



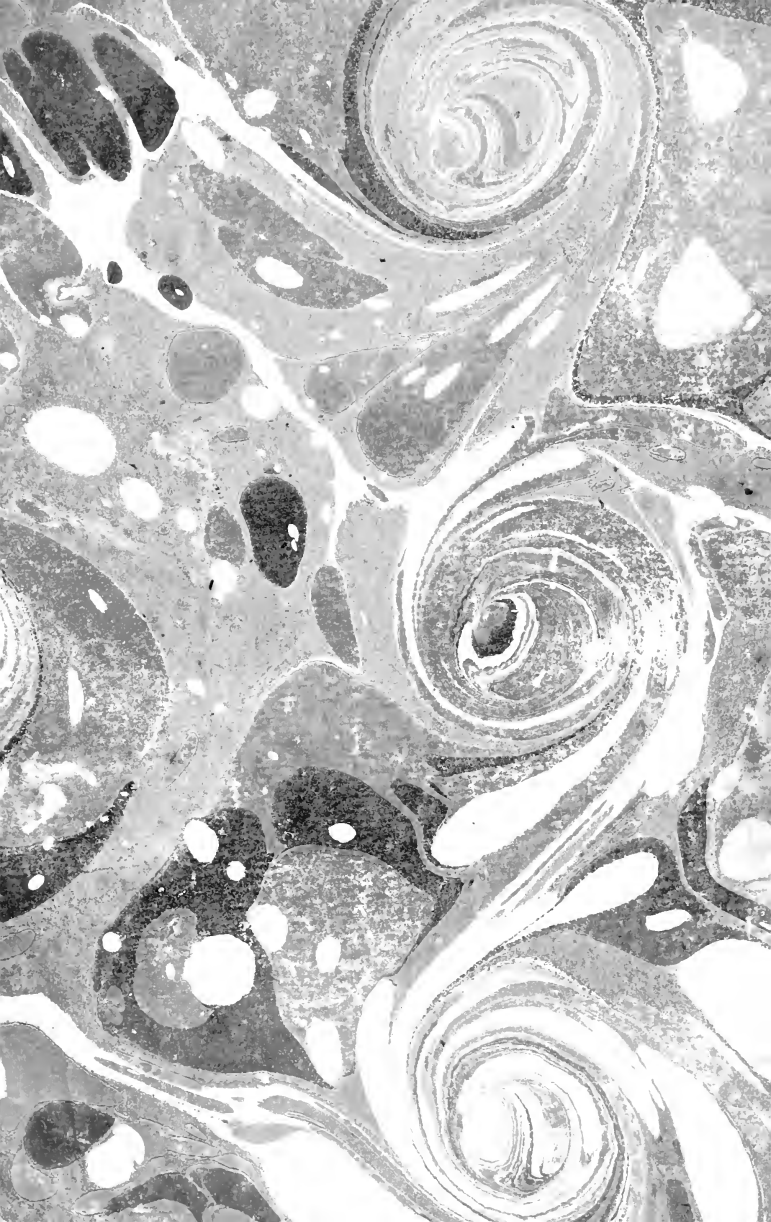
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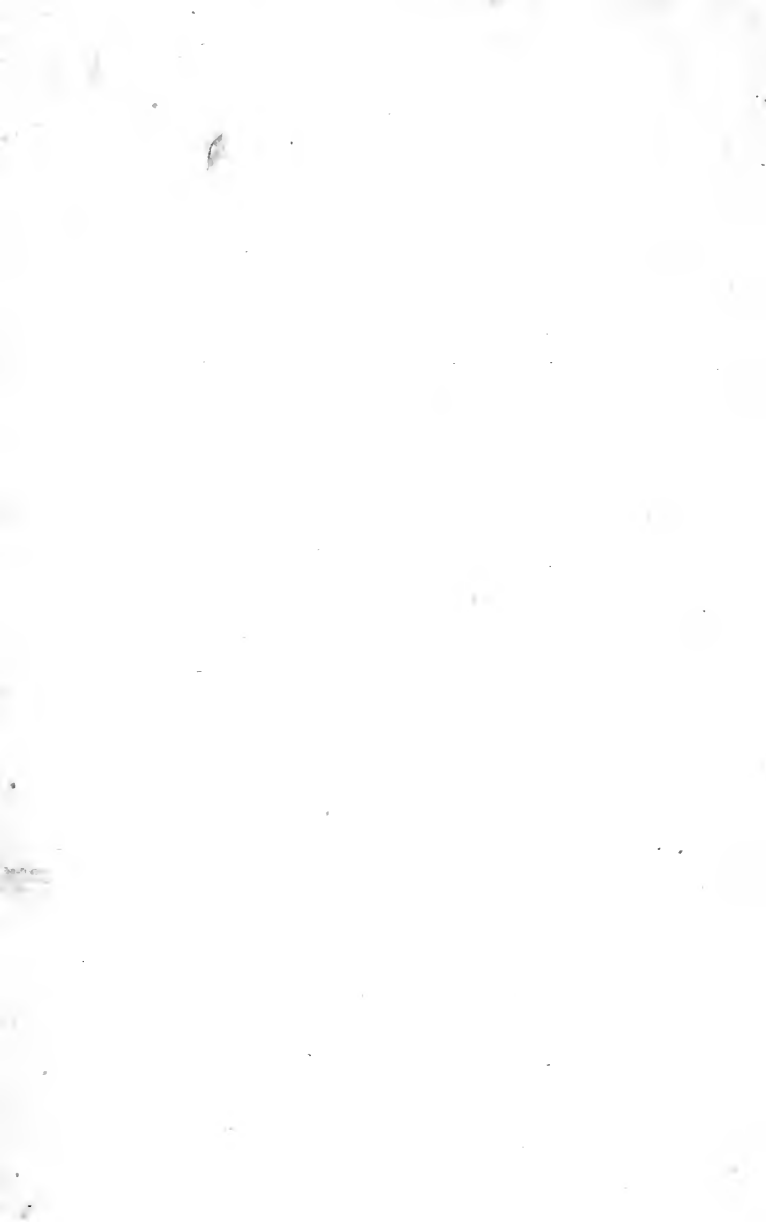


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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

IMPORTANCE

OF THE

AMERICAN REVOLUTION,

AND

The MEANS of making it a BENEFIT to
the WORLD.

By RICHARD PRICE, D.D. L.L.D.

And FELLOW of the ROYAL SOCIETY of LONDON, and
of the ACADEMY of ARTS and SCIENCES in NEW-
ENGLAND.

Printed in LONDON in 1784.

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TO

The FREE AND UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA,

THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS
ARE HUMBLY OFFERED,

AS

A LAST TESTIMONY

OF

THE GOOD-WILL

OF

THE AUTHOR.

JULY 6. 1784.

OBSER-

Dr Price pres.

His pamphlet on
having been into
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He has, however
sent to which
It is not in Dr
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Newington: Green

Dr. Price's observations
are so replete with
worthy the perusal of every
eye have its dictates imprinted
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O F

THE GOOD-WILL

O F

THE AUTHOR.

JULY 6. 1784.

OBSER-

D^r Price presents his complim^{ts} to M^r Bell.
His pamphlet on the American Revolution not
having been intended for publication in this
country he has but few copies to spare.
He has, however, sent him one copy for M^r
Genet to which he is very welcome.
It is not in D^r Price's power to spare more
than one copy; nor has he at present more than
one in his possession.

Newington: Green Nov: 27: 1764th

Dr. Price's observations on the American revolution are so replete with theoretic reasoning, that it is worthy the perusal of every American, who ought to have its dictates imprinted on his mind, as the remarks are sacred, and to us interesting truths.





OBSERVATIONS, &c.

*Of the IMPORTANCE of the REVOLUTION
which has established the Independence of
the United States.*

HAVING, from pure conviction, taken a warm part in favour of the *British* colonies (now the United States of America) during the late war; and been exposed, in consequence of this, to *much* abuse and *some* danger; it must be supposed that I have been waiting for the issue with anxiety — I am thankful that my anxiety is removed; and that I have been spared to be a witness to that very issue of the war which has been all along the object of my
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wishes. With heart-felt satisfaction, I see the revolution in favour of universal liberty which has taken place in *America*;—a revolution which opens a new prospect in human affairs, and begins a new æra in the history of mankind;—a revolution by which *Britons* themselves will be the greatest gainers, if wise enough to improve properly the check that has been given to the despotism of their ministers, and to catch the flame of virtuous liberty which has saved their American brethren.

The late war, in its *commencement and progress*, did great good by disseminating just sentiments of the rights of mankind, and the nature of legitimate government; by exciting a spirit of resistance to tyranny, which has emancipated one *European* country, and is likely to emancipate others; and by occasioning the establishment in *America* of forms of government more equitable and more liberal than any that the world has yet known. But, in its *termination*, the war has done still greater good by preserving the new governments from that destruction in which they must have been involved, had Britain conquered; by provid-

ing,

ing, in a sequestered continent possessed of many singular advantages, a place of refuge for oppressed men in every region of the world; and by laying the foundation there of an empire which may be the seat of liberty, science and virtue, and from whence there is reason to hope these sacred blessings will spread, till they become universal and the time arrives when kings and priests shall have no more power to oppress, and that ignominious slavery which has hitherto debased the world is exterminated. I therefore, think I see the hand of Providence in the late war working for the general good; and can scarcely avoid crying out, *It was the Lord's doing.*

Reason, as well as tradition and revelation, lead us to expect that a more improved and happy state of human affairs will take place before the consummation of all things. The world has hitherto been gradually improving. Light and knowledge have been gaining ground, and human life *at present*, compared with what it *once* was, is much the same that a youth approaching to manhood is compared with an infant.

Such are the natures of things that this progress must continue. During particular intervals it may be interrupted, but it cannot be destroy'd. Every present advance prepares the way for farther advances; and a single experiment or discovery may sometimes give rise to so many more as suddenly to raise the species higher, and to resemble the effects of opening a new sense, or of the fall of a spark on a train that springs a mine. For this reason, mankind may at last arrive at degrees of improvement which we cannot now even suspect to be possible. A dark age may follow an enlightened age; but, in this case, the light, after being smothered for a time, will break out again with a brighter lustre. The present age of increased light, considered as succeeding the ages of *Greece* and *Rome* and an intermediate period of thick darkness, furnishes a proof of the truth of this observation. There are certain kinds of improvement which, when once made, cannot be entirely lost. During the dark ages, the improvements made in the ages that preceded them remained so far as to be recovered immediately at the resurrection of letters, and to produce afterwards that more rapid progress

gress in improvement which has distinguished modern times.

There can scarcely be a more pleasing and encouraging object of reflection than this. An accidental observation of the effects of gravity in a garden has been the means of discovering the laws that govern the solar system*, and of enabling us to look down with pity on the ignorance of the most enlightened times among the antients. What new dignity has been given to man, and what additions have been made to his powers, by the invention of optical glasses, printing, gun-powder, &c. and by the late discoveries in navigation, mathematics, natural philosophy, &c. ?

But among the events in modern times tending to the elevation of mankind, there are none probably of so much consequence as the recent one which occasions these observations. Perhaps, I do not go too far when I say that, next to the introduction of Christianity among mankind, the Ame-

* This refers to an account given of Sir Isaac Newton in the Preface to Dr. PEMBERTON'S View of his Philosophy.

rican revolution may prove the most important step in the progressive course of human improvement. It is an event which may produce a general diffusion of the principles of humanity, and become the means of setting free mankind from the shackles of superstition and tyranny, by leading them to see and know “ that nothing “ is *fundamental* but impartial enquiry, an “ honest mind, and virtuous practice— “ that state policy ought not to be applied “ to the support of speculative opinions “ and formularies of faith.”——“ That the “ members of a civil community are *con-* “ *federates*, not *subjects*; and their rulers, “ *servants*, not *masters*.—— And that all “ legitimate government consists in the do- “ minion of equal laws made with com- “ mon consent; that is, in the dominion “ of men over *themselves*; and not in the “ dominion of communities over commu- “ nities, or of any men over other men.”

Happy will the world be when these truths shall be every where acknowledged and practised upon. Religious bigotry, that cruel demon, will be then laid asleep. Slavish governments and slavish Hierarchies will then sink; and the old prophecies be
verified,

verified, “ that the last universal empire
 “ upon earth shall be the empire of reason
 “ and virtue, under which the gospel of
 “ peace (better understood) *shall have free*
 “ *course and be glorified, many will run to*
 “ *and fro and knowledge be increased, the*
 “ *wolf dwell with the lamb and the leopard*
 “ *with the kid, and nation no more lift up*
 “ *a sword against nation.*”

It is a conviction I cannot resist, that the independence of the *English* colonies in America is one of the steps ordained by Providence to introduce these times; and I can scarcely be deceived in this conviction, if the United States should escape some dangers which threaten them, and will take proper care to throw themselves open to future improvements, and to make the most of the advantages of their present situation. Should this happen, it will be true of them as it was of the people of the Jews, that *in them all the families of the earth shall be blessed*. It is scarcely possible they should think too highly of their own consequence. Perhaps, there never existed a people on whose wisdom and virtue more depended; or to whom a station of more importance in the plan of Providence has

has

has been assigned. They have begun nobly. They have fought with success for themselves and for the world ; and, in the midst of invasion and carnage, established forms of government favourable in the highest degree to the rights of mankind.—— But they have much more to do ; more indeed than it is possible properly to represent. In this address, my design is only to take notice of a few *great* points which seem particularly to require their attention, in order to render them permanently happy in themselves and useful to mankind. On these points, I shall deliver my sentiments with freedom, conscious I mean well ; but, at the same time, with real diffidence, conscious of my own liability to error.

Of the Means of promoting human Improvement and Happiness in the United States.
 — *And first, of PUBLIC DEBTS.*

IT seems evident, that what first requires the attention of the United States is the redemption of their debts, and making compensation to that army which has carried them through the war. They have an infant credit to cherish and rear, which, if this is not done, must perish, and with it their character and honour for ever. Nor is it conceivable they should meet with any great difficulties in doing this. They have a vast resource peculiar to themselves, in a continent of unlocated lands possessing every advantage of soil and climate. The settlement of these lands will be rapid, the consequence of which must be a rapid increase of their value. By disposing of them to the army and to emigrants, the greatest part of the debts of the United States may probably be sunk *immediately*. But had they no such resource, they are very capable of bearing taxes sufficient for the purpose of a gradual redemption. Sup-
 C posing

posing their debts to amount to *nine millions* sterling, carrying interest at $5\frac{1}{2}$ *per cent.* taxes producing a revenue of a million *per ann.* would pay the interest, and at the same time leave a *surplus* of *half* a million *per ann.* for a *sinking fund*, which would discharge the principal in thirteen years. A surplus of a *quarter* of a million would do the same in $20\frac{1}{2}$ years. After discharging the principal, the appropriated revenue being no longer wanted, might be abolished, and the States eased of the burthen of it. But it would be imprudent to abolish it entirely. 100,000 *l. per ann.* reserved, and faithfully laid out in clearing unlocated lands and other improvements, would in a short time increase to a treasure (or continental patrimony) which would defray the whole expenditure of the union, and keep the States free from debts and taxes for ever*. Such a *reserve* would (sup-

* The lands, forests, imposts, &c. &c. which once formed the *patrimony* of the crown in *England*, bore most of the expences of government. It is well for this kingdom that the extravagance of the crown has been the means of alienating this patrimony, for the consequence has been making the crown dependent on the people. But in America such a patrimony would be *continental* property, capable of being applied only to public purposes, in the way which the public (or its delegates) should approve.

posing it improved so as to produce a profit of 5 *per cent.*) increase to a capital of three millions in 19 years; 30 millions in 57 years, 100 millions in 81 years, and 261 millions in 100 years. But supposing it capable of being improved so as to produce a profit of 10 *per cent.* it would increase to five millions in 19 years, 100 millions in 49 years, and 10,000 millions in 97 years.

It is wonderful that no state has yet thought of taking this method to make itself great and rich. The smallest appropriation in a sinking fund, *never diverted*, operates in cancelling debts, just as money increases at compound interest; and is, therefore, *omnipotent* *. But, if *diverted*, it loses all its power. BRITAIN affords a striking proof of this. Its sinking fund (once the hope of the kingdom) has, by

* One penny put out at our Saviour's birth to 5 *per cent.* compound interest would, before this time, have increased to a greater sum than would be contained in TWO HUNDRED MILLIONS of EARTH'S all solid gold. But, if put out to *simple* interest, it would have amounted to no more than *seven shillings and six-pence*. All governments which alienate *funds* destined for reimbursements, chuse to improve money in the *last* rather than the *first* of these ways.

the practice of alienating it, been rendered impotent and uselefs. Had it been inviolably applied to the purpose for which it was intended, there would, in the year 1775, have been a *surplus* in the revenue of more than five millions *per ann.* But instead of this, we were then encumbered with a debt of 137 millions, carrying an interest of near $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions, and leaving no surplus of any consequence. This debt has been since increased to 280 millions, carrying an interest (including expences of management) of *nine* millions and a half.— A monstrous bubble; — and as no effectual measures are likely to be taken (or perhaps *can now* be taken) for reducing it within the limits of safety, it must, some time or other, produce a dreadful convulsion. Let the United States take warning—Their debts at present are moderate. A Sinking fund, guarded * against misapplication, may soon extinguish them, and prove a resource in all events of the greatest importance. Let such a fund be established. Could a sacredness be given it like that of

* When not thus guarded, public funds become the worst evils, by giving to the rulers of states a command of revenue for the purposes of corruption.

the ark of God among the Jews, it would do the same service.

I must not, however, forget that there is ONE of their debts on which no sinking fund can have any effect; and which it is impossible for them to discharge: — A debt, greater, perhaps, than has been ever due from any country; and which will be deeply felt by their latest posterity. — But it is a debt of GRATITUDE only — Of GRATITUDE to that General, who has been raised up by Providence to make them free and independent, and whose name must shine among the first in the future annals of the benefactors of mankind.

The measure now proposed may preserve America for ever from too great an accumulation of debts; and, consequently, of taxes — an evil which is likely to be the ruin not only of *Britain*, but of other *European* States. — But there are measures of yet greater consequence, which I wish ardently to recommend and inculcate.

For the sake of mankind, I wish to see every measure adopted that can have a tendency to preserve PEACE in America; and to make it an open and fair stage for discussion, and the seat of PERFECT LIBERTY.

Of P E A C E,

And the Means of perpetuating it.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT is an expedient for collecting the wisdom and the force of a community or confederacy, to preserve its peace and liberty against every hostile invasion, whether from *within* or from *without*.—In the latter of these respects, the United States are happily secured; but they are far from being equally happy in the *former* respect. Having now, in consequence of their successful resistance of the invasion of *Britain*, united to their remoteness from *Europe*, no external enemy to fear, they are in danger of fighting with one another.—This is their *greatest* danger; and providing securities against it is their *hardest* work. Should they fail in this, America may some time or other be turned into a scene of blood; and instead of being the hope and refuge of the world, may become a terror to it.

When a dispute arises among *individuals* in a State, an appeal is made to a *court of law*;

law; that is, to the wisdom and justice of the State. The court decides. The losing party acquiesces; or, if he does not, the power of the State *forces* him to submission; and thus the effects of contention are suppressed, and peace is maintained.—In a way similar to this, peace may be maintained between any number of confederated States; and I can almost imagine, that it is not impossible but that by some such means *universal* peace may some time or other be produced, and all war excluded from the world.—Why may we not hope to see this begun in America?—The articles of confederation make considerable advances towards it. When a dispute arises between any of the States, they order an appeal to Congress, —an enquiry by Congress, — a hearing, — and a decision.—But here they stop.—What is most of all necessary is omitted. No provision is made for enforcing the decisions of Congress; and this renders them inefficient and futile. I am by no means qualified to point out the best method of removing this defect. Much must be given up for this purpose, nor is it easy to give up *too* much. Without all doubt the

powers

powers of Congress must be enlarged. In particular, a power must be given it to collect, on certain emergencies, the force of the confederacy, and to employ it in carrying its decisions into execution. A State against which a decision is made, will yield of course when it knows that such a force exists, and that it allows no hope from resistance.

By this force I do not mean a STANDING ARMY. God forbid, that standing armies should ever find an establishment in America. They are every where the grand supports of arbitrary power, and the chief causes of the depression of mankind. No wise people will trust their defence out of their own hands, or consent to hold their rights at the mercy of armed *slaves*. Free States ought to be bodies of armed *citizens*, well regulated, and well disciplined, and always ready to turn out, when properly called upon, to execute the laws, to quell riots, and to keep the peace. Such, if I am rightly informed, are the citizens of America. Why then may not CONGRESS be furnished with a power of calling out from the confederated States, *quotas* of *militia* sufficient to force at once the compliance

pliance of any State which may shew an inclination to break the union by resisting its decisions ?

I am very sensible that it will be difficult to guard such a power against abuse ; and, perhaps, better means of answering this end are discoverable. In human affairs, however, the choice generally offered us is “ of two evils to take the least.” We chuse the restraint of civil government, because a less evil than anarchy ; and, in like manner, in the present instance, the danger of the abuse of power, and of its being employed sometimes to enforce wrong decisions, must be submitted to, because a less evil than the misery of intestine wars. Much, however, may be done to lessen this danger. Such regulations as those in the ninth of the articles of confederation will, in a great measure, prevent hasty and partial decisions. The rotation established by the fifth article will prevent that corruption of character which seldom fails to be produced by the long possession of power ; and the right reserved to every State of recalling its Delegates when dissatisfied with them, will keep them constantly responsible and cautious.

The observations now made must be extended to money transactions. Congress must be trusted with a power of procuring supplies for defraying the expences of the confederation; of contracting debts, and providing funds for discharging them: and this power must not be capable of being defeated by the opposition of any minority in the States.

In short, the credit of the United States, their strength, their respectableness abroad, their liberty at home, and even their existence, depend on the preservation of a firm political union; and such an union cannot be preserved, without giving all possible weight and energy to the authority of that delegation which constitutes the union.

Would it not be proper to take periodical surveys of the different states, their numbers of both sexes in every stage of life, their condition, occupations, property, &c. ?—Would not such surveys, in conjunction with accurate registers of births, marriages and deaths at all ages, afford much important instruction by shewing

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ing what laws govern human mortality, and what situations, employments, and civil institutions, are most favourable to the health and happiness of mankind?— Would they not keep constantly in view the progress of population in the states, and the increase or decline of their resources? But more especially, are they not the only means of procuring the necessary information for determining accurately and equitably the proportions of men and money to be contributed by each state for supporting and strengthening the confederation?

Of LIBERTY.

THE next point I would insist on, as an object of supreme importance, is the establishment of such a system of perfect liberty, *religious* as well as *civil*, in America, as shall render it a country where truth and reason shall have fair play, and the human powers find full scope for exerting themselves, and for shewing how far they can carry human improvement.

The faculties of man have hitherto, in all countries, been more or less cramped by the interference of civil authority in matters of speculation, by tyrannical laws against heresy and schism, and by slavish hierarchies and religious establishments. It is above all things desirable that no such fetters on reason should be admitted into America. I observe, with inexpressible satisfaction, that at present they have no existence there. In this respect the governments of the United States are liberal to a degree that is unparalleled. They have the distinguished honour of being the first
states

states under heaven in which forms of government have been established favourable to *universal* liberty. They have been thus distinguished in their *infancy*. What then will they be in a more advanced state; when time and experience, and the concurring assistance of the wise and virtuous, in every part of the earth, shall have introduced into the new governments, corrections and amendments which will render them still more friendly to liberty, and more the means of promoting human happiness and dignity?—May we not see there the dawning of brighter days on earth, and a new creation rising. But I must check myself. I am in danger of being carried too far by the ardor of my hopes.

The liberty I mean includes in it liberty of conduct in all *civil* matters—liberty of discussion in all *speculative* matters—and liberty of conscience in all *religious* matters.—And it is then *perfect*, when under no restraint except when used to injure any one in his person, property, or good name; that is, except when used to destroy itself.

In liberty of discussion, I include the liberty of examining all public measures, and the conduct of all public men; and of writing and publishing on all speculative and doctrinal points.

Of LIBERTY of DISCUSSION.

IT is a common opinion, that there are some doctrines so sacred, and others of so bad a tendency, that no public discussion of them ought to be allowed. Were this a right opinion, all the persecution that has been ever practised would be justified. For, if it is a part of the duty of civil magistrates to prevent the discussion of such doctrines, they must, in doing this, act on their own judgments of the nature and tendency of doctrines; and, consequently, they must have a right to prevent the discussion of all doctrines which they *think* to be too sacred for discussion or too dangerous in their tendency; and this right they must exercise in the only way in which civil power is capable of exercising it, “by inflicting
“penalties

“ penalties on all who oppose sacred doctrines, or who maintain pernicious opinions.” — In *Mahometan* countries, therefore, civil magistrates have a right to silence and punish all who oppose the divine mission of *Mahomet*, a doctrine there reckoned of the most sacred nature. The like is true of the doctrines of transubstantiation, worship of the Virgin Mary, &c. in *Popish* countries; and of the doctrines of the Trinity, satisfaction, &c. in *Protestant* countries: — In *England* itself, this principle has been acted upon, and produced the laws which subject to severe penalties all who write or speak against the Supreme Divinity of Christ, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Church Articles of Faith. All such laws are right, if the opinion I have mentioned is right. But in reality, civil power has nothing to do with any such matters; and civil governors go miserably out of their proper province, whenever they take upon them the care of truth, or the support of any doctrinal points. They are not judges of truth; and if they pretend to decide about it, they will decide wrong. This all the countries under heaven think of the applica-

plication of civil power to doctrinal points in every country but their own. It is, indeed, superstition, idolatry, and nonsense, that civil power at present supports almost every where, under the idea of supporting sacred truth, and opposing dangerous error. Would not, therefore, its perfect neutrality be the greatest blessing? Would not the interest of truth gain unspeakably, were all the rulers of States to aim at nothing but keeping the peace; or did they consider themselves as bound to take care, not of the *future*, but the *present* interest of men;—not of their *souls* and their *faith*, but of their *persons* and *property*;—not of any *ecclesiastical*, but *secular* matters only?

All the experience of past time proves that the consequence of allowing civil power to judge of the nature and tendency of doctrines, must be making it a hindrance to the progress of truth, and an enemy to the improvement of the world.

Anaxagoras was tried and condemned in Greece for teaching that the sun and stars were not Deities, but masses of corruptible matter. Accusations of a like kind contributed to the death of *Socrates*. The threats of bigots and the fear of persecution,

tion, prevented *Copernicus* from publishing, during his whole life time, his discovery of the true system of the world. *Galileo* was obliged to renounce the doctrine of the motion of the earth, and suffered a year's imprisonment for having asserted it. And so lately as the year 1742, the best commentary on the first production of human genius (*NEWTON'S Principia*) was not allowed to be printed at ROME, because it asserted this doctrine; and the learned commentators were obliged to prefix to their work a declaration, that on this point they submitted to the decisions of the supreme Pontiffs. Such *have* been, and such (while men continue blind and ignorant) *will* always be the consequences of the interposition of civil governments in matters of speculation.

When men associate for the purpose of civil government, they do it not to defend truth, or to support formularies of faith and speculative opinions; but to defend their civil rights, and to protect one another in the free exercise of their mental and corporeal powers. The interference, therefore, of civil authority in such cases

is directly contrary to the end of its institution. The way in which it can best promote the interest and dignity of mankind, (as far as they can be promoted by the discovery of truth) is, by encouraging them to search for truth wherever they can find it; and by protecting them in doing this against the attacks of malevolence and bigotry. Should any attempt be made by contending sects to injure one another, its power will come in properly to crush the attempt, and to maintain for all sects equal liberty, by punishing every encroachment upon it. The conduct of a civil magistrate, on such an occasion, should be that of *Gallio* the wise Roman proconsul, who, on receiving an accusation of the apostle Paul, would not listen to it, but drove from his presence the accusers who had laid violent hands upon him, after giving them the following admonition:—*If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, reason would require that I should bear with you. But if it be a question of words and names and the law, look you to it. For I will be no judge of such matters.* Acts xviii. 12. &c. How much happier would the world have been, had all magistrates acted in this manner? Let

America learn this important lesson, and profit by the experience of past times. A dissent from *established* opinions and doctrines has indeed often miserably disturbed society, and produced mischief and bloodshed. But it should be remembered, that this has been owing to the *establishment* of the points dissented from, and the use of civil power to enforce the reception of them. Had civil government done its duty, left all free, and employed itself in *procuring* instead of *restraining* fair discussion, all mischief would have been avoided, and mankind would have been raised higher than they are in knowledge and improvement.

When Christianity, that first and best of all the means of human improvement, was first preached, it was charged with turning the world upside down. The leaders of Jewish and Pagan establishments were alarmed, and by opposing the propagation of it, converted a religion of peace and love into an occasion of violence and slaughter; and thus verified our Lord's prophecy, that he was come *not to send peace, but a sword on earth*. All this was the effect of the misapplication

of the powers of government. Instead of *creating*, they should have been employed in *preventing* such mischief, and been *active* only in causing the Christian cause to receive a fair hearing, and guarding the propagators of it against insult.—The like observation may be made concerning the first reformers.—What we all see would have been right in *Pagan* and *Popish* governments with respect to Christianity and the Reformation; would it not be *now* right in *Christian* or *Protestant* governments, were any attempts made to propagate a new religion, or any doctrines advanced opposite to those now held sacred? Such attempts, if unsupported by reason and evidence, would soon come to nothing. An imposture cannot stand the test of fair and open examination. On the contrary, the cause of truth will certainly be served by it. *Mahometanism* would have sunk as soon as it rose, had no other force than that of evidence been employed to propagate it; and it is an unspeakable recommendation of *Christianity*, that it made its way till it became the religion of the world in one of its most enlightened periods, by evidence only, in opposition to the strongest exertions

tions of civil power. There cannot be a more striking proof, that nothing but fair discussion is necessary to suppress error and to propagate truth. I am grieved, indeed, whenever I find any Christians shewing a disposition to call in the aid of civil power to defend their religion. Nothing can be more disgraceful to it. If it wants such aid, it cannot be of God. Its corruption and debasement took place from the moment that civil power took it under its patronage; and this corruption and debasement increased, till at last it was converted into a system of absurdity and superstition more gross and more barbarous than Paganism itself.—The religion of Christ disclaims all connexion with the civil establishments of the world. It has suffered infinitely by their *friendship*. Instead of silencing its opponents, let them be encouraged to produce their strongest arguments against it. The experience of *Britain* has lately shewn that this will only cause it to be better understood and more firmly believed.

I would extend these observations to all points of faith, however sacred they may be

be deemed. Nothing reasonable can suffer by discussion. All doctrines *really* sacred must be clear and incapable of being opposed with success. If civil authority interposes, it will be to support some misconception or abuse of them.

That *immoral tendency* of doctrines which has been urged as a reason against allowing the public discussion of them, may be either *avowed* and *direct*, or only a *consequence* with which they are charged. If it is *avowed* and *direct*, such doctrines certainly will not spread. The principles rooted in human nature will resist them; and the advocates of them will be soon disgraced. If, on the contrary, it is only a *consequence* with which a doctrine is charged, it should be considered how apt all parties are to charge the doctrines they oppose with bad tendencies. It is well known, that *Calvinists* and *Arminians*, *Trinitarians* and *Socinians*, *Fatalists* and *Free-willers*, are continually exclaiming against one another's opinions as dangerous and licentious. Even Christianity itself could not, at its first introduction, escape this accusation. The professors of it were considered as *Atheists*, because they opposed Pagan idolatry; and their

their religion was on this account reckoned a destructive and pernicious enthusiasm. If, therefore, the rulers of a State are to prohibit the propagation of all doctrines in which they apprehend immoral tendencies, an opening will be made, as I have before observed, for every species of persecution. There will be no doctrine, however true or important, the avowal of which will not in some country or other be subjected to civil penalties.—Undoubtedly, there *are* doctrines which have such tendencies. But the tendencies of speculative opinions have often very little effect on practice. The Author of nature has planted in the human mind principles and feelings which will operate in opposition to any *theories* that may seem to contradict them. Every sect, whatever may be its tenets, has some *salvo* for the necessity of virtue. The philosophers who hold that matter and motion have no existence except in our own ideas, are capable of believing this only in their closets. The same is true of the philosophers who hold that nothing exists *but* matter and motion; and at the same time teach, that man has no self determining
power;

power; that an unalterable fate governs all things; and that no one *is* any thing that he can avoid *being*, or *does* any thing that he can avoid *doing*.—These philosophers when they come out into the world act as other men do. Common sense never fails to get the better of their theories; and I know that many of them are some of the best men in the world, and the warmest friends to the true interests of society. Though their doctrine may seem to furnish an apology for vice, their practice is an exhibition of virtue; and a government which would silence them would greatly injure itself.— Only overt acts of injustice, violence or defamation, come properly under the cognizance of civil power. Were a person now to go about London, teaching that “property is founded in grace,” I should, were I a magistrate, let him alone while he did nothing but *teach*, without being under any other apprehension than that he would soon find a lodging in *Bedlam*. But were he to attempt to carry his doctrine into its consequences by actually *stealing*, under the pretence of his right as a saint to the property of his neighbours, I should think

think it my duty to lay hold of him as a felon, without regarding the opinion from which he acted.

I am persuaded, that few or no inconveniencies would arise from such a liberty. If magistrates will do their duty as soon as violence begins, or any overt acts which break the peace are committed, no great harm will arise from their *keeping themselves neutral* till then. Let, however, the contrary be supposed. Let it be granted that civil authority will in this case often be too *late* in its exertions; the just inference will be, not that the liberty I plead for ought not to be allowed; but that there will be two evils, between which an option must be made, and the least of which must be preferred.—*One* is, the evil just mentioned.—The *other* includes in it every evil which can arise from making the rulers of States judges of the tendency of doctrines, subjecting freedom of enquiry to the controul of their ignorance, and perpetuating darkness, intolerance and slavery. I need not say which of these evils is the least.

Of LIBERTY of CONSCIENCE, and CIVIL
ESTABLISHMENTS of RELIGION.

IN LIBERTY of CONSCIENCE I include much more than *Toleration*. Jesus Christ has established a perfect equality among his followers. His command is, that they shall assume no jurisdiction over one another, and acknowledge no master besides *himself*.—It is, therefore, presumption in any of them to claim a right to any superiority or pre-eminence over their brethren. Such a claim is implied, whenever any of them pretend to *tolerate* the rest.—Not only all *Christians*, but all *men* of all religions ought to be considered by a State as equally entitled to its protection as far as they demean themselves honestly and peaceably. *Toleration* can take place only where there is a civil establishment of a particular mode of religion; that is, where a predominant sect enjoys *exclusive* advantages, and makes the encouragement of its own mode of faith and worship a part of the constitution of the State; but at the same
time

time thinks fit to SUFFER the exercise of other modes of faith and worship. Thanks be to God, the new American States are at present strangers to such establishments. In this respect, as well as many others, they have shewn, in framing their constitutions, a degree of wisdom and liberality which is above all praise.

Civil establishments of formularies of faith and worship are inconsistent with the rights of private judgment—They ingender strife—They turn religion into a trade—They shoar up error—They produce hypocrisy and prevarication—They lay an undue bias on the human mind in its enquiries, and obstruct the progress of truth.—*Genuine* religion is a concern that lies entirely between God and our own souls. It is incapable of receiving any aid from human laws. It is contaminated as soon as worldly motives and sanctions mix their influence with it. Statesmen should countenance it only by exhibiting in their own example a conscientious regard to it in those forms which are most agreeable to their own judgments, and by encouraging their fellow-citizens in doing the same. They cannot as *public men* give

it any *other* assistance. All besides that has been called a *public leading* in religion, has done it an essential injury, and produced some of the worst consequences.

The Church Establishment in *England* is one of the mildest sort. But even here what a snare has it been to integrity? And what a check to free enquiry? What dispositions favourable to despotism has it fostered? What a turn to pride and narrowness and domination has it given the clerical character? What struggles has it produced in its members to accommodate their opinions to the subscriptions and tests which it imposes? What a perversion of learning has it occasioned to defend obsolete creeds and absurdities? What a burthen is it on the consciences of some of its best clergy, who, in consequence of being bound down to a system they do not approve, and having no support except that which they derive from conforming to it, find themselves under the hard necessity of either *prevaricating* or *starving*?—No one doubts but that the English clergy in general could with more truth declare that they *do not*, than that they *do* give their *unfeigned assent to*
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all and every thing contained in the thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common-Prayer; and yet, with a solemn declaration to this purpose, are they obliged to enter upon an office which above all offices requires those who exercise it to be examples of simplicity and sincerity. — Who can help execrating the cause of such an evil?

But what I wish most to urge is the tendency of religious establishments to impede the improvement of the world. They are boundaries prescribed by human folly to human investigation; and inclosures which intercept the light and confine the exertions of reason. Let any one imagine to himself what effects similar establishments would have in Philosophy, Navigation, Metaphysics, Medicine or Mathematicks. Something like this took place in Logick and Philosophy; while the *IPSE DIXIT* of Aristotle and the nonsense of the schools maintained an authority like that of the creeds of churchmen: And the effect was a longer continuance of the world in the ignorance and barbarity of the dark ages. But civil establishments of religion are *more* pernicious. So apt are mankind to misrepresent the character of
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the Deity, and to connect his favour with particular modes of faith, that it must be expected, that a religion so settled will be what it has hitherto been—a gloomy and cruel superstition bearing the name of religion.

It has been long a subject of dispute, which is worst in its effects on society, *such* a religion or speculative Atheism. For my own part, I could almost give the preference to the latter.—ATHEISM is so repugnant to every principle of common sense, that it is not possible it should ever gain much ground, or become very prevalent. On the contrary; there is a particular proneness in the human mind to SUPERSTITION, and nothing is more likely to become prevalent.—ATHEISM leaves us to the full influence of most of our natural feelings and social principles; and these are so strong in their operation, that in general they are a sufficient guard to the order of society. But SUPERSTITION counteracts these principles, by holding forth men to one another as objects of divine hatred; and by putting them on harrassing, silencing, imprisoning and burning one another in order to do God service.—ATHEISM is a sanctuary for

vice by taking away the motives to virtue arising from the will of God and the fear of a future judgment. But SUPERSTITION is more a sanctuary for vice, by teaching men ways of pleasing God without moral virtue, and by leading them even to compound for wickedness by *ritual* services, by bodily penances and mortifications, by adorning shrines, going pilgrimages, saying many prayers, receiving absolution from the priest, exterminating heretics, &c.—ATHEISM destroys the sacredness and obligation of an oath. But is there not also a religion (so called) which does this, by teaching that there is a power which can dispense with the obligation of oaths, that *pious* frauds are right, and that faith is not to be kept with heretics?

It is indeed only a rational and liberal religion; a religion founded on just notions of the Deity as a being who regards equally every sincere worshipper, and by whom all are alike favoured as far as they act up to the light they enjoy; a religion which consists in the imitation of the moral perfections of an almighty but benevolent governor of nature who directs for the best all events, in confidence in the care
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of his providence, in resignation to his will, and in the faithful discharge of every duty of piety and morality from a regard to his authority and the apprehension of a future righteous retribution. — It is only THIS religion (the inspiring principle of every thing fair and worthy and joyful, and which in truth is nothing but the love of God and man and virtue warming the heart and directing the conduct.)—It is only THIS kind of religion that can bless the world, or be an advantage to society.— This is the religion that every enlightened friend to mankind will be zealous to promote. But it is a religion that the powers of the world know little of, and which will always be best promoted by being left free and open.

I cannot help adding here, that this is in particular the *Christian* religion.— Christianity teaches us that there is none good but one, that is, God; that he willeth all men to be saved, and will punish nothing but wickedness; that he desires mercy and not sacrifice (benevolence rather than rituals); that loving him with all our hearts, and loving our neighbour as ourselves, is the whole of our duty; and that in every
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nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. It rests its authority on the power of God, not of man; refers itself entirely to the understandings of men; makes us the subjects of a kingdom that is not of this world; and requires us to elevate our minds above temporal emoluments, and to look forwards to a state beyond the grave, where a government of perfect virtue will be erected under that Messiah who has *tasted death for every man*.—What have the powers of the world to do with such a religion?—It disclaims all connexion with them; it made its way at first in opposition to them; and, as far as it is now upheld by them, it is dishonoured and vilified.

The injury which civil establishments do to Christianity may be learnt from the following considerations.

First. The spirit of religious establishments is opposite to the spirit of Christianity. It is a spirit of pride and tyranny in opposition to the Christian *lowly* spirit; a contracted and selfish spirit, in opposition to the Christian enlarged and benevo-

lent spirit ; the spirit of the world in opposition to the Christian *heavenly* spirit.

Secondly. Religious establishments are founded on a claim of authority in the Christian church which overthrows Christ's authority. He has in the scriptures given his followers a code of laws, to which he requires them to adhere as their *only* guide. But the language of the framers of church establishments is—*We have authority in controversies of faith and power to decree rites and ceremonies.* We are the deputies of Christ upon earth, who have been commissioned by him to interpret his laws, and to rule his church. You must therefore follow us. The scriptures are insufficient. Our interpretations you must receive as Christ's laws ; our creeds as *his* doctrine ; our inventions as *his* institutions."

It is evident, as the excellent HOADLY has shewn, that these claims turn Christ out of the government of his own kingdom, and place usurpers on his throne.—They are therefore derogatory to his honour ; and a submission to them is a breach
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of the allegiance due to him. They have been almost fatal to true Christianity; and attempts to enforce them by civil penalties, have watered the Christian world with the blood of saints and martyrs.

Thirdly. The difficulty of introducing alterations into church establishments after they have been once formed, is another objection to them. Hence it happens, that they remain always the same amidst all changes of public manners and opinions*; and that a kingdom may go on for ages in idolatrous worship, after a general conviction has taken place, that there is but one object of religious worship, namely, *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. What a sad scene of religious hypocrisy must such a discordance between public conviction and the public forms produce?

* This is an inconvenience attending *civil* as well as *ecclesiastical* establishments, which has been with great wisdom guarded against in the new *American* constitutions, by appointing that there shall be a revival of them at the end of certain terms. This will leave them always open to improvement, without any danger of those convulsions which have usually attended the corrections of abuses when they have acquired a sacredness by time.

At this day, in some *European* countries, the absurdity and slavishness of their hierarchies are seen and acknowledged; but being incorporated with the state, it is scarcely possible to get rid of them.

What can be more striking than the State of *England* in this respect?—The system of faith and worship established in it was formed above two hundred years ago, when *Europe* was just emerging from darkness and barbarity. The times have ever since been growing more enlightened; but without any effect on the establishment. Not a ray of the increasing light has penetrated it. Not one imperfection, however gross, has been removed. The same articles of faith are subscribed. The same ritual of devotion is practised.—There is reason to fear that the *absolution of the sick* which forms a part of this ritual, is often resorted to as a passport to heaven after a wicked life; and yet it is continued.—Perhaps nothing more shocking to reason and humanity ever made a part of a religious system than the damning clauses in the *Athanasian* creed; and yet the obligation of the clergy to declare assent to this creed, and to read it as a part of the public devotion, remains.

The necessary consequence of such a state of things is, that,

Fourthly, Christianity itself is disgraced, and that all religion comes to be considered as a state trick, and a barbarous mummary. It is well known, that in some Popish countries there are few Christians among the higher ranks of men, the religion of the State being in those countries *mistaken* for the religion of the Gospel. This indeed shews a criminal inattention in those who fall into such a mistake; for they ought to consider that Christianity has been grievously corrupted, and that their ideas of it should be taken from the New Testament only. It is, however, so natural to reckon Christianity to be that which it is held out to be in all the establishments of it, that it cannot but happen that such an error will take place and produce some of the worst consequences.—There is probably a greater number of rational Christians (that is, of Christians upon enquiry) in *England*, than in all Popish countries. The reason is, that the religious establishment here is *Popery reformed*; and that a considerable body dissent from it, and are often inculcating the necessity of distinguishing

guishing between the Christianity established by law and that which is taught in the Bible.—Certain it is, that till this distinction is made, Christianity can never recover its just credit and usefulness.

Such then are the effects of civil establishments of religion. May heaven soon put an end to them. The world will never be generally wise or virtuous or happy, till these enemies to its peace and improvement are demolished. Thanks be to God, they are giving way before increasing light. Let them never shew themselves in America. Let no such monster be known there as HUMAN AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION. Let every honest and peaceable man, whatever is his faith, be protected there; and find an effectual defence against the attacks of bigotry and intolerance.—In the united States may RELIGION flourish. They cannot be very great and happy if it does not. But let it be a better religion than most of those which have been hitherto professed in the world. Let it be a religion which enforces moral obligations; not a religion which relaxes and evades them.—A tolerant and *Catholic*

atholic religion ; not a rage for profelitism.—
 A religion of peace and charity ; not a
 religion that perfecutes, curses and damns.
 —In a word, let it be the genuine Gof-
 pel of peace lifting above the world, warm-
 ing the heart with the love of God and
 his creatures, and fuftraining the fortitude
 of good men by the affured hope of a
 future deliverance from death, and an in-
 finite reward in the *everlafting kingdom of*
our Lord and Saviour.

From the preceding obfervations it may
 be concluded, that it is impoffible I fhould
 not admire the following article in the de-
 claration of rights which forms the founda-
 tion of the *MAffachufett's* conftitution.—
 “ In this State every denomination of
 “ Chriftians demeaning themfelves peace-
 “ ably and as good fubjects of the com-
 “ monwealth, fhall be EQUALLY under the
 “ protection of the law ; and no fubordi-
 “ nation of any one feft or denomination
 “ to another fhall ever be eftablifhed by
 “ law *.”

* The *North Carolina* conftitution alfo orders that
 there fhall be no eftablifhment of any one religious church
 or denomination in that State in preference to any other.

This is liberal beyond all example.—I should, however, have admired it more had it been MORE liberal, and the words ALL MEN OF ALL RELIGIONS been substituted for the words *every denomination of Christians*.

It appears farther from the preceding observations, that I cannot but dislike the religious tests which make a part of several of the *American* constitutions.—In the *Massachusetts's* constitution it is ordered, that all who take seats in the House of Representatives or Senate shall declare “their firm persuasion of the truth of the Christian religion.” The same is required by the *Maryland* constitution, as a condition of being admitted into *any* places of profit or trust. In *Pensylvania* every member of the House of Representatives is required to declare, that he “acknowledges the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.” In the State of *Delaware*, that “he believes in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ his only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God blessed for evermore.” All this is more than is required even in *England*, where, though

every person however debauched or atheistical is required to receive the sacrament as a qualification for *inferior* places, no other religious test is imposed on members of parliament than a declaration against Popery.—It is an observation no less just than common, that such tests exclude only *honest* men. The *dishonest* never scruple them.

MONTESQUIEU probably was not a Christian. NEWTON and LOCKE were not *Trinitarians*; and therefore not *Christians* according to the commonly received ideas of Christianity. Would the united States, for this reason, deny such men, were they living, all places of trust and power among them?

Of EDUCATION.

SUCH is the state of things which I wish to take place in the united *American* States. — In order to introduce and perpetuate it, and at the same time to give it the greatest effect on the improvement of the world, nothing is more necessary than the establishment of a wise and liberal plan of EDUCATION. It is impossible properly to represent the importance of this. So much is left by the author of nature to depend on the turn given to the mind in early life and the impressions then made, that I have often thought there may be a *secret* remaining to be discovered in education, which will cause future generations to grow up virtuous and happy, and accelerate human improvement to a greater degree than can at present be imagined.

The end of education is to direct the powers of the mind in unfolding themselves; and to assist them in gaining their just bent and force. And, in order to this,
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its business should be to teach *how* to think, rather than *what* to think ; or to lead into the best way of searching for truth, rather than to instruct in truth itself.—As for the latter, who is qualified for it ? There are many indeed who are eager to undertake this office. All parties and sects think they have discovered truth, and that they alone are its advocates and friends. But the very different and inconsistent accounts they give of it demonstrate they are utter strangers to it ; and that it is better to teach *nothing*, than to teach what they hold out for truth. The greater their confidence, the greater is the reason for distrusting them. We generally see the warmest zeal, where the object of it is the greatest nonsense.

Such observations have a particular tendency to shew that education ought to be an initiation into candour, rather than into any systems of faith ; and that it should form a habit of cool and patient investigation, rather than an attachment to any opinions.

But hitherto education has been conducted on a contrary plan. It has been a *contraction*, not an *enlargement* of the

intellectual faculties; an *injection* of false principles hardening them in error, not a *discipline* enlightening and improving them. Instead of opening and strengthening them, and teaching to think *freely*; it hath cramped and enslaved them, and qualified for thinking only in *one* track. Instead of instilling humility, charity, and liberality, and thus preparing for an easier discovery and a readier admission of truth; it has inflated with conceit, and stuffed the human mind with wretched prejudices.

The more has been learnt from *such* education, the more it becomes necessary to *unlearn*. The more has been taught in this way, of so much the more must the mind be emptied before true wisdom can enter.—Such was education in the time of the first teachers of christianity. By furnishing with skill in the arts of disputation and sophistry, and producing an attachment to established systems, it turned the minds of men from truth, and rendered them more determined to resist evidence, and more capable of evading it. Hence it happened, that this heavenly instruction, when first

communicated, was to the Jews a *stumbling block*, and to the Greeks *foolishness*; and that, in spite of *miracles themselves*, the persons who rejected it with most disdain, and who opposed it with most violence, were those who had been educated in colleges, and were best versed in the false learning of the times: And had it taught the true philosophy instead of the true religion, the effect would have been the same. The doctrine “that the sun stood still and that “the earth moved round it,” would have been reckoned no less absurd and incredible, than the doctrine of a *crucified Messiah*. And the men who would have treated such an instruction with most contempt, would have been the *wise and the prudent*; that is, the proud sophists and learned doctors of the times, who had studied the *Ptolemaick* system of the world, and learnt, by cycles and epicycles, to account for all the motions of the heavenly bodies.

In like manner, when the improvement of Logick in Mr. LOCKE’s *Essay on the Human Understanding* was first published in *Britain*, the persons readiest to attend to it and to receive it were those who had
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never been trained in colleges; and whose minds, therefore, had never been perverted by an instruction in the jargon of the schools. To the deep professors of the time, it appeared (like the doctrine taught in his book on the reasonableness of christianity) to be a dangerous novelty and heresy; and the University of OXFORD, in particular, condemned and reprobated the author.—The like happened when Sir ISAAC NEWTON'S discoveries were first published. A romance (that is, the Philosophy of DESCARTES) was then in possession of the philosophical world. Education had rivetted it in the minds of the learned; and it was twenty-seven years before NEWTON'S *Principia* could gain sufficient credit to bring it to a second edition.—Such are the prejudices which have generally prevailed against new lights. Such the impediments which have been thrown in the way of improvement by a narrow plan of education.—Even now the principal object of education (especially in divinity) is to teach established systems as certain truths, and to qualify for successfully defending them against opponents; and

and thus to arm the mind against conviction, and render it impenetrable to farther light. Indeed, were it offered to my option which I would have, the plain sense of a common and untutored man, or the deep erudition of the proud scholars and professors in most universities, I should eagerly prefer the former, from a persuasion that it would leave me at a less distance from real wisdom. An unoccupied and simple mind I think infinitely preferable to a mind warped by systems; and the entire want of learning better than a learning, such as most of that is which hitherto has been sought and admired—A learning which puffs up, while in reality it is nothing but profounder ignorance and more inveterate prejudice.

It may be worth adding here, that a narrow education (should it ever happen not to produce the evils now mentioned) will probably produce equal evils of a contrary nature. I mean, that there will be danger, when persons so educated come to see the absurdity of *some* of the opinions in which they have been educated, that they will become prejudiced against them *all*, and, consequently, throw them *all* away, and

run wild into scepticism and infidelity.—
At present, in this part of the world this
is a very common event.

I am by no means qualified to give a just account of the particular method in which education ought to be conducted, so as to avoid these evils: That is, so as to render the mind free and unfettered; quick in discerning evidence, and prepared to follow it from whatever quarter and in whatever manner it may offer itself. But certain it is, that the best mode of education is that which does this most effectually; which guards best against silly prejudices; which enflames most with the love of truth; which disposes most to ingenuity and fairness, and leaves the mind most sensible of its own need of farther information.—Had this been always the aim of education, mankind would now have been farther advanced.—It supposes, however, an *improved* state of mankind; and when once it has taken place, it will quicken the progress of *improvement*.

I have in these observations expressed a dislike of systems; but I have meant only
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to condemn that attachment to them as standards of truth which has been too prevalent. It may be necessary in education to make use of them; or of books explaining them. But they should be used only as guides and helps to enquiry. Instruction in them should be attended with a fair exhibition of the evidence on both sides of every question; and care should be taken to induce, as far as possible, a habit of believing only on an overbalance of evidence; and of proportioning assent in every case to the degree of that overbalance, without regarding authority, antiquity, singularity, novelty, or any of the prejudices which too commonly influence assent. — Nothing is so well fitted to produce this habit as the study of *mathematics*. In these sciences no one ever thinks of giving his assent to a proposition till he can clearly understand it, and see it proved by a fair deduction from propositions previously understood and proved. In these sciences the mind is inured to close and patient attention; shewn the nature of just reasoning; and taught to form distinct ideas, and to expect clear evidence in all cases before belief. They furnish, therefore, the best exercise for the intellectual

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tual powers, and the best defence against that credulity and precipitation and confusion of ideas which are the common sources of error.

There is, however, a danger to be avoided here. Mathematical studies may absorb the attention too much; and when they do, they contract the mind by rendering it incapable of thinking *at large*; by disqualifying it for judging of any evidence except mathematical; and, consequently, disposing it to an unreasonable scepticism on all subjects which admit not of such evidence.—There have been many instances of this narrowness in mathematicians.

But to return from this digression, — I cannot help observing on this occasion, with respect to CHRISTIANITY in particular, that education ought to lead to a habit of judging of it as it is in the code itself of Christianity; that the doctrines it reveals should be learnt only from a critical and fair enquiry into the sense of this code; and that all instruction in it should be a preparation for making this enquiry and a communication of assistance in examining into the proofs of its divine original, and in determining to what degree of evidence

evidence these proofs amount, after allowing every difficulty its just weight.— This has never yet been the practice among Christians. The New Testament has been reckoned hitherto an *insufficient* standard of Christian Divinity; and, therefore, formularies of human invention *pretending* to explain and define it (but in reality misrepresenting and dishonouring it) have been substituted in its room; and teaching *these* has been called teaching *Christianity*. And it is very remarkable, that in the *English* Universities no Lectures on the New Testament are ever read, or even suffered to be read; and that, through all Christendom, it is much less an object of attention than the *systems* and *creeds* which have been fathered upon it.

I will only add on this subject, that it is above all things necessary, while instruction is conveyed, to convey with it a sense of the imbecility of the human mind, and of its great proneness to error; and also a disposition, even on points which seem the most clear, to listen to objections, and to consider nothing as involving in it our final interest but an HONEST HEART.

Nature has so made us, that an attachment must take place within us to opinions once formed; and it was proper that we should be so made, in order to prevent that levity and desultoriness of mind which must have been the consequence had we been ready to give up our opinions too easily and hastily. But this natural tendency, however wisely given us, is apt to exceed its proper limits, and to render us unreasonably tenacious. It ought, therefore, like all our other natural propensities, to be carefully watched and guarded; and education should put us upon doing this. An observation before made should, in particular, be inculcated, “that all mankind
 “ have hitherto been most tenacious when
 “ most in the wrong, and reckoned them-
 “ selves most enlightened when most in the
 “ dark.”——This is, indeed, a very mortifying fact; but attention to it is necessary to cure that miserable pride and dogmatism which are some of the worst enemies to improvement.——Who is there that does not remember the time when he was entirely satisfied about points which deeper reflexion has shewn to be above his comprehension? Who, for instance, does

not remember a time when he would have wondered at the question, “ why does “ water run down hill ? ” What ignorant man is there who is not persuaded that he understands this perfectly ? But every *improved* man knows it to be a question he cannot answer ; and what distinguishes him in this instance from the less improved part of mankind is his knowing this. The like is true in numberless other instances. One of the best proofs of wisdom is a sense of our want of wisdom ; and he who knows most possesses most of this sense.

In thinking of myself I derive some encouragement from this reflexion. I now see, that I do not understand many points which once appeared to me very clear. The more I have inquired, the more sensible I have been growing of my own darkness ; and a part of the history of my life is that which follows.

In early life I was struck with Bishop BUTLER'S *Analogy of religion natural and revealed to the constitution and course of nature*. I reckon it happy for me that this
book

book was one of the first that fell into my hands. It taught me the proper mode of reasoning on moral and religious subjects, and particularly the importance of paying a due regard to the imperfection of human knowledge. His sermons also, I then thought, and do still think, excellent. Next to *his* works, I have always been an admirer of the writings of Dr. CLARK. And I cannot help adding, however strange it may seem, that I owe much to the philosophical writings of Mr. HUME, which I likewise studied early in life. Though an enemy to his Scepticism, I have profited by it. By attacking, with great ability, every principle of truth and reason, he put me upon examining the ground upon which I stood, and taught me not hastily to take any thing for granted.—The first fruits of my reading and studies were laid before the public in a Treatise entitled *A REVIEW of the principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals*. This publication has been followed by many others on various subjects.—And now, in the evening of a life devoted to enquiry and spent in endeavours (weak indeed and feeble) to serve the

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the best interests, present and future, of mankind, I am waiting for the GREAT TEACHER, convinced that the order of nature is perfect; that infinite wisdom and goodness govern all things; and that Christianity comes from God: But at the same time puzzled by many difficulties, anxious for more light, and resting with full and constant assurance only on this ONE truth — That the practice of virtue is the duty and dignity of man; and, in all events, his wisest and safest course.

Of the DANGERS to which the American States are exposed.

IN the preceding observations, I have aimed at pointing out the means of promoting the progress of improvement in the united States of America. I have insisted, particularly, on the importance of a just settlement of the FEDERAL UNION, and the establishment of a well-guarded and perfect liberty in speculation, in government, in education, and in religion.— The united States are now setting out, and all depends on the care and foresight with which a plan is begun, which hereafter will require only to be strengthened and ripened. This is, therefore, the time for giving them advice; and mean advice (like the present) may suggest some useful hints.— In this country, when any improvements are proposed, or any corrections are attempted, of abuses so gross as to make our boasts of liberty ridiculous*, a clamour

* The majority of the BRITISH House of Commons is chosen by a *few thousands* of the dregs of the people, who are constantly paid for their votes.—

clamour immediately arises against INNOVATION, and an alarm spreads, lest the attempt to *repair* should *destroy*. — In America no such prejudices can operate. *There* abuses have not yet gained sacredness by time. *There* the way is open to social dignity and happiness; and reason may utter her voice with confidence and success.

Is it not *ridiculous* to call a country *so* governed *free*?
 — See a striking account of the State of the British Parliamentary Representation, in Mr. *Burgh's* Political Disquisitions, Vol. I. p. 39, &c.

Of DEBTS and INTERNAL WARS.

I HAVE observed in the introduction to this Address, that the *American* States have many dangers to shun. In what follows I shall give a brief recital of some of the chief of these dangers.

The danger from an endless increase of PUBLIC DEBTS has been already sufficiently noticed.

Particular notice has been likewise taken of the danger from INTERNAL WARS.— Again and again, I would urge the necessity of pursuing every measure and using every precaution which can guard against this danger. It will be shocking to see in the *new* world a repetition of all the evils which have hitherto laid waste the *old* world — War raging where peace and liberty were thought to have taken their abodes — The points of bayonets and the mouths of cannon settling disputes, instead of the collected wisdom of the confederation — and perhaps one restless and ambitious State rising by
bloody

bloody conquest above the rest, and becoming a *sovereign* State, claiming impiously (as *Britain* once did) “ full authority to make “ laws that shall bind its sister States in all “ cases whatever,” and drawing to itself all advantages at their expence. — I deprecate this calamity. I shudder when I consider how possible it is; and hope those persons are mistaken who think that such are the jealousies which govern human nature, and such the imperfections of the best human arrangements, that it is not within the reach of any wisdom to discover any effectual means of preventing it, without encroaching too much on the liberty and independence of the States. I have mentioned an enlargement of the powers of CONGRESS. Others have proposed a consolidation of the powers of government in one PARLIAMENT representing *all* the States, and superseding the particular parliaments by which they are now separately governed. But it is obvious, that this will be attended with greater inconveniencies, and encroach more on the liberty of the States, than the enlargement I have proposed of the powers of CONGRESS.—If

such a parliament is not to supersede any of the other parliaments, it will be the same with CONGRESS as at present constituted.

*Of an UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF
PROPERTY.*

IT is a trite observation, that “dominion
“is founded on property.” Most free States have manifested their sense of the truth of this observation, by studying to find out means of preventing too great an inequality in the distribution of property. What tumults were occasioned at ROME in its best times by attempts to carry into execution the *Agrarian* law? Among the people of *Israel*, by the direction of heaven, all estates which had been alienated during the course of fifty years, returned to their original owners at the end of that term. One of the circumstances that has been most favourable to the *American* States in forming their new constitutions of government has been the equality which subsists among them.

The

The happiest state of man is the middle state between the *savage* and the *refined*, or between the wild and the luxurious state. Such is the state of society in CONNEDICUT, and some others of the *American* provinces; where the inhabitants consist, if I am rightly informed, of an independent and hardy YEOMANRY, all nearly on a level—trained to arms,—instructed in their rights—cloathed in home-spun—of simple manners—strangers to luxury—drawing plenty from the ground—and that plenty, gathered easily by the hand of industry; and giving rise to early marriages, a numerous progeny, length of days, and a rapid increase—the rich and the poor, the haughty grandee and the creeping sycophant, equally unknown—protected by laws, which (being their own will) cannot oppress; and by an equal government, which wanting lucrative places, cannot create corrupt canvassings* and ambitious intrigue.—O distinguished people! May you continue

* In this State, and also the State of *Massachusetts*, *New Jersey*, &c. any attempt to canvas, or even the expression of a wish to be chosen, will exclude a candidate from a seat in the House of Representatives. The same is true of any stain on his moral character.

long thus happy; and may the happiness you enjoy spread over the face of the whole earth!—But I am forgetting myself. There is danger that a state of society so happy will not be of long duration; that simplicity and virtue will give way to depravity; that equality will in time be lost, the cursed lust of domineering shew itself, liberty languish, and civil government gradually degenerate into an instrument in the hands of the *few* to oppress and plunder the *many*.—Such has hitherto been the progress of evil in human affairs. In order to give them a better turn, some great men (*Plato, Sir Thomas More, Mr. Wallis, &c.*) have proposed plans, which, by establishing a community of goods and annihilating property, would make it impossible for any one member of a State to think of enslaving the rest, or to consider himself as having any interest distinct from that of his fellow-citizens. Such theories are in speculation pleasing; nor perhaps are they wholly impracticable. Some approaches to them may hereafter be made; and schemes of government may take place, which shall leave so little, besides personal merit, to be a means of distinction,

as

as to exclude from society most of the causes of evil. But be this as it will; it is out of doubt that there is an equality in society which is essential to liberty, and which every State that would continue virtuous and happy ought as far as possible to maintain. — It is not in my power to describe the best method of doing this. — I will only observe, that there are THREE enemies to equality against which *America* ought to guard.

First; Granting hereditary honours and titles of nobility. Persons thus distinguished, though perhaps meaner than the meanest of their dependents, are apt to consider themselves as belonging to a higher order of beings, and *made* for power and government. Their birth and rank necessarily dispose them to be hostile to general liberty; and when they are not so, and discover a just zeal for the rights of mankind, it is always a triumph of good sense and virtue over the temptations of their situation. It is, therefore, with peculiar satisfaction that I have found in the articles of confederation an order that no titles of nobility shall be ever granted by the united States. Let there

there be honours to encourage merit ; but let them die with the men who have earned them. Let them not descend to posterity to foster a spirit of domination, and to produce a proud and tyrannical aristocracy. — In a word, let the united States continue for ever what it is now their glory to be—a confederation of States prosperous and happy, without LORDS—without BISHOPS*—and without KINGS.

Secondly ; The right of primogeniture. The tendency of this to produce an improper inequality is very obvious. The disposition to raise a name, by accumulating property in one branch of a family, is a vanity no less unjust and cruel, than

* I do not mean by *Bishops* any officers among Christians merely *spiritual* ; but *Lords spiritual*, as distinguished from *Lords temporal*, or Clergymen raised to pre-eminence, and invested with civil honours and authority by a State establishment.

I must add, that by what is here said I do not mean to express a *general* preference of a *republican* constitution of government. There is a degree of political degeneracy which unfits for such a constitution. BRITAIN, in particular, consists too much of the high and the low, (of *scum* and *dregs*) to admit of it. Nor will it suit *America*, should it ever become equally corrupt.

dangerous

dangerous to the interest of liberty ; and no wise State will encourage or tolerate it.

Thirdly; FOREIGN TRADE is another of the enemies against which I wish to caution the united States. But this operates unfavourably to a State in so many more ways than by destroying that equality which is the basis of liberty, that it will be proper to take more particular notice of it.

Of TRADE, BANKS, and PAPER CREDIT.

FOREIGN trade has, in some respects, the most useful tendency. By creating an intercourse between distant kingdoms, it extends benevolence, removes local prejudices, leads every man to consider himself more as a citizen of the world than of any particular State, and, consequently, checks the excesses of that *Love of our Country** which has been applauded as
 one

* The love of our country is then only a noble passion when it engages us to promote the *internal* happiness of our country, and to defend its rights and liberties against domestic and foreign invasion, maintaining at the same time an equal regard to the rights and liberties of other countries. But this has not been its most common effects. On the contrary, it has in general been nothing but a spirit of rivalry between different communities, producing contention and a thirst for conquest and dominion.—What is his *country* to a *Russian*, a *Turk*, a *Spaniard*, &c. but a spot where he enjoys no rights, and is disposed of by owners as if he was a beast? And what is his *love* to his country but an attachment to degradation and slavery?—What was the love of their country among the *Jews* but a wretched partiality for themselves and a proud contempt for other nations?

Among

one of the noblest, but which, *really*, is one of the most *destructive* principles in human nature.—Trade also, by enabling every country to draw from other countries conveniences and advantages which it cannot find within itself, produces among nations a sense of mutual dependence, and promotes the general improvement.—But there is no part of mankind to which these uses of trade are of less consequence than the *American* States. They are spread over a great continent, and make a world within themselves. The country they inhabit includes soils and climates of all sorts, producing not only every *necessary*, but every *convenience* of life. And the vast rivers and wide-spread lakes which intersect it, create such an inland communication between its different parts, as is unknown in any other region of the earth. They possess then within themselves the

Among the *Romans* also what was it, however great in many of its exertions, but a principle holding together a band of robbers in their attempts to crush all liberty but their own?—Christianity has wisely omitted to recommend this principle. Had it done this, it would have countenanced a vice among mankind.—It has done what is infinitely better—It has recommended UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE.

best means of the most profitable *internal* traffic, and the amplest scope for it. Why should they look much farther? What occasion can they have for being anxious about pushing *foreign* trade; or even about raising a great naval force?—Britain, indeed, consisting as it does of *unarmed* inhabitants, and threatened as it is by ambitious and powerful neighbours, cannot hope to maintain its existence long after becoming open to invasion by losing its naval superiority.—But this is not the case with the American States. They have no powerful neighbours to dread. The vast Atlantic must be crossed before they can be attacked. They are all a well-trained *militia*; and the successful resistance which, in their infancy and without a naval force, they have made to the invasion of the first *European* power, will probably discourage and prevent all future invasions. Thus singularly happy, why should they seek connexions with *Europe*, and expose themselves to the danger of being involved in its quarrels?—What have they to do with its politics?—Is there any thing very important to them which they can draw from thence—except INFECTION?—Indeed,

deed, I tremble when I think of that rage for trade which is likely to prevail among them. It may do them infinite mischief. All nations are spreading snares for them, and courting them to a dangerous intercourse. Their best interest requires them to guard themselves by all proper means ; and, particularly, by laying heavy duties on importations. But in no case will any means succeed unless aided by MANNERS. In this instance, particularly, there is reason to fear that an increasing passion for foreign frippery will render all the best regulations ineffectual. And should this happen, that simplicity of character, that manliness of spirit, that disdain of tinsel in which true dignity consists, will disappear. Effeminacy, servility and venality will enter ; and liberty and virtue be swallowed up in the gulph of corruption. Such may be the course of events in the American States. Better *infinitely* will it be for them to consist of bodies of plain and honest farmers, rather than opulent and splendid merchants. — Where in these States do the purest manners prevail ? Where do the inhabitants live most on an equality, and most at their ease ? Is it

it not in those inland parts where agriculture gives health and plenty, and trade is scarcely known?—Where, on the contrary, are the inhabitants most selfish, luxurious, loose, and vicious; and at the same time most unhappy? Is it not along the sea coasts, and in the great towns, where trade flourishes and merchants abound?—So striking is the effect of these different situations on the vigour and happiness of human life, that in the one population would languish did it receive no aid from emigrations; while in the other it increases to a degree scarcely ever before known.

But to proceed to some observations of a different nature—

The united States have, I think, particular reason to dread the following effects of foreign trade.

By increasing importation to feed luxury and gratify prodigality, it will carry out their coin, and occasion the substitution of a delusive paper currency; the consequence of which will be, that *ideal* wealth will take place of *real*, and their security come to depend

~~on the strength and duration of a~~
Bubble. — I am very sensible that paper

(as the Security of Britain credit does)

credit is one of the greatest of all conveniences ; but this makes it likewise one of the greatest of all temptations. A public Bank, (while it can circulate its bills) facilitates commerce, and assists the exertions of a State in proportion to its credit. But when it is not carefully restricted and watched ; when its emissions exceed the coin it can command, and are carried near the utmost length that the confidence of the public will allow ; and when, in consequence of this, its permanence comes to depend on the permanence of public credulity—In these circumstances, a BANK, though it may for a time (that is, while a balance of trade too unfavourable does not occasion a run, and no events arise which produce alarms) answer all the ends of a MINE from which millions may be drawn in a minute ; and, by filling a kingdom with cash, render it capable of sustaining *any* debts, and give it a kind of OMNIPOTENCE. — In such circumstances, I say, notwithstanding these temporary advantages, a public BANK must *at last* prove a great calamity ; and a kingdom so supported, at the very time of its greatest exer-

exer-

exertions, will be only striving more violently to increase the horror of an approaching convulsion.

The united States have already verified some of these observations, and felt in some degree the consequences to which I have alluded. They have been carried through the war by an emission of paper which had no solid support, and which now has lost all value. It is indeed surprising that, being secured on no fund and incapable of being exchanged for coin, it should ever have obtained a currency, or answered any important purpose.

Unhappily for *Britain*, it has used the means of giving more stability to its paper-credit, and been enabled by it to support expences greater than any that have been yet known, and to contract a debt which now *astonishes*, and may hereafter produce a catastrophe that will *terrify* the world.— A longer duration of the late war would have brought on this catastrophe immediately. The PEACE has put it off *for the present*. God grant if still possible, that measures may be adopted which shall put it off *for ever*.

Of OATHS.

OATHS are expedients to which all States have had recourse in order to obtain true information and ascertain facts by securing the veracity of witnesses. But I know not how to relish that *imprecation* which always makes a part of an oath. Perhaps; there is no such necessity for it as is commonly imagined. An AFFIRMATION solemnly made, with laws inflicting severe penalties on falsehood when detected, would probably answer all the ends of oaths. — I am, therefore, disposed to wish, that in the united States *imprecatory* oaths may be abolished, and the same indulgence in this respect granted to all which is now granted to the *Quakers*. But I am afraid they will think this too dangerous an experiment; and what is of most consequence is to avoid,

First, Such a multiplicity of oaths as will render them too familiar.

And, Secondly, A slight manner of administering them. ENGLAND, in this respect,

M

spect,

spect, seems to be sunk to the lowest possible degree of degeneracy. Oaths among us are required on so many occasions, and so carelessly administered, as to have lost almost all their use and efficacy. It has been asserted, that, including oaths of office, oaths at elections, custom-house oaths, &c. &c. there are about a *million* of perjuries committed in this kingdom *annually*.—This is one of the most atrocious of our national iniquities; and it is a wonder if we are not to be visited for it with some of the severest of God's judgments.

Of the NEGRO TRADE and SLAVERY.

THE NEGRO TRADE cannot be censured in language too severe. It is a traffick which, as it has been hitherto carried on, is shocking to humanity, cruel, wicked, and diabolical. I am happy to find that the united States are entering into measures for discountenancing it, and for abolishing the odious slavery which it has introduced. 'Till they have done this, it will not appear they deserve the liberty for which they have been contending. For it is self-evident, that if there are any men whom they have a right to hold in slavery, there may be *others* who have had a right to hold *them* in slavery. — I am sensible, however, that this is a work which they cannot accomplish at once. The emancipation of the Negroes must, I suppose, be left in some measure to be the effect of time and of manners. But nothing can excuse the united States if it is not done with as much speed, and at the same time with as much effect, as their particular

circumstances and situation will allow. I rejoice that on this occasion I can recommend to them the example of my own country.—In *Britain*, a *Negro* becomes a *freeman* the moment he sets his foot on *British* ground.

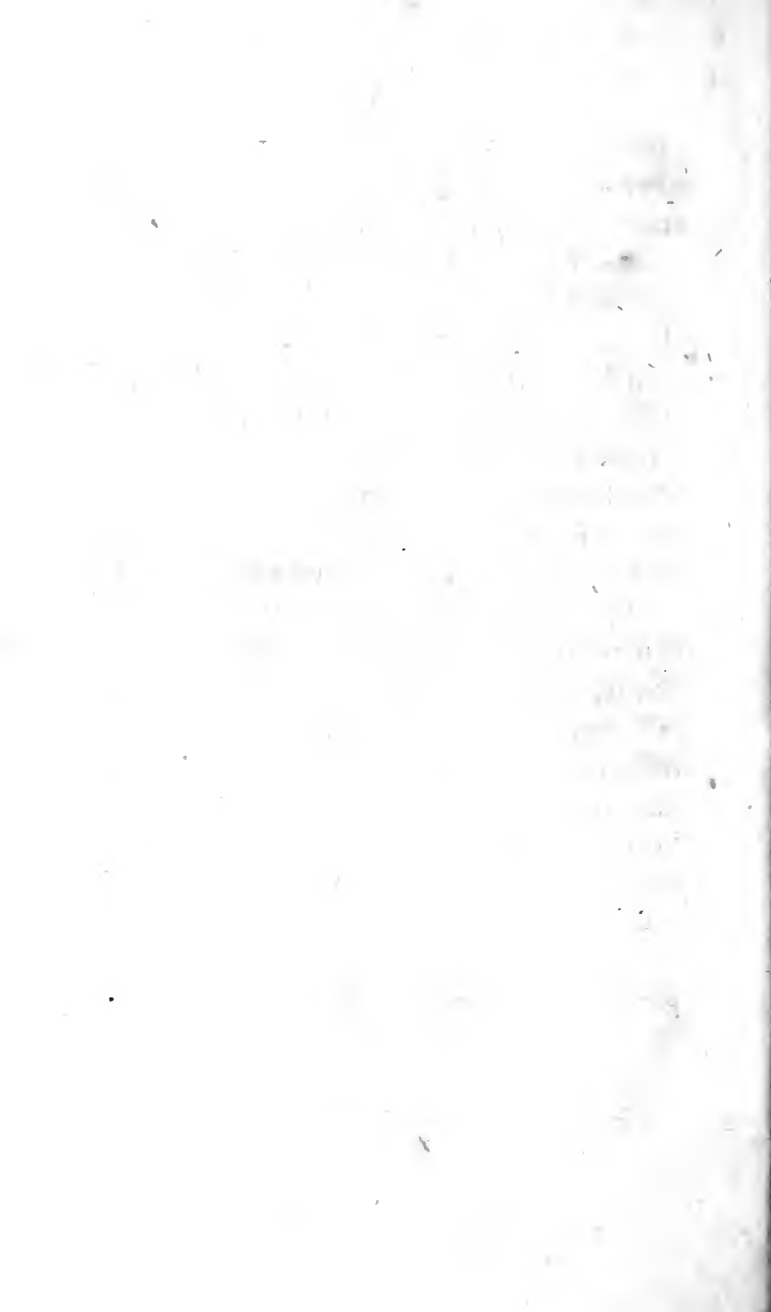
C O N C L U S I O N .

SUCH is the advice which I would *humbly* (but *earnestly*) offer to the united States of *America*.—Such are the means by which they may become the seats of liberty, science, peace, and virtue; happy within themselves, and a refuge to the world.

Often, while employed in writing these papers, have I wished for a warning voice of more power. The present moment, however auspicious to the united States if wisely improved, is critical; and, though apparently the end of all their dangers, may prove the time of their greatest danger. I have, indeed, since finishing this Address, been mortified more than I can express

prefs by accounts which have led me to fear that I have carried my ideas of them too high, and deceived myself with visionary expectations.—And should this be true—Should the return of peace and the pride of independence lead them to security and dissipation—Should they lose those virtuous and simple manners by which alone Republics can long subsist—Should false refinement, luxury, and *impiety*, spread among them; excessive jealousy distract their governments; and clashing interests, subject to no strong controul, break the federal union—The consequence will be, that the fairest experiment ever tried in human affairs will miscarry; and that a REVOLUTION which had revived the hopes of good men and promised an opening to better times, will become a discouragement to all future efforts in favour of liberty, and prove only an opening to a new scene of human degeneracy and misery.

F I N I S.







A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE following letter was written by the late M. *Turgot*, Comptroller General (in the years 1774, 1775, and 1776) of the finances of FRANCE. It contains observations in which the United States are deeply concerned; and, for this reason, I now convey it to them, not doubting but that the eminence of M. *Turgot's* name and character will recommend it to their attention, and that it will do honour to his memory among all the friends of public liberty.

A Monsieur PRICE,

A Londres.

A Paris, le 22 Mars, 1778.

MR. FRANKLIN m'a remis, Monsieur, de votre part, la nouvelle édition de vos observations sur la liberté civile, &c. Je vous dois un double remerciement ; 1^o de votre ouvrage dont je connois depuis longtems le prix, et que j'avois lu avec avidité, malgré les occupations multipliées, dont j'étois assailli, lorsqu'il a paru pour la première fois ; 2^o de l'honnêteté que vous avez eue de retrancher l'imputation de maladresse * que vous aviez mêlée au bien que vous disiez d'ailleurs de moi dans vos observations additionnelles. J'aurois pu la mériter, si vous n'aviez eu en vue d'autre maladresse que celle de n'avoir pas sçu démêler les ressorts

* What is here said refers to an account of M. *Turgot's* administration in the *second* tract on *Civil Liberty and the War with America*, p. 150, &c. In the first edition of this tract I had mentioned improperly his *want of address* among the other causes of his dismissal from power. This occasioned a letter from him to inform me of the true reasons of his dismissal, and begun that correspondence of which this letter is a part, and which continued till his death.

d'intrigues

d'intrigues que faisoient jouer contre moi des gens beaucoup plus *adroits* en ce genre que je ne le suis, que je ne le ferai jamais, et que je ne veux l'être. Mais il m'a paru que vous m'imputiez la maladresse d'avoir choqué grossièrement l'opinion générale de ma nation ; et à cet égard je crois que vous n'aviez rendu justice ni à moi, ni à ma nation, où il y a beaucoup plus de lumières qu'on ne le croit généralement chez vous, et où peut-être il est plus aisé que chez vous même de ramener le public à des idées raisonnables. J'en juge par l'infatuation de votre nation sur ce projet absurde de subjuguier l'Amérique, qui a duré jusqu'à ce que l'aventure de Burgoyne ait commencé à lui deffiller les yeux. J'en juge par le système de monopole et d'exclusion qui règne chez tous vos écrivains politiques sur le commerce, (J'excepte Mr. Adam Smith et le Doyen Tucker) système qui est le véritable principe de votre séparation avec vos colonies. J'en juge par tous vos écrits polémiques sur les questions qui vous agitent depuis une vingtaine d'années, et dans lesquels avant que le vôtre eut paru, je ne me rappelle presque pas d'en avoir lu un, où le vrai point de la question ait été saisi. Je n'ai pas conçu comment une nation qui a

cultivé avec tant de succès toutes les branches des sciences naturelles a pu rester si fort au dessous d'elle même, dans la science la plus intéressante de toutes, celle du bonheur public ; dans une science où la liberté de la presse, dont elle seule jouit, auroit dû lui donner sur toutes les autres nations de l'Europe un avantage prodigieux. Est-ce l'orgueil national qui vous a empêchés de mettre à profit cet avantage ? Est-ce parce que vous étiez un peu moins mal que les autres, que vous avez tourné toutes vos spéculations à vous persuader que vous étiez bien ? Est-ce l'esprit de parti, et l'envie de se faire un appui des opinions populaires qui a retardé vos progrès, en portant vos politiques à traiter de vaine * métaphysique toutes les spéculations qui tendent à établir des principes fixes sur les droits et les vrais intérêts des individus et des nations ? Comment se fait-il que vous soyez presque le premier parmi vos écrivains qui ayez donné des notions justes de la liberté, et qui ayez fait sentir la fausseté de cette notion rebattue par presque tous les écrivains les plus républicains,

* See Mr. Burke's letter to the *Sheriffs of Bristol*.

que la liberté consiste à n'être soumis qu'aux loix, comme si un homme opprimé par une loi injuste étoit libre. Cela ne seroit pas même vrai quand on supposeroit que toutes les loix sont l'ouvrage de la nation assemblée; car enfin l'individu a aussi des droits que la nation ne peut lui ôter, que par la violence et par un usage illegitime de la force générale. Quoique vous ayez eu égard à cette vérité, et que vous vous en soyez expliqué, peut-être méritoit-elle que vous la développassiez avec plus d'étendue, vû le peu d'attention qu'y ont donnée même les plus zelés partisans de la liberté.

C'est encore une chose étrange que ce ne fût pas en Angletterre une vérité triviale de dire qu'une nation ne peut jamais avoir droit de gouverner une autre nation; et qu'un pareil gouvernement ne peut avoir d'autre fondement que la force, qui est aussi le fondement du brigandage et de la tyrannie; que la tyrannie d'un peuple est de toutes les tyrannies connues la plus cruelle et la plus intolérable, celle qui laisse le moins de ressource à l'opprimé; car enfin un despote est arrêté par son propre intérêt, il a le frein du remords, ou celui de l'opinion

nion publique, mais une multitude ne calcule rien, n'a jamais de remords, et se dècerne à elle même la gloire lors qu'elle mérite le plus de honte.

Les événemens font pour la nation Angloise un terrible commentaire de votre livre. Depuis quelques mois ils se précipitent avec une rapidité très accélérée. Le dénouement est arrivé par rapport à l'Amérique. La voila indépendante sans retour. Sera-t'elle libre et heureuse ? Ce peuple nouveau situé si avantageusement pour donner au monde l'exemple d'une constitution où l'homme jouisse de tous ses droits, exerce librement toutes ses facultés, et ne soit gouverné que par la nature, la raison et la justice, saura-t'il former une pareille constitution ? saura-t'il l'affermir sur des fondemens éternels, prévenir toutes les causes de division et de corruption qui peuvent la miner peu-à-peu et la détruire ?

Je ne suis point content je l'avoue des constitutions qui ont été rédigées jusqu'à-présent par les différens Etats Américains. Vous reprochez avec raison à celle de la Pensylvanie le serment religieux exigé pour
avoir

avoir entrée dans le corps des représentans. C'est bien pis dans les autres ; il y en a une, je crois que c'est celle des *Jerseis* qui exige
 (†) * * * * *
 Je vois dans le plus grand nombre l'imitation sans objet des usages de l'Angleterre. Au lieu de ramener toutes les autorités à une seule, celle de la nation, l'on établit des corps différens, un corps des représentans, un conseil, un gouverneur, parce que l'Angleterre a une chambre des communes, une chambre haute et un Roi. On s'occupe à balancer ces différens pouvoirs ; comme si cet équilibre de forces, qu'on a pu croire nécessaire pour balancer l'énorme prépondérance de la Royauté, pouvoit être de quelque usage dans des Républiques fondées sur l'égalité de tous les citoyens ; et comme si tout ce qui établit différens corps n'étoit pas une source de divisions. En voulant prévenir des dangers chimériques, on en fait naître de réels ; on veut n'avoir rien à

(†) It is the constitution of *Delaware* that imposes the test here meant. That of the *Jerseis*, with a noble liberality, orders that there shall never in that province be any establishment of any one religious sect in preference to another, and that all Protestants of all persuasions shall enjoy equal rights and privileges.

craindre

craindre du clergé, on le réunit sous la barrière d'une proscription commune. En l'excluant du droit d'éligibilité, on en fait un corps, et un corps étranger à l'Etat. Pourquoi un citoyen, qui a le même intérêt que les autres à la défense commune de sa liberté et de ses propriétés, est-il exclus d'y contribuer de ses lumières et de ses vertus, parce qu'il est d'une profession qui exige des lumières et des vertus ? Le clergé n'est dangereux que quand il existe en corps dans l'Etat ; que quand il croit avoir en corps des droits et des intérêts, que quand on a imaginé d'avoir une religion établie par la loi, comme si les hommes pouvoient avoir quelque droit, ou quelque intérêt à régler la conscience les uns des autres ; comme si l'individu pouvoit sacrifier aux avantages de la société civile les opinions auxquelles il croit son salut éternel attaché ; comme si l'on se savoit, ou se damnoit, en commun. Là où la vraie tolérance, c'est-à-dire l'incompétence absolue du gouvernement sur la conscience des individus, est établie, l'ecclesiastique au milieu de l'assemblée nationale n'est qu'un citoyen, lorsqu'il y est admis ; il redevient ecclesiastique lorsqu'on l'en exclut.

Je ne vois pas qu'on se soit assez occupé de réduire au plus petit nombre possible, les genres d'affaires dont le gouvernement de chaque Etat sera chargé ; ni à séparer les objets de législation, de ceux d'administration générale et de ceux d'administration particulière et locale ; à constituer des assemblées locales subsistantes, qui remplissant presque toutes les fonctions de détail du gouvernement dispensent les assemblées générales de s'en occuper, et ôtent aux membres de celles-ci tout moyen, et peut-être tout désir d'abuser d'une autorité qui ne peut s'appliquer qu'à des objets généraux et par là même étrangers aux petites passions qui agitent les hommes.

Je ne vois pas qu'on ait fait attention à la grande distinction la seule fondée sur la nature entre deux classes d'hommes, celle des propriétaires de terres, et celle des non-propriétaires ; à leurs intérêts et par conséquent à leurs droits différens, relativement à la législation, à l'administration de la justice et de la police, à la contribution aux dépenses publiques et à leur emploi.

Nul principe fixe établi sur l'impôt ; on suppose que chaque province peut se taxer à sa fantaisie, établir des taxes personnelles, des taxes sur les consommations, sur les importations, c'est-à-dire se donner un intérêt contraire à l'intérêt des autres provinces.

On suppose par tout le droit de régler le commerce ; on autorise même les corps exécutifs, ou les gouverneurs à prohiber l'exportation de certaines denrées dans certaines occurrences ; tant on est loin d'avoir senti que la loi de la liberté entière de tout commerce est un corollaire du droit de propriété ; tant on est encore plongé dans le brouillard des illusions Européennes.

Dans l'union générale des provinces entre elles, je ne vois point une coalition, une fusion de toutes les parties, qui n'en fasse qu'un corps *un*, et homogène. Ce n'est qu'une aggrégation de parties, toujours trop séparées, et qui conservent toujours une tendance à se diviser, par la diversité de leurs loix, de leurs mœurs, de leurs opinions ; par l'inégalité de leurs forces actuelles ; plus encore par l'inégalité de leurs progrès ultérieurs.

rieurs. Ce n'est qu'une copie de la République Hollandoise; et celle-ci même n'avoit pas à craindre comme la République Américaine les accroissemens possibles de quelques unes de ses provinces. Tout cet édifice est appuyé jusqu'à présent sur la bête fausse de la très ancienne et très vulgaire politique; sur le préjugé que les nations, les provinces, peuvent avoir des intérêts, en corps de province et de nation, autres que celui qu'ont les individus d'être libres et de défendre leurs propriétés contre les brigans et les conquérans: intérêt prétendu de faire plus de commerce que les autres, de ne point acheter les marchandises de l'étranger, de forcer l'étranger à consommer leurs productions et les ouvrages de leurs manufactures: intérêt prétendu d'avoir un territoire plus vaste, d'acquérir telle ou telle province, telle ou telle île, tel ou tel village: intérêt d'inspirer la crainte aux autres nations: intérêt de l'emporter sur elles par la gloire des armes, par celle des arts et des sciences.

Quelques-uns de ces préjugés sont fomentés en Europe, parce que la rivalité ancienne des nations et l'ambition des

princes oblige tous les Etats à se tenir armés pour se défendre contre leurs voisins armés, et à regarder la force militaire comme l'objet principal du gouvernement. L'Amérique a le bonheur de ne pouvoir avoir d'ici à bien longtems d'ennemi extérieur à craindre, si elle ne se divise elle même ; ainsi elle peut et doit apprécier à leur juste valeur ces prétendus intérêts, ces sujets de discorde qui seuls sont à redouter pour sa liberté. Avec le principe sacré de la liberté du commerce regardé comme une suite du droit de la propriété, tous les prétendus intérêts de commerce disparaissent. Les prétendus intérêts de posséder plus ou moins de territoires s'évanouissent par le principe que le territoire n'appartient point aux nations, mais aux individus propriétaires des terres ; que la question de savoir si tel canton, tel village, doit appartenir à telle province, à tel Etat ne doit point être décidée par le prétendu intérêt de cette province ou de cet Etat, mais par celui qu'ont les habitans de tel canton ou de tel village de se rassembler pour leurs affaires dans le lieu où il leur est le plus commode d'aller ; que cet intérêt étant mesuré par le plus ou moins de chemin

chemin qu'un homme peut faire loin de son domicile pour traiter quelques affaires plus importantes sans trop nuire à ses affaires journalières, devient une mesure naturelle et physique de l'étendue des juridictions et des Etats, et établit entre tous un équilibre * d'étendue et de forces, qui écarte tout danger d'inégalité, et toute prétention à la supériorité.

L'interêt d'être craint est nul quand on ne demande rien à personne, et quand on est dans une position où l'on ne peut être attaqué par des forces considérables avec quelque espérance de succès.

La gloire des armes ne vaut pas le bonheur de vivre en paix. La gloire des arts, des sciences appartient à quiconque veut s'en saisir ; il y a dans ce genre à moissonner pour tout le monde ; le champ des découvertes

* This seems to be a particular of much consequence. The great inequality now existing, and which is likely to increase, between the different states, is a very unfavourable circumstance ; and the embarrassment and danger to which it exposes the union ought to be guarded against as far as possible in laying out future States.

est inépuisable, et tous profitent des découvertes de tous.

J'imagine que les Américains n'en sont pas encore à sentir toutes ces vérités, comme il faut qu'ils les sentent pour assurer le bonheur de leur postérité. Je ne blâme pas leurs chefs. Il a fallu pourvoir au besoin du moment par une union telle quelle, contre un ennemi présent et redoutable; on n'avoit pas le tems de songer à corriger les vices des constitutions et de la composition des différens états. Mais ils doivent craindre de les éterniser, et s'occuper des moyens de réunir les opinions et les intérêts et de les ramener à des principes uniformes dans toutes leurs provinces,

Ils ont à cet égard de grands obstacles à vaincre.

En Canada, la constitution du clergé Romain, et l'existence d'un corps de noblesse.

Dans la Nouvelle Angleterre, l'esprit encore subsistant du Puritanisme rigide, et toujours, dit on, un peu * intolérant.

* This has been *once* true of the inhabitants of *New-England*, but it is not so *now*. See p. 47.

Dans la Penſylvanie, un très grand nombre de citoyens établiffant en principe religieux que la profeſſion des armes eſt illicite, et ſe refusant par conféquent aux arrangements néceſſaires pour que le fondement de la force militaire de l'Etat, ſoit la réunion de la qualité de citoyen avec celle d'homme de guerre et de milicien ; ce qui oblige à faire du métier de la guerre un métier de mercenaires.

Dans les colonies méridionales, une trop grande inégalité de fortunes, et ſur tout le grand nombre d'eſclaves noirs dont l'eſclavage eſt incompatible avec une bonne conſtitution politique, et qui même en leur rendant la liberté embarrafferont encore en formant deux nations dans le même Etat.

Dans toutes, les préjugés, l'attachement aux formes établies, l'habitude de certaines taxes, la crainte de celles qu'il faudroit y ſubſtituer, la vanité des colonies qui ſe font cru les plus puiffantes, et un malheureux commencement d'orgueil national. Je crois les Américains forcés à s'agrandir, non pas
par

par la guerre, mais par la culture. S'ils laissoient derriere eux les déserts immenses qui s'étendent jusqu'à la mer de l'Ouest il s'y etabliroit du mélange de leurs bannis, et des mauvais sujets échappés à la sévérité des loix, avec les sauvages : des peuplades de brigands qui ravageroient l'Amérique, comme les barbares du nord ont ravagé l'empire Romain ; de là un autre danger, la nécessité de se tenir en armes sur la frontiere et d'être dans un état de guerre continuelle. Les colonies voisines de la frontiere seroient en conséquence plus aguerries que les autres, et cette inégalité dans la force militaire seroit un aiguillon terrible pour l'ambition. Le remede à cette inégalité seroit d'entretenir une force militaire subsistante à laquelle toutes les provinces contribueroient en raison de leur population ; et les Américains qui ont encore toutes les craintes que doivent avoir les Anglois redoutent plus que toute chose une armée permanente. Ils ont tort. Rien n'est plus aisé que de lier la constitution d'une armée permanente avec la milice, de façon que la milice en devienne meilleure, et que la liberté n'en soit que plus affermie. Mais il est mal aisé de calmer sur cela leurs allarmes.

Voilà

Voilà bien des difficultés, et peut-être les intérêts secrets des particuliers puissans se joindront-ils aux préjugés de la multitude pour arrêter les efforts des vrais sages et des vrais citoyens.

Il est impossible de ne pas faire des vœux pour que ce peuple parvienne à toute la prospérité dont il est susceptible. Il est l'espérance du genre humain. Il peut en devenir le modèle. Il doit prouver au monde, par le fait, que les hommes peuvent être libres et tranquilles, et peuvent se passer des chaînes de toute espèce que les tyrans et les charlatans de toute robe ont prétendu leur impôser sous le prétexte du bien public. Il doit donner l'exemple de la liberté politique, de la liberté religieuse, de la liberté du commerce et de l'industrie. L'asyle qu'il ouvre à tous les opprimés de toutes les nations doit consoler la terre. La facilité d'en profiter pour se dérober aux suites d'un mauvais gouvernement forcera les gouvernemens d'être justes, et de s'éclairer; le reste du monde ouvrira peu-à-peu les yeux sur le néant des illusions dont les politiques se sont bercés. Mais il faut pour cela que l'Amérique s'en

P

garantisse,

garantisse, et qu'elle ne redevienne pas comme l'ont tant repeté vos écrivains ministériels une image de notre Europe, un amas de puissances divisées, se disputant des territoires ou des profits de commerce, et cimentant continuellement l'esclavage des peuples par leur propre sang.

Tous les hommes éclairés, tous les amis de l'humanité devoient en ce moment réunir leurs lumieres et joindre leurs réflexions à celles des sages Américains pour concourir au grand ouvrage de leur législation. Cela seroit digne de vous, Monsieur ; je voudrois pouvoir échauffer votre zèle ; et si dans cette lettre je me suis livré plus que je ne l'aurois dû peut-être à l'effusion de mes propres idées, ce désir a été mon unique motif, et m'excusera à ce que j'espère de l'ennui que je vous aurai causé. Je voudrois que le sang qui a coulé, qui coulera encore dans cette querelle ne fût pas inutile au bonheur du genre humain.

Nos deux nations vont se faire réciproquement bien du mal, probablement sans qu'aucune d'elles en retire un profit réel.

L'ac-

L'accroissement des dettes et des charges,
 * * * * * , et la ruine
 d'un grand nombre de citoyens en feront
 peut-être l'unique resultat. L'Angleterre
 m'en paroît plus près encore que la France.
 Si au lieu de cette guerre vous aviez pu
 vous exécuter de bonne grace dès le premier
 moment, s'il étoit donné à la politique de
 faire d'avance ce qu'elle fera infailliblement
 forcée de faire plus tard, si l'opinion na-
 tionale avoit pu permettre à votre gou-
 vernement de prévenir les evenemens, en
 supposant qu'il les eut prévus, s'il eût
 pu consentir d'abord à l'indépendance de
 l'Amérique sans faire la guerre à personne,
 je crois fermement que votre nation n'au-
 roit rien perdu à ce changement. Elle y
 perdra aujourd'hui ce qu'elle a dépensé, ce
 qu'elle dépensera encore ; elle éprouvera
 une grande diminution pour quelque tems
 dans son commerce, de grands boulever-
 semens intérieurs si elle est forcée à la ban-
 queroute ; et quoiqu'il arrive une grande
 diminution dans l'influence politique au
 dehors, mais ce dernier article est d'une
 bien petite importance pour le bonheur
 réel d'un peuple, et je ne suis point du tout
 de l'avis de l'Abbé Rainal dans votre épi-
 graphe.

graphe. Je ne crois point que ceci vous mene à devenir une nation meprifable, et vous jette dans l'esclavage.

Vos malheurs feront peut-être au contraire l'effet d'une amputation nécessaire; ils sont peut-être le seul moyen de vous sauver de la cangrene du luxe et de la corruption. Si dans vos agitations vous pouviez corriger votre constitution en rendant les elections annuelles, en repartissant le droit de représentation d'une maniere plus égale et plus proportionnée aux interets des représentés, vous gagneriez peut-être autant que l'Amérique à cette révolution; car votre liberté vous resteroit, et vos autres pertes se répareroient bien vîte avec elle et par elle.

Vous devez juger, Monsieur, par la franchise avec laquelle je m'ouvre à vous sur ces points délicats, de l'estime que vous m'avez inspirée, et de la fatisfaction que j'éprouve à penser qu'il y a quelque ressemblance entre nos manieres de voir. Je compte bien que cette.* confidence n'est que pour vous.

je

* In compliance with Mr. *Turgot's* desire, this letter was kept private during his life. Since his death I have

Je vous prie même de ne point me répondre en détail par la poste, car votre réponse seroit infailliblement ouverte dans nos bureaux de poste, et l'on me trouveroit beaucoup trop ami de la liberté pour un ministre, même pour un ministre disgracié !

J'ai l'honneur d'être, Monsieur, avec toute la considération possible,

Votre très humble,
et très obeissant serviteur,

TURGOT.

have thought the publication of it a duty which I owe to his memory, as well as to the United States and the world. I can add, with much satisfaction, that my venerable friend whose name introduces this letter; and also, that some intimate friends of Mr. *Turgot's*, who have been consulted on this subject, concur with me in this sentiment.

Note for Page 5th.

Who could have thought, in the first ages of the world, that mankind would acquire the power of determining the distances and magnitudes of the sun and planets? — Who, even at the beginning of this century, would have thought that in a few years they would acquire the power of subjecting to their wills the dreadful force of lightening, and of flying in areostatic machines? — The last of these powers, though so long undiscovered, is only an easy application of a power always known and familiar. Many similar discoveries may remain to be made, which will give new directions to human affairs; and it may not perhaps be too extravagant to imagine that (should civil government throw no obstacles in the way) the progress of improvement will not cease till it has excluded from the earth, not only *vice* and *war*, but even *death* itself, and restored that *paradisaical* state, which, according to the *Mosaic* history, preceded our present state.

Note for Page 53d.

The imperfection of *real* knowledge may often produce an unreasonable incredulity. Had the best philosophers been told a few years ago “ that there existed fishes “ which had the command of *lightening*, and always used “ it to kill their prey,” they would have thought the information absurd and ridiculous.

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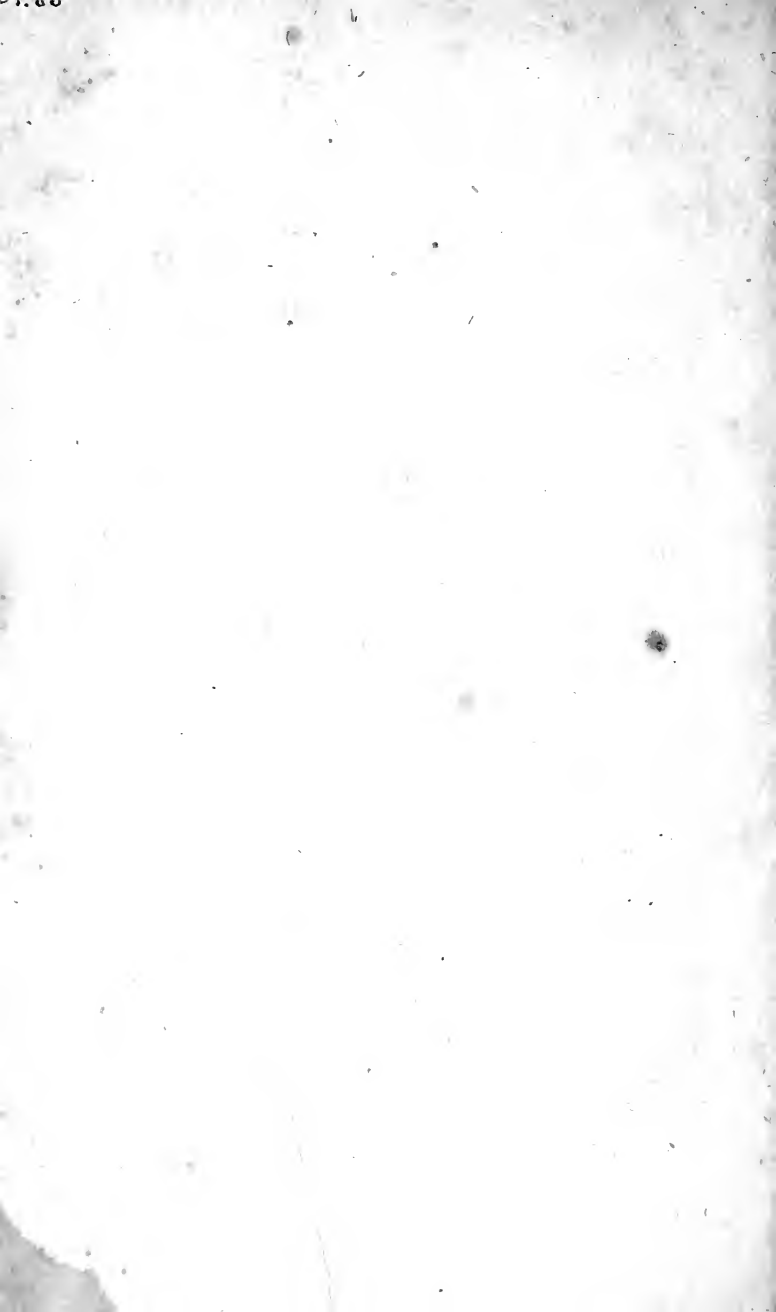
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