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Catharine Macaulay, *Observations on the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, on the Revolution in France* [1790]



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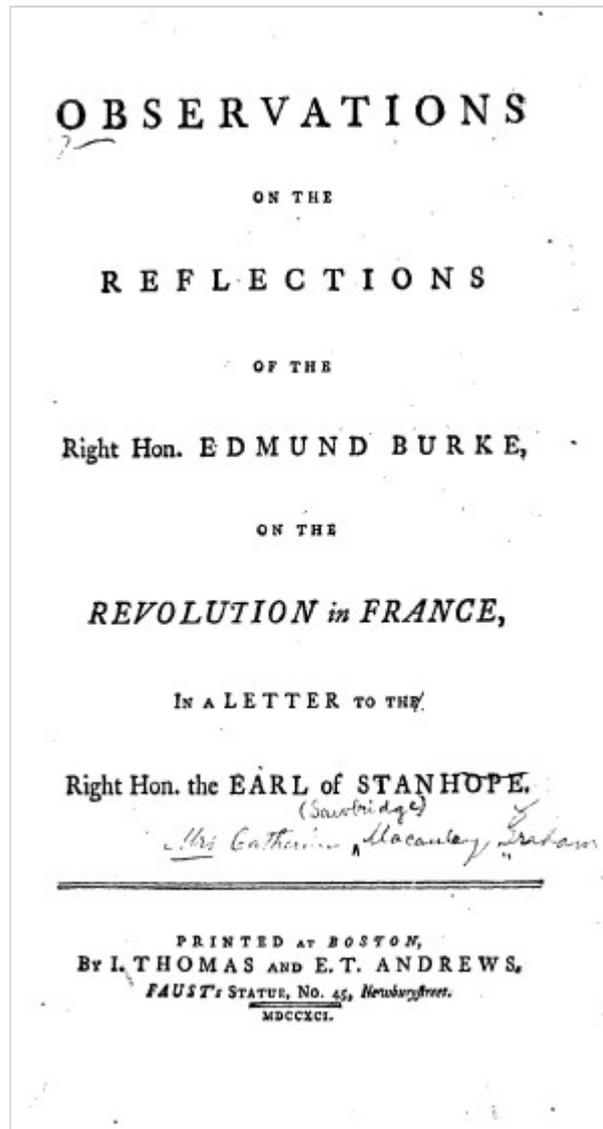
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Edition Used:

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Author: [Catharine Macaulay](#)

About This Title:

An early reply to Burke by an English supporter of republicanism.

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OBSERVATIONS, &c.

MY LORD,

YOUR lordship's character as a patriot, a philosopher, and the firm friend of the general rights of man, encourages me to present to you the following Observations on Mr. Burke's famous Reflections on the Revolution in France. They claim no popular attention for the ornaments of style in which they are delivered; they can attract no admiration from the fascinating charms of eloquence; they are directed, not to *captivate*, but to *convince*; and it is on the presumption that your lordship attends more to the *substance* and *end* of literary compositions, than to the *art* of their arrangement, which induces me to flatter myself with your approbation.

It is not surprising that an event, the most *important* to the dearest interests of mankind, the most *singular* in its nature, and the most *astonishing* in its means, should not only have attracted the curiosity of all civilized nations, but that it should have engaged the passions of all *reflecting* men.

Two parties are already formed in this country, who behold the French Revolution with a very opposite temper: To the one, it inspires the sentiment of *exultation* and *rapture*; and to the other, *indignation* and *scorn*. I shall not take upon me to consider what are the *secret* passions which have given birth to these last sentiments; and shall content myself with observing, that Mr. Burke has undertaken to be the oracle of this last party. The abilities of this gentleman have been fully acknowledged by the impatience with which the publick have waited for his observations; and when we consider that he has been in a manner educated in the great school of Parliament, that he has assisted in the publick councils of the English nation for the greater part of his life, we must suppose him fully competent to the talk he has undertaken, of censuring the politicks of our neighbour kingdom, and entering into an exact definition of those native rights which equally attach themselves to every description of men.

Is there a rational observation, or argument, in moral existence, which this gentleman (so highly favoured by nature and circumstances for political debate) could possibly have passed over, on a
subject

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The Following, From A Lady Whose Literary And Political Character Is Justly Esteemed, Accompanied A Copy Of This Work For The Press.

Messieurs Thomas And Andrews,

PRIESTLEY, Paine, and other observers on Mr. Burke's celebrated Philippick, have been read with avidity in America, while a pamphlet of equal merit has escaped the publick eye. It has happened to fall into very few hands on this side the Atlantick, therefore a republication will doubtless gratify every American, who has not lost sight of those principles that actuated, and the perseverance that effected, the independence of America.

The celebrity of the author precludes the necessity of an introduction to any of her works, and the truths contained in her observations might be their best recommendation, even though she had thought proper to prefix her name.

A people who have recently and severely struggled for the security of their rights, cannot be inattentive to the arguments that support them, however some, from the versability of the human character, and the instability of man, may be ready to relinquish them.

Whatever convulsions may yet be occasioned by the revolution in France, it will doubtless be favourable to general liberty, and Mr. Burke may undesignedly be an instrument of its promotion, by agitating questions which have for a time lain dormant in England, and have been almost forgotten, or artfully disguised, in America.

You will doubtless be pleased, without further comment from your correspondent, with an opportunity of republishing the observations of a lady in England, who has added in a letter to her friend, that "the French Revolution was very unpopular in England; that it is disliked by government, because it would necessarily check the encroachments of arbitrary power; by the nobility and clergy, from motives of interest; and by the great body of the people, because the National Assembly, in their reform, had not made the British Constitution the model of their own."

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Is there a rational observation, or argument, in moral existence, which this gentleman (so highly favoured by nature and circumstances for political debate) could possibly have passed over, on a subject in which he appears so greatly interested, and of which he has taken a full leisure to consider. When we find him then *obliged* to substitute a *warm* and *passionate declamation* to a *cool investigation*, and to address the *passions* instead of the *reason* of mankind, we shall be induced to give a fuller credit to our judgment and our feelings, in the view we have taken of this interesting object, and the pleasure it has given us.

Mr. Burke sets out with throwing a *great deal* of contemptuous censure on two club societies in London, for a very harmless exertion of natural and constitutional liberty. They certainly had a right to compliment the French National Assembly on a matter of domestick government, and to express an *approbation* of their conduct, with a

freedom equal to that which Mr. Burke has taken in his letter to express his *abhorrence*.

The National Assembly of France have taken no such *supercilious state* upon them, as would render such a communication of sentiment ridiculous or presumptuous. As the patrons of *equal liberty*, they have not disdained the addresses of the *meanest* individual; consequently the Revolution Society then might rationally expect that their addresses would have met with a civil reception, though not clothed with the “dignity of the whole representative majesty of the whole English nation.”

But Mr. Burke thinks that these gentlemen have so strong a predilection in favour of the democrattick arrangements which have taken place in France, that they have been induced to wish, if not to indulge an hope, that some very important reformations may in the process of time also take place in this country; and these harmless operations of the mind in a *few obscure* individuals, (for such are the members described who compose the offending clubs) have produced in Mr. Burke, apprehensions no ways consistent with the *high* opinion he has formed of the English constitution, or of the *strong* attachment which he supposes all that is *great* and *good* in the nation have to it.

Dr. Price, whose animated love for mankind and the spread of general happiness, moved him to express the effusion of his patriotick sentiment, in a sermon preached the 4th of Nov. 1789, at the dissenting meeting house in the Old Jewry, is censured by Mr. Burke in *severe*, and even *acrimonious terms*. Among other parts of the very offensive matter with which he charges this sermon, the having asserted that the *King of Great Britain owes his right to the Crown by the choice of the people*, is particularly selected, as worthy an historical and argumentative confutation.

The liberty that was taken in the year 1688, by a convention of Lords and Commons, to depose king James the reigning sovereign from the throne, and to vest the sovereignty of the realm in his daughter Mary, and her husband the prince of Orange; and afterwards by the legislature, to pass an act to settle the succession in queen Anne and her issue, and in default of these, in the heirs of king William’s body, and in default of these, in the house of Hanover, (the Protestant descendants of the house of Stuart in the female line;) and this to the prejudice not only of king James, but of his son, who had been acknowledged as the lawful heir of his throne; and also to the prejudice of the house of Savoy, who by lineal descent were the next in regular succession; are indeed facts, which *might warrant a plain thinking man* in the opinion, that the present reigning family owe their succession to the choice or assent of the people. But, in Mr. Burke’s opinion, these facts are of no weight, “because the whole family of the Stuarts were not entirely left out of the succession, and a native of England advanced to the throne; and because it was declared in the act of succession, that the Protestant line drawn from James the first, was absolutely necessary for the security of the realm.”

That those individuals of the family of the Stuarts, who had never committed any offence against the peace of the country, and whose mode of faith was not injurious to its welfare, should not be set aside in favour of an absolute stranger to the blood, was

certainly a *just measure*; and it was certainly *wise* to leave as *few* competitors to the crown as possible, whether on grounds founded in justice, or in mere plausibility. But there was a reason still more forcible for the conduct of the two Houses of Convention, and afterwards for the Parliament in their constitutional capacity; and the reason is this, that *without the prince of Orange, and the assistance of his Dutch army, there could have been no Revolution*. For the English nation at large was so little convinced of the *severe and grave necessity* which Mr. Burke talks of, that the people of themselves would never have been roused to have deposed king James; and they regarded all his innovations with such a *constitutional phlegm*, that had this unfortunate monarch possessed the qualities of *firmness, perseverance, or patience*, he must either have been killed by the dark means of *assassination*, or he would have *continued on the throne*.

That the friends of the Revolution knew they could not do without the assistance of king William, is plain, by their laying aside the intention of vesting Mary *singly* with the sovereignty, on his declaring that if this event took place, he would return to Holland, and leave them to themselves.

However strongly the warm friends of freedom might wish that this abstract right of the people, of choosing their own magistrates, and deposing them for ill conduct, had been laid open to the publick by a formal declaration of such a right in the acts of succession, this certainly was not a period of time for carrying these wishes into execution. The whole body of the people had swallowed deeply of the *poison* of church policy; *passive obedience*, by their means, had so entirely supplanted the *abstract notion* of the *rights of men*, which prevailed in the opposition to Charles the first; and so desirous were the triumphant party to prevent the revival of such a principle, by which their interests had been affected, that they took care to confound the *only just authority* they had for their conduct, in as great a *mist of words and terms as possible*. Besides, would William, who was the soul of the whole proceeding, have given way to a claim, by which, in the plainest terms, he was bound to his good behaviour?

Mr. Hume justly supposes, that if the revolution had happened one hundred years after it did, it would have been *materially different* in all its circumstances. Instead of thinking with Mr. Burke, that such a plain declaration of the rights of men would have tended to disturb the quiet of the nation, I firmly believe that it would have had a contrary effect; for, in this case, those endless disputes between the *Nonjurors, Tories, and Whigs*, would soon have had an end. For, the question not being involved in that *obscurity, contradiction, and absurdity*, in which it was enveloped by the revolutionists, *truth and reason* would have resumed their sway; *party jarjon* would have been exploded; the people would have given a cheerful obedience to the new government; and that dreadful *necessity* by which Sir Robert Walpole excused the introducing a settled *system of corruption* into the administration, would never have existed.

When the succession to a crown in one family, or even the possession of private property, owes its origin to the people, most undoubtedly the authority from whence it is derived, attaches itself to the gift as equally in every individual of the family

through the whole line of succession, as in the first possessor. And I can hardly believe, that there was *one* enlightened member who composed part of that legislative body who settled the succession to the throne, could possibly think that body possessed of such a plenitude of power, as should give them a right, not only to *set aside* the regulations of their ancestors, but to *bind their posterity*, to all succeeding generations, in the permanent chains of an unalterable law. Should we once admit of *a power so incompatible with the conditions of humanity*, and only reserved for the dictates of *divine wisdom*, we have not, in these enlightened days, improved on the politicks of the fanatick atheist Hobbes: *For he supposes an original right in the people to choose their governors*; but, in exerting this right, the citizen and his posterity for ever lose their native privileges, and become bound through the whole series of generations to the service of a master's will.

We will now take into consideration the nature and tendency of the two different compliments which have been paid by Dr. Price and Mr. Burke to his Majesty and his successors. Dr. Price, I think, puts their right to government on the *most dignified*, and perhaps, in the event of things, on the *most permanent* footing. But Mr. Burke would have done well to consider, whether such a compliment as he is willing to pay to royalty is at all *proper*, either for the subject to make, or the King to receive. To a weak prince, it would be apt to cancel in his mind *all the obligations* which he owes to the people; and, by flattering him in a *vain* conceit of a mere personal right, tempt him to break those sacred ties which ought to *bind* and *direct* his government. I am apt to believe, that almost *all the vices* of royal administration have principally been occasioned by a *slavish adulation* in the language of their subjects; and, to the *shame of the English people* it must be spoken, that none of the enslaved nations in the world address the throne in a more *fulsome* and *hyperbolic* stile of submissive flattery.

To a *wise* and a *good* prince, compliments of the same complexion, made and recommended by Mr. Burke, would be *offensive*. He would consider it as taking away the *noblest* and *safest title* by which he possesses his power: He would consider it as acknowledging a kind of *latent* right in other families; and the liberality of his sentiment would incline him to triumph in the opinion, that he was *called* to government, and *continued* in it, by the *choice* and *confidence* of a free nation.

Mr. Burke seems to adopt *prejudice*, *opinion*, and the powers of the *imagination*, as the *safest grounds* on which *wise* and *good* statesmen can establish or continue the happiness of societies. These have always been imputed by philosophers (a tribe of men whom indeed Mr. Burke affects much to despise) as causes which have produced all that is *vicious* and *foolish* in man, and consequently have been the fruitful source of human *misery*.

Mr. Burke has certainly a *fine* imagination; but I would not advise either *him*, or any of *his admirers*, to give *too much* way to such direction; for if from the virtue of our nature it does not lead us into *crimes*, it always involves us in *error*.

The being put into a situation clearly to understand and to obey the *principles of truth*, appears to be the basis of our happiness in this, and our perfection in another world; and the *more* truth is followed and pursued in this dark vale of human ignorance and

misery, the *more* we shall *increase* our mundane felicity, and *secure* the blessings of a future existence. *Every opinion* which deviates from *truth*, must ever be a *treacherous* guide; and the more it deviates from it, it becomes the *more dangerous*.

Though a false opinion of the rights and powers of citizens may *enslave* the ductile mind into a state of passive obedience, and thus secure the peace of government; yet in the same degree does it inflate the *pride* and *arrogance* of princes, until all considerations of *rectitude* give way to *will*, the barriers of personal security are flung down, and thence arises that *tremendous necessity* which must be followed by a state of *violence* and *anarchy*, which Mr. Burke so *justly* dreads. That this is the case, the experience of all societies of men who acknowledge a *power* in their princes *paramount* to all resistance, fully evinces. These societies are obliged often to have recourse to violence and massacre; not indeed to establish any popular rights, but in the way of force, to wreck their vengeance on their tyrants.

As to the right of *cashiering* or *deposing* monarchs for misgovernment, I cannot possibly agree with Mr. Burke, that in England it only existed in that Convention of the two Houses in 1688, which exercised this power over King James and his legal successors. But I am clearly of opinion, that it is a right that ought *never* to be exercised by a people who are satisfied with their form of government, and have spirit enough to correct its abuses; and so far from *condemning* the French nation for not deposing or executing their king, even though the *strongest presumptions* of the *most atrocious guilt* should have appeared against him, I think, had they elected any other person to that high office, they would have thrown difficulties in the way of their liberty, instead of improving it. But it is the *wisdom*, and not the *folly* of the National Assembly, which gives *offence* to their *enemies*; and *forces even Mr. Burke* to contradict, in this instance, the rule which he has laid down, "That monarchs should not be deposed for misconduct, but only when its criminality is of a kind to render their government totally incompatible with the safety of the people."

But before we leave the subject of Dr. Price's patriotick effusions, we must take notice of a very heavy charge laid against him by Mr. Burke—no less than that of *prophaning* the beautiful and prophetick ejaculation, commonly called, *Nunc dimittis!* made on the first proclamation of our Saviour in the Temple, and applying it, "*with an inhuman and unnatural rapture, to the most horrid, atrocious, and afflicting spectacle*, that perhaps was ever exhibited to the *pity* and *indignation* of mankind." That Mr. Burke's imagination was greatly affected by a scene, which he describes in the highest glow of colouring, I can well believe; but Dr. Price, who classes with that description of men stiled by Mr. Burke *abstract philosophers*, has been used to carry his mind, in a long series of ideas, to the consequences of actions which arise in the passing scene. Dr. Price then, with *full as much sympathy* in him as *even Mr. Burke* can have, might not be greatly moved with the mortifications and sufferings of a *very few persons*, however highly distinguished for the splendour of their rank, when those mortifications led the way, or secured the *present and future happiness of twenty four millions of people*, with their *posterity*, emancipated by their *manly exertions*, from all that is *degrading* and *afflicting* to the sensible mind; and let into the immediate blessings of *personal security*, and to the enjoyment of those advantages which above *all others* must be delightful to the feelings of an high spirited people.

The *events* of human life, when *properly* considered, are but a series of *benevolent providences*: Many of them, though very important in their consequences, are too much confounded with the common transactions of men, to be observed; but whenever the believer thinks he perceives the *omnipotent will* more immediately declaring itself in favour of the future *perfection* and *happiness* of the moral world, he is naturally led into the same ecstasies of *hope* and *gratitude*, with which Simeon was transported by the view of the infant Messiah. Has Mr. Burke never heard of any millenium, but that fanciful one which is supposed to exist in the kingdom of the saints? If this should be the case, I would recommend to him to read *Newton on the Prophecies*. He will find that this most respectable Bishop, *who was no ranter*, is of opinion, that *some passages* in the Revelations point out a period of time when the *iron sceptre of arbitrary sway* shall be broken; when *righteousness shall prevail* over the whole earth, and a *correct system of equity* take place in the conduct of man. Every providence, therefore, by which any *insuperable object* to this transcendent blessing appears to be taken away, must rationally draw forth ejaculations of *gratitude* from the *benevolent* Christian. What ideas do more naturally associate in the human mind, than those of the first appearance of the infant Jesus, and his future universal reign in the hearts of his people?

But Mr. Burke thinks, that there was at least a great impropriety in expressing an approbation of the spirited conduct of the French nation, before time and circumstances had manifested that the freedom they had gained, had been used with *wisdom* in the forming a new constitution of government, or in improving the old one. "When I see," says Mr. Burke, "the spirit of liberty in action, I see a strong principle at work; and this for a while is all I can possibly know of it. The wild gas, the fixed air, is plainly broke loose; but we ought to suspend our judgment until the first effervescence is a little subsided, till the liquor is cleared, and until we see something deeper than the agitation of a troubled and frothy surface."

The French Revolution was attended with something so *new* in the history of human affairs; there was something so *singular*, so *unique*, in that *perfect* unanimity in the people; in that *firm* spirit which baffled *every hope* in the *interested*, that they could possibly divide them into parties, and render them the instruments of a resubjection to their old bondage; that it naturally excited the *surprise* and the *admiration* of all men. It appeared as a *sudden spread of an enlightened spirit*, which promised to act as an effectual and permanent barrier to the inlet of those usurpations which from the very beginning of social life the *crafty* have imposed on *ignorance*.

This was a triumph of *sufficient importance* to call forth the exultation of individuals, and the approbation of societies. But the two clubs who have the *misfortune* to fall under Mr. Burke's severe censure, did not testify a formal approbation of the conduct of their neighbours, till the deputies they had chosen for the transaction of their affairs, had manifested a virtue *equal* to so high a trust; for no sooner was the power of the court *sufficiently* subdued to enable them to act with *freedom* and *effect*, than they gave an example of *disinterested magnanimity*, that has *no parallel* in the conduct of *any* preceding assembly of men, and which was *never surpassed by any individual*. That memorable day in which the members of the National Assembly, with a *virtuous enthusiosm*, vied with each other in the alacrity with which they

surrendered to the people all their feudal privileges, will for ever stand in the records of time as a monument of their *singular greatness*. Such an instance of human virtue was surely a *proper subject of applause and congratulation*.

Men who have suffered in their personal interests by the new order of things in France, must naturally be inclined to *exaggerate* every blemish which appears in the conduct of a multitude, by whose spirit they have been deprived of many fond privileges. Their *petulant* observations, whilst their minds are *heated* by imaginary wrongs and injuries, is *excusable*; because it is a *weakness* almost inseparable from *human frailty*. It would, however, have become *Englishmen*, from whom might have been expected a *more sympathising* indulgence towards the *friends* and *promoters* of liberty, to have been more *candid* in their censures; but in no part of Europe perhaps, have the evils which must *necessarily* attend all Revolutions, and especially a Revolution so *complete* and *comprehensive* as that which has taken place in France, been *more exaggerated*, and *more affectedly* lamently.

Had this *great work* been effected without the shedding one drop of *innocent* or even *guilty* blood, without doubt it would have better pleased the *generous* and *benevolent* mind. But, was it *possible* that such a pleasing circumstance could ever have had an existence? If we take into consideration that *animosity* which subsisted between the *aristocratists* and *democratists* on the eve of the Revolution, an animosity which was greatly heightened by the imprudent *insults* which the *Tier Etat* had received from the first mentioned body, we shall rather *wonder at the moderation* with which the people used their *complete* victory, than lament their cruelty. After the successful storming the king's camp, and the flight or desertion of his Janizaries, instead of that *order* and voluntary *subjection* to discipline which appeared in an armed mob, and which prevented *all* infringement on the rights of property, had the subdued party been delivered over to the *outrage* and the *pillage* of the rabble, the *horrid* scene might have been *paralleled* by examples drawn from the guilty violence of *civilized* nations, without calling our attention to *Theban* and *Thracian orgies*, or a procession of American *savages* entering into *Onondaga*. I do not indeed exactly know how much blood has been spilled in France, or how many individuals have fallen a sacrifice in the publick commotions; but by all the general accounts which have been transmitted to us, the history of monarchies will point out as many sufferers who have fallen in *one hour* to the *rage* and *outrageous pride* of kingly despots.

The punishment of the lamp post, it must be owned, strikes terror to the mind, and calls forth an immediate effusion of *sympathy* to the sufferer. But when *candid reflection* supersedes the *first emotions* of human tenderness, this truth will force itself on our consideration, that a people who had been used to such *barbarous* spectacles as that of beholding wretches, whose *destitute poverty* had in a manner *compelled* to the forlorn course of highway robbery, broken on a wheel, and *lingering* out the last hours of life under the *agonizing* strokes of a stern executioner, would naturally regard hanging as a *mild* punishment on men whom they considered as the worst of criminals. Let us rejoice, then, that such *dreadful legal executions*, which must from their nature tend to *barbarise* men, are happily put an end to by the Revolution.

But Mr. Burke is now come to a scene which is calculated to draw forth *all* the energies of his imagination, and which consequently he describes with the *highest possible* colouring. This is no other than the 6th of October, 1789, when the king and queen were led in triumph to Paris. I very much *honour the king of France* for that ease of temper which has enabled him to go through all his personal mortifications with a *manly dignity*; but it must be confessed that he brought them on himself, by a conduct, which, to say the best of it, was altogether imprudent.

The first involuntary visit which he made to the capital, was absolutely necessary, to appease the *fears* and the *resentment* which had been raised by his *ineffectual* attempt to *awe* the deliberations and the resolutions of the National Assembly by an *armed force*. In the second, he was carried to Paris to *prevent* the execution of a *design* formed by the court cabal, which, had it succeeded, might have *deluged* the nation in blood, and furnished the fuel of civil discord for years.

The Parisians shewed no intention, or even desire, to deprive in any respect their king of his personal liberty; till, by a very suspicious conduct, he appeared to have manifested a design to corrupt the fidelity of his guards to their new government, and to set up the standard of arms in that quarter of the kingdom where the friends of despotism from every part of Europe might repair with safety. The *great* and *unabating* rage and indignation which the enemies to the new constitution have shewn for what they term the captivity of the king, plainly evinces the *necessity* that urged the measure.

Having endeavoured to shew the futility of Mr. Burke's observations and censures on the Revolution and Constitutional Societies; and likewise, that his severe pointed reflections on the conduct of the French nation, for having, as he says, committed on the vanquished party the most *unexampled* acts of atrocious violence, are not founded either in *truth* or *reason*; I shall proceed with my critical reflections on the animadversions of my author, who goes on in a very *free manner* to censure every part of the French constitution, to draw a comparison between the British and the Gallic governments as they now exist, and to establish, in the way of reasoning, a superiority in favour of the government of his own country.

To shew that the National Assembly have committed a very *gross* and *ruinous* error, in the building a new structure, instead of improving an old one; Mr. Burke cites, in a triumphant manner, the conduct of the English nation. Our oldest reformation, he observes, is that of *Magna Charta*. "You will see, says he, addressing his correspondent, that Sir Edward Coke, that great oracle of our law, and indeed all the great men who follow him to Blackstone, are industrious to prove the pedigree of our liberties. They endeavour to prove, that the ancient Charta, the Magna Charta of king John, was connected with another positive Charta from Henry the first, and that both the one and the other were nothing more than a reaffirmance of the still more ancient standing law of the kingdom." "In the famous law of the third of Charles the first, called the Petition of Right, the Parliament says to the king—Your subjects have inherited this freedom (claiming their franchises) not on abstract principles as the rights of men, but as the rights of Englishmen, and as a patrimony derived from their forefathers."

This language of the parliament, when pleading for the freedom of their countrymen at the tribunal of a prince's throne, who was as little inclined to *admit*, and whose *prejudices* enabled him as little to *understand* the only reasonable grounds of the argument as any despot who ever swayed an eastern sceptre, was well adapted to the *character* of the prince, and the *ignorance* of the multitude. But had the *circumstances* of Charles enabled him to *speak* and to *enforce* the sentiments of his mind, he would undoubtedly have made the following reply: You tell me upon your *own* authority, and the authority of *your lawyers*, that what you plead so strenuously for, is a patrimony derived from your forefathers, and grounded on the ancient law of the land. Be it so—Was not this ancient law *superseded by the authority of arms*, and the *entire* submission of the people to the Norman code established by William the Conqueror? *Magna Charta*, then, and the other charters, must either have been *extorted* from the *imbecility* of the princes who granted them, or they must have issued from the *voluntary donations of monarchs*; in either case, they only stand on a *resumable* right.

What the parliament could have answered to this plea, I know not, without calling in the aid of an *abstract right*; which they endeavoured to keep out of the view of the king, with as much care as Mr. Burke *endeavours* to keep it out of the view of all men. But certain it is, that the king, though he did not explicitly declare with all their force the above mentioned sentiments, yet he acted agreeable to their tenor the moment he got rid of this troublesome assembly: For, considering the articles of the petition of right as a *gift depending on his pleasure to fulfil or to resume*, he broke them whenever they thwarted his system of administration, and *imprisoned* those who on the strength of this statute withstood his authority.

I have myself always considered the boasted birthright of an Englishman, as an *arrogant* pretension, built on a *beggarly* foundation. It is an arrogant pretension, because it intimates a kind of exclusion to the rest of mankind from the same privileges; and it is beggarly, because it rests our legitimate freedom on the *alms* of our princes.

I must own I was somewhat surprised to find a gentleman of polished manners, who has spent the best part of his life in the company of those who *affect* the nicest conformity to the rules of a refined civility, addressing the august representatives of the most *gallant* and *respectable* of the European nations, in terms which I should not use to a set of chimney sweepers, though acting the most ridiculously out of their sphere. Neither do I choose to repeat all those expressions of ineffable contempt, which the strong glow of Mr. Burke's imagination has scattered through the whole of his reprehensions.

It is not my intention to make any formal comparison between the new constitution of France, and the present existing constitution of England; or to presume to censure a government, from which an industrious people receive protection, and with which the large majority of the nation are entirely satisfied. Yet it may not be inexpedient to observe, that we cannot with any grounds of *reason* or *propriety*, set up our own constitution as the model which all other nations ought *implicitly* to follow, unless we are *certain* that it bestows the *greatest* possible happiness on the people which in the

nature of things any government can bestow. We ought to be *certain*, that this *model* will bear the most *nice* and *critical* examination. It ought to be void of any of those *obvious*, or more *concealed* causes, which produce *present evils*, and carry the mind to apprehensions of *future mischiefs*. We ought not at least to have had a *national debt*, swelled to a *magnitude* which *terrifies* even the *most sanguine* for its consequences. Our parliaments ought to have been *eminently* distinguished for their *integrity*, and a *total* independence of any *corrupt influence*; and no *necessity ought to have existed in our affairs*, which have obliged us to *endure imposts* which our ancestors would have *rejected with horror*, and *resisted*. If an Englishman sees any thing which is amiss in his own government, he ought not undoubtedly to look forward to any other remedy than those which the lenient hand of reformation will supply. But when the old vessel of a commonwealth is *torn to pieces* by the *shocks* it has sustained from *contending parties*; when the people, disdaining and rejecting all those fond opinions by which they have been *enslaved to misery*, assert their native right of forming a government for themselves; surely in such a case the builders are bound by no law of *duty* or *reason* to make use of these old materials in the structure of their new constitution, which they suppose to have been of an injurious tendency. The leaders of the French Revolution, and their followers, see *none of those striking beauties* in the old laws and rules of the Gothick institutions of Europe, which Mr. Burke does. They do not profess to have any of the spirit of antiquarians among them; and they have not perceived, in the experience of old or ancient times, a *perfect harmony* arising from *opposition* of interests; nor can they *understand* how such a combination can be formed as shall produce it. In such a view of things, they have chosen a simple rule for the model of their new structure, yet regulated with all that *art* and *design* which the experience of ages affords to the wisdom of man. They are accused of having entirely dismissed that useful guide *experience* from their councils, but they think they have made *the best use* of it; whether this opinion of theirs is founded in truth, time, and the future history of man, must evince.

Mr. Burke, reasoning from what I regard as a groundless supposition, very pathetically laments, and very severely reprehends the conduct of those, who, holding out false and treacherous lures to the king, led him into concessions fatal to his personal power, and the constitution of the monarchy. That the parliaments of France never intended to make any *alteration* in the old government, I am thoroughly persuaded; and I am equally persuaded, that they fondly imagined the people would *freely* give their money for the redress of some of the most heavy of the grievances under which they laboured. They knew, by the experience of past times, that in voting by orders, the people had never gained any *solid* advantage from an assembly of the States General. Neither the court, nor the parliament of Paris, who made the king so many splendid promises, were aware of the consequences which must arise from the general spread of knowledge among the people; and in the event of things, they were *both disappointed* of their purposes; for the *Tier Etat*, reflecting on the *old practices* which the *crown*, the *clergy*, and the *nobility* had used against them, were determined to throw the whole weight of their natural scale into the balance, and to redress their own grievances, without waiting the effect of *humble* petitions and *discordant* councils. That neither the king, nor the parliaments of France, could long have prevented the *full* exertion of this power, (had they foreseen all the consequences which did arise from suffering the meeting of the States General,) is to me very plain.

A *regeneration* of the constitution would have been *equally* effected; but it would have been attended with a *tremendous* difference in its circumstances. It would have been ushered in by a general bankruptcy, and the waste of civil blood. “Our enemies,” says a popular Leader in the National Assembly, “may, by their machinations, make us buy our liberties dear, but they cannot deprive us of them.” “This breach of confidence,” as Mr. Burke terms it, “to an easy and condescending king, will have a dreadful effect on the interests of mankind, by sanctifying the dark suspicious maxims of tyrannous distrust; and will teach kings to tremble at what will be called the delusive plausibilities of *moral politicians*.” Be this as it may, the people of France had *certainly* a right to provide for their own *security* and *welfare* on those principles which *they* thought the most conducive to this *great end*, and to leave it to the wisdom of other nations to make suitable provision for theirs. It behoves them, however, to be careful to *cherish* and *preserve* the liberty they have *so nobly* gained; to suffer no intemperate spirit to produce that licentiousness which must bring anarchy in its train; nor to indulge a *capricious impatience*, by which their enemies, in working on their passions and *misguiding* their reason, may reduce them to their old state of bondage; in which case it is *certain*, power will reap *many* advantages from past transactions, by which it will be enabled to *tie fast* those *fetters* the giddy people will so well deserve.

Though I have hitherto spared my readers a detail of all the severe invectives which Mr. Burke has used against the leading members who compose the National Assembly; yet, for the sake of those principles of *moral rectitude* which the torrent of his eloquence appears to *baffle* and *confound*, it will be necessary to notice his observations on the character and conduct of the nobles who have taken the lead in the French revolution, and who yet continue to support it. He accuses them with having assisted in the spoil and humiliation of their own order, to possess a sure fund for their new followers. “To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society (says Mr. Burke) is the first principle, the germ as it were, of publick affections: It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love of our county and mankind.”

What *splendid emoluments* and what *grand objects* of personal ambition those noblemen could have in view, who, whilst they *generously* sacrificed those privileges which are the most fondly coveted by human vanity, shut out their entrance to the publick offices of the state, by resolutions which rendered such promotions incompatible with their legislative trust, I know not; but I hope we shall not be so much *blinded* with the splendour of dazzling images, as to confound those *narrow affections* which bind small bodies together by the mutual ties of personal interest, to that *liberal benevolence*, which, disdaining the consideration of every selfish good, cheerfully sacrifices a *personal interest* to the *welfare* of the community.

Of the list of individuals whom Mr. Burke selects as examples of *true glory*, and as benefactors rather than destroyers of their country, some of them ought to have been for ever stamp'd with *infamy*, as the *pests* and *tyrants* of their species; and they are all of them of doubtful fame, as to any *honour* derived to their country by their ambitious projects, unless a *nation of slaves can receive glory* from a *capacity* of becoming the *scourge* of other societies.

Richlieu was the grand instrument by which the court of France, in the reign of Louis the fourteenth, was enabled to massacre the greater part of the French Hugonots, and to drive the remainder out of the kingdom. Cromwell, indeed, who deprived his sovereign of life, *merely to usurp his power*, has, with many people, paid the debt of his crimes, by having, through the general detestation which men conceived of his *treachery* and *tyranny*, rendered the Revolution and the Revolutionists odious, and thus paved the way for the restoration of the old government.

In the next argument presented to our attention, Mr. Burke has very strongly entrenched himself in the holds of the British constitution; and we will not attempt to pursue him into his fortress: For though a natural vanity *might flatter us* with a *delusive hope* of victory, arising from the subtle objections which may be urged to every political proposition; yet the victory would cost *too dear*, if it subjected us to the reproach of any design against the peace and quiet of the community. But it will not, I think, be deviating from the highest point of decency and prudence, to make our objections to his general assertions. His proposition, “that it is the great masses of property which form a natural rampart about the lesser properties in all their gradations,” is not in our opinion founded in truth; for every citizen who possesses ever so small a share of property, is *equally* as tenacious of it as the most opulent member of society; and this leads him to *respect* and to *support* all the laws by which property is protected. It is this sense of personal interest, which running through every rank in society, and attaching itself to every one of its members who are not in the condition of a pauper, forms an impenetrable barrier to the security of wealth; for otherwise, as the numbers of the opulent must be *very* small in proportion to the number of those who form the great mass of the people, *envy* would operate so successfully against them as to destroy the force of artificial supports.

When the constitution of France is compleatly settled, and the commonwealth rests upon its basis, this disposition of the human mind which operates so powerfully for the preservation of peace and order, will, as on former occasions, regain its natural force. For the operations of *power* on the property of the citizen, is not an *unexempled* event in the histories of civil societies.

The manner in which the National Assembly of France have endeavoured to secure and to defend the liberty of the different towns and provinces which compose that vast empire, come next under Mr. Burke’s severe criticism. But in his *endeavour* to bring men over to his sentiments on this subject, he is obliged to have recourse to all those *unfair* means which persons of genius think themselves entitled to use in the course of their argument; for what, indeed, but the *delusive* power of a subtle sophistry, can produce an apparent *concord* between propositions the most *opposite in their nature?* and what but an appeal to the passions of the reader, can prevent his assent to the *most obvious truths?*

The National Assembly of France are at one time accused by Mr. Burke of a scheme for *perpetuating* their power, at the expense of the rights of election; at another, of acting *weakly* and *meanly* in the having *limited* their sitting to the *short space of two years*. In one view of things, they are accused of drawing to themselves, and to the city of Paris, *an exorbitance of power*, which, if not resisted, must end in the total

subjection of the provinces, whose natural productions and acquired wealth are to be exhausted to pamper the luxury and gratify the avarice of the capital. In another, their politicks are arraigned, for having left no leading *controlling power* in the empire, of *sufficient energy* to support a necessary subordination of its parts. Such *palpable contradictions*, such *little arts of misrepresentation* we have seen daily thrown out in the publick papers by the *hostile faction*, who naturally endeavour to *mislead* the people into a *distrust* of their deputies, because they have guarded their liberties with too nice and too jealous a care. But we did not expect to see them collected together and set off with all the powers of literary composition, by one of the greatest orators of the age; and this in a work which the author holds out as an *exact standard*, by which the limits of *power* and of *freedom* are from henceforth *to receive their bounds*. Neither did we expect to find that the *humane* writer would have so far entered into the passions of the discontented party, as to *envy* the people of Paris that bread which is so necessary for their subsistence, and which cannot be otherwise supplied but by the produce of the provinces.

We were also greatly surprized to find Mr. Burke entering into such contradictions, as at *one time* to represent the excellencies of the English constitution as *obvious* to every observer, and so sensibly felt by its subjects as *unanimously* to bind their affections to its principles, its rules, and its dictates; to the exception only of a few *idle, insignificant, speculative individuals*: And at *another, trembling* lest if the question of the abstract rights of men were brought before the eyes of the people, the most *dreadful* confusions might follow, and be attended with the *utter downfall* of every order in the church and state, of *every exclusive* privilege existing in its bodies corporate, and with the *general pillage* of the rich.

Such representations are certainly well adapted to *rouse* the selfish passions of the *timid* mind, and may serve the present purpose of the *hour*; but they will not stand the more *candid* and *cool* decisions which attend on *time*.

The *legitimate* power by which governments are made or altered, must either stand on the *native rights* of the species, or it must stand on an authority vested in an individual, or in a limited number of individuals, exalted to this authority, either by the positive law of a *revealed will*, or by some native superiority *evidently* attached to their persons. That this sacred trust has never been so formally vested in *any* individual, or in *any given number* of individuals, is in a manner acknowledged by the most strenuous advocates for *passive obedience*; for all their arguments are built on presumptive grounds.

The contrary proposition to this, *viz. that native right in the social body to choose its own government*, which Mr. Burke *condemns* under the description of a *metaphysical foolery*, is allowed with all its weight of authority by the greatest part of the English Revolutionists; nor can any other *reasonable* ground of persuasion be made use of, to bring the people to concur in any plan of salutary or necessary reformation. With what pretence then, can Mr. Burke charge Dr. Price, or any of his adherents or admirers, with advancing a *novel* or a *mischievous* doctrine, when they assert that all legitimate power is founded on the rights of nature? “But government (says Mr. Burke) is not made in virtue of natural rights, which may and do exist in total independence of it;

and exist in much greater clearness, and in a much greater degree of abstract perfection; but their abstract perfection is their practical defect. By having a right to every thing, they want every thing. Government is a contrivance of human wisdom, to provide for human wants. Men have a right that these wants should be provided for by this wisdom. Among these wants is to be reckoned the want out of a civil society, of a sufficient restraint upon their passions. Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but even in the mass and body, as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done by a power out of themselves, and not in the exercise of its functions, subject to that will, and to those passions, which it is in its office to bridle and subdue. In this sense, the restraints of men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.”

To this very *ingenious* reasoning, and these *refined* distinctions between natural and social rights, the people may possibly object, that in delivering themselves *passively* over to the *unrestrained rule of others* on the plea of controlling *their inordinate inclinations* and *passions*, they deliver themselves over to *men*, who, as *men*, and partaking of the *same* nature as themselves, are as liable to be governed by the same *principles* and *errors*; and to men who, by the great superiority of their station, having no *common* interest with themselves which might lead them to preserve a salutary check over their vices, must be inclined to *abuse* in the *grossest manner* their trust. To proceed with Mr. Burke’s argument—should the rich and opulent in the nation plead their right to the predominant sway in society, from its being a necessary circumstance to guard their wealth from the gripe of poverty, the men in an inferior state of fortune might argue, that should they *give way to this plea in all its extent*, their moderate possessions would be exposed to the burden of *unequal* taxes; for the rich, when possessed of the *whole* authority of the state, would be sure to take the *first care* of themselves, if they should not be tempted to secure an exoneration of *all* burthens, by dividing the spoils of the public; and that the *abuse* of such high trusts must *necessarily* arise, because to act by selfish considerations, is in the very constitution of our nature.

To such pleas, so plausibly urged on all sides, I know of no *rational* objection; nor can I think of any expedient to remove the well grounded apprehensions of the different interests which compose a commonwealth, than a *fair* and *equal* representation of the *whole* people;—a circumstance which appears very peculiarly necessary in a mixed form of government, where the democratic part of the constitution will ever be in danger of being overborne by the energy attending on its higher constituent parts.

On such grounds of reasoning, there will be found no insuperable objections to those propositions of Dr. Price, which are so highly censured by Mr. Burke, as containing principles of the most *seditious* and *dangerous* nature; even though we should allow that every government which accords with the opinions and the inclinations of the large majority of the people, is, in an high sense of the term, a legitimate government.

We shall now proceed with that course of the argument in which Mr. Burke endeavours to shew, that the *unequal* representation which he allows to have taken

place in *our government*, is a *perfection* rather than a *defect*. “With us, when we elect popular representatives, (says Mr. Burke, still addressing his French correspondent,) we send them to a council in which each man individually is a subject, and submitted to a government complete in all its ordinary functions. With you the elective assembly is the sovereign, and the sole sovereign; all the members therefore are integral parts of the sole sovereignty. But with us, it is totally different. With us, the representatives separated from the other parts, can have no action, and no existence. The government is the point of reference of the several members and districts of our representation. This is the centre of our unity. This government of reference is a trustee for the whole, and not for the parts. So is the other branch of our public council; I mean the House of Lords. With us, the King and the Lords are several and joint securities for the equality of each district, each province, each city. When did you hear in Great Britain of any province suffering from the inequality of representation? what district from having no representation at all? Not only our monarchy and our peerage secure the equality on which our unity depends, but it is the spirit of the House of Commons itself. The very inequality of representation, which is so *foolishly* complained of, is perhaps the very thing which prevents us from thinking or acting as members for districts. Cornwall elects as many members as all Scotland; but is Cornwall better taken care of than Scotland?”

If your Lordship sees the result of this argument in the same light as I do, you will consider it as equally recommendatory to an election of the *Lower House* in the *King* and the *Lords*, as of an inadequate representation made by the election of the Commons. For if the *King* and the *Lords* are several and joint securities for the equality of each district, each province, and each city; why should we throw the country into a state of *riot* and *confusion* every seven years? Why should we put ourselves to electioneering *expenses*? Would it not be a *more convenient* method to suffer the *King* and the House of *Lords* to *chuse* our representatives?

But this is not the point of view in which the friends of equal representation see the necessity of a reform: They do not alledge that Cornwall is better taken care of than any other district in Great Britain. The subject of their complaint is, that the important interests of the great body of the Commons is, by our *present inadequate state of representation*, sacrificed to the ambition of *private* individuals, who by their *command* over boroughs, may make their *market* with government at the *expense* of the publick. The *strong* and *firm* opposition which the *ruling powers* have given to *every* step towards this *reasonable* reformation, is not *one* of the *happiest* effects which arise from that continual war of *interests* so much admired by Mr. Burke and others. The jealousy it manifests of the people, is without *all* bounds of moderation; for the organ by which the democratic influence is exerted, has no very formidable energy. Its power is circumscribed and shut in by the immoveable barrier of laws, usages, positive rules of doctrine and practise, counterpoised by the House of Lords, and in a manner *subjected to the Crown* by the prerogative of calling and dissolving parliaments.

To proceed with the observations of my author—After a torrent of the most pointed invective, Mr. Burke takes upon him to censure every part of the conduct of the French Revolutionists; and among other acts *one* which I have always considered as

founded in *truth, religion, and the purest morality*; it is that of annihilating by the force of a bright example, those notions founded on *false* principles of honour, which fell so *severely* and so *cruelly* on every family who had the misfortune to have produced one *real* or *pretended* culprit. The infamy which families sustained for the misconduct of any of its individual members, was one of the *strongest* reasons which have been urged for *personal* imprisonment at pleasure; and when this dreadful engine of despotism was removed, it surely became expedient to *emancipate* the people from the *terror* of this impending evil. But when the *most laudable transactions* of men are represented as *crimes*, we ought to be *cautious* how we give ear to the suggestions of their *accuser*.

In the personal mortifications of the Queen of France, Mr. Burke finds great reason to lament that the age of chivalry is no more; for had the same spirit existed in this, that existed in past ages, “ten thousand swords might have leaped from their scabbards, to *avenge even a look* that threatened her with insult.” The high colouring given by Mr. Burke to those scenes of regal distress, will, I doubt not, captivate the imagination of the greater number of his readers, in a degree equal to the effects produced on the author by the *charms* of the Queen of France. But the *delusions* of fancy are apt to subside in men of *cool* minds, when any *great* object of publick concern is held up to their view, to the prejudice even of beauty and dignity, and all those external objects, adapted rather to *enslave* our affections, than to *lead* our judgement.

The bringing the king and queen to Paris, and thus, by preventing their escape, to disable them from forming new troubles in the kingdom, was certainly regarded as a measure of the *highest necessity*; and in this view, must have been approved by the true friends of the revolution, although it was attended with tumult and disorder.

The age in which the spirit of chivalry was triumphantly prevalent, would indeed have been a very *improper* time to have attempted a regeneration of constitutions on a *popular* principle; but I have always regarded the necessity which gave birth to the orders of chivalry, as a mark of *disgrace* to the times in which they were formed. They were indeed a proper remedy to the evils arising from *ferocity, stavery, barbarism, and ignorance*; but now, when the causes no longer exist which rendered them useful, we should rather think of *freeing* society of all the evils inherent in those *false* notions of honour which they have given rise to, than endeavour to call back their spirit in its full force. That enthusiastick military fire, that *methodized sentimental barbarism*, which instigates men to deprive their fellow citizens of life for *supposed* personal affronts, in *defiance* of the laws of *religion* and *society*, are the offsprings of chivalry, and unknown to *all* the nations of the *ancient civilized* world. But it is the *simplicity* of all *abstract principles* against which Mr. Burke makes an *eternal* war; all the *devices* of pride, all the *fond conceits* of vanity, all the train of *pompous* ostentation, by which *naked* virtue is put *out* of her *rank*, to give way to the more imposing glare of external magnificence, are represented as useful ideas, “furnished from the wardrobe of a *moral* imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation.”

It is not, according to *these* ideas, recommended by Mr. Burke, that the Scripture teaches us to *respect ourselves*; and although the maxims of the sacred writings are exploded by all politicians as *incompatible* with their views, yet certainly the *excellency* of their precepts consists in their being *exactly* fitted to a *temporal* as well as to a *spiritual* happiness. Neither in a *moral* view of things, can I perceive how the *ornaments* of artificial greatness, which are found to answer all the purposes of *human pride*, should assist us in acquiring that *true* dignity of character which *alone* ought to constitute distinction; nor how we can truly respect ourselves, by *idolizing* the *mere phantom* of greatness, whether it be attached to our own persons, or the persons of others.

As every act of the French National Assembly is to be *condemned*, not only in the *gross*, but in the *detail*, the address of congratulation to the king on the commencement of the present year, comes, among others, under Mr. Burke's severe animadversion.

I have not indeed got this address by me; but if my memory does not deceive me, it contained a language the *best* adapted to sooth the personal afflictions of the king. Not the *smallest* hint was given, than any ill conduct in his Majesty had provoked the people to emancipate themselves from his power; it *thanked* him for his concurrence with their wishes; it represented their liberty as the *necessary* consequence of their *enlightened* spirit, not of their sufferings under his administration; and it promised as loyal an attachment to his person, and to the distinction he held as the first magistrate of the commonwealth, as could have been exacted by the authority of which he was dispossessed.

Whatever might have been held out as the ostensible object of the people in their demand for the meeting of their representatives, it certainly was intended by them to use their power, when thus vested with a legitimate form, and endued with a capability of legislation, not only to the *reformation* of abuses, but to the *regeneration* of their constitution; and thus the National Assembly became vested with the trust of legislation, in the *highest* sense of the word: Nor could this trust be *limited* or *governed* by any of those rules and practices, which, for *reasons* drawn from *experience*, the people *condemned*, and were *determined to abolish*.

Thus the preserving the state from the ruin of an impending bankruptcy, *brought on* by the *prodigality* of courts, and the *regeneration* of the constitution, were the important services which the National Assembly were expected to perform for their constituents. And when we consider that these *important* and *difficult* services were to be performed without that ready and effectual instrument of power, a *standing* army, (in whom *implicit* obedience is the *only* rule of action), we shall be obliged to confess, either that the men who undertook this *great* work were infected with a *daring* *insanity*, or that they were seconded by an *unanimity* in the sentiments of the people, which is *unparalleled* in the history of large empires, and which evidently destroys the force of *every* accusation which can be brought against them, as having rendered themselves the *instrument* of a faction, rather than the *faithful* deputies of the people.

A total reformation in the ecclesiastical system, and the new modelling the system of jurisprudence, were the *two leading points* in which *every* member of the empire agreed, excepting those individuals whose interests were personally affected by a change. It was a point of union in which both the nobility and the people met; and several of those persons who have been the *loudest* in their exclamations against the conduct of the National Assembly, for having *disappointed* their body of the largest share of the *spoils of the crown*, and who have since united themselves to the *mal contents* among the lawyers and the clergy, were the most active in the first movements of these grand points of reformation.

To begin with the reformation of the ecclesiastical system—It was thought by the French nation, that *one hundred, and four score* millions of property, principally confined to the use of the *higher* orders of the clergy, and thus prevented from entering into the common circulation of other parts of property, was a *nuisance* in a treble sense. It was a *nuisance*, in the first instance, as a monopoly; in the second, it was a nuisance, as giving a dangerous power to those who possessed that monopoly, and in the third instance, as it tended, by the *natural course* of moral causes in this *its excess*, to *corrupt* rather than to *encrease* and *invigorate* those *qualities of the mind*, and those *spiritual endowments*, which are to be desired in the teachers of religion. What real grounds there were for this opinion, so generally conceived by the French nation in the conduct of the clergy, I know not; neither shall I enquire, for *I am as little* inclined as Mr. Burke can be to insult the unfortunate: I shall only say, that as their temptations were *great*, and that their *nature* was not *superior* to human infirmity, it was *probable* they produced their *due* effects. But there is *one* sentiment in which I in some measure accord with Mr. Burke. I do most sincerely lament that the *exigencies* of the times would *not suffer* the National Assembly to indulge their clergy in a life-enjoyment of their possessions. But this sentiment of mine is not of *so forcible* a kind as to destroy *all other* sympathies. It would not lead me, even if I possessed a similar portion of abilities with Mr. Burke, like him, to *endeavour*, by the animating power of declamation, so to condole with the sufferers as to combine all the energies of the *worst* passions of men in favour of my opinion. I should not attempt to *rouse* and *inflame* the resentment of the French clergy to a *repetition* of acts which have renewed scenes of violence, and by which, after the *manner of old times*, they have set up the standard of Christ crucified, to *arm bigotry* in favour of their pretensions. Neither should I, among the more peaceable members of that body, by representations the most touchingly affecting, open afresh those wounds on which it is to be hoped *religion has poured her healing balm*.

In the *attempt* to make the French National Assembly *singularly odious*, for the confiscations they have made of the church lands, Mr. Burke asserts, that in many instances they have more violently outraged the principle, as well as the forms of publick justice, than has been done by any other preceding power. The examples he brings in proof, are the confiscations made by the fury of triumphant factions in the Roman commonwealth; and an example more in point in the person of Henry the Eighth, for Mr. Burke does *not chuse* to extend his observations to the conduct of Denmark, Sweden, and other states, on their profession of the reformed religion. Mr. Burke considers the *violences* of Marius and Sylla to be *much graced* in the formalities of *false accusations of treason* against the *most virtuous persons* in the

commonwealth; and that the tyrant Henry the Eighth, who seized the property of the clergy for his own private use, and the emoluments of his favourites, *dignified these acts of violence*, by assuming the character of the judge, and condemning the victims on *false pretences*. Surely the French clergy would not have thought themselves *better used*, if the National Assembly had set on foot a commission to examine into the crimes and abuses which prevailed among them, and then to have governed their proceedings by reported truths, mixed with exaggeration and falsehood; surely this *mockery of justice, so much used* in old times, and this *covering to the deeds of power, by spoils torn* from the only consolatory remains of the sufferer, *his good fame*, will not be thought an example *proper* to have been followed, rather than the *plain* dealing of the French legislature.

But Mr. Burke has as great a dislike to the reform of the church police, as to the confiscations of the property of the more dignified part of the order. He is quite in a *rage*, that the *poor curates* should be taken out of the *hopeless poverty* into which they were plunged; and he *cannot endure* those regulations which took place in the *best times* of Christian societies. That bishops *should be confined* to their dioceses, and the *care* of their spiritual administration, instead of attending courts, and lavishing their incomes in the pleasures of the capital; and that the people should assume their rights of election; “are solecisms in policy, which none but *barbarous, ignorant, atheistical minds* could dictate, and which no man of *enlarged capacity and generous passions* can obey.”

On that article of the French ecclesiastical policy which confines bishops to their episcopal administration, it may not be improper to observe, that Bishop Leighton, the *most eminent* of the Scotch prelates for his *piety* and his *zeal* for that order, *ardently wished* that such a regulation should take place on their re-establishment in Scotland under Charles the Second. I am far from saying that such a regulation is compatible with the state of things among us; and I think so well of the moderation of the clergy, and their regard to the constitution of the country, that I wish they were as *independent* a body as Mr. Burke *represents them to be*. But surely if *gratitude* for *past favours*, the *hopes* held out to *ambition* for the acquiring *further preferments*, and a very considerable number of church-livings in the *disposal* of the crown, *can in any respect* influence the minds of the clergy, they cannot be said to be *totally independent*.

I shall now take into consideration the second grand point of reformation, in which the nobles and people appear at first to have been in union, *viz.* the *new* modelling the system of jurisprudence; but that a system of jurisprudence, formed by *ignorant barbarians*, from codes of law adapted to support the *despotic tyranny* of the *Roman Emperors*, could not be in unison with the sentiments of an enlightened people, or capable of supporting the principles of a *free* government, was apparent to all parties: But personal interest, for reasons as apparent, at length produced an union between the lawyers and nobles. The National Assembly *justly* thought, that laws dictated by the *humane* spirit of an enlightened age, would be but *ill* administered by a tribunal formed under the influence of the *rankest* prejudices; and they conceived it as a *solecism* in politics, that Parliaments, who had been especially appointed to see that the laws and regulations framed by the Assemblies of the States General, should

receive no injury from the edicts of the monarch, should be kept as a control over the standing authority of the nation. It was on this reason that the old independent Parliaments with all their merits, and all their faults, were abolished. Nor is it a wonder that in the change of the *prospect*, a change in the *sentiments* of the nobles should have taken place: For when they perceived that the system of the ancient tyranny was *better* adapted to their *personal* greatness than the *new order* of things, they with Mr. Burke, looked on the Parliaments as a *convenient* power, under which they might rally. What a *ready convenience* for the play of a *delusive* policy would it have afforded, if the Parliaments, exerting their *old* authority under the crown, had pertinaciously refused to register the edicts of the Assembly! What a display of eloquence *in favour* of the *privileges* of the *nobles* and the *clergy*, might have been seen in their *remonstrances* to the Assembly! and what *useful* delays would it have afforded for the president of the National Assembly, in the name of the Majesty of the people, to have been obliged to mount the Bed of *Justice*, after the example of the late monarchs of the realm; and in case of an *incurable* obstinacy, for the Assembly, through the means of the executive power, to have recourse to the *tedious* remedy of an imprisonment. With such advantages on their side, the *faction* in opposition would have had *reasonable* grounds of hope, that *centuries* might have elapsed before the constitution could have been in any sense of the word regenerated.

Before I leave this subject, it will be necessary to notice, that Mr. Burke *condemns* the conduct of the National Assembly for the distinction they have made in their treatment of the lawyers and their clergy, a distinction which I think every unprejudiced person will agree to be founded in justice, *viz.* the preference afforded the former by making them a suitable provision during life, in consideration that the civil offices, of which they were deprived, had been purchased with private property (as Mr. Burke observes) “at an high rate.”

The prevention of a national bankruptcy was thought an object of the most *momentous* concern to the whole French nation. It was in order to avert this *impending* evil, that the States General were permitted to assemble; and it was an object *principally* recommended to the deputies of the people, by their united voice. In this state of public opinion, the arguments so plausibly, and indeed so forcibly urged by Mr. Burke *against the right* of the monarch to mortgage the public revenue, will not render the Assembly culpable for *endeavouring to keep faith* with the creditors of the crown. For though I never could perceive why on any *good grounds of reason*, the people should *quarrel* with their new constitution, because the *prodigality* of the *old government* had involved them in *distresses* which were in their nature irremoveable, which did not proceed from any *fraud* or *corruption* in their *new* servants, and which could not be mended by subjecting themselves to the *old* domination; yet certain it is, that the *enemies* of the new constitution have beheld the arrival of a moment big with that temporary distress and confusion which must ever attend a national bankruptcy, with the *utmost impatience*, as of bringing with it a *sure* prospect of *victory*. What an *opportunity* indeed, would it present, of setting forth *exaggerated* descriptions of public distresses, and of arraigning the members of the National Assembly as the *sole* authors of the nation’s wrongs! The *anxious* and *provident* care which this Assembly has taken to ward off this disaster, and also to avoid, in the present irritable state of the public feelings, the imposing very heavy

burthens on the people, is certainly a mark of political *sagacity*, and, *being such*, is treated with the *utmost bitterness of disappointed rage* by their opponents.

On the subject of the difficulties which the French Legislature have encountered in the task of regenerating the constitution, it is natural to turn our minds on the *paper-currency* they have established, and especially as it is a subject on which Mr. Burke has displayed the *whole force* of his ingenuity, to alarm the fears of the French nation, and to depreciate, and to render odious in their eyes, the conduct of their representatives.

On this subject I do profess a total ignorance: I have no financiering abilities; and I wish with all my heart, that this art which Mr. Burke represents as a talent the *most highly* necessary in those who conduct the affairs of state, and which I consider as deriving its practical use from its *deceptious* address in *picking the pockets* of the people, was not so necessary an engine in the present modes of administration. A few observations however, which must occur to every thinking mind, I shall venture to make. They are as follows: That the difference which Mr. Burke makes between the paper currency of this country, and that which now subsists in France, is not *so much* in favour of England as Mr. Burke represents; for, as the French legislature have *not* issued more paper than they appear to have a *solid fund to support*, and a fund that is *obvious* to every man's eyes and understanding, its credit *ought not in reason* to have less stability than a paper currency founded on *confidence*. For, though every man believes, and on good grounds believes, that the bank of England has a sufficient property to answer for the payment of its notes; yet still although *this belief* should arise to a *moral certainty*, it cannot be *superior* to a credit founded on an *obvious* fact. And should the French legislature continue this *wise* caution, of not issuing more paper than the state revenue can obviously support, whilst the revolution stands on its *present* bottom, this paper, *whatever may be* the exigencies of the times, must *always* be of *some value*; whereas a failure of our national credit would, it is generally thought, render the paper money of this country of *no more worth than the intrinsic value of the paper*.

The diffusion of a general spirit of gaming, and the destructive practice of stock-jobbing, *are evils* which I am afraid in a more or less degree must ever exist with national debts; and the *larger* the debt, the *greater* will be *the degree* of evil. That this spirit prevails in our capital to a very alarming height, the history of the *Bulls* and *Bears* in the alley will *abundantly* testify: That it has been the *ruin* of many a fair fortune, *thousands of sufferers* can also testify: That it has *enabled* and *tempted* several of those who are in the *secret* of affairs, to *pillage* the publick unmercifully, fame represents; and that the stocks have a *great* influence over the landed property of this country, which rises or falls according to their various fluctuations, the experience of the last American war *evinces beyond a doubt*.

All these evils, if evils they are, were *prognosticated* by those who stiled themselves the patriots of their country, from the *first* establishment of a funded debt, to almost the present period of time; and the reasons they urged to enforce the arguments they used against the measure, appear to me sufficiently convincing to have induced a *cautious moderation* in our councils. But they were not attended to; they were

represented as the *chimeras of discontented speculative men*; the *encrease* of the national debt was set forth as both the *cause* and the *effects* of public *prosperity*; it was described as the *enlivening* principle of commerce, the *grand panacea* that was to keep us in an *eternal vigour*, the *steady hold* by which all the members of the community were to be *bound* in the bands of loyalty; and that there was *no excess* in the amount of the debt, that could be attended with *any ruinous* consequences.

If such representations, so repeatedly made by a large party in the kingdom, and at present so generally adopted, are founded in truth, I cannot see how *causes* which have a *salutary effect* among us, should operate as *poison* to our neighbours; and I have a *better* opinion of the policy of the National Assembly in issuing their *assignats*, from the *strong* and *violent opposition* which was made to the measure by their *enemies*.

It must not be forgot, that among the other economical regulations of the National Assembly, that which has taken place in their *list of pensioners*, falls equally with other of their acts, under the severity of Mr. Burke's pen. The amount of the public money given to this description of people by the court, was indeed *enormous*; and if we may give credit to the *Red Book*, published by authority, there was *little* of the principles of *reason* or *justice* in the admeasurement of rewards to individuals, unless the *state* and the *country* are considered as *separate interests* in the account; and that the pleasing or gratifying the *prince* and his *favourites* should be reckoned in the value of an *hundred pounds* to a *penny*, when set in the balance of *blood shed* in *defence* of the *nation*.

What indeed can escape Mr. Burke's censure, or what act of the French legislature can please him, (but the dissolving themselves, and leaving the king and the nobles to form their own rules of power), when he finds subject for *reproach* even in their acts of *sympathy* to the *indigent* part of the *citizens*? That Paris was always crowded with a numerous herd of mendicants, even more numerous, if possible, than those who infest and disgrace our capital, is certain; and should their numbers have encreased by the desertion of those opulent citizens who are out of temper with the government, it would neither be a *surprising* nor an *alarming* circumstance: But it is an evil that time alone can cure, when the shock of so important a revolution has spent its force, and when the *ill humour* which at present rages in the breasts of the discontented shall subside, and lead them to return into the bosom of their country, and under the protecting laws of a regular government.

In a very elaborate defence of all the artificial modes of greatness which have taken place in society, Mr. Burke has used all the powers of eloquence and subtlety to prove, that the crimes which have been committed by our species, have not arisen from the imperfections of institutions, but from the vices of individuals. In *one sense*, his argument will be found to be *just*; in *another*, *nugatory*: For though it must be acknowledged, that the crimes committed by Nero proceeded from the depravity of his character, yet the *opportunity* of committing those crimes, and perhaps that very *depravity* of sentiment from whence they proceeded, lay in the *vice* of the *imperial institution*.

With the same flow of eloquence, and the same subtlety, Mr. Burke recommends in all legislators, that *tardy* caution which suffers the *spirit of reform to evaporate* before their work is half finished; “for the evils latent in the most promising contrivances,” says Mr. Burke, “should be provided for as they arise; one advantage is as little as possible to be sacrificed to another; for thus we compensate, we reconcile, we balance, we are enabled to unite in a consistent whole, the various anomalies and contending principles that are found in the minds and affairs of men.”

This *finely* imagined theory would undoubtedly be adopted by all wise and good legislators, did it in any manner suit with the *nature* of mankind, and that *leaven of selfishness* which taints *every principle* of human conduct. That perfect knowledge of human affairs, which Mr. Burke conceives, and justly conceives, ought to be inseparable from the office of legislation, will convince men, that when new constitutions are to be formed, it is necessary they should, in their formation, be regulated in all their circumstances by those principles which the legislators conceive to be *the best*; for if any thing which may be thought *defective* is left for the wisdom of future legislators to *correct*, the constitution must *remain defective*, as future reformers will find their *difficulties encrease*, instead of being *diminished*, by time. The reason is plain; for that which constitutes the *defects* in all governments, are those principles in them which support a *partial interest*, to the injury of a *public one*; and the *prescription of time* with the *politic use of power*, has been found an *irresistible barrier* to every important part of *reformation* in the ordinary course of things.

The French legislature, in order to extinguish those local prejudices and provincial jealousies which formerly existed in the kingdom of France, arising from the different laws and customs which took place when the independent principalities were annexed to the crown; and also to regulate the rights of election in such a manner, as whilst it secured to the citizens at large this invaluable blessing, it should provide for the public tranquillity; conceived and executed a plan of dividing the kingdom into eighty one departments. Each of these departments are divided into smaller districts, called *Communes*; and these again into smaller districts, called *Cantons*. The primary assemblies of the *cantons* elect deputies to the *communes*, one for every two hundred qualified inhabitants. The *communes* chosen by the *cantons* chuse to the *departments*, and the deputies of the *departments* chuse the deputies to the *National Assembly*. A qualification to the right of election in the first instance, is placed at the low rate of the price of three days labour; the qualification of being elected into the *Commune*, is the amount of ten days labour; and that of being elected a deputy to the *National Assembly*, is only *one* mark of silver.

This plan, in theory at least, promises to unite the highest degree of *freedom* with the highest degree of *order*: it extends the right of election to *every man who is not a pauper*, and as such by living on the *alms* of society, cannot reasonably have a *right* to enjoy its political privileges; and whilst it thus encourages industry, by rendering it a necessary quality to enjoy these privileges, it opens the door to every man of ability to obtain the highest honours of his country. But this plan, so plausible at least in its appearance, and so exactly agreeing with the rights of the citizens in the *strictest sense* of the word, is criticised by Mr. Burke in a manner *highly unworthy* of his great abilities, because he descends to the *arts* of a quibbling sophistry. He accuses the

legislature of not attending to their avowed principles of the equal rights of men, in *refusing* their *pauper*: a vote. He asserts that the right of election granted in the first instance, is no privilege at all; and he foresees, that the most *fatal dissensions* will arise from regulations which seemingly tend to *harmonise* every jarring principle in the state, to subdue every prejudice of the mind hostile to the publick welfare, and to combine all its affections in the character of a loyal citizen.

In opposition to Mr. Burke's accusation, that the legislature, in the qualifications they have annexed to the rights of election, have acted in contradiction to their avowed principles of the equal rights of men, I shall, without sheltering myself under the cover of a practical use, (which may be used to justify every mode of tyranny,) assert, that the French legislature have in those qualifications adhered to the rights of men in the *strictest sense*, even as they exist in their *abstract* perfection in a state of nature: For, who ever conceived, that, in a state of nature, a man who was either not inclined, or by bodily infirmity not able, to till the ground, had a right to the fruits produced by the labour of others? In this case, either in a state of nature, or in a state of society, the *right* of maintenance depends alone on the *laws of humanity*, proceeding from that sympathy which the benevolent Author of our being has for the *best purposes* woven into the mental constitution of all his *moral* creatures. But these laws of humanity do not oblige men to yield rights with the *donation of alms*, and to put those whom their charity has relieved, into a situation of *forcing* from them the fruits of their industry. It is on the basis of *industry* alone, the *only* principle which exactly squares with a native right, and *not on rent-rolls*, that the legislature has formed the rights of representation; and this on such liberal principles, that every man who has activity and industry, may qualify himself as to the matter of property, for a seat in the legislative assembly. As to the nature and operation of the privileges annexed to the first and second steps in the gradation, I conceive that the regular degrees, which directly point to the grand privilege of chusing the representatives, whilst they totally prevent *confusion* and the errors of a *blind* choice, do not, in *any* respect, render *nugatory* the right of its more *abstract* principle. For every man in the Canton makes *his choice* of a deputy whom he thinks qualified by merit to represent him in the Commune, and *every* voter in the Commune has also *his choice* of a deputy to present him in the department, who have a right to the choice of representatives.

As Mr. Burke has made it a point to object to *every* part of the French constitution as it now stands, and to every act of the legislature which respects this constitution, I must follow him through all his objections, and state those reasons which appear to me to have regulated their conduct. It is true that a senate, or an assembly of men who have had some control over the voice of the people, some power of mitigating, regulating, or carrying into execution their laws, has always had a place in the ancient republics: But Mr. Burke himself seems to allow, that they are not *absolutely* necessary in monarchies, or rather in any government which admits of a *standing permanent* executive power. It is true they appear to have been a necessary institution in the ancient republics; yet history will shew us, that their tendency has ever been *hostile* to the principles of democracy, and often ended in the *ruin* of freedom. To the *pride*, the *avarice*, and *corruption* of the Roman Senate, was undoubtedly owing the subversion of the republic. It is, I think, very little to the purpose of enlightening men's minds on the subject of modern government, to quote the reflections of ancient

authors, or draw comparisons from ancient times, which were totally unacquainted with that *excellent* policy, by which the people's power is represented, and brought into regular action through the means of deputation. An Assembly of men *thus appointed*, seems to unite in it all the energy and fitness to the affairs of government of the Roman Senate, in its most brilliant and perfect state, without the *latent* principles of *corruption* and *destruction* which lurked in this institution.

What Lord Bolingbroke could mean I know not, when he says, that he prefers a monarchy to other governments; because every description of a republic can be better engrafted on it, than any thing of a monarchy upon the republican forms; unless he refers to such a *qualified* monarchy as is confined to the *mere* office of an executive governor, with the *stability* that is annexed to *hereditary descent*; for sure it is *impossible* to engraft a democracy on any other description of monarchy. If this is his Lordship's meaning, the French monarchy, as it now stands, will be found to agree *perfectly* with it; and should experience prove it to be defective for the want of such a member as a senate, the defect must be supplied with all those *cautious* preventatives which experience can alone afford.

The *limitations* of power, in which the executive magistrate is confined, affords Mr. Burke a subject for the exertion of *all* the powers of his oratory. He *deplores* the mortified state of the fallen monarch; he sees nothing but *weakness* in the government, and *confusion* in the affairs of the empire; from the want of a *proper influencing power in the executive, and that cordiality which ought to subsist between it and the legislative*. He conceives, that without such a *controlling* influence, the executive office is a state of *degradation*, to which *no man of spirit* would submit. And if the present King and his successors respect their *true* glory, they will take *every* opportunity which time may present, of shaking off the yoke of their imperious masters, and resuming their former independence.

To these animadversions of Mr. Burke, it may be observed, that most of the limitations of which he complains, are either *inseparable* to the security of the democracy, or they have their grounds in a *just policy*, suiting itself to the present state of things. It is necessary that a popular legislature should be informed through *other channels* than the *executive power*, of such matters as may import that body to know: It is necessary that all the means by which *a personal influence* may be established by the *grant of lands and large pensions*, should be taken away; and for the same reasons of policy, it is necessary that the executive power *should not* be capable of *deluding the imaginations* of men, by creating *artificial distinctions* among them.

According to Mr. Burke's political creed, Kings are only to *respect those* who serve their *personal greatness*; and it is his opinion, that the successors to the throne of France in the Bourbon line, *must*, unless they are *illiterate men*, act on a principle *hostile* to the constitution which *they are sworn* to preserve. It is true, as Mr. Burke observes, this is *nature*; but are not those very *inclinations*, so inherent in man, the grounds for that *jealousy* which reflecting patriots entertain *of all persons* vested with the dangerous gift of *permanent* authority? And unless the present monarch of France, and his successors, shall conceive *very different ideas of glory* than they will *learn*

from Mr. Burke; unless they shall conceive that the executing an office *faithfully*, reflects *more honour* upon them than any encrease of *personal greatness* they can gain by *treachery*; there is very little probability that they will obtain from a popular legislature, that enlargement of power* which may reasonably be given, when circumstances shall *convince* the public mind that there are no grounds for jealousy.

Mr. Burke extends his *commiseration not only* to the person of the King and his royal issue, but *even* to the ministers of the crown in their civil capacity. In this commiseration, he *reprobates* a principle which is held out to the people of Great Britain as the grand *palladium* of their liberties, I mean the principle of responsibility; though the reprobation is indeed qualified by a distinction of *active* and *zealous* service, and the restraint of crimes. But it is a distinction which I cannot well understand; for if responsibility does not go to every part of a minister's conduct, in which he acts without due authority, it is indeed a *very slight* constitutional barrier against the *vices* of administration, especially when it is allowed among the prerogatives of our Kings, that they may chuse their own servants, and retain them in their office at pleasure: but will any minister who serves such a King (says Mr. Burke, when speaking of the present King of France) with but a decent appearance of respect, *cordially* obey the orders of those whom but the other day in his name they had committed to the Bastile? Will they obey the orders of those whom, whilst they were exercising *despotick justice* upon them, they conceived they were treating with *lenity*, and for whom, in a *prison*, they thought they had provided an *asylum*.

This is saying *very little*, either for the disposition of the ministers, or for the *spirit* and *principles* of the ancient government. Nor can I see that these gentlemen have any *reasonable* complaints to make against the conduct of the French legislature. It is true they are denied a seat amongst them; but this exception is not made on any *personal* ground: They do not except against the abilities of these gentlemen, or their honesty as individuals; but they will *not* permit, either a *real*, or a *supposed influence*, to control their own actions. They will not permit that the sanctuary, in which the Majesty of the people of France resides, should be *polluted* or *impeached* by any *suspicion of corruption*; and they will not endanger the liberties of their country, by giving *absolute power any motive*, which, in the event of things, may possibly tend to an *abuse of trust*.

The opinion which Mr. Burke endeavours to establish in his elaborate Reflections on the French Revolution, is the *incompatibility* of a truly popular government with the human constitution: And the subject which affords him the most ample scope for the display of his argumentative powers, is found in the investment of that military force which is necessary to the support of all governments; for if that force is trusted to the people at large, they may be tempted to act in their natural capacity, and, by destroying or weakening the energy of those organs by which regular councils are held and enforced, induce a state of anarchy. And if the support of the government is made to subsist in a regular standing disciplined body, under the control of an individual, that individual will become the *master of the people*, and *violate* the government he was appointed to *defend*.

Either the establishment or the overthrow of an opinion so fatal to the proud hopes of man, must be left to time and experience; for I am sorry to say, that we have no notices on which we can attempt the construction of an opposite argument. We cannot venture to establish an opinion on the state of a country not yet recovered from the convulsive struggles which every important revolution must occasion. We can gain no light from history; for history furnishes *no example* of any government in a large empire, which, in the strictest sense of the word, has secured to the citizen the *full* enjoyment of his rights. Some attempts indeed have been made of this kind; but they have hitherto failed, through the *treachery* of leaders, or by the *rash folly* of the multitude. But though these circumstances will prevent cautious persons from giving a *decided* opinion on what may be the event of things, yet they do not so *benight* the understanding as to deprive the mind of hope. They do not prevent it from seeing that the present complexion of things in France has something of a different aspect from what history, or the state of other countries, presents to our view. Instead of that *barbarous ignorance*, or that *depravity of principle*, which are to be seen in other European States, and which might reasonably prevent the patriot from bestowing (if it were in his power) the full boon of liberty, we see a people *firm* and *united* in their efforts to *support* their rights, yet obedient.* to the dictates of that government which they have appointed to defend them.

From what can this difference which subsists between the French nation and other societies arise, but in a more *general* diffusion of *knowledge*, and in a principle of action which consults the *public* good, as well as the gratifications of *self*? It is the business of *knowledge* to teach men their *real interests*; and it is to be hoped it will so far prevail over that *mist* which *inordinate* affections cast over the mind, as to enable the French municipalities to see, that if they so far *abuse* the power with which they have been invested for the defence of their rights, as to gratify a *private* passion at the expense of the *public* peace, they will induce a *necessity* which will lead to their *utter* destruction. It is to be hoped also, that a *true* sense of interest will enable the army to perceive, that the *moment they fling off the character of the citizen, and assume a controlling power over their country*, from that moment they become *individually slaves*; for the very circumstance in their condition by which this power must subsist, is a discipline inseparable to the *strictest subordination*, and which in *all* respects must militate against their civil rights. When the Roman army was in the very height of their power; when it was enabled to depose and murder emperors, and raise private men to the imperial throne; when they were enabled to ravage the empire at their pleasure, and exact largesses from its spoils; they were, in an *individual* capacity, the *greatest* of slaves.

The patriot Frenchman has a prospect of hope which *never* yet offered itself to the view of society, and that is in the *disinterestedness* of those councils to which he has confided his right. The republican parliament of England, by their *inordinate* thirst after public offices, and by using their power to their *own emolument*, gave *too much room* for the suspicions of a divided people to act in their disfavour; and it must be acknowledged, that the interests of self have been observed to act as much in popular councils as in courts. But the French legislature have set, in this point, an example *unparalleled* in the history of man. To a *bold* and *enterprising* spirit, they have united a *disinterestedness* of principle which has deprived their enemies of *every* means of

opposition, but *vain* declamation, *groundless* accusation, and *impotent* hope. Long may they continue the *admiration* of the world in these important particulars! Long may they thus continue to *aggrandize* the character of man! And long may they continue to deserve a *monument of esteem* on the minds of their species, which neither *time*, nor *accident*, nor *adverse fortune*, shall be able to efface!

It cannot be denied that Mr. Burke has made a display of very *uncommon* abilities in his attack on the French Revolution; but why has he deigned to make use of the *mean arts* of abuse as an *auxiliary* in the contest? Why has he, by the most *invidious* comparisons, and *groundless* accusations, endeavoured, to rouse all nations and all descriptions of men against them, and thus to *crush in their ruin all the rights of man*? Is the tendency of his publication a *recommendation* to the British government, to dragoon their neighbours into an adoption of their own system of policy? Would he recommend to the potentates of Europe, a renewal of that *wicked conspiracy* against the rights of men, which was planned by Henry the fourth and his minister Sully, and which was only prevented from taking place by the timely death of that monarch?—a plan, by which, through the *combination* of power, modes of government were to be *arbitrarily* imposed and supported, and the rights of conscience *abolished*. If such *violent* councils were indeed to take place of that *moderation* and *equity* which has hitherto been shewn, it would *prove* that the *forming treaties* and directing the *force of nations* were but *ill* trusted to the *secrecy* of cabinets. When we reflect that such dreadful purposes can never be effected without the effusion of *oceans* of blood, of such an invidious intention we must certainly exculpate Mr. Burke; unless, by a *strange* modification of *sympathy*, the lives of plebeians, and those vulgar characters which compose the “*swinish multitude*,” is held at *no value* in his account. Some of Mr. Burke’s expressions, indeed, seem to warrant us in making such a supposition, though we *must acknowledge*, that, in others, he appears to have a *concern* for the *spiritual*, if not for the *temporal* happiness of those he despises: “Whilst, says he, the wealth and pride of individuals at every moment makes the man of humble rank and fortune sensible of his inferiority, and *degrades* and *vilifies* his condition* ; it is for the man in humble life, and to raise his nature, and to put him in mind of a state in which the privileges of opulence will cease, when he will be equal by nature, and may be more than equal by virtue, that this portion of the general wealth of his country is employed, and sanctified.”

If Mr. Burke, in the management of his argument, could have descended from the *lofty* strain of a *poetic* imagination, to the *drudgery* of close reasoning, he would have perceived the *error* of deviating from the line of *expediency* into the question of *right*; for when we once *give up* the point, that there is an *inherent* right attached to privileged persons to make laws for the community, we cannot fix on any other principle that will stand the test of argument, but the *native* and *unalienable* rights of man. For if we say that *lawful* governments are formed on the authority of conventions, it will be asked, *who gave these conventions their authority*? If we grant that they derived their authority from the *assent of the people*, how came the people, it will be said, to exert such an authority at *one* period of society, and not at *another*? If we say it was *necessity* that recovered to the social man the full rights of his nature, it will be asked, *who is to be the judge* of this necessity? why *certainly* the people.

Thus, in *every* light in which we can place the argument, in every possible mode of reasoning, we shall be driven back to elect either the first or the second of these propositions; either that an individual, or some privileged persons, have an inherent and indefeasible right to make laws for the community, or that this authority rests in the unalienable and indefeasible rights of man.

That the people have often abused their power, it must be granted; for they have often *sacrificed* themselves and their posterity to the *wanton will* of an individual, and *this* is the foundation of all the regal tyrannies which have subsisted in society; but *no abuse* of their power can *take away their right*, because their right *exists in the very constitution of things*. If the French people therefore should be so *capricious* as to fling off their new constitution, and subject themselves to more *unequal* forms of government, or even to *tyranny*, it will be agreeable to the course of past experience: But such an exertion of power *cannot injure their right*; and whatever form or complexion any future government in France may bear, it can have no *legitimate* source, *but in the will of the people*.

I Am, My Lord,
With Great Esteem And Respect,
Your Lordship'S
Most Obedient
Humble Servant,

The AUTHOR.

[*]The exercise of the suspensive *Veto*.

[*]Mr. Burke acknowledges this obedience, and calls it *sanaticism*.

[*]This is a sad condition, indeed, for "*naked shivering nature*:" But what is the remedy? why, let them respect property, and seek "their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice." *Vide* Reflections, pages 147 and 351.