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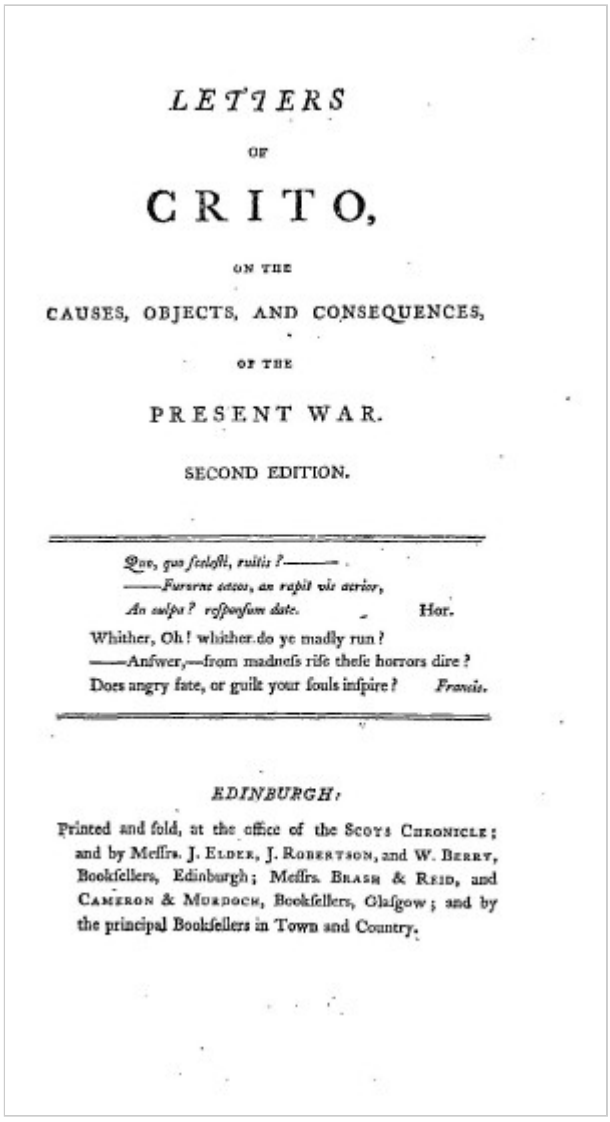

LETTERS

OF

CRITO,

ON THE

CAUSES, OBJECTS, AND CONSEQUENCES,

OF THE

PRESENT WAR.

SECOND EDITION.

Quo, quo ſcelefti, ruitis?———
——Furorne cæcus, an rapit vis acrior,
Aut culpa? reſponſum date. Hor.

Whither, Oh! whither do ye madly run?
——Anſwer,—from madneſs riſe theſe horrors dire?
Does angry fate, or guilt your ſouls inſpire? *Francis.*

EDINBURGH:

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Millar writes letters to the Right Honourable Charles James Fox pointing out the harmful effects the war against France will have.

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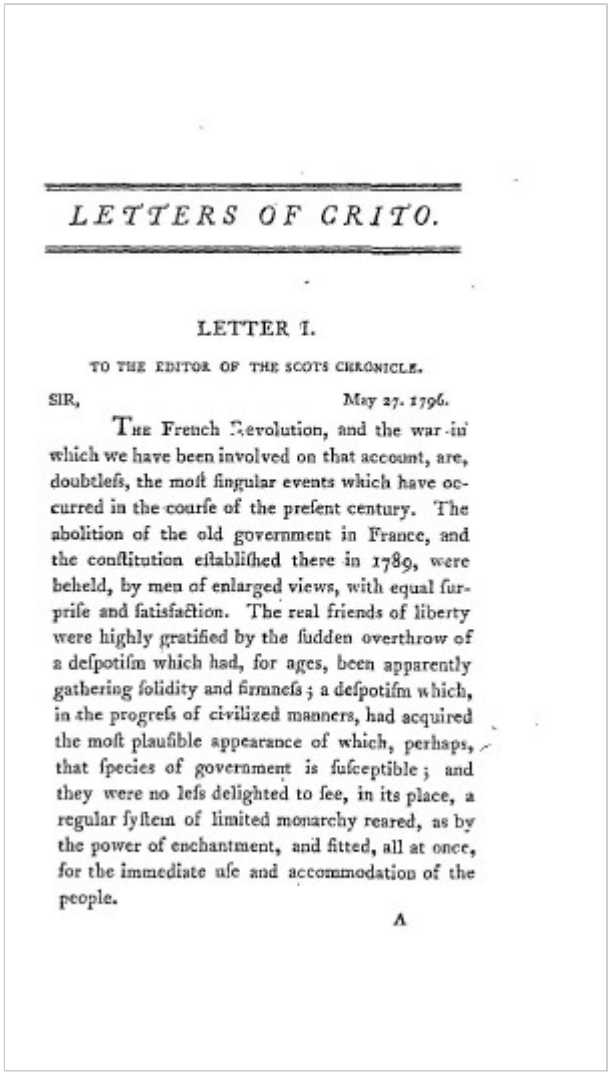

LETTERS OF CRITO.

LETTER I.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR, May 27. 1796.

THE French Revolution, and the war in which we have been involved on that account, are, doubtleſs, the moſt ſingular events which have occurred in the courſe of the preſent century. The abolition of the old government in France, and the conſtitution eſtabliſhed there in 1789, were beheld, by men of enlarged views, with equal ſurpriſe and ſatisfaction. The real friends of liberty were highly gratified by the ſudden overthrow of a deſpotiſm which had, for ages, been apparently gathering ſolidity and firmneſs; a deſpotiſm which, in the progreſs of civilized manners, had acquired the moſt plauſible appearance of which, perhaps, that ſpecies of government is ſuſceptible; and they were no leſs delighted to ſee, in its place, a regular ſyſtem of limited monarchy reared, as by the power of enchantment, and fitted, all at once, for the immediate uſe and accommodation of the people.

A

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No person of reflection can peruse the following Letters, without observing that the details which they contain are a compleat fulfilment of the memorable prediction uttered by Mr. Fox, in the House of Commons, near four years ago.

Honest and candid men, of all parties, now willingly avow their conviction, that, if the advice which that great Statesman then gave in his place, had been seasonably followed by his Majesty's Ministers, Great Britain would have acquired a degree of prosperity, of opulence and power, and a rank and dignity of character among the Nations of Europe, far superior to what she ever possessed during the most splendid periods of her former history.

From the consequences of measures adopted in opposition to that advice, and persisted in with criminal and incorrigible obstinacy, good men wish it were possible for them to turn away their eyes.—One hundred millions of the National Treasure already squandered,—from thirty to forty millions more to be immediately raised,—and the total enormous amount lost to this country for ever.—Taxes nearly doubled.—Millions of human lives barbarously sacrificed.—Many thousands of families reduced, from situations of independence and high respectability, to beggary and wretchedness.—The national character degraded, derided, or execrated abroad;—the constitution attacked and stabbed in its vitals at home.—These are some of the mischiefs that have arisen out of the mad prosecution of this War of Ministers.

To you, ye authors, and abettors, of all this wanton havock and desolation of your country, and of the human race, may an humble individual be permitted to address a wellmeant admonition, in the words of Shakespeare:—

—Confess yourselves to Heaven;
Repent what's past—avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker.—Forgive me this my virtue;
For, in the fatness of these pursy times,
Virtue itself of Vice must pardon beg,
Yea courb, and woo for leave to do it good.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHARLES JAMES FOX.

Sir,

The Author of the following publication entertains the persuasion, in common with all thinking and impartial people, that the plan of policy which you recommended to Ministers, in the most forcible terms, at the opening of the session of parliament towards the close of 1792, would, if then adopted, have ensured the permanence of our national prosperity, while it would have preserved all Europe from the calamities which it has since endured.

He is likewise persuaded, as all thinking and impartial people are, that until such time as His Majesty, in his royal wisdom, and paternal affection for his People, shall be graciously pleased to dismiss from his presence and councils those Ministers whose pernicious measures have produced our present calamities, no reasonable hope can be entertained of the establishment of a Peace suitable to the interests of Great Britain, and likely to preserve the tranquillity of Europe.

Having thus far explained the sentiments of the Author, I flatter myself you will have the goodness to acquit me of the guilt of presumption in wishing to draw your attention to the Letters of Crito.

I Have The Honour To Be,
Sir,
Your Most Obedient
And Most Faithful Humble Servant,

the editor.

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PREFACE.

AS the Editor of the Scots Chronicle has thought proper to collect and re-publish the following Letters, which first appeared in his Miscellany, the Author cannot help feeling, at their appearance in a separate publication, a degree of uneasiness, of which he was not sensible when they lay scattered among the other materials of a Newspaper. He hoped that the manner of publication, in the one case, might afford some apology, which will be wanting, and which, he fears, will be much needed in the other. As the Letters were written occasionally, at different periods, he is apprehensive that they may contain, on the one hand, numerous repetitions; and on the other, may be too desultory, to exhibit a connected view of the several particulars which he meant to convey. His intention was, in the first place, to throw together some remarks upon the origin and progress of those political changes which have lately taken place in France; and to examine how far the conduct of the people, in that country, together with the system of government which they have at length established, has proceeded from their own free choice, and how far it has been influenced and varied by the jealousy, and the hostile interposition of neighbouring nations.—This naturally led him to consider the conduct of the other states of Europe, who formed, and carried into execution, a regular plan for preventing, by force, the French people from modelling their own government according to their own will.

Of all the European states, it may seem surprising that Britain should have felt the greatest disturbance from the French Revolution, and have made the most violent exertions for preventing its completion. The mildest, and the most limited monarchy in the world has affected the greatest apprehension, lest the example of a political change, in a neighbouring country, should shake the foundations of her authority. It is the purpose of these Letters to point out the causes of this extraordinary phenomenon; to explain the true motives by which our Ministry were induced to enter into a war with France; to ascertain the real object of that war, in contradistinction to those plausible pretences which they assumed in order to conceal their designs; and thence to discover the grounds of their obstinacy in prosecuting this unfortunate contest, notwithstanding many fair opportunities which have been presented for obtaining an advantageous peace. These inquiries are concluded by some reflections upon the injustice and the impolicy of this ministerial conduct; upon the unfortunate situation into which it has reduced us; and upon the measures which, in our present circumstances, appear indispensibly necessary.

It must be confessed, that the picture, which is thus exhibited, of this great scene of European transactions, is far from being a pleasant one; and that the part which has been performed by the British nation is not such as will tend to gratify national vanity. Whether it be a true picture, is, with due deference, submitted to the Public. The inhabitants of this devoted country have too long neglected to see with their own eyes; and have placed too much confidence in men who have had an interest to deceive them. They have, accordingly, been made the dupes of an interested policy; and have suffered themselves to be misled by a train of artful and delusive representation. It is now high time to examine the consequences of their simplicity;

and to behold the precipice upon which they stand. The observations contained in the following Letters may, perhaps, assist in this examination, and afford a clue to unravel the mysterious designs of some of the principal parties. Their publication, it is hoped, will not seem improper in this dangerous crisis, and when we have so near a prospect of the meeting of a new parliament. To this new assembly, not embarassed or prejudiced by opinions declared in the former, the nation must look, with eager expectation, for such interpositions as may alleviate our distress, and avert the impending calamities.

THE AUTHOR.

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LETTERS OF CRITO.

LETTER I.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

May 27. 1796.

The French Revolution, and the war in which we have been involved on that account, are, doubtless, the most singular events which have occurred in the course of the present century. The abolition of the old government in France, and the constitution established there in 1789, were beheld, by men of enlarged views, with equal surprise and satisfaction. The real friends of liberty were highly gratified by the sudden overthrow of a despotism which had, for ages, been apparently gathering solidity and firmness; a despotism which, in the progress of civilized manners, had acquired the most plausible appearance of which, perhaps, that species of government is susceptible; and they were no less delighted to see, in its place, a regular system of limited monarchy reared, as by the power of enchantment, and fitted, all at once, for the immediate use and accommodation of the people.

The poceedings, indeed, in relation to this great revolution, were in many respects liable to exception. The changes introduced were not, in all cases, justified by necessity. Though the old privileges, immunities, and peculiar jurisdiction of the clergy, and of the nobility, were with great propriety abolished, the entire abolition of the titles and rank of the latter appeared a needless and insolent stretch of innovation. The frivolous minuteness, too, of the leaders and directors of this great transaction, the affectation of philosophic accuracy with which they entered upon many abstract and useless questions, and the pomp of systematic regularity with which they endeavoured to exhibit and to adorn their new political system, were disgusting to many, and were considered rather as the juvenile efforts of raw and speculative politicians, than as the solid productions of experienced and profound statesmen. Upon the whole, however, the new institution, with all the objections which could be made to it, and notwithstanding all the ridicule attempted to be thrown upon the persons engaged in conducting it, appeared, in the eye of reason, to be fraught with numberless advantages to the French nation, and likely to produce over all Europe, perhaps over the whole globe, a rich field of instruction and example to the human race.

The peculiar circumstances which, by irritating and provoking the French people, and by creating inextricable difficulties and embarrassment to administration, became the immediate occasion of breaking down the old goverment, have been clearly pointed out, and fully stated, in a late publication by a Noble Author of this country. Among

these, the imprudent behaviour of some part of the Royal Family, the disgust excited by a glaring outrage to the military spirit of the nation, and the thoughtless profusion, which, promoted by the practice of funding, had led to a national bankruptcy, may perhaps be regarded as the most conspicuous. But the ultimate cause of this great phenomenon appears to be no other, than the general diffusion of knowledge, and the progress of science and philosophy.

Men are disposed to submit to goverment, either from the mere influence of *authority,* or from the prospect of the advantages to be derived from that submission. The former principle is the effect of an immediate feeling or instinct; it acquires additional strength from habit, and rises commonly to its highest pitch in the ages of ignorance and barbarism. The latter supposes information and reflection, and may be expected to become the prevailing principle, in proportion as the understanding is cultivated, and as reason triumphs over ancient prejudices.

Among all the great nations of Europe, the French were the first who attained that state of civilization which is necessary to encourage liberal pursuits; and as they have remained longer in that situation, their progress, in the natural course of things, has been so much the greater. In the other countries upon the Continent, this point is is undisputed. The French literature, taste, and fashions, are universally considered as a model for imitation.

England, with its dependancies, appears alone to dispute this universal superiority. In many branches of philosophy, indeed, the English have certainly been eminently distinguished; and we might mention the names of a Newton, a Locke, a Hume, and a Smith, with several others, which will not easily be matched by the neighbouring nations. But in England, literature is a good deal confined to men of learned professions; whereas in France, the result of the discoveries of all seems known to every person of education. A philosopher, in that country, is no peculiar character; but corresponds to what we should call a gentleman. Every part of knowledge, even that which is derived from the abstract sciences, enters into common conversation, and is handled almost equally by both sexes.

In England, too, it must be admitted, that literature, even among persons intended for the learned professions, is narrow and frivolous: Instead of pursuing an extensive range of useful and ornamental knowledge, what is called a learned man, is frequently occupied merely in scanning Latin verses, and in acquiring a very minute acquaintance with two dead languages. He reads even Latin and Greek authors, not for the sake of the information contained in them, but on account of the classical purity of their compositions; and a public speaker often interlards his discourse with scraps of Latin sentences, in which the thought, if expressed in his mother tongue, would seem unworthy of notice. The French are above this pedantry. Upon the first revival of letters, they were, like the English, engrossed by objects of this nature; but according to the advancement of taste and science, their views have been enlarged, and their pursuits rendered more manly. The knowledge, which has diffused itself over all that part of the society exempted from bodily labour, could hardly fail to shed its rays upon the subject of government, and in that quarter, as well as in others, to enlighten the great body of the people. It has enabled them to examine, and to despise

the quackery of politicians, to explode the superstition of old institutions, and to render authority subservient to general utility. How far they have always reasoned properly upon this subject, I shall not at present enquire. That they have ventured here to speculate boldly, and have fallen into errors, is of a piece with their conduct in regard to religion, and to other branches of science.

But whatever were the causes of the French Revolution, the alarm and terror which it spread in the neighbouring countries of Europe may be considered as the most natural, and the least surprising of all its consequences. The consideration of this, however, would lead me too far at present. If you think these hints worthy of insertion in some corner of your well conducted Paper, you may possibly be troubled with more of the same sort. I am, &c.

Crito.

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LETTER II.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

June 3. 1796.

The French Revolution, which took place in 1789, was not hostile to kingly government: It went no farther than to establish a limited monarchy. The abuses in the ancient political system were so numerous, and had attained such magnitude, as to exclude every idea of a partial reform, and to require a complete and radical change. The king had acquired an absolute power over the lives and fortunes of all his subjects. He might throw them into prison without assigning any cause, and subject them, at pleasure, to perpetual confinement. If the ordinary courts of justice were not sufficiently obsequious, he might name other judges for trying any offence in the last resort. He had an unlimited power of making laws and of imposing taxes. The nobility, though dependent upon the crown, had interest to procure an exemption from the greater part of taxes; and they exercised very arbitrary powers over their tenants and vassals. The higher clergy were a sort of nobles, possessing enormous wealth, with similar powers and exemptions; while those of inferior rank were depressed with poverty, and subjected to the whole burden of the clerical functions.

When a reformation of political abuses is to be obtained with concurence of the existing government, it is a maxim of common prudence, that it should proceed slowly and gradually, so as not to endanger the public tranquillity, by counteracting old habits, and losing all sight of the former usages. But when a great change is to be extorted in opposition to the constituted authorities, it must be effected all at once: the machine of administration must be brought into the hands of the reformers; and precautions must be taken for preventing the partizans of the old system from producing a counter-revolution. This was the situation in France. If the people, therefore, had been contented with lopping off a small branch from the power of the crown, the effect of their labours would have remained no longer than till the popular enthusiasm had subsided; and their attempt would have served no other purpose than to rivet their chains, and to draw upon them the vengeance of an irritated and jealous despot. When a highwayman demands your money, it is not enough, if we mean to make resistance, that we should seize his pistol, and let him go; for ten to one he has another in his pocket. We must lay hold of him, and secure his person; otherwise we had better not have provoked his resentment.

The leaders of the French people may, on this account, be vindicated for endeavouring to new-model their government; though they seem to have aimed at a certain ideal perfection beyond what, perhaps, is consistent with the conduct of human affairs. Their great object was to commit the supreme power to a national assembly, composed of representatives, not nominal and fictitious as is in some other countries,

but really chosen by the nation at large. For this purpose, all the male inhabitants of different districts, with very few exceptions, were empowered to choose electors for larger departments; and these last nominated the members of the national assembly.

A considerable share of the executive power was, at the same time, devolved upon the king, who had, besides, a negative upon the determinations of the legislature; a negative, which was not merely a shadow, but was intended to be commonly exercised. The king was likewise invested with no inconsiderable patronage; and the civil list, entirly at his disposal, amounted, in our money, nearly to a million and a half. The influence and power of the crown were thus, in some respects, greater than in this island.

It is a difficult to form a decided opinion concerning the merits of any system of government, before it has been actually proved by experiment; but this, as far as mere speculation can enable us to determine, has the appearance of a liberal system, greatly superior to most of those which have ever been established in a great nation. As to the double election of the national representatives, it seems peculiarly calculated for securing an equal representation; and in that view it is highly approved of by two eminent writers, Harrington and Hume, the latter of whom was far from being a favourer of popular licence.

In proportion as the French Revolution was grateful to those who rejoiced in the extension of political liberty, it gave rise to very unpleasant sensations in the absolute sovereigns of Europe. Their authority was obviously founded upon opinion; and that opinion rested upon old custom and prejudice. If the people should once be led to *think* upon the subject of government, they must immediately see the absurdity of sacrificing their lives, and every thing they hold valuable, to the private interest, to the avarice and ambition, to the whim and caprice of a single individual. They must immediately see that government is intended, by the wise and good Author of nature, for the benefit of the whole community; and that every power, inconsistent with this great principle, assumed by any person, under whatever title, of prince, king, or emperor, is manifestly unjust and tyrannical. There was every reason to apprehend, that the disposition, which had now grown to such a height in France, of prying into these matters of state, of investigating principles which had long lain dormant in the venerable lap of antiquity, would tear off the covering from numberless usurpations, and produce a reformation of many enormous abuses.

How this revolution was, from the beginning, viewed in England, it seems a matter of curiosity to examine. I am, &c.

Crito.

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LETTER III.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

June 7. 1796.

While the French Revolution had become the object of such alarm and terror in the neighbouring despotical governments, it was regarded, by many people in Britain, in a light less favourable than might have been expected. Instead of rejoicing in the conversion of their ancient political adversaries to the principles of liberty, a considerable part of the English nation appears to have viewed the transactions in France with an eye of jealousy and disgust. With all the solid good qualitics by which John Bull is distinguished, it must be confessed, that he is not a little overrun with prejudices. In the simplicity of his heart, he is apt to feel, and even to express a blind prepossession in favour of those usages which have long been familiar to him, and an overweening conceit of himself on account of those advantages which he has been supposed to enjoy. As the French were accustomed to prescribe to their neighbours with respect to the fashions of dress, and the modes of ordinary behaviour; so the English have long claimed a superiority in politics, and have considered their constitution as a model of perfection. It could not fail, therefore, to shock the feelings of many worthy politicians in England, to observe that the French had the audacity to think for themselves on that subject; and that the Constitution arising from their united labours, differed, in many important particulars, from that which has been so long established and admired in this country.

This objection to the proceedings in France had probably lurked in the bosoms of more people than were willing to acknowledge it; but it soon came to be followed by another, which was thought of greater importance, and which produced a much greater effect upon persons at the helm. The progress of knowledge, which, from the circumstances of society in England as well as in France, had pervaded a great proportion of the inhabitants, could not be prevented from exciting the same spirit of inquiry, and from producing a similar enlargement of ideas. Though the English may be under strong prepossessions in some points, their understandings have been much exercised on the subject of politics. They have been long accustomed to canvass the measures of administration, to mark the line of conduct pursued by opposition, and to examine the various topics which make the ground of contention and altercation between those two parties. Having a good government, they are not disposed to find fault with it; but on the contrary, are impressed with a powerful bias towards all their own institutions and customs. Whatever may be thought of this in philosophy, it certainly is a happy circumstance in conduct; as it tends to discourage useless innovation and to avert those evils with which all violent changes in government are apt to be attended. But, notwithstanding this laudable disposition in the people, they could not fail to observe the urgent necessity of correcting some very flagrant abuses,

which, in the course of time, have crept into our political system, and which have, at length, produced a remarkable deviation from its original principles.

Of these, the Constitution of the House of Commons affords a glaring instance. The advantages of our mixed form of government, for preventing the excesses, either of pure monarchy, of aristocracy, or of democracy, have been universally admitted; but in order to preserve the democratical part, it is indispensably necessary that the House of Commons should comprehend the representatives of, at least, a considerable proportion of the whole nation. That this was the aim of our forefathers, in the formation of that House, none but Arthur Young, the late *political* traveller, has ever, so far as I can observe, been hardy enough to dispute. But so widely has the practice deviated from the original principles of the Constitution, that more than a majority of the Commons, according to a late publication, are now in reality nominated, or returned by the interest of single individuals; and of these *real constituents,* it is likewise to be observed, that a great proportion are peers, who, having a seat in the Upper House, ought to have no share in forming this other branch of the Legislature.

The necessity of a reform in this particular, to check the rapid advances of prerogative, and to retain the Constitution upon its ancient basis, has long been acknowledged; and a motion for this purpose, by men of great eminence and abilities, has repeatedly, though hitherto unsuccessfully, been brought into parliament. The important transactions in France naturally recalled the attention of British subjects to the state of their government at home; and as the prevalence of greater abuses in that neighbouring kingdom had produced a violent change of system, it was thought by many, that in Britian we might thence derive an useful lesson; to correct, without loss of time, the abuses of our own Constitution; to remove, by the ordinary and regular interposition of the Legislature, such defects as had given any just ground of complaint; and thus, by small and partial alterations, to guard ourselves from the danger of a total revolution. The greater the apprehensions entertained from the example set before us, these precautions become the more indispensible. If our neighbour is likely to suffer by a violent quack-medicine, we should be the more anxious, in our own case, to call an experienced and approved physician; and, if we are afraid of contagion from abroad, we should double our diligence in the timely application of a remedy, which may prevent a slight distemper from being converted into a desperate disease.

The opposition, however, that has been made, from interested motives, to a parliamentary reform, and consequently to the French Revolution, I shall afterwards take the liberty of considering.

I Am, &C.

Crito.

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LETTER IV.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

June 10. 1796.

In my last letter, I hinted that, how reasonable or necessary soever a reform of the parliamentary representation may appear, it is likely, from views of private interest or ambition, to be, on every occasion, warmly and uniformly opposed by many powerful individuals, and bodies of men. This observation is chiefly applicable to persons of three different descriptions.

Men of great fortunes, the nobility and gentry, who have acquired the nomination of members of parliament, and who by that means are enabled to gratify their ambition, and to promote their own emolument, or that of their respective families, have a great interest, in retaining the present corrupted system, and may be supposed ready to employ every pretext whatever for warding off the intended reformation.

I shall not take upon me to censure, with immoderate severity, the behaviour of such persons. They have a great pecuniary interest at stake. The sums which have been given for, what is called, the *property of a borough,* are immense. The person who commands four or five of these boroughs is, besides, exalted to superior consideration and rank. He is possessed of a considerable share in the Legislature of a great nation; and may be said, in some sort, to belong to a company of sovereign princes. When he struggles, therefore, to retain those advantages, at the expence of our national freedom, he only declines a sacrifice which few people would be willing to make. He cannot indeed say, with the Apothecary in Shakespeare, “My poverty, and not my will, consents.” But wealth, as well as poverty, has her necessities; at least her violent passions, which produce no less powerful temptations. The misfortune is, that such persons are, from their situation, obliged to have the words, *public spirit,* very frequently in their mouths. In a case of this nature, to mention the fact will be sufficient; I leave it to the clergy, those especially in the southern part of the island, who, from their profession, no doubt, are abundantly disposed to point out the immorality of such conduct.

The rotten boroughs, themselves, form another class, highly interested to maintain the present system of corruption. These, in their public capacity, will always be strongly actuated by a corporation spirit, and considered as made up of individuals, educated in the detail of gainful professions, which lead them to reckon any thing according to the price that it will bring, are disposed, of course, to weigh their privileges in the common scale of mercantile profit. As an appendage to these boroughs, may be considered a multitude of needy adventurers, who, having been unsuccessful in trade, and hoping to procure places or pensions from government, derive an immediate

benefit from that system of things, which enables them to sell their paltry services to the best advantage. To this class, also, may be joined the numerous tribe of borough-mongers, those pimps and panders of political prostitution, who carry on a regular and lucrative trade by the infamous management of elections. All such people may be expected to unite as one man, in the practice of every artifice within the sphere of their education and abilities, for preventing a change that would reduce them to a state of beggary or insignificance.

The ministry form a third class, more powerful than the two former, and no less interested in preserving those abuses, which put it in their power so easily to overrule elections, and so effectually to defeat all the efforts of opposition. To give a history of the conduct and sentiments of our Prime Minister, from his first appearance on the political theatre, would be to probe an empoisoned sore, which, I am persuaded, no ordinary medicine can cure. The popular arts by which he first brought himself into notice; his invectives against the authors of the American war, and the zeal which he expressed in promoting a reform of the representation in parliament; his arrogant, but very intelligible declaration, that he could not pretend to the first ministerial situation, and would not accept of a secondary one; his procuring that unconstitutional interference of the Crown in the deliberations of a great assembly, by which he forced himself into office; and the long train of dissimulation and deception, which he practised and *advised,* for the purpose of concealing the measure of a dissolution of parliament that, in order to obtain a majority in the House of Commons, he had all along determined to execute; these are events, which, taken in connection with each other, will not soon be forgotten; and, when compared with his posterior conduct, they must make an impression on the public mind which will not soon be effaced. That such a minister, and his adherents, of similar principles, will not willingly relinquish any part of the undue influence acquired by the crown, there is every reason to believe.

How extensive, at the same time, this influence has become, and how universally it pervades all ranks and orders in the community, the army, the church, the retainers of the law, and of the revenue, those who speculate in monied and mercantile transactions; the nobility, the great corporations throughout the kingdom, not to mention placemen and pensioners, and the various classes of executive officers; whoever examines the state of the fact, and considers the vast and increasing magnitude of the patronage, in the hands of administration, will be at no loss to discover.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when, in May 1792, a motion for obtaining a reform of the national representation was made in the House of Commons, by a gentleman no less distinguished by his eloquence and spirit, than by opulent family connections, which afford a pledge of his aversion to anarchy and popular disturbance, it excited uncommon marks of apprehension and terror. The measure, though it had formerly been proposed by the minister himself, was now represented as taking its orgin from the French Revolution; and as calculated to introduce in this country similar innovations to those which had taken place in France. To promote the same idea, a royal proclamation was issued soon after, tending to spread an alarm over the country,

and to insinuate suspicions, that our happy constitution was in danger from the propagation of, what are called, French opinions.

I Am, &C.

Crito.

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LETTER V.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

"Bella per Ematheos plusquam civilia campos."—

SIR,

June 17. 1796.

Though the outlines of the French Revolution were completed in 1789, the more minute parts of the work occupied a much longer time, and were not understood to be finally adjusted until the year 1791, when the Convention, invested with revolutionary powers, gave place to an ordinary legislative assembly. During the period while this great undertaking was in its progress, the neighbouring potentates appear to have indulged the malignant hope, that insuperable difficulties, or some sinister accidents, would prevent its completion; but when, to their extreme disappointment and mortification, they saw the whole fabric successfully and completely reared, there occurred no other resource than to join, by main force, in pulling it down.

For this purpose, therefore, was concluded the famous treaty of Pilnitz; a treaty by which the greater despots of Europe, forgetting their former feuds, and overlooking that opposition of interest which had hitherto been continually exciting them to overreach and undermine one another, united in the common cause of despotism, and became bound, by themselves, and with the assistance of all whom they could persuade to embark in the same enterprize, to overturn the new government in France, and to root out those obnoxious principles and opinions which had given rise to it.

From a publication which is believed to be authentic, it appears that the object of this treaty, was not only the invasion of France, and the restoration of its ancient government, but the partition of that country, and of Poland, among the principal contracting powers. The accomplishment of that object, in part, with respect to the Poles; the barbarous treatment which that people have experienced in the destruction, not only of their free constitution, but of their existence as an independent nation, leave no room to doubt what would have been the fate of the French, had their unprincipled and ambitious invaders been able to carry their designs into execution.

It seems impossible for any person, animated by the least spark of justice or humanity, to reflect, for a moment, without indignation and horror, upon a combination of this atrocious nature; a combination against the liberties of mankind, by which a fet of absolute princes, not contented with enslaving their own subjects, resolved to maintain by force a system of slavery in other countries; arrogated the power of dictating a form of government to a foreign independent state; and while they required that the people should renounce that constitution which they had voluntarily adopted, laid hold of the opportunity for enriching and aggrandizing themselves by the wreck

of those dominions which they proposed to dismember. Such were the avowed sentiments of those combined powers; the basis of their association for the conquest of France, in which the other states of Europe were invited to concur, and to contribute their assistance. It was expected, it seems, that the other European nations would join in this confederacy; but how far this expectation arose from any particular assurances to this purpose actually given, or from the general belief that they would feel a common interest in suppressing the late political innovations in France, the public has not yet been sufficiently informed.

In pursuance of this treaty, the Duke of Brunswick, in summer 1792, invaded France with an army of about 90,000 men; having circulated, at the same time, a manifesto, in which he threatened military execution to such of the inhabitants as dared to defend themselves, and promised safety and protection to all who should open their gates to his troops; adding, withal, a declaration, that he had no intention to meddle with the internal government of France.

This was accompanied by another elaborate manifesto, in which the Emperor and the King of Prussia undertake the arduous task of vindicating these violent measures, by declaiming against the French Revolution, and by maintaining, with great gravity, that the French King was possessed of a *supreme, never-ceasing, and indivisible authority,* of which he neither could be deprived, nor could voluntarily divest himself.

With respect to the proceedings of the French, which are here the subject of such keen invectives, it is to be observed, that the establishment of their new constitution was attended with less tumult, disorder, or licentiousness, than from the nature of things could have been expected. And among the other circumstances arising from that great political change, the little bloodshed, which it had hitherto occasioned, is most especially worthy of notice. Though the French populace had, in some few cases, discovered remarkable ferocity in taking vengeance upon some obnoxious individuals; yet, upon the whole, the number of lives destroyed, in a nation comprehending five-and-twenty millions, and in so great a revolution as that of changing an inveterate despotism into a very limited monarchy, had been incredibly small.

It also merits attention, that hitherto the resolution of establishing a pure democracy had never been taken. There had, indeed, been great differences of opinion upon that subject, in what was called the *Constituent Assembly;* but the majority had determined in favour of a limited monarchy; and the partizans of a republic had formerly expressed their acquiescence in that determination. The circumstances of France, however, with respect to the other powers of Europe, had unavoidably weakened and discouraged the friends of monarchy; and had no less confirmed and strengthened the adherents of republican government. During the impending quarrel with those powers, and after the war was publicly declared, or distinctly foreseen, suspicions that the king was disposed to support the enemies of France, and was engaged in a secret correspondence with them, were almost unavoidable. In that critical situation, the continuance of monarchical government became, perhaps, impracticable.

I do not enter into the question, how far the sovereign had really formed a conspiracy with those foreign powers, and with that part of his own family engaged in the same cause, for the purpose of restoring the government handed down by his ancestors, which had been so recently and so violently overturned. Supposing him to have been involved in that conspiracy, his situation, if it could not entirely justify, will be admitted to palliate at least, and, in some measure, to excuse his behaviour. The hardships and insults to which he had been exposed, the total want of the confidence of his own subjects which he experienced, and the absolute confinement to which he was subjected; not to mention the loud voice of his ancient nobility, deprived of their estates, and banished from their native country; the intrigues of an artful and ambitious queen, whose spirit was not broken by her misfortunes; together with the flattering promises of so many powerful sovereigns who had warmly espoused his interest, and had resolved to hazard every thing for the recovery of his prerogative; these afforded, perhaps, temptations too powerful, and seducing, to be resisted by a person of his feeble and flexible character. But whatever was the real state of the fact, the suspicions entertained against him were too universal, and had too much the air of probability to render it prudent for the French Nation to commit their rights and liberties to the custody of so equivocal a guardian.

The effects produced upon the minds of the French people by the Duke of Brunswick's invasion, and by such a powerful combination against them will be the subject of another letter.

I Am, &C.

Crito.

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LETTER VI.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

June 24. 1796.

It is impossible to conceive a situation more deplorable and desperate than that into which the French, from the circumstances mentioned in my former letter, were now reduced. Invaded by a force which they could have no hope of being able to resist, and prosecuted with a degree of animosity and rancour which would be satisfied with nothing less than utter extermination, they appeared to have no other alternative, than either to submit implicitly to their enemies, or to sell their lives and liberties at the highest price, and to die in the last ditch. Without hesitation they chose the latter; and, by the impulse of that determination, they were exalted to a pitch of heroic enthusiasm, which rendered them superior to all the nations of the earth.

The first measure that seemed indispensible in this dreadful conjuncture, was to establish a pure democracy. Their king, according to their unanimous opinion, was not to be trusted. His slight to Varennes, from which he was brought back by force, and his disputes with the National Assembly, concerning the appointment of his ministers, and concerning the interposition of his negative to the public decrees, had prepared the way to an immediate rupture. The manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick appeared in Paris about the 7th of August 1792. Alarm and terror seized the inhabitants; and, on the 10th of that month, produced a violent attack upon the king's palace, with the destruction of the Swiss guards. This was followed by the bloody tragedy exhibited on the 2d of September, which appears to have been the effect of sudden rage and resentment excited by the progress of the danger.

The friends of republican government, who now gained the ascendant, were divided into two factions. The Parisian populace, who, feeling the influence which, from their numbers, and their vicinity to the seat of government, they were likely to maintain over the legislature, wished as much as possible to equalize the different ranks, to expel or extinguish the superior class of inhabitants, and to annihilate every monument or vestige of the ancient distinctions. The people in the provinces, who possessed no such influence, adopted a milder system of policy; and being jealous of the authority likely to be attained by the capital, were suspected of intending to divide the monarchy into independent districts, and to connect them by a federal union. The leaders of the latter party were men of great liberality and benevolence, and some of them not without eloquence and talents; but they seem to have been destitute of that capacity, vigour, and boldness, which their perilous situation demanded. The opposite party were directed by persons of a different description; men of a lower education, but of greater intrepidity, and who seemed to scruple at nothing, in order to attain their purposes. At the head of these was the noted Robespierre, a man possessed of no

brilliant accomplishments, but of deep penetration, and boundless ambition; awed by no principle; restrained by no feelings of humanity. This man courted the populace with unwearied attention; and he seems to have obtained their implicit confidence. He adopted all their peculiar interests and opinions. He seems to have been a real enthusiast; and, however strongly actuated by the love of power, was never suspected of pecuniary corruption. Though his character as a man has been held in deserved execration, it may, perhaps, be affirmed with truth, that he was the only person in the nation capable, in that critical period, of defending his country from its numerous enemies. To gratify the Parisian mob, as well as to establish his own authority, he shed without mercy the blood of every person who opposed his designs. But such was the unhappy situation of France, that an absolute submission to the executive government was become indispensibly necessary. Had any opposite party to that which was uppermost been suffered to raise its head, it would immediately have been joined and supported by the foreign powers; and this would have produced such internal commotion, as would have prevented the extraordinary exertions which the preservation of the constitution required.

It is not my intention to vindicate these violent measures, but to point out the persons at whose door the principal guilt must lie; and, however we may blame the numerous violations of justice and humanity, exhibited in those scenes of blood and horror, we must always remember that they proceeded, in a great measure, from the hostile powers who threatened France with inevitable destruction. By them a great part of those cruelties had been rendered unavoidable. The enemies of the *first revolution,* in that devoted country, were in reality the authors of the *second.* Had the French been left to settle their own government according to their own ideas of expediency, the mild and inoffensive character of their sovereign would, probably, never have rendered him the object of their distrust and resentment; and the form of government, suggested and established by their own free choice, would have remained with little alteration or disturbance. Had they not been terrified, and reduced to despair, by an invasion, which no ordinary force could resist, conducted by an unrelenting and sanguinary enemy, who did not seem to look upon them as fellow creatures, but as beasts of prey, to be hunted down, and exterminated from the face of the globe, there is no ground to believe that those tragical and shocking events, so inconsistent with the character of a polished nation, would ever have appeared. These are truths which ought to be seriously considered by those persons who declaim with so much noise upon the barbarity of the late transactions in France, and who exult with such indecent triumph, in the reflection that the revolution in that country, instead of being an object of imitation, is now beheld, by the rest of Europe, with disgust and aversion.

The unfortunate issue of the Duke of Brunswick's invasion must have tended to convince the surrounding nations of two important facts: The first, that the attachment of the French nation to liberty, and their hatred to the old government, were insuperable: The second, that the enthusiasm with which that people were animated, was sufficient to counterbalance the advantages of military skill and discipline, and had, in fact, rendered their new levied militia superior to the most regular armies which Europe could produce.

The world has been long dazzled by the *eclat* of military glory, and led, it should seem, to estimate military talents above their just value. Mr. Hume was thought to indulge in his usual love of paradox, when he wrote an essay to prove, that a higher exertion of genius is requisite to form a great poet than to form a great general, and that Homer and Milton were greater men than Alexander or Cæsar. This essay has been suppressed in the latter editions of his works; but were that acute author now alive, he would own that his assertion falls greatly short of the truth. The late military events in Europe have reduced the Turennes, the Marlboroughs, and the Ferdinands, to mere ordinary men. Experience has shown, in how short a time an army may be equipt, both in point of officers and men, and taught to conquer the best appointed and disciplined troops in the world. But surely we cannot entertain very lofty ideas of a profession, in which eminence may be so easily and so quickly attained. It seems to require intrepidity and cool judgment, but no extraordinary abilities.

The decisive battle of Jemappe, which followed the Duke of Brunswick's retreat, afforded conviction to every man of common sense, not misled by prejudice, that all attempts to conquer France, with a view of restoring the old monarchy, must be idle and chimerical. I am, &c.

Crito.

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LETTER VII.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

July 1. 1796.

The friends of liberty in Britain could not behold the violent measures of the Europe an despots without extreme concern and uneasiness. It afforded ground for the most melancholy reflections, to consider, that despotism, in so many kingdoms, was not only maintained by each interior government, but was further to be protected by a sort of imperial authority assumed over all, imposing a negative upon the establishment of liberty in each particular state. Henry the IV. of France is said to have formed the plan of preventing wars, by an appeal to the determination of a supreme council, upheld by an union of different nations. The present combination supposed a *great council,* not of nations, but of sovereigns; not in behalf of the rights of mankind, but in support of tyranny and oppression.

It would be superfluous to observe, that, by persons of an opposite description, by the aristocracy, by the retainers of prerogative, and by a great part of the corporate bodies in the kingdom, these transactions upon the continent were viewed in a very different light. The reformation of abuses at home, the introduction of a more adequate representation in the House of Commons, began to stare them in the face, as the necessary effect of the successful exertions in France.

The British ministry have solemnly disclaimed any accession to the treaty of Pilnitz; and it is impossible to disbelieve their assertion in a matter which, however the particulars may have hitherto been concealed, must at length be completely divulged. The truth seems to be, they entertained no doubt that the invasion of France, by the Duke of Brunswick, would gain the end proposed without their assistance. But no sooner had that enterprize been found entirely abortive, than they were thrown into the utmost consternation, and resolved to take a principal share in the confederacy. The speech-making talents of the prime minister, it seems, could suggest no better expedient for dissipating those clouds with which he began to be encompassed.

In this resolution he was confirmed by a great addition of strength, which he received from a powerful defection among the leaders in opposition. It had for some time been rumoured, that certain distinguished members of the whig-party had been planet-struck by the progress of French opinions; and they now were induced, in spite of the detestation of the principles of ministry which they had always avowed, to join the ministerial phalanx, and to accept of places under government.

Though the public is not very apt to judge favourably of men who come into office by leaving their party, and is disposed to pay little attention to the pretences which

happen, in such cases, to be assumed, it must be confessed, that these persons have, on this occasion, been treated with unusual candour. They have been supposed to act from general aristocratic prejudices more than from private views of interest. Even their enemies must admit, when the proud station which they abandoned is taken in connection with the humble situation which they now enjoy, that their conduct has been dictated, neither by the love of fame, nor by the love of power. In reality they have been pitied more than censured; and their understandings have been made the *scape-goat* of their feelings. The same indulgence, however, has not been extended to the inferior agents, included in this migration; who, at the same time that they willingly embraced the opportunity of serving their country, are understood to have felt no reluctance at quitting the cold and thankless climate of opposition for the genial sunshine of court favour. Even the fanciful admirer of the age of chivalry, who appears to have formerly displayed the gilded colours of liberty as a mere light horseman of aristocracy, now forgetting *the sublime* and *the beautiful,* was glad to retire upon a most extravagant pension; and had the effrontery to laugh at his former professions, by stating the price of his apostacy as the reward of his services, and by submitting to a miserable recantation, in the form of a humilitating panegyric upon the least brilliant, and formerly the least admired of all his present benefactors.

To prepare the nation for seconding the designs of ministry, and to provide a force capable of preventing all resistance, no common efforts were sufficient. The desire of obtaining a reform in the national representation had produced numerous meetings of the people, in the mercantile towns, and in other parts of the kingdom, for the purpose of petitioning parliament in support of that favourite object. Many publications appeared, at the same time, in which the general principles of government, and various political doctrines, were handled with great freedom. In some of these, it must be confessed, that the British Constitution was treated with little respect. But whatever might be the wanton speculations, or the licentious or foolish expressions of a few individuals, there is no ground to believe, that any considerable number were desirous of a Republican system, or that the great body of the people were not warmly attached to that form of limited monarchy under which they have lived, and of which the happy effects have been so long experienced. Ministers, however, affected to think very differently; and endeavoured to propagate an opinion, that the lower classes of the people, instigated by French emissaries, and seduced by French politics, had entered into a conspiracy for the total overthrow of our government. Every engine was now employed for exciting apprehensions of disloyalty and sedition. Societies were set on foot, to procure information, to circulate reports, to propagate political doctrines favourable to the views of their employers, and to prepare materials for the prosecution and conviction of the supposed offenders. At the head of these, one Reeves, a retainer of the law, and possessing an office under government, was distinguished by his indefatigable zeal and activity. At a later period, after the nation had recovered, in some measure, from the delusion which then prevailed, the conduct of this person appeared in such a light to the public, that the House of Commons thought proper to order a prosecution against him by the Attorney General. This measure, towards a person in his subordinate capacity, marks sufficiently the indignation which was felt. It is necessary to observe, that, in the trial which followed, the fact was found to be proved; but he has been acquitted from favourable circumstances with respect to his intentions.

The artificial cry, which was thus raised by designing politicians, communicated real alarm and terror to the honest undesigning part of the inhabitants. The gentry expected to be degraded from their rank by the French system of *equality.* Those who had any thing to lose regarded themselves as the immediate prey of *republicans* and *levellers.* Men of peaceable dispositions, who hated innovation, and were attached to the British Constitution, trembled with the apprehension of some terrible convulsion, and of seeing the anarchy and the cruelties, which had prevailed in France, introduced into their own country. It was in vain to represent, that no vestige of insurrection, conspiracy, or design to overturn the government, could be found in any part of the kingdom. The continual ferment which agitated the public mind, prevented a fair examination, and contributed to distort and exaggerate every object.

Having succeeded in raising a panic in the higher classes of the community, the next aim of Ministry, in conjunction with all those who had a private interest in avoiding a reform of the National Representation, was to recommend a war with France, from whose uncommon exertions had proceeded all the dangers with which this island appeared to be threatened. Some of the arguments employed for this purpose, which are of a singular nature, I shall take the liberty of mentioning on a future occasion. I am, &c.

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LETTER VIII.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

July 12. 1796.

The British Ministry having resolved upon a war with France, their next point, in the natural order of things, was to find arguments in support of that measure. A celebrated writer of the last age has said, that it was easier to find *monks* than *reasons*. Matters have, since that time, been strangely altered. Monachism has not been thriving; and the reasoning faculty has been greatly improved. Reasons for going to war with France have occurred in sufficient abundance to furnish a new system of logic; as the eloquence displayed upon the occasion might supply an equally new system of rhetoric. With respect to the *morality* to be gathered from either of these, it seems, to speak in the mildest terms, a little *casuistical.*

One of the chief reasons which has been advanced for going to war with France is, that this measure appears absolutely necessary for checking, in this country, the progress of *French opinions.* This is the celebrated argument which logicians call the *argumentum baculinum.* If you do not give up your opinion, I will break your head. It has been pushed, however, in this case, a little further than is commonly done. I will not only break the head of you, who entertain the offensive opinion; but I will break the head of that scoundrel who has persuaded you to embrace it.

By French opinions, in the language of the knowing ones, are understood sentiments favourable to a reform of Parliamentary Representation; but, as represented to sincere, undesigning alarmists, are meant designs to overturn our monarchy, and to establish a democratical government, with a complete equalization of rank and property, added to all the evils of anarchy, and a civil war, for God knows how long.

That there is any Englishman, or at least any considerable number of Englishmen, who can entertain French opinions, in this latter sense, appears to be advanced without any proof, and without the least shadow of probability. If there be any one political principle more prevalent than another in the inhabitants of this island, it is a fond prepossession in favour of our own Constitution, and an attachment to the House of Hanover, in whom the crown was established by the authority of parliament, and by whose accession we were secured from the tyranny of the lineal heir.

But supposing, for the sake of argument, that a number of persons in Britain were so wrong-headed as to entertain such opinions, would it follow, that going to war, either with them, or with France upon their account, is a proper expedient for guarding against the consequences of such a pernicious way of thinking? Is force the best instrument for preventing poisonous doctrines, either religious or political? Has not

the contrary been found by the experience of all ages? Was not the persecution of Christianity, by the Roman government, the great natural means which contributed to spread that religion over the empire? Was not persecution one of the great circumstances which promoted the Reformation? This tendency of the application of force, in matters of opinion, is what might be expected from the constitution of human nature. There is a pride in the heart of man which makes him refuse to be browbeaten, and renders him tenacious of those opinions which he is commanded to renounce. His indignation and resentment are kindled against the injustice of pretending to assume a dominion over his conscience. The sufferings, besides, to which he is exposed for persisting in what he thinks the cause of truth, never fail to excite compassion; at the same time that the resolution and courage which he is prompted to display, raise admiration and esteem; sentiments which interest us for the sufferer, and create a strong prepossession in favour of his opinions.

There may, doubtless, be a persecution so powerful and sanguinary as to overcome these obstacles, and to extirpate the offensive tenets against which it is pointed; but this would require such a degree of tyranny, barbarity, and cruelty, and is so inconsistent with the manners of an enlightened and civilized age, that in the present state of most of the European nations, it may be supposed utterly impracticable; and every persecution, which is not effectual in exterminating opinions, must, of course, tend to aggravate and to promote them. If you mean to recommend a book to the public notice and approbation, you cannot practise a more successful method than by causing it to be burnt by the hangman. By making war upon French opinions, you have thus bestowed upon them an importance and consideration which they could not otherwise have attained. Your imprudence, not to say your injustice, has in some measure gilded and varnished them over, and given them a degree of currency, to which, of themselves, they had no title.

After all, why may not the inhabitants of this island enjoy the right of private judgment in speculating upon their government? Is our Constitution so crazy and rotten, that it will not bear the handling? Is our limited monarchy, of which we have so long boasted, and which has been purchased by the blood of our forefathers, so little consonant to the principles of true liberty; so ill adapted to the state of the community, that we dare not bring it to the test of reason? Is it so ill contrived, that it requires a mysterious veil to cover its defects? or if otherwise, will not reason and truth secure a great majority of the nation in opposition to folly and error? Why truly, if our political system is not such as will recommend itself to the nation at large; if, upon a full and fair examination, it does not appear suited to the great ends of government, I am afraid it must fall; and all our attempts to preserve it by mystery and concealment will be to no purpose. But why, in the name of wonder, should this dismal and groundless apprehension be countenanced by the British Ministers?

The alarming progress of the French arms, after the retreat of the Duke of Brunswick, afforded another reason for going to war with that formidable nation. By their enthusiastic ardour, and by their amazing exertions, they were become a match for all Europe; they had over-run the Austrian Netherlands, so as to threaten the immediate invasion of Holland; and they had issued a decree, offering fraternization to all those nations who might be desirous of establishing a free government. Necessity therefore,

it was said, obliged us to take arms in our own defence, and to provide for our own safety before it was too late. The balance of power has ever been accounted a great political object among the potentates of modern Europe; and to maintain this balance has always been held a sufficient cause for entering into a war. In the present case, the French were likely not only to destroy the external boundaries of dominion, but even to sweep away the systems of government which had formerly subsisted.

It was a little unlucky, that those who stated this argument, at the same time that they beheld with such terror these military operations, were obliged to shut their eyes upon the no less alarming transactions in Poland. In violation of all treaties, and in contempt of every law divine and human, that miserable country was torn to pieces, and divided among those very princes with whom Britain had combined for maintaining a balance of power; and while the British ministry were endeavouring to rouse all Europe for opposing the arms of the French nation, they were acquiesceing, without a murmur, in the dreadful devastation, and in the violent political convulsion, which their own allies had produced in another quarter.

With regard to the danger apprehended from the conquest of other countries by France, there are two considerations, which hardly any person of plain sense, and of ordinary information, can possibly overlook. In the first place, by whom were the French driven to the necessity of becoming an armed nation, and of invading the neighbouring states? Before the treaty of Pilnitz, they had expressed strong resolution against foreign wars, and seemed to have no desire of extending their own dominions. They had indeed invaded Avignon, and the bishopric of Basle, together with certain territories in Lorrain, and Alsace, belonging to particular princes or states of the empire. As those territories were locally situated within the kingdom of France, it had been judged essentially requisite, for the safety of the new establishment, that they should be annexed to the French monarchy; while a pecuniary compensation was allowed to the proprietors. Not to mention any disputes concerning the *title* of the persons who had held those possessions, this transaction proceeded upon a principle of general utility, similar to that which has been understood to justify our government in obliging the Duke of Athol to sell the sovereignty of the Isle of Man, or in obliging the feudal lords in Scotland to resign, to the crown, their heritable jurisdictions. But the foreign states, who afterwards invaded France, and whose territories were now over-run by the French, had drawn that misfortune upon themselves by their unprovoked aggression. The French had acted, in this case, upon a principle of retaliation, which no impartial observer, who is acquainted with the law of nations, will venture to condemn. As to their offering fraternity and assistance to other states desirous of establishing a free government, it seems to have been a mere bravado, intended to counteract the effects of the general combination of despots, by which all the other powers of Europe, and even the French people themselves, were invited to join in restoring the old government of France. But whatever was intended by this general declaration, as they never had acted upon it, I cannot help thinking it was incumbent upon us to require an explanation of their intentions, before we made it the ground of a war which was likely to be attended with very serious consequences.

The other consideration, to which I alluded, respects the measures which Britain ought to have pursued on that occasion, for preventing the effusion of blood, and

restoring peace to Europe. Had Britain, at that period, offered her mediation between the contending powers, is there any person who believes that the French would not have gladly accepted the offer, and have been willing to conclude a peace with their enemies, upon condition that each party should resign its foreign acquisitions? But we seem to have thought that France, after being pillaged by Prussia and the Emperor, and after having retaliated those hostilities, should immediately relinquish her conquest, so as to give her enemies time to breathe, and prepare for a new invasion. Was it not the duty of our ministry, as the guardians of our lives and our property, to set on foot, in that critical conjuncture, a negotiation for the purpose which I have mentioned? They not only neglected to do so, but they positively refused to negociate, and to receive explanations, though repeatedly, and with apparent anxiety, offered them by the French. Does not this abundantly show, that the danger of conquest by the French was a mere bugbear, set up by those persons to terrify and delude the nation; and that, so far from wishing to force a peace, as they might easily have done, by offering to guarantee a reasonable treaty, and by threatening, upon the refusal of either party, to throw the weight of Britain into the opposite scale, our ministers were in reality desirous of joining the framers of the league of Pilnitz, and of entering into a war of extermination against France, not for the reasons which they assigned, but from other motives best known to themselves? I am, &c.

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LETTER IX.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

July 19. 1796.

The cruelties committed by the French, together with the danger apprehended to the lives of the king and the royal family, were also strongly urged as a reason for going to war with that barbarous people. This became a topic of declamation, upon which the unfledged orator was happy to try his wings, and the crafty politician found an opportunity of displaying, at an easy rate, both his humanity and his loyalty.

Every person possessed of common feeling must be shocked with a recital of those barbarities; and human nature revolts against any attempt to excuse or to palliate them. We cannot, however, sufficiently express our astonishment at the effrontery with which the ultimate authors of these enormities, the framers of the treaty of Pilnitz, who, by their invasion of France, had driven the people to these desperate measures, were studiously kept out of view and concealed. I am very far from thinking that every murder, or act of cruelty, committed by the French, was absolutely necessary, or even expedient for extricating them from their difficulties. But a general course of extreme severity was rendered unavoidable; and in such a case it is not surprising that the administrators, thrown into consternation by the magnitude of the danger, should sometimes act from precipitate rashness, and sometimes lay hold of the occasion to gratify their own passions, or to court popularity by such rigorous punishments as were agreeable to the lower class of citizens. The foreign potentates, therefore, who enabled those leaders to acquire and to exercise such extraordinary powers, and who put them into a situation where such abuses were naturally to be expected, are certainly answerable for that guilt which was incurred.

Though this consideration will not always justify the immediate agents, it must, in every case, throw the principal blame upon those who could not miss to foresee the consequences, and yet persisted in that line of conduct which infallibly produced them.

But whatever may be thought of the speculative humanity and loyalty of the inhabitants of this country, in declaiming against the cruelty and injustice committed by their neighbours, it does not appear that those who recommended a war with France, upon that account, were actuated by a real principle of benevolence, or by a regard for the life of Louis the XVIth; since nothing could be more evidently calculated to augment and to extend the cruelties complained of, and the mischiefs that were apprehended. By joining the league for compelling the French to restore the old government, the British Ministers could not fail to increase the despair, and desire of vengeance, which had produced such revolutionary powers in the leaders of the

multitude, and which furnished a reason for the murder of those who had incurred any suspicion of assisting the enemy. Had Britain, on the contrary, declared against a war, and offered her mediation between the contending parties, those evils might have been greatly abated; and the lives of the king and the royal family might, in all probability, have been preserved. It is well known, that a numerous party in the Convention wished to save the life of the King; and it can hardly be doubted that a great majority would have concurred in this object, if they could have purchased by it the interposition of Britain for stopping the progress of their enemies. Why did our humane and loyal orators neglect to suggest such an obvious and salutary measure? I am unwilling to credit, what has been insinuated with some colour of probability, that many, who censured with so much acrimony the conduct of the French, were secretly pleased with such barbarity and cruelty, as being calculated to throw an odium upon the Revolution, and to prevent, what was dreaded as the effect of it in this country, the reform of parliamentary representation. In this view, I cannot help recollecting an observation, said to have been imprudently hazarded by a person of some note, that the wretched Marat was *the hen who laid golden eggs.*

The preservation of the Christian religion was another motive, by which those who had resolved upon a war with France endeavoured to rouse the nation, and to procure its unanimous exertions in seconding that measure.

It is a circumstance not the least remarkable in the history of the great political events of the present age, that the late important revolutions in America, and in France, unlike those in preceding periods, have not been dictated, or promoted, by any religious enthusiasm. It may even be observed, that in France, men of letters, from the wantonness of speculation, or from the affectation of contradicting received opinions, have of late frequently admitted a vein of irreligion and scepticism into their writings. We are not, however, to conclude from hence that the people in general are tainted with principles of infidelity; nor even, perhaps, that those very writers have seriously formed any practical system hostile to religion. The first revolution in France, by attempting a radical reform in the prodigious inequality of church livings, had provoked, as we may easily suppose, the indignation and resentment of the higher orders of churchmen; and multitudes of the clergy, who thought it incumbent upon them to resign their functions, rather than submit to a degradation which they hoped would not be permanent, communicated, in the countries to which they fled, an alarm that the French, among other changes, intended nothing less than the total overthrow of the Christian religion. Even the clergy who had been content to remain in their own country, were led to propagate similar representations; and thus a stated opposition and animosity was created between them and the leaders of the revolution; while the former employed their whole remaining power and influence in support of the old government, and the latter, irritated by repeated provocations, became more and more disposed to limit or destroy that authority which the church had formerly enjoyed.

It was, perhaps, with a view of diminishing the influence of churchmen, though partly, too, from an ostentation of singularity, more than from those considerations of utility which were avowed, that that the French Convention afterwards introduced a new calendar, dividing every month into *decades,* instead of the former division into weeks of seven days, and in this manner pointing out one day in ten, instead of the

one day in seven, which by the practice of early Christians had been set apart for the public observances of religion.

The impropriety and folly of this new regulation is obvious enough. For though the difference between one day and another, in a matter of mere external observance, is in itself not very material; and though there be no particular precept of the Gospel recommending the first day of the week for the peculiar purpose of public worship, yet the alteration of a practice, in every respect so useful, and confirmed by the usage of many centuries, was totally inconsistent with prudence, and might prove a stumbling-block to many well disposed Christians.

It would be great weakness, however, to believe, that the Christian religion in general, or even in France, can be materially injured, either by this regulation, or by the petulant and absurd opposition and derision which the vanity, or the malice, of some individuals appears to have suggested. Christianity is founded upon a rock; and neither Thomas Paine with his *Age of Reason,* nor Anarchasis Cloots, with his *Representative of all Religions,* nor Fabre D'Eglantine, the abolisher of Sunday, with his *New Calendar,* nor even that profound philosopher who stood up in the French Assembly, and professed himself *an Atheist,* shall ever, as we are assured, from the best authority, prevail against our holy religion. Christianity is an enlightened system, which introduced a purer morality than had formerly prevailed in the world, and more distinct views of a future state of rewards and punishments, by which the efforts of human laws for the suppression of crimes are better enforced and promoted. The more the light of truth is spread over the world, the more clearly are mankind enabled to see their true interest; and the more will they be convinced of the utility of supporting a religion by which all the bands of human society are thus maintained and strengthened.

But though the genuine principles of Christianity are in no danger, the adventitious trappings in which it has been decked, for the purpose of dazzling the multitude, are likely to be stripped off, and thrown away as mere useless rags; mysterious tenets, the invention of priestcraft in the dark ages, by which that religion was so unworthily debased, and rendered the instrument of undue influence and corruption, are likely to be exploded; and the unbounded authority and dominion which an ambitious and interested clergy have so long exercised over the rights of private judgment and of conscience, are likely to crumble down, and to be trodden under foot. The Roman Catholic superstition, that gigantic monster which has drunk so much human blood, that dragon which has long guarded the den of ignorance, and held more than the half of Europe in the chains of moral and political slavery, seems now to be fast approaching his last agonies.

With regard to the religious opinions entertained in France, it cannot escape observation, that how disagreeable soever they may be to us, it is the height of imprudence and absurdity to make war upon our neighbours for the purpose of producing a reformation in this particular. The world has too long experienced the effects of religious persecutions and wars, not to have learned the salutary lesson, that mankind, those especially who belong to different nations, should bear with one another in their differences of religious opinion. It seems evident, at the same time,

that the system of policy to which the French government is now rapidly advancing, is that of allowing an unbounded liberty of conscience; of protecting all different sects, provided they are not enemies to the civil constitution; and of leaving to the members of every sect the privilege of choosing, and the task of maintaining their own religious teachers. This, every one knows, is conformable to the principles of the *independents* in England, a sect, whose uniform zeal in the cause of pure and genuine Christianity is unquestionable; and it seems to be the system of religious policy which is now realised in the North American States. For my own part, though I feel, from education, an attachment to the forms of religion established in this country, and am sensible that innovation, in matters of this kind, ought never to be attempted without very cogent reasons; yet, were I the inhabitant of a country, where, from good grounds, the old establishment had been abolished, I should, without hesitation, prefer this very liberal and apparently beneficial system.

It is easy to see, however, that the aversion discovered by the leading people in France to religious establishments, has tended to excite a jealousy in the established clergy of other countries, and to produce a set of *religious alarmists,* willing to represent the whole nation as hostile to Christianity, and even to all religion. In such a situation, it is not surprising, that many individuals of our established church, whether in consequence of their own apprehensions, or in the capacity of stipendiaries to the executive government, should be ready, upon this point, to distinguish themselves in the service of administration. Even in Scotland, where the very moderate provision of the clergy allows very scanty rewards to extraordinary merit, many laudable attempts have not been wanting to rouse the people on account of the dangers to religion arising from the French Revolution. It should seem, however, that the populace in this country, though certainly not suspected of lukewarmness in matters of religion, yet, whether from an acquaintance with the real state of the facts, or from a want of confidence in the intentions of those political pastors, or from whatever causes, have hitherto paid very little attention to such publications. I am, &c.

Crito.

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LETTER X.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

August 2. 1796.

The chief reasons which were given for involving us in a French war have now been considered; and I cannot help thinking, that, though they have been turned and twisted into a great variety of shapes, and presented in different lights, with all the address which human ingenuity could employ, their futility and absurdity must, at the first glance, be apparent. They were fit only to make an impression upon imaginations already disordered by fear, and warped by prejudice. There were two other topics employed on this occasion, of which a very slight notice will be sufficient; because, though they were much insisted upon, both in public and in private discourse, and had probably some weight at the time, they seem now to be universally and completely disregarded.

The first was the decree of the French Convention for opening the navigation of the Scheldt from Antwerp, intended to promote the trade of the Belgic provinces, now in the possession of France. This measure is capable of being viewed in different lights; as, on the one hand, it put an end to a monopoly which, like all restrictions of that nature, was, doubtless, hurtful to the general interest of commerce; and, on the other, it was held prejudicial to the peculiar trade of the Dutch, to whom, by some old treaties, that monopoly had been secured. Which of these considerations is of the greatest importance I shall not pretend to determine; but certain it is, that the British ministry, in 1786, had concurred in the views of the Emperor, who then, for the benefit of the Netherlands, had thoughts of establishing the free navigation of that river. A British Ambassador was then sent to Antwerp, for the purpose of exciting the inhabitants to bestir themselves in soliciting the Emperor for the attainment of this commercial object; so different were the political views entertained by the same persons within so short a period. That nations, that is, ministers, as well as private individuals, should change their opinions, and their systems of conduct, according to their different political combinations, is agreeable to common experience; but that so frivolous a matter, an injury so entirely diplomatic, should be regarded as a solid ground for rushing immediately into a dangerous and expensive war, is truly surprising. It might be a proper subject of remonstrance or complaint, but could never afford, to persons, not visited with insanity, an inducement for plunging a great nation into an abyss of blood and misery, without attempting, by a previous negociation, to avert that calamity. The States of Holland themselves, it is well known, the parties understood to be immediately injured, but who had not our private reasons, were much less captious; and it was with the utmost difficulty that, by the authority of the Stadtholder, under the influence of the British Court, they could be prevailed upon to second our designs.

In mentioning the state of the Dutch, upon whose account we professed that we were led immediately into the war, it seems impossible to avoid remarking, that our behaviour to that people, from first to last, appears not a little extraordinary; and nothing, it should seem, but the ancient commercial jealousy, through which we are apt to view their circumstances, could prevent us from reflecting upon it with shame and regret. Having dragged them into the war, we no sooner found it inconvenient to persist in the defence of their country, than we left them to shift for themselves; not for the purpose of making peace, for that might have been excusable, but with a view to carry on the war in a different manner, by subsidizing Prussia and the Emperor. When the Dutch were, of consequence, reduced under the power of their enemies, and did what, in those hard circumstances, imperious necessity compelled them to do, we immediately seized their property, subjected them to every species of hostility, and have at this day scarce any other acquisitions to boast of but those which we have obtained from the plunder of these our ancient allies. In what manner we can vindicate our conduct to that long-suffering people, it were to be wished that our minister, when he can spare so much time under the pressure of his present financial difficulties, would have the goodness to explain.

The other topic which I proposed to mention is one, to which, in private conversation, men have usually resorted after trying, unsuccessfully, to vindicate the war upon every other ground. The French, it is said, were the first to make war upon us. We had no choice, but were reduced to the fatal necessity of defending ourselves. Those ambitious republicans had formed the design of extending their dominion, and of planting their tree of liberty over the whole of Europe, if not over the whole globe. In pursuance of this object they made war upon us, whenever it suited their purpose; and we had no alternative left, but that of implicit submission, or of providing for our own safety by a timely resistance. Whether any person ever believed this assertion, I very much doubt. It is at least pretty clear that nobody believes it at present.

For enabling us to judge of this point, a very slight review of the circumstances of the case will be sufficient. That the first verbal declaration of war proceeded from the French Convention, on the 1st of February 1793, is indisputable. But the conduct of the British Court, long before that period, had been such as clearly to evince its hostile intentions, and in reality amounted to an unequivocal declaration of hostilities. Soon after the 10th of August 1792, the British Ambassador to the French Court was recalled. Upon the meeting of Parliament about the end of that year, the debates were carried on in a strain of arrogant invective and declamation against the French, which abundantly showed a resolution to keep no measures with that people. The proposal of negociation, which had been urged by Opposition, was again and again rejected with disdain, as disgraceful to the British Crown; and Mr. Burke repeatedly declared, without the least contradiction, or mark of disapprobation from his ministerial friends, that *the two states might already be considered as actually engaged in war.* From an idea of starving the inhabitants, our ministry, in the mean time, laid an embargo upon the exportation of corn to that country, though the market was then open to other nations. The Alien Bill, soon after, was introduced into parliament, which being considered as an infraction of the commercial treaty with France, M. Chauvelin, the French Ambassador, in very respectful terms, remonstrated against it; but so far from meeting with any attention from our ministers, he was peremptorily ordered to quit

the kingdom within eight days; and the order was inserted by authority in the London Gazette.

It is here worthy of remark, that by the commercial treaty above referred to, concluded in 1786, it was expressly declared, that, in case any subject of misunderstanding should arise between the two nations, *the sending away the Ambassador of one of them should be deemed a rupture.*

It is further to be observed, that in regard to the two measures of France which had given offence to the British Court, the decree for the opening of the Scheldt, and that which offered fraternity to other nations, M. Chauvelin had, in explanation of these measures, delivered an official note to the Secretary of State, on the 27th of December; and, upon the refusal of the Ministry to treat with them, his explanation was confirmed by an immediate communication, in another note from the *French Executive Council.* In this note they declare, "that the decree of *fraternization* could not be applicable, but to the single case, when the general will of a nation, clearly and unequivocally expressed, should call for the assistance and fraternity of the French nation;" and, with respect to their interference in the navigation of the Scheldt, they declare, as "the French nation has renounced all conquest, and only occupies the Netherlands during the war; that as soon as the Belgic nation shall find itself in full possession of its liberty, and when its general will may be declared legally and unfettered, then, if England and Holland shall affix any importance to the opening of the Scheldt, the Executive Council will leave that affair to a direct negociation with the Belgians themselves."

From an anxiety, as it should seem, to avoid a rupture with England, the French Ministry, perceiving the reluctance of the British Court to treat with M. Chauvelin, dispatched M. Maret, under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to enter into a negociation with our Ministers. It has been asserted, that M. Maret was instructed to offer to our Ministers; first, that the claim for opening the Scheldt should be given up; secondly, that the French troops should not advance beyond a certain distance from the Dutch territories; and, thirdly, that the offensive decree of fraternization should be repealed. The proposal of negociation with M. Maret, however, was rejected by our Ministry in the same haughty and contemptuous manner as that with M. Chauvelin; notwithstanding which, that Commissioner was sent from France a second time, with enlarged powers, and with instructions, it is said, to offer still greater concessions, with respect to their possessions in the West Indies. His second mission, however, was equally unsuccessful with the first; and he was ordered immediately to depart from the kingdom.

Considering all these different circumstances, it was certainly with a bad grace that our Ministry pretended to be taken unawares, and to be driven from a system of neutrality, by the declaration of war upon the part of France. Candour must oblige us to confess, that our behaviour was in the highest degree offensive and provoking; and that it marked a determined purpose of proceeding to immediate hostilities; while, on the contrary, the conduct of the French testified an eager desire to avoid any rupture with Britain. In such a case, the verbal declaration of war by the French was a mere

matter of ceremony; though perhaps it would have been more politic in them to have, for some time longer, avoided this measure.

I Am, &C.

Crito.

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LETTER XI.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

August 9. 1796.

After giving such reasons as were judged expedient for entering into the war, it was further necessary to inform the public of the precise object for which it was undertaken. The former was requisite, that we might receive some satisfaction concerning the propriety of the measure; the latter, that we might have an idea of the magnitude and duration of the enterprise, and of the hazard or expence which it might occasion. It may easily be imagined, that the explanation of this latter point was a matter of some delicacy. There are many cases where the naked truth ought not rashly to be exposed to the view of every by-stander. To avow all at once the real object of the war, considering the circumstances formerly mentioned, was inconsistent with that reserve and caution which the nature of the case appeared to demand, and might have prevented that future variation of purpose which the uncertain course of events might possibly suggest. Were it not for the serious consequences which have been produced, and which are still likely to follow, the various juggling tricks that have been practised, the different views which have been held up at different periods, and the sudden shifting of the ground upon the several unexpected turns of fortune, would be highly ludicrous. They present a chequered scene of dissimulation and embarrassment, a sort of tragic distress interwoven with a degree of comic dexterity, something resembling the clergyman, in the farce, who preaches against popery, at the same time that he is picking your pocket; which, though not perfectly consistent with the unities of Aristotle, can hardly fail to exercise the risible muscles of the most phlegmatic spectator.

The real and ultimate object of the war, as was formerly observed, has been invariably the preventing of a reform in our parliamentary representation; and this, it was thought, required a counter-revolution in France, by pulling down the new constitution, and restoring the ancient despotism; measures which could not be effected without an entire conquest of the country. But this purpose, which would, at the first proposal, have startled, perhaps, the most determined adherent of prerogative, and have sunk in despair the panic-struck alarmist, was carefully concealed. The Jesuitical pretences which were assumed, at the beginning, will for a long time be remembered. To prepare the minds of people for engaging in the contest, and to preclude the scruples which, in the first moments of deliberation, were likely to occur, positive assurances were given that our government had no intention to join in the objects of those foreign potentates who had entered into the treaty of Pilnitz. The war in which we were about to engage was merely a defensive war, and had no other aim than to secure ourselves, and our allies from the aggression of the French. After the nation had once actually engaged in the war, the national passions, in the progress of

the contest, were likely to be inflamed; and, in the eagerness of victory, scruples, which appeared at first insurmountable, would probably vanish. Having passed the Rubicon, our retreat was, by every new step, rendered more difficult, and our path more intricate and perplexed. The minister then ventured to open his mind more fully, and to acknowledge that his object in the war included, not only an indemnification for our expences, but the establishment of such a government in France as could afford to Great Britain a sufficient security for the maintenance of her future tranquillity.

Such were the progressive views held out, in particular by Mr. Pitt, in his speech on the opening of the budget in 1793, and in that upon the motion for an address to his Majesty, in January 1794. It was not difficult to see, that upon the supposition of the continuance of the war till our ministry were satisfied with the security afforded by the government in France, the interpretation of this article being reserved to themselves, a peace might be deferred as long as they should find convenient. But, if any doubt had remained upon that subject, it was afterwards, in the debate concerning the employment of the French Emigrants in our military service, removed by a positive declaration. The alarmists having then arrived at that pitch of enthusiasm to be ripe for the direct avowal, it was at length plainly admitted by a minister, from the northern part of the island; a minister who, in case it should prove disagreeable, had not much popularity to lose; that the war must be continued, until we shall be in a condition to re-instate the Emigrants in their former possessions; that is, until we have not only overturned the present order of things, but have by force of arms, restored the ancient despotism. The frankness of this avowal deserves commendation; and, if I mistake not, it was accompanied with some kind of apology, from considerations of policy, for not having been made at the beginning.

But that, from the beginning, the conquest of France, and the restoration of the ancient despotism were intended, is manifest from a variety of circumstances. Not long after the commencement of the war, I think in the beginning of April 1793, a proposal was made to Lord Grenville by Le Brun the French minister, for the re-establishment of peace by an amicable negociation; and to this end a passport was demanded for an envoy upon the part of France. But though the letters, containing this application, sufficiently authenticated, were laid before the Honourable Secretary of State, they were totally disregarded, and, it should appear, as much as possible buried in silence. So favourable an opportunity of attempting at least to terminate the war, with honour to the nation and crown, would not have been overlooked, unless a fixed resolution had been formed of prosecuting the contest to the last extremity.

The success of our arms towards the beginning of the first campaign, when, by the treachery of Dumourier, the French were driven from Holland, and from the Austrian Netherlands, and their armies were almost completely disorganised, presented another opportunity, no less favourable, for putting an end to the war; an opportunity which, had our views terminated upon any thing short of the entire conquest of France, we should certainly have been eager to seize. We had then recovered all the possessions of our allies; and we had reduced our enemy to such distress as appeared to lay the foundation for an advantageous treaty. But though negociation was continually rung

in the ears of our ministry, by the party in opposition at home, it was uniformly rejected with indignation.

The tone and language, indeed, of the combined powers varied a good deal, according to the exigency of their affairs. They had no objection, occasionally, to the employment of stratagem for promoting their ends; and it should seem that they even suffered, inadvertently, such terms of accommodation to be offered, in their name, as they had no serious intention to fulfil. Upon the agreement between the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg and Dumourier, the latter published a manifesto, declaring, that his sole purpose, in marching with his army to Paris, was *to restore the constitution* 1789; and the Prince of Cobourg, in another manifesto, relative to the foregoing, declares, "that he will support, by all the force which is entrusted to him, the generous and beneficent intentions of General Dumourier and his brave army." But the enterprise of Dumourier having totally failed of success, there was held at Antwerp, on the 8th of April, that is, three days after the above declaration was published, a congress of the representatives of the combined powers, at which the Duke of York and Lord Auckland were present on the part of Great Britain. Here it was again resolved to prosecute the conquest of France; in consequence of which, the former manifesto of Prince Cobourg was withdrawn; and, agreeable to this resolution, a new manifesto, in terms very different from the former, was, on the day following, published by that general.

These are facts which proclaim the intention of parties, in a manner less ambiguous, and more forcible, than can be done by mere verbal declarations.

Another instance of a similar nature occurs in the transactions relative to the capture of Toulon. As it was thought of great importance that the English forces should be admitted into that place, an agreement was made with the inhabitants, conformable to what appeared, at the time, to be their prevailing inclinations. Let us hear the proclamation of Lord Hood upon that subject, dated 28th August 1793, when he obtained possession of Toulon.

"Whereas the Sections of Toulon have, by their commissioners to me, made a solemn declaration in favour of Monarchy; have proclaimed Louis the XVII. son of the late Louis the XVI. their lawful king; and have sworn to acknowledge him, and no longer suffer the despotism of the tyrants which at this time govern France, but will do their utmost to establish monarchy, *as accepted by their late sovereign in* 1789, and restore peace to their distracted and calamitous country; I do hereby repeat, what I have already declared to the people of the south of France, that I take possession of Toulon, and hold it in trust only for Louis the XVII. until peace shall be re-established in France, which I hope and trust will be soon."

After obtaining possession of that place, however, and weighing the matter more fully, a declaration, in somewhat a different strain, was sent by his Majesty's command, to the commanders of his fleets and armies employed against France, and to his ministers employed at foreign courts, dated 29th October 1793. It is there said, that "his Majesty by no means disputes the right of France to reform its laws."—And afterwards it goes on as follows: "The King demands that some legitimate and stable

government should be established, founded on the acknowledged principles of universal justice, and capable of maintaining with other powers the accustomed relations of union and of peace. His Majesty wishes ardently to be enabled to treat for the re-establishment of general tranquillity with such a government, exercising a legal and permanent authority, and possessing power to enforce the observance of its engagements. The King would propose none other than equitable and moderate conditions; not such as the expences, the risk, and the sacrifices of the war might justify, but such as his Majesty thinks himself under the indispensible necessity of requiring with a view to these considerations, and still more to that of his own security and of the future tranquillity of Europe."—And referring to the calamities and disorders prevailing in that country, "It is then in order to deliver themselves from this unheard-of oppression, to put an end to a system of unparalleled crimes, and to restore at length tranquillity to France, and security to all Europe, that his Majesty invites the co-operation of the people of France. It is for these objects that he calls upon them to join the standard of an hereditary monarchy, not for the purpose of deciding, in this moment of disorder, calamity, and public danger, on all the modifications of which this form of government may hereafter be susceptible; but in order to unite themselves once more under the empire of law, of morality, and of religion," &c.

In short, the inhabitants of France, instead of the constitution 1789, promised them by Lord Hood, and upon the faith of which they had delivered Toulon into the hands of the English, are referred to such a government as they themselves, at the termination of the war, might frame under the direction of England, with whom, at the same time, they were then to settle the account of expences. This requires no comment. Had we, in consequence of this transaction, or by whatever means, been finally victorious, we should have procured a government to our liking in France, with as much ease as the French have lately done in Holland.

But though there can be no doubt that the combined powers intended to conquer France, we are not so certain that they intended to conquer it for the benefit of the Bourbon family. It has been asserted that the treaty of Pilnitz proposed to dismember that country; and the behaviour of the Allies, in the hour of their success, tends to confirm that assertion. When Valenciennes furrendered to the Duke of York, his Royal Highness took possession of that place, not for the benefit of Louis the XVII. but *in behalf of the Emperor of Germany.* Generous and wise administrators of Britain! Happy people, under the auspicious direction of such able and prudent Ministers!!! With what a laudable spirit have we spent our blood and treasure for the benefit of so firm, so useful, and so disinterested an ally! May we not expect also, in the partition of that vast and fertile country, to obtain, for our share, a few towns or districts, the maintenance and government of which will improve our economy, as the revenue to be drawn from thence will contribute to discharge our national debt, and to alleviate our burdens?

Our success, however, was but of short duration; and we have now experienced almost three years of uninterrupted defeat and disaster. During this long period, the most remarkable circumstance has been that inflexible obstinacy with which our Ministry have persevered in the primitive object of the war. They seem to have thought, that

—to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering—

Their behaviour puts one in mind of the warrior in Ariosto, who does not observe that his head has been cut off, but continues fighting as if nothing had happened to him. This immoveable intrepidity has been most conspicuous in that branch of administration containing the deserters from the ancient Whigs, among whom no change of countenance, no voice, or gesture, unbecoming their former professions, has hitherto been observable. A late Lord Lieutenant has, even recently, in a public debate, recommended our perseverance in the conquest of France, with a warmth that does great honour to the sincerity of his feelings; and *old Truepenny,* it is said, reposing upon his pensions, still swears against a *regicide peace.*

Our Prime Minister, indeed, has been brought to admit, that the form of government in France presents no insuperable objection to our concluding a peace with that nation; an admission which appears to have been extorted, not without some wry faces, and much hesitation; and which, after all his vain boasting, was, doubtless, to him, if that were of any importance, abundantly humiliating. But this declaration seems to produce no alteration in his measures; and peace is apparently as remote as ever. What is now his object in continuing the war, the Lord only knows. But if any sagacious projector could, in our very critical situation, hit upon the plan of a peace, which would not threaten to drive our present Ministers from the possession of their places, it is probable he would meet with due encouragement. I am, &c.

Crito.

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LETTER XII.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

August 16. 1796.

After examining the real, and the pretended objects of the war, as well as the reasons which have been given for inducing the nation to engage in it, I cannot forbear adding a few remarks, concerning the *injustice,* and concerning the *impolicy* of that undertaking. With respect to its *injustice* I shall say but little; because I am sensible that justice is too apt to be little regarded in the disputes between different nations.

It seems to be universally admitted by writers upon the law of nature, and, so far as I can observe, is not disputed by our ministers themselves, that every independent state has an exclusive right to legislate for itself, and to settle its own internal government. This is a principle which makes its way directly to the understanding, and to the feelings of every enlightened mind. It is supported, not only by the immediate sense of justice, but by the clearest and strongest considerations of expediency. Every nation is best acquainted with its own peculiar circumstances, and having invariably its own interest in view, is the best qualified to judge of those measures by which its welfare is likely to be promoted. But the interest and views of different nations are always different, and frequently opposite to one another; and if a foreign state were permitted to interfere in making laws, or framing a constitution for its neighbours, there can be no doubt that it would, in such cases, be directed by very improper motives; that the advancement of its own power or emolument would often be the real object; and that the happiness or prosperity of the nation for whom it acted would be merely a pretence. To allow such interference, therefore, would be to sacrifice the welfare, and even sometimes the existence, of one independent state, to the caprice, the ambition, or the avarice of its neighbours; to afford a perpetual colour and pretext for invasion and oppression; and to give an open and regular license to anarchy, rebellion, robbery, and murder.

That, in the conduct of nations, this principle has frequently been violated, and that powerful states have, in many cases, produced revolutions in the constitution of their weaker neighbours, upon pretence of consulting the general interest or safety, is a melancholy truth. We may mention, as one instance of such an attempt, in our own country, the *partition treaty,* planned by King William, but which, being disapproved of by the great and good Lord Somers, or from whatever causes, was never carried into execution; and as another, the war about the succession to the crown of Spain, which took place at the beginning of the present century. But the frequency of such violations of the rules of justice only shows, that great bodies of men, where multitudes act in concert with each other, have less sensibility to the feelings of morality than private and unconnected individuals. The number of persons embarked

in the same undertaking, and actuated by the same passions, keep one another in countenance; they meet with nobody that is cool and impartial, to censure their conduct, or to represent its enormity and baseness; and having in view a common interest among themselves, they appear to act, in part at least, not from selfish motives, but from a sort of benevolence or public spirit. This observation, however, though it may explain, is very far from being intended to vindicate such proceedings.

The attempts to justify the war with France appear to have rested upon two different grounds, which are, in reality, incompatible with each other. First, it has been pretended, that we entered into that war from absolute necessity, the French having declared hostilities against us; or, at least, that we acted merely upon the defensive, having had no other means of preventing the progress of their arms. This view, which represents the present contest as founded upon similiar grounds to those which have produced the greater part of quarrels among nations, I had formerly occasion to examine, in stating the reasons which were alleged for our engaging in the war; and to add any thing further upon it would be superfluous. Though the French made the first verbal declaration of war, yet our behaviour had previously been fully equivalent to an actual declaration of hostilities. It is, at the same time, well known, that the British ministry avowed their purpose of prosecuting the contest upon other grounds than that of self-defence; that France had both an interest and an inclination to maintain a good understanding with Britain; and that she made several attempts to terminate the dispute by an amicable negociation.

I shall at present consider the contest in its peculiar, and true light; as a war founded upon a determined purpose to interfere in the internal government of France, to pull down that constitution which the people themselves had established, and to restore an order and system of policy which the people, by an almost unanimous consent, had reprobated.

This interference, the supporters of the war have endeavoured to vindicate upon two different principles. It has been said, in the first place, that Britain, from a regard to the French themselves, and to the general interests of human nature, had a right to interfere in the internal policy of France, to defend the rights of the sovereign, and those of the emigrants, to put a stop to the cruelties and to the anarchy prevailing in the country, to assume the guardianship of the Christian religion, and of the rules of morality, which were openly exploded, and treated with every mark of scorn and indignity.

The question is, whether we are entitled to new-model the government or policy of a neighbouring nation from pretences of this nature? From what I formerly observed, it must be evident, that the permission of such interference would open a door to much worse evils than those which we should propose to redress. The pretence of generous, humane, or virtuous motives, would always be at hand to cover secret and unwarrantable designs. The majority of an independent state will commonly act with propriety in promoting their own interest; or if, in a singular emergency, they should happen to do otherwise, they are likely soon to correct their mistakes, and to rectify their conduct. But the interposition of foreigners, by a military force, instead of removing, is most likely to aggravate the disorders which have been committed. Can

any thing be more absurd than for Great Britain to imagine that, by means of her sleets and armies, she is capable of maintaining in France the virtues of humanity and benevolence, or of enforcing the principles of morality and the Christian religion? Does any person believe, that, by attempting to do so, she would not produce more harm than good?

But in reality the evils complained of in France have arisen, at least in a great measure, not so much from the fault of the French themselves, as from the conduct of Britain and her allies. Had it not been for the Treaty of Pilnitz, and its consequences, there would have been no such disorders in that country. The limited monarchy, established in 1789, would have remained; the lives of the Sovereign, and of the Royal Family, would have been preserved; the bloodshed, in accomplishing so great a revolution, would have been wonderfully little; and there would have been no emigrants but such as voluntarily abandoned their native country rather than submit to the new constitution. We resemble a physician, therefore, who having previously administered a poisonous drug to occasion a violent disease, kindly offers his best endeavours in curing the patient; and who, instead of waiting till he is called for that purpose, endeavours, as in some German farces, to seize the unhappy sufferer, and follows him from place to place, attempting in vain to force his medicine upon him.

The other ground, upon which we have pretended to the right of overturning the present government of France, is a regard to our own interest; and in this we are probably more sincere. The interested supporters of the abuses in our own government pretend, and our honest well-meaning alarmists appear to be convinced, that our own political system is endangered by the French Revolution.

It is certain that the late changes in the government of France have had a tendency to excite, in this island, as well as over all Europe, an attention to the general principles of government, and a disposition to rescue mankind from slavery and oppression. I shall even admit, for the sake of argument, that the example of a republican system in France may have some effect upon the inhabitants of this, and of other countries, in recommending to them that form of government: But will any person take upon him to assert, that the hazard arising from thence to Great Britain is of such magnitude, or so direct and immediate, as to justify our interference, by force, to overturn or alter the internal government of France? Does the establishment of a republic in France, together with the enthusiastic spirit which prevails among the people, threaten the government of this country with such immediate destruction as to excuse our violating the ordinary rules of justice, and invading our neighbours upon the mere principle of indispensible self-preservation? According to this mode of reasoning, every country in the world would be entitled to quarrel with its neighbours for establishing among themselves a different political system. Louis XIV. acted meritoriosly in his attempts to conquer Holland, where a republican government was established; most divinely, in supporting the two rebellions against the House of Hanover, by whose accession we, in this country, were secured in a limited monarchy, very adverse to the despotism in France. The King of Prussia, and the Empress of Russia, who have lately crushed in the bud the liberties of Poland, are two angels sent from heaven, to prevent the progress of political innovation, and to defend mankind from the pernicious attempts of republicans and levellers.

Citizens of Britain, know your own good fortune, and learn to prize the inestimable blessings of that Constitution which has been handed down by your forefathers. Are you in earnest in wishing to preserve it to the latest posterity? Be assured, that force and violence are not the proper means for effecting this important purpose. This purpose is not to be effected, either by attempting to overthrow the political system of your neighbours, or by punishing with immoderate severity such of your countrymen as take the liberty of censuring your own; but by mending your own Constitution where it is defective, by submitting it with full confidence to the free examination of all the world, and by conducting its administration in such a manner as, instead of marking jealousy and distrust, or inspiring discontent and resentment, will conciliate the love and affection, the lively gratitude and zealous attachment of the people. The British Constitution is an old fabric, strong, massy, and well contrived, equally fitted to defend against the winter storm and the summer's heat. It would surely be madness, as well as the grossest injustice, to demolish the more splendid or fashionable house of your neighbour, lest by its newfangled ornaments it should put you out of conceit with your own; but sound reason should teach you, as soon as possible, to repair the injuries which time and accidents have occasioned to your own building. Covet not the frippery of modern embellishments, the fancied improvements of speculative architects; but let the reparation be executed in that style of plainness and simplicity which is agreeable to the original plan; bestowing upon it, at the same time, all the accommodation, all the free intercourse of apartments, all the light and cheerfulness of which that plan is susceptible. If you act in this reasonable and liberal manner; there is no ground to fear that this venerable pile will ever be thrown down by its inhabitants, or that its household gods will ever be deserted.

To conclude, with respect to the injustice of the war, I wish I could avoid remarking, that the weight of this charge lies chiefly upon us. We were not, indeed, the first to invade France; but we took arms whenever we saw that the country could not be conquered without our assistance; and we soon became the leaders and directors of the undertaking. We over-persuaded Holland to take a share in the contest; we subsidised Sardinia; we subsidised Prussia; we did what is equivalent to subsidising the Emperor. Whatever was the object of our ministry in the beginning, they have since pursued it with an inflexible resolution, which no change of circumstances, no motives of national interest or safety, have been able to slacken or divert. After a long and incessant acoumulation of disappointment, mortification, and calamity, they continue, like the animal in the fable, to gnaw the file, mistaking or misrepresenting the blood that appears for that of their enemies. Not contented with becoming the prime mover and soul of the combination against France, they have tried to force into the confederacy those few powers of Europe who had resolved to maintain a neutrality. The operations of our ambassador at Copenhagen, of Mr. Drake, our envoy at Genoa, and of Lord Hervey, our envoy at Florence, are sufficiently known. The Genoese resisted the rough attacks that were made upon them with a degree of spirit, which, from so inconsiderable a state, could hardly have been expected. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, much against his interest and his opinion, found it necessary to yield, and to declare hostilities against the common enemy. Upon what principle of morality they ventured to treat independent states in this manner, it is not easy to say. The barbarity of compelling a sovereign to involve his subjects in all the miseries and

calamities of war, and this in opposition to his own sense of right and wrong, is something that outrages the feelings of justice in a very uncommon degree. I am, &c.

Crito.

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LETTER XIII.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

August 23. 1796.

Concerning the *impolicy* of the war, there occur so many remarks which press forward and seem to merit attention, that I am afraid of wandering in a boundless field, and of encroaching too far upon the important information usually collected in your very intelligent paper. To form a just opinion upon the subject, it would be necessary to examine the following particulars:—

1. Whether the conquest of France was a measure calculated to procure the object which we had in view.

2. How far we were likely to succeed in the project of conquering France.

3. What might be the probable consequences of our complete success in that measure.

4. The inconveniences and mischiefs to which we unavoidably exposed ourselves by that undertaking.

The first article abovementioned has been already considered at some length, in examining the causes of the war; and I shall not trouble you with a repetition of the observations formerly made. The intention of our ministers in attempting the conquest of France was to stop the progress of what are called French opinions. The crusades, for the purpose of redeeming the holy sepulchre from the hands of infidels were not half so absurd; for those expeditions had really some tendency to procure the ridiculous end which was proposed. But the cudgelling twenty-five millions of people out of a system of opinions, which they had most deliberately adopted, and which they considered as essential to the security of their lives and their property, is evidently beyond the reach of human strength. Had we marched our victorious armies from one corner of France to the other, had we subverted all the new institutions, and restored the old government in France, had we broiled ten thousand Jacobins at a British *auto da fe,* we should probably have been as far as ever from our purpose, either of extinguishing republican tenets in that country, or of persuading the people in this island, that a reform of parliamentary representation is not indispensibly requisite for the preservation of their liberties.

But supposing that the conquest of France would have extirpated these offensive opinions, it was a wide step to conclude that this could be accomplished by the joint efforts of those potentates who had formed a combination against her. Did those potentates consider the populousness, the fertility, and riches of France; the

compactness of her dominions, her military spirit, and her superiority in the military science, particularly in that branch which relates to the management of artillery, now become the chief instrument of modern tactics? Were they aware that a nation, in those circumstances, comprehending near a fourth part of the inhabitants of Europe, could send greater armies to their frontiers, at least armies which, when fighting for every thing that is dear to them, would do more execution than those which all Europe, in the view of a foreign conquest, could maintain at a distance? Did they take into the account the many fortified towns belonging to France, on that side where alone she is exposed to an enemy, and which the late King of Prussia, from whose opinion, in matters of this kind, our lawyer ministers, or parliamentary orators might not be ashamed to reap instruction, considered as an impregnable defence? “The frontiers of France next to Germany,” says that great military genius, “are like the jaws of a lion, with two dreadful rows of teeth, ready open to devour any invader.”

But whatever obstacles to the conquest of France might occur in ordinary cases, these are greatly multiplied on the present occasion. France, as our minister himself acknowledged, has now become an armed nation, capable, by a simple requisition, of bringing into the field such multitudes as resemble the swarms which, in a rude state of society, issued from the northern parts of Europe, to overwhelm the provinces of the Roman Empire; and these multitudes, animated by an enthusiastic love of liberty, which, added to their discipline and military spirit, appears to render them invincible. The effects of that enthusiasm, joined to that military spirit and discipline, we had fully experienced in the total discomfiture of the Duke of Brunswick; in the rapid conquest of the Austrian Netherlands; and in the decisive battle of Jemappe. That any person of sound mind, after so impressive a trial, should have proposed to renew the project of conquering that country, was not to be expected. It exceeds the castle-building of a dream, or the delirium of a fever. We had seen the unanimity with which the French nation reprobated our designs in favour of monarchy; and if we trusted to the divisions in that country, and to the ferment of political factions, we took the infallible method of precluding any advantage from that source, by uniting every party against the common enemy of all. We became the Sir Martin Mar-all in the great theatre of Europe; and stumbled upon the very measure which excluded the possibility of our ever attaining the object of our wishes.

But supposing that, in spite of every obstacle, we should, by some miraculous interposition, have been successful in conquering France, may it not reasonably be demanded, what national advantage could possibly have resulted from that conquest? Was it proposed that, after we had restored the ancient despotism, and replaced the emigrants in their former situation, we should leave the French monarchy, thus happily renovated, to go on in its natural channel. Some additional precautions, I am afraid, would have been requisite for securing the continuance of our workmanship. We must, undoubtedly, have left in the country an army, and a great one too, for supporting that system of government which we had established, and for preventing an enraged and desperate people from cutting the throats of those detested rulers whom we had set over them. An English mercenary army, of sufficient magnitude, and properly trained up in the pleasant service of keeping the French democrates in subjection, would form an excellent corps to be entrusted with the guardianship of

English liberty; and would, in all probability, be often appealed to in any of those future disputes, in England, which might arise between the crown and the people.

But it is possible that our governing politicians, intoxicated with power, might please themselves with the prospect of depressing still more our ancient rivals, and might prefer the project of dismembering the French monarchy. Would Britain, in that case, have chosen to retain any part of it? Would Britain, who finds the expence of holding the insulated rock of Gibraltar so insupportable, have subjected herself to the burthen of maintaining a number of garrisoned towns in France, and to the hazard of being involved, as a principal party, in all the wars of the Continent? To avoid these evils, would we have chosen to leave this contested country in the possession of our allies, to be divided by them, like Poland, or to be disposed of as they, in their great humanity and justice, should please to determine?

We could, in that case, indeed, have no security that the powers, whom we had thus aggrandized beyond measure, would not proceed, in a short time, to the partition, or conquest of Britain, whose commerce they have long envied, and whose government they cannot fail to detest.

To whatever side we turn ourselves, in whatever light we view this project of conquering France, it appears no less pregnant with danger and calamity than it is absurd and chimerical; and so far is it from presenting any solid prospect of national benefit, that the mischiefs to be apprehended from our final success would be infinitely greater, and more fatal, than even those which we have suffered, and are likely to suffer, by our complete failure and disappointment.

In estimating, however, the folly and madness of this infatuated project, we must not overlook the national advantages which have been forfeited, or the inconveniences, the losses, and the mischiefs which we have reason to expect; and which (for unhappily we need not here depend upon conjecture) we have actually sustained from it. Of the multitudes *killed off* in the course of the war, which are much greater than we ever had, or ever shall have any account of, I will say nothing; for Ministers appear to reckon it a prescriptive privilege to sacrifice as many lives as they please to their ambition or private emolument. But the age in which we live is said to be the age of calculators. Let me ask our arithmeticians, what sums of money have been lost? What was the amount of that alarming stagnation of trade, which began upon the commencement of the war, and which made it necessary that government should support the credit of merchants by extensive loans of public money; an interposition calculated to bring the mercantile interest under the immediate influence of the executive power? What is the amount of those depredations upon our shipping, which have so raised the price of insurance, and so impaired and clogged our foreign trade? What is the amount of the danger, to which we are now exposed, of being excluded from foreign harbours, and of having our merchandize captured in neutral bottoms? But above all, what is the amount of that public expenditure which the war has occasioned? Has it not been affirmed, upon good authority, that our public debt is already augmented by an hundred millions; and that the demands upon the Treasury are pouring in from all quarters, with such rapidity, that a new loan, to a great extent, will be necessary for the present year? It is computed that, though we should be

fortunate enough to conclude a peace with the utmost expedition, our national debt will be so enormous as to require a constant annual revenue of three or four-and-twenty millions; a sum, by the minister's own confession, fully equal to the landed rent of the kingdom. What a prospect does this open to the future commerce of Britain, clogged with such a weight of taxes? What a prospect does it open to the landed interest, who, according to some systems of political economy, sustain the whole of this burden, but according to all, must bear a great proportion of it? What a prospect does this open to annuitants, and to such as live upon a yearly salary or stipend, whose real fund of subsistence, after deducting the taxes which are paid from it, is reduced to a mere trifle, while the price of all commodities must, from the same cause, be in proportion augmented? But where will this end? Will this bubble continue to swell for ever without bursting?

How different would have been the aspect of our affairs, had we, during the conflict of the continental powers, remained in a state of neutrality? Had we, indeed, used our endeavours, we might easily have prevented the war altogether. But supposing the struggle to have been limited to the Continent, we should have carried on, without impediment, all the trade of Europe, and its dependencies; and the commerce of all other nations would have been sheltered under our wings. Instead of adding to our public debts, the increase of our wealth, and our resources, would have enabled us in proportion to extinguish our former burdens. Without engaging in hostilities, we might have put ourselves in a state of preparation for our own defence; and by retaining our own strength unimpaired, we might have expected, that, after the contending parties had mutually exhausted themselves, we should become the arbiters of their pacification.

The mischiefs arising from the war, which relate more immediately to our government and police; that immense military force which, in different shapes, and by new and unprecedented institutions, has been spread over the country; the measures that have been pursued for separating the soldiery from the rest of the inhabitants; the severe punishments, unsuitable to a polished nation, which have been inflicted on political offences; the unusual and dangerous powers committed to administration; the suspension of the great bulwark of our personal liberty; the unconstitutional restrictions which have been laid upon the intercourse of the people, in examining their grievances, and in petitioning for redress; these, and such other political effects of the war, I shall not at present enter upon. Here let me drop the curtain; leaving behind the scene transactions which are not necessary for proving the point I had in view, and the full exhibition of which would be too severe a tax upon your indulgence and good humour.

I Am, &C.

Crito.

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LETTER XIV.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

September 2. 1796.

After the reflections which have been suggested concerning the impolicy of the war, I shall make no apology for considering a little more particularly the situation to which it has reduced us, and the means most likely to deliver us from the difficulties and dangers with which we appear to be surrounded. Our situation is highly critical and alarming. Our prospect is gloomy; and the clouds appear still to gather around us, without discovering a rack, in any corner of the sky, to indicate the approach of sunshine and serenity. We set out, three years ago, in this unprosperous war, with high hopes and arrogant pretensions. Our allies were numerous and powerful. We thought of no less than uniting all the states of Europe, whether great or small, against the French Republic; and we expected to employ successfully the two great engines of *force* and *famine* for effecting our purposes. What a dreadful reverse of fortune have we sustained! The Stadtholder, for whose interest we at first pretended to commence hostilities, is now an exile, stripped of his dominions; and the Dutch, from being the enemies, are converted into the firm and zealous allies of the French. Spain and Prussia are nearly in the same situation. Russia supports our cause only by *declarations;* and the Emperor, after shrinking into a mere auxiliary, dependent upon the pecuniary assistance of Britain, is no longer able to hold up his head even in that subordinate capacity, or to bestow that protection which is requisite for maintaining any authority or influence in the Germanic body. Sardinia, who, engaged in the war in consequence of a subsidy from us, has, from absolute necessity, submitted to the law of the conquerer; and all Italy has, in the most humble manner, petitioned for peace. So completely have the tables been turned, that France is now imitating the example we formerly set them, by seizing our merchandize in the vessels of neutral nations; and is even threatening to exclude our foreign trade from those ports and markets to which it has hitherto been destined. In short, we are evidently upon the point of being reduced to grapple alone with an enemy who has proved too powerful for almost all Europe; and in this desperate conjuncture, we have reason to fear that many of the neighbouring states will rejoice in seeing, or perhaps in promoting the downfall of a maritime power which they have long regarded with envy and jealousy. What is now become of the big words of our minister? What is become of his promise, that the French would not be able to continue their efforts for a month or a fortnight? What is become of his calculations founded upon the debasement of the assignats? His promises, his predictions, his calculations, have all vanished in smoke. In vain would he attempt any longer to impose upon us. His swelling tones can no longer be heard; his threatening aspect remains in the form of a ridiculous grimace; and he appears, like the counterfeit musician in the play, continuing to move his fingers, in the same order and method, after the music has completely ceased.

The most alarming circumstance, perhaps, in our present melancholy situation, is that dejection and despondency in which the nation appears to be sunk, by the dangers with which she is threatened, and by the long train of mortification and disappointment which she has met with. Our faculties seem to be overwhelmed in a stupid lethargy, which renders us incapable of any active exertion, and even of examining the extent of our misfortunes. Our politicians now hardly read the newspapers, and are unwilling to speak of the public transactions. Have you heard any thing to-day? No! It seems to be all going the same way! Need I observe, that this feeble and cowardly spirit is inconsistent with the duty which, as faithful subjects and good citizens, we owe to ourselves, to our king, and to our country; and that its consequences, in all these different views, must be equally ruinous. It is, indeed, the mere counterpart of those unprincipled and arrogant pretensions which were so lately exhibited. But in order to guard against the impending evils, we must look our danger in the face. We must probe our wounds; we must not shrink at the appearance of the incision knife, if it be necessary to remove the malady which we have contracted.

If France shall conclude a Peace with the Emperor, which is likely to happen very soon, there are *three* different ways by which that formidable enemy will probably endeavour to distress Great Britain.

In the *first* place, she will endeavour to exclude our commodities from all the foreign markets to which they have hitherto been carried. The effect of this measure is said to be already felt, in some degree, by the French having taken possession of Frankfort and Leghorn; and the reports, in circulation, of their pursuing a similar policy with respect to Hamburg and Lisbon, and even with respect to the whole of the Baltic and Mediterranean, have become the subject of universal apprehension. That they will succeed, to the full extent of their views, in a project of this nature, I have no conception; for as, according to the proverb, *there is no friendship in trade,* so we may hold it equally certain that there is no *enmity.* Merchants will trade with all the world, whether friend or foe, wherever they find an advantageous market. But though this disposition will, in the long-run, overcome every obstacle, it cannot be supposed to operate all at once; and a length of time, doubtless, will be requisite for devising proper expedients to evade those prohibitions and discouragements with which our commerce is likely to be encumbered. The extent of the pecuniary loss which this may occasion can hardly be estimated; because it is impossible to ascertain the effects of a sudden, though but a temporary interruption to the trade of our great mercantile companies; and because the indirect methods, by which only the trade can be continued, must be attended with different degrees of expence, which will contribute more or less to diminish the profits.

There is ground, *also,* to believe, that France, when she has concluded a peace with the Emperor, will send a great force to the West Indies, and attempt to conquer the British colonies in that part of the globe. The distance, and the extent of our possessions, in that quarter, make it extremely difficult for us to guard them effectually; and the measure of proclaiming liberty to the Negroes, which the French are said to have already executed in St. Domingo, and which they probably will extend to all the islands of which they acquire the possession, must hold out an encouragement to join their standard, which cannot fail to be of great service in

promoting their designs. Whatever may be the effects of this policy with respect to the power of France in the West Indies, there can be no doubt of its tendency to annihilate the dominion of Great Britain, and to produce a total change in the political state and government of the country, as well as in the condition of its inhabitants. To say the truth, if the consequences of a violent and sanguinary contest could be avoided, if the immediate destruction of lives, and of property, which is likely to occur in that part of the world, could be prevented, I am disposed to think that the final issue of the revolution to be expected would not be so hurtful as may, at first view, be apprehended. The total independence of those colonies, and their complete emancipation from those restrictions, in point of trade, to which they have hitherto been subjected; an event which every person of discernment will consider at no great distance; will in all probability be a change highly advantageous, both to them, and to the several European nations with whom they have been connected; as, by a greater competition, it will bestow upon the former much greater encouragement, and a better direction to industry; and will furnish the latter, in greater abundance, and at an easier rate, with the different productions of the West Indies. The experience of the present age has demonstrated the absurdity of many regulations to which the commercial intercourse of the world had long been subjected, and which were thought indispensibly requisite. It was apprehended, not many years ago, that the emancipation and independence of our North American colonies would give a mortal blow to the commerce of the mother country; whereas the trade of Britain never attained such prosperity as it has enjoyed since the accomplishment of that great revolution.

Lastly, It is probable that the French, when they have no other enemy to cope with, will concentrate their force, and direct their principal views to the invasion of Britain, or of Ireland, or of both together. That our fleets, notwithstanding their great superiority, being obliged to keep in large bodies for the purpose of guarding against any considerable defeat, or, from adverse winds, being occasionally rendered incapable of acting, as happened at the revolution 1688, may not be, at all times, able to prevent the enemy from pouring a multitude of troops upon different parts of a coast so extensive, and so near both to France and Holland, there is too much reason to fear; and though I am firmly persuaded that such a descent would meet with no countenance or assistance from the inhabitants of this country, and that in the end it would be entirely unsuccessful, it is impossible not to foresee numberless inconveniences and disasters, which an enterprize of that nature is likely to produce, in an open country, where mercantile transactions are so numerous and complicated, and where the shaking of the public credit is apt to be attended with an immediate convulsion. We should then, indeed, have, in one respect, the same advantage over our enemies which they formerly had over us. We should act with the resolution and firmness of men fighting in their own defence, and endeavouring to maintain their independence. The great body of the people, upon whom the chief stress of the contest must be devolved, would then have an opportunity of wiping off the aspersions which formerly were cast upon them; of showing how far the suspicions entertained, concerning their polititical sentiments, had any foundation; and of resisting those attempts to subvert our constitution, which, from what we have lately seen in Holland, and what we now see in Lombardy, might with too much reason be expected.

In whatever light we regard our present circumstances, every person, who is not entirely divested of the capacity of reflection, will be convinced, that we ought, before it is too late, to make every exertion for putting an end to this calamitous war. But the question is, how this can be accomplished; since the pretensions of the French will naturally rise in proportion to their astonishing success; and considering, that they probably entertain a mortal resentment against Britain, whom they cannot fail to look upon as the chief author and conductor of hostilities prosecuted with such implacable animosity and rancour?

That we should accept of a *dishonourable* peace, even in our disastrous circumstances, I hope no British subject, whose opinion is worthy of the least attention, will ever propose. On the other hand, that we should obtain an advantageous one, can hardly be expected. For this we must thank that Ministry, by whose wretched policy in undertaking the war, and by whose incapacity in conducting it, we have been brought into this perilous fituation. I am far from thinking, however, that the French are not, as well as every reasonable man in this country, desirous of terminating the war; and that even, if proper means are employed, a peace may not be procured upon reasonable terms. The administrators of that country, if they are guided by sound views of policy, cannot surely entertain a wish to dismember the British dominions, or to insist upon such conditions as would hazard that desperate effort which Britain is capable of making in defence of her national existence. The French ministry may be supposed to have no farther aim than the obtaining of such a treaty as is likely to be permanent, and as may be expected to secure their new constitution against any future attempts, upon our part, to overturn it. The idea of universal fraternization imputed to them, if ever it existed, has probably been long since abandoned as impracticable. It would be the height of madness to require that our government should be rendered exactly conformable to theirs; but they may reasonably, perhaps, demand, that we should give some evidence of our entertaining sentiments which are not inimical to their constitution; and that, for this purpose, the authors of our late political measures, those who have conducted the force of Britain in such a manner as to demonstrate an implacable hatred to the French Republic, should be instantly dismissed from the helm. Without such a change upon our part, it is impossible that there should be the appearance of a sincere reconciliation; and the proposal of a peace could lead to nothing more than a temporary armistice, to be broken as soon as Britain has recovered her exhausted resources. Whoever talks of a peace, without this preliminary step, is a mere party man, the adherent of that miserable junto by whom the nation has been exposed to such dangers, and involved in such calamities.

In another letter, I shall consider the expediency, or rather the absolute necessity of this change, from circumstances relating to the internal state and government of the country.

I Am, &C.

Crito.

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LETTER XV.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

In my last letter I observed, that, if we are in earnest in wishing to conclude a peace, we must make it appear that we are cordially reconciled to the French nation; that our views are no longer hostile to their Constitution; and that we have no plan, at any future period, to act in concert with other powers in disturbing or undermining its establishment. Considering our behaviour for some time past; considering that, of all the European powers, we have appeared the most inveterate enemies of this Constitution, it cannot be expected that our professions, with regard to such a change of sentiments, will gain any credit, unless they shall be accompanied with a total change of Ministry, and, as far as the French are concerned, with a total change of our political conduct.

But a change of ministry and of measures is not more necessary for enabling us to conclude a peace with France, than for securing our own future tranquillity, and for preserving the principles of the British Constitution. If the present Ministry have shown, as they certainly have, a most inflexible resolution to destroy the new form of government, and to restore the ancient despotism in France; if there be good ground to believe, as there undoubtedly is, that they have not really abandoned this resolution, but only give way to a temporary necessity, and will take the first opportunity of resuming their former measures, and of creating new disturbances in pursuance of the old quarrel, it would be egregious folly in us to pay any regard to their professions; and the height of imprudence to permit that they should remain in situations where they may play over again the same ruinous game at our expence. It has, indeed, been always understood, and is considered as a maxim founded upon the nature of our government, that every unsuccessful war should produce a change of Ministry. As our Ministers are in all cases responsible for their conduct, they ought to be so more especially in the direction of a war, which, of all the measures in which they can engage, is the most pregnant with danger and calamity. From their success in the adventure, the nation, who can have no other criterion of their merit, must form a judgment of their integrity, or their capacity; and, if the issue is extremely unfortunate, they may often deserve punishment, but surely, in all cases, must forfeit the trust and confidence of the public. It would be an alarming circumstance, if, contrary to this natural course of things, a set of war-ministers, who by their misconduct had produced a series of public disasters, and had brought the nation to the brink of a fatal precipice, were still able to retain their offices, and to proceed in their career. It would show that they were upheld, upon a detestable system of favouritism, and, by a secret interference, threatening to subvert the Constitution.

The application of this remark to our present critical situation is hardly necessary. There surely never was a war more unprosperous than the present, undertaken from

worse motives, or carried on in such a blundering manner. There never was a war, to which the people were excited by such a train of delusion and imposture, or in which their hopes were, from time to time, buoyed up, and their passions enflamed, by such a series of misrepresentations and falsehoods. If the Ministry who planned and conducted this infatuated enterprise shall remain in power after the conclusion of such a peace as Britain, in her untoward circumstances, must be contented to accept, we can have no doubt that there is at the bottom some peculiar cause of so extraordinary a phenomenon, which requires to be investigated; some secret malady, affecting the vitals of the Constitution, for which a remedy cannot be too soon provided.

It is evident, that not only a change of Ministry, but a total change of *measures,* has become indispensably requisite for the preservation of our liberties.

Whoever is acquainted with the principles of our Constitution, and considers the nature of the Revolution-settlement, in 1688, will easily perceive that, from the course of public events, and from the changes in the state of society, great alterations have, since that period, occurred in our political system. By that great transaction, the boundaries of the prerogative were ascertained and fixed, in such a manner as precluded all hazard from any of those encroachments against which the nation, from past experience, had been taught to provide. From this time forward, a new order of things was introduced. The House of Commons, no longer jealous of the Crown, became hearty and liberal in granting supplies; and the expensive wars in which the nation was involved, occasioned a rapid increase of taxes. Ministers, taking advantage of the national spirit, became proportionably daring and rapacious; and when the expence of their projects could not be defrayed within the year, they ventured to borrow a capital, providing only a sum for the annual discharge of the interest. Thus the system of *funding,* which from small beginnings was gradually extended, and has risen to such a monstrous pitch, taught the nation to engage in military undertakings beyond their strength, and rendered her familiar with an endless accumulation of public burthens.

It is unnecessary to observe, that this augmentation of the public revenue, by creating a correspondent increase of patronage, has produced an extension of *influence,* pervading all the different branches of administration, and advancing without end, like the fources from which it is derived. The public revenue, immediately before the Revolution, amounted to about two millions. Supposing that the present war is terminated with all possible expedition, it is believed that our future peace establishment cannot be below twenty-four millions. It would not be difficult to show, did the limits of the present letter admit of such a particular discussion, that this increase of the public revenue, during the period above mentioned, has produced an extension of influence far exceeding the proportion of that increase. But throwing this consideration aside, it must be acknowledged that, by the immense patronage arising from the disposal of so much money; not to mention the church livings in the gift of the crown, the appointments of the East India Company, under the controul and direction of ministry, with many other offices and places of emolument in their nomination, none of which are included in the foregoing calculation of the public revenue, there is produced an universal ascendancy in all the departments of government, which often lulls asleep and palsies our sense of duty, holds in derision

all pretences to public spirit, and seems at length to overbear and destroy all opposition. With what propriety the different powers of government are distributed and balanced, how beautiful the political machine may appear in theory, and with what apparent nicety its various parts are adjusted to one another, is of little importance, if our ministers shall be possessed of a magical instrument, by which they may secretly tamper with all its operations, and controul or direct all its movements!

It was this view of our political state which, in the course of the American war, extorted the memorable declaration from the House of Commons, "that the influence of the Crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished." It was the same view which, upon the conclusion of that war, produced, among men of all ranks, a very general attention to a circumstance of great importance in the government, (though formerly it had excited little concern or uneasiness) the unequal representation of the community in the House of Commons. While the secret influence of ministry, from the limited state of the revenue, was inconsiderable, this deviation from the original principles of our government, which, in a course of time, had proceeded from various causes, was attended, perhaps, with no great inconvenience; but, in consequence of the vast extension of ministerial patronage, it came necessarily to be regarded as a defect, of the utmost magnitude, in the constitution of the legislature.

Notwithstanding the prodigious progress of Ministerial influence and corruption, there still remained one check upon the conduct of every Administration, which had always been considered as the great safeguard of our liberties. Though the doctrine of absolute confidence in Ministers had been exalted to a wonderful pitch, and though their measures could, in ordinary cases, be carried into execution with nearly the same facility as in the most despotical government, it was always expected, that, upon extraordinary occasions, when those measures had become extremely unpopular, the interposition of the House of Commons, by a petition to the Crown, would infallibly produce a change of Ministry, and a consequent change of system. This ultimate controul, it was thought, might prove a terror to evil doers, and might prevent the executive power from shutting its ears to the loud voice of the nation. But the transactions in the year 1784 put an end to that expectation; and demonstrated, that if ever the Crown, from a singular concurrence of accidents, should lose a majority in that House, its Ministers might safely venture upon a dissolution of Parliament as an infallible expedient for supporting their interest. A great majority of the Commons being, in the present state of the representation, returned by the interest of a small number of individuals, a dissolution of Parliament, as far as related to that House, was not, in reality, an appeal to the nation at large, but, in a great measure, an appeal to such of the nobility and gentry as had acquired the direction of *rotten boroughs,* or of certain political districts. After this leading experiment, it became now evident to all the world, that a reform in the mode of electing the national representatives was indispensably requisite, for counteracting the effects of that great influence acquired by Ministers, and for maintaining the free exercise of those powers established at the Revolution.

It was by expressing great zeal in the pursuit of this object, and by professing various opinions of a similar tendency, together with the possession of a pompous and

plausible eloquence, that our Prime Minister had acquired such popularity as rendered him, at the time alluded to, a necessary ally to that collection of the adherents of prerogative which came to be placed at the helm. He continued, when in office, to make some feeble and aukward attempts for promoting a parliamentary reform, but soon acquiesced in the negative which was given to that measure, chiefly by his ministerial friends. How far he had been in earnest in those attempts became evident in 1792, when a motion for the same purpose was brought, from another quarter, under the consideration of Parliament, and countenanced by a society of gentlemen, whose rank and character afforded a sufficient pledge of their good intentions; upon which occasion, this versatile statesman not only opposed the measure with all the weight of ministerial interest, but endeavoured to hold it up to the public as calculated to promote the designs of republicans and levellers. It was, in fact, to disappoint the measures proposed at that time, as I formerly observed, that the war with France was undertaken. Had a temperate reform been then carried into execution, the system of alarm, which has been so artificially spread over the kingdom, would have been superseded; this ruinous war, with all its dreadful consequences, would have been prevented; and the national prosperity would have risen to a height without example in any former period.

But if it was, at that time, a measure of supreme necessity to counteract the tendency of ministerial influence, by correcting the inequality of the national representation, how much more so must it appear at present; when, in consequence of the war, that influence has been so wonderfully extended; and when the terrors which were excited, and the malignant suspicions which were instilled into the minds of men, have contributed to arm our ministers with such new and unprecedented powers? What an implicit faith in those Ministers has been inculcated? With what an absolute dominion over all ranks and orders of men have they been invested? What discretionary powers have been committed to them on pretence of guarding the public safety, though at the expence of personal liberty; and what abuses have been made of these powers by the prosecution and oppressive treatment of innocent persons? What restraints have been imposed upon the liberty of the press, that necessary instrument for checking the encroachments of prerogative? What restraints, what prohibitions have been laid upon the meetings of the people for the defence of their privileges? In a mixed government like ours, is it not the privilege of every British subject to petition the Sovereign; to petition Parliament, whenever he conceives his rights to be invaded? Is not this privilege secured expressly by the *Bill of Rights,* that sacred and fundamental law of the kingdom? But how are men to know when encroachments are made upon their rights; and how are they to petition with any effect for redress, if they are not allowed to meet and converse together upon political subjects? And with what sort of freedom can they communicate their thoughts, and procure mutual information, if they are liable to be silenced, imprisoned, and punished, at the discretion of an officer, appointed by that very executive power of whose oppression they may have occasion to complain?

When a parliamentary reform was proposed, immediately before the commencement of the war, the chief objection, which any person chose to avow, was founded upon a suspicion that the people would not be contented with an amendment of the defects particularly specified, but, in imitation of the French, were, in reality, desirous of a

total revolution. It is hoped the experience we have had, since that period, of the temper and moderation of the people in all parts of the island, will be sufficient entirely to remove this objection, and to satisfy us that the lower orders are in general firmly attached to the British Constitution. They have undergone a severe scrutiny. Their conduct has been strictly watched. No political offences, however trivial, have been overlooked. No pains have been spared to convict offenders; and the law has not withheld her utmost severity from such as were convicted. Nor has the conduct of Administration, with respect to the populace, been of a conciliating nature. But notwithstanding the mortifying suspicions which have been cast upon them, notwithstanding the neglect which their humble petitions in behalf of their favourite object have constantly met with, notwithstanding the invidious distinctions which have unnecessarily and injudiciously been held up between them and the superior ranks, they have never been betrayed into violent or unconstitutional measures; they have never testified any marks of resentment against the ruling powers; and, under the pressure of uncommon difficulties, even in procuring their daily bread, they have waited with patience the issue of a war which they could not approve of, and against which they had in vain remonstrated. Of the many who were capitally prosecuted for political offences, all have been acquitted by the verdict of a Jury, except two obscure persons in Scotland, of whom the principal was a noted spy, that had received a bribe upon the part of the Executive Government.

Upon the whole, if measures are not speedily taken to procure a peace, and to avert the impending evils, it will be impossible to entertain a doubt, that the national prosperity and happiness are sacrificed to the power of the present Ministers, and to the advancement of that ministerial influence and corruption which they have so steadily and successfully cultivated.

It is now time, Sir, that I should conclude these remarks, with expressing my sincere gratitude for your politeness in giving them so indulging a reception in your entertaining and useful repository. I am not vain enough to think that I was capable of throwing any light upon subjects which have already been so much canvassed by men of the greatest abilities; but I wished to correct some mistakes, and to remove some prejudices, which frequently occur in persons exposed to the want of sufficient information; a misfortune of which their superiors are sometimes disposed to take advantage. If I have, in any degree, succeeded in this attempt, my intention is completely answered.—I am,

SIR,
Your Much Obliged Humble Servant,

Crito.