

THE
RIGHTS OF NATURE,
AGAINST THE
USURPATIONS OF ESTABLISHMENTS.

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THE
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AGAINST THE
USURPATIONS OF ESTABLISHMENTS.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO
THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN,
ON
THE STATE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
AND
THE RECENT EFFUSIONS
OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE EDMUND BURKE.

BY JOHN THELWALL.

LETTER THE FIRST.

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LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS; ON THE SPIRIT
AND TEMPER OF BURKE'S LETTERS ON THE
PROSPECT OF A REGICIDE PEACE.

THE *tocfin* of aristocracy sounds once more—the *generale* is beaten on the tortured hide of “old John Zisca,” and the yell of persecution rings through the harassed country. Rouse from the couch of lethargy, O sluggish and insensate people! shake off the drowsy stupor, which, creeping over the frozen nerve of misery, at once soothes, and threatens with the sleep of death. If neither the blood of friends nor relatives, “poured out like water” in this profligate crusade of the powerful and the wealthy, against the poor and weak—of governments, and government contractors, against their oppressed and plundered people*—If neither the sacrifice of thousands and tens of thousands by the yellow pestilence, that high priests to the Moloc of West Indian ava-

* “It is in its spirit, and for its object, a *civil war*.”—Letters, Rivington's edit. p. 144.

rice, who immolates the flower of British youth, for the perpetuity of the African slave trade—If neither the woes, nor the insults you have endured, nor the persecutions which have outraged all humanity, and made law a mockery; if neither the burthens under which you groan, nor the organized system of monopoly (which those burthens have of necessity produced) and which, worse than a blighting mildew, hangs on the full ear of your vain prosperity, counteracts the bounties of nature *, and, in spite of an abundant harvest, denies to the craving family of the artificer and the peasant, even the *negative blessing* † of a plenteous meal—If neither of these, nor all accumulated together in one horrid mass, can goad and urge you to the manly energies of reason, and the decided tone of *authoritative* complaint—If neither the invocations nor the sufferings of the intrepid few, who, even in these bad times, dare to be the advocates of human rights, can warm you to sympathy, or rouse you to reflection, yet, listen awhile to the prophetic fury of the arch-enemy of your rights and freedom: peruse the portentous leaves he has thus wildly scattered, and think

* Bread 9d. a quartern loaf, immediately after a most abundant harvest: The cause of this evil, and the nature of the remedy, will be discussed in the following letters.

† I shall shew hereafter, that, in the present state of society, the labourer has a right to something more than meat, drink, sleep, and clothing, in return for his productive toil.

upon

upon the fetters that are still forging for you: Attend, I say, to the threats so liberally distributed, stamped as it were, with the currency of authority, from the very mint of court confidence, and issued by the pensioned hand of an hireling apostate, paid by the produce of *your labour* to encrease your burthens, and destroy your rights: and, when you have heard these denunciations, which in daring profligacy outstrip conception, and almost make us heretics against our senses, then sink down again, if ye can, into your wonted supineness, till the "salutary, but critical terrors of the cautery and the knife*"—the relumined fires of Smithfield, and the axe upon Tower Hill, shall awaken, and warn ye that your hour is come.

For myself, my heart bleeds, when I think of the abject condition to which the spirit of my devoted country is beaten down, when hireling plunderers, riotous paupers, dependant upon the purse of extorted charity (to support whose wasteful luxury the labourer must sweat, so much the more at his hard drudgery, and return at night to so much the worse hammock and the worse meal) can dare to give public utterance to such sentiments as these pamphlets contain: Sentiments which outrage all hu-

* Letters, p. 20. The whole passage from which this sentence is quoted, is an after-thought. It is not to be found in Owen's edit.

manity—which defy all shame—which breathe the most unqualified tyranny—excite to the most sanguinary persecutions—tear asunder, with the utmost violence, all communion and sympathy between the governing few and the governed multitude*—declare open, inveterate, irreconcilable war, on the part of the former, not only against the lives, properties, and liberties, but against the opinions, feelings, inclinations of the latter—uphold the horrible doctrine of exterminating opinions, and enforcing creeds and ceremonies by the sword†—threaten, with something more than distant hints, the abrogation of every provision that stands between the life of the patriot, and the vengeance of a corrupt and irritated court‡, and denounce at once, a com-

* It has been the fashion, in certain assemblies, to rail against the practice of separating the government from the nation, as a new-fangled Jacobinical artifice; and Mr. B. is most outrageous against the French Directory on this account: Yet he himself out-jacobinizes Jacobinism in this way. There is, however, nothing new in it. The distinction is as old as history, as every man of reading well knows. The most revered and philosophical of the ancient historians teach us by their sentiments, as well as their facts, that when governments set up an interest opposite to that of the people—the people are necessitated to seek an interest in opposition to their governments.

† Thoughts, p. 63 to 68.—Owen's edit. Not in Rivington's.

‡ Letters, p. 20. If I understand this passage, it is a prelude to the invasion of trial by jury. See further, p. 53, 54, &c.

puted

puted number of eighty thousand people *, (according to the author's own account, the stem and flower of British intellect †) to the prompt and destroying fury of " a vigour beyond the law."

Yes, my heart bleeds to think that such men *dare* to utter such sentiments—for though I wish not to stop the current of discussion, either by legal persecution, or the fury of a mob, yet most certainly I do wish to uphold the salutary awe of popular opinion ; and, notwithstanding some doctrines of supposed treasons, propagated in the late never to be forgotten parliament, and retailed again (if retail it could be called) in the nine hour harangues of Adair, Scott, and Mitford, I shall venture to affirm, that in whatever country this salutary awe does not operate, not only upon the tools and dependants of government, but upon the government itself, *even to its highest head*, there tyranny, in its essence, is already established, and liberty is but a name.

And, how is this salutary awe to be enforced? By the manly energies of the people—by their active vigilance, in watching the conduct of their governors, and comparing it with the sentiments of their advocates and known retainers—by that in-

* Letters. Compare p. 19 to 22, with p. 67, 68, and 71.

† Ibid. p. 70 and 144.

intellectual courage, which dares to give utterance to whatever the heart feels; and, above all, by that sturdy, restless, jealous exertion of the inalienable prerogative of reason, which contends, inch by inch, for the great charters of birth-right and nature, and instead of shrinking, with panic terror, at every triumph of *legal* innovation, is roused to fresh exertions by every retrenchment, and exercises, with greater ardour, the rights which yet remain. These are the means by which a brave and enlightened people *overawe* their governors, and compel them to exercise a wary and modest caution, salutary to the nation at large, and ultimately beneficial to themselves. These are the true and genuine checks of a free government. Without these, I repeat it, no government can be free. Different shapes and modes of political institution, may give to these checks a different mode of operation—a better or a worse—a more permanent, or a more precarious organization; but the principle is in the heart of the people; and where this principle is active, monarchy* itself may be attempered with a degree of liberty;

* By monarchy, the reader is to remember, that I mean something very different from kingly power. The former means a government *by one man*, who holds his power by some supposed or assumed *individual* right: the latter is a delegated trust, conferred by, and held for the acknowledged *benefit of the people*. Where monarchy begins, kingship ends; and the people who bargained for a king, are not bound to submit to a monarch.

without

without it, republics are but despotisms in masquerade.

How stands it in this country with respect to this salutary check, grounded (as in the ensuing letters I shall prove it to be) in the essential rights of nature, and the very principles of political association? Does the government—does the legislature—do the ministers, or even the hireling scribblers of those ministers, feel and acknowledge this controlling awe? No. The legislature (the *late* legislature) has ventured to call this over-awing influence of popular opinion high treason; the ministers have declared, in express terms, that they lay taxes on our shoulders for the support of an immense troop of cavalry, to out-awe this awe, to destroy this check, to suppress this opinion, to ram it down our throats with the broad sword, or drown it with the murderous roar of musquetry; while grey-headed, pensioned apostates—the purchased panders of official corruption, bewail the pretended “relaxation of all authority*,” and call aloud for laws of more sanguinary promptitude, and measures of more coercive violence †, because, “the crown,” forsooth, cannot destroy,

* Letters, p. 19.

† “The steadiness of the physician is overpowered—The doctor of the constitution shrinks from his own operation,” &c. p. 20. The whole passage is quoted and examined, p. 57 of this letter.

at will, whomsoever it chooses to arraign, but “retires from *its courts*, defeated and disgraced*” by the groundless prosecutions with which its ministers insult the justice and the feelings of the nation. Could these things be—could we be thus dragooned and trampled upon—half gagged, and half bullied into silence, if we were the men we have been?—if we inherited the spirit of those ancestors, over whose honourable graves we stalk, an abject and degraded progeny? No, the evil is here. A greedy and unsocial selfishness absorbs our faculties. A base timidity bows our soliciting necks to the yoke: and a want of all kindness, all good faith, and all common justice, to those who embark fairly in the common cause, palsies every effort of patriotism; and leaves the isolated wretch, whose desperate honesty still prompts him to contend with powerful usurpation, more a prey to the malignant envy of those he endeavours to serve, than the persecuting violence of the clan whose corruption he has the hardihood to expose. These dispositions have had more to do in prostrating the hopes and liberties of the people, at the footstool of borough-mongering usurpation, than all the proclamations and persecutions of the last five years, backed and supported with new-fangled laws of treason and sedition, the

* Letters, p. 20.

formidable legions of military associators, and all the troops of fencible and yeomanry cavalry which inflate with such audacious confidence *the MARAT of the British cabinet.*

While these dispositions remain, the cause of liberty will be retrograde, the beggary and wretchedness of the multitude will continually encrease, and the growing insolence of authorised plunder will exult in apparent omnipotence. In short, while each man continues to care for no one but himself, all will be trampled and oppressed; and while the friends of liberty, unassociated, and unendeared to each other*, instead of considering themselves as one common family, cherish their private jealousies, and forget their common interests, so long will fresh projects of usurpation be formed and executed with impunity, and mankind be treated like a herd of cattle. But when the people, recovered from their panic, and roused from their insensibility, shall be persuaded to compare their faculties with their condition—

* It is really lamentable to recollect how large a portion of those who have been persecuted for their attachment to the public cause, have either been driven to America for bread, or are pining for want of it at home. Aristocrats will not employ the men whom they have injured, and democrats neglect the veterans who have served them. Every patriot, thus abandoned to ruin, is a feather plucked from the wing of Freedom.

the situation in which they are—and that in which they have a right to be—when no longer the dupes of their own mistaken selfishness, they shall feel and acknowledge the importance of a persevering fortitude, and (yielding to that strong sense of general necessity, which annihilates, or at least suspends, the petty factions of jealousy and envy) with a generous confidence and unanimity shall resolve to demand their rights; then shall the golden visions of corruption fade away, and the dark mists of hovering despotism flee before the rising sun of British freedom. Then shall the hireling Burke, with the whole clan of pensioned scribblers, instead of yelping thus audaciously for the blood of their fellow citizens, bow, with becoming awe, to the tribunal of popular opinion, and learn to respect the rights and the feelings, not only of “four hundred thousand political citizens*,” but of seven millions of enlightened Britons, all conscious of their natural and civil equality; all asserting their equal share in the common inheritance of *rights*, and producing “(in their persons) their title deeds†.”

In the meantime, let us hope that this new outrage upon the rights, and feelings, and security

* Letters, p. 67.

† *Paine's First Principles of Government*.—Intrinsically the most valuable of all his productions.

of mankind, will not be without its influence in producing the desired effect: for, if ever wholesale denunciations could inspire a sense of common danger—and, if ever a sense of common danger had the power of knitting men together in the firm links of unanimity and common interest, surely these pamphlets contain sufficient warning, that we must be no longer supine, selfish, and divided—unless, indeed, we mean to be reduced to the dreadful alternative of either abandoning, for ever, all discussion of our rights—all hope of improving our miserable condition—all opposition to the measures of government, however corrupt and tyrannical they may become, or of resigning to proscription, legalized massacre, or hired assassination, an acknowledged fifth—perhaps a third—perhaps more than half of the well informed, reflecting, reasoning, and, what is aristocratically called, *respectable* part of the community.

This, I say, is the plain alternative, laid down by Mr. Burke. But I shall not, according to his fashion, satisfy myself with assertion. I shall proceed to proof.

Mr. B. I should premise, is a very desultory, and excentric writer. His combustible imagination fumes, and boils, and bursts away, like the lava from a volcano (as bright, and as
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destructive)

destructive) in a thousand different directions; apparently without art or design. Order and arrangement appear to be entirely despised; proportion of parts is expressly laid down, in his only elementary work*, to be no ingredient of the beautiful; and his political publications may be regarded as illustrations of this curious doctrine. Tropes, sentiments, and propositions, are every now and then starting up, one knows not why, or whence, or wherefore.

“ The things, ’tis true, are costly, rich, and rare :
 “ But wonder how the devil they got there !”

Every metaphor becomes an allegory; every embellishment a digression; and every digression a voluminous episode. But the reader, who, on this account, should calculate upon the artlessness of Mr. Burke’s mind, would do no credit to his own penetration. “ If this be madness, there is method in’t.” In this excursive frenzy of composition, there is much deep design and insidious policy. He not only writes with a two-fold object—but his objects are in diametrical opposition to each other. It is his intention at once to instruct and to confuse. Even in that small proportion of the people of Britain whom he calls

* Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful, part III. sect. 2, 3, 4, and 5.

“ the British public,” there is a still smaller subdivision (men of complete leisure, and of trained political education) whom he regards as the initiated few, and who, of course, may be expected to catch up, and put together, many of the loose disjointed hints, scattered here and there, with such studied carelessness as to escape the observation of those who “ read as they run.” Hence, if we want to know the whole meaning, and real object of this master of political controversy, instead of following him through the regular succession of pages and paragraphs, we must seek for the leading traits and positions of his work, and then, putting together the disjointed parts of the syllogism so artfully divided, we must extract the enveloped conclusion for ourselves.

Having furnished the reader with this clue, let him turn to the *Letters*,” p. 66 to 71, or the “ *Thoughts*,” p. 16 to 21, then to the “ *Thoughts*,” p. 63 to 68, and to the “ *Letters*,” p. 19 to 23, and he will find the dilemma I have stated to be very fully unfolded: that is to say, he will find the pensioner of an administration, which has been in the constant practice of preparing the minds of a certain class, by means of the pamphlets and paragraphs of their hirelings, for the promulgation of every pre-concerted scheme of tyranny
and

and usurpation—he will find this pensioned pander—this grey-headed procurator of proscription and blood, seriously recommending, by the “fevere” and “unshrinking operation” of some new means of persecution and “force,” the utter extermination of every sentiment of reform—or, as he very accurately, though insidiously, calls it, change*.

In the first of those passages above referred to, Mr. B. after observing that, “it cannot be concealed, we are a divided people,” proceeds “to compute, and to class those, who, *in any political view*, are to be called the people.”—“In England and Scotland,” says he, “I compute that those of adult age, not declining in life, of tolerable leisure for such discussions, and of some means of information, more or less, and who are above menial dependence, (or what is virtually such) may amount to about four hundred thousand:” (*Letters* †, p. 66) to which, in his original *Thoughts* ‡, he had added—“In this number I include the women who take a concern in these transactions, who cannot exceed twenty thousand.” And thus did this *preux chevalier*, though so furious an antagonist of the *Rights of Man*, in an unguarded, perhaps a tender hour,

* See p. 44 of this Letter.

† Rivington’s edit.

‡ Owen’s edit. p. 17.

confess himself a profelyte to the *rights of woman*. And this, says he—this petty fraction of the population of England and Scotland—these four hundred thousand males and females, who alone, of all the three or four millions of adults, by whom this island is peopled, have leisure for discussion, or the means of any degree of information—“*This is the British public!*”—this is the “*natural* representative of the people!”

O insulted and degraded Nature!—O awful aggregate of existence! how is thy venerable name blasphemed, by these pious, canting, juggling politicians! By what right, by what omnipotent power, by what uncreating, and re-creating authority, does this base renegade doom to political annihilation nine-tenths of the adult inhabitants of a nation? Where are the fate-commanding locks of this painted Jupiter, that thus he thinks to *nod* away the existence of millions?—Where are his thunder-bolts and his lightnings?—But I had forgot: the lightnings and the thunderbolts are all prepared. Windham (the armed progeny of his prolific brain) keeps the key of the dread arsenal; and if he does but turn the maffy lock, the thunders roar, the conflagration spreads, the heavy clouds bear death and desolation on their wings, and the million trembles and obeys. But waving these thundering arguments (and I trust that

that

that the time is not distant when the conductors of reason will disarm them of their terrors, and the tempests of ministerial fury rage innoxious!) upon what foundation do these calculators take a tenth for the whole, and call four hundred thousand (men and *women*) “the public of Britain?” Why, truly—the reason is even more profligate than the assertion itself!—because of our whole population not more than a tenth-part have either the *leisure*, or the means for any degree of “information, more or less!” And is this your boasted state of civilization and refinement?—Is this the wealth, grandeur, prosperity, and flourishing condition of the country?—Is this good order?—Is this *government* (or is it grinding and murderous oppression) which dooms the mass of mankind to incessant toil, and comfortless assiduity, and assigns the leisure, and the means of any degree of information or discussion, to a tenth-part only of the inhabitants? And, even of this tenth, how large a portion are to be ranked, not among the *promoters*, but the *destroyers* of the prosperity so much vaunted:—not among the productive labourers, but among the caterpillars and locusts, the blights and mildews of social industry!—the placemen and the pensioners; the Burkes and the Reeveses—unprincipled sophists hired with prodigal portions of the general plunder,

plunder, to abuse, calumniate, and destroy the poor wretches whom this plunder reduces to starving beggary.

Are these the institutions which Mr. B. wishes to support? Are these the perfect models of social jurisprudence which it is blasphemy to approach with the unhallowed finger of innovation or reform? Are these (in their effects) the regular and orderly fabrics of the ancient legitimate "government of states," whose plans and materials were "drawn from the old Germanic or Gothic customary *," and of which those famous architects, "the civilians, the jurists, and "the publicists," have given us such flattering draughts, ground plots and elevations? If they are, perish, I say, such temples of oppression and injustice! Away with your idle jargon of *venerable* antiquity:—that awful, but endearing epithet, belongs not, Mr. *Burke*, to grey hairs alone. Away with your pompous boasts of grace, beauty, and sublimity, of swelling proportions, and polished symmetry. If such are the effects of these fabrics, they are hateful and accursed; and, though crowned with "Corinthian capitals," though hung with antique trophies of renown, and adorned with offerings of ancient and modern piety, they must perish; they ought to perish; and they

* Letters, p. 110. Thoughts, p. 49.

will. They are Augean stables that must be cleansed. They are Bastilles of intellect, which must be destroyed. They are insulting mausoleums of buried rights, and are ready to totter from their base ; for the day of the resurrection is near at hand ; and “ the veil of the temple shall be rent in twain.”

But no, Mr. B. you are a slanderer of the institutions you pretend to support. Things are not yet so bad as you represent them ; though if you and your confederates were suffered to proceed in your infamous career, there is no knowing how soon we might sink even to a still lower state of degradation. The number of those, who, some how or other, find, or *make*, the means and opportunities of obtaining *some degree* of information, is not yet reduced to one in ten. I, indeed, affirm (and I shall argue the right hereafter) that *every man*, and *every woman*, and *every child*, ought to obtain something more, in the general distribution of the fruits of labour, than food, and rags, and a wretched hammock, with a poor rug to cover it : and that without working twelve or fourteen hours a day, six days out of seven, from six to sixty.—They have a claim, a sacred and inviolable claim, growing out of that fundamental maxim, upon which alone all property can be supported, to some comforts and enjoyments, in addition to the necessaries of life ; and to some
“ tolerable

“ tolerable leisure for such discussion, and some means of such information,” as may lead to an understanding of their *rights*; without which they can never understand their *duties*. It is true, in the present circumstances of society, the mass of the people are far from the enjoyment of this right: let Mr. B. determine whether this is to be attributed to the nature, or the corruption of our institutions. But still, notwithstanding the scandalously inadequate price of labour—wages being, in many instances, rather a mockery than a support;—notwithstanding the unreasonable number of hours through which the labour of the day is protracted, and the impediments thrown in the way of a cheap, and, therefore general, circulation of knowledge, by the duties on paper, stamps on news-papers, advertisements; and the like; yet, judging of the whole country, from the parts which I have seen, and making all possible allowances for the difference of local and adventitious advantages, Mr. B. will not be able to contract his *new aristocracy of thinkers and discourses* into any thing like the narrow circle of four hundred thousand. This champion for the few, to the exclusion of the many—this advocate for the noble and the gentle, at the expence of the useful and the honest, may exult as much as he pleases in the luxuriance of his imagination, his various stores of learning and of science, his

hours of literary leisure, and his familiar intercourse with the wits and literati of half a century, but there are hundreds, nay thousands, in those classes excluded from his calculation, who though they could neither endite, nor comprehend his learned metaphors and dashing periods, would yet blush at such flimsy sophisms as he sometimes covers with a cloud of splendour; and with the weapons of plain, solid, Socratic argument, would beat half a dozen such combatants out of the arena. I could point him to whole companies, whole neighbourhoods *, nay,

* I might refer particularly to Sheffield. My stay in that place was very short; but it was long enough to see that there is a great body of virtue, intelligence, and well grounded principle among what may be called the *Sanfulotterie*: but it is a body without a head. They have unfortunately no leaders. There are, indeed, several people of considerable property and influence who *think* with them; but who have not the courage, or the energy, to take that open and decided part which might promote the real peace (for *oppression is not peace*) and happiness of the neighbourhood: and as for that *Chicken-witted thing* that calls *itself* a Whig leader in those parts, *it* is the being most despised for aristocratic domination of any creature in the county: and I am sure I mean no disparagement to *Squire, Justice, Colonel Ayrthorpe!!!* If any three or four persons of weight and pecuniary consequence in that place, would but take these honest, intelligent manufacturers and their cause fairly and publicly by the hand (as persons of that description, to their immortal honour, have done in Norwich) in Sheffield, as in Norwich, the petty tyranny of provincial persecution would presently be at an end; the instruments of power would feel, and practically confess that salutary awe of which I have spoken above; and no jack in office would dare to exercise, or to threaten, the exertion of a vigour beyond the law.

almost

almost whole professions of labouring manufacturers, who understand the principles of government much better than himself, and who want nothing but practical fluency to render them most formidable antagonists to the whole college of aristocratical declaimers.

The fact is, that monopoly, and the hideous accumulation of capital in a few hands, like all diseases not absolutely mortal, carry, in their own enormity, the seeds of cure. Man is, by his very nature, social and communicative—proud to display the little knowledge he possesses, and eager, as opportunity presents, to encrease his store. Whatever presses men together, therefore, though it may generate some vices, is favourable to the diffusion of knowledge, and ultimately promotive of human liberty. Hence every large workshop and manufactory is a sort of political society, which no act of parliament can silence, and no magistrate disperse. Socrates, therefore, (the first democratical lecturer, mentioned in history, and the founder of the unsophisticated, and unrestricted system of *Sanf-culotte* philosophy) when he wished to expose “the corruption and venality of the times *,” and those “false tenets and opinions which were contrary to the happiness of the human race †,” acted consistently with his

* Cullen’s life of Socrates, prefixed to his translation of the *Phædon*, p. 23.

† *Ibid.* p. 15.

high character for wisdom and penetration, in visiting, among other places of resort, the shops where workmen assembled to pursue their vocations*.—“ He began,” says the biographer, “ to oppose *sophistry* and superstition with success, and to teach his fellow *citizens* wisdom and virtue. In the open streets, in the public walks and baths, in private houses, in the *workshops of artists*, or wherever he found men whom he could make better, he entered into conversation with them, explained what was right and wrong, good and evil, holy and unholy, &c.” The nature and tendency of these conversations we learn from a variety of passages. We are particularly informed that such was his intrepid zeal for the promotion of truth, and the assertion of human liberty, that “ As soon as any opinion or superstition occasioned an *open violence*, the invasion of the **NATURAL RIGHTS OF MAN**, or the corruption of their morals, no threats or persecution could deter him from declaring against it †.” And, again, we find that when a senate of tyrants, a vile and detestable *Oligarchy* ‡, assisted by an armed force, and a foreign alliance, trampled on the rights and liberties of the Athenian people, and exercised an authority beyond the law—“ robbing the most upright men of the republic of their property and

* Life Socr. p. 12.

† Ibid. p. 32.

‡ Ibid. p. 35.

“ their

“ their lives, *under the pretext of punishing rebellion and treasonable offences* *,” banishing others, and driving many more to seek for peace and safety in voluntary emigration ; in the midst of these persecutions and proscriptions, Socrates was found, as usual, in the places of public resort—in the workshops of the artists, and among the labourers in their manufactories, uttering seditious allegories, and condemning the desolating tyranny of the Oligarchy. “ It is wonderful indeed,” he is reported to have said, “ if shepherds make the herd which is entrusted to their care grow smaller, and more meagre, and yet shall not be accounted bad shepherds ; but it is still more wonderful, if the guardians of a state make its subjects grow fewer and worse, that they should not be accounted bad guardians †.”

Now,

* Cullen's Life of Socr. p. 35. *N. B.* The book from which I quote this, was dedicated to the Right Honourable *Henry Dundas*, in 1789.

† *Ibid.* p. 36. The reader will not, after these specimens, be surprised that an act of parliament was made by the tyrannical Oligarchy to stop the mouth of Socrates ; and that *Critias* and *Characles*, two of their sophists, or state lawyers (*see p.* 36.) were employed to entrap, impeach, and destroy him ; while their buffoons were set to work, to ridicule and defame him to the people, and “ the priests,” and other venal wretches, “ who felt Socrates a thorn in their side,” made use of their pious cant and holy mummeries “ to turn the minds of the Athenians against him.” (*p.* 24, 25.) Such was the origin of the conspiracy against Socrates. A victim to that conspiracy he fell

Now, though every workshop cannot have a Socrates within the pale of its own society, nor even every manufacturing town a man of such wisdom, virtue, and *opportunities* to instruct them, yet a sort of Socratic spirit will necessarily grow up, wherever large bodies of men assemble. Each brings, as it were, into the common bank his mite of information, and putting it to a sort of circulating use, each contributor has the advantage of a large interest, without any diminution of capital.

But such men, I shall be told, are out of the question: let their capacities, their acquirements, their understandings be what they may, they form no part of "the British public;" they are in a state of "menial *dependance* (or what is virtually such.)"—Dependance and independance! Fine distinctions! But in what do they consist?

fell—the wisest, the greatest, the most virtuous of mankind. Yet a pedantic fellow, one Dr. Bisset, in a certain ridiculous farrago of ignorance and misrepresentation, which he calls a "Sketch of Democracy," represents him as the victim of democratic envy and injustice; and, by a curious perversion of facts, makes *Critias* and *Characles* (the two sophists, or lawyers, employed by the tyrants to destroy him) "two lecturers, who earned their bread by gratifying the prejudices of the people, and incensing them against *dignified* characters." Socrates was so far from being a dignified character in Dr. B.'s sense of the word, that his mother was a poor midwife; his father a stonemason; and he himself worked several years in his father's yard. His dignity was of a nobler kind.

Are

Are they to be fought in the station, or in the mind? Do wealth and rank give independence? Does industrious poverty of necessity degrade the man? An anecdote shall settle these questions.

During the late election at Nottingham, one of the principal manufacturers of that place, who had always deprecated, with great severity, the present war, and the whole system of ministerial measures, was observed, of a sudden, to become reserved and wavering. The ministerial candidate had concerns with a banking house, which, by means of acceptances, discounts, and the like, was exceedingly useful to him, in his large dealings. Dr. *Crompton* was a candidate for the people: but he had no connection with any bank, but that of virtue and patriotism; and their notes, you know, are not current in commercial transactions. The wealthy manufacturer deliberated—he doubted—he calculated—he resolved to vote for the ministerial champion. He determined to canvass for him. “William,” said he, to one of his journeymen, “I hope you mean to vote for Mr. *Smith*?”—“No, Sir,” replied the *menial dependant*, “indeed I do not. I am surprised you should ask me such a question. However, if you are not independent, I AM!” This, however, I am aware, will be no argument, *ad hominem*, as they call it, to Mr. B. It will rather enflame than moderate his prejudices. He will re-

gard it as a flagrant act of *Jacobinism* and insubordination; an overt-act of treason against the sovereignty of wealth; a “revolt of enterprising talent against property*.”

I grant, also, that this argument will not universally apply. Though some men have energy of mind enough to act in this independent way, upon such occasions, many, under such circumstances, feel themselves compelled to bow. During the same Nottingham election, an instance of this sort occurred, which, to minds of a particular stamp at least, cannot fail to be interesting.

A poor manufacturer, who was past his best days, and to whom, therefore, it was of serious consequence to be dismissed from an established shop—especially as he had a large family to support—was pressed by his employer, in very authoritative terms, to vote for this same Mr. Smith. He hesitated: but the very sustenance of his family was at stake; and he yielded. Going up to the hustings, and having given in his name, he was asked by the poll-clerk, for whom he voted? “Why, I have two votes; have I not?”—“You have.”—“Well, then, I give one of them to Mr. Smith—but that’s not mine: it’s my master’s! The other’s my own; and I’ll give that to Dr. Crompton—for he’s the man for the peo-

* Letters, p. 98.

“ple!”—“Thank you, my good friend,” (exclaims the *courtly* candidate)—“thank you, for me. Let me have the pleasure of shaking hands with you.”—No, I’m d—d if I do,” replied the voter; “I was obliged to vote for you, but I an’t obliged to shake hands with you, neither. But I’ll shake hands with you, Dr. Crompton; for I gave it *you* from my heart!” Mr. B. may despise the fans-culotism displayed in this anecdote—and I am certainly no enemy to soothing manners and decorum;—but yet such energy of mind, however rudely fashioned, is of ten thousand times more real worth than all the polished periods of pensioned apostacy, and all the dressed up smiles that ever flickered on the “curled lips” of obsequious courtiers! And whatever sentiments a master of the ceremonies might entertain upon the subject, he is but a shallow politician who excludes such men from the account, in his calculations of the weight and force of opinion. Such men have not, it is true, all the advantages of free agency:—so much the worse for Britain*. The generality of them have no votes at all; and many who have, are under coercion in the exercise of their privilege—so

* I do not mean the mysterious, allegorical thing, which *statesmen* call the country. I mean the aggregate of British population. That is my idea of a country, or a state.

much the greater scandal to justice and humanity. But though they have not votes, they have opinions. They are a part of "the British public," even of Mr. Burke's *informed, discussing*, garrulous public, upon which "more than the legal constituent, the artificial representative," is supposed (falsely supposed) to depend †. An oppressive

† Letters, p. 67.

I ought not, while speaking of humble patriotism, to forget the *independant, poor* voters of Norwich: among which there are six or seven hundred, whom (even in these seasons of distress) no threats, no interest, no bribery can shake: but who will vote for the permanent liberties of themselves and families, at the hazard of their temporary bread. Upon any *strong exigency*, this number (I mean, among the *labouring freemen* of that city) would be nearly doubled: that is to say, it would embrace almost the whole class. If *Bartlet Gurney*, the late candidate, had stood forward manfully (or rather, if his family had not held him back)—if he had even done those things, which, under *existing circumstances*, any candidate may fairly and honourably do—I mean, brought up the London and other out-voters, who were in his interest, (which would not have been the tythe, or twentieth part of what his opponent is *known* to have done)—nay, had he even shewn himself on the hustings, and convinced the people, that he was in earnest, (instead of *running into the north* to avoid them) he would have driven the War Secretary from the market-place, with a majority so decisive, as would have sunk that *blustering puppet of a day* into political annihilation. Even as it was, Bartlet Gurney had a majority of 143 *resident votes*. The Quakers (that body of men, whom, of all religionists, I most revere and love) must pardon me, if I say, that the timid bashfulness of sectarian pride, lost Freedom a triumph, of which no other circumstance could have deprived her.

combination

combination of employers, the cold grasp of penury, or the brutal violence of a mad-headed, drunken, profligate magistrate (armed, for the sake of the constitutional system of checks, with the united powers of the police, and of the sword) may suppress, for awhile, the due influence of this opinion; but, ultimately, it will have its weight: and its weight will be greatest when its exertion is of most importance. In the mean time, it has a degree of influence even now; though not in its natural and rightful place—that assembly which *calls itself* the Commons House of Parliament;—the honourable and right honourable members of which (as we are expressly told) are in such a state of “menial dependence, (or what is *virtually* such) that the “votes of the majority are directly opposite to “their *dispositions*”. But it has its influence—a powerful influence, upon the resources of the country; upon the expence and the facility of filling the ranks of the army, and upon the spirit of enthusiasm in the day of battle. It has its influence, also, on the pillow of the minister, where it requires no second-sight to perceive, that it haunts his imagination, and disturbs his slumbers. There, in prophetic visions, it foretels the sad catastrophe of his ambition, and points out, in the

* Letters, p. 63; and Thoughts, p. 14, where it is put still more strongly.

continuance of this war, the means of British renovation; the approaching failure of the funding system; the demurs of money-lenders, and the prudent desertion of those "life and fortune men," who, repenting the madness of "Merchant Taylors Hall," and finding the bankrupt state no longer competent to support, at once, the burthen of public credit, and the enormous prodigality of the present system, will be obliged to *abandon the borough-mongers to preserve their property.*

To appease this opinion, to lay this wandering ghost* of popular discontent, the simulator, Pitt, has drawn once more around him this magic circle of delusion, with charms and spells of pretended negotiation, and backward mutters of arrogance and recantation. But lift up your voices, ye artificers, ye mechanics, ye manufacturers of the land, ye genuine props and pillars of the nation! Be not amused with pretended treaties! for what is a peace but war, to you, while ye drudge in fervile misery for inadequate rewards, and your families pine in want and ignorance? Wear not

* The body is reported to have been buried, at the beginning of December last, in St. Stephen's Chapel, with this inscription—"Pitt and Grenville's Acts;"—and underneath, "in a state of *internal tranquillity.*" Thus much by authority. To which is added, by an unknown hand, "but in hopes of a joyful resurrection."

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your lungs with sighs and fullen murmurs—let not only the nocturnal phantom, but the living body of your complaints appear before your oppressors. Try once more the manly energies of reason; and tell them, with a clear and decided tone, that “peace is not peace, without re-
 “form:” that “your discontents can never be
 “allayed, without the restoration of equal rights,
 “and equal laws, and the adoption of a pure and
 “independant organ, through which the opinions,
 “not of a *tenth-part*, but of the whole nation,
 “can be freely delivered, and distinctly heard.”

But no: we are told, the nation wants no such organ. The opinion of the *menial, dependant mass*, must be taken for granted from those of their *betters*. In those more reputable orders, in that privileged four hundred thousand, who, by virtue of their situation, have an exclusive licence to enquire and to discuss, the people have, already, “a *natural* representative.” Natural representative!—Of what excellent use, in the science of confusing mankind, is this prerogative of coining new phrases! Natural representative of the people! The people itself, as the word is here used, is an artificial, or corporate body—for it means the aggregate population of a particular state, or body politic: and how there can be a *natural representative* of an *artificial corporation*, I am yet to learn. I can understand, indeed, that the parent
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is the natural representative of his infant children, armed with the right, and bound by the duty of judging and acting for them. I can, also, understand, that children are the natural representatives of a departed parent; and, as such, are entitled to those portions of the produce of his labour, which have neither been consumed by him, nor legally set apart to support the profligate luxury of placemen and pensioners. But how it should happen, that four hundred thousand people (*men and women*) from the mere *accident* of living in more comfort, and with less toil, should be the natural representatives of three or four millions of other full-grown—full-age beings, of the same structure and faculty with themselves, but to whom they have neither relationship nor affinity, and, as such, should be entitled to act for them, speak for them, think for them, and almost eat for them (for even this privilege is scarcely left to the personal exercise of the million) is a problem which the “jurists and publicists” must solve; for I give it up entirely.

But Mr. B.'s *nature* and mine are widely different. With him every thing is natural that has the hoar of ancient prejudice upon it; and novelty is the test of crime. In my humble estimate, nothing is natural, but what is fit and true, and can endure the test of reason. With him the feudal system, and all its barbarous, tyrannical,
and

and superstitious appendages, is natural. With him, all the gaudy, cumbrous, fustian of "the old Germanic, or Gothic customary" is natural, and all the idolatrous foppery and degrading superstition of the church of Rome are natural, also. Nay, with him, that detestable traffic in blood and murder—that barter of groans, and tortures, and long, long lingering deaths of shrieking anguish, the *Slave Trade*, is also natural. Nor do I doubt, that, with equal facility, and upon the very same principles, as he maintains the masters and employers of this country to be the natural representatives of the workmen they employ, he could prove, also, those very humane, and very, very respectable beings, who, as they walk upon two legs, I shall continue to call men, by *courtesy*, (I mean the West India Planters, and their Negro drivers) to be the natural representatives of those poor, harassed, half-starved, whip-galled, miserable slaves, whom they, also, employ in their farms and factories.

In short, this champion of the privileged orders adopts, most unequivocally, the principle of this similitude. Having assigned the exclusive privilege of opinion to the favoured four hundred thousand—a mixed herd of nobles and gentles, placemen, pensioners and court-expectants, of bankers and merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, parsons

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and physicians, warehousemen and shop-keepers, pimps and king's messengers, fiddlers and auctioneers, with the included "twenty thousand" petticoat allies—ladies of the court, and ladies of the town!—having secured this motley groupe (the favoured progeny of Means and Leisure) in the exclusive, and unquestioned enjoyment of the rights of information and discussion, he proceeds to observe, that "the rest, when feeble, "are the *objects* of protection!"—Objects of protection!—so are my lady's lap-dog and the Negro slave. It is easy to determine, which, of the two, *polished sensibility* will shelter with the most anxious care!—Ye murky walls, and foul, straw-littered floors of the plantation hospital! Ye full-crammed, noxious workhouses of Britain—vile dens of tyrannic penury and putrescence*! speak—speak, I charge ye (for that part of nature which should be loud and eloquent, is spell-bound in panic apathy)—Speak: what is the *protection* which the feeble labourer, or the sick Negro finds? and then refer for a comparison to the down pillow of yon pampered, snarling cur, or the com-modious chambers of the canine palace at *God-*

* There are some few, and but few exceptions, to this general description. At any rate, however, a workhouse is but a gaol; and, therefore, a fit receptacle only for those paupers, whose infirmities make confinement necessary to their preservation.

wood *.—But to return to the description.—“ The
 “ rest, when feeble, are the objects of protection—
 “ when *strong*, they are the MEANS OF FORCE †.”
 So is the dray-horse ; and the poor ass that drudges
 in yon sand-cart ! So are the bludgeon, and the
 pistol, with which, under *existing circumstances*, every
 man (at least, every marked, obnoxious man) will
 do well to be provided, as preservatives against as-
 sassination †. But foul befall the man, and foul
 befall the government, that considers the great
 mass of the people as mere brute machines ; in-
 fensate instruments of physical force, deprived of
 all *power*, and destitute of all *right* of reason, or
 information ; doomed, like the dray-horse, or the
 musquet, to perform, mechanically, whatever task
 of drudgery, or murder, a few “ counsellors and
 deliberators ” may command ! And yet, Mr. B.

* A splendid edifice, erected by the D. of Richmond for
 his dogs, with commodious kitchens, parlours, dining-rooms,
 bed-rooms, lying-in-rooms, pleasure-ground for the morning
 sun, pleasure-ground for the evening sun, baths, &c. &c.—
 N. B. It is a strict rule at Godwood, that no servant be
 permitted to give a morsel of broken victuals either to mendi-
 cant traveller, or neighbouring peasant. Poor women, who
 presume to pick up withered sticks from under the trees in
 the park, are taught, by a “ severe and awful ” adminis-
 tration of “ justice,” to respect the sacred rights of property.

† Letters, p. 67.

‡ See an Appeal to Popular Opinion against Kidnapping
 and Murder: including a Narrative of the atrocious Outrages
 at Yarmouth, Lynn, and Wisbech.—*Jordan*.

tells us, that “ they who *affect* to consider that “ part of us” (to wit, nine-tenths of the adult population of the country) “ in any other point “ of view, *insult while they cajole us* *!”

Such, my fellow-citizens, is the language of insolence itself, personified in the character of a pensioned prostitute? Nine out of ten of the human race (it will, anon, be nineteen out of twenty) are born to be beasts of burthen to the remaining tythe: to be hewers of wood, and drawers of water—to be exposed to heat and cold, winds and waters, rocks and tempests, for these privileged masters; and, finally, to be “ list-
“ ed as soldiers for battle*,” to defend, or to aggrandise a country, in which they have neither voice nor right. And he who dares to assert their claim to “ any tolerable leisure for discussion, or “ means of information :”—he who dares to maintain their pretensions to opinion, or title to be regarded “ in any political view,” as a part of “ the people,” is an hypocritical jacobin incendiary, revolts against the sovereignty of wealth, and “ insults while he cajoles us!” Such is the language of a man to whom our government gives a yearly pension of four thousand pounds, for distracting the world with the ravings of bedlam, and the filthy loquacity of the stewards, in

* Letters, p 67.

favour of aristocratic despotism, and beating the tough hide of old Zisca, "to animate Europe to "eternal battle *!"

But beware, Mr. Burke, and you, his hypocritical employers, how ye cajole and insult us too far. Abuses, when discovered, inspire the sober wish of peaceful and rational reform: but when wrong is added to wrong, and coercion to coercion; when remonstrance is answered by the goad and the yoke, and insult is heaped upon oppression, reason may be overpowered, and madness may succeed; and the philanthropic few, who admonish in vain, may deplore the destiny from which they cannot preserve you. In vain do you shudder at the cannibals† of Paris—in vain do you colour, with exaggerated horrors, the "tribunals of Maroon and Negro slaves, covered "with the blood of their masters‡;" if, obstinately vicious, instead of being warned, ye are irritated by the example.

I deplore, as you do, the "robberies and the "murders," of these poor wretches—the blind instruments of instinctive vengeance. But, I cannot, like you, forget by whom those lessons of

* Letter to a Noble Lord.

† The reader will, of course, give me credit, for using this word in a figurative sense. Mr. B. in the very dotage of credulity, applies it literally.

‡ Letters, p. 123. Thoughts, p. 61.

murderous rapacity were taught. I cannot forget, that slavery itself is robbery and murder ; and, that the master who falls by the bondsman's hand, is the victim of his own barbarity.

I am no apologist for the horrible massacres of revenge ; whether perpetrated by negroes, by monarchs, or by mobs. I abhor revenge. Vengeance, Mr. Burke, with me is crime. All retrospective principle is crime ; and to its crime, adds folly. In your own sort of language I should say—we were *made* with our eyes in our foreheads, that we might look onward to the future, not linger upon that which can never be recalled. Give me *security for the future*; I will dispense with what is called *justice for the past*. But we are not to expect whole nations (whether of Maroon negroes, or vassals of feudal tyranny) to become of a sudden so entirely speculative. Revenge, it cannot be concealed, is a rude instinct, common to all animated being, which nothing but deep reflection, and well digested principles can eradicate. It is an instinct, also, when it dares to shew itself, strongest in the most feeble, fiercest in the most submissive, and most fruitful in the steril soil of ignorance. The bleak frost of severity nourishes it to wild luxuriance. It perishes beneath the warm manure of kindness. It is a wild growth of nature, it is true : but it is fatally cherished by authoritative example : and if tyrants will teach
bloody

bloody lessons, it is unreasonable in them to complain of the aptitude of their scholars. Add to which, Mr. B. this *detestable vice* is one of the *virtues* of the *ancient and venerable* part of that religion you so anxiously uphold. The maxim of forgiveness to enemies, is, comparatively, a *modern innovation* : which accounts for its being so seldom practised by governments or priests. “ Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth,” will not satisfy them. Theirs are the dread instructions, “ which, being taught, return to plague the inventors.” Theirs, indeed, too generally, are the crimes unprovoked : the crimes of revolutionists are only the crimes of revenge. Had the Maroons and negroes never been most wickedly enslaved, their masters had never been murdered. Had the chains of France been less galling, they had never fallen so heavy on the heads of French oppressors. To avoid their fate, let governors avoid their crimes. To render sanguinary *revolutions* impossible, let them yield to temperate *reforms*. To avert a dreaded vengeance, let the provocations of injustice be instantly removed ; and the padlock from the mouth of an injured people, be transferred to the lips of pensioned insolence !

But the politician of Beaconsfield, “ the doctor of the constitution”—or rather the doctor’s doctor, has found a shorter way.—“ The cautery
“ and

“and the knife” are more sovereign than the emollient and the balm. Extermination (even of eighty thousand men of talent and capacity) is more easy than reform. Desolation itself is not to ministerial ears “a word of such ill sound” as “change;” and Jacobins and reformers are therefore to be submitted to the “severe and “awful operation,” in a manner that will expose “the crown” to no sort of danger of again “retiring disgraced and defeated from its courts.”

“Of these four hundred thousand *political citizens*,” says he, “I look upon one-fifth, or about eighty thousand, to be *pure Jacobins*; *utterly incapable of amendment*; objects of eternal vigilance,” &c. “On these, no reason, no argument, no *example*, no *venerable authority*, can have the slightest influence. They desire”—What? “A *change*; and they will have it if they can.”—True: And they ought to have it; and they must, or the nation is undone for ever. If all are Jacobins who wish for a change, Mr. B. most miserably under-rates the Jacobins of this country. Some wish for a greater change, and others for a less. There are, I fear, almost as many different opinions, among reformers, as to the extent of that change, as there were among the allies about the objects of that ever to be renowned and glorious confederacy of kings, by being chief trumpeter

trumpeter to which—or, more properly speaking, drum-major (for we must not forget old Zisca) Mr. Burke has accumulated so considerable a portion of spoil, at so small an expence of danger. But, barring the idle terrors which state jugglers keep so alertfully alive, by repeating, at due intervals, and with due solemnity, the cabalistic words, *French massacres ! republicans and levellers ! horrid atheists ! dreadful anarchy ! bloody regicides ! cannibal philosophy !* and the like, I believe there is scarcely a single reflecting man, unconnected, by interest or expectation, with existing corruptions, who does not, in some degree, wish a change. But says Mr. B. “ England has been happy ; and “ change is a word of ill sound to happy ears*.”— England *has been* happy!!!—Perhaps so. England was not always infested with such a pestiferous swarm of placemen and pensioners, boroughmongers and contractors, as, at this time, devour the harvests, and blast the smiling verdure of the year. Will Mr. B. pretend to say, that England *is* happy now ? Will he pretend to say, that even that small portion, that tythe, which he calls “ the British public,” are happy at this time ? And if they were, what

* Thoughts, p. 1.—In Rivington's edition this is omitted. A qualm of modesty seems, unaccountably, to have seized the author, and this insult to our feelings was struck out. But, thanks to Mr. Owen ! (honourable mention of him in the journals of political literature !) we have the first thoughts, as well as the after thoughts. Of the writings of Burke we can never have too much.

right has a tenth part to be happy at the expence of the misery of all the rest? But, can even these be called happy? Are those middle classes (which we middling people are apt, so selfishly, and so wickedly, to consider as the whole!)—are even they happy? Alas! alas! how dismal the reverse?

Ye tradesmen, ye manufacturers, ye noiseless proficient in the arts, the sciences, and the gainful branches of learning (the bulk and mass of all those callings and professions *nick-named* RESPECTABLE*) tell me—tell *the world*, can ye look in the innocent faces of your children, and, contemplating the prospect before them, say, that ye are happy? Can ye look upon your own condition, your blighted prospects, and your stinted comforts, and, even barring future prospects, say ye are happy? Alas! how many of you are, at this very time, descending, and how rapidly, down the ladder of degradation! A few (I grant it) prosper. A few swell to uncontrollable pride, and incalculable affluence. The more is your disaster. To be, like Tantalus, in a lake of misery, with the prospect of abundance constantly before our eyes, and never taste it, is to be doubly lost. But what is the condition of the mass?—*Your*

* Respect is not the attribute of property, calling, or condition. It belongs, in reality, to nothing but virtue; and to that which is a branch of virtue—well applied talents.

little mans, I mean. As for *the great mans*—it is trampled in the dust; and is forgotten. How many of you have been obliged to relinquish your little country house, or country lodging?—sweet recreations of health and pleasure! which at once prolonged existence, and decked it with a ruddier smile! From the tables of how many has the tax-gatherer snatched the cheering wine? How many, many a family, that once basked in the inner, has been pushed to the outer circles of this temperate zone? How many from these outer circles have been thrust into the chill regions of penurious labour? And, how many thousands, upon whose moderate toil the sidelong sun once cast his cheering gleams, now shiver at the dark, bleak poles of comfortless distress?

If, then, our happiness be reduced to a mere “has been,” this terrible *change*, is the burthen of a *dirge*, rather than a *word of omen*; and must impress us rather with plaintive than terrific sensations. We might, therefore, with strict propriety dismiss the subject, in Mr. B’s own style, by declaring that the objection “will not apply;” and put it out of court accordingly: ordering, “that so far as that goes, the counsel for existing abuses take nothing by his motion*.”

But the counsel in this cause is a deep politi-

* Letters, p. 129.

cian. He can practice popular arts against the people. His motion was not made with any view to the decision of that high court of reason, to which he appealed, but for the sake of the general impression expected from the mere motion itself. Change is a word of ambiguous meaning ; and, under certain circumstances, the worst construction is sure to be put upon every ambiguity. It should be remembered, therefore, that *change*, *revolution*, and *reform*, are but modifications of the same idea: though the last, by established courtesy, is the most unequivocally admitted in a favourable sense. *Reform* is a *change*, or *revolution*, *from bad to good*. Every usurpation, and every concession, is a change. Every alteration of the law, the repeal of an old act, or the passing of a new one, is a change. The whole history of government is nothing but a record of changes, or revolutions, gradual or sudden ; and the worst revolutions are those that are never called so. In short, abstractedly considered, there is nothing terrible in change or revolution. Violence and cruelty are to be abhorred. Humanity is to be loved and cherished. First and greatest of all virtues ! parent of all blessings ! fountain of all social joys ! it is to be wooed, and fostered, and revered with the fondest care ! to be clasped to the breast, and entwined with the very texture of the heart—only to be torn away with
 with

with the last, dearest fibre. But when violence and cruelty are established—when they are surrounded by privileges, and fortified by power, revolution itself becomes humanity and justice.

The question, then, is, what sort of a change do we desire? Does Mr. B. mean to say, that one-fifth of the people of that class which he regards as “the British public,” *desires a change* of tumult, ferocious anarchy and slaughter?—O woeful Britain! if this were indeed the case: for there would scarcely be a paper partition between thee and the flames of the most hideous desolation. But if, by change, he means, as I do, redress of grievances, and reform of long-growing corruptions, I repeat it, not a fifth, but four-fifths of the thinking part of the community, do, in their hours of sanity, when the tertian of alarm subsides, wish for such a change: and when I look around on the condition of my country, and the scandalous abuses of government, proud am I to be considered, among the distinguished eighty thousand, not the least obnoxious to Mr. B. and his *new employers*.

After having thus indulged his indolence, in a little faint and dubious colouring, the artist, however, presently returns to his *old dashing style*. “If they cannot have this change, which they desire, by English cabal,” says he, “they will
“ make

make no sort of scruple of having it by the canal of France, into which already they are *virtually incorporated.*" Thus, *all reformers* are Jacobins; and all Jacobins are of the French faction, virtually incorporated with that nation, and willing to secure the change they wish by foreign interference.

As for *virtual incorporation*, or *virtual presence*, whether in a *wafer*, or a *confederacy*, they are mysteries which, I profess, I do not understand. Mr. B. perhaps could explain the one, and some of our good allies might write commentaries on the other. But I am not curious about occult sciences; and I shall only observe, that if the French republic derives no greater benefit from our *virtual incorporation* than the grand confederacy from the virtual co-operation of the Empress of Russia's manifestoes, it would be most gratuitous prodigality in government to be at any further expence for special commissions, and trials for high treason. For my own part, at least, I have no objection to avow all the incorporation I am conscious of with French Jacobinism.

I do confess, that so long as I imagined it even possible for the republic to be overthrown, no prospect was accompanied with equal anguish. For, notwithstanding the many adventitious horrors which have clouded the revolution, I regarded it as a great and glorious effort for the emancipation

emancipation and moral improvement of the human race. But the thought has long ceased to agitate my mind. The Republic stands upon a rock; and Æolus may blow till he cracks his cheeks, but all the blasts of his eloquence will never shake it. We must have miracles; or all is safe. "The sluices of heaven must be opened, and the waters of the great deep be broken up;" for nothing less than a general deluge can destroy it.

As for English reform by foreign cabal, I shall only observe, that I hold, with respect to England, the same doctrines that I held with respect to France. I deny Mr. B.'s law of vicinage altogether; and shall reply to his sophisms in another letter. In the mean time, I would have the reformers of all nations keep for ever in their minds the monitory remembrance, that hatred may be forced, but love cannot; that chains may be *imposed*, but freedom must be *acquired*.—In other words, that no country can have freedom, which cannot obtain it for itself; and that *foreign interference can only, at best, produce a change of masters* *.

* This maxim, however, applies only to those nations in which foreign mercenaries are not employed by the government. It is no impeachment of the conduct of the Dutch. They were, already, under a foreign yoke. Their government coerced them by British and Prussian mercenaries; and they had no choice but that of accepting the aid of French fraternity.

But,

But, this is by the way. All I have to do, at present, with Mr. B.'s charge, is, to shew the point of view in which he regards, or pretends to regard, the opinions of eighty thousand of those people of Britain, who, by virtue of their pecuniary situations, *are licenced to think on politics*. This, together with what he says of the talents and capacities of these men, will form the first branch of what I shall venture to call *Burke's new syllogism of massacre*.

“ I have a good opinion,” says he, “ of the general abilities of the Jacobins.”—In his very last publication, they were a herd of “ fools aspiring to be knaves* ;” and the reader cannot have forgotten his vehement declamations at the beginning of the contest with France, against “ the vilest, the most despicable, the most ignorant of mankind ; who, unlike the English Revolutionists of the last century—for they were men of genius and intelligence—that was a struggle of talents for their natural ascendancy—a transfer of power, from the aristocracy of birth, to the aristocracy of mind ; but these men, on the contrary, had overthrown *all* distinctions, and transferred dominion, not to the wisdom and the intellect, but to the folly and ignorance of the nation † !” But now, “ I

* Letter to a Noble Lord.

† I have not the speech before me : but this, I know, was the strain and sentiment of that furious philippic.

“ have

“ have a good opinion of the general abilities
 “ of Jacobins.” Who knows, but that bye-and-
 by, he may take another turn, and entertain a
 good opinion of their principles? Change is with
 him no inconsistency. Mr. B. and the weather-
 cock, are only out of character when they are
 fixed. “ Strong passions,” says he, “ awaken the
 “ faculties. They suffer not a particle of the
 “ man to be lost. The spirit of enterprise gives
 “ to this description the full use of all their na-
 “ tive energies*.” And again, in his second
 Letter †:—“ It is a dreadful truth, but it is a
 “ truth that cannot be concealed; in ability, in
 “ dexterity, in the *distinctness of their views, the*
 “ *Jacobins are our superiors.* They saw the thing
 “ right from the very beginning!!!” &c.—Such is
 the picture drawn by this sublime politician of that
 “ great and formidable minority” (not, gentle
 reader, the whig minority of the House of Com-
 mons!) of whom he wishes to put the men of
 family and property in terror, that he may put
 them into *blood*. To complete the picture, in the
 true style and colouring of alarm, he adds, “ I do
 “ not know whether, if I aimed at the total over-

* Letters, p. 70. Thoughts, p. 20.

† Letters, p. 144. Thoughts, p. 87. Compare this with
 his picture (Let. p. 145. Thoughts, p. 89) of “ the tribe of
 “ vulgar politicians” that throng the courts of princes!!! and
 who can doubt the issue of the struggle?

“ throw of a kingdom, I should wish to be encumbered with a larger body of partizans. They are more easily disciplined and directed, than if the number were greater*.” Nay, and so disciplined, and so directed does he conceive us to be, that he ascribes to us a sort of omnipresence, and supernatural power of metamorphosis —“ passing from place to place, with incredible velocity, and diversifying our character and description, so as to be capable of mimicking the general voice! †”

And what has all this to do (you will naturally enquire) with the argument against a Regicide Peace? Will the government, by exhausting the resources of the nation, be better enabled to struggle against such a faction (admitting its existence)? Will the increase of burthens, the beggary, misery, and consequent discontents, growing out of the prolongation of war, make such a faction less formidable? (Though not anxious myself for peace, I argue the question openly and fairly. In cases so momentous, there ought to be no disguise.) Would the unthinking, the desperate, the fickle and the wavering, be the less likely to fall into the hands, and be rendered instrumental to the views of such men, from the accumulating miseries, which, from such pro-

* Letters, p. 68. Thoughts, p. 18. † Ibid.

longation,

longation, must inevitably result? Mr. B. is not such an idiot as to believe it. His hyperbolic statement might, indeed, supernaturally account for a general *exclamation*, without admitting a general *desire*, for peace: supposing, indeed, that such *general exclamation* had been raised. But this I deny. The moderates (the patchworkmen—place-hunters, and dupes of place-hunters) wish for peace, I believe; and such of the mo-nied men as have no advantage from loans and contracts, or as dread the consequences of a fresh loan: but as for the Jacobins—indeed, Mr. Burke, (maugre all your profound penetration) they are very indifferent about the matter: they know (as you do) that peace, under *existing circumstances*, could only be a hollow truce*: that the over-burthened labourer would still continue to be taxed for enormous sums to be squandered in foreign intrigue, to disturb the tranquillity, and irritate the government of France; and that “ what now *stands for* a government” in England,

* Since this was written, I have seen a spirited and well-written pamphlet, “ *Utrum Horum*:—The Government, or the Country,” in which this idea is further pursued; and the distinction between a *real* peace, and a peace concluded by our present government, is ably marked. D. O’Brien—I observe, with pleasure, he has not daubed his title-page either with *Mr.* or *Esq.*—D. O’Brien, and myself, differ upon some points—our habits, and, perhaps, our objects, are somewhat dissimilar; but different mediums do not prevent us from seeing the same great glaring truths.

(I mean Pitt and Hawkeſbury's diſcordant cabal) has injured the French Republic too outrageouſly ever to forgive it. In ſhort, they know that there is no peace for Europe, ſo long as the unnatural alliance between the funding ſyſtem and the borough-mongering ſyſtem laſts; and that, therefore, any thing (in how queſtionable a ſhape ſoever it may come) would be, ultimately, a bleſſing, that ſhould bring this unnatural alliance to the criſis of a divorce. Sooner or later, this criſis, I believe, muſt come: and when it does come, "Periſh, the Borough-mongers," I ſay, for one, "and let the public creditor be ſecured!"—In other words, let corruption be deſtroyed—let plunderers and ruffians be diſmiſſed from power, let penſions be aboliſhed, ſinecures be totally abrogated, and the ſalaries of all offices reduced to a level with the mere neceſſary expences of the table and the library, of a man of ſcience and public buſineſs: Let ſimplicity and virtue be ſubſtituted for oſtentatious debauchery; and thus let the peaſant and the manufacturer be redeemed from miſery; and, at the ſame time, the thouſands, and tens of thouſands of virtuous families, whoſe *well-earned competence* is now veſted in government ſecurities, be preſerved from hideous ruin. Thus it is, and only thus, that the joint object can be attained, and the jarring intereſts
of

of the stock-holder, and the productive labourer, be united.

But if Mr. B.'s extravagant picture of British Jacobinism has nothing to do with the argument on Regicide Peace, it has something to do with that which is of infinitely more importance: it has something to do with our palladium, Trial by Jury: it has something to do with all the yet-remaining fences of our little, little liberty—with all that stands between the head of the patriot and the axe of ministerial vengeance.

But take it not upon credit. Trust not to my assertion. Read the book yourselves—or rather the books: for the parts in which they differ, and the parts in which they agree, are equally important to the just display of the temper and views with which they were composed. Consider the whole. Compare together the respective parts; and if ever you execrate again the names of Robespierre and Marat, without glowing with superior detestation for Edmund Burke, it is only, because it is in the nature of man, that reason should be the fool of imagination, and that guilt should lose its guiltiness in our eyes, when impotence prevents the perpetration of its malice.

Hear, for example, his affected lamentations over “ the total relaxation of all authority,”

“ rity *,” the “ inefficiency of tribunals,” the backwardness of whose “ most essential members” (the juries, I suppose, he means) to execute the bloody mandates of a minister, is described, with insidious obscurity, as a “ disowning of the government.” See, also, his furious attack upon the House of Lords, because that “ highest tribunal of all,” would not indulge his rhetorical spleen with the condemnation of Warren Hastings. There was no evidence, it is true : no case made out. But what of that? Mr. Burke can have no idea of “ the reason, and equity, and justice,” of that “ severe and awful—living law,” to which he so pompously appeals, unless trial and condemnation are one and the same thing ; and accusation, sentence, and execution follow each other with as mechanical a certitude as the conclusions of a mathematical problem result from its premises—Without this, it is “ dead and putrid ; insufficient to save the state, but potent to infect and to kill.”

But “ the very storm and tempest of his rage,” are reserved for the *treasonable* acquittals—for treason, it seems, it was, that we should be acquitted: That Lords and Commons should have joined together in votes of prejudication—that Ministers

* Letters, p. 19, and 20. This is one of the additions, for the purpose of working up which to due sublimity, the work has been kept six months in the press.

and Crown Lawyers should have projected and planned such elaborate prosecutions; and twisted and twined, and distorted all law and common sense, till the very statutes of the realm, and the English language itself, were turned inside out, and logic and jurisprudence walked topfly-turvy, like the captive king of the Antipodeans, in Chronohotonthologos—that his own most sublime and *inventive* genius should have been employed in arranging, drawing out, garbelling and embellishing “Reports of Secret Committees*”—that Courts of Special Commission should have been adorned with such pomp and circumstance—Bedlam, Bridewell, and the stews, so ransacked for collateral evidence, and nature’s loose analogies explored for moonshine links of unconnected facts: that Judges, Counsel, and Witnesses, should have been so well chosen, and so well paid †, and Juries so

* This, is believed to be one of the *important services* for which Mr. B. received that pension of 4000l. a year, which he so modestly assures us, “is no more than he deserved!!”—*Letter to a Noble Lord.*

† All the witnesses were not paid alike; or with equal good will. The honest fellows from Sheffield were dismissed with the price of an outside passage on the coach, and about 7s. for expences on a journey of 200 miles. My very valuable and lamented friend, the late John Stuart Taylor, of Norwich, when he applied to a certain gentleman in office, or Jack in office, which ever you please to call him, for those fixed and regular expences, which the subpoenaing party always pays, to every professional man, during the time he is withheld from his

so carefully selected, with such due proportions on each pannel, of contractors, police magistrates, and tradesmen to the royal family*; and yet, after all, that we should come off with our heads upon our shoulders, and “ the CROWN retire disgraced and defeated from ITS courts,” with only the solitary, *ambiguous* consolation of executing one of its own spies—this

“ Is grief too fierce for nerves like his to bear,
“ And claims the horrors of a last despair!”

He raves till he foams again. Like a wounded elephant, his enemies having escaped, he turns his fury upon his friends—upon himself—upon those very pavillions and edifices of state he was armed and caparisoned to defend; and four dread pages † of splendid ruins, are covered over with froth and blood.

his business, was answered with surly insolence—“ Expences, Sir—for such a witness as you! Do you think it was for this you were brought up to London? You were expected to give evidence on the part of the crown, not on the part of the prisoner!!!”—When the Lynams, the Taylors, the Groveses, the Timses went for their *expences*, was there any demur??? No, they had said all that was expected—and almost every word of it had been proved to be false.

* To the immortal honour of those men—to the honour of our national character, this was not a sufficient inducement to those honest men to bring in a verdict for the crown against the evidence.

† Letters, p. 19 to 22.

“ The

“The highest tribunal of all is deprived of all dignity and efficiency.”—“Public prosecutions are become little better than schools for treason; of no use but to improve the dexterity of criminals” [i. e. reformers] “in the mystery of evasion,” [i. e. of avoiding the society of perjured spies!] “to shew with what complete impunity men may conspire against the common WEALTH,” [that is to say, in plain English, against the corruptions of a gang of borough-mongers—the PLUNDER of a hord of placemen and pensioners!] “to shew with what safety assassins may attempt its awful head!”

There is a gradation, it seems, in *honourable obloquy*: but surely we are now at the ladder’s top. Mr. Windham made us *white-washed felons*; Lord Grenville *stained us with moral guilt*; and Mr. B. has dubbed us ASSASSINS. It would be curious to know what epithet this *Gentleman!!!* would give to those ruffians (*mostly in the pay of Government*) who were concerned in the meditated, attempted massacres of Lynn and Yarmouth!—In the mean time; I wonder how *juries* relish these things. But it matters not. They are not to be used any more, I suppose, *on such occasions*.

Having exhausted his stock of Newgate wit, the metaphorical Proteus now turns his hand to medicine and surgery, and cures low fevers with amputation and the caustic. It must be confessed,

I

however,

however, that his *language* is sufficiently scientific. “ Whilst the distempers of a *relaxed fibre prognosticate* and *prepare* all the *morbid force* of *convulsion* in the body of the state, the steadiness of the *physician* is over-powered,” &c. “ The *doctor* of the constitution shrinks from his own *operation*. He doubts and questions the salutary but critical terrors of the *cautery* and the *knife*.” The doctor thus disgraced, anon he becomes a soldier, learns the Brunswick march, and “ takes a poor credit even from defeat.” Then again he is an eulogist ; a politician ; a lawyer ; a resurrection-man, dealing in rotten carcases ; a “ jurist ;” a letter-founder, and a printer’s devil ; an engrosser of parchment rolls, and an engraver of brazen tablets : and all in one single page.

And now he is a dancing master, whimsically enough employed in “ *bowing* to the enemy abroad,” which, it is sagaciously remarked, is not the way “ to subdue the *conspirator* *” who is breaking the fiddle “ at home.” Having displayed these harlequin tricks in his own person, he proceeds to try his dagger of lath upon other objects. In ten little lines “ anarchy” is a rattle-snake ; a “ *focus*,” endowed with magnetic powers ; a “ venomous and blighting insect,” that

* *Conspirator!* singular number !—“ A man may conspire with himself !!!”—*Chief Justice EYRE.*—*State Trials, King v. J. Thelwall, fifth day.*

“ blasts and shrivels, and burns up the promise of “ the year,” occasions “ salutary and beautiful “ *institutions to yield dust and smut,*” and turns “ the “ harvest of the law to stubble.” At last, to crown the whole, tired of agriculture and natural history, and having panted round the whole circle of metaphor, he returns, like a hare to the squat he started from, takes up his old profession of physic again, and gives us an emetic of pustles and blotches, and “ eruptive diseases,” which “ sink in and re-appear by fits.” The malady, however, which is now under his care, whatever it may be, has, somehow or other, a *conversable faculty*—a sort of *intellectual “ fuel,”* which holds treasonable correspondence “ with “ the source of regicide,” and cunningly “ waits “ for the favourable moment of a freer communication to exert and to encrease its force.” This is really the most intelligent, artful, intriguing, philosophising disease I ever heard of. What a loss to the readers of “ Medical Transactions,” that the doctor has not favoured us with its name, its diagnosis, and the peculiar characteristics of its exterior symptoms.

Wonderful man! most incongruous, and most brilliant phenomenon of genius! how hast thou the power to make even nonsense fascinating, and give charms to sheer malevolence! Thou art, indeed, a compound at once strange and terrible:

but, it must be confessed, thou art an entertaining mongrel. Full of beauty, and of ferocity, as the *royal* beast of Bengal; and driven onward by the same blind impulse of rage and ravin—thy hideous roar is ever prophetic of blood: But “the tyger is frequently lost in the ape;” and indignation is disarmed by splendid absurdity:—while the tricks and antics of a wild, extravagant, frantic imagination have a sort of witching charm, that defies the sober severity of judgment, and occasions even the absurdity itself, to be accepted as a sort of atonement for the depravity we should else abhor!

But let us not forget—for if we should, there are others who will remember, that these tropes, and metaphors, and allegories, however wild and incoherent in themselves, all point to one determinate object—all lead to one conclusion: namely, that the eighty thousand jacobins (more or less) who are so firmly grounded in the truth and purity of their sentiments, that no sophistical “reasoning,” no hackney “argument” of prejudice or corruption, “no example” of government spies caught in their own vile nooze, “no venerable authority!” can have the slightest influence upon them;” and whose conduct is so strictly consonant with benevolence and justice, that when the crown (that is to say the minister) brings

brings them before a jury, howsoever selected, and of whomsoever composed, it retires from its courts defeated and disgraced—That these detestable jacobins—these eighty thousand criminals, against whom no crime can be proved—these conspirators, who never yet conspired—these assassins, whose only dagger is reason, and whose only sword is truth—the meridian sun itself being their dark lanthorn, and publicity their only cloak—these are to be submitted to the prompt execution of the cautery and the knife; to be cut and burnt away, like warts, from the eruptive body. All, all who dare to complain, though oppression were heaped upon oppression, “till it o’ertopp’d Olympus”—all, all who dare to wish for change, (though tyranny grew black as thickest night, and corruption stank in our very pottage,) all are to be swept away. Jurors (unless juries can be regulated by some new fashion) must no more be trusted with such conspirators: for jurors are conspirators themselves—“the acquittal of the conspirators is a proof of the extent to which the conspiracy had spread*.” Juries will not do: our present tribunals are not efficient. They were instituted

* Such was the audacious language of William Pitt. His mind seems pretty well disposed for the adoption of *the cautery and the knife*. His *steadiness* would not be much *overpowered* by the operation.

for the purpose of chastising criminal ACTS— they cannot reach OPINIONS with sufficient certainty;—*but the SWORD can.* “ Out the word came; and it never went back* :” nor ever can get back. Mr. B. indeed soon repented that he had let it out; and endeavoured to recal it: but in vain. It had escaped into the hands of Mr. Owen; and by means of a fortunate quarrel, between the apostate politician and the apostate bookseller, behold—we have it. It is before the world. It is in print. “ The type is black and legible;” and both “ the letter,” and the spirit are “ clear.”

“ I have formerly heard,” says he †, *with more surprize than “ satisfaction,”* that “ opinions are “ things out of human jurisdiction,”—that “ you “ can never extirpate opinion, without extirpating a whole nation.” He then proceeds to argue both the practicability, and the propriety of this forcible extirpation; maintaining the justice of “ war against opinion ‡,” and even affirming, in round terms, “ when I am told it is a war “ of opinions, I am told it is the most important “ of all wars §.” He does not, however, neglect the opportunity of exposing the inconsistency of his antagonists. I am glad he does not. I

* Letters, p. 171.

† Thoughts p. 63. ‡

Ibid. 64.

§ Thoughts, p. 66.

would

would not have the intemperance, or the injustice, of either party spared. All persecution, from whatever quarter it come, (and I call all war upon opinion, all prosecution for opinion, persecution) is equally detestable: nay, if the thing, in itself, is capable of aggravation, that aggravation it receives, when it is appealed to by the friends of liberty. Let priests and tyrants take shelter in their inquisitions, their star-chambers, and their courts of law, where their *blind* deity, with the two-edged sword, uplifts her scales, in pageant mockery, but strikes as power directs. We have a goddess of more perfect organ—far-seeing Reason, of steadier balance, and unweaponed hand; but, yet, of force that cannot fail of victory, if we have faith, and trust in her omnipotence.

Why should any advocate for freedom have lost his temper, or his consistency, on account of any nonsense which Mr. Reeves might choose, or be hired, to write, about the trunk, or the branches of a rotten tree? In the name of wonder, what can we wish for more, than that *such talents* should be employed in *such a cause*. I, at least, have never suspected Mr. Reeves of being one, who, if the Thames were a fire, would know where to run for water to put out the flames. But if ever it should please the gods to enable him to write any thing worth answering, let us hope that pen, ink, and paper will not be wanting. Write away then,
 . Justice

Justice Reeves, and support your cause. Scalp headless wights with Grub-street "Tomahawks;" and indite new "Thoughts*" for men who never think. I, meanwhile, proceed to examine the arguments of your more potent coadjutor.

"As to the *mere matter of extirpation*," says he, "of all kinds of opinions, *whether right or wrong*, "without the extirpation of a people †"—O certainly: it is not necessary to extirpate the *whole* people: Cut but the throats of *that portion* of a people who hold the obnoxious opinion—*Saint Bartholomise* them—nay, that *informed, discussing* portion of them—that *awakened*, able, energetic band, such as the proscribed: eighty thousand of this country, over whom "no example" (however terrible) "no venerable authority can have the slightest influence"—*Do but Bartholomise* them, and the business *appears* to be done. And this, says the Oracle of aristocratical abhorrence of massacre and cruelty—"this is a thing so very common, "that would be clouded and obscured, rather than "illustrated, by examples."

Mr. B. was very much in the right to save himself from the confusion, in which particular statements would have involved him, by this round and general assertion; for certainly, if he had

* Thoughts on the English Government.

† Thoughts on the Regicide Peace, p. 64.

come to close quarter with facts, none of the particular statements would have answered his purpose: certainly the massacre of the protestants, by the *humane* and *politic* old despotism of France, would not: though for this our *serious* Machiavel (for the Italian did but jest) could, perhaps, assign a reason. The thing was not thoroughly done. It is true, that the *Grand Monarque* having determined to “ exert a vigour beyond the law,” and having given orders accordingly*, “ there were “ killed in the city of Paris, that day and the “ next, above ten thousand, whereof above five “ hundred were barons, knights, and gentlemen, “ who were purposely met together, from all parts, “ to honour the king of Navar’s marriage.”—It is true, “ Gasper de Coligny, the famous admiral,” (one of the leaders of the Hugonots) “ was pulled “ out of the stable, and cruelly abused by the fury “ of the common people,” (this was a royalist mob —a mob hired, instigated, marshalled by the *regular*, constituted government) “ who detesting his very “ name, *tore* his head from his shoulders, cut off “ his hands, and dragging him through the streets “ to the place of execution, left him hanging by

* See English Translation of *Davila*, p. 374, 375, and 376, edit. 1647. See also for the horrible particulars, “ History of the bloody Massacres, &c. in 1572” (extracted from “ Thuanus’s Hist. of his own times,” and translated.) Lond. 1674.

“ one of his feet upon the gallows ; and a few
 “ days after” (these were royalist cannibals!) “ they
 “ set fire to it upon the same gallows, half burning
 “ it, with barbarous rejoicings ; their cruelty find-
 “ ing no end, till two servants of the Marechal de
 “ Momorancy stole away the relics of his misera-
 “ ble carcase, and buried them, secretly, at Chan-
 “ tilly.” It is true, also, that “ the day before
 “ this terrible execution, the king dispatched
 “ posts into divers parts of the kingdom, con-
 “ manding the governors of cities and provinces
 “ to do the like.”—It is true, that “ on the same
 “ night at Meaux, and the days ensuing at Or-
 “ leans, Rouën, Bourges, Angiers, Thoulouse,
 “ and many other places, but above all, at
 “ *Lyons*, there was a most bloody slaughter of
 “ the Hugonots, *without any respect of age or sex,*
 “ or quality of persons.” But it is true, also, that
 through the great extent, and out of the whole
 population of France, there were *only* forty thou-
 sand men, women, and children put to the sword.
 There ought to have been eighty thousand, rea-
 soning, discoursing, enquiring adults, even if the
 population of France had only equalled that of
 Britain. Hence, perhaps, it was, that *Hugonot*
Jacobinism and *Hugonot infidelity* (or *Hugonot heresy*—
 for with *established priests* they are *essentially* the
 same !) instead of being “ extirpated” from
 “ the vicinage of Europe,” have been gaining
 ground

ground ever since, both in number of profelytes, and extent of principle.

Neither will "the wars of Charles V. and his successors," against this same *Hugonotism*, better support his cause; as indeed he confesses: though at the same time he cautiously observes, that whether those wars "might or might not" be justified, "is a matter of historical criticism!" Nor yet will he be able to quote, among his "cloud of examples," the early persecutions of the Christian system of innovation and reform: a system which, whatever Mr. B.'s *mode of faith* may suggest, went much greater lengths, with respect to a very tender subject, than the wildest *Atheism* either of the French or English Jacobins. The primitive Christians (as every scholar knows) both upheld and practised, not only *equality of rights*, but *community of goods*: (a wild and absurd scheme, I confess; and not practicable upon any *large scale*: but I speak to the doctrinal and historical fact:) nor can the man who has seriously considered the essential doctrines of that religion, view, without contempt, the ostentatious mockery of a modern congregation, who call it Christianity to keep "the poor, the halt, and the blind," standing, at due distance, in the aisles, while the well-dressed classes are closeted up in pews, lined, elevated, and embellished, according to the rank and station of the occupants, listening to a drawler

in an awkward habit, and cooped up in a mahogany box, to soothe the pride of greatness with obsequious exhortations, and terrify the abject and oppressed into trembling subordination, and reverence for their *bettors*. Edifices, thus *set out*, are Pagan theatres; not Christian churches. What degree of perfection this system met with in Pagan countries, is a subject of so much controversy among the learned, that I shall not venture to decide. However, that it was perfected in "that centre and focus of innovation," Judea, where it first broke out, is evident; and that with tolerable severity. It was perfected. Christ became popular. His doctrines became popular. —How could doctrines fail of popularity, which contained so many elementary political truths, and vindicated, so directly, in many respects at least, the Rights of Man? He did not spare corruptions, either in Church or State. He exposed the doctrines and the practices of the priests and the aristocrats, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the powerful, the wealthy, and the great. He collected the people together, in great numbers, and lectured them against existing abuses; in the streets, in the wilderness, in the fields, and on the neighbouring hills. The government was alarmed. They "sought to destroy him;" and when they could not "lay hold of his words," they set gangs of ruffians upon him, to knock him on the head,

head, with bludgeons and stones. But "he escaped out of their hands, and got away." In the midst of these persecutions, the number of his profelytes continually encreased; and some of the *great men* among the Jews (like the *great man* I had mentioned in the "Narrative of my arrest and treatment*") thought, "that men who had a heap of people running after them, were best in a place of security." He was secured. A certain apostate (his name was neither *Edmund Burke*, *William Pitt*, nor *William Windham*—it was *Judas Iscariot*) took it into his head to persecute the doctrines he had formerly supported; betrayed the cause; and accepted a pension for "his public services." In short, Jesus Christ was crucified, as *Joseph Gerrald* has been transported, for exposing the corruption and degeneracy of the times, and preaching a great reform. But it was all in vain. Hang, transport, and crucify, as long as you please: the spirit of a great reformer, martyr'd for a glorious principle, will rise again. The phoenix mind springs triumphant from the pyre; and the winds, that scatter the ashes of the martyr, propagate the principles for which he fell.

Thus fared it with Christianity. The persecutions it suffered, by drawing attention to its doc-

* Tribune, vol. I. p. 89.

trines (many of which, particularly in the state of society then prevailing, were excellently calculated to impress the general mind) contributed, more than all the tales of prophecies and miracles, with which it *became* incorporated, to spread the system, not only through Judea, but through "all the surrounding vicinage." *It did continue to spread so long as persecution continued; and never was overthrown till* POLITIC EMPERORS (*finding it a useful instrument of ambition*) ESTABLISHED THE NAME, AND DESTROYED THE PRINCIPLE.

But, says Mr. B. opinions may not only be forced; you may even force men into the forcible persecution of their own opinions:—"Instances enough may be furnished of people who have enthusiastically, and with force, propagated those opinions, which, some time before, they resisted with their blood*." True: but it is a truth which makes terribly against *one* part of his argument, and nothing for the other—for it tends to shew (if brought to the test of facts) the great advantages which new opinions have over the old, when driven to the issue of coercion. The proselytizing army is always encreasing; the army of establishments always falling away. Many thousands, in every long-continued struggle, begin with "resisting opinions with their

* Thoughts, p. 64.

"blood,"

“ blood,” on account of their *novelty*, which they conclude with “ propagating (even enthusiasti-
cally, and with force,)” from a conviction of their *truth*. An Arnold, or a Dumourier, may be dragged from the retreats of infamy, to prove that the Champions of Liberty may be bought by its foes. But the examples are worth but little, in the scale of argument; and, I speak it with glowing satisfaction, they are but few. As for the voluntary, and unbought recantations, they are all on the other side. In short, “ in the event of a struggle,” settled governments may rest almost assured, that they must conquer immediately, or not at all. It is, therefore, a serious thing, to bring matters to such an issue.

I rather suppose, however, that Mr. B. had his eye upon examples of another kind; for specimens of which, not to burthen the reader with quotations, especially, as I have cited the passage in a former publication*; I refer to “ Burnet’s Summary of Affairs before the Restoration †.” There he will find *Lutherans*, *Catholics*, and *Calvinists*—that is to say, Lutheran, Catholic, and Calvinist *Princes*—Electors, Dukes, and Palatines, in abundance, changing, and re-changing their religion, as policy of state directed; and propagating, with *force*, at one time, “ those opinions

* Pol. Lect. p. 55. *On Prof. for Pol. Opinion.*

† Own Times, vol. I. p. 14. fol. edit.

“ which,

“ which, before, they resisted with *their* blood :” —that is to say, with the blood which they regarded as *their property*—the blood of their subjects: the fact being, that, like princes and statesmen in general, they had no settled opinion of any kind; except, ~~that~~ whatever tended to gratify their usurping ambition, was to be pursued; and that every thing was to be “ judged by moral “ prudence” (of which they were sole umpires) “ and not by any abstract principle of right *.”

But, continues the advocate of extirpation—
 “ Rarely *have ever* great changes in opinion taken
 “ place, without the application of force, more
 “ or less †.” True, Mr. B.—and for this plain reason—governments have rarely wanted such counsellors as yourself, to persuade them to drive the question to that issue. Establishments (however pure in the outset) have never failed, in process of time, to be infected with innumerable corruptions. These the governors have an interest in perpetuating; and, indeed, for the sake of that interest, the corruptions have been generally introduced. To them, “ the beauty of all Constitutions consists in those very corruptions of which
 “ others complain †;” for it is by the latter, not

* Thoughts, p. 64.

† Ibid. p. 65.

‡ Speeches of the Right Hon. W. Pitt, and Lord Mornington, on the Motion for a Committee to take into consideration the Petition of the Friends of the People.

the former, that their ambition is flattered, their rapacity indulged, their patronage extended, and places and pensions heaped upon themselves, their families, and dependants. These corruptions are therefore artfully confounded, and incorporated, with the original institutions; and the institutions themselves, under one pretence or other, are artfully abrogated by their pretended supporters; till, at last, the whole is infected; and nothing but corruption remains. The enormity of the evil produces complaint. Remonstrance, rejected and despised, provokes to keener discussion, and more bold enquiry. New theories and new systems are started, more consonant with the nature of man, and principles of justice; and the old, corrupted, disjointed, patch-works of obsolete institution, and new-fangled usurpation, are attacked with all the strength of argument, and the ardour of principled conviction. But corruption cannot stand the test of enquiry. It shrinks from the galling probe of truth. Its strength consists in "the morbid force of convulsion," not in the conscious energies of temperate health. It therefore flies from argument, and appeals to force: leaving, to the proscribed reformers, only the sad alternative of perishing in thousands, according to the example of the Hugonots, and the advice of Burke and Windham, by "a vigour beyond the law," or of repelling force by force, with

death or victory on their banners, and on their hearts.

Such has been the case in many a nation—in Genoa—in Switzerland—in Holland *twice*—in America; and such was the case in France. Opinion had grown till it had burst its chains; circumstances concurred that gave opinion weight: the court seemed to yield; but coercion was prepared. Monopolies (gigantic in wickedness) were planned and executed, to put the subsistence of the people in the power of their oppressors; and fresh massacres were resolved, and organised: but the project transpired: force was repelled by force: *Lambesque* was discomfited; the people flew to arms; the Bastille was taken; *Broglio* fled; and Paris escaped a second feast of Saint Bartholomew. But still there were *silver-headed* traitors to the cause of man, pensioned profligates, at the ear of royalty, advising coercion—from within, or from without—it mattered not. A foreign combination produced a foreign war; and Louis XVI, who had sworn to defend the *constitution of new opinions*, kept up (as *Mallet du Pan*, his confidential agent confesses, in his *Correspondance Politique pour Servir a l'Histoire*) a secret intercourse with the despots who had leagued for its destruction. But surely the “great changes
“in opinion,” resulting from “the application
“of

“ of force,” in these instances, are not much calculated to encourage established governments to a repetition of the experiment.

I do not mean to assert, that coercion has no influence over opinion. I have not forgotten that the despotisms of China, and Japan (despotisms in which that prompt-conductor and disseminator of intellect, the press, is yet unknown*) did, by nipping Christianity in the very bud (long before it was eighty thousand—perhaps before it was eight hundred strong) exterminate that religion: or, more properly, prevent it from taking root. Neither do I forget the prophet of Mecca and his armed apostles; who carried conviction on the sabre's edge, propounding circumcision or death. But Mahomet, and his Arabs, also, war against Mr. B.: for here *the new opinion prevailed*. And why did the new opinion prevail? The answer is a dreadful warning to old establishments not to be eager for contests of blood. The new opinion prevailed, because there is an incalculable distance between the energy and enthusiasm of a new conviction, and the science and mechanism of ancient habits: because it is the former, alone, that rouses the full force of intellect and valour,

* The Chinese have an art of printing. But it consists in the use of logographic characters, instead of an alphabet: it is, accordingly, a labour of many years to learn to read their language.

and "suffers not a particle of the man to be lost:" because the old opinion depends upon routine; the new upon intrepidity and merit: because in one, the mass feel that they are nothing; in the other, they may be every thing they dare: because the establishment takes its leaders, and must take them, by a *sort of lottery*, from the court cabal; the innovation *selects* them "from the ranks." In one case commands are conferred, that laurels may be reaped: in the other, laurels are reaped that commands may be obtained. Such, "in the event of a struggle," are the advantages in favour of the innovating army: and Mr. B. sees, and has acknowledged them in all their strength.

Yet, still this champion of old systems maintains, that new opinions may be, and ought to be extirpated by force. They ought to be extirpated for three reasons. 1. Because "*Opinion is the rudder of human action* *." Granted. Granted, also, that "*as the opinion is wise or foolish, vicious or moral, the cause of action is noxious or salutary.*" But who is to judge of this wisdom or this folly—of this vice or this morality? *Government!* says Mr. B. I say no: for that thing called government, if there be corruption in the state, is, of necessity, the focus of that corruption: That thing called government, is composed of a privi-

* Thoughts, p. 65.

leged few, who always may have, and, the history of the world assures us, frequently have had, an interest diametrically opposite to that of the state. Was the court of Tarquin, of Nero, of Caligula, Domitian, or Hiliagabalus, fit to be consulted for standards of moral and intellectual taste? Did they not mow down all virtue and all wisdom, and propagate the most detestable vices, and the most atrocious barbarism? Are the governments of Japan, of Morocco, of Algiers, fit to be consulted as oracles upon these subjects? If they are not, none are: and for this reason, If the government were ten times blacker than all that I have instanced, it would say that it was pure; and the fouler it was, the more dangerous to deny the dictum.

How then is it to be decided? *By precedent!* you say—No; for precedent is infinitely diversified. All things may be supported by precedent; and all condemned. It would, therefore, revert to governments to decide what precedents were good, and what were bad; and all my former objections recur—*By antiquity and established usage!* No; that would be to proscribe all improvement—for all improvement is change of established usage. That would be to make the weakness and simplicity of childhood a standard for the vigour and intelligence of maturity; and to prohibit all the advantages of experience. As Lord
Bacon

Bacon observes, in this respect, *we, who live now, are, in reality, the ancients ; they are the younger generations that have passed before.*

Every thing useful to man has resulted from this great principle. Every improvement, every invention, is an innovation, resting upon the substantial data—that, by having all the experience of our ancestors, with the addition of our own, we are wiser than they ; and have a right, not only to imitate, like apes, but to improve—to alter—to choose, and to change, as men.

And is political science, alone, upon whose improvement depend the happiness, and the lives of millions, and the creation, as it were, of new worlds of population, whose embryos are now perishing in the dark and comfortless chaos of devouring despotism—Is political science alone to be an exception to the rule, and never to be breeched in manhood, because it has formerly been encumbered with swathing-bands and long coats ? Certainly ; and, for this obvious reason, that the nurses, who hold the leading strings, have a profit in its weakness ; and must lose their places, and their perquisites, by such a change. The case of governments, and of arts and sciences, in this respect, are said to be essentially different ; but the difference consists in this alone : and if we had a government of tanners, and a priesthood of lawyers, I have no doubt that it would be high treason

treason to dress a hide after a new fashion, and blasphemy to invent machines for splitting timber.

2. "*It has ever been the great, primary object of speculative and doctrinal philosophy, to regulate opinion.*" Certainly, and this object has always been, and of necessity must be, most effectually answered when opinion is most free; as indeed the very terms, "speculative and doctrinal philosophy," when used in any sense of approbation, take for granted. Every body knows that *philosophy* means the *love of wisdom*; and that to *speculate* is to *conjecture, and pry, and enquire, with a view to the discovery of truths as yet unknown*. So that speculative philosophy evidently means *the love of that wisdom which consists in making enquiries and conjectures, with a view to the discovery of new truths*; while doctrinal philosophy, or the philosophy of *teaching*, must of necessity mean *that love of wisdom which displays itself in imparting to mankind the truths which, in the process of our conjectures and enquiries we may have discovered*. Now how can we speculate without the liberty of speculation? How can truths, hitherto unknown, be discovered, if we are not at liberty to conjecture and enquire?—And how can new truths be taught, if the philosopher is not at liberty to communicate what his conjectures and enquiries have led him to regard as true? In short, how can there

there be any such thing as "speculative and doctrinal philosophy," if opinion is not left unshackled? It is not by coercion, but by discussion, that opinion is to be regulated, and the desirable effects of morality and good conduct are to be obtained. But,

3. "*It is the great object of political philosophy to promote that [opinion] which is sound.*" Certainly, it is the duty of the political philosopher, and of every philosopher, by every motive of reason, and every opportunity of discussion, to promote whatever appears to him to be sound. But the disposition to decide between soundness and unsoundness by the faggot and the axe, comes not from the schools of philosophy, but from those of theological contention. What follows, therefore, "*and to EXTIRPATE what is mischievous, and which directly tends to render men bad CITIZENS in the community, and mischievous neighbours out of it,*" is a sophism both in terms and substance. It is a sophism in substance, in as much as the statement being general, vague, and hypothetical, furnishes no just foundation for the particular conclusion meant to be inferred. It is a sophism in terms, in as much as the phrase, "extirpating what is mischievous," being spoken in reference to the antecedent "political philosophy," demands assent only to the propriety of extirpating the supposed mischievous opinion by philosophical means—
that

that is to say, by means of reason, or setting one opinion against another; while the whole tenor of the argument would apply this assent, not to extirpation by philosophy, but by the sword. —In this sense of the word, therefore, I deny the proposition: a proposition, indeed, which absolutely begs the question; and affirms the very point it pretends to argue. I, on the other hand, affirm, that political philosophy has no right (according to Mr. B.'s jargon) to extirpate, by force, any opinion whatever:—no, not even “the opinion, that it is a man's duty to take from me my goods, and to kill me if I resist him.” The sophist who should propound such a doctrine, would be easily confuted. [To say, that he could not, is to admit that he is right; or to affirm, that falsehood is more convincing than truth: a dictum that destroys all morals.] He who should *act* upon the doctrine, would, undoubtedly, be hanged. But so long as indolence, or fear, restrains him from action, *the opinion*, however absurd, is perfectly harmless; and society ought to be satisfied. It is sufficient for the *law*, that we fear the *gallows*: Our friends and companions, it is true, the guardians of our interests, and the instructors of our children, we would seek among men who act upon more generous principles.

As for pulling down governments—in addition to the preceding arguments, I shall only add, that *no man* can pull down a government. But when,

not a *Man*, but a *People*, wills a grand renovation, to feel the *will* is also to be conscious of the power: and, when the will and the power cooperate, sophists may string syllogisms, like beads upon a rosary; but while they are reasoning, the thing is done.

Fortunately for mankind, this will is not lightly inspired. It is not to be produced by declamations or logic. The speculative few will have their preferences, their theories, and their projected improvements. Sir Thomas Moore had his *Eutopia*; and Hume, himself, sketched a sort of ground-plot for the French Republic: but to the mass, even of those who have some "tolerable" leisure for discussion, and some means of information," (so long as their grievances are not very galling) that which *is* will generally appear to be best, merely because it *is*; and because that spirit of nationality, which belongs to the whole species, occasions us to imbibe, with our very nutriment, a prejudice in favour of our national institutions. Nay, even the speculative few, themselves, from their very love of speculation, till roused by some extraordinary provocative, prefer the very establishments they disapprove, to the dangers, and the trouble of a change.—Hume's *Commonwealth* slept for sixty years, and the *Eutopia* for whole centuries, on the shelves of the learned; and even the popular language
of

of Thomas Paine would not have provoked any very alarming discussion, if the general condition of mankind had not pre-disposed them to exclaim—
We are wretched!—Let us enquire the cause!

In short, in all the pages of history I have perused, there is not a single instance (and most assuredly I have not forgotten France) of a great, popular revolution taking place, till grinding, and long-continued oppression, had rendered it absolutely necessary:—till groaning Nature called for the dire relief.

It is not, therefore, by the extermination of eighty thousand mal-contents and theoretical reformers, but by the alleviation of burthens, and the restoration of equal justice, that such revolutions are to be avoided. It is not by the persecution of *new opinions*, but by the reform of *old abuses*, that contentment can be restored, and tranquillity preserved to a state; and governors secured from the terrors of retributive justice.

But, says Mr. B. I do not mean to persecute all *new doctrines*. “Theological opinions,” for example, “whether sound or erroneous, do not go directly to the well-being of social, of civil, or of politic society.” [If I were disposed to give a clue to one sort of persecution, while I reprobate another, I could mention some theological opinions which appear to me, at least, to go more directly to the destruction of all social, moral, and

political virtue, than any thing of which Atheism itself was ever accused. "If I were the Deity," says Plutarch, who, by the way, was himself a priest—but he was, also, a philosopher—a moral philosopher!—"If I were the Deity, I would rather that men should deny my existence, than say, that I was cruel, jealous, lascivious, or revengeful*." The theological dogmatists, he continues, "did not preach vices or crimes." [How, Mr. B.—did they not preach the crusade? Did they not preach murder, assassination, poisoning, *deposition of Kings*, the axe, the halter, and the faggot? And did they not practise what they preached?—But I forget myself—With the single exception of *deposing kings*, all that I have objected, instead of vices and crimes, are virtues, in Mr. B.'s *politico-moral* code. Nay, even such deposition itself, provided the power be transferred only to the privileged bodies, and feudal proprietories of the "old Germanic or Gothic customary," may be perfectly innocent, and even praise-worthy: for "indeed, the force and form of the institution, called States, continued, in *greater perfection*, in those republican communities (in which the classes, orders, and distinctions, such as before subsisted, or nearly such, were still left) than under monarchies †."] "The parties," says he (the

* I quote from memory: but I know, that in sentiment, I am correct.

† Letters, p. 111.

religionists)

religionists) “disputed on the best means of promoting virtue, religion, and morals.” And what do the Atheist and the Christian dispute about?—Why, whether religion is, or is not, the best instrument for promoting morals and virtue*. Men may differ upon this point, as well as upon the question, of which sort of religion (from the Egyptian faith, in calves and onions, to the orthodox metaphysician’s, in an incomprehensible, immaterial, triune Deity) and yet both parties may be good members of society. Do you try our lives by our opinions, or our opinions by our lives? Neither would be just: for man is an incongruous animal. But surely, the latter were the more candid: and, upon this foundation, I would be bound to bring Atheists into court, before whom the pious, impetuous, hireling apostate of Beaconsfield must hide his head in confusion.

Opinions certainly have their tendencies with respect to moral character. But opinions are multitudinous. They proceed not from any one common stock. They spring up from many a wildly scattered seed. They blossom on innumerable stems. Detested, therefore, be the bigotry that condemns the whole soil, on account of one rank weed: that, from a particular doctrine, however erroneous, would argue the immorality of a general character!

* They dispute, also, whether religion be true or false. But with this abstraction, the politician has nothing to do.

But

But "is there no distinction between an innocent and moral liberty," and opinions that are "the direct highway to every crime and every vice?"—Must government "either throw the bridle on the neck of headlong nature, or tie it up for ever to the post*?" The sophism is stated with most plausible subtlety; and the simile is truly fascinating: and when mankind shall acknowledge themselves to be horses—or that their governments are created for the express purpose of riding them, then will it strictly apply: then will it be right, that opinion should be lashed round the station-post, till it is broken-in to the taste of the rider. But so long as men and their governors are animals of the same order—so long as the great body of the people have a *common weal*, and that little corporation called Government, a *particular one*—so long as rulers have an interest, and betray an inclination, to consider every thing as "an innocent and moral liberty," which tends to pamper their ambition and rapacity, or increase their power; and to represent all opinion inconsistent with their views, and hostile to their corrupt and despotic pride, as "the down-hill way to every crime and every vice"—so long (that is to say, as long as political society exists) will it be much more dangerous to the peace and welfare of the universe, to give the reins to that dread War-Horse,

* Thoughts p. 66.

Constituted Power—*whose neck is clothed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, and who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage,* than to throw them loose on the neck of the headlong colt **Opinion**, who, though he may snort, and curvet, and frolic through a thousand extravagancies, will never, unless cruelly lashed and goaded, commit any serious depredations, or do irreparable mischief, either to himself or others.

This metaphor is, however, an important part of Mr. Burke's statement; inasmuch, as it proves, that his observations on the forcible extirpation of opinion, are intended to apply, not only to the foreign war, but, also, to the *Domestic Enemy*. Here, then, the argument, as far as relates to the developement of the mind and object of the writer, is complete—And thus it stands :

There are, in this country, " eighty thousand
" Jacobins, utterly incapable of amendment, over
" whom no argument, no example, no vene-
" rable authority, can have the slightest influ-
" ence."

These Jacobins have been tried, in the persons of their supposed leaders; but " the tribunals
" have been found inefficient ;" the Juries, (by finding them " Not Guilty") have " disowned the
" government ;" and " public prosecutions have
" become mere schools of treason."

But

But opinions, if they cannot otherwise be checked, ought to be "extirpated by force:" the practicability of which may be proved "by a cloud of examples."

Ergo—Eighty thousand Jacobins are to be forcibly got rid of, at any rate; "by the caustic and the knife;" by fire and sword—by mock trial, without Juries to "disown the government,"—or by the murderous tumults of Lynn and Yarmouth bludgeon-men.

Such, my fellow-citizens! are the propositions and denunciations of the confidential hireling of a court, which yet fills the world with senseless howlings against cannibal philosophy, and affected exaggerations of revolutionary massacres!!! And to shew you that the insinuations of Mr. B. are not rashly, or unadvisedly made—to shew you the object of his insinuations—and that these hints do actually, and *bona fide*, come from the governing powers, for the purpose of preparing the public mind for some fresh member of "that *previously digested plan, or series of measures*," hinted at in the memorable debates of the last session; essential parts of the language of these pamphlets—important branches of this *sylogism of massacre*, are incessantly propounded by all the members and dependants of the government; no opportunity is neglected of insulting and reprobating the Juries who were guilty of the *deplorable* acquittal; the circumstance

circumstance is openly connected with every motion and proposition for encreasing the military force ; and Mr. Pitt (even since these sheets have been at the press) in a debate (*OE.* 31.) upon that very subject, affirms, that, notwithstanding the issue of the trials, nine-tenths of the nation are convinced of our guilt. The inference is plain. It is a commentary (a tremendous commentary, coming from such a quarter) on the intricate, yet not obscure text of the arch-apostate to Aristocratic moderation ! The ordinary physic of the state cannot cure the disease ; even extraordinary potions have been administered without effect ; and as soon as the body politic (that is to say, the body of " political citizens,"—the privileged " four hundred thousand,") can be properly prepared for the operation, recourse must be had to " the cautery and the knife."

If this is not sufficient to open your eyes, the last trumpet alone can awaken you. If this is not sufficient to rouse you to fresh vigilance, fresh exertion, closer intercourse, and intrepid unanimity, ye are dead—ye are lost, not only " in the " oblivious pool," but

" In bottomless perdition ; there to dwell

" In adamant chains,"

Think, I conjure you : What is the prospect held out to you?—For yourselves—unqualified

N

submission,

submission, or the prompt and destroying vengeance of some new mode of legalized massacre, or military execution:—for your children—the tombstones of progenitors, who, though born to a degree of freedom, which they were bound to improve, and had no right to alienate, yet relinquished the patrimony, with criminal supineness, and left to them, for their inheritance, beggary, and accumulating chains!

Rouse, then, once more, to the investigation of your rights: for, if ye will be ignorant, ye must be slaves. Trust not your hopes to a blind fatality. Repose not in the indolent expectation, that the corruption of the system will work its own cure. That corruption will, I believe, inevitably destroy itself: But the destruction of the tyranny is not, of necessity, the emancipation of the slave. Almost all are tyrants when they have the power: and the being, or the nation, that knows not how to maintain its freedom, when one yoke is broken, will find that another is prepared. Even if a continuation of the war, or the *winding-up* of a peace, should bring affairs to a crisis—If, as is not unlikely, ere the close of this century of ambition, usurpation, and carnage, prodigal expenditure should come to open bankruptcy, and the obstinate infatuation of courtly pride, should bring, at once, to their catastrophe, a system

a system of horrors and a ministry of crimes; how shall ye be assured of benefitting by the event?—How shall ye secure yourselves from new modes of corruption, and new systems of oppression? How, but by vigilant discussion, and well-grounded principles?

Awake, then, once more, to the important enquiry. Compare what ye are with what ye have a right to be. Compare your powers and your faculties with your condition: the bounty of nature with your scanty enjoyments, and unsatisfied wants: the wealth resulting from your productive labour, and the abject wretchedness of your general state. Compare these things, and consider well the causes. Trace them to their sources, in the nature of some, and the corruptions of other, of those very institutions of the old Germanic, or Gothic customary, at the prospect of whose approaching overthrow, the volcanic imagination of Burke pours out such deluges of flame and smoke. Contrast the gloomy intricacy of these oppressive systems—these antique temples of fraud and violence, with the simple plans of reason, and of nature; and learn what to avoid, and what to pursue.

In the furtherance of this great enquiry, despise not the warnings, nor reject the assistance of a friend, whose sincerity, at least, has been, more than once, tried in the balance, and has not

been wanting; and who^d still, unsubdued by persecutions, unawed by the daggers of assassins, unchilled by the cold neglect of an unsocial world, and forgetful of his own misfortunes, and his own personal cares, incorporates himself with the public, and with the warm enthusiasm of conviction, proceeds to advocate the cause of man against the usurpations of establishments.

Among the vindicators of these abuses, the most formidable, assuredly, is Edmund Burke:—nay, he is the only one who, in any literary point of view, can be regarded as formidable at all: for the talents of this country are, generally speaking, pure: they have not been debauched by court favour, nor rendered dependant by the liberal patronage of an administration of Mæcenasés and Medici. In brilliancy of imagination, extent of general knowlege, and richness and versatility of talents, Mr. B. is, however, by himself a host: though, at the same time, such a host as no champion of reason, of an inductive mind, and an enthusiastic impressiion of truth, need be afraid to attack. Armed with these advantages, and these alone, I appear once more in the list; and, not conscious of any disgrace in a former skirmish, proceed to closer and more decided conflict. He has stated what he calls his principles: mine shall be stated still more explicitly. I shall demonstrate the misery produced
by

by his feudal institutions ; and shall endeavour to display the social and moral advantages, the improved felicity and extended intellect, which would result from the more simple and equitable systems dictated by the laws, and by the rights of nature.

In the pamphlet, or rather pamphlets, I am replying to, there are three important objects of discussion. 1. The spirit of Jacobinism, in this country ; and the manner in which it ought to be disposed of, or extirpated. 2. The excellency of the old established systems of government, as now administered, and the folly, wickedness, and profligacy of attempting to shake them, either by sudden or progressive change. 3. The justice and propriety of the present war ; the capability of this country to pursue it, till what is affectedly styled regicide and atheism, by establishment, shall be utterly destroyed ; and the virtue, the wisdom, and even the necessity of staking our national existence upon that issue.

Of these, the first only (which, though artfully incorporated with the rest, forms, in reality, a distinct subject) is particularly examined, in this letter ; to which I have given entirely a controversial form ; as the nature of Mr. B's. attack, in reality, necessitated me to do. The other two belong to the comparison of the respective systems.

I shall,

I shall, therefore, in the following letters, proceed to a sort of systematical developement of the rights of nature, and genuine objects of social institution; and shall, of course, controvert the axioms and declamations of the arch-champion of feudal barbarism (which he calls polished society) as they fall in with the respective heads: and shall thus endeavour to present, in living colours, the contracted pictures of the usurping establishments, which court sycophants would have you worship, and those natural and inalienable rights, against which they entertain such inveterate abhorrence.

END OF LETTER I.

ADVERTISEMENT.

TH**ERE** is a class of Readers to whom it may, perhaps, appear necessary to apologize for somewhat of a different temper exhibited towards Mr. B. in the present pamphlet, from that which has been admitted, on all hands, to have distinguished my Answer to his former Letter. But the apology must be sought in the publications of my antagonist himself. If I have become more warm, it is because the sentiments of Mr. B. have become more atrocious. His former attack was upon individuals: this is an outrage upon human nature: and he who can seek excuses to palliate the enormous profligacy of a wretch, who would extirpate opinions by the sword, and devote eighty thousand of his fellow-citizens to judicial, or military massacre, must be deficient in that ardent benevolence, which, while it pants for the happiness of man, cannot but detest the sanguinary ferocity that yelps for wholesale carnage. Some, however, may think, that I am not without a sense of personal interest, to stir me, on this occasion. Perhaps it may be so: But I am not, at the same time, without my consolations. If the government should act upon the advice of Mr. B. my eyes will not be cursed with the sight of those horrors that must inevitably ensue: Mine will be the glory, and the comparative felicity, of being one of the first victims.

Beaufort Buildings, 5 Nov. 1796. ✓

H. G.

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