in the honour of exterminating all Jacobinism, democracy, anarchy, and irreligion (all which are now only considered as different names of the same thing) and you should not quite like the proposal, I should still hope to be excused for making it, from my loyalty to my natural sovereign, and my zeal for the honour of my native country, even if I did not consult your interest in it; and as you would not be hurt, you could not be much offended.

Mr. Cobbet, a greater admirer of England than I am, would, no doubt, go farther than I could in its commendation. He might say that, could you but see the king of Great Britain in his state coach, drawn by eight cream coloured horses, with all his horse guards, surrounded by perhaps a hundred thousand admiring spectators, in his progress thro' St. James's park; and after that see him seated in his robes on the throne in the house of

Lords,

Lords, with all the Lords and Bishops in their robes; could you see him served on the knee, and persons kissing his hand, you would be ashamed of your President, and every thing belonging to him. He might say that an American would be struck dumb at the sight of an English judge seated in his scarlet robe on the bench, with all the lawyers in their gowns, and flowing wigs. He would say that the best man among you was hardly fit to be made a justice of the peace in England. And then what is your *navy*? It is not so much as the *frog* compared to the *ox* in the fable; and might bid you take care lest the *ox* should set his foot upon it.

But should you consider all this as mere prejudice in favour of our native country, and think there was more show than substance in kingly governments, that armies and navies cost more than they are worth, and that you could employ your funds to more advantage, you would only smile at our representations, and not be angry.


To be perfectly serious: in all countries, and under every form of government, *opinions* of every kind, and those of all persons, natives or aliens, in office or out of office, should be perfectly free; because they can do no harm; tho' *overt acts*, tending to the forcible subversion of any government, should be watched with the greatest care.

A person may even be safely trusted with the administration of the affairs of a country the constitution of whose government he does not approve. Admitting, for instance, what is commonly supposed, and is not altogether improbable, that Mr. Adams, the President, should think an *hereditary monarchy* preferable to an *elected Executive*, like that of this country; being of opinion that such a form of government is more favourable to the peace and happiness of the people; yet, yielding, as every man must do, to the opinion of the majority of his fellow citizens, and dreading, as all wise men

men will, the hazard of any great change, or revolution, in the government, he may faithfully administer that which he has sworn to maintain; and I have no doubt but that, whatever may be his private opinion on the subject, he will do it to the best of his ability.

All that we have to apprehend in such a case is from the opinions of persons in high offices becoming general; and it is, doubtless, much in their power to recommend their opinions to general acceptance. But even then, if the people at large really approve of the change proposed, he will be entitled to their gratitude for bringing it about. Nothing is to be dreaded but *violence*, which we need not fear will ever be attempted in this country. Let every thing, especially things of importance, be proposed to free discussion, and let *truth* and *error* have equal advantage. The former cannot fail to recommend itself to universal acceptance in due time, and the latter will be universally exploded.

I am, &c.



### LETTER IX.

*Of Improvements in the Constitution of the United States.*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

MY object in this Letter is not to criticise the whole of your constitution, or to dwell on the general excellence of it. I think it the best that has ever been devised by man, and reduced to practice, in any age, or in any part, of the world. It has every thing that is valuable in the English constitution, which



was confessedly superior to any other in Europe, without its defects. Without this persuasion I should not have come among you. But no work of man can be expected to be perfect; and therefore you will not, I hope, be offended if I mention two or three particulars, with respect to which I think it might be improved. Of this, however, you will judge for yourselves. The mere opinion of any person, and especially that of an alien, cannot do you any harm.

1. If, then, I may take the liberty to censure any article in your constitution, the first that I should notice would be that which allows of the eligibility of any man to the office of President for life. History abundantly shews that the love of power is as great as that of money. The more men have of either, the more they generally wish to have: It being possible, then, by your constitution, for a man to keep this high situation for life, by being elected into it every four years, he has an interest in enlarging the power attached to it; and if ambition be his object (and pure patriotism, I fear, exists only in Utopia) he will use every means that his situation gives him, which will necessarily be great, to gain friends; especially by giving offices of trust and emolument under him, not to those who are the best qualified to discharge the duties of them, but to those who will second his views of continuing in power. And they who are thus favoured by him will naturally concur in promoting his interest, because it will lay him under an additional obligation to promote theirs.

On the contrary, if the constitution was such as that no person could enjoy an office of such power as that of the President longer than three or four years, and he was not eligible to it again, or not till after a considerable distance of time, it would not be his interest to make friends at the expence of his country, and he would not wish to enlarge a power to which he must himself soon be, and remain, subject.

Whatever may be objected to the constitution of France in other respects, in this it is preferable to that of this country. Since each of the five directors, besides having only one fifth part of the power of your President, must be reduced to the rank of a common citizen in five years, the temptation he is under to extend his power is much less. This advantage, however, is probably more than balanced by the want of union, and consequently of energy, in such a divided executive.

It will be said that the longer any person in the executive offices of government continues in power, the more stable and uniform the measures of government will be; whereas frequent changes will be attended with endless fluctuations, so that foreign powers will never know what to look to.

But this inconvenience, for such it is acknowledged to be, only takes place when the person possessed of this power has no will but his own to follow, as in governments that are arbitrary, like that of Russia. This empire has seldom changed its head without a total change of its politics. Peter III found his country at war with the king of Prussia, and instantly became his ally. This alliance the empress, who soon succeeded him, changed into a state of neutrality, and if she had pleased, it might have been hostility again.

What can be more changeable than the measures of the same arbitrary court, directed by the caprices of different courtiers and favourites. Dumouriez says that those of the court of Versailles, in his time, varied with every change of ministers, of factions, of mistresses, or of favourites. See his *Life*, vol. 2, p. 85.

But the leaders of a government truly republican, like that of the United States, will, and must, take their measures from the wishes of the people, which are not so apt to change, because they flow from the general interest. The annual change of the Roman consuls never occasioned any change in the measures of government,

vernment, nor did the annual election of Doges at Venice or Genoa.

It will also be said that if the people really prefer any particular President to any other, they ought to be gratified, and not be under a necessity of changing him. But in a country of such an extent as that of the United States of America, there must, surely, be more than one person whom the people will think sufficiently qualified to serve them, and in whom they can safely place confidence: and this small restriction of their choice will be abundantly compensated by putting it out of the power, or inclination, of any President to consult his own interest at the expence of theirs.

If you read any history, you will find that an attachment to particular persons has been the occasion of unspeakable mischief in all countries. Tho' some inconvenience arose from the Romans having annual consuls, and annual generals, it was found to be trifling compared with those which were the consequence of the attachment the soldiers acquired for such men as Marius and Sylla, Cæsar and Pompey, who were suffered to continue many years in the command of the same armies. It was the true cause of that succession of dreadful civil wars, which did not end but with the total subversion of the republican form of government, and the establishment of one that was purely military and despotic.

2. So excellent a constitution as is that of this country deserves to be guarded with the greatest care; and yet in this respect it appears to me to be defective, as it contains no sufficient provision for guarding against violations of it by persons entrusted with its administration. To decide in questions of this high and serious nature, there should, I think, be a *special court*, consisting of deputies from all the states of the union.

The greatest danger of any encroachment on the constitution is from the congress mistaking or exceeding their

their power; and by proceeding without any check of this kind, they might gradually assume all the power of the English parliament, which is uncontrouled by any defined constitution. And certainly no body of men should be judges in their own cause.

The ordinary judges, tho' continuing in office during their good behaviour, and not removeable at any person's pleasure, are so connected with persons in power, and especially those from whom they received their appointments, that they have been found, with very few exceptions, to favour the existing administration in all countries, and in all times.

I would also take the liberty to propose that it should be in the power of the legislature of any of the separate states to call this special court, and lay before it whatever they should apprehend to have been a violation of the constitution, by the Congress, the President, or any man, or body of men, whatever.

3. If I might take the liberty to censure not only your government, but that of every other in the world, it would be your requiring *oaths of allegiance*, and indeed any declaration of a man's principles or sentiments, in words or writing. Besides being an abuse of religion, and a temptation to prevaricate, I do not believe that this measure has ever been found to answer the end proposed by it. On one pretence or other, and especially that of persons being compelled to take them, thro' the impossibility of avoiding them, it will be maintained by many, that they are of no force or obligation; and in many countries oaths of allegiance have been changed to others inconsistent with them, and yet not objected to on that account. Witness those that have been taken in France to the different constitutions of that country since the abolition of monarchy.

A few conscientious persons, who wish to be quiet, and who might be safely trusted in any government, will scruple to take such oaths; and by this means good  
subjects

subjects are excluded, while men of no principle, such as alone are dangerous, will make no difficulty of taking any oath that you chuse to impose.

It might, surely, be sufficient to punish persons residing in any country when they are found to act contrary to the laws of it. For my own part, I prefer the situation of an alien, inconvenient as it is in several respects, rather than make the harsh declaration which your laws require respecting the country of which I am a native; but while my person and my property are in your power, have you not sufficient hold upon me, without requiring any verbal declaration about *renouncing England*, and of my attachment to America?

It may be prudent not to admit strangers to offices of trust and power till after a competent time of residence; so that it may be presumed that they have acquired a sufficient knowledge of your laws and constitution, and a proper attachment to them. But the declaration of this by an oath appears to me to be superfluous, to be a cause of distress to the conscientious, and no bar whatever to those whom you would wish to keep out of the country.

I am, &c.

**LETTER**

## LETTER X.

*Of Infringments of the Constitution by the Acts of Congress respecting the Regulation of Commerce, the Power of making Peace and War, and Restrictions of the Freedom of Speech and of the Press.*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

WHEN I left England, I was induced to come hither chiefly on account of my high admiration of the constitution of your government. It was at that time the only one that had been drawn up with deliberation by persons appointed for that express purpose, and solemnly accepted by the nation. It was wholly founded on the *rights of man*, and the *sovereignty of the people*. In other words it was purely *republican*, every officer being chosen by the people, to serve them for a limited time, and afterwards accountable to them for their conduct. There were no hereditary honours, or powers of any kind, and no form of religion established by law. The power of making peace or war, and also that of regulating commerce with foreign nations, as well as among yourselves, was wisely placed in the Congress, of which your immediate representatives (who are the most interested in every thing of this kind) are the most essential part. Your country was then open to all new comers without any restriction; and that great and necessary guard of liberty the *freedom of speech and of the press*, was uncontrolled. Your constitution expressly says that "the migration of such persons as any state then existing should think proper to admit should not be prohibited by Congress till the year 1808; and that the Congress should make

"no

“no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the  
“press.”

To my great surprize and mortification, however, I now find that several of these articles, essential to a truly free government, have been, in my opinion, on one pretence or other, infringed. Or, if the present state of things be really agreeable to the Constitution, it was not drawn up for the use of plain men, but of very acute lawyers only. Certainly the comment does not naturally flow from the text; or there was in the letter of the constitution a latent ambiguity, which defeats the professed object of it. Thus because your Constitution gives to the President, and two thirds of the Senate, the power of making *treaties* with foreign powers, and treaties may relate to any subject in which different states may be concerned, they may make *treaties of alliance, offensive and defensive*, and also *treaties of commerce*; and by this means all interference of the proper representatives of the people either in the business of *commerce*, or of *peace and war*, in which they are most concerned, and in which they therefore ought in reason to have the most control, is effectually precluded. The treaty, shackling their commerce, or involving them in a war, is actually made independently of them, and all their objections to it have no effect.

Since treaties become parts of the law, by which the courts of justice are bound, I do not see but that it is in the power of the President and two thirds of the senate, that is I believe of twenty one men, to bind the country *in all cases whatever*. For what is there that may not be introduced into some treaty? In this way this country might have become a party in the treaty of Pilnitz or of Pavia, and thus have been engaged, tho' ever so reluctantly, in the coalition against the liberties of France, and of Europe in general.

It is, moreover, contended by *the friends*, as they are called, of *government*, that when, in consequence  
of

of any treaty, money is to be raised to carry it into effect, the representatives of the nation, who give the money, must absolutely raise the sum required, or as the phrase is, *make the appropriations*; having no other choice than that of raising it in what they may think the best manner.

This is a power which even the parliament of Great Britain has not yet been brought to surrender. There the king has, indeed, the nominal power of making peace and war, and also treaties of every kind. But if *money* be necessary to carry them into execution, the treaties come under discussion in the House of Commons, and the people give or withhold their money as they think proper; so that they have a virtual negative on all the measures of the court; and certainly it is highly reasonable that they should have it. And was not this intended by the framers of your constitution too? Could they give the Congress the power of making peace and war, and also that of regulating commerce in one part of that instrument, and take it out of their hands in another. Such manifest inconsistency and deceit is not to be supposed.

It, therefore, appears most clearly to me, who am a stranger among you, that the real meaning and intent of the constitution in these two essential articles has been perverted, that a most important power has been taken from the many, and transferred to the few, and that the most valuable interests of the former have been surrendered to the latter. If in this I reason wrong, I wish to be set right. But I presume that your *constitution* was drawn up for the use of the citizens at large, and in such language as it was thought they might understand; and this language being English, I may be supposed to understand it as well as yourselves. Your constitution is not like that of the English government, to be looked for in remote history, or collected from the actual exercise of it, like the principles of the *com-*



*non law.* It is committed to *writing*, and was made in the memory of persons now living; so that the real meaning of every article of it, and the reasons on which they were founded, are well known.

So evident is it, in my opinion, that the *alien and sedition acts* are unconstitutional, that I shall not enlarge on the proof of this. It is sufficient, I think, to observe with respect to them, that the Congress have made laws (if unconstitutional acts can be called *laws*) on subjects with respect to which they were expressly forbidden by the constitution to make any. I shall, therefore, content myself with making some observations on the nature and tendency of them.

Laws calculated to restrain the freedom of speech and of the press, which have always been made on the pretense of the *abuse* of them, are of so suspicious a nature in themselves, and have been so constantly the resort of arbitrary governments, that I was beyond measure astonished to find them introduced here; and yet in some respects the laws that have lately been made by Congress are more severe than those in England.

While the press is open to the friends, as well as the enemies, of those in power, I see no good reason why they should not be content to defend themselves with the same weapons with which they are attacked. Why should any man shelter himself behind *penal laws* when he is attacked by *argument*, if it was in his power to defend himself in the same way. Argument answers the purpose so much more effectually than *force*, that it is reasonable to conclude, that recourse will never be had to the latter, but when there is a failure of the former. Why do we use a rod to children, but because they are incapable of hearing reason? In no country will there ever be wanting men sufficiently able, and willing, to defend the conduct of the governing powers. To this standard men of genius are ready

dy enough to run, from motives that do not need to be pointed out.

All mere *opinions* concerning the conduct of persons in public offices ought to be as free as any other opinions concerning subjects that are interesting to the community. In fact, it is no more than masters censuring the conduct of their servants. For every individual is a part of the great mass, for the use of whom all governments were instituted. But persons in *office*, which necessarily implies *servitude*, being usually called *governors*, are apt to arrogate to themselves the prerogatives of *masters*; and their friends and flatterers call almost every censure on their conduct, every thing that has in it more of freedom than they like, in speaking or writing, *sedition* or *treason*: whereas, in reason, nothing ought to be so termed, that does not immediately affect the peace of the country.

The characters, or the lives, of persons in *office*, by whatever names they may be called, ought not to be considered in any other light than those of other individuals, under the protection of the same laws. An attempt to take the life of a king would never have been considered as *high treason* in Europe, if kings had not been considered in a different light from that of the servants of the Public. Not but that the lives of all public officers, civil or military, even that of a constable, being of great importance to the society, the crime of taking them away is greater than that of the murder of private persons; but still it is a different thing from that of high treason. But tho' it may be proper to guard the *lives* of public officers by severe penal laws, there is no necessity for such a defence of their *characters*, or *public conduct*; because they may be defended by the same means by which they are attacked. When a life is taken the mischief is without remedy, but any injury done to a character may be repaired.

Governors vainly endeavour to ward off impending evils by imposing silence on their adversaries. History shews that no government ever derived any permanent advantage from measures of this kind. The less men have the liberty to *speak*, the more they will *think*; and they naturally suspect that what they are forbidden to examine will not bear examination.

In no country was there ever less liberty of printing and publishing than in France before the revolution. When I was at Paris, in 1774, the translator of the first volume of my *Experiments on Air* could not obtain leave to publish the whole of my Preface, which contained some free sentiments concerning the general extension of knowledge. The inspector of the press desired a friend to inform me, that he had not himself any objection to the publication; but that the nature of his office was such, that it would be too hazardous for him to admit of it.

But did this strictness prevent the revolution? The freest publications were at the same time circulated with the greatest industry, and they were read with avidity, and with tenfold effect, in consequence of it. The same will be the case in every other country in which the same measures shall be adopted; so that without pretending to any extraordinary means of prying into futurity, we may predict, that the cause of *monarchy* in England, and that of *federalism* in this country, will be no gainers eventually by what their advocates are doing in this way.

I am, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER XI.

*Of the Laws relating to Aliens, and the Naturalization of Foreigners.*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

ALL the laws respecting *Aliens*, and those that are calculated to throw difficulties in the way of *naturalization*, have been made since my arrival in the country, and I am far from seeing the wisdom of them. Little did I then expect that, tho' I continued an alien, I should not have the right of a *trial by jury*, which your constitution expressly gives to *all persons* without exception, if I should be accused of any crime; whereas I now find that, not only without the benefit of a jury, but that even without a *trial*, or indeed any formal *accusation*, your President may, of his own suspicion only, send me out of the country. And in this case perfect innocence is no security; since the best of men are liable to prejudice, and open to false information.

It is not denied that those laws were intended to exclude from this country the friends of liberty, opprobriously called *Jacobins, Democrats, &c.* emigrating from Europe, a description of men in which I am proud to rank myself. But consider the matter calmly, and say whether you can think the object worth securing by this means. What does this country, I do not say the *governors* of it, but what does *the country*, what do *your-selves*, gain by it. You certainly do not now want people from Europe. Your population increases fast enough without this additional source; but you want the *money* of Europeans, to clear your country, and cultivate

vate your lands, and you cannot expect the money without the *men*.

Had those laws been made six years ago, there would not have been an Englishman in this place; but tho' the makers and friends of the laws would not have been sorry for this, can *you* say the same? Have the proprietors of lands and houses, have your artizans, and your labouring poor, derived no advantage from our residence among you? Have you not been benefited by the purchases we have made, and the punctuality of our payments; and what is perhaps more than this, by the example of our activity and industry, which are habitual to Englishmen?

You see, besides, that the dread of our *politics*, which has been the cause of all these harsh laws, is altogether chimerical. For the English of this place are not more agreed on this subject than you are yourselves. Several of us are as good federalists as any of you, and none of us more violently democratical than others of you. And the generality are men who quietly mind their business, without giving themselves, or you, any trouble on the subject. Very far should I have been from writing these expostulatory letters on the subject of Politics, if I could have been suffered as quietly to follow the business of my library and my laboratory, as they do that of their several professions. But to be held out as I have been for several years as a dangerous person, on whom it behoves the governors of the country to keep a watchful eye, and perhaps to have been in a great measure the cause of the prevailing jealousy of foreigners, and of the laws that are calculated to exclude them, has at length, tho' with much reluctance, led me to endeavour to undeceive you. If I succeed it will be to your advantage as well as mine. If not, things will only remain as they were before.

Admitting

Admitting the object of our adversaries to be a proper one, I do not see that they gain any advantage by rendering naturalization difficult. It is not a man's being kept by force in the state of an alien that will dispose him to think better of any country; nor, if his disposition be hostile to it, and he be chagrined by this suspicion of him, will it be at all the less in his power to do the mischief that is apprehended from him. His being an alien does not prevent his speaking or writing; and by the use of his tongue, and his pen, he has all the influence that his talents and activity can give him. All that you take from him is his capacity for enjoying any civil office, which a stranger, tho' naturalized, would not soon expect; and his single vote for any other person to gain it is of trifling consequence among many thousands.

If the gross abuse from which I have never been exempted ever since my arrival in this country could have made me an enemy to it (which it by no means has done) was it not in my power to have written in your newspapers, or to have published political pamphlets, either anonymously, or otherwise, as I should have thought most prudent, and by that means have done as much mischief as if I had been naturalized?

Where, then, is the wisdom of these measures, which prevent the coming of valuable emigrants, such as you wish to receive, and do not take from those that you dislike their power of injuring you? To make these measures of any real use to those who are advocates for them, they ought to have been carried farther. Aliens should not have been allowed the use of pen, ink and paper; or whatever they wrote, should have been subject to the inspection of the officers of government. They should also have seen no company but in the presence of the same officers. This being understood, the end would be effectually gained, by the voluntary retreat of all the aliens in the country, and the

effectual

effectual prevention of the arrival of any more. The half measures you now take are calculated to do you more harm than good.

What you see of Englishmen in this place, you may take for granted is equally true of those that are settled in other parts of the continent. The generality of them only wish to be quiet; and if they were otherwise disposed, they are in no degree formidable, and the country derives advantage from their capital and their example, especially that of the English farmers; and such men are of the greatest importance in this agricultural country.

But to find in America the same maxims of government, and the same proceedings, from which many of us fled from Europe, and to be reproached as disturbers of government *there*, and chiefly because we did what the court of England will never forgive in favour of liberty here, is, we own, a great disappointment to us, especially as we cannot now return. Had Dr. Price himself, the great friend of American liberty in England, or Dr. Wren, with both of whom I zealously acted in behalf of your prisoners, who must otherwise have starved, and in every other way in which we could safely serve your cause, because we thought it the cause of *liberty and justice*, against *tyranny and oppression*; I say, had either of these zealous, and active, and certainly, disinterested, friends of America been now living, they would not have been more welcome here than myself; and they would have held up their hands with astonishment to see many of the old Tories, the avowed enemies of your revolution, in greater favour than themselves. If in this you act on the Christian principle of *forgiving and loving your enemies*, for which, *if they repent*, you are to be commended, you should not forget your obligations to old and steady friends.

The emigrants you wish to exclude are those who might reasonably expect to be the best received here,

as most likely to be attached to your government; because it is free from every thing that they complain of at home. Finding here no hereditary honours or powers, no church establishment, few taxes, and those laid by the representatives of the people, freely chosen, what could lead to a suspicion that persons flying from what was in all respects the reverse of this in Europe should not be the best friends to the government here?

I am, &c.

## LETTER XII.

*Of the Policy of America with Respect to Foreign Nations*

*My Friends and Neighbours,*

Having taken the liberty in the preceding letters to arraign the wisdom of some of the late measures of your government with respect to your *home concerns*, I shall proceed with the same, I hope not offensive, freedom, to say what I think of your conduct towards *foreign nations*; and with respect to *them* I am of opinion that you have done what your interest required you not to have done.

While an alliance subsisted between this country and France, which had given you material assistance in asserting your independence, a treaty of *amity* as well as of commerce and navigation, should not, I think, have been made with England without the knowledge, if not the concurrence, of the French government. And this being done while those countries were in a  
state



state of war, could not fail to give umbrage to France, especially as your ambassador, who negotiated the treaty, was ostensibly sent for a very different purpose, viz. to demand satisfaction for injuries received from England. In this proceeding I see nothing of the fairness and openness that I should have expected from a republican government.

The French government, however, resented this conduct more than reason and true policy required; and tho' it might be expected that, if friendship was really intended, a person supposed to be friendly to them would have been sent to negotiate with them, they had no right to reject any persons in whom this country put confidence.

The French government, also, following the example of England, was much to be blamed for their conduct to this country, and the neutral nations in general. And when your coasts were insulted, and your vessels captured almost in the mouth of your harbours, you did right, I think, to protect your property, and repel that violent aggression. But this might have been done without making it a national quarrel, by allowing the merchants to defend their property, which they would have done at no great expence; and this would have been defrayed in the best manner by an advance of the price of their goods. But to build navies, and especially to raise standing armies, on account of any apprehension you could reasonably have from France, a country so distant, and which could not have any imaginable motive for quarrelling with you, was, in my opinion, the wildest policy, and putting the country to a great expence for nothing, if not worse than nothing. For one writer on the side of your government in the Philadelphia Gazette for October 19, says that the army was intended to overaw, or suppress, the democrats. If this be true (and this writer has better means of information than I have) it is a  
D declaration

declaration of war against those who disapprove the late measures.\*

Tho' I honour your President for his frank and open conduct, the reverse of that of the crafty politician, which I consider as one of the most detestable of human characters, I could not approve of his unnecessary and incessant, not to say unjust, invectives against the French government. It was in my opinion, unbecoming a wise statesman, and must render a reconciliation with France (which is certainly a very desirable object) more difficult than it would otherwise be, during his presidency; unless the French directory have more temper and prudence than we can reasonably expect.

All this, you will say, is nothing more than common place party politics. But if I have nothing better, what must I say? You wish I suppose, to know  
my

\* The writer of this remarkable paper says "Though France or Rigaud should not invade us, we have, nevertheless, all the host of internal enemies to keep down. What can do it so effectually as a good body of troops? — To keep thieves off, have a gun or a sword at your bed side. To keep traitors, united Irishmen, and Frenchmen in awe, have some troops ready to repel the first invaders, to crush the first risings and seditions. An ounce of prevention is worth a tun of remedy" —

"Military force, they tell us, is sometimes abused. What power is not? Civil power certainly is. But a military force more frequently turns against its employers than it betrays or represses liberty. That is, indeed, a strong argument against using it. But remote dangers are to be disregarded when greater are imminent. Jacobins are to be kept out of the army, and militia. Government must use its best courage and vigilance."

"Plain truth, like this, is not to be expected from men in Congress, or general courts. This is no good reason why it should not be told by other honest men, nor why honest men should reject it."

my sentiments, and they are such as I have to offer on a subject which has agitated the minds of all the citizens of the United States. However, I shall now proceed to observations that are not so very trite, and indeed almost peculiar to myself.

If any country in the world was so situated as to be capable of deriving advantage from all nations, and of receiving injury from none of them, it is surely this. The native Indians being out of the question, as having no power to hurt you, all that you can have in contemplation are the several powers of Europe, generally, and especially at this time, in a state of war with each other. But as it is the interest of them all to be upon good terms with this country, it is very easy for this country to be upon good terms with them, without taking any part in their quarrels.

As this nation wants no territory belonging either to France or England, the two great rival nations of Europe, and they have no visible interest in coveting any thing belonging to this, no natural cause of hostility can exist with respect to either of them. Every possible difference must relate to commercial intercourse. But if regard to *profit and loss* be the leading principle

I, as a democrat, and an enemy to standing armies, thank the writer of this paper, and also the person who introduced the extracts from it into the *Northumberland Gazette of Nov. 9*, for this frank communication. When persons in office will not, as this writer says, speak out, and tell their whole meaning, we are obliged to their friends for doing it for them. I wish this paper may be copied into every Newspaper in the United States; as I am confident it would do more towards opening the eyes of the people with respect to the late measures of the government, than all our writing. And if this be done, there will be nothing to apprehend either from sedition laws, or standing armies. The ralisman will be broken, and the castie, with all its terrific apparatus, will vanish at once.

principle in all transactions of a commercial nature, the protection of commerce can never be a justifiable cause of war; because, whatever be the issue of national hostility, the loss must far exceed the amount of all the possible gain. It is the part of wisdom, therefore, to bear a smaller loss, rather than endeavour to repair it, with the certainty of incurring a greater.

As to mere *insults*, there is more dignity in despising than in resenting them. No expression of contempt can justify a war between nations, any more than it will justify duels between individuals. In both cases alike it is the conduct of men governed by passion rather than by reason, by a principle of false honor, rather than the true one.

All the intercourse you can want with any foreign nation is, as I have observed, a commercial one; and the idea of commerce is very simple. It consists in nothing more than the exchange of one commodity for another. If any thing that you have be of less value to you than it is to a foreign nation, and any thing that they have be of more value to you than it is to them, it is for the benefit of both countries to exchange the one for the other. But the means, or the mode, in which this exchange is made is not the commerce. A third nation might be the carrier of the different commodities from the one to the other.

If the merchants of either of the two countries undertake this business, it is foreign to what is properly their own; and if, in any situation of national affairs, there be peculiar hazard in this business, those who undertake it ought to lay their account with that hazard before they engage in it, as persons who undertake any other kind of business do with respect to theirs. And whatever loss is incurred by it, it will not fall upon them, but upon their customers. For in all cases the consumer is the person who pays every expence attending

the raising, or the transport, of the commodity that he purchases.

If any number of persons ensure the safety of ships at sea, they expect to be gainers by that undertaking, as well as the merchant by his, or the farmer by his; and the merchant will not fail to charge the price of the insurance to his customers. Is it not far better, then, to let things go on in this natural train, in which the only inconvenience is that, during this state of things, the consumer will pay a little more than usual for his commodity, than to defend this particular branch of business by involving the nation in a war?

Exclusive of all consideration of the horrors of war, to which statesmen in general give little attention, it were far better, that is, far less expensive, for the nation to pay for all the loss by a direct tax; but much better still, if the risk of loss be very great, to suspend that branch of business altogether. Others, who can do it at a less risk, will be ready enough to undertake it; and the competition of nations, and of merchants, is such, that the country will be served as well, and as cheaply, as the state of things will bear. While the sea remains open to all nations, we need not fear wanting any thing that other nations can supply us with. Allowing this to be an evil, or an undesirable state of things, it cannot be of any long continuance. After this things will return to their natural state, and the merchants may undertake the carrying trade, in addition to their proper business, as before.

But if navies must be built and manned for the sake of protecting this particular branch of business, and what is a necessary consequence, if hostilities must be engaged in first at sea, and then by land; and if ambassadors must be maintained at foreign courts, which is another consequence of the same system, for one dollar that the former system would require, this will require a thousand, to say nothing of the intricacy of foreign politics, and

and the lives that will be lost in war. The kingdom of China acts upon the system that I wish to recommend. That country has an extensive commerce with all the world, but it employs few ships of its own, it has no resident ambassador at any foreign court, and it has no wars on account of commerce.

The merchant, or rather the carrier of merchandize from port to port, will say, that as he follows a *lawful occupation*, he ought to be protected in it. But then every other person whose occupation is lawful has the same plea for a reimbursement of his losses; for example the farmer, the manufacturer, &c. Do they not all lay their account with the accidents to which their several professions are liable, and charge their customers accordingly.

If the farmer should apply to Congress for indemnification of his losses by storms, drought, or insects, would he not be told that he knew his undertaking to be subject to all those accidents, that it was his business, and not theirs, to guard against them as well as he could, and that he might indemnify himself by the advanced prices of such products as he was able to raise? And should not the shipper of goods, and the insurers, be content with a similar answer to *their* complaints, whether of losses by pirates, privateers of other nations, &c. &c. as well as by shipwrecks. All these should be equally considered as *accidents*, to which, in a particular state of things, they knew their undertaking to be liable, as much as the farmer was apprized of the danger of bad seasons.

They might farther be told, that it would be the extreme of folly, and injustice, in the representatives of the nation, to involve it in a state of war, for the recovery of any sum they could have lost by the certain expenditure of a hundred times as much, besides hazarding the safety of the whole state.

A nation conducting its affairs on these maxims,  
defending

defending its territory by a well disciplined militia, remonstrating against injuries from other nations, but never revenging them, and withal acting justly and generously on all occasions. could not fail to be respected, and would not be subject to many insults. It would insure the invaluable blessing of *peace*. It would employ its hands, and its capital, in the improvement of the country, in making bridges, roads, and navigable canals, in encouraging science, agriculture, and manufactures. It would contract no debts, and have occasion for few taxes; and therefore could not fail to flourish more than any country has ever yet done.

When I once took the liberty to throw out these hints to the President, to whom they were not new, he quoted the authority of some person which I do not recollect, who said that "a nation that could act on such maxims would command the world!" I doubt not it soon would; and there is a nation now under the discipline of providence destined for this great purpose. It is to govern the world in peace, when *nation will no more rise up against nation, and when they will learn war no more*. This happy state of things is distinctly announced in the prophecies of scripture, so that no christian can have any doubt with respect to it; and the present appearance of things in the old world is such as leads me to expect that it will take place at no very great distance of time. It is, however, according to the same prophecies, to be preceded by a season of uncommon calamity such as *there never was since there was a nation* (Dan xii, 1) and especially by the destruction of men in war, which we now see abundantly verified, but the final issue is to be most glorious and happy. It will be what is in the prophecies called the *kingdom of heaven*, a state of *righteousness and peace*. With respect to this, I said some years ago, what I shall repeat, and conclude with now. "May this kingdom of God, and of Christ, that which I conceive  
" to

“ to be intended in the Lord’s prayer, fully come, tho’  
 “ all the kingdoms of the world be removed to make  
 “ way for it.”

Hoping to have no occasion to trouble you with any more Letters of this kind, I am, with my wishes and prayers for your temporal and eternal welfare,

My Friends and Neighbours,

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

P. S. Finding that it is generally reported among those who call themselves *Federalists*, that Mr. Cooper writes as prompted, or supported, by me, I think it right to observe, that they who believe this know nothing of Mr. Cooper, or of me. Every thing that he has written has been wholly independent of me. He is not a man that requires to be prompted, or supported, by any person. Tho’ I was frequently in his company during the publication of his *Essays*, I never saw one of them, nor do I distinctly recollect even hearing him mention the subject of any of them, before their publication.

*Maxims*



# M A X I M S

O F

## POLITICAL ARITHMETIC,

APPLIED TO THE CASE OF THE

*UNITED STATES of AMERICA.*

*First published in the AURORA for FEBRUARY 26  
and 27, 1798.\**

(By a QUAKER in Politics.)

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AN idea of the true interests of any country is perhaps most easily formed by supposing it to be the property of one person, who would naturally wish to derive the greatest advantage from it, and who would therefore, lay out his capital in such a manner as to make it the most productive to him. An attention to separate and discordant interests of different classes of men, is apt to distract the mind: but when all the people are considered as members of one family, who can be disposed of, and employed, as the head of it shall direct, for the common benefit, that cause of embarrassment is removed.

To derive the greatest advantage from any country it will be necessary that attention be paid, in the

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\* Some of the leading sentiments in this paper are the same with those in the preceding *Letters*: but they could not well be left out, and I think them of sufficient importance to be repeated.

first place, to the wants of nature, and to raise from it, in the greatest quantity and perfection, such productions as are necessary to feed and clothe the inhabitants, and to provide them with habitations, in order to guard them against the inclemency of the weather, and after this such as are of use to their more comfortable accommodation, and the supply of artificial wants.

If any country be completely insulated, or cut off from all communication with other countries, it will be necessary to raise all those articles within itself; but when a communication is opened with other countries, the proprietor will do well to give his whole attention to those productions which his own country can best yield, and exchange the surplus for such articles as other countries can better supply him with. For by that means, his labour will be employed to the most advantage. If, for example, it would employ him a month to go thro' all the processes which are necessary to make a piece of cloth, when the effect of the labour of a week in his husbandry would enable him to purchase that cloth, it will be better for him to confine himself to his husbandry, and buy his cloth; besides that, not making it his sole business, he would not, with any labour, make it so well. And now that a communication by sea with all parts of the world is so well established, that it may be depended upon that whatever any country wants another can supply it with, to the advantage of both, this exchange may be made with little interruption, even by war.

Commerce consists in the exchange of the commodities of one country for those of another; and as this, like any other business, will be performed to the most advantage by persons who give their whole attention to it, and who are called *Merchants*, it will be most convenient, in general, that this be done by them, rather than by those who employ themselves in raising the produce. The business of conveying the produce of

one country to another is a different thing from merchandize. Those who employ ships for this purpose, are paid for their trouble by the freight of their vessels, while the merchant subsists from what he gains by the exchange of commodities.

What is generally termed *active commerce* is that which is carried on by the natives of any country, in ships of their own, conveying their produce to other countries, and bringing back theirs in return; and that is called *passive commerce* which is carried on at home, people of other countries bringing their commodities, and taking back what they want in exchange for them. The quantity of proper commerce, or merchandize, is the same in both these cases. All the difference consists in the employment given to the carriers, and the shipping of the different countries.

While the communication with other countries by sea is open, it cannot be for the interest of any country, either to impose duties on goods brought into it, or to give bounties on those that are exported; because, by both these means, the people are made to pay more than they otherwise would do for the same benefit. In both cases the price of the goods must be advanced. He who pays the duty will be refunded at least, by the persons who purchase the commodity, and the bounty to the vender must be paid by a tax on all the inhabitants.

It is, no doubt, the interest of any particular class of persons to extend their business, and thereby increase their gains. But if their fellow citizens pay more in the advanced price of what they purchase than their gain amounts to, the community is a loser; and if it be equal, one class is made to contribute to the maintenance of another, when all have an equal natural right to the fruits of their own labour.

For the same reason, if, on any account, the conveyance of goods from one country to another be attended

tended with more loss than gain, the person in whose hands was the property of the whole would discontinue that branch of business, and employ his capital in some other way, or rather let it remain unproductive than employ it to a certain loss.

These maxims appear to me to be incontrovertible in the abstract. What, then, may be learnt from them with respect to this country, situated as it now is?

Without enquiring into the cause, which is no part of my object, it is a fact, that the conveyance of goods, or the carrying trade of this country, which has generally been taken up by the merchants, though it is no necessary branch of their business, is peculiarly hazardous, and of course, expensive. This expence the country at large must pay, in the advanced price of the goods purchased. In this state of things they have also found it necessary to send ambassadors to distant countries, in order to remove the supposed cause of the difficulty, which is attended with another expence. It has likewise been thought necessary to build ships of war for the purpose of protecting this carrying trade; and if this be done to any effect, it must be attended with much more expence.

I do not pretend to be able to calculate the expence occasioned by any of these circumstances; but the amount of all three, viz. the additional price to the carrier to indemnify him for his risque, the expence of ambassadors, and that of fitting out ships of war; I cannot help thinking must be much more than all the profit that can be derived from the carrying trade; and if so, a person who had the absolute command of all the shipping, and all the capital of the country, would see it to be his interest to lay up his ships for the present, and make some other use of his capital. And as the greatest part of the country is as yet uncleared, and there is a great want of roads, bridges and  
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canals, the use of which would sufficiently repay him for any sums laid out upon them, and they would not fail to contribute to the improvement of the country, which I suppose to be his estate, he would naturally lay out his superfluous capital on these great objects. The expence of building one man of war would suffice to make a bridge over a river of a considerable extent, and (which ought to be a serious consideration) the morals of labourers are much better preserved than those of seamen; and especially those of soldiers.

Another great advantage attending this conduct is, that the country would be in no danger of quarrelling with any of its neighbours, and thereby the hazard of war, which is necessarily attended with incalculable evils, physical and moral, would be avoided. To make this case easier to myself, I would consider injuries done by other nations, in the same light as losses by hurricanes or earthquakes: and without indulging any resentment, I would repair the damage as well as I could. I would not be angry where anger could answer no good end. If one nation affront another, the people would do best to take it patiently, and content themselves with making remonstrances. There is the truest dignity in this conduct; and unprovoked injuries would not often be repeated, as the injurious nation would soon find that it gained neither credit nor advantage by such behaviour.

This is the case with independent individuals, and why should it be otherwise with independent nations? Rash and hasty men, standing on what they fancy to be honour, are ever quarrelling, and doing themselves, as well as others, infinitely more mischief than could possibly arise from behaving with christian meekness and forbearance. In fact, they act like children, who have no command of their passions, and not like men, governed by reason. In this calculation, peace of mind, which is preserved by the meek, and lost by the quarrelsome, is a very important article.

It will be said, that merchants, having no other occupation than that of sending goods to foreign countries, by which their own is benefited, have a *right* to the protection of their country. But what is the *rule of right* in this, or any other case? It must be regulated by a regard to the good of the whole; and if the country receive more injury than benefit by any branch of business, it ought to be discontinued; and those who engage in any business, should lay their account with the risque to which it is exposed, as much as the farmer with the risque of bad seasons, for which his country makes him no indemnification, though his employment is as beneficial to it as that of the merchant.

If, therefore, in these circumstances of extraordinary hazard, any person will send his goods to sea, it should be at his own risque; and the country, which receives more injury than advantage from it, and whose peace is endangered by it, should not indemnify him for any loss. Let him, however, be fully apprized of this; and if he will persist in doing as he has done, the consequence is to himself, and his country is not implicated in it.

This is a country which wants nothing but *peace*, and an attention to its natural advantages, to make it most flourishing and respectable; and wanting the manufactures of other countries, its friendship will be courted by them all, on account of the advantage they will derive from an intercourse with it. Other countries being fully peopled, the inhabitants *must* apply to manufactures; and where can they find such a market as this must necessarily be? And on account of the rivalry and competition which there will be among them, the people of this country cannot fail to be served in the cheapest manner by them all. This will be independent of all their politics, with which this country has nothing to do. But, if by endeavouring to rival any of them in naval power (which will only resemble the  
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frog in the fable endeavouring to swell itself to the size of the ox) it excites their jealousy, and this country should join any one of them against any other, it will certainly not only lose the advantage it might derive from the trade of that country, but pay dearly for its folly, by the evils of a state of warfare.

What seems to be more particularly impolitic in this country, as ill suiting the state of it, is the duty on the importation of *books*, which are so much wanted, and which even great encouragement could not produce here. Is it at all probable that such works as the Greek and Latin classics, those of the christian Fathers, the Polyglott Bible, the Philosophical Transactions, or the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences, &c. &c. will, in the time of our great grand children be printed in the United States? and yet there is a heavy duty on their importation; and for every printer, or maker of paper for printing, there are, no doubt, several thousand purchasers of books, all of whom are taxed for their advantage. In these circumstances, it were surely better to have more cultivators of the ground, and fewer printers.

When I see at what expence ambassadors are sent to foreign and distant countries, with which this country has little or no intercourse; and when it is very problematical whether in any case, they have not done more harm than good, and think what solid advantage, might be derived from half the expence in sending out men of science for the purpose of purchasing works of literature and philosophical instruments, of which all the universities and colleges of this country are most disgracefully destitute; and that the expence of one of the three frigates would have supplied all of them with telescopes equal to that of Dr. Herschell, and other philosophical instruments in the same great style, to the immortal honour of any administration, I lament that the progress of national wisdom should be so slow,  
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and that our country profits so little by the experience and the folly of others. The Chinese never had resident ambassadors in any country, and what country has flourished more than China?

A foreigner travelling in the interior part of this country, and finding the want of roads, bridges and inns, wonders that things of such manifest utility should not have had more attention paid to them, when he sees that great sums are raised and expended on objects, the use of which is at best very doubtful. And men of letters coming to reside here, find their hands tied up. Books of literature are not to be had, and philosophical instruments can neither be made nor purchased. Every thing of the kind must be had from Europe, and pay a duty on importation.

But all this may be short sighted speculation; and it may be, nay I doubt not it is, better for the world at large, that its progress should not be so rapid; that a long state of infancy, childhood and folly, should precede that of manhood and true wisdom; and that vices, which will spring up in all countries, are better checked by the calamities of war than by reason and philosophy.

It may be the wise plan of Providence, by means of the folly of man, to involve this country in the vortex of European politics, and the misery of European wars; and to prevent the importation of the means of knowledge till a better use would be made of them. Nations make slower advances in wisdom than individual men, in some proportion to their longer duration. But what they acquire at a greater expence, they retain better; so that, I doubt not, there is much wisdom in that part of the general constitution of things.

A stranger is apt to wonder that political animosity should have got to so great a height in this country, when all were so lately united in their contest with a common enemy; and that their enmity, which cannot  
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be of long standing, should be as inveterate as in the oldest countries, where parties have subsisted time immemorial. But it may be the design of Providence, by this means, to divide this widely extended country into smaller States, which shall be at war with each other, that by their common sufferings their common vices may be corrected, and thus lay a foundation for the solid acquisition of wisdom; which will be more valued in consequence of having been more dearly bought, in some future age.

Divided as the people of this country are, some in favour of France, and others of England, I should not much wonder, if the decision of the government in favour of either of them should be the cause of a civil war. But even this, the most calamitous of all events, would promote a greater agitation of men's minds, and be a more effectual check to the progress of luxury, vice, and folly, than any other mode of discipline, and at the same time that it will evince the folly of man, may display the wisdom of Him that *ruleth in the kingdoms of men*, and who appoints for all nations such governments, and such governors, as their state, and that of other countries connected with them, really requires. Pharaoh occupied as important a station in the plan of Divine Providence, as king David, though called *a man after God's own heart*. For his wife and excellent purposes, one was as necessary as the other.

Many lives, no doubt, will be lost in war, civil or foreign; but men must die; and if the destruction of one generation be the means of producing another which shall be wiser and better, the good will exceed the evil, great as it may be, and greatly to be deplored as all evils ought to be.

A stranger naturally expects to find a greater simplicity of manners, and more virtue, in this *new country*, as it is called, than in the old ones. But a nearer acquaintance with it, will convince him, that consider-  
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ing how easily subsistence is procured here, and consequently how few incitements there are to the vices of the lower classes especially, there is less virtue as well as less knowledge, than in most of the countries of Europe. In many parts of the United States there is also less religion, at least of a rational and useful kind. And where there is no sense of religion, no fear of God, or respect to a future state, there will be no good morals that can be depended upon. Laws may restrain the excesses of vice, but they cannot impart the principles of virtue.

Infidelity has made great progress in France, through all the continent of Europe, and also in England; but I much question whether it be not as great in America; and the want of information in the people at large, makes thousands of them the dupes of such shallow writings as those of Mr. Paine, and the French unbelievers, several of which are translated and published here, and either through want of knowledge, or of zeal, little or nothing is done by the friends of Revelation, to stop the baneful torrent.

All this, however, I doubt not, will appear to have been ultimately for the best. Let temperate and wise men forwarn the country of its danger, and, as they are in duty bound, endeavour to prevent, or alleviate, evils of every kind. Their conduct will meet the approbation of the great Governor of the universe; and, in all events, He, whose will no foreign power can control, being the true and benevolent parent of all the human race, will provide for the happiness of his offspring in the most effectual manner, though, to our imperfect understanding, the steps which lead to it be incomprehensible. We must not do evil that good may come, because our understanding is finite, and therefore we cannot be sure that the good we intend will come. But the Divine Being, whose foresight is unerring, continually acts upon that maxim, and, as we see, to the greatest advantage.

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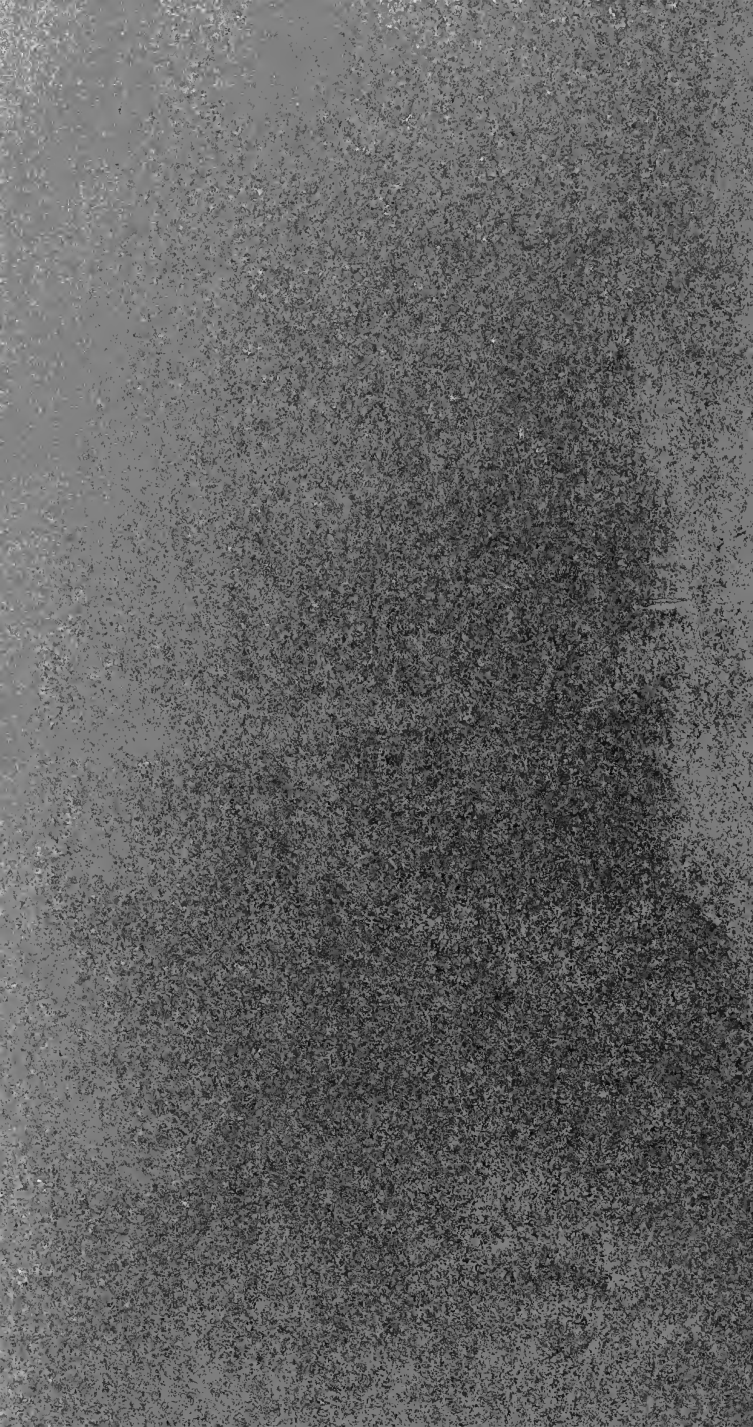
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