

JOHN TRENCHARD AND THOMAS
GORDON,
*Cato's Letters: or, Essays on Liberty, Civil
and Religious, and Other Important
Subjects. Volume 1 (1755)*

C A T O ' s
L E T T E R S :

O R,

ESSAYS *on* LIBERTY,
CIVIL and RELIGIOUS,

- And other Important SUBJECTS.

In FOUR VOLUMES.

V O L . I

The SIXTH EDITION, corrected.



L O N D O N :

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- Volume 1: November 5, 1720 to June 17, 1721 - facs. PDF
- Volume 2: June 24, 1721 to March 3, 1722 - facs. PDF
- Volume 3: March 10, 1722 to December 1, 1722 - facs. PDF
- Volume 4: December 8, 1722 to December 7, 1723 - facs. PDF

The essays first appeared in the *London Journal* and the *British Journal* between 1 November, 1720 and 7 December, 1723.

Editor's note: The spelling has been modernised, page numbers have been partially added (at the beginning of each article); the rather extravagant use of capital letters and italics has been minimized; the author's name has been added to the title (in the original it was indicated by the initial "G." or "T." at the end of the essay).

Editor's Introduction

To make this edition useful to scholars and to make it more readable, I have done the following:

1. inserted and highlighted the page numbers of the original edition
2. not split a word if it has been hyphenated across a new line or page (this will assist in making word searches)
3. added unique paragraph IDs (which are used in the "citation tool" which is part of the "enhanced HTML" version of this text)
4. retained the spaces which separate sections of the text
5. created a "blocktext" for large quotations
6. moved the Table of Contents to the beginning of the text
7. placed the footnotes at the end of the book
8. formatted short margin notes to float right
9. inserted Greek and Hebrew words as images

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**CATO'S LETTERS:
OR,
ESSAYS ON LIBERTY,
CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS,
AND OTHER IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.
IN FOUR VOLUMES.
VOL. I.
THE SIXTH EDITION, CORRECTED**

**DEDICATION TO JOHN MILNER, ESQ; OF GREAT RUSSEL-
STREET BLOOMSBURY. [Gordon]↵**

[I-iii]

SIR,

As shy as I know you to be of publick notice and eclat, let me for once draw, if not you, your name at least, from that recess which you value in proportion to the measure of felicity that you derive from it, and to your contempt for the blaze and tumult of publick life: A taste to which I have the pleasure of finding my own so entirely conformable.

Quiet passions and an easy mind constitute happiness; which is never found where these are not, and must cease to be, when these cease to support it. Mighty pomp and retinue, glaring equipages, and the attendance of crowds, are signs, indeed burdens, of greatness, rather than proofs of happiness, which I doubt is least felt where these its appearances are most seen. The principal happiness which they seem to bring, is, that other people think them marks of it; and very imperfect must be that happiness which a man derives not from what he himself feels, but from what another imagines. We may indeed be happy in our own dreams, but can never be happy by the dreams of others.

Happiest of all men, to me, seems the private man; nor can the opinion of ill-judging crowds make him less happy, because they may think others more so. He who can live alone without uneasiness, who can survey his past life with pleasure, who can look back without compunction or shame, forward without fear or rebuke; he, whose every day hath produced some good, at least is passed with innocence; the silent benefactor, the ready and faithful friend; he who is filled with secret delight, because he feels his heart full of benevolence, who finds pleasure in relieving and assisting; the domestic man, perhaps little talked of, perhaps less seen, beloved by his friends, trusted and esteemed by all that know him, often useful to such as know him not, enjoys such high felicity as the wealth of kingdoms and the bounty of kings cannot confer.

Imaginary happiness is a poor amend for the want of real. Nor can a better reason than this be urged against envying any man's grandeur and state, however mighty it be, however easy it appear. A great lot is ever accompanied with many cares; and whoever stands constantly in the eyes of the world, will be apt to feel a constant concern (perhaps even to anxiety) how to become his station and degree, or how to raise it, or how to keep it from sinking. The more he is set to view, the more glaring will be any blot in his character, and the more magnified: Nay, malignant eyes will be seeing blots where there are none; and 'tis certain, that, with all his grandeur, nay by the means and help of his grandeur, it will be always in the power of very little people to mortify him, when he can no ways in return hurt them: And thus the least man may become an overmatch for the greatest.

Men are more upon a level than is generally believed; or rather the advantage is commonly where 'tis least imagined, if we take our estimate where it ought to be taken, from the state and measure of their passions; since from this source their happiness or misery arises. Greatness accompanied with vexations, is worse than an humble state void of anxiety; and he who aims not at an elevated lot, is happier than he, who, having it, fears to lose it.

Happiness is therefore from within just as much as is virtue; and the virtuous man enjoys the most.

If with this goodness of mind he be also a wise man, and a master of his passions; if to good sense he have joined other laudable accomplishments, a competent acquaintance with books, with a thorough knowledge of the world, and of mankind; if he be a benevolent neighbour, a useful member of society, perfectly disinterested, and justly esteemed; if he have served and saved great numbers; if he be daily protecting the innocent, daily watching and restraining the guilty; his happiness must be complete, and all his reflections pleasing.

Who this happy man is, where this amiable character to be found, is what I pretend not to inform you; though I am persuaded that few that know you, will ask that question. My purpose here is, to desire your permission to prefix your name to the following edition of *Cato's Letters*, as well as to what I have said of Mr. Trenchard. He esteemed you as much as one man could another: You lived in a long course of intimacy with him: I have long lived, to my great advantage and pleasure, in an equal course of intimacy with you. You saw most of these papers before they came out, and many of them were first left to your perusal and judgment. You know in a great measure which were his, which were mine; and no man else whosoever was concerned or consulted. You know what motives produced them; how remote such motives were from views of interest; and that whilst they continued in full credit with the publick, they were laid down, purely because it was judged that the publick, after all its terrible convulsions, was again become calm and safe.

You can vouch, that, as these letters were the work of no faction or cabal, nor calculated for any lucrative or ambitious ends, or to serve the purposes of any party whatsoever, but that they attacked falsehood and dishonesty in all shapes and parties, without temporizing with any, but doing justice to all, even to the weakest and most unfashionable, and maintaining the principles of liberty against the practices of most parties; so they were dropped without any sordid composition, and without any consideration, save that already mentioned. They had treated of most of the subjects important to the world, and meddled with publick measures and publick men only in great instances.

You know that in the character which I have here given of Mr. Trenchard, I have set him no higher than his own great abilities and many virtues set him; that his failings were small, his talents extraordinary, his probity equal; and that he was one of the worthiest, one of the ablest, one of the most useful men, that ever any country was blessed withal.

You know all the writings which he ever produced, and saw most of them before they were published. You know that whatever he wrote was occasional, the effect of present thought, and for immediate use, and that he never laid up writings in store; an undertaking quite opposite to his turn; and all his acquaintance knew that he could never submit to such a task.

I mention this last particular in justice to him, that he may not be answerable for any work in which he had no share. Because I have been told that some, who knew nothing, or very little of him, perhaps never saw him, have fathered upon him writings which he never wrote; from no kindness to him, but purely because they were not disposed to let me be the author of a work which found such favourable reception from the world, though it was written several years after that worthy man, my friend, was dead. You, who are one of his executors, and saw all his papers, know, as the other executors perfectly do, that he left no writings at all behind him, but two or three loose papers, once intended for *Cato's Letters*,

and afterwards laid aside; which papers of his, with some of mine of the same sort, you have in your hands.

As you have for many years seen whatever I intended for the publick, you know by what intervals I translated Tacitus, and when it was that I wrote the discourses upon that author, since you perused both as I produced them, and the discourses prefixed to the first volume were not begun till three years after his death; nor those to the second till two years after the former. You can therefore vouch what an absurd falsehood they are guilty of who would ascribe these discourses to him, to whose valuable name I ever have done, I ever shall do, all honour and exact justice. Had he really written and owned that work, 'tis more than probable, that the same slanderers would have attributed it to somebody else.

I should not have once mentioned this ridiculous falsehood, which you and many others know to be a complete one in all its parts, had it not in some measure concerned the publick. Let this detection be the punishment of the little malicious minds who invented it; nor can there be a greater, if they have one honest passion remaining, that of shame or any other, to represent them to themselves in their own miserable colours, lying, envious, and contemptible. It is a lot sufficiently wretched, to be obliged to hate one's self; and to be hardened against just shame and remorse, is almost as bad. Doubtless it were better to have no soul, than to have a lying and malicious one; better not to be, than to be a false and spiteful being.

Unhappily for these undiscerning slanderers, who, whilst they mean me a reproach, make me a compliment, many of the reflections in the discourses upon Tacitus, are illustrated from books that have been written, and from facts that have happened since Mr. Trenchard's death, some of them long since his death.

It may be proper here to mention another mistake which has generally prevailed; that a noble peer of a neighbouring nation, now dead, had a chief, at least a considerable hand in *Cato's Letters*. Though what I have already said in this address to you abundantly contradicts this mistake; yet, for the satisfaction of the world, and for the sake of truth and justice, I here solemnly aver (and you well know what I aver to be strictly true) that this noble person never wrote a line of those letters, nor contributed a thought towards them, nor knew who wrote them, till all the world knew; nor was ever consulted about them before or after, nor ever saw any of them till they were published, except one by accident.

I am far from mentioning thus much as any reflection upon that able and learned nobleman, who professed a friendship for Mr. Trenchard and myself, and was so fond of these letters, that, from his great partiality in speaking of them, many people inferred them to be his own. I must add, that he sent once or twice, or oftener, some papers to be published under Cato's name; but as they were judged too particular, and not to coincide with Cato's design, they were not used. He afterwards published some of them in another form. What heightened the report of his being the author of *Cato's Letters*, was, that there then came forth a public print of his lordship, with a compliment at the bottom to him, as Cato. I have been told, that this was officiously done by Mr. Toland.

My regard for the memory of Mr. Trenchard obliges me to take notice also of some men, who, since his death, have thought fit to have been very intimate with him; though, to my knowledge and yours, he hardly ever conversed with them, and always strove to shun them, such of them especially as he found to be void of veracity.

Let me add, that these letters are still so well received by the publick, that the last edition has been long since sold off and for above three years past it was scarcely possible to find a set of them, unless in publick auctions. I mention this, that the present edition may not seem owing to the frequent quotations made from them in our late party-hostilities. I flatter myself, that, as these papers contain truths and reasons eternally interesting to human society, they will at all times be found seasonable and useful. They have already survived all the clamour and obloquy of party, and indeed are no longer considered as party- writings, but as impartial lessons of liberty and virtue. Nor would it be a small recommendation of them to the world (if the world knew you as well as I know you) that they have ever had your approbation. I am therefore very proud, upon this publick occasion, to declare, that I have long experienced your faithful friendship; and that I am, with very great and very sincere esteem,

SIR,

Your most faithful and
Most humble servant,

T. GORDON

THE PREFACE ↩

[I-xxi]

The following letters, first printed weekly, and then most of them gathered into collections from time to time, are now brought all together into four volumes. They were begun in November, 1720, with an honest and humane intention, to call for publick justice upon the wicked managers of the late fatal South-Sea scheme; and probably helped to procure it, as far as it was procured; by raising in a nation, almost sunk in despair, a spirit not to be withstood by the arts and wealth of the powerful criminals. They were afterwards carried on, upon various publick and important subjects, for nigh three years (except a few intermissions, which will appear by the dates) with a very high reputation; which all the methods taken to decry and misrepresent them could not abate.

The pleasing or displeasing of any party were none of the ends of these letters, which, as a proof of their impartiality, have pleased and displeased all parties; nor are any writers proper to do justice to every party, but such as are attached to none. No candid man can defend any party in all particulars; because every party does, in some particulars, things which cannot be defended; and therefore that man who goes blindly in all the steps of his party, and vindicates all their proceedings, cannot vindicate himself. It is the base office of a slave, and he who sustains it breathes improperly English air; that of the Tuilleries or the Divan would suit him better.

The strongest treatise upon the liberty of the press could not so well shew its great importance to civil liberty, as the universal good reception of these papers has done. The freedom with which they are written has been encouraged and applauded even by those who, in other instances, are enemies to all freedom. But all men love liberty for themselves; and whoever contends for slavery, would still preserve himself from the effects of it. Pride and interest sway him, and he is only hard-hearted to all the rest of the world.

The patrons of passive obedience would do well to consider this, or allow others to consider it for them. These gentlemen have never failed upon every occasion to shew effectually, that their patience was nothing increased by their principles; and that they always, very candidly and humanely, excluded themselves from the consequences of their own doctrines. Whatever their speculations have been, their practices have strongly preached, that no man will suffer injustice and violence, when he can help himself.

Let us therefore, without regarding the ridiculous, narrow, and dishonest notions of selfish and inconsistent men, who say and do contradictory things, make general liberty the interest and choice, as it is certainly the right of all mankind; and brand those as enemies to human society, who are enemies to equal and impartial liberty. Whenever such men are friends to truth, they are so from anger or chance, and not for her own sake, or for the sake of society.

I am glad, however, that by reading and approving many of *Cato's Letters*, they have been brought to read and approve a general condemnation of their own scheme. It is more than ever they did before; and I am not without hopes, that what they have begun in passion, may end in conviction. Cato is happy, if he has been the means of bringing those men to think for themselves, whose character it has been to let other men think for them: A

character, which is the highest shame, and the greatest unhappiness, of a rational being. These papers, having fully opened the principles of liberty and power, and rendered them plain to every understanding, may perhaps have their share in preventing, for the time to come, such storms of zeal for nonsense and falsehood, as have thrown the three kingdoms more than once into convulsions. I hope they have largely helped to cure and remove those monstrous notions of government, which have been long instilled by the crafty few into the ignorant many.

It was no matter of wonder that these letters should be ill understood, and maliciously applied, by some, who, having no principles of their own, or vile ones, were apt to wrest Cato's papers and principles to favour their own prejudices and base wishes. But for such as have always professed to entertain the same sentiments of government with Cato, and yet have been offended with his sentiments; as this their offence was neither his fault nor intention, I can only be sorry for their sakes, that the principles which they avowed at all times should displease them at any time. I am willing to believe, that it was not the doctrine, but the application, that disobliged them. Nor was Cato answerable for this; themselves made it, and often made it wrong. All candid and well-bred men (if Cato may be reckoned in the number) abhor all attacks upon the persons and private characters of men, and all little stories invented or revived to blacken them. These are cowardly and barbarous practices; the work and ambition of little and malicious minds: Nor wanted he any such low and contemptible artifices to gain readers. He attended only to general reasonings about publick virtue and corruption, unbiassed by pique or favour to any man. In this upright and impartial pursuit he abused no man's person; he courted no man's fortune; he dreaded no man's resentment.

It was a heavy charge upon Cato, which however wanted not vouchers (if they were in earnest) that he has spoken disrespectfully, nay, insolently, of the King. But this charge has been only asserted. If it were in the least true, I should be the first to own that all the clamour raised against him was just upon him. But the papers vindicate themselves; nor was any prince ever treated with more sincere duty and regard, in any publick or private writings, than his present Majesty has been in these. In point of principle and affection, his Majesty never had a better subject than Cato; and if he have any bad ones, they are not of Cato's making. I know that this nation cannot be preserved, if this establishment be destroyed; and I am still persuaded, that nothing tended more to his Majesty's advantage and popularity, or more to the credit of his administration, or more to the security of the subject, than the pursuing with quick and impartial vengeance those men, who were enemies to all men, and to his Majesty the most dangerous of all his enemies; a blot and a curse to the nation, and the authors of such discontents in some, and of such designs in others, as the worst men wanted, and the best men feared.

In answer to those deep politicians, who have been puzzled to know who were meant by Cicero and Brutus: Intending to deal candidly with them, and to put them out of pain and doubt, I assure them, that Cicero and Brutus were meant; that I know no present characters or story that will fit theirs; that these letters were translated for the service of liberty in general; and that neither reproof nor praise was intended by them to any man living. And if these guessing sages are in perplexity about any other passage in Cato's letters, it is ten to one but the same answer will relieve them. There was nothing in those letters analogous to our affairs; but as they are extremely fine, full of virtue and good sense, and the love of mankind, it was thought worth while to put them into English, as a proper entertainment for English readers. This was the utmost and only view; and it was at least an unkind mistake to suppose any other.

In one of Brutus's letters it is said, "We do not dispute about the qualifications of a master; we will have no master." This is far from being stronger than the original: *Nisi forte non de servitute, sed de conditione serviendi, recusandum est a nobis*. From whence some have inferred, that because Brutus was against having a master, therefore Cato was against having a king: A strange construction, and a wild consequence! As if the translator of Brutus's letters were not to follow the sense of Brutus: Or, as if there were no difference in England between a king and a master, which are just as opposite as king and tyrant. In a neighbouring country, indeed, they say that their monarch is born master of the kingdom; and I believe they feel it; as they do with a witness in Turkey. But it is not so here: I hope it never will be. We have a king made and limited by the law. Brutus having killed one usurper, was opposing another, overturning by violence all law: Where is the parity, or room for it?

The same defence is to be made for the papers that assert the lawfulness of killing Caesar. It has been a question long debated in the world; though I think it admits of little room for debate; the only arguments to be answered being prejudice and clamour, which are fully answered and exposed in these papers. What is said in them can be only applicable to those who do as Caesar and Brutus did; and can no otherwise affect our free and legal government, than by furnishing real arguments to defend it. The same principle of nature and reason that supported liberty at Rome, must support it here and every where, however the circumstances of adjusting them may vary in different places; as the foundations of tyranny are in all countries, and at all times, essentially the same; namely, too much force in the hands of one man, or of a few unaccountable magistrates, and power without a balance: A sorrowful circumstance for any people to fall into. I hope it is no crime to write against so great an evil. The sum of the question is, whether mankind have a right to be happy, and to oppose their own destruction? And whether any man has a right to make them miserable?

Machiavel puts Caesar upon the same foot with the worst and most detestable tyrants, such as Nabis, Phalaris, and Dionysius. "Nor let any man," says he,

deceive himself with Caesar's reputation, by finding him so exceedingly eminent in history. Those who cried him up, were either corrupted by his fortune, or terrified by his power; for whilst his empire continued, it was never permitted to any man to say any thing against him. Doubtless if writers had had their liberty, they could have said as much of him as of Catiline: And Caesar is much the worst of the two, by how much it is worse to perpetrate a wicked thing, than to design it. And this may be judged by what is said of Brutus his adversary; for, not daring to speak in plain terms of Caesar, by reason of his power, they, by a kind of reverse, magnified his enemy.

He afterwards gives a summary of the doleful waste and crying miseries brought upon Rome and upon mankind by the imperial wolves his successors; and adds, that, by such a recapitulation, "it will appear what mighty obligations Rome and Italy, and the whole world, had to Caesar."

I shall say no more of these papers either in general or particular. I leave the several arguments maintained in them to justify themselves, and cannot help thinking that they are supported by the united force of experience, reason, and nature, it is the interest of mankind that they assert; and it is the interest of mankind that they should be true. The opinion of the world concerning them may be known from hence; that they have had more friends and readers at home and abroad than any paper that ever appeared in it; nor does it lessen their praise, that they have also had more enemies.

Who were the authors of these letters, is now, I believe, pretty well known. It is with the utmost sorrow I say, that one of them is lately dead, and his death is a loss to mankind. To me it is by far the greatest and most shocking that I ever knew; as he was the best friend that I ever had; I may say the first friend. I found great credit and advantage in his friendship, and shall value myself upon it as long as I live. From the moment he knew me, 'till the moment he died, every part of his behaviour to me was a proof of his affection for me. From a perfect stranger to him, and without any other recommendation than a casual coffee-house acquaintance, and his own good opinion, he took me into his favour and care, and into as high a degree of intimacy as ever was shewn by one man to another. This was the more remarkable, and did me the greater honour, for that he was naturally as shy in making friendships, as he was eminently constant to those which he had already made. His shyness this way was founded upon wise and virtuous considerations. He knew that in a number of friendships, some would prove superficial, some deceitful, some would be neglected; and he never professed a friendship without a sincere intention to be a friend; which he was satisfied a private man could not be to many at once, in cases of exigency and trial. Besides, he had found much baseness from false friends, who, for his best offices, made him vile returns. He considered mutual friends as under mutual obligations, and he would contract no obligation which he was not in earnest to discharge.

This was agreeable to the great sincerity of his soul, which would suffer him to mislead no man into hopes and expectations without grounds. He would let no body depend upon him in vain. The contrary conduct he thought had great cruelty in it, as it was founding confidence upon deceit, and abusing the good faith of those who trusted in us: Hence hypocrisy on one side, as soon as it was discovered, begot hatred on the other, and false friendship ended in sincere enmity: A violence was done to a tender point of morality, and the reputation of him who did it lost and exposed amongst those who thought that he had the most.

He was indeed so tender and exact in his dealings with all sorts of men, that he used to lay his meaning and purposes minutely before them, and scorned to gain any advantage from their mistaking his intentions. He told them what he would and would not do on his part, and what he expected on theirs, with the utmost accuracy and openness. They at least knew the worst; and the only latitude which he reserved to himself was, to be better than his word; but he would let no man hope for what he did not mean. He thought that he never could be too plain with those whom he had to do with; and as men are apt to construe things most in their own favour, he used to foresee and obviate those their partial constructions, and to fix every thing upon full and express terms. He abhorred the misleading of men by artful and equivocal words; and because people are ready to put meanings upon a man's countenance and demeanor, his sincerity extended even to his carriage and manner; and though he was very civil to every body, he ordered it so, that the forms of his civility appeared to mean no more than forms, and could not be mistaken for marks of affection, where he had none: And it is very true, that a man's behaviour may, without one word said, make professions and promises, and he may play the knave by a kind look.

He used to say, and from knowing him long and intimately I could believe him when he said, that he never broke a promise nor an appointment in his life, in any instance where it was practicable to keep them. If he were to make a visit at an hour, or to meet a friend at an hour, he was always there before the hour. He observed the same severe punctuality in every other engagement of his, and had a very ill opinion of such as did not make every promise of every kind a matter of morality and honour. He considered a man's behaviour in smaller matters, as a specimen of what he would do in matters that were greater; and that a principle

of faithfulness, or the want of it, would shew itself in little as well as in considerable things; that he who would try your patience in the business of an appointment, would fail you in a business of property; that one who promised at random, and misled you without an intention to mislead you, was a trifling man, and wanted honesty, though he had no treachery, as he who did it with design was a knave; that from what cause soever they deceived you, the deceit was the same, and both were equally to be distrusted; that punctuality or remissness, sincerity or perfidiousness, runs, generally, through the whole of a man's life and actions, and you need only observe his behaviour in one or two, to know his behaviour in all; and a negligent man when he is neglected, has no reason to complain, no more than a false man when he is hated. In many instances, negligence has all the effects of falsehood, and is as far from virtue, though not so near vice.

As Mr. Trenchard was wary and reserved in the choice of his friends, so no small faults, no sudden prejudices nor gusts of humour or passion, could shake their interest in him, or induce him to part with them; nor could any calumnies, however artful, nor the most malicious tales and infusions, however speciously dressed up, lessen his regard for them. In those cases, as in all others, he would see with his own eyes, and have full proof, before he believed or condemned. He knew how easily prejudices and stories are taken up; he knew how apt malice and emulation are to creep into the heart of man, and to canker it; how quickly reports are framed, how suddenly improved; how easily an additional word or circumstance can transform good into evil, and evil into good; and how common it is to add words and circumstances, as well as to create facts. He was aware that too many men are governed by ill nature; that the best are liable to prepossessions and misinformation; and that if we listen to every spiteful tale and insinuation that men are prone to utter concerning one another, no two men in the world could be two days' friends. He therefore always judged for himself, unbiassed by passion or any man's authority; and when he did change, it was demonstration that changed him. He carried his tenderness even to his lowest servants; nor could his steward, who had served him many years, and given him long proof of great integrity and good understanding, ever determine him to turn away a servant, till he had satisfied himself that he ought to be turned away. He was not assured but his steward might be prejudiced, notwithstanding his probity: And the steward has told me, that he never went with any complaint to his master, how necessary soever for him to hear, but he went with some uneasiness and diffidence.

No man ever made greater allowances for human infirmities, and for the errors and follies of men. This was a character which he did not bear; but it is religiously true. He knew what feeble materials human nature was made of; perhaps no man that ever was born knew it better. Mankind lay as it were dissected before him, and he saw all their advantages and deformities, all their weaknesses, passions, defects, and excesses, with prodigious clearness, and could describe them with prodigious force. Man in society, man out of society, was perfectly known and familiar to his great and lively understanding, and stood naked to his eye, divested of all the advantages, supplements, and disguises of art. His reasonings upon this subject, as upon all others, were admirable, beautiful, and full of life.

As to his indulgence to human infirmities, he knew that without it every man would be an unsociable creature to another, since every man living has infirmities; that we must take men as they are, or not at all; that it is but mutual equity to allow others what we want and expect to ourselves; that as good and ill qualities are often blended together, so they often arise out of one another: Thus men of great wit and spirit are often men of strong passion and vehemence; and the first makes amends for the last: Thus great humourists are generally very

honest men; and weak men have sometimes great good nature. Upon this foundation no man lived more easy and debonair with his acquaintance, or bore their failings better. Good nature and sincerity was all that he expected of them. But in the number of natural infirmities, he never reckoned falsehood and knavery, to which he gave no quarter. Human weaknesses were invincible; but no man was born a knave: He chooses his own character, and no sincere man can love him.

In his transactions with men, he had a surprising talent at bringing them over to his opinion. His first care was that it was sure, and well-grounded, and important; and then he was a prevailing advocate: He entered into it with all his might; and his might was irresistible. He saw it in its whole extent, with all the reasons and all the difficulties, and could throw both into a thousand surprising lights; and nothing could escape him. This a friend of his used to call bringing heaven and earth into his argument. He had indeed a vast variety of images, a deluge of language, mighty persuasion in his looks, and great natural authority. You saw that he was in earnest; you saw his excellent judgment, and you saw his upright soul.

He had the same facility in exposing and taking to pieces plausible and deceitful reasonings. This he did with vast quickness and brevity, and with happy turns of ridicule. Many a grave argument, delivered very plausibly and at large, in good and well-sounding language, he has quite defeated with a sensible jest of three words, or a pleasant story not much longer. He had a promptness at repartee, which few men ever equalled, and none ever excelled. He saw, with great suddenness, the strength and weakness of things, their justness or ridicule, and had equal excellence in shewing either.

The quickness of his spirit made him sometimes say things which were ill taken, and for which, upon recollection, he himself was always sorry. But in the midst of his greatest heat I never heard him utter a word that was shocking or dangerous: So great was his judgment, and the guard which he kept over himself and over the natural impetuosity of his temper. He was naturally a warm man; but his wisdom and observation gave him great wariness and circumspection in great affairs; and never was man more for moderate and calm counsels, or more an enemy to rash ones. He had so little of revenge in his temper, that his personal resentment never carried him to hurt any man, or to wish him hurt, unless from other causes he deserved it.

He had an immense fund of natural eloquence, a graceful and persuasive manner, a world of action, and a style strong, clear, figurative, and full of fire. He attended to sense much more than to the expression; and yet his expression was noble. Coming late into the House of Commons, and being but one session there, he could not exert his great talent that way with freedom; but the few speeches which he made were full of excellent strong sense; and he was always heard with much attention and respect. Whether he would have ever come to have spoke there with perfect ease and boldness, time, from which he is now taken away, could only shew. It is certain, in that short space he acquired very high esteem with all sorts of men, and removed many prejudices conceived against him, before he shewed himself in publick. He had been thought a morose and impracticable man, an imputation which nothing but ill-will, or ignorance of his true character, could lay upon him. He was one of the gayest, pleasantest men that ever lived; an enchanting companion, and full of mirth and raillery; familiar and communicative to the last degree; easy, kind-hearted, and utterly free from all grimace and stateliness. He was accessible to all men. No man came more frankly into conviction; no man was more candid in owning his mistakes; no man more ready to do kind

and obliging offices. He had not one ambitious thought, nor a crooked one, nor an envious one. He had but one view; to be in the right, and to do good; and he would have heartily joined with any man, or any party of men, to have attained it. If he erred, he erred innocently; for he sincerely walked according to the best light that he had. Is this the character, this the behaviour, of a morose, of an impracticable man? Yet this was the character of Mr. Trenchard, as many great and worthy men, who once believed the contrary, lived to see.

He was cordially in the interest of mankind, and of this nation, and of this government; and never found fault with publick measures, but when he really thought that they were against the publick. According to the views which he had of things, he judged excellently; and often traced attempts and events to their first true sources, however disguised or denied, by the mere force of his own strong understanding. He had an amazing sagacity and compass of thinking; and it was scarce possible to impose appearances upon him for principles: And they who having the same good affections with him, yet sometimes differed in opinion from him, did it often from the difference of their understandings. They saw not so far into the causes and consequences of things: Few men upon earth did; very few. His active and inquisitive mind, full of velocity and penetration, had not the same limits with those of other men: It was all lightning, and dissipated in an instant the doubts and darkness which bewildered the heads of others. In a moment he unravelled the obscurest questions; in a moment he saw the tendency of things. I could give many undeniable instances, where every jot of the events which he foretold came to pass, and in the manner that he foretold. Without doubt, he was sometimes mistaken; but his mistakes did him no discredit; they arose from no defect in his judgment, and from no sourness of mind.

As he wanted nothing but to see the publick prosper, he emulated no man's greatness; but rejoiced in the publick welfare, whatever hands conducted it. No man ever dreaded publick evils more, or took them more to heart: At one time they had almost broke it. The national confusions, distresses, and despair, which we laboured under a few years ago gave him much anxiety and sorrow, which preyed upon him, and endangered his life so much, that had he staid in town a few days longer, it was more than probable he would never have gone out of it alive. He even dreaded a revolution; and the more, because he saw some easy and secure, who ought to have dreaded it most. This was no riddle to him then, and he fancied that he had lived to see the riddle explained to others.

The personal resentment which he bore to a great man now dead, for personal injuries, had no share in the opposition which he gave to his administration, how natural soever it was to believe that it had. He only considered the publick in that opposition; which he would have gladly dropped, and changed opposition into assistance, without any advantage or regard to himself, if he could have been satisfied that that great man loved his country as well as he loved power. Nor did he ever quarrel with any great man about small considerations. On the contrary, he made great allowances for their errors, for the care of their fortunes and families, and even for their ambition, provided their ambition was honestly directed, and the publick was not degraded or neglected, to satiate their domestick pride. He did not vainly expect from men that perfection and heroism which, he knew, were not to be found in men; and he cared not how much good ministers did to themselves, if by it they hurt not their country. He had two things much at heart; the keeping England out of foreign broils, and paying off the publick debts. He thought that the one depended upon the other, and that the fate and being of the nation depended upon the last; and I believe that few men who think at all, think him mistaken. For a good while before he died he was easier, as to those matters, than I had ever known him. He was pleased with the calm that we were in, and entertained favourable hopes

and opinions. Nor is it any discredit to the present administration, that Mr. Trenchard was more partial to it than I ever knew him to any other. In this he sincerely followed his judgment; for it is most certain than he had not one view to himself; nor could any human consideration have withdrawn him from the publick interest. It was hard to mislead him; impossible to corrupt him.

No man was ever more remote from all thoughts of publick employments: He was even determined against them; yet he would never absolutely declare that he would at no time engage in them, because it was barely possible that he might. So nice and severe was his veracity! He had infinite talents for business; a head wonderfully turned for schemes, trains of reasoning, and variety of affairs; extreme promptness, indefatigable industry, a strong memory, mighty dispatch, and great adroitness in applying to the passions of men. This last talent was not generally known to be his: He was thought a positive, uncomplaining man; and in matters of right and wrong he was so. But it is as true, that he knew perfectly how mankind were to be dealt with; that he could manage their tempers with great art, and bear with all their humours and weaknesses with great patience. He could reason or rally, be grave or pleasant, with equal success; and make himself extremely agreeable to all sorts of people, without the least departure from his native candour and integrity. As he chiefly loved privacy and a domestick life, he seldom threw himself in the way of popularity; but where-ever he sought it, he had it. One proof of this may be learned from the great town [*] where he was chosen into Parliament; no man was ever more beloved and admired by any place. He found them full of prejudices against him, and left them full of affection for him. Very different kinds of men, widely different in principle, agreed in loving him equally; and adore his memory, now he is gone. The few sour men who opposed him there, owed him better things, and themselves no credit by their opposition.

In conversation he was frank, cheerful and familiar, without reserve; and entertaining beyond belief. His head was so clear, ready, and so full of knowledge, that I have often heard him make as strong, fine, and useful discourses at his table, as ever he wrote in his closet; though I think he is in the highest class of writers that have appeared in the world. He had such surprizing images, such a happy way of conceiving things, and of putting words together, as few men upon earth ever had. He talked without the pedantry of a man who loves to hear himself talk, or is fond of applause. He was always excellent company; but the time of the day when he shined most, was for three hours or more after dinner: Towards the evening he was generally subject to indigestions. The time which he chose to think in, was the morning.

He was acceptable company to women. He treated them with great niceness and respect; he abounded in their own chit-chat, and said a world of pleasant things. He was a tender and obliging husband; and indeed had uncommon cause to be so, as he well knew, and has shewn by his will: But he had worthy and generous notions of the kind regard which men owe to women in general, especially to their wives; who, when they are bad, may often thank their husbands. This was a theme that he often enlarged upon with great wisdom. He was very partial to the fair sex, and had a great deal of gallantry in his temper.

He was a friendly neighbour: he studied to live well with every body about him; and took a sensible pleasure in doing good offices. He was an enemy to litigiousness and strife; and, I think, he told me, that he never had a law-suit in his life. He was a kind and generous landlord; he never hurried nor distressed any of his tenants for rent, and made them frequent, and unasked, abatements. There were yearly instances of this. He was exact in performing all

his covenants with them, and never forgot any promise that he had made them. Nor did he ever deny any tenant any reasonable favour: But he knew his estate well; they could not easily deceive him: And none but such as did so, or attempted it, were known to complain.

To his servants he was a just and merciful master. Under him they had good usage and plenty; and the worst that they had to apprehend in his service, was now and then a passionate expression. He loved to see cheerful faces about him. He was particularly tender of them in their sickness, and often paid large bills for their cure. For this his compassion and bounty he had almost always ill returns. They thought that every kindness done them, was done for their own sake; that they were of such importance to him, that he could not live without them; and that therefore they were entitled to more wages. He used to observe, that this ingratitude was inseparable from inferior servants, and that they always founded some fresh claim upon every kindness which he did them. From hence he was wont to make many fine observations upon human nature, and particularly upon the nature of the common herd of mankind.

Mr. Trenchard had a liberal education, and was bred to the law; in which, as I have heard some of his contemporaries say, he had made amazing progress. But politicks and the Irish Trust, [*] in which he made a great figure, though very young, took him from the Bar; whither he never had any inclination to return. By the death of an uncle, and his marriage, he was fallen into an easy fortune, with the prospect of a much greater.

He was very knowing, but not learned; that is, he had not read many books. Few books pleased him: Where the matter was not strong, and fine, and laid close together, it could not engage his attention: He out-ran his author, and had much more himself to say upon the subject. He said, that most books were but title pages, and in the first leaf you saw all; that of many books which were valued, half might be thrown away without losing any thing. He knew well the general history and state of the world, and its geography every where. For a gentleman, he was a good mathematician; he had clear and extensive ideas of the astronomical system, of the power of matter and motion, and of the causes and production of things. He understood perfectly the interest of England in all its branches, and the interest and pretensions of the several great powers in Europe, with the state and general balance of trade every where. Upon these subjects, and upon all others that are of use to mankind, he could discourse with marvellous force and pertinency. Perhaps no man living had thought so much and so variously. He had a busy and a just head, and was master of any subject in an instant. He chiefly studied matters that were of importance to the world; but loved poetry, and things of amusement, when the thoughts were just and witty: And no body enjoyed pleasantries more. He had formerly read the classicks, and always retained many of their beautiful passages, particularly from Horace and Lucretius, and from some of the speeches in Lucan. He admired the fire and freedom of the last; as he did Lucretius for the loftiness of his conceptions: And Horace he had almost all by heart. He had the works of Cicero and Tacitus in high esteem: He was not a little pleased when I set about translating the latter. He thought no author so fit to be read by a free people, like this; as none paints with such wisdom and force the shocking deformities of that sort of consuming government, which has rendered almost the whole earth so thin and wretched.

He had a great contempt for logick, and the learning of the Schools; and used to repeat with much mirth an observation of Dr. Smith, late Bishop of Down, his tutor. The doctor used to say, that "Mr. Trenchard's talent of reasoning was owing to his having been so good a logician"; a character for which he was eminent at the university. The truth was, that his

reasoning head made him excel in the subtleties of logick. Reason is a faculty not to be learned, no more than wit and penetration. Having as great natural parts as perhaps any man was ever born with, he wanted none of the shew and assistance of art; and many men, who carry about them mighty magazines of learning and quotation, would have made a poor figure in conversation with Mr. Trenchard. He highly valued learned men, when they had good sense, and made good use of their learning: But mere authorities, and terms, and the lumber of words, were sport to him; and he often made good sport of those who excelled in them. He had endless resources in his own strong and ready understanding, and used to strip such men of their armour of names and distinctions with wonderful liveliness and pleasantry. Having lost all the tackle of their art, they had no aids from nature. False learning, false gravity, and false argument, never encountered a more successful foe. Extraordinary learning and extraordinary wit seldom meet in one man: The velocity of their genius renders men of great wit incapable of that laborious patience necessary to make a man very learned. Cicero and Monsieur Bayle, had both, and so had our Milton and George Buchanan. I could name others; but all that I could mention are only exceptions from a general rule. As to Mr. Trenchard, the character of Aper, the Roman orator, suits him so much, that it seems made for him.

Aprum ingenio potius & vi naturae quam institutione & literis famam eloquentiae consecutum—communi eruditione imbutus, contemnebat potius literas quam nesciebat: Ingenium ejus nullis alienarum artium inniti videretur. Dialog. de Oratoribus.

He was not fond of writing; his fault lay far on the other side. He only did it when he thought it necessary. Even in the course of the following letters, he was sometimes several months together without writing one; though, upon the whole, he wrote as many, within about thirty, as I did. He wrote many such as I could not write, and I many such as he would not. But in this edition, to satisfy the curiosity of the publick, I have marked his and my own with the initial letters of our different names at the end of each paper. To him it was owing, to his conversation and strong way of thinking, and to the protection and instruction which he gave me, that I was capable of writing so many. He was the best tutor that I ever had, and to him I owed more than to the whole world besides. I will add, with the same truth, that, but for me, he never would have engaged in any weekly performance whatsoever. From any third hand there was no assistance whatever. I wanted none while I had him, and he sought none while he had me.

His notions of God were noble and refined; and if he was obnoxious to bigots, it was for thinking more honourably of the deity, and for exposing their stupid, sour, and narrow imaginations about him. There was more instruction in three *extempore* sentences of his upon this subject, than in threescore of their studied sermons. He taught you to love God; they only to dread him. He thought the gospel one continued lesson of mercy and peace; they make it a lasting warrant for contention, severity, and rage. He believed that those men, who found pomp and domination in the self-denying example and precepts of Jesus Christ, were either madmen, or worse—not in earnest; that such as were enemies to liberty of conscience, were enemies to human society, which is a frail thing kept together by mutual necessities and mutual indulgences; and that, in order to reduce the world to one opinion, the whole world must be reduced to one man, and all the rest destroyed.

He saw, with just indignation, the mad, chimerical, selfish, and barbarous tenets maintained by many of the clergy, with the mischievous effects and tendency of these tenets: He saw, as every man that has eyes may, that for every advantage which they have in the world, they are beholden to men and societies; and he thought it downright fraud and impudence, to claim as a gift from God, what all mankind knew was the manifest bounty of men, and the policy of states, or extorted from them; that ecclesiastical jurisdiction and revenues could have no other possible original; that it was a contradiction to all truth, to Christianity, and to all civil government, to allow them any other; that the certain effect of detaching the priesthood from the authority of the civil magistrate, was to enslave the civil magistrate, and all men, to the priesthood; and these claims of the clergy to divine right and independency, raised a combustion, a civil schism in the state (the only schism dangerous to society) made the laity the property or the enemies of the clergy, and taught the clergy avowed ingratitude for every bounty, indulgence, privilege, and advantage, which the laity, or any layman, could bestow upon them; since having all from God, they could consider laymen only as intruders, when laymen meddled with celestial rents, and pretended to give them what God had given them. I am apt to think that from this root of spiritual pride proceeds the too common ingratitude of clergymen to their patrons for very good livings. They think it usurpation in laymen to have church benefices in their gift. Hence their known abhorrence of impropriations; and we all know what they mean, when they find so much precipitancy and so many errors in the Reformation. It was a terrible blow to church dominion, and gave the laity some of their own lands again.

Some will say, that these are only a number of hot-headed men amongst the clergy; and I say, that I mean no other: I only wish that the cool heads may be the majority. That there are many such, I know and congratulate; and I honour with all my heart the many bishops and doctors, who are satisfied with the condition of the clergy, and are friends to conscience and civil liberty; for both which some of them have contended with immortal success.

But whatever offence the high claimers of spiritual dominion gave Mr. Trenchard, he was sincerely for preserving the Established Church, and would have heartily opposed any attempt to alter it. He was against all levelling in church and state, and fearful of trying experiments upon the constitution. He thought that it was already upon a very good balance; and no man was more falsely accused of an intention to pull it down. The establishment was his standard; and he was only for pulling down those who would soar above it, and trample upon it. If he offended churchmen, while he defended the legal church, the blame was not his. He knew of no authority that they had, but what the laws gave them; nor can they shew any other. The sanctions of a thousand synods, the names and volumes of ten thousand fathers, weigh not one grain in this argument. They are no more rules to us, than the oracles of Delphos, no more than a college of augurs. Acts of Parliament alone constitute and limit our church government, and create our clergy; and upon this article Mr. Trenchard only asserted what they themselves had sworn. Personally he used them with great civility wherever he met them; and he was for depriving them of no part of their dignities and reversions. As to their speculative opinions, when he meddled with them, he thought that he might take the same liberty to differ with them, which they took to differ with one another. For this many of them have treated his name very barbarously, to their own discredit. Laymen can sometimes fight, and be friends again. The officers and soldiers of two opposite camps, if they meet out of the way of battle, can be well-bred and humane to each other, and well-pleased together, though they are to destroy one another next day. But, I know not how it happens, clerical heat does not easily cool; it rarely knows moderation or any bounds, but

pursues men to their death; and even after death it pursues them, when they are no longer subject to the laws or cognizance of men. It was not more good policy than it was justice in these angry men, to charge Mr. Trenchard with want of religion; as it is owning that a man may be a most virtuous man, and an excellent member of society, without it. But, as nothing is so irreligious as the want of charity; so nothing is more indiscreet.

As passionate as he was for liberty, he was not for a Commonwealth in England. He neither believed it possible, nor wished for it. He thought that we were better as we were, than any practicable change could make us; and seemed to apprehend, that a neighbouring republick was not far from some violent shock. I wish that he may have been mistaken; but the grounds of his opinion were too plausible.

I have before owned that he was passionate; but he shewed it only in instances where it was not worth while to watch and restrain his temper. In things of moment, or when he had a mind not to be provoked, no man was more sedate and calm. I have often seen him laugh a peevish man out of his peevishness, and without being angry, make others very angry. If he had a mind to dive into any man's designs, in which he was very successful, or meant to gain any end upon him, it was impossible to ruffle him. He was only hasty, when he was inadvertent. There was a rapidity and emotion in his way of talking, which sometimes made him thought warm when he was not. *Etsi vehemens, nondum iratus*; as I think Tully says of himself upon the like occasion. He was likewise apt to give quick answers to impertinent questions, and to mortify men who he thought talked knavishly. Hence chiefly he was called a hot man. Little things sometimes provoked him, but great provocations set him a thinking; and he was capable of bearing great losses, opposition, and disappointments, with signal temper and firmness. He was very merry with those who wrote scurrilously against him, and laughed heartily at what they thought he resented most. Not many days before he died, he diverted himself with a very abuseful book written by a clergyman, and pointed personally at him; by a clergyman highly obliged to his family, and always treated with great friendship by himself.

He had a noble fortune, of which he took such care as a wise man should. He understood husbandry and improvements excellently, and every place where he came was the better for him. But though he was careful to preserve his estate, he was no ways anxious to increase it. He kept a genteel and a plentiful table, and was pleased to see it well filled: He had a great number of servants, and daily employed several tradesmen and many labourers. So that of his whole yearly income he saved little at the year's end, not above two or three hundred pounds. This will appear strange to most people, who generally believed that he saved great sums: But I know what I say, and it is plain from the personal estate which he has left.

As to his family, which I mention last, because it is the last thing upon which a wise man will value himself; it is one of the ancientest in England, and well allied: His ancestors came over with William the Norman; and there has been a good estate in the name ever since. He left no child, and his three sisters are his heirs. I know but one family now remaining of the name, Mr. George Trenchard's, of Dorsetshire, a member of the House of Commons; and I believe the estate in both families is worth near ten thousand pounds a year.

He died of an ulcer in the kidneys, after an illness of five weeks and some days; and he died like a wise man, with great resignation and calmness of spirit, quite free from all false fears or panick terrors, and without one struggle or convulsion. The day before his death he talked to me much and often of an affair which regarded myself; and which, were I to

mention it, would shew the great concern and tenderness that he had for me. He died in the fifty-fifth year of his age. I saw him expire, and these hands helped to close his eyes; the saddest office that ever they performed.

In his person he was a strong, well-set man, but of a sickly constitution, and scarce ever in perfect health. He thought too much, and with too much solicitude: This without doubt impaired, and at last wore out, the springs of life: The vigour and activity of his head caused him many bodily disorders, whatever he did, he did intensely; and no man was ever more turned for the *hoc agere*. What Livy says of Cato the Elder, suits Mr. Trenchard extremely; *Versatile ingenium sic pariter ad omnia fuit, ut natum ad id unum diceres, quodcunque ageret*. He had a manly face, and a fair sanguine complexion; regular features, a look of great good sense, and a lively black eye, so full of fire, that several people have told me that they could not bear to look him in the face. I have heard the same observation made of his father, who, by all accounts, was a gentleman of much wit and spirit.

To conclude: He had extraordinary abilities, extraordinary virtues, and little failings, and these arising from good qualities: He was passionate from the quickness of his parts; and his resentments arose from things which his heart abhorred. I will end his character as Livy does that of Cicero. The words are extremely pertinent:

*Vir magnus, acer, memorabilis fuit, & in cujus laudes exsequendas,
Cicerone laudatore opus fuerit. Fragm. Livii.*

Thus much, I hope, I may be permitted to have said of this great and upright man, and my excellent friend, before the following work; and much more I could have said. His character was as little known, as his name was much. Many sorts of men and causes combined to misrepresent him. Some were provoked by his honest freedom; others emulated his reputation; some traduced him through prejudice, some through folly. But no good man that knew him thoroughly could be his enemy; and what enemies he had, malice, misinformation, or his own virtue, made.

The world has few such men as Mr. Trenchard; and few men in it will be missed so much. His parts, his spirit, and his probity, will be remembered, and perhaps wanted, when the prejudices raised against him will be dead and forgotten with the passions that raised them.



CATO'S LETTERS

[Vol. I.: November 5, 1720 to June 17, 1721]

No. 1. SATURDAY, November 5, 1720.

Reasons to prove that we are in no Danger of losing Gibraltar. [Gordon] ↪

SIR,

As I have heard, with concern, the report of our being in danger of losing Gibraltar, lately revived; so I had no small pleasure to see, in the generality of the people, a just sense of the great importance of that place to the trade and security of England.

All men, in truth, shew their opinion of it, by the fears which they express about it; and if we set aside (as unworthy of mention) a few prostitute hirelings, who go about coffee-houses to drop, as far as they dare, stupid and villainous reasons for giving it up: I say, excepting such a contemptible few, I defy those, who for vile ends, or to make good vile bargains, would gladly have it surrendered, to pick out of all the people of England, one honest, rational, and disinterested man, to concur with them in it.

Thank God, in spite of the folly of parties, and the arts of betrayers, we see in all men a steady, warm and unanimous spirit for the preservation of Gibraltar; and I hope to see shortly the time, when we shall, with the same frankness and unity, exercise our reason and our eyesight in other matters, in which we are at present misled, either by infatuation, or false interest.

There are two things which surprize me in the many apprehensions which we have had about Gibraltar. The first is, the great diffidence manifested by such fears: Men must be far gone in distrust, before they could come to suspect, that their superiors could ever grow so much as indifferent about a place of such consequence to their country; and to suppose them capable of giving it up, is to suppose them capable of giving up Portsmouth, nay, England itself. Such suppositions must therefore be unjust, and the height of ignorance or spleen. Can it be imagined, that men of honour would forfeit their reputation, patriots sacrifice a bulwark of their country, or wise men venture their heads, by such a traitorous, shameful and dangerous step?

But, say some, perhaps it will be suffered to be taken by surprize; and then all the blame will only rest upon some obscure officer, who may easily be given up or kept out of the way, while those who contrived the roguery, and felt the reward of it, will be as loud in their

resentments, as others who love their country well enough to grieve for its disgrace or its losses.

I know, indeed, that all this has been said more than once, and some plausible circumstances urged, to shew that it was not absolutely groundless. But, alas, what a poor plot would here be! A farce of treachery and nonsense, visible to the weakest of mankind, and only fit to raise hatred and contempt towards the wretched framers of it. This would be to deal with us as with a nation of idiots, blind and insensible, who can neither see day-light, nor feel injuries, nor return insolent usage. No, no, we are not as yet to be hood-winked by such thin schemes: We can ask, if need were, a few plain questions, which would easily puzzle such feeble politicians; but at present we have no occasion.

All this, however, shews how much we are apt to suspect foul play in this, and many other cases of the like nature; nor shall I now maliciously enquire, to what prevailing cause such distrust is to be ascribed.

Another thing, at which I am apt to wonder, is, that, considering how much our credit is concern'd to clear ourselves from the charge of any base purpose, of being willing that Gibraltar should be given away, we have not yet done it, at least in any publick and satisfactory manner: The mistaken people will say, and have said, that our silence is a confession of our guilt; and that if their censures and suppositions had not been just, it was in our power publickly to have confuted and removed them; neither of which we have done, but suffered them to remain under painful fears, and ourselves under the suspicion of neither regarding their interest, nor their ease, nor our own credit.

Why did you not, say they, tell all the world how much you were wronged, and belied, in a declaration, said to be the Regent's of France, which expressly asserted, that a bargain was made to give away Gibraltar? Why did you not demonstrate, that you were at least as willing to preserve your own towns, as to conquer countries for other people, who are remarkable for doing you as little service as they possibly can? Why did you suffer it to be suggested, with the least colour of probability, that you would rather throw away what was your own, than not procure for foreign allies, at your expence, what was none of theirs? Why do we fight, why conquer, if we must thus condescend to implore the vanquished, graciously to grant peace to us the conquerors, for which we will humbly pay them with part of our dominions? And how came foreign states, most of them slaves, to be more in your favour, than Old England, which is a nursery of freemen?

All these are malicious questions, though I hope groundless; but as they are proposed by many thousands of his Majesty's liege subjects, in a modest and serious way, methinks it would be a seasonable piece of discretion and good policy, to prove them groundless.

For God's sake, let us answer, if we can answer; and if our innocence can be shewn, as no doubt it can, let it be shewn. It will not even be enough, that Gibraltar is never given up, but we ought to purge ourselves from the imputation of ever having entertained so criminal an intention. If we can do this, it will recover us some part of the credit and confidence which we have lost by not doing of it. I therefore hope, and humbly propose, that we may soon see some able and sagacious pen, instead of making panegyricks upon us, make apologies for us.

In the mean time, permit me to give here three unanswerable reasons why Gibraltar cannot either be given up, or taken:

First, because Secretary Grimaldo says it. [✱]

Secondly, it would make South-Sea stock fall: And,

Thirdly, and lastly, we have wise and honest governors.

G

I am, &c.

No. 2. SATURDAY, November 12, 1720.

The fatal Effects of the South-Sea Scheme, and the Necessity of punishing the Directors.
[Gordon] ↩

[I-5]

SIR,

The terrible circumstances of our French neighbours, under the plague in some places, expecting it in others, and dreading it in all, is a loud warning to us, to take all expedients and possible precautions against such a formidable calamity.

We have already had, and still have, a contagion of another sort, more universal, and less merciful, than that at Marseilles: The latter has destroy'd, we are told, about sixty thousand lives; ours has done worse, it has render'd a much greater number of lives miserable, who want but the sickness to finish their calamity; either by rendering it complete, or by putting an end to them and that together.

Indeed, had the alternative been offered us half a year ago, I think it would have been a symptom of wisdom in us to have chosen rather to fall by the hand of God, than by the execrable arts of stock-jobbers: That we are fallen, is a sorrowful truth, not only visible in every face which you meet, but in the destruction of our trade, the glory and riches of our nation, and the livelihood of the poor.

But complaining does not mend the matter; yet what sensible heart can avoid complaining, when he hears his country, a whole country, a potent nation, a nation happy in its climate, in its prince, and in its laws, groaning under mighty evils brought upon it by mean and contemptible hands, and apprehending evils still more mighty? This gives bitterness to a humane spirit, though it suffer not otherwise than by sympathy. Is there no way left of doing ourselves justice, and has the death of our prosperity extinguished all sense of our injuries?

'Tis true, it is both prudent and religious in private persons, to stifle the notions of revenge, and calmly to expect reparation from God and the law: But jealousy and revenge, in a whole people, when they are abused, are laudable and politick virtues; without which they will never thrive, never be esteemed. How far they are to carry their resentments, I do not pronounce: The measures of it must be determined by circumstances; but still keen resentment ought to be shewn, and some punishment, or punishments, inflicted. When the dignity or interest of a nation is at stake, mercy may be cruelty.

To this spirit of jealousy and revenge, was formerly the Roman commonwealth beholden for the long preservation of its liberty; the Venetian commonwealth owes its preservation to the same spirit; and liberty will never subsist long where this spirit is not: For if any crimes against the publick may be committed with impunity, men will be tempted to commit the greatest of all; I mean, that of making themselves masters of the state; and where liberty ends in servitude, it is owing to this neglect. Caesar thought that he might do what he had seen Marius and Sulla do before him, and so enslaved his country: Whereas, had they been hanged, he would, perhaps, never have attempted it.

I bring these examples to prove, that nations should be quick in their resentments, and severe in their judgments. As never nation was more abused than ours has been of late by the dirty race of money-changers; so never nation could with a better grace, with more justice, or greater security, take its full vengeance, than ours can, upon its detested foes. Sometimes the greatness and popularity of the offenders make strict justice unadvisable, because unsafe; but here it is not so, you may, at present, load every gallows in England with directors and stock-jobbers, without the assistance of a sheriff's guard, or so much as a sigh from an old woman, though accustom'd perhaps to shed tears at the untimely demise of a common felon or murderer. A thousand stock-jobbers, well trussed up, besides the diverting sight, would be a cheap sacrifice to the Manes of trade; it would be one certain expedient to soften the rage of the people; and to convince them that the future direction of their wealth and estates shall be put into the hands of those, who will as effectually study to promote the general benefit and publick good, as others have, lately, most infamously sacrificed both to their own private advantage. Something is certainly due to both the former. The resurrection of honesty and industry can never be hoped for, while this sort of vermin is suffered to crawl about, tainting our air, and putting every thing out of course; subsisting by lies, and practising vile tricks, low in their nature, and mischievous in their consequences.

That a multitude of families are ruined, and suddenly sunk from plentiful circumstances to abject poverty, is affecting and lamentable; though perhaps all owing to their own rash confidence in the management of known knaves: That innocent children, born, as they imagin'd, to fair fortunes, and brought up accordingly, must now want bread, or beg it, is a catastrophe that must pierce every tender heart, and produce pity and tears: But to see one's country labouring under all the sad symptoms of distress, without the violence of war, without the diabolical refinements of able politicians; but purely from the dull cunning of inferior rogues, void of bravery, void of abilities; wretches that would run away in the field, and be despised in assemblies; this is what should turn pity into rage, and grief into vengeance.

For a nation to suffer itself to be ill used, is of dangerous example; whether those that use it ill be its neighbours or its natives. Patience, in this case, invites fresh injuries; and that people, who would not bear many unjust burdens, must not bear one.

A country, as I said above, ought to do itself justice with speed, as well as with vigour: Delay has often rendered a cure impossible in the body politick, as well as in human bodies: By delays, the edge of resentment goes off, and the offender has leisure to fortify himself by new rogueries.

I would therefore have my countrymen take advantage of the humour that they are in, and make a virtue of their present anger. Let them rouse the bold spirit of a free nation; and shew by all lawful and loyal means, that they who always scorned to be the property of tyrants, will not be the prey of stock-jobbers.

G

I am, &c.

No. 3. SATURDAY, November 19, 1720.

The pestilent Conduct of the South-Sea Directors, with the reasonable Prospect of publick Justice. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[I-10]

SIR,

A man robbed in his house, or on the highway, receives from the law all possible satisfaction: He has the restitution of his goods again, where it can be made; he has the life of the offender, if he can be apprehended; and there is a plentiful reward given for every such apprehension. By this salutary method, vengeance is at once taken for the crime committed, and a terrible example made of its author, to prevent its repetition.

The law is the great rule in every country, at least in every free country, by which private property is ascertained, and the publick good, which is the great end of all laws, is secured; and the religious observance of this rule, is what alone makes the difference between good laws, and none. The terror and sanctity of the laws are shewn by the execution of them; and to a contempt of the laws, or to a direct dispensing with them, have been owing most of the shocks and revolutions, that we have, for many ages, sustained in England.

Some laws are, indeed, unwarily made, being procured by passion, craft, or surprize; but such are generally either suffered to wax obsolete, or are repealed, as we have seen in many instances, and may yet see in more.

But I speak here of those laws which have a direct and known tendency to secure to us what we have, and to preserve us what we are: A free people are kept so, by no other means than an equal distribution of property; every man, who has a share of property, having a proportionable share of power; and the first seeds of anarchy (which, for the most part, ends in tyranny) are produced from hence, that some are ungovernably rich, and many more are miserably poor; that is, some are masters of all means of oppression, and others want all the means of self-defence.

What progress we have lately made in England, towards such a blessed state of confusion and misery, by the credulity of the people, throwing their all upon the mercy of base-spirited, hard-hearted villains, mischievously trusted with a power to undo them, is too manifest from the woeful condition that we are in. The ruin is general, and every man has the miserable consolation to see his neighbour undone: For as to that class of ravens, whose wealth has cost the nation its all, as they are manifest enemies to God and man, no man can call them his neighbours: They are rogues of prey, they are stock-jobbers, they are a conspiracy of stock-jobbers! A name which carries along with it such a detestable and deadly image, that it exceeds all human invention to aggravate it; nor can nature, with all her variety and stores, furnish out any thing to illustrate its deformities; nay, it gains visible advantage by the worst comparisons that you can make: Your terror lessens, when you liken them to crocodiles and cannibals, who feed, for hunger, on human bodies.

These monsters, therefore, stand single in the creation: They are stock-jobbers; they have served a whole people as Satan served Job; and so far the Devil is injured, by any analogy that you can make between him and them.

Well; but monsters as they are, what would you do with them? The answer is short and at hand, hang them; for, whatever they deserve, I would have no new tortures invented, nor any new death devised. In this, I think, I shew moderation; let them only be hanged, but hanged speedily. As to their wealth, as it is the manifest plunder of the people, let it be restored to the people, and let the publick be their heirs; the only method by which the publick is ever like to get millions by them, or indeed any thing.

But, say some, when did you ever see rogues covered with wealth, brought to the axe or the gallows? I own that the example is rare, more is the shame of this nation, which has had such rich temptations, and such frequent opportunities; we have had publick guilt in abundance, God knows, often protected by party, and often by money. Faction on one side, and riches on the other, have, as it were, made a lane for the great criminals to escape. But all these escapes, which are, indeed, our reproach, cannot give any ground to fear a present one.

This nation has formerly been bought and sold; but arts were used to blind the people's eyes, the effects of the treachery were not immediately felt; and we know that the resentment of the vulgar never follows from their understanding, or their reflection, but from their feeling: A pick-pocket may tickle a plain fellow's ear, till he has got his purse; but if he feel it going, he will knock the thief down.

We have felt our pockets picked, and we know who have done it: vengeance abides them.

I am told, that some of them have the face to pretend, that they ought not to be put to death; but we hope that the legislature will effectually convince them, that this their partiality to themselves is groundless: All their hopes of safety must consist in their money; and without question, they will try to make the wages of their villainy protect their villainy. But I cannot see how any sums can save them; for as they have robbed and cheated all men, except their accomplices, so all men are concerned to see justice done to themselves; and if the ordinary channels of justice could be stopped by bags of money, or by partnership in original guilt, the enraged, the abused people, might be prompted by their uppermost passion, and having their resentment heightened by disappointment, might, it is to be feared, have recourse to extraordinary ways; ways that are often successful, tho' never justifiable.

Here are no parties in this case to disguise truth, and obstruct justice; the calamity is general, so is the resentment: All are sufferers, all will be prosecutors. The cry for justice is loud and united; if it be balked, I can prophesy no good from so cruel an omission.

If this mighty, this destructive guilt, were to find impunity, nothing remains, but that every villain of a daring and avaricious spirit may grow a great rogue, in order to be a great man. When a people can no longer expect redress of publick and heavy evils, nor satisfaction for publick and bitter injuries, hideous is the prospect which they have before them. If they will tamely suffer a fall from plenty to beggary, they may soon expect another, and a worse, from that to slavery: But I hope better things of England.

I have before my eyes a wise and beneficent prince, a generous and publick-spirited Parliament, an able and disinterested ministry; all contending with each other for the wealth, the glory, the liberty of their country: And I have before my eyes a brave and honest people, lovers of trade and industry, free of their money, and well-deserving of the legislature, passionate for liberty, and haters of chains; but deluded, drained of their money, and abused beyond patience, beyond expression, by mean sharpers, that swagger in the plunder of their country.

Where therefore there is so much capacity, and there are so many good dispositions to help us on one side; such loud and melancholy calls, for that help on another side; such open, such execrable, such publick crimes, from a third quarter; we may hope every thing from the speedy meeting of the King and Parliament. They are our protectors, and we trust that they do not bear the sword in vain.

I doubt not but many schemes will be laid before them, some of them designed for a source of new rogueries, and to prevent enquiries into the old ones. It shall be the business therefore of this paper, to watch and examine such schemes; and to condemn them, or recommend them, just as they deserve.

I have, you see, taken the guilt of our traitors for granted, as I think all men do: But because they shall have all fair play, I undertake hereafter, if it be found necessary, to prove it by an induction of particulars.

G

I am, &c.

No. 4. SATURDAY, November 26, 1720.

Against false Methods of restoring Publick Credit. [Gordon] ↩

[I-15]

SIR,

All men are now taught, by miserable experience, that the project of the South-Sea, through the hard-hearted knavery of some, who have been in the direction of it, and through the folly or rather distraction of the people, has not answered the good and wise ends designed by the Parliament; but instead of that, has ruined thousands of innocent and well-meaning people, to glut harpies and publick robbers with millions: Unhappy fate of poor England, worthy of a better! For this, trade has been neglected: For this, industry discouraged: For this, credit undone; and all, that stock-jobbers might make fortunes, and small sharpers grow mighty men.

Every one, therefore, seems to agree, that something is necessary to be done, in a legal way, to restore, once more, our publick credit. But it is hoped, we are far from consenting, that any thing ought to be done to repair the losses, occasioned by folly and covetousness, out of the estates of those, who always foresaw, who always opposed this mighty mischief; much less at the further expence of the honour and trade of the nation.

To set this matter in a due light, it is necessary to enquire what is meant by the publick credit of the nation.

First, credit may be said to run high, when the commodities of a nation find a ready vent, and are sold at a good price; and when dealers may be safely trusted with them, upon reasonable assurance of being paid.

Secondly, when lands and houses find ready purchasers; and when money is to be borrowed at low interest, in order to carry on trade and manufacture, at such rates, as may enable us to undersell our neighbours.

Thirdly, when people think it safe and advantageous to venture large stocks in trade and dealing, and do not lock up their money in chests, or hide it under-ground. And,

Fourthly, when notes, mortgages, and publick and private security will pass for money, or easily procure money, by selling for as much silver or gold as they are security for; which can never happen, but upon a presumption that the same money may be had for them again.

In all these cases, 'tis abundantly the interest of a nation, to promote credit and mutual confidence; and the only possible way effectually to do this, is to maintain publick honour and honesty; to provide ready remedies for private injustice and oppression; to protect the innocent and helpless from being destroyed by fraud and rapine.

But national credit can never be supported by lending money without security, or drawing in other people to do so; by raising stocks and commodities by artifice and fraud, to unnatural and imaginary values; and consequently, delivering up helpless women and orphans, with the ignorant and unwary, but industrious subject, to be devoured by pick-pockets and stock-jobbers; a sort of vermin that are bred and nourished in the corruption of the state.

This is a method, which, instead of preserving publick credit, destroys all property; turns the stock and wealth of a nation out of its proper channels; and, instead of nourishing the body-politick, produces only ulcers, eruptions, and often epidemical plague-sores: It starves the poor, destroys manufactures, ruins our navigation, and raises insurrections, &c.

The first loss is always the least; one half of the nation is ruined already; I hope we may learn wit from our misfortunes, and save the other half: In order to this, we may expect, that no new projects will be countenanced or received, which have any tendency to prejudice trade, or which cause monopolies, or set up exclusive companies; and that no privileges or advantages be granted, for which ready money might be got.

Some people have the assurance to publish it, for example, that a certain set of stock-jobbers, whose faith and modesty are now well known and felt, expect, among other gifts from the publick, that the island of St. Christophers should be given them, as a further expedient to get more wealth to themselves, and leave the nation none. Now, St. Christophers is worth three hundred thousand pounds sterling, and will yield so much: So that to present them with this island, would be just making them a present of three hundred thousand pounds; a sum almost sufficient to make the fortune of an under-South-Sea clerk; but such a sum as this poor nation cannot at present spare.

I hope, therefore, that it will no longer be impudently alledged, that by parting with such gifts, we lose nothing; since that alone is worth nothing, for which nothing can be got. But the case is otherwise here; and from the nature of our publick gaming, and the spirit of the worthy sharpers who direct it, I dare pronounce before-hand, that every scheme which they themselves propose, to make their bubble and their roguery thrive again, will still be built upon the farther expence, upon the farther loss and misery of these unhappy nations.

If our money be gone, thank God, our eyes are left: Sharpened by experience and adversities we can see through disguises, and will be no more amused with moon-shine.

The nation and Parliament have been abused, and they will undoubtedly be revenged; they will not be put off with dark juggling, with knavish projects, to stifle resentments, and divert due vengeance: There is no attending to any new schemes, till the publick robbers are punished, with whom there can never be any accommodation.

To begin then, in the first place, with the criminals, will shew that we are in earnest champions for honesty, for trade, for the nation, all oppressed by money-leaches. All other remedies will be mountebank remedies: It would be madness to concert new schemes, liable to new abuses, without first doing justice to the abusers of the old; impunity for past crimes is a warrant to commit more, especially when they are gainful.

Such mighty mischiefs as these men have done, will be but meanly atoned for by such infamous lives, unless their estates be also confiscated; and even these, great as they are, will repair but part of our misfortunes. But what we can have of them, let us have; their necks and their money.

To begin with any other project, they will take for a confession, that there is a design to save them; and to what that must be owing, we all know: What farther evils it may produce, may even surpass our fears, though already terribly great; but a method of justice presently entered upon, and impartially carried through, will give us patience under our burdens, banish all our fears, give credit to the publick proceedings, and restore hope to the almost

despairing people.

G

I am, &c.

No. 5. SATURDAY, December 3, 1720.

A further Call for Vengeance upon the South-Sea Plunderers; with a Caution against false Patriots. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[I-20]

SIR,

This great nation, undone by despicable stock-jobbers and their abettors, has hitherto quietly groaned under the merciless hands of its pillagers, and lived for some months upon the pure hopes of redress. We looked towards the Parliament: His Majesty and his ministry being absent, and busied with the affairs of this kingdom abroad, in the glorious aims of settling the peace of Europe, in strengthening the Protestant interest.

The first part of our hopes is now almost accomplished, the Parliament are just upon meeting; and never, sure, did ever session open with greater expectation, or with more to do: Every thing is turned topsy-turvy; and the nation, thrown into convulsions, is waiting for the healing hand of its representatives.

Many expedients will, no doubt, be offered without doors; calculated, in appearance, to improve the stock, but, in reality, designed to save the directors. This is to begin at the wrong end. To pretend to form schemes for the increasing of credit, before the destroyers, the cannibals of credit, are honestly and openly hung up to its manes, is, in some sort, to confess, that we had our instructions and politicks from the criminals themselves, and our best and only reasons out of their purses.

Or if we be not thus wicked, we should, at best, be miserably weak to fall into such a preposterous method; and whether great and general calamities have their root in roguery or folly, is all one to a nation.

In spite of all the remedies that can be applied, multitudes will still remain undone beyond all remedy: Nay, for aught I can see, there is no practical remedy at all for what is past; so effectual has been the roguery on one side, so rivetted is the ruin on the other.

All, therefore, that seems to me to be left, even to the united wisdom of Great Britain, is the cure of prevention, to stop the progress of the contagion, to take care that those who have already suffered, shall suffer no more, nor make new sufferers: It is certain, that all men have suffered in one sense or other, the criminals excepted. It is hoped that the miserable people will now be honoured with their good company; and that the box on the ear, which wantonly began from them, will in good earnest be returned to them, and end with them. It is some consolation to the inhabitants of a village, who have been bit all round by a mad dog, to see the instrument of the poison, and the author of their pain and danger, honestly hung up, or knocked on the head.

The prevailing woe which has long raged, and still sits hard and heavy upon us, has certainly some authors; the directors are generally taken to be these authors; and if they be duly and publicly punished, they will continue to be taken for the only authors. But if there be nothing done to them, or nothing effectually done, we shall naturally look farther, and make bold to know, that though they have been rogues, yet that others had been greater than

they; that others have directed the directors, and were partners in the spoil.

But if they stand single, and are found the only and original plunderers of their country, they will infallibly be given up to publick and crying vengeance; not only by the rules of guilt, but of good policy. A more popular thing cannot be done, nor indeed so popular a thing. The blessings of the people, and the universal affections of Great Britain, will be some of the rewards attending upon those who will be the generous authors of publick justice upon the detestable authors of publick and intense misery.

I will never suppose that any men, or even one man in any publick station, did by any means join with stock-jobbers to undo their country; much less enabled stock-jobbers, to undo their country, and supported them while they were about it. It would be melancholy and terrible, indeed, to imagine that any publick men, at least, any man concerned in the finances, or set over any part of the publick money, by which publick credit is circulated and sustained, should, in defiance of his publick trust, put himself at the head of a conspiracy of stock-jobbers, who were, with merciless and unclean hands, rifling the publick itself, engrossing all its wealth, and destroying at once all publick and private faith.

Such unprecedented treachery, such over-grown guilt, can never be supposed. Our corruptions cannot be yet become so bold and bare-faced, nor we so tame. The thing therefore being so very monstrous, must be impossible, whatsoever suggestions there may be to the contrary; which, were they true, could not fail of calling down double and conspicuous punishment upon such a Verres.

As to those who lately encouraged the scheme, out of an honest purpose to relieve the publick, and pay off its debts, they ought, and no doubt will be the first and the most active to revenge the publick upon those, who, instead of relieving it, have brought the publick into such doleful and dying distress.

By this, they will farther evince the honesty of that purpose, merit still more to conduct our affairs; and their services will undoubtedly be remembered by the honest freeholders of England, at a proper season, to their advantage: Our eyes are upon them, our confidence is in them, and we wish them good success in this great trial of integrity and publick spirit.

I foresee that there will be many loud in their call for publick justice, and yet be the first to prevent it. Their avarice will arm their tongues with zeal, and a proper present disarm it of its eloquence. However, the outside of publick spirit will still be kept on; they will be sure to cry out to the last for punishment, for severe punishment; but they will be as sure to find fault with every expedient proposed for inflicting it. I could name some worthy patriots, of many words, and great weight, who will act this farce rarely. It will not be the first time. What is human life, but a masquerade: And what is civil society, but a mock-alliance between hypocrisy and credulity?

Magna & misera civitas, eodem anno tantas injurias tantumque; pudorem passa, inter Vinos, Fabios, Icelos, Asiaticos, varia & pudenda sorte agebat; donec successere Mutianus, & Marcellus, & magis alii homines quam alii mores.

These are the words of a great ancient, signal for his wisdom and strong observations. Had he lived now, and written in English, he would have written thus:

Oh London! Oh England! Oh my country! How great! And yet how miserable! What reproach, what calamities, what ruin, hast thou sustained? Sustained in the space of one short year; and less than a year! Sustained from the dregs of human kind! From fellows, vile in their original; and as to their spirit, slaves! What opprobrious delusions, what deadly revolutions, hast thou suffered to be brought upon thee, by the ignoble names and servile hands of B — t, L — b — t, H — h, and the like scum of the vulgar! And after all this, art thou not weary, O my country! of thy own shame? Not yet satiated with devastation and havock? And wilt thou yet again try the old knavery, managed by new knaves?

G

I am, &c.

No. 6. SATURDAY, December 10, 1720.

How easily the People are bubbled by Deceivers. Further Caution against deceitful Remedies for the publick Sufferings from the wicked Execution of the South-Sea Scheme.
[Gordon] ↩

[I-25]

SIR,

No experience or sufferings can cure the world of its credulity. It has been a bubble from the beginning; nor is it a bit wiser for this discovery, but still runs into old snares, if they have but new names, often whether they have or no.

Self-love beguiles men into false hopes, and they will venture to incur a hundred probable evils, to catch one possible good; nay, they run frequently into distracting pains and expences, to gain advantages which are purely imaginary, and utterly impossible.

Were the passions properly balanced, men would act rationally; but by suffering one passion to get the better of all the rest, they act madly or ridiculously.

Our prevailing passions in England, of late, have been hope, avarice, and ambition; which have had such a headlong force upon the people, that they are become wretched and poor, by a ravenous appetite to grow great and rich. Our fear and caution were postponed; and by a sanguine struggle for what we had not, we lost what we had. Could such courage be inspired by stock-jobbing? A cowardly science of mean tricks and lies!

Every adventurer in this mighty lottery foresaw that many must be losers, and that what was got by one must be lost by another; but every man hoped that fate would be kinder to him in particular, than to a thousand others; and so this mad hope became general, as are the calamities which it has produced.

This shews the little power that reason and truth have over the passions of men, when they run high. In the late revolution in the Alley, figures and demonstration would have told them, and the directors could have told them, that it was phrenzy; that they were pursuing gilded clouds, the composition of vapour and a little sunshine; both fleeting apparitions! Common sense could have told them, that credit is the most uncertain and most fluctuating thing in the world, especially when it is applied to stock-jobbing; that it had long before been exalted higher than it could well stand, even before it was come to twenty above par; and therefore always tottered, and was always tumbling down at every little accident and rumour. A story of a Spanish frigate, or of a few thieves in the dark dens in the Highlands, or the sickness of a foreign prince, or the saying of a broker in a coffee-house; all, or any of these contemptible causes were able to reduce that same credit into a very slender figure, and sometimes within her old bounds: But particularly, they might have seen, that it was now mounted to such an outrageous height, as all the silver and gold in Europe could not support; and therefore, when people came in any considerable number to sell (and to sell was the whole end of their buying), it would have a dreadful fall, even to the crushing of the nation. This has since dolefully happened: Our hopes, which were our ruin, are gone; and now we behold nothing but the face of the mourner.

But in spite of this mischief, produced by credulity, by manifest and ill-grounded credulity, it is much to be feared that some little art and big promises would make us repeat it, and grow mad again. This seems evident, not only from the folly and feebleness of human nature, ever the prey of craft, and ever caught with shadows; but from our endless gaping after new projects, and our eagerness to run into them. We have been bruised in a mortar, but we are not wiser; while one ruin is yet upon us, we are panting after another, perhaps worked up by the same hands, or by other hands with the same views.

O the weakness and folly of man! It is like a whirlpool, which destroys and drowns not by halves, but when a part is drawn in, the whole follows.

Surely the pleasure is as great,
Of being cheated, as to cheat!

Else men would not be such dupes, as every where they are. Whoever would catch mankind, has nothing to do, but to throw out a bait to their passions, and infallibly they are his property. This secret is well known to corrupt courts, who flatter or frighten their obeying believing vassals into all the excesses of misery and obeisance. By this, standing armies have been maintained; by this, wild wars have been waged; by this, an idle, expensive, absurd, and cruel popish hierarchy has been supported.

Once more, O wretched man! Thou willing instrument of thy own bondage and delusion; even mountebanks know this secret of cajoling thee, and picking thy pocket; nay, worse than mountebanks, stock-jobbers know it.

When a people are undone, it is some consolation to reflect, that they had no hand in their own ruin, or did all that they could to prevent it, by the best counsels that they could take, or by the bravest defence that they could make. But alas, poor England! thou hast not that consolation: Thou hast not fallen by able traitors; thou art not the victim of deep design, or artful treason; nor art thou the price of victory in the field; neither art thou out-witted by the subtle dealers in mystery and distinction, nor in this instance deceived by their false alarms.

No, we have no such palliating reflection to reconcile us to our misery, or to abate its pangs: To our deathless shame, we are the conquest, the purchase of stock-jobbers. The British lions crouch to a nest of owls! Can we survive the remembrance without revenge?

But all this is complaining, will some say; and we want remedies, rather than complaints: To bewail our calamities, is indeed natural; but to extricate ourselves out of them, is necessary. Here are two hundred millions of imaginary property lost, and at least twenty millions of real property plundered from the honest and industrious, and given to sharpers and pick-pockets: Shall these rooks be suffered to enjoy it? And shall the bubbles be redressed out of other men's estates, no ways chargeable with the mischief? Or must we prostitute the publick honour of the nation to draw in other people (no way concerned) to take the bold bargains of rash men and dupes off their hands? But if none of these methods be taken, our cullies must sit down with their loss, or the traitors be forced to disgorge.

If we make new schemes, or diversify the old, till doom's-day, there will be no paying twenty millions without twenty millions, or without what is equivalent to twenty millions; which will be the same thing to the nation as the parting with twenty millions.

The payment therefore will either be a real payment or a sham payment; and in this case, if *caveat emptor* (let the buyer look to it) be a good general rule in the business of bargains and sale, it will be a good rule here too.

If we have any state chemists, who have art enough to make millions evaporate into smoke; yet I must beg leave to doubt their skill at consolidating smoke into gold.

I hope that I shall not be understood, by what I have said, to oppose an attempt to redeem us out of our present wretched condition. On the contrary, I shall be the first to vote that man a statue of gold, who can strike out an honest and skilful expedient for our recovery, which I own is far past my own skill: I am no candidate for the golden statue.

By all this, I would only caution my countrymen not to be caught again; let them beware of new snares. As to the losers, they have not a great deal to expect; and I can say no more to them here, than that in the countries where the plague rages, the preservation of the whole is the principal care; the infected are, for the most part, left to take care of themselves; and I never heard it suggested, that nine millions of people ought to be exposed to the mortal contagion of that distemper, to preserve a few individuals.

G

I am, &c.

No. 7. SATURDAY, December 17, 1720.

Further Cautions about new Schemes for publick Redress. [Gordon] ↪

[I-30]

SIR,

Beware of the step, will be allowed by all men, who have any skill in human affairs, to be a commendable caution in all proceedings of moment. In how many instances do we see, that things which begin plausibly, end tragically? People have been often enslaved by princes created by themselves for their protection, often butchered by armies raised by themselves for their defence. The late French King, whenever he was going to shed the blood of his people in any wanton war, though undertaken to gratify his lust of power, or to exalt his own house, never failed to let them know, in an edict made on purpose, that it was all for their good and prosperity; that is, they were to suffer slaughter abroad, oppression and famine at home, purely for their own advantage and felicity.

General propositions are, for the most part, dangerous, and intended to support consequences, which, at first view, they do not seem to mean and imply. They are, therefore, generally plausible in appearance, to catch consent; from which consent, when it is once got, advantages are taken, which were not foreseen; and fresh articles are added, which were not known to have been designed.

In the late long war with France, what was more desirable, what more plausible, than peace? A blessing so universally understood to be one, that the lowest vulgar wanted no words nor persuasions to know its excellency! And when we were insulted with this question, What, will you not treat? To have said, No, would have been an answer so invidious, that scarce any man durst make it; yet all wise men then knew, that to consent to a treaty at that time with France, considering the persons and their interests who were to manage it, was to consent to a conspiracy against England in particular, and to plot against all Europe in general: We were stunned with the word peace; nor could we stand it, though we knew it was hatching treason. In short, to treat, as soft a phrase as it was, signified neither more nor less, than to give to old Lewis his wicked will of all Europe, and to the Tories their Pretender.

Take another instance. In the present Spanish war, which, we are assured, wants nothing but a form to conclude it, we cannot forget the loud attestations that were every where given us, that to declare war was sufficient alone to end the war, and to frighten the Spaniards into a peace: And who, among us, would not willingly be at the expence of a piece of paper, and of the herald's lungs, to scare a turbulent and enterprizing court, as was that of Philip, into moderation and quietness? But the obstinacy of Spain, the length of that war, our great charge in men and money to support it, and the condition of our fleet, worn in the service of our allies, or eaten by worms in the Mediterranean, are all sufficient lessons to us, how little we ought to have trusted to such assurances, or to the word of those that gave them.

Take a third instance. Upon the establishing of the present East-India Company, it was reasonably urged, that such a company would be no other than a confederacy of cunning fellows, against fair and general trading, by monopolizing to a few the sole traffick and riches

of a great continent. To which it was answered, that there was no such design; but that every man who would subscribe his name in their books, and comply with some easy conditions, would be frankly admitted to share in their trade. But this was all hypocrisy or lying; for no sooner had the projectors by such petty pretences to publick honesty, got the better of opposition, and cooked up their project, but it was found that their trade was impracticable to all but themselves: Every trader was obliged to come into the joint-stock; and all attempts since, for the publick good, have proved ineffectual against so formidable a society.

We have a fourth instance from the first institution of the South-Sea. It was at first pretended, that every proprietor was to have six per cent for his money, without trouble or deductions; and need not engage in the trade, unless he chose it. This drew in a great multitude to vouch for the scheme, and encourage it; but in passing the bill, it was found that the crafty managers had lopt off one per cent to be applied, as they pretended, to carry on the trade of the company, and all were obliged to join in the chimerical Asiento; by which they have since pillaged the proprietors of a million and a half. *See the vast advantage of losing by trade!* A secret well known to the directors!

The fifth instance may be taken from the same South-Sea. What a rare sugar-plumb to the nation was a scheme so finely calculated to pay off the nation's debts! What a tempting bait was here! Even those who saw whither it mischievously tended, and perceived the deceitful hook under it, could not stand the scorn and rebukes of the many, who swallowed it without seeing it. What fatal devastation and poverty it has since produced, by the unparalleled treachery of the directors, and some that are worse than they, the miserable people feel much more sensibly than I can express, pierced as they are with the keen arrows of merciless villainy, and unrelenting distress. We have undone ourselves to pay our debts, and our debts are not paid. What shall I say? We had once bread, money, and publick faith: But now! What remains to us? I cannot answer. Our grief, our folly, our losses, our dishonour, our cruel usage, are too big for words.

I have said so much, to prove how wary we ought to be in going into new schemes. We ought at least to know the whole of them, before we consent to a part. It will also behoove us to have an eye to the quarter from whence they come; whether they be directors, or their masters, and confederates; or men of fair and upright characters, whose souls are honest, and their hands clean. As to those who are known to have promoted the mighty cheat, and the ruin of their country; their infamy is so glaring, that, since they will not have modesty and remorse enough to hold their tongues, and to forbear meddling with the concerns of a people beggared by them, we ought to mind no more what they say, than the judge did the house-breaker, who, upon his trial, told his lordship, that he would swear the peace against him, for putting him in fear of his life.

The same may be said of those that are fallen in with the guilty, and unexpectedly speak the same note. We guess at their motives. The powerful getters would save themselves, by letting others get as much; and perhaps are glad to divide their gains, to escape punishment.

If any man would be the unsuspected and fair author of a new project, he can recommend it and himself no better, than by shewing it to be honestly consistent with the punishment of our million knaves, the blood-suckers of England. A new scheme, and an inquisition into the management of the old one, may both successfully go on at the same time; and they who say that they cannot, do but own that they are afraid they should. Are they conscious to themselves, that the directors may hope to escape part of their punishment, by fathering upon

others a great share of their guilt, or rather the power of being guilty?

What mean some men by saying, we ought to extinguish the fire, before we inquire into the incendiaries? Are they some of these? Or did they furnish out brands to the rest? Or would they give them time to run away? The truth is, the house is already burned down, many are burned to death, all are miserably scorched: The flame has in a manner wasted itself; but those that talk thus, seem eager to revive it, by new devices to stir the embers. All that we can now do, is to build the house again, if we can; and hang those that fired it, which we are sure we ought. Besides, we have long known who did it; they have been taken in the fact at noon-day, and every day. This thing was not done in a corner, nor at once, nor by one; the villainy was deliberate, gradual, and open.

These gentlemen do however confess, that the house has been set on fire; which confession they would doubtless be glad to avoid, if they could: But the misery is sorely felt, and all Europe are witnesses of it. Can they therefore, after an acknowledgment that the nation has been burned, have the face to be contriving ways to delay the punishment of the burners? Has self-love no share in this? And by the delay of the punishment of others, do they not as good as avow, that they tremble for themselves? For my part, I can see no difference in this case, between delaying it, and frustrating it.

The expedients for retrieving us, if we can be retrieved, are certainly compatible with expedients for revenging us; and the latter will facilitate the former. It will give life to the poor bankrupt heart-broken people, if they see that their destroyers meet due vengeance, and that they are like to be no more the prey of daring parricides.

G

I am, &c.

No. 8. SATURDAY, December 24, 1720.

The Arts of able guilty Ministers to save themselves. The wise and popular Conduct of Queen Elizabeth towards publick Harpies; with the Application. [Gordon] ↩

[I-36]

SIR,

There is not in politicks a more established rule, than, *That when a corrupt and wicked ministry intend to pillage a nation, they make use of vile and contemptible instruments, to gather in their plunder, and allow the miscreants part of it; and when the cry for justice becomes strong and universal, they always hang up their faithful rogues.* By this means they stop the people's mouths, and yet keep the money.

But they act by no rule of good policy, but are, in truth, chargeable with folly, or rather with phrenzy, who dream that they can prevent this cry, by the means that first raised it, and by means that will ever produce it. As well might they attempt to prevent the spreading of a deluge, by damming it up; which would prove the direct method to make a whole country its conquest; for it will then know no bounds, but bear down men, beasts, and cities before it; whereas its force and mischief are easily prevented, if proper channels be opened for it, and its torrent be skilfully directed.

The simple multitude, when most provoked, are easily appeased, if they have but fuel for their rage: They will scarce feel their miseries, if they do but fancy that justice is done upon the authors of their miseries. And whatever they suffer; the hanging of a few sorry knaves, who are but the working-tools of a few greater, will hush all the tumult of their spirits, and reconcile them to patience and wretchedness.

The expedient, therefore, to please them, is constantly practised by all wise traitors, by all able oppressors. But when, through the ignorance of their pillagers, the course of justice is entirely stopped; when the abused and enraged people can have no remedy, either real or imaginary, nor one victim to their fury, they will naturally and necessarily look higher; and then who can foresee where their vengeance will end?

If a pirate, who robs upon the sea, be hanged for his robbery, every body is satisfied with the death of the offender: But if the action be avowed, and he produce a commission, the state that gave it becomes answerable.

All these secrets in government were excellently understood by Queen Elizabeth's ministry. Out of her history I have therefore copied the following passage, and the following speech.

The Queen, upon her return from a progress, held a Parliament at Westminster; wherein, among other things, several good laws were made for the relief of the poor, and of maimed and disabled soldiers and seamen; against fraudulent guardians and trustees; the cheats and impositions of clothiers; and the robberies and outrages committed upon the borders of the kingdom towards Scotland. But whereas great complaints were made in the lower house, relating to the engrossing practice:

(for it seems there were some, who, under the colour of publick good, but, in reality, to the great damage of the kingdom, had got the Queen's letters patents, for the sole privilege and liberty of vending some particular sorts of wares):

The Queen therefore, to forestall them, published a proclamation, declaring those grants to be null and void; and also left them to be tried at common law. A method which was so acceptable to the lower house, that eighty of that body were appointed to wait upon her Majesty with their humble thanks, which the Speaker was to present in the name of them all. She received them very graciously, and gave her answer in the following speech:

Gentlemen,

I owe you my best thanks and acknowledgments for your respect towards me; not only for your good inclination, but those clear and publick expressions thereof, which have discovered themselves in retrieving me from a mistake, into which I have been betrayed; not so much by the faults of my will, as the error of my judgment. This had unavoidably drawn a blemish upon me, (who account the safety of my people my chief happiness) had you not made me acquainted with the practice of these lewd harpies and horse-leeches. I would sooner lose my heart or hand, than ever consent to allow such privilege to engrossers, as may turn to the detriment of my people. I am not so blinded with the lustre of a crown, as to let the scale of justice be weighed down by that of an arbitrary power. The gay title of a prince may deceive such as know nothing of the secret of governing; as a gilded pill may impose upon the patient: But I am not one of those unwary princes; for I am very sensible, that I ought to govern for the publick good, and not to regard my own particular; and that I stand accountable to another, a greater tribunal. I account myself very happy, that, by God's assistance, I have enjoyed so prosperous a government in all respects, and that he has blessed me with such subjects, for whom I could be contented to lay down my crown and life. I must entreat you, that let others be guilty of what faults or misdemeanors soever, they may not, through any misrepresentation, be laid at my door. I hope the evidence of a good conscience will, in all respects, bear me out. You cannot be ignorant, that the servants of princes have, too often, an eye to their own advantage; that their faults are often concealed from their notice; and that they cannot, if they would, inspect all things, when the weight and business of a whole kingdom lies on their shoulders.

Here is a speech, worthy of the occasion, worthy of a wise prince, worthy of a free people; a speech that has truth, and sense, and spirit in it. We may be sure from the frankness and vigour of it, that the ministers who advised it were no sharers in the guilt and oppression of which it complains: If they had, they would have chosen words more faint and equivocal; they would have shuffled in their assertions; they would have talked more cowardly; they would have kept off from particulars: They could not have hid their guilt and fears. But here their boldness is the effect of their innocence, and prompted by it.

Her Majesty frankly owns, that she was drawn into an error; but that it was only an error of her judgment, she makes manifest by her alacrity and forwardness to punish those harpies and horse-leeches, who, in her name, had abused the publick: She owns it just, that those engrossers should suffer: She owns that the art and end of reigning, is to advance the publick good; and when that good is not attained, she consigns to punishment those rooks and

traitors, through whose fault it is not attained. She owns that she has been abused by her servants; who, under her authority, and in the name of the law, had sought their own vile advantages; and she removes from herself all guilt, by giving up the guilty.

Happy Queen! happy in her own qualifications; happy in those of her counsellors: But wise and good as she was, she could not have talked thus, if her ministry had been weak or wicked: Had this been her misfortune, in spite of her sincerity, wisdom and resolution, her speech would have been false, faint, and silly. But her counsellors were able and faithful, and made England prosper; and if we except some rebellions, and some persecutions, both the doings of hot-headed bigots, her people saw nothing during her whole reign but felicity and sunshine.

This has entailed blessings upon her memory, and praise upon that of her counsellors: And, indeed, the happiness or misery of a people will always be the certain measure of the glory or infamy of their rulers, whenever such happiness or misery is evidently deducible from their management.

The above passage out of Queen Elizabeth's history, I thought not impertinent to our present times: Her people had suffered from harpies and horse-leeches: This shews, that the corruption had not reached the court; the hands of her ministers were clean, else her speech would have taken another turn.

Has England suffered less, in this our day, from harpies and horse-leeches? Surely no: All our losses, pillages, and oppressions, since the Conquest, do not balance the present great calamity: From a profusion of all things, we are reduced to a want of every thing: Heaven avert the pestilence and the famine! I am afraid that the latter begins to be sorely felt by many thousands of our poor, and even the rich complain that they can hardly find money to buy bread.

And shall not our harpies be given up? Shall not their blood and money make an undone nation some small amends for their heavy depredations and matchless villainy? Certainly they must: From a ministry as able, and as innocent, as that of Queen Elizabeth, we may expect the behaviour and publick spirit of Queen Elizabeth's ministry: Having no part in the guilt of harpies, they cannot dread the vengeance due to harpies: They have not raised out of their country's calamities, fortunes great as those calamities; they have no discoveries to dread; they have no guilt to hide; they have not conspired with harpies.

G

I am, &c.

No. 9. SATURDAY, December 31, 1720.

Against the projected Union of the Three Great Companies; and against remitting to the South-Sea Company any Part of their Debt to the Publick. [Trenchard] ↩

[I-42]

SIR,

The most successful deluders and oppressors of mankind have always acted in masquerade; and when the blackest villainies are meant, the most opposite spirit is pretended. Vice acts with security, and often with reputation, under the veil of virtue.

Hence atheists have set up for the greatest piety; and, to cover their own real want of it, have cruelly burned those who really had it. The most merciless tyrants have, in the midst of oppression, set up for the patrons of liberty; and, while their hands were deep in blood, impudently adopted the title of clemency; and publick liberty has almost always been given up by those, who passed for the patrons of publick liberty.

The cheating religious orders of the Church of Rome gain the greatest wealth, by a profession of the strictest poverty. The popish inquisitors, while they deliver over to the flames a poor wretch, already half dead with fears, famine, and torture, beseech and adjure the civil magistrate, who must see it done, by the love of God, and the bowels of Jesus Christ, not to hurt his life or limb. And our inquisitors at home began their Occasional Bill with a declaration for liberty of conscience; though the purpose of them, and their bill, was to destroy all liberty of conscience.

Companies and joint-stocks are always established for the encouragement and benefit of trade; though they always happen to mar and cramp trade. The Peerage Bill was to be granted as a favour to the Commons of England, by cutting off the Commons of England from all right to peerage. And some people, to save charges to England, are for giving up Gibraltar, which is of such advantage to England; being the security of all our trade. Sweden was once to be destroyed, to preserve the balance of power in the north; and now Sweden must be defended, for the very same reason.

When certain chiefs were at mortal odds, one side opposing (at all adventures) whatever the other projected, it was thought convenient to both sides to come to terms; for one party wanted to fill their coffers, and the other to save their bacon. However, the good of the publick was their sole aim: They, good men! sought no personal advantages, though they have since got considerable ones: But we must believe their sayings, notwithstanding their doings.

Stock-jobbing too must be declared against, whilst the greatest stock-jobbing is promoting. Last year a South-Sea project was to be established to pay off the national debts; and now a project is said to be in embryo, to remit the greatest part of the debt due to the nation by the South-Sea: And if so, the whole nation is to suffer this general loss, out of mere pity to a small part of the nation. Twelve months ago forty millions was not too much to be trusted with one company, high in credit, and its reputation hoisted up by publick authority; but now, when they are bankrupt and undone, and when their directors and undertakers are universally hated and detested, it is to be feared, it seems, that they will become too

formidable, if all the stock subscribed into them be continued with them.

There is, therefore, I am told, a project on foot, in Exchange Alley, to deliver up the nation to three companies; and to let them divide us, their cully, among them. In order to prevail upon these three great societies to accept us as a present, to be used as they think fit, I humbly presume that we must behave ourselves as follows: We can do no less than sacrifice the poor halfstarved manufacturers to one of them, and oblige ourselves to lay no restraint upon India callicoes, &c. We must also confirm the clause which makes that society perpetual. New trades, more monopolies, and fresh privileges, must be given to another great and virtuous company, which had made so good use of the old: And the Bank of England, which long preserved its integrity, must be brought into the conspiracy; and without doubt something more must be given them, perhaps the increase of their term.

Now, if this mighty project, this noble design, can be accomplished; I suppose that every one will see, or be prevailed upon to see, the absolute necessity why all past errors, and former management, should be forgot; because publick credit, which depends upon temper and moderation, must not be interrupted by ill-timed enquiries, nor disturbed by publick vengeance. How finely we are to be disposed of; and how safe it is to provoke us!

The projectors of such a publick good must deserve well from their country; and I will give city security, that they shall be no losers by it. Where is the wonder, or ill policy of the plunderers and dishonourers of the nation, if the betrayers of their trust should keep a little ill-begotten wealth, to preserve the publick peace? Without doubt, they will give large shares of their prey to those who have power to let them keep the rest; and will readily help their projectors and coadjutors with their honest skill and endeavours, to form new projects, to get as much as they have done.

There lives in a certain kingdom, a certain gentleman, of no mean importance there at present, who was agent to one who had the custodium of a forfeited estate there, worth twelve thousand pounds a year; and when he gave in his account to his successor, brought the estate some hundreds of pounds in debt to himself. The other resented this with some menacing expressions, but could get no other answer from him, but that he would abide by his account: "However," says he, "if you will be discreet, I will help you to the man that helped me to this account."

But what now, if, after all, there should be a little job in a corner; and if any gentleman, of remarkable merit, should have amends made for his services, sufferings, and losses of late years? Why, there is nothing uncommon in it; for, *who will serve the Lord for nought?* This certainly can be no reason for rejecting a project, which will restore publick credit, fill the Alley again, raise South-Sea stock to three or four hundred, and help the present proprietors to new bubbles; without doing any other mischief, than that of ruining a few thousand families more, and of not paying off the nation's debts.

These, I confess, are potent reasons; and will, without doubt, have their due weight with all persons interested. But, for myself, who am so unfortunate as often to differ from my betters, I can find nothing in this proposal, which has any tendency to help the present company, or to raise credit, in any respect, or to retrieve us from our great and national calamities; but, on the contrary, to plunge the publick inevitably into irretrievable ruin, by making it impossible, by any medium in nature but that of a sponge, to discharge our national burdens: It will, besides, deprive us of our only colourable pretence, which could justify or excuse the late dreadful scheme; and which, I believe, I may safely say, was the only

pretence ever offered to excuse it. I think that it will be listing the three great companies, with all the moneyed interest in England, against England; and will, at last, reduce, and even force, all parties not to oppose what I dread to name, and tremble to think of.

The project abovementioned is calculated, we are told, for the advantage of South-Sea, and for the improvement of their stock; and, in order to this, a great part of that stock is to be given away to the Bank of England, and to the East-India Company; without any apparent consideration to themselves, or any other use to the publick, than the uniting the three great companies in one interest; and consequently, the forming such a potent conspiracy against the whole kingdom, as nothing but a total confusion of all things can dissolve. O Companies, Companies! ye bane of honesty, and ruin of trade; the market of jobbers, the harvest of managers, and the tools of knaves, and of traitors!

It is proposed, that the South-Sea is to give the Bank an hundred and twenty pounds for every hundred pounds of stock in the Bank; which stock is said to be but barely worth ninety pounds; even though we should suppose that they had never divided any of their principal: Which, whether they have done it or not, no body but themselves can know: But at this rate, however, they must divide, whenever they are paid off by the government.

But we are told, that they are to be let also into the profits of banking; from which profits, 'tis said, that they are enabled to divide three per cent upon the old capital, besides the five per cent paid them by the government: But, even upon this foot, the greater their capital is, the less they will be able to divide: And consequently, when nine millions are added to their old capital, they will not be able to divide much above one per cent which is not the interest of the money paid in difference between ninety, which is the real value, and an hundred and twenty, which is the nominal value.

Besides, there is no probability that the Bank can continue to make, for the future, the same gain of banking, as heretofore. The trafficking in publick tallies, from whence that gain chiefly arose, will be at an end, unless there be new funds given, and new debts contracted.

The contract proposed by these people, to be made with the other company, is still worse; for, there they are to give a hundred and twenty pounds for a hundred-pound nominal stock, which is suspected to be worth very little; some men being of the opinion, that the greatest part of the ten per cent divided for some years past, has been pocketed out of other people's money, borrowed by the company upon their bonds: And yet for this choice bargain, they are to give six hundred thousand pounds at present, and subject nine hundred thousand pounds more to be disposed of according to the pleasure, skill, and honesty of the present directors. A pretty sum, and doubtless set apart to answer and accomplish some lovely job, which will appear in proper time, and by which the projectors of the scheme, I dare say, will be no losers!

'Tis said too, that the trade of this company may be enlarged; I suppose they mean, by bringing in more India manufactures, to the ruin of our own.

Now all this we are given to understand is for the sole benefit of the South-Sea; and if they have not sense to conceive it aright, a worse thing may befall them: We all know, what directors and their old patrons carry halters about their necks, though they have millions in their pockets; and who would not give away a little of other people's money, to save a great deal of their own, with their lives into the bargain? A special set of traitors, to negotiate for the very being of a kingdom!

But I must tell all these forgers of schemes, and inventors of grievances, that the nation, exhausted by past projects, cannot bear new ones, nor furnish out more millions to glut more harpies. The want of bread, long felt by the poor, begins now to be felt by the rich. The purses therefore of the new conspirators must be filled out of the extortions and depredations of the old, or remain empty: They may rack their invention, sift every topick of knavery, and toss and change their projects as much and as long as they please; but we know that nothing but plain honesty can ever save us; and to those who would practise honesty, plain speech is best. Let us honestly hang up those who have deceived and undone us, and let us beware of new deceivers and new destroyers: Let us, with a severity equal to our distress, examine what the directors and their masters have embezzled, and lost to their country, by their merciless villainy, and consuming avarice; and let us have the only satisfaction that they can make us, their lives, and their estates: Let, afterwards, a fair valuation be made of their present capital, and let all the world know it; that the purchaser may buy solid substance, and not a fleeting shadow. This is the honest way to restore credit again; this will prevent the roguish part of stock-jobbing; and this will throw the remaining money into trade once more.

But what, may some say, if we should give away from the South-Sea Company some millions to make new friends, and to save our old friends, so long as we can make that company amends out of the publick, for such a loss? A thing easily done! It is only giving them back again the seven millions already due by them to the publick; or at least the greatest part of those seven millions, as the same stand secured upon forty millions; and if we do this, behold the advantage that will accrue from it! We will then be under no necessity of hanging our countrymen, or calling up any to disgorge their honest gains: Besides, it is to be hoped that this proposal will be backed with such powerful motives, as to meet with little opposition.

This calls to my mind a comparison, which I have been for some time very apt to make, between the French projectors and those of another country which I know. The first plunder for the publick; the other plunder the publick: The one robs part of the people for the whole people; the other robs the whole people for a small part of the people.

This comparison may be the subject of another letter to you, if you think fit to print this.

T

I am, &c.

No. 10. Tuesday, January 3, 1721.

The Iniquity of late and new Projects about the South-Sea considered. How fatally they affect the Publick. (Trenchard and Gordon) [↪](#)

[I-51]

SIR,

When we compare one nation with another, and balance the power of both, we are not to consider alone the number of people, or the wealth diffused amongst the people; though number and wealth are undoubtedly the first elements of power in a commonwealth; no more than we are to consider the mere extent of territory, or the mere fertility of soil: But we are chiefly to consider, how much of that wealth can be brought together, how it may be most frugally managed, and how most skilfully applied to the publick emolument and defence.

If, in taxing labour and manufactures, we exceed a certain proportion, we discourage industry, and destroy that labour and those manufactures. The like may be said of trade and navigation; they will bear but limited burdens: And we find by experience, that when higher duties are laid, the product is not increased; but the trade is lost, or the goods are run.

Nor can more be extorted from the gentleman and freeholder, than he can spare from the support of his family, in a way suitable to his former condition.

When impositions exceed these bounds, the history of all ages will convince us, that their produce is only bitterness, murmurings, universal discontents; and their end, generally, rebellion, and an overthrow of the then present establishment, or of public liberty.

If therefore one state, for example, possessed of five times as much true, but scattered, wealth, as another state, cannot for all that, from a defect in its constitution, collect so much from the people as the poorer state can; or, if when collected, does yet trust the same to the disposal of blood-suckers and traitors, who intercept the national wealth, and divert it to private purses; or if it be appropriated, before it be raised, to the payment of former debts; or if it be embezzled in pensions and salaries to mercenary men, for traitorous ends; then is such a state really weaker than the other poorer state, and less capable of defending itself against the other, so much its inferior in outward shew and intrinsick power.

This was the state of Spain for near two hundred years; Spain, the mistress of so many nations, and of a new world, richer in silver and gold than the old; Spain, that from terrifying all Christendom with chains, and from threatening all Europe with universal slavery, reduced itself, by mortgaging its publick revenues, to such a despicable condition, that we have seen, in our days, that once formidable kingdom contended for by two small armies of foreigners, within its own bowels: In which contest the natives themselves were little more than spectators; as is very justly observed by the author of a pamphlet printed last year, and written with a spirit which I pretend not to imitate. Had that pamphlet been generally read, and well weighed, it would have prevented most of the mischiefs which we now lamentably labour under. It is entitled, *Considerations upon the State of the Publick Debts in general, and of the Civil List in particular*. I would recommend it to the reading of every one, who is not ashamed of being an honest man.

It is certain, that all the powerful nations of Europe, who were parties in the two last bloody and expensive wars, were reduced, by mortgaging their publick revenues, to the same low and abject condition; and nothing saved any one of them from all the rest, but that all the rest were in the same state of impotence and distress. They were all miserably weak. That people, therefore, who can soonest discharge their publick burdens, will give laws to the rest; and either reduce them to subjection and vassalage, or to a necessity of seizing their mortgaged funds.

There are in the world but two ways of clearing a nation of its publick engagements: The one is, by paying them off; the other is, not to pay them at all. When the one cannot be practised, a small skill in politicks will tell us, that the other must.

It is a jest for any man to flatter himself, that any state will not save the whole people, by the ruin of a part of the people, when the ruin of a part is absolutely necessary to the preservation of the whole. This consideration should, methinks, be worth the attention of the gentlemen inhabitants of the Alley. In truth, nothing would exercise their thoughts more, were it not that every one hopes to save one, by cheating another into a hard and knavish bargain. Will men never have done hoping? They forget how they were caught last year in the South-Sea, with all their hopes and their wisdom about them.

It is, doubtless, the last misfortune to a nation, to be beholden to a sponge for the payment of its debts; such a necessity must be a heavy necessity, attended with many sorrowful circumstances, and much sore distress. Nothing but the certain fear of foreign force, or domestick tyranny, can justify it. But even a great calamity is eligible, in comparison of a greater. Every person, therefore, who is a creditor to his country, and has demands upon the publick, is nearly concerned to prevent such great and personal, and indeed general misery; which cannot be at all prevented, but by putting the national debts into a method of being honourably discharged. This is the concern of every honest man; this ought to be the care of every worthy citizen; this will be the task of every guiltless great man.

All innocent men, throughout the world, find a private blessing in the general felicity of the publick; and none but mock-patriots, who foolishly or deliberately can lead kingdoms into ruin; desperate hard-hearted parricides, who can wantonly suck out the vitals of their country, whose fortunes are often the plunder of the publick, whose creatures are conspirators, hired against the publick; I say, none but such traitors can find private joy in publick confusion, or their own security in the slavery of their country. Those, it is true, who earn vengeance by committing mighty crimes, would, doubtless, go on to resemble themselves, and to avoid it, if they could, by committing crimes still more mighty. If any amongst us should be capable of practising such great wickedness to get enormous wealth, such persons, if not prevented, might still practise greater to keep it. A fox pursued by the full cry of the hounds, will run into the dog-kennel for shelter; as at the battle of La Hogue, the French fleet fled through the race of Alderney, and ventured rocks and shelves, to escape from the conquering enemy.

It is a folly, and indeed an infatuation, in any persons interested in the publick funds, to form any schemes, or to fall into any schemes for increasing those funds, or for continuing in them, any longer than is absolutely necessary to pay them their debts: When our neighbouring nations have cleared theirs, we too must clear ours, or we are undone. 'Tis said, indeed, that a revolution in government would certainly and effectually do it, and do it at once; and this I take to be the true reason why so many unthinking men appear to wish it;

though I hope it is in vain. God avert so dreadful a catastrophe!

Spain has already discharged itself of its publick burdens, by a general sweep: And behold the effect of this! It again shews its head in the world; again it carries its armies into new countries. Holland lies still, free from new broils, and fresh expence: It politically pleads poverty: It takes all ways in its power to recover its losses; and questionless laughs in its sleeve to see another nation grow more mad, and more in debt every year; to see it every year mortgaging new revenues, and every year engaging in wild wars, to support the interests of a state of no concernment to it.

But the most terrible instance of all, is that of France: That government, though to the ruin of great multitudes of other people, has almost, if not quite, got rid of its incumbrances and engagements. The whole wealth of that great kingdom is now got into the hands of the publick. From which formidable situation of theirs, is there not room to fear, that as soon as the present confusion is a little abated, they will renew their designs for empire, and throw Europe into arms again? This is an alarming reflection! And what do the gentlemen of the Alley expect from us, under such an ill-boding circumstance? Trade is already burdened as much as it can bear, and perhaps more than it ought to bear: There is scarce a commodity that can be taxed, but is already taxed. We are marked, we are mortgaged from head to foot. They do not surely expect that the Parliament will give ten shillings in the pound upon land, or that it could be raised if they did.

What therefore are we to do in such a calamitous case? Are we to save ourselves at the expence of the gentlemen of the Alley? Or are we to perish together with them? The choice is easy. Can they be so weak, as to form a pretended necessity, to bring their country into such unhappy circumstances; and yet not fear that wise and honest men may take advantage of a real necessity, to get out of such unhappy circumstances?

There is but one thing to be done, to save themselves and their country together; and that is, to put the debts into a method of being certainly and speedily paid off. The present establishment may be saved, though they are undone: But if, through folly or knavery, the establishment sink, they must sink with it. I hope therefore, that they will not be decoyed into any traitorous designs of desperate men: Men, whose characters are but faintly expressed by that of parricides; men, who, had they studied the art of making us miserable, could not have been more accomplished in their trade, nor boast of compleater success. Where is our trade, by which we so long flourished? It is lost. Where is our publick faith, once our own boast, and the envy of foreign nations? It is fled; and one man has no longer any faith in another. Where is our money? Where are our current millions? The people have none. The most part find it hard to buy bread; and many find it impossible. Every man whom you meet complains that he is undone. All our coin is engrossed, pocketed by vile jobbers, their prompters and confederates; publick robbers, who, to keep what they have got, and to escape deserved punishment (if such punishment can possibly be found), would deliver up the wealth and power of England into the griping and polluted hands of a new conspiracy of stock-jobbers, worse than the last, by being more numerous and potent. With these they would combine for common defence, and for publick destruction; with these, contrive new ways to enlarge our miseries, shorten our enjoyments still more, and grind us still smaller; with these, they would form into such a confederacy against their common country, and against common honesty, as would mock even the endeavours of a legislature to dissolve it. Good God! what implacable men! thus mercilessly bent to ruin the very ruins of their country!

What Briton, blessed with any sense of virtue, or with common sense; what Englishman, animated with a publick spirit, or with any spirit, but must burn with rage and shame, to behold the nobles and gentry of a great kingdom; men of magnanimity; men of breeding; men of understanding, and of letters; to see such men bowing down, like Joseph's sheaves, before the face of a dirty *stock-jobber*, and receiving laws from men bred behind counters, and the decision of their fortunes from hands still dirty with sweeping shops!

Surely we shall never suffer this to be our case, and therefore shall never see it. It is ridiculous to think that a nation, free as we are, and bold by being so, will ever submit to such indignities: It is therefore easy to foresee, if once we foolishly take the first step, what will necessarily be the next. One oppression cannot be supported but by another, and a greater; and force and violence alone can do what reason cannot and will not do. These hardships will produce new wants, and new necessities for money; which money, if such men can have their will, will only be to be had from these companies, and from them only upon hard conditions, and in exchange for new privileges, still tending to the detriment of general trade, and ending in the total ruin of the nation.

The nation will be provoked in proportion as it is distressed; ill usage will be returned with rage: And then, I doubt not, when these projectors have rendered the people distracted, they will tell us, that it will not be safe to venture them with another election. They will do every thing in their power to make the kingdom disaffected; and then urge that disaffection as a good reason not to trust them.

This conduct will produce necessarily more and higher discontents; discontents will make armies necessary; armies will inflame those discontents still more vehemently. I dare think no further. But sure there is no one who loves King George, and his government, but will endeavour to prevent these dismal mischiefs, before it be too late.

No man living laments the calamities brought upon his country, more than I do those brought upon mine: Yet I freely own, that I think the paying off the nation's debts, and restoring, by that means, the kingdom to its power, its grandeur, and its security again, was an end worth all the evils which we have yet suffered;

an end which ought, if possible, to have been purchased with greater than we have yet suffered, if it could not otherwise have been purchased. I think that it ought to have been done, though attended with many ill circumstances; and might have been done, even upon those hard terms, with justice to private men, and honour to the nation. We are not a people without it; nor is it worth while to dispute about the best cabin in a ship that is sinking.

This prospect gave me some pleasure, and some relief to my thoughts, made anxious by the melancholy and importunate clamours of thousands and ten thousands of my distressed countrymen: But when I was told that a project was formed by men of figure, power, and fortune, to give back all, and the only advantage which we were to reap, or could reap, from so many miseries, and which could alone palliate or excuse such a wild and desperate attempt; though this was the only excuse which was ever offered, or can yet be suggested by the wisest men in behalf of it; I confess that I was seized with horror and confusion from such news, and could see nothing before my eyes but total desolation and final ruin.

To tell us, that this is to be done out of tenderness to the miserable, is adding contempt to the injury: It is insulting our understandings, and playing with the publick misfortunes; it is first to make us beggars, then to treat us like idiots. With as much modesty did a grand

monarch, who was known to make himself sport, for about half a century, with the lives of men, pretend to ground his desire of peace upon a conscientious inclination to prevent the effusion of Christian blood.

Those who have true compassion, virtue, and tenderness, will shew it upon the properest objects; they will prefer the security and welfare of many millions to the security and welfare of some thousands, though they should be many thousands; especially if the latter prove to have been covetous and unthinking men, caught in the snare which they spread for others: For by these wild bargains no man is undone, but he who intended the favour of being undone to somebody else. These gentlemen, pretending to so much tenderness and compassion, will not at least sacrifice those who always foresaw the mischief, and always opposed it, to the relief of such who contributed to it; who made corrupt applications for an early admittance into the advantage of the secret; who swallowed plumbs in their imaginations, and ridiculed as fools or beggars all that kept at a wise and honest distance.

Pity and compassion are charming and engaging sounds, when rightly applied; but pity and compassion do not consist in protecting criminals from justice, and in suffering the devourers of a nation to go off with the plunder of a nation; nor in oppressing the people over again, to make the loser amends: Neither do they consist in giving away the publick treasure of nations to private men, for no reason, or for very bad reasons; nor in engaging a kingdom in wild and romantick expences, to serve wild and romantick purposes; neither do they consist in sacrificing the trade and manufacture of a whole people, and in consequence the bread of a whole people, to the destructive interests of societies of stock-jobbers, combined with publick plunderers for mutual defence.

Our wise and disinterested legislature mean other things; they have told us, that they will not relieve one part of the distressed and deluded bubbles, to the detriment of others, who have as much pretence to relief as themselves; and it is impossible to imagine that they will give up the unoffending and almost despairing people (whose interests they are chosen to assert) to repair the losses of unwary men, and to put thirty millions in the pockets of twenty stock-jobbers.

Can it be supposed, that the Parliament will refuse to make void hasty and private bargains, founded in corruption and fraud, and made without any one honest consideration? And shall this refusal be made for the publick good? And yet shall that very Parliament be thought capable of making void a publick bargain, made for the publick good, with the greatest deliberation, and upon the weightiest motives in the world? Which bargain was indeed the chief, if not the only cause, that drew upon us our present great calamities.

But we are told by the projectors, that the company is not able to pay the publick the sum stipulated; and the King must lose his right, where his right is not to be had. This is impudently as well as stupidly said; for the security is already in the hands of the publick: The nation owes the company near forty millions, and nothing is necessary but to stop the payment of seven.

But it is farther urged by the projectors, that the company will be undone, if so much be stopped from them; and I aver, that the nation is undone, if it be not stopped.

Here a very pleasant observation offers itself: For this very same project, which would mercifully remit to the South-Sea Company the seven millions due by them to the publick, is intended to raise a hundred pounds of their capital stock to three or four hundred pounds in

value, I will suppose only to three hundred; and even then their present capital being about twenty-six millions, the whole will be worth about eighty millions; and surely, if the publick give them such an immense advantage, they may well afford to pay the small sum of seven millions due to the publick out of it. Our own laws, and the laws of every country in the world, give precedence to the prerogative, in the business of debtor and creditor; and always secure the debts due to the publick, whatever becomes of those due to private men. Surely we shall not reject the wisdom of nations, and invert the maxims of government, that while we confirm the bargains of particular men, we destroy those made for the benefit of all the men in the kingdom.

But there is yet something more absurd in this project: For the bargain was made with the old company, who were to give three millions and a half, certain, to the publick; and about three millions more, if they could purchase in the annuitants: Which sum they could have afforded to the publick, if they could but have raised their stock thirty per cent upon the whole stock so united: But we have, in fact, seen its imaginary value increased, at one time, more than two hundred millions; which has enabled those in the secret to carry off more than twenty, if not thirty millions.

Valuing the stock, at present, at two hundred, which is less than the stock sells for, the old capital alone is advanced near twelve millions above its first value, and consequently is able to pay seven, without the assistance of the new subscribers: And, if the projectors of the scheme advance the stock to three or four hundred, as they pretend that they will; then the first contractors, and those who stand in their places, will double or treble their capital; though they alone were to pay the publick the poor consideration which has enabled them to do so.

Hard fate of poor England, to be thus the last regarded, even in schemes and deliberations which purely regard England! Private men, who have been bubbled, are to be pitied, but must private men, who have contributed to the publick ruin, and their own, be regarded preferably to the publick? And must publick compassion be shewn to private dupes, rather than to the publick itself?

Poor England! What a name art thou become! A name of infatuation and misery! How art thou fallen! how plundered! And those that have done it, would, to keep their spoil, agree to assist others to squeeze out thy last dregs, and to suck out thy remaining blood. How passive do they think thee! How tame would they make thee! An easy prey for devourers; who, while they hold thee fast, and gripe thee hard with iron claws, aggravate thy misery, by mocking it, and insolently talk of compassion.

What keener indignities can they do us, than thus to jest with us, while we are gasping, while we are expiring, in the midst of the pangs and convulsions into which they have wantonly and wickedly thrown us!

Odd is that compassion which arises from guilt and avarice; and with how much modesty would they christen, with the deluding title of pity, that conduct, which would prove in effect to be only impunity to the murderers of our prosperity, and the manglers of their country! Thus would they insult our understanding, and deal with us as if we had none.

How long shall we suffer under this pungent usage? this painful disgrace to our sense and our spirit? Patience under indignities, invites fresh indignities. We see our parricides do, as it were, take pains to invent new miseries for us. A hard task! considering those that they have

already accomplished. Nay, they act as if they despaired of making us desperate.

They may be mistaken. And indeed, in the whole string of their politicks, I could never discover any one symptom of their skill in human nature, except that which they learned from brokers and pedlars in stocks.

In truth, matters are come to that pass, that an endeavour to make them worse, may probably make them better: *Res nolunt male administrari*. All men suffer; all men are alarmed: Resentment rages high, and gathers thick from all quarters; and though it may seem big with some terrible event, yet it may be prevented by anticipation.

Our eyes are upon the Parliament, and so are the eyes of Europe. We have begun to conceive hope from the bold and upright spirit which appears in our representatives to right us and to revenge us. They have, indeed, a great and unprecedented opportunity given them, of securing to themselves, in the hearts of all Englishmen, a monument of grateful praise and publick spirit, and of perpetuating that praise in the memory of every Briton, till time shall be no more.

T and G

I am, &c.

No. 11. SATURDAY, January 7, 1721.

The Justice and Necessity of punishing great Crimes, though committed against no subsisting Law of the State. [Gordon] ↪

[I-66]

SIR,

Salus populi suprema lex esto: That the benefit and safety of the people constitutes the supreme law, is an universal and everlasting maxim in government; It can never be altered by municipal statutes: No customs can change, no positive institutions can abrogate, no time can efface, this primary law of nature and nations. The sole end of men's entering into political societies, was mutual protection and defence; and whatever power does not contribute to those purposes, is not government, but usurpation.

Every man in the state of nature had a right to repel injuries, and to revenge them; that is, he had a right to punish the authors of those injuries, and to prevent their being again committed; and this he might do, without declaring before-hand what injuries he would punish. Seeing therefore that this right was inherent in every private man, it is absurd to suppose that national legislatures, to whom every man's private power is committed, have not the same right, and ought not to exercise it upon proper occasions.

Crimes being the objects of laws, there were crimes before there were laws to punish them; and yet from the beginning they deserved to be punished by the person affected by them, or by the society, and a number of men united with him for common security, though without the sentence of a common judge (called by us the magistrate) formally appointed to condemn offenders.

Laws, for the most part, do not make crimes, but suit and adapt punishments to such actions as all mankind knew to be crimes before. And though national governments should never enact any positive laws, never annex particular penalties to known offences; yet they would have a right, and it would be their duty to punish those offences according to their best discretion; much more so, if the crimes committed are so great, that no human wisdom could foresee that any man could be wicked and desperate enough to commit them.

Lawyers distinguish betwixt *malum prohibitum* and *malum in se*; that is, between crimes that are so in their own nature, and crimes that owe their pravity to a disobedience to positive laws. Of the former sort are all those actions, by which one man hurts another in his reputation, his person, or his fortune; and those actions are still more heinous, if they injure, or are intended to injure, the whole society.

The latter sort consists of such crimes as result from what legislatures enact for the particular benefit of private societies; as laws concerning the regularity of trade, the manner of choosing magistrates, local orders; and from such positive institutions, as receive their force alone from the powers that enact them. Now those crimes were not so before they were declared so; and consequently, no man before was under any obligation to avoid them.

It would be very severe and unjust to punish any man for an undesigned transgression of the latter sort; that is, for such action as he thought that he might lawfully and honestly do, and which he had never notice given him not to do. But to infer from thence, that a villain may despise all the laws of God and nature, ruin thousands of his fellow-subjects, and overturn nations with impunity, because such villainy was too monstrous for human foresight and prevention, is something so absurd, that I am ashamed to confute it.

This is nothing less than asserting, that a nation has not a power within itself to save itself: That the whole ought not to preserve the whole: That particular men have the liberty to subvert the government which protects them, and yet continue to be protected by that government which they would destroy: That they may overturn all law, and yet escape by not being within the express words of any particular law.

There are crimes so monstrous and shocking, that wise states would not suffer them to stand in their statute books; because they would not put such an indignity upon human nature, as to suppose it capable of committing them. They would not mention what they imagined would never be practised. The old Romans, therefore, had no law against parricide; yet there was no want of punishment for parricides from the want of law: Those black and enormous criminals were sewed up in a sack, and thrown into the Tiber.

In Holland, there was no law against men's breaking fraudulently; yet the first man who was known to do so, was immediately executed, and his estate divided among his creditors.

In England, 'tis said, there was no law, till lately, against the burning of ships; yet, if any man had burned the Royal Navy of England, lying at anchor, ought not his crime, which it seems was not felony, to have been declared high-treason?

Many nations have had particular officers appointed on purpose to punish uncommon crimes, which were not within the reach of ordinary justice. The Romans had a dictator; a great and extraordinary magistrate, vested with an extraordinary power, as he was created on extraordinary exigencies; and his commission was limited only by the publick good, and consisted in a very short direction, *Nequid detrimenti respublica capiat*; in English, *To save the state*.

This powerful officer was once created on purpose to put to death Spurius Maelius, for giving *gratis* to the people a large quantity of corn, in a time of famine. This liberality of his was construed by the senate, an ambitious bribe to catch the hearts of the multitude, in order to seize their liberties. *Spurius Maelius—praedives, rem utilem pessimo exemplo, pejore consilio est aggressus*. He undertook a publick and plausible thing, but of ill example, and with a worse design. *Largitiones frumenti facere instituit*. His avowed pretence was to relieve the poor; *Plebemque hoc munere delinitam, quacunquē incederet conspectus alatusque supra modum hominis privati, secum trahere*. He cajoled the people, intending to enslave them; and growing too powerful for a subject, became terrible to the common liberty, which is supported by equality: *Ipse, ut est humanus animus insatiabilis eo quod fortuna spondet, ad altiora & non concessa tendere*: The mind of man is restless, and cannot stand still, nor set bounds to its pursuits. It is not to be expected that one of our million men (and they say that we have several) will sit down and be content with his millions, though he were allowed to keep them (which God forbid!). He will be making new pushes for new acquisitions, having such ample means in his hands. Spurius Maelius would at first have been content with the consulate, or chief magistracy in ordinary; but because he found that even that could not be got without force, he thought that the same force would as well carry him higher, and make

him king. *Et quoniam consulatus quoque eripiendus invitis patribus esset, de regno agitare.* The traitor had been suffered to carry a great point; he had abused the publick, and deceived the people. The Senate, therefore, took him to task: and there being no law subsisting, by which he could be put to death—*Consules legibus constricti, nequaquam tantum virium in magistratu ad eam rem pro atrocitate vindicandum quantum animi haberent;* they therefore created a dictator, an officer with power, for a time, to suspend laws, and make laws. The occasion was great—*Opus esse non forti solum viro, sed etiam libero, exsoluto que legum vinculis.* L. Quincius Cincinnatus was the man; a true and brave old republican, who worthily and boldly did his work, and by the hands of his master of the horse slew the mighty traitor, impudently imploring the publick faith, to which he was a sworn enemy; and complaining of the power of oppression, when the shameless villain had been only seeking a power to oppress. *Fidem plebis Romanae implorare; & opprimi se consensu patrum dicere.* He knew that his villainies were out of the reach of the law, and he did not dream of an extraordinary method of punishing them by the Roman parliament. But he was deceived; and the dictator tells the people, that being a sort of an outlaw, he was not to be proceeded with as with a citizen of Rome: *Nec cum eo tanquam cum cive agendum fuisse.* An unusual death was due to his monstrous wickedness: *Non pro scelere id magis quam pro monstro habendum.* Nor was his blood alone, says the wise dictator, sufficient to expiate his guilt, unless we also pull down his house, where such crying crimes were first conceived; and confiscate to the publick use his estate and his treasures, the price and means of the publick ruin. And his estate was accordingly given to the publick—*Nec satis esse sanguine ejus expiatum, nisi tecta parietesque, inter quae tantum amentiae conceptum esset, dissiparentur; bonaque contacta pretiis regni mercandi publicarentur; jubere itaque questores, vendere ea bona & in publicum redigere:* The treasury had them for the use of the publick.

Thus did the great, the wise, and the free Romans punish this extraordinary knave, by a power that was not ordinary. They likewise exerted it upon other occasions; nor were they the only people that did so.

The Athenians, grown jealous by having lost their liberties, by the usurpation of a private, but too powerful citizen, durst never trust this great power to any single magistrate, or even to a council. They would not, however, part with it, but reserved it to the whole body of the people, agreeably to the nature of a popular government. In this jealous state, it was a crime to be popular, much more to affect popularity: They would not allow a man to have it in his power to enslave his country. And, indeed, it is wisdom in a state, and a sign that they judge well, to suppose, that all men who can enslave them, will enslave them. Generosity, self-denial, and private and personal virtues, are in politicks but mere names, or rather cant-words, that go for nothing with wise men, though they may cheat the vulgar. The Athenians knew this; and therefore appointed a method of punishing great men, though they could prove no other crime against them but that of being great men. This punishment was called the *ostracism*, or the sentence of a majority in a ballot by oyster-shells; by which a suspected citizen was adjudged to banishment for ten years. They would not trust to the virtue and moderation of any private subject, capable, by being great, to be mischievous; but would rather hurt a private subject, than endanger the publick liberty. Worthy men are thought to have suffered unjustly by this ostracism; and it may be true, for aught that I know; but still it secured the publick, and long secured it. Weak and babbling men, who penetrate no deeper than words, may blame this politick severity in the commonwealth of Athens; but it is justified, in that it was politick.

In Venice, a wise, ancient, and honourable republick, there is a Council of Ten, which exercises this extraordinary power: Every arbitrary prince in the world exercises it; and every free state in the world has an undoubted right to exercise it, though they have never delegated their power to particular magistrates to exercise it for them.

In England, indeed, we have not delegated this power at all, because we very well know who must have had it, and what use would be made of it. The legislature, therefore, has reserved this power to itself, and has an undoubted right to exercise it; and has often done so upon extraordinary occasions. It ought indeed to be exercised but upon extraordinary occasions. Jove's thunderbolts were only launched against such as provoked the thunderbolts of Jove.

I shall, in my next letter to you, apply these general maxims of government to our own particular constitution, and to the present occasion, which calls aloud for Jove's help and thunder.

G

I am, &c.

No. 12. SATURDAY, January 14, 1721.

Of Treason: All Treasons not to be found in Statutes. The Right of the Legislature to declare Treasons. [Trenchard] ↩

[I-74]

SIR,

Treason, properly so called, in Latin, *Crimen laesae majestatis*, is in all countries the same: It is an endeavour to subvert, or to do some notable mischief to the publick; of which every man is a part, and with which he has joined himself for mutual defence, under what form soever the administration is exercised. I own, that lesser crimes are sometimes called by the same name, and subjected to the same punishment.

An attempt to destroy the chief magistrate of a commonwealth, or the general of an army in the field, or the governor of a town during a siege, are certainly treasons every where; because in such attempts, when they succeed, are often involved the ruin of states. They also are doubtless guilty of high treason, who, being entrusted with the wealth, security, and happiness of kingdoms, do yet knowingly pervert that trust, to the undoing of that people whom they are obliged, by undeserved rewards, as well as by all the ties of religion, justice, honour, and gratitude, to defend and protect.

'Tis the same, if any number of men, though in a lesser trust, or in no trust at all, should deliberately and knowingly destroy thousands of their fellow-subjects, and overturn the trade and publick credit of the nation, to enrich themselves and their accomplices.

These, and crimes of the like nature, are treasons from the nature of things themselves, antecedent to all laws that call them so; and will be treasons, though laws gained by subordination should call them otherwise: And every state has a right to treat those who commit them, as traitors and parricides. In truth, there are as many of these kinds of treasons, as there are different methods of conspiring against kingdoms; and the criminals, though ever so great, deserve death and confiscation; that is, they ought to be destroyed by the people whom they would destroy.

The great principal of self-preservation, which is the first and fundamental law of nature, calls for this procedure; the security of commonwealths depends upon it; the very being of government makes it necessary; and whatever is necessary to the publick safety, is just.

The fate of millions, and the being of states, must not stand and fall by the distinctions of monks, coined in colleges, or by the chicane of petty-foggers; who would bring every thing within the narrow verge of their own knowledge, under their own jurisdiction and cognizance; and would determine all things by the rules of inferior judicatures, the gibberish of private practisers, and the sayings of old women, or of those who are like old women; whose brains are addled by being long jumbled and always turned round within the scanty circle of private courts, not daring to venture at a bold and free thought out of them, however self-evident; like some carriers' horses, that are used to a track, and know not how to travel in an open road.

But questions of this kind belong *ad aliud examen*, and ought to be brought before an higher tribunal: The legislature are the only proper and safe judges: What is done against all, should be judged by all. Nor are their resolutions to be confined by any other rule than *Quid est utile, quid honestum*, general justice, and the general good. Religion, virtue, common sense, and the publick peace and felicity, are the only counsel to be admitted either for the publick or the prisoners.

The conspirators against mankind ought to know, that no subterfuges, or tergiversations; no knavish subtilties, or pedantic quirks of lawyers; no evasions, skulkings behind known statutes; no combinations, or pretended commissions, shall be able to screen or protect them from publick justice. They ought to know, that there is a power in being that can follow them through all the dark labyrinths and doubling meanders; a power that can crush them to pieces, though they change into all the shapes of Proteus, to avoid the fury of Hercules: a power, confined by no limitation, but that of publick justice and the publick good; a power, that does not follow precedents, but makes them; a power, which has this for its principle, that extraordinary crimes ought not to be tried by ordinary rules, and that unprecedented villainies ought to have unprecedented punishments.

But though in all governments, this great power must exist somewhere, yet it can rarely be delegated with prudence to inferior magistrates; who, out of ambition, revenge, or faction, or for bribes and preferments, or out of fear and flattery, or in concert with the ill measures or selfish intrigues of statesmen, may pervert so dangerous a trust to the destruction of those whom it was intended to preserve.

This particularly has been the case of England: We know by what means judges were often made, and from what conduct they expected farther preferment, and from whom they looked for protection: For this reason they were, and ought to be, confined in their jurisdiction relating to treason, and the manner of trying it.

Undoubtedly every intention manifested by act to destroy the constitution and government, was treason by the common law of England. But why do I say of England, since it is, and ever was, treason in every country throughout the world? This treason equally extends to those, who would subvert either house of Parliament, or the rights and privileges of the people, as to those who attempt to destroy the person of the King, or dethrone him. And indeed, what can be more absurd, than to suppose it to be the highest crime to attempt to destroy one man, for no other reason but that he is King; and yet not to suppose it the highest crime to destroy that people for whose benefit alone he was made King, and for whose sake indeed there ever was such a thing in the world?

But though this proposition was self-evident, and must ever be assented to as soon as mentioned, yet, by the flattery of priests and servile lawyers, the *salus populi*, or security of the state, soon came to signify only the unbounded power and sovereignty of the prince; and it became treason to hinder one, constituted, and grandly maintained out of the people's labour and wealth, for the publick safety, from destroying the publick safety. Our ancestors found, by lamentable experience, that unworthy men, preferred by corrupt ministers for unworthy ends, made treasons free only of the court; that the least attempt to oppose unlimited and unlawful authority, was often called treason; and that the highest treasons of all, which were those against the commonwealth, might be committed with impunity, applause, and rewards.

It was therefore high time to apply an adequate remedy to an enormous mischief, which struck at the whole state, and at the fortunes and lives of every subject in England. The statute therefore of the 25th of Edward III was enacted, which enumerates the several species or kinds of treasons, which shall continue to be esteemed treasons, and be adjudged so by the King's justices; and are chiefly those which relate to the King's person, his family, and dignity: These the Parliament thought they might safely trust to the examination of the King's judges, under such limitations and regulations as the act presents.

But it is plain, from the same act, that they did not intend to confine all treasons to those recited there, because it is declared in the following words, *viz.*

If any other case supposed treason, not before specified, shall happen before any justices, they shall stay judgment, till the cause be shewed before the Parliament, whether it ought to be judged treason or not.

So that here is a plain declaration of the legislature (if any man can possibly think such a declaration wanting) that other crimes were treason, and ought to be punished as treason (though not by the King's judges), besides those recited in the act; which were, as has been said, designed only to extend to treasons which were committed against our Lord the King, and his Royal Majesty, as the act expressly says. And 'tis evident, from the whole tenor of it, that it was intended purely to restrain the unlimited and exorbitant jurisdiction assumed by the King's courts, in declaring treasons, and sacrificing by that means, whom they pleased to unlawful power.

But as to the highest and most heinous treasons of all, such as were treasons against the legislature, and against the whole body of the people, for whose safety alone there were any treasons against the King at all, seeing that their safety was, in a great measure, included in his; the Parliament reserved the judgment of every such treason to themselves: They did not alter what was treason, but the judges of it. They knew that treasons against the constitution could seldom be committed but by ministers and favourites of princes, protected by power, and sheltered by authority; and that therefore it would be absurd to trust the punishment of such potent knaves, and criminal favourites, to judges made by themselves; judges, who would neither have inclination, figure, or character, to reach crimes countenanced, and perhaps authorized, by a Richard II or Edward II.

Such crimes, therefore, were the proper objects of the awful power of a legislature; who will always be supported by the people whom they represent, when they exert themselves for the interest of that people. A power, so supported, can make the loftiest traitor quake. It can fetch corrupt ministers out of their dark recesses, and make their heads a victim to publick vengeance. Every wise and good king will lend a willing ear to their dutiful remonstrances; he will hearken to the importunate cries of his people, and readily deliver up the authors of their misery.

One great part of their care, therefore, has ever been, to call those to an account, who have abused the favour of their royal master, and endeavoured to make him little and contemptible to his people; weakening, by such means, his authority, and hazarding his person. This the people, whom they represented, thought they had a right to expect and demand from them; and this justice they have often done to their King and country.

An excellent *Discourse concerning Treasons and Bills of Attainder* was published soon after his Majesty's accession to the throne, and shewed unanswerably, that our Parliaments, in almost every reign since the Conquest, claimed and exercised this right, upon extraordinary occasions; and none ever, till lately, opposed it, but the criminals who were to suffer by it, and their party: Some gentlemen now living can give the best account, why that book, and the cries of every honest man, had not their desired effect. I hope that no man will be deluded again by any practising the same arts, and for the same reasons too.

The length of this letter will not allow me to draw from all these reasonings upon treason such applications as I promised in my last, and intended in this. I shall therefore defer these applications to another, and perhaps more proper, occasion. In the mean while, I observe with pleasure the noble spirit shewn by our legislature, to punish, with an exemplary severity, the murderers of our credit, and the publick enemies of our liberty and prosperity. This revives every drooping heart, and kindles joy in every face, in spite of all our miseries. And this brings terror, trembling, and paleness upon the guilty; to see death and destruction pursuing them close, and besetting them hard on every side. They are in the circumstances and the agonies of the guilty Cain, who justly feared that every man whom he met would kill him, though there was no law then in being against murder.

T

I am, &c.

No. 13. SATURDAY, January 21, 1721.

The Arts of misleading the People by Sounds. [Trenchard] ↪

[I-82]

SIR,

In surveying the state of the world, one is often at a great loss, whether to ascribe the political misery of mankind to their own folly and credulity, or to the knavery and impudence of their pretended managers. Both these causes, in all appearance, concur to produce the same evil; and if there were no bubbles, there would be no sharpers.

There must certainly be a vast fund of stupidity in human nature, else men would not be caught as they are, a thousand times over, by the same snare; and while they yet remember their past misfortunes, go on to court and encourage the causes to which they were owing, and which will again produce them.

I will own, however, that government makes more fools, and more wise men, than nature makes; and the difference between nation and nation, in point of virtue, sagacity, and arms, arises not from the different genius of the people; which, making very small allowances for the difference of climate, would be the same under the same regulations; but from the different genius of their political constitutions: The one, perhaps, making common sense dangerous, and enquiries criminal; cowing the spirits of men, and rebuking the sallies of virtue; while the other, at the same time, encourages the improvement of the understanding, rewards the discovery of truth, and cultivates, as a virtue, the love of liberty and of one's country.

Yet even in countries where the highest liberty is allowed, and the greatest light shines, you generally find certain men, and bodies of men, set apart to mislead the multitude; who are ever abused with words, ever fond of the worst of things recommended by good names, and ever abhor the best things, and the most virtuous actions, disfigured by ill names. One of the great arts, therefore, of cheating men, is, to study the application and misapplication of sounds—a few loud words rule the majority, I had almost said, the whole world.

Thus we have heard from our fathers, and seen in our own days, that contemptible insects, born in poverty, educated by charity, and often from cleaning their masters' shoes, preferred unexpectedly and undeservedly to offices and preferments in the Church, have had the front to call themselves the Church itself, and every one its enemy, who despised their meanness, exposed their reverend knavery, and laughed at their grimace.

And thus we have been told of the times, and some men now living remember to have seen them, when unworthy men, who, by faction and treachery, by mean compliances with power, or by insolently daring of authority, having raised themselves to wealth and honours, and to the power of betraying some considerable trust, have had the provoking sauciness to call themselves the government, and their own rogueries his then Majesty's measures; and the next thing was, to pronounce all those enemies to his then Majesty, who would endeavour to rescue their abused King and sinking country out of their devouring and polluted claws.

In King Charles I's time, the great Earl of Strafford and little Archbishop Laud told the nation, that his Majesty's measures were, governing without Parliaments, a power without reserve in the state, a flaming popish hierarchy in the Church, absolute and abject submission in the people, and a barbarian army of Irish papists to support and insure all these worthy measures. But the untimely death of one of these offenders, and the imprisonment of the other, broke all those fine measures.

In the reign of Charles II Pensionary Parliaments, a general depravation of manners, guards increased into armies, and popish religion and a popish successor, popish leagues and Protestant wars, were called by wicked men his Majesty's measures; and all honest men and good subjects were called his Majesty's enemies: And, when that prince saw that these measures of his ministry created endless jealousies to his people, and endless uneasiness to himself, and when he resolved to take other measures of his own, it is thought that they put a short end to all his measures.

When King James came to the crown, though, setting bigotry apart, he had some royal virtues, being a prince of industry and good oeconomy; yet he suffered himself to be governed by a set of sycophants, many of them as foolish as they were mischievous. The establishment of bare-faced Romish popery in the Church, and a lawless tyranny in the prince, became then his Majesty's measures; the ministers, who advised and promoted them, called themselves the government; and whoever opposed his reason, his honesty, and his publick spirit, against those traitors to the publick, was charged with flying in the face of the government, and opposing his Majesty's measures. In what these measures ended, is well known: They cost his Majesty his kingdoms, and made him an honourable beggar in France all his life for his daily bread.

King William, when he came to the crown, brought with him the hearts, and hands, and the good wishes of every honest man in England; and was supported by these men through a tedious and expensive war, unknown to our ancestors; which, when he had finished, and the exhausted people expected some relaxations from their sufferings, they were given to know by some court parasites that his Majesty's measures was a standing army in time of peace, under the inspection of Parliaments. This unexpected spirit in the court gave such jealousy to those who were best affected to his Majesty's person and government, that with grief I call to mind the difficulties and anxieties which that great prince felt ever afterwards to the end of his reign.

As to Queen Anne, I shall say no more, than that it is shrewdly suspected, that what her Majesty's ministry had the insolence to call her Majesty's measures, broke her Majesty's heart.

Let mankind therefore learn experience from so many misfortunes, and bear no longer to hear the worst things called by the best names; nor suffer hereafter the brightest and most conspicuous virtues of the wisest and most beneficent princes, to be sullied by actions which they do not countenance, nor even know of. Let them not permit the vices of the worst of servants to be laid at the door of the best of masters.

We, in this land, are very sure that we are blessed with the best King in the world, who desires of his people nothing but their own greatness and felicity: A prince, ready to prevent their wishes, and to give them more than their duty ought to suffer them to ask. Let us shew our duty to this our great and benevolent sovereign; let us endeavour to alleviate his cares, and ease him of all ungrateful burdens; let us take upon ourselves the heavy labour of

cleansing the Augean stables, and of cutting off all the Hydra's heads at once.

The law tells us, that the King can do no wrong: And, I thank God, we have a King that would not, if he could. But the greatest servants to princes may do wrong, and often have done it; and the representatives of the people have an undoubted right to call them to an account for it.

In truth, every private subject has a right to watch the steps of those who would betray their country; nor is he to take their word about the motives of their designs, but to judge of their designs by the event.

This is the principle of a *Whig*, this the doctrine of liberty; and 'tis as much knavery to deny this doctrine, as it is folly to ridicule it. Some will tell us, that this is setting up the mob for statesmen, and for the censurers of states. The word *mob* does not at all move me, on this occasion, nor weaken the grounds which I go upon. It is certain, that the whole people, who are the publick, are the best judges, whether things go ill or well with the publick. It is true, that they cannot all of them see distant dangers, nor watch the motions, and guess the designs, of neighbouring states: But every cobbler can judge, as well as a statesman, whether he can fit peaceably in his stall; whether he is paid for his work; whether the market, where he buys his victuals, be well provided; and whether a dragoon, or a parish-officer, comes to him for his taxes, if he pay any.

Every man too, even the meanest, can see, in a publick and sudden transition from plenty to poverty, from happiness to distress, whether the calamity comes from war, and famine, and the hand of God; or from oppression, and mismanagement, and the villainies of men. In short, the people often judge better than their superiors, and have not so many biases to judge wrong; and politicians often rail at the people, chiefly because they have given the people occasion to rail: Those ministers who cannot make the people their friends, it is to be shrewdly suspected, do not deserve their friendship; it is certain, that much honesty, and small management, rarely miss to gain it. As temporal felicity is the whole end of government; so people will always be pleased or provoked, as that increases or abates. This rule will always hold. You may judge of their affection, or disaffection, by the burdens which they bear, and the advantages which they enjoy. Here then is a sure standard for the government to judge of the people, and for the people to judge of the government.

Blessed be God, and thanks to our sovereign, who has given us a ministry that makes all these cautions unnecessary; who will baffle all calumny, and remove all suspicion of guilt from themselves (if any such suspicion can be), by being foremost to pursue the guilty; and will, doubtless, take double vengeance upon any in publick authority (if any such can be found), who shall appear to have contributed to our publick misfortunes; and, in fine, will promote and encourage a rigorous and strict enquiry, wherever any suspicion is given that enquiry ought to be made.

Such conduct will disperse our fears, restore our credit, give bread to our poor, make trade and manufacture flourish again; and, in some measure, compensate for all our past evils, by giving us a lasting prospect of our future plenty, peace, and felicity.

T

I am, &c.

No. 14. SATURDAY, January 28, 1721.

The unhappy State of despotick Princes, compared with the happy Lot of such as rule by settled Laws. How the latter, by abusing their Trust, may forfeit their Crown.

[Trenchard] ↩

[I-88]

SIR,

The best, the wisest, and the most courageous of despotick princes, have frequently lamented the unhappy condition into which their greatness betrayed them. Being often born in purple, and educated in pride and luxury, they seldom can have any feeling of the calamities which the rest of the world suffer. They are, besides, surrounded, for the most part, by the falsest, the most ambitious, and the basest of all men; with such men's eyes they must therefore see, with such men's ears they must likewise hear.

I cannot, in truth, see how, in the nature of things, it can be otherwise: For the mean fawning, the servile flatteries, the deceitful correspondences, the base ingratitude to old benefactors, and the slavish compliances with new friends, and all the other arts and treacheries, which are necessary to be put in practice, in order to rise in such courts, or indeed to become heads of parties even in free governments, make it almost impossible for a truly great or virtuous man to attain to those stations.

A good man will choose to live in an innocent obscurity, and enjoy the internal satisfaction resulting from a just sense of his own merit, and virtue, rather than aim at greatness, by a long series of unworthy arts, and ignoble actions; whilst the ambitious, the cruel, the rapacious, the false, the proud, the treacherous part of mankind, will be ever thrusting themselves forward, and endeavouring to sparkle in courts, as well as in the eyes of the unthinking crowd; and, to make themselves necessary, will be continually either flattering or distressing princes.

Nor can it be expected that men, who have been raised to power by such execrable means, should ever use it to the benefit of mankind, or to any good end. They will always proceed in the same steps where they began; and use, for the support of their greatness, the same vile measures by which they acquired their greatness, till they have at length sacrificed all things in heaven and earth to their ambition.

There is a fine passage, to this purpose, in the short history of the Emperor Aurelian by Vopiscus:

Et quaeritur quidem quae res malos principes faciat: Jam primum, licentia, deinde rerum copia, amici improbi, satellites detestandi, eunuchi avarissimi, aulici vel stulti et detestabiles, & (quod negari non potest) rerum publicarum ignorantia. Sed ego a patre meo audivi, Dioclesianum principem, jam privatam, dixisse, nihil esse difficilius quam bene imperare. Collegunt se quatuor vel quinque, atque unum consilium ad decipiendum principem capiunt: Dicunt quod probandum sit. Imperator, qui domi clausus est, vera non novit. Cogitur hoc tantum scire quod illi loquuntur: Facit iudices quos fieri non oportet; amovet a republica quos debet obtinere. Quid multa? Ut Dioclesianus ipse dicebat, bonus, cautus, optimus venditur imperator. Histor. August. Scriptor. Tom. II. p. 531, 532.

“My friends,” (says the great Emperor Dioclesian, to those who advised him to resume the empire)

you little know how difficult an undertaking it is to perform the duty of a Roman emperor, and to reign well. The few who have access to him, will cabal and conspire together, and unite in their counsels to deceive and betray him. They will study how to flatter him, and never tell him what it is their duty to tell him, and what is his interest to know; but only what they think will best please him. They will shut him up, and, as it were, imprison him in his palace; and no one shall be admitted to his ear, but by their leave, and in their presence. So that he shall never know the condition of his affairs, or be informed of the cries of his people, or, indeed, of any thing but what they think fit to tell him: By their means he shall prefer undeserving men to the best posts of the empire, and disgrace the most worthy of his subjects, and the most devoted to his interest. But why should I labour this point any more, when even the good, the most discerning, when the best and ablest emperors are bought and sold?

But Dioclesian was an arbitrary prince, whose will was a law to his subjects. But it is far otherwise in limited monarchies, where the prince governs his people by fixed rules and known statutes; and where his faithful States have a right to represent freely, though humbly, their grievances to him, and by his authority to call to account, and punish, such betrayers as are before described.

Happy therefore is that prince, happy in the love of his subjects, happy in the just applause and dutiful acknowledgment of millions of his fellow-creatures, who derive their felicity from him! Thrice happy is that people, where the constitution is so poised and tempered, and the administration so disposed and divided into proper channels, that the passions and infirmities of the prince cannot enter into the measures of his government; where he has in his power all the means of doing good, and none of doing ill; where all beneficent and gracious actions are owned to flow from his clemency and goodness, and where inferior machines are answerable for all such conduct as may prejudice the publick.

Such a government does, in some sense, resemble that of heaven itself, where the sovereign disposer of all things can neither will nor do any thing but what is just and good: He is restrained, by the excellency of his own nature, from being the author of evil; and will call to a severe account all those, who would impute their own unrighteousness to his orders or influence.

Such is the monarchy of England, where the sovereign performs every act of his regal office by his authority, without the fatigue and anxiety of executing the troublesome parts of it in his person. The laws are chosen and recommended to him by his Parliament; and afterwards executed by his judges, and other ministers of justice: His great seal is kept by his chancellor: His naval power is under the direction of his high admiral: And all acts of state and discretion are presumed to be done by the advice of his council. All which officers are answerable for their misbehaviour, and for all actions done within their several provinces, which they have advised or could have prevented by giving their advice, or by making timely and humble remonstrances; which they are obliged to shew that they have done.

His leagues, his commands, and even his authentick speeches, are records. His high office consists in approving laws chosen by common consent; in executing those laws, and in being the publick guardian of the publick safety: And all private orders, which are inconsistent with these great duties, are not the orders of the crown; nor are the actions done

in pursuance of them, the actions of the King, but the actions of those that do them. He can do no wrong himself, nor give authority to any one else to do wrong. Every act of his must be lawful, because all unlawful acts are not his. He can give no commands, as a man, which shall interfere with those which he gives as a King. His private will cannot control his publick will. He commands, as a King, his chancellor, and judges, to act according to his known laws; and no private orders to do otherwise can be valid.

The nation has ever acted upon these maxims, and preserved such a dutiful respect to the royal Majesty, as never to suffer any guilt to be laid to him; but has always heaped double vengeance upon such miscreants as would insinuate, that their crimes were approved or countenanced by their royal master.

Here is all the precaution which can be taken by human wisdom to make a happy prince and a happy people. The prince is restrained in nothing, but from doing mischief to his subjects, and consequently to himself; their true interest being ever the same: And the people can never have any motive to refuse just allegiance to their prince, whilst the ligaments of the constitution are preserved entire; that is, whilst parliaments are suffered to meet, and the courts of justice remain open, and such force is not used against them as dissolves all relation. All the subjects of such a prince highly honour, and almost worship, him. He has a vast revenue to support the splendor and magnificence of his court at home, and his royal dignity abroad: He has the power of disposing of all offices: All honours flow from him: His person is sacred, and not answerable for any events: He cannot be accountable for any wrong, which he is incapable of doing; and those who do it, shall be punished by his authority, even though it be supposed possible that they could, by false mis-representations, deceive him far enough to approve it.

The examples of Richard II who, as our histories tell us, was deposed by the States of his kingdom, and of the late King James, are no instances to disprove the truth of this assertion: For neither of them was deposed by his people before he first deposed himself. No champions for tyranny, or dogmatizers for unlimited dominion, have yet asserted, that a prince may not resign his crown by the consent of his people, when he declines to hold it any longer upon the conditions on which he first accepted it.

Suppose a prince, in any limited monarchy, should make a publick declaration to the States of his kingdom, that, Whereas the crown descended to him by the laws of that country, and that all the power which he was possessed of was conferred upon him by those laws; That he well knew that the preservation of those laws, which he had sworn to observe, and the general good of his people, were the sole considerations of his enjoying that high dignity; and yet, notwithstanding, he refused to hold it any longer, upon the terms upon which he had first accepted it, and sworn to observe; but that he now renounced that title, and would govern them hereafter by his sole will and pleasure: I say, if any should do this, the advocates for lawless power would do well to tell us, whether such a prince did not make as effectual a renunciation and resignation of his government, as if he disabled himself, and resigned it for his ease, or from the satiety of power. And if they allow that he may do all this by words spoken to express his intentions, I should be glad to know, from these men of distinctions, why he may not do it by a series of actions, which will more effectually discover and declare his inward intentions, and may therefore be more depended on than any words can possibly be?

I call upon the two famous universities of this land for an answer: And, till I have a full one, shall continue to believe, that what was done, in regard to the abdication of the late King James, was just and necessary to be done upon the fundamental principles of government; and, that all his successors since have been rightful and lawful Kings and Queens of this realm; and I particularly glory to say, that no prince has ever better deserved that high title, than our present great and glorious sovereign, King George.

T

I am, &c.

No. 15. SATURDAY, February 4, 1721.

Of Freedom of Speech: That the same is inseparable from publick Liberty. [Gordon] ↪

[I-96]

SIR,

Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as publick liberty, without freedom of speech: Which is the right of every man, as far as by it he does not hurt and control the right of another; and this is the only check which it ought to suffer, the only bounds which it ought to know.

This sacred privilege is so essential to free government, that the security of property; and the freedom of speech, always go together; and in those wretched countries where a man cannot call his tongue his own, he can scarce call any thing else his own. Whoever would overthrow the liberty of the nation, must begin by subduing the freedom of speech; a thing terrible to publick traitors.

This secret was so well known to the court of King Charles I that his wicked ministry procured a proclamation to forbid the people to talk of Parliaments, which those traitors had laid aside. To assert the undoubted right of the subject, and defend his Majesty's legal prerogative, was called disaffection, and punished as sedition. Nay, people were forbid to talk of religion in their families: For the priests had combined with the ministers to cook up tyranny, and suppress truth and the law. While the late King James, when Duke of York, went avowedly to mass; men were fined, imprisoned, and undone, for saying that he was a papist: And, that King Charles II might live more securely a papist, there was an act of Parliament made, declaring it treason to say that he was one.

That men ought to speak well of their governors, is true, while their governors deserve to be well spoken of; but to do publick mischief, without hearing of it, is only the prerogative and felicity of tyranny: A free people will be shewing that they are so, by their freedom of speech.

The administration of government is nothing else, but the attendance of the trustees of the people upon the interest and affairs of the people. And as it is the part and business of the people, for whose sake alone all publick matters are, or ought to be, transacted, to see whether they be well or ill transacted; so it is the interest, and ought to be the ambition, of all honest magistrates, to have their deeds openly examined, and publickly scanned: Only the wicked governors of men dread what is said of them; *Audivit Tiberius probra queis lacerabitur, atque perculsus est*. The publick censure was true, else he had not felt it bitter.

Freedom of speech is ever the symptom, as well as the effect, of good government. In old Rome, all was left to the judgment and pleasure of the people; who examined the publick proceedings with such discretion, and censured those who administered them with such equity and mildness, that in the space of three hundred years, not five publick ministers suffered unjustly. Indeed, whenever the commons proceeded to violence, the great ones had been the aggressors.

Guilt only dreads liberty of speech, which drags it out of its lurking holes, and exposes its deformity and horror to day-light. Horatius, Valerius, Cincinnatus, and other virtuous and undesigning magistrates of the Roman commonwealth, had nothing to fear from liberty of speech. Their virtuous administration, the more it was examined, the more it brightened and gained by enquiry. When Valerius, in particular, was accused, upon some slight grounds, of affecting the diadem; he, who was the first minister of Rome, did not accuse the people for examining his conduct, but approved his innocence in a speech to them; he gave such satisfaction to them, and gained such popularity to himself, that they gave him a new name; *inde cognomen factum Publicolae est*; to denote that he was their favourite and their friend. *Latae deinde leges. Ante omnes de provocatione, adversus magistratus ad populum*, Livii lib. ii. cap. 8.

The best princes have ever encouraged and promoted freedom of speech; they knew that upright measures would defend themselves, and that all upright men would defend them. Tacitus, speaking of the reigns of some of the princes above-mention'd, says with ecstasy, *Rara temporum felicitate, ubi sentire quae velis, & quae sentias dicere liceat*: A blessed time, when you might think what you would, and speak what you thought!

The same was the opinion and practice of the wise and virtuous Timoleon, the deliverer of the great city of Syracuse from slavery. He being accused by Demoenetus, a popular orator, in a full assembly of the people, of several misdemeanors committed by him while he was general, gave no other answer, than that he was highly obliged to the gods for granting him a request that he had often made to them; namely, that he might live to see the Syracusians enjoy that liberty of speech which they now seemed to be masters of.

And that great commander, M. Marcellus, who won more battles than any Roman captain of his age, being accused by the Syracusians, while he was now a fourth time consul, of having done them indignities and hostile wrongs, contrary to the League, rose from his seat in the Senate, as soon as the charge against him was opened, and passing (as a private man) into the place where the accused were wont to make their defence, gave free liberty to the Syracusians to impeach him: Which, when they had done, he and they went out of the court together to attend the issue of the cause: Nor did he express the least ill-will or resentment towards these his accusers; but being acquitted, received their city into his protection. Had he been guilty, he would neither have shewn such temper nor courage.

I doubt not but old Spencer and his son, all honest men in England. They dreaded to be called traitors, because they were traitors. And I dare say, Queen Elizabeth's Walsingham, who deserved no reproaches, feared none. Misrepresentation of publick measures is easily overthrown, by representing publick measures truly: When they are honest, they ought to be publickly known, that they may be publickly commended; but if they be knavish or pernicious, they ought to be publickly exposed, in order to be publickly detested.

To assert, that King James was a papist and a tyrant, was only so far hurtful to him, as it was true of him; and if the Earl of Strafford had not deserved to be impeached, he need not have feared a bill of attainder. If our directors and their confederates be not such knaves as the world thinks them, let them prove to all the world, that the world thinks wrong, and that they are guilty of none of those villainies which all the world lays to their charge. Others too, who would be thought to have no part of their guilt, must, before they are thought innocent, shew that they did all that was in their power to prevent that guilt, and to check their proceedings.

Freedom of speech is the great bulwark of liberty; they prosper and die together: And it is the terror of traitors and oppressors, and a barrier against them. It produces excellent writers, and encourages men of fine genius. Tacitus tells us, that the Roman commonwealth bred great and numerous authors, who writ with equal boldness and eloquence: But when it was enslaved, those great wits were no more. *Postquam bellatum apud Actium; atque omnem potestatem ad unum conferri pacis interfuit, magna illa ingenia cessere.* Tyranny had usurped the place of equality, which is the soul of liberty, and destroyed publick courage. The minds of men, terrified by unjust power, degenerated into all the vileness and methods of servitude: Abject sycophancy and blind submission grew the only means of preferment, and indeed of safety; men durst not open their mouths, but to flatter.

Pliny the Younger observes, that this dread of tyranny had such effect, that the Senate, the great Roman Senate, became at last stupid and dumb: *Mutam ac sedentariam assentiendi necessitatem.* Hence, says he, our spirit and genius are stupified, broken, and sunk for ever. And in one of his epistles, speaking of the works of his uncle, he makes an apology for eight of them, as not written with the same vigour which was to be found in the rest; for that these eight were written in the reign of Nero, when the spirit of writing was cramped by fear; *Dubii sermonis octo scripset sub Nerone—cum omne studiorum genus paulo liberius & erectius periculosum servitus fecisset.*

All ministers, therefore, who were oppressors, or intended to be oppressors, have been loud in their complaints against freedom of speech, and the licence of the press; and always restrained, or endeavoured to restrain, both. In consequence of this, they have brow-beaten writers, punished them violently, and against law, and burnt their works. By all which they shewed how much truth alarmed them, and how much they were at enmity with truth.

There is a famous instance of this in Tacitus: He tells us, that Cremutius Cordus, having in his *Annals* praised Brutus and Cassius, gave offence to Sejanus, first minister, and to some inferior sycophants in the court of Tiberius; who, conscious of their own characters, took the praise bestowed on every worthy Roman, to be so many reproaches pointed at themselves: They therefore complained of the book to the Senate; which, being now only the machine of tyranny, condemned it to be burnt. But this did not prevent its spreading. *Libros cremandos censuere patres; sed manserunt occultati & editi:* Being censured, it was the more sought after. "From hence," says Tacitus, "we may wonder at the stupidity of those statesmen, who hope to extinguish, by the terror of their power, the memory of their actions; for quite otherwise, the punishment of good writers gains credit to their writings:" *Nam contra, punitis ingeniis, gliscit auctoritas.* Nor did ever any government, who practised impolitick severity, get any thing by it, but infamy to themselves, and renown to those who suffered under it. This also is an observation of Tacitus: *Neque aliud [externi] reges, [aut] qui ea[dem] saevitiae usi sunt, nisi dedecus sibi, atque gloriam illis peperere.*

Freedom of speech, therefore, being of such infinite importance to the preservation of liberty, every one who loves liberty ought to encourage freedom of speech. Hence it is that I, living in a country of liberty, and under the best prince upon earth, shall take this very favourable opportunity of serving mankind, by warning them of the hideous mischiefs that they will suffer, if ever corrupt and wicked men shall hereafter get possession of any state, and the power of betraying their master: And, in order to do this, I will shew them by what steps they will probably proceed to accomplish their traitorous ends. This may be the subject of my next.

Valerius Maximus tells us, that Lentulus Marcellinus, the Roman consul, having complained, in a popular assembly, of the overgrown power of Pompey; the whole people answered him with a shout of approbation: Upon which the consul told them, “Shout on, gentlemen, shout on, and use those bold signs of liberty while you may; for I do not know how long they will be allowed you.”

God be thanked, we Englishmen have neither lost our liberties, nor are in danger of losing them. Let us always cherish this matchless blessing, almost peculiar to ourselves; that our posterity may, many ages hence, ascribe their freedom to our zeal. The defence of liberty is a noble, a heavenly office; which can only be performed where liberty is: For, as the same Valerius Maximus observes, *Quid ergo libertas sine Catone? non magis quam Cato sine libertate.*

G

I am, &c.

No. 16. SATURDAY, February 11, 1721.

The Leaders of Parties, their usual Views. Advice to all Parties to be no longer misled.
[Gordon] ↩

[I-104]

SIR,

The wise Sancho Pancha desired that his subjects, in the promised island, might be all blacks, because he would sell them. And this seems to be the first modest, and, as I think, the only reasonable desire of the leaders of all parties; for no man will be at the expence and fatigue of body and conscience, which is necessary to lead a faction, only to be disturbed and annoyed by them.

A very great authority has told us, [§] that "'Tis worth no man's time to serve a party, unless he can now and then get good jobs by it." This, I can safely say, has been the constant principle and practice of every leading patriot, ever since I have been capable of observing publick transactions; the *primum mobile*, the *alpha* and *omega* of all their actions: They all professed to have in view only the publick good; yet every one shewed he only meant his own; and all the while the great as well as little mob, the *procerum turba mobilium*, contended as fiercely for their leaders, as if their happiness or misery depended upon the face, the clothes, or title of the persons who robbed and betrayed them. Thus the highwayman said to the traveller, "Pray, Sir, leave your watch and money in my hands; or else, by G —, you will be robbed."

Pound a fool in a mortar, and he comes out never the wiser; no experience will make the bulk of mankind so, or put them upon their guard; they will be caught over and over again by the same baits and stale stratagems: No sooner is a party betrayed by one head, but they rail at him, and set up another; and when this has served them in the same manner, they choose a third; and put full confidence in every one of them successively, though they all make the same use of their credulity; that is, put a price upon their calves' heads, and sell them; which, however, they have the less reason to complain of, because they would have all done the same.

I assure you, Sir, that I have not the least hopes in this letter to make men honest, but I would gladly teach them a little more wit; that is, I would advise any one who is contented to be sold, that he receive the money himself, and take good care of one, whatever becomes of his neighbours; as some discreet persons have lately done. Whatever bargains are struck up amongst the betrayers of their country, we must find the money, and pay both sides. How wise and advantageous would it then be for us, not to interest ourselves in the agreements or squabbles of ambitious men, who are building their fortunes upon our ruin? Once upon a time, a French ambassador desired an audience of the Grand Vizier, and in pompous French fustian notified to him, that his master had won a great victory over the Germans; to which that wise minister answered laconically, "What is it to me, if the whole herd of unbelievers, like dogs, mutually worry one another, so that my master's head be safe?"

This letter of advice is not intended for those who share already in the publick spoils, or who, like jackals, hunt down the lion's prey, that they may have the picking of the bones, when their masters are glutted. But I would persuade the poor, the injured, the distressed

people, to be no longer the dupes and property of hypocrites and traitors. But very few can share in the wages of iniquity, and all the rest must suffer; the people's interest is the publick interest; it signifies the same thing: Whatever these betrayers of their country get, the people must lose; and, what is worse, must lose a great deal more than the others can get; for such conspiracies and extortions cannot be successfully carried on, without destroying or injuring trade, perverting justice, corrupting the guardians of the publick liberty, and the almost total dissolution of the principles of government.

Few can receive the advantages arising from publick misfortunes; and therefore methinks few should desire them. Indeed, I can easily see how men of desperate circumstances, or men guilty of desperate crimes, can find their account in a general confusion of all things. I can see how those priests, who aim at tyranny, can find their interest in the loss of publick liberty, in the restraint of the press, and in introducing a religion which destroys Christianity: There are reasons too at hand, why ambitious men should, *per fas & nefas*, grasp at the possession of immense wealth, high honours, and exorbitant power: But that the gentry, thebody of the people in a free nation, should become tools and instruments of knavesand pick-pockets; should list themselves in their quarrels, and fight their battles;and this too, often at the expence, and by the violation of goodneighbourhood, near relation, private friendship: That men of great estates and quality, for small and trifling considerations, and sometimes none at all, should promote wild, villainous projects, to the ruin of themselves and country, by making precarious their own titles to their lives, estates, and liberties, is something so stupendous, that it must be thought impossible, if daily experience did not convince us that it is more than possible.

I have often seen honest Tories foolishly defending knavish Tories; and untainted Whigs protecting corrupt Whigs, even in instances where they acted against the principles of all Whigs; and by that means depreciated Whiggism itself, and gave the stupid herd occasion to believe that they had no principles at all, but were only a factious combination for preferment and power.

It is high time, at last, for the bubbles of all parties, for Whigs and Tories, for High Church and Low Church, to come to an *éclaircissement*, and no longer suffer themselves to be bought and sold by their drivers: Let them cease to be calves and sheep, and they will not be used like calves and sheep. If they can be persuaded now and then to confer notes, they will find, that for the most part the differences between them are not material; that they take only different measures to attain the same ends; that they have but one common interest, which is the interest of their country; and that is, to be freed from oppression, and to punish their oppressors: Whose practice, on the contrary, will always be to form parties, and blow up factions to mutual animosities, that they may find protection in those animosities.

Let us not therefore, for the time to come, suffer ourselves to be engaged in empty and pernicious contentions; which can only tend to make us the property and harvest of pickpockets: Let us learn to value an honest man of another party, more than a knave of our own: Let the only contention be, who shall be most ready to spew out their own rogues; and I will be answerable that all other differences will soon be at an end. Indeed, there had been no such thing as party now in England, if we had not been betrayed by those whom we trusted.

Through the villainy and knavish designs of leaders, this nation has lost several glorious opportunities of rescuing the constitution, and settling it upon a firm and solid basis: Let us not therefore, by the like practices, lose the present favourable offer: Let us make earnings of

our misfortunes, and accept our calamities as an opportunity thrown into our laps by indulgent providence, to save ourselves; and not again foolishly and ungratefully reject and spurn at the intimations and invitations of heaven, to preserve our prince and country.

Machiavel tells us, that no government can long subsist, but by recurring often to its first principles; but this can never be done while men live at ease and in luxury; for then they cannot be persuaded to see distant dangers, of which they feel no part. The conjunctures proper for such reformatations, are when men are awakened by misfortunes, and frighted with the approach and near view of present evils; then they will wish for remedies, and their minds are prepared to receive them, to hear reasons, and to fall into measures proposed by wise men for their security.

The great authority just quoted informs us what measures and expedients are necessary to save a state under such exigencies: He tells us, that as a tyranny cannot be established but by destroying Brutus; so a free government is not to be preserved but by destroying Brutus's sons. Let us therefore put on a resolution equal to the mighty occasion: Let us exert a spirit worthy of Britons, worthy of freemen who deserve liberty. Let us take advantage of the opportunity, while men's resentments boil high, whilst lesser animosities seem to be laid aside, and most men are sick of < party and party-leaders; and let us, by all proper methods, exemplarily punish the parricides, and avowed enemies of all mankind.

Let neither private acquaintance, personal alliance, or party combination, stand between us and our duty to our country: Let all those who have a common interest in the publick safety, join in common measures to defend the publick safety: Let us pursue to disgrace, destruction, and even death, those who have brought this ruin upon us, let them be ever so great, or ever so many: Let us stamp and deep engrave, in characters legible to all Europe at present, and to all posterity hereafter, what vengeance is due to crimes, which have no less objects in view than the ruin of nations, and the destruction of millions: They have made many bold, desperate, and wicked attempts to destroy us; let us strike one honest and bold stroke to destroy them.

Though the designs of the conspirators should be laid as deep as the center, though they should raise hell itself in their quarrel, and should fetch legions of votaries from thence to avow their proceedings; yet let us not leave the pursuit, till we have their skins and estates: We know, by past experience, that there are those amongst us, who will be glad to quit the chase, when our villains, like beavers, drop what they are usually hunted for; but the nation is now too much provoked, and too much injured, to suffer themselves to be again so betrayed.

We have heaven to direct us, a glorious King to lead us, and a wise and faithful Parliament to assist and protect us: Whilst we have such a King, and such a Parliament, every worthy Briton cries out aloud,

Manus haec inimica tyrannis
Ense petit placidam, sub libertate quietem.

T

I am, &c.

No. 17. SATURDAY, February 18, 1721.

What Measures are actually taken by wicked and desperate Ministers to ruin and enslave their Country. [Trenchard] ↩

[I-111]

SIR,

As under the best princes, and the best servants to princes alone, it is safe to speak what is true of the worst; so, according to my former promise to the publick, I shall take the advantage of our excellent King's most gentle government, and the virtuous administration of an uncorrupt ministry, to warn mankind against the mischiefs which may hereafter be dreaded from corrupt ones. It is too true, that every country in the world has sometimes groaned under that heavy misfortune, and our own as much as any; though I cannot allow it to be true, what Monsieur de Witt has long since observed, that the English court has always been the most thievish court in Europe.

Few men have been desperate enough to attack openly, and barefaced, the liberties of a free people. Such avowed conspirators can rarely succeed: The attempt would destroy itself. Even when the enterprize is begun and visible, the end must be hid, or denied. It is the business and policy of traitors, so to disguise their treason with plausible names, and so to recommend it with popular and bewitching colours, that they themselves shall be adored, while their work is detested, and yet carried on by those that detest it.

Thus one nation has been surrendered to another under the fair name of mutual alliance: The fortresses of a nation have been given up, or attempted to be given up, under the frugal notion of saving charges to a nation; and commonwealths have been trepanned into slavery, by troops raised or increased to defend them from slavery.

It may therefore be of service to the world, to shew what measures have been taken by corrupt ministers, in some of our neighbouring countries, to ruin and enslave the people over whom they presided; to shew by what steps and gradations of mischief nations have been undone, and consequently what methods may be hereafter taken to undo others: And this subject I rather choose, because my countrymen may be the more sensible of, and know how to value the inestimable blessing of living under the best prince, and the best established government in the universe, where we have none of these things to fear.

Such traitors will probably endeavour first to get their prince into their possession, and, like Sejanus, shut him up in a little island, or perhaps make him a prisoner in his court; whilst, with full range, they devour his dominions, and plunder his subjects. When he is thus secluded from the access of his friends, and the knowledge of his affairs, he must be content with such misrepresentations as they shall find expedient to give him. False cases will be stated, to justify wicked counsel; wicked counsel will be given, to procure unjust orders. He will be made to mistake his foes for his friends, his friends for his foes; and to believe that his affairs are in the highest prosperity, when they are in the greatest distress; and that publick matters go on in the greatest harmony, when they are in the utmost confusion.

They will be ever contriving and forming wicked and dangerous projects, to make the people poor, and themselves rich; well knowing that dominion follows property; that where there are wealth and power, there will be always crowds of servile dependents; and that, on the contrary, poverty dejects the mind, fashions it to slavery, and renders it unequal to any generous undertaking, and incapable of opposing any bold usurpation. They will squander away the publick money in wanton presents to minions, and their creatures of pleasure or of burden, or in pensions to mercenary and worthless men and women, for vile ends and traitorous purposes.

They will engage their country in ridiculous, expensive, fantastical wars, to keep the minds of men in continual hurry and agitation, and under constant fears and alarms; and, by such means, deprive them both of leisure and inclination to look into publick miscarriages. Men, on the contrary, will, instead of such inspection, be disposed to fall into all measures offered, seemingly, for their defence, and will agree to every wild demand made by those who are betraying them.

When they have served their ends by such wars, or have other motives to make peace, they will have no view to the publick interest; but will often, to procure such peace, deliver up the strong-holds of their country, or its colonies for trade, to open enemies, suspected friends, or dangerous neighbours, that they may not be interrupted in their domestick designs.

They will create parties in the commonwealth, or keep them up where they already are; and, by playing them by turns upon each other, will rule both. By making the Guelfs afraid of the Ghibelines, and these afraid of the Guelfs, they will make themselves the mediums and balance between the two factions; and both factions, in their turns, the props of their authority, and the instruments of their designs.

They will not suffer any men, who have once tasted of authority, though personally their enemies, and whose posts they enjoy, to be called to an account for past crimes, though ever so enormous. They will make no such precedents for their own punishment; nor censure treason, which they intend to commit. On the contrary, they will form new conspiracies, and invent new fences for their own impunity and protection; and endeavour to engage such numbers in their guilt, as to set themselves above all fear of punishment.

They will prefer worthless and wicked men, and not suffer a man of knowledge or honesty to come near them, or enjoy a post under them. They will disgrace men of virtue, and ridicule virtue itself, and laugh at publick spirit. They will put men into employments, without any regard to the qualifications for those employments, or indeed to any qualifications at all, but as they contribute to their designs, and shew a stupid alacrity to do what they are bid. They must be either fools or beggars; either void of capacity to discover their intrigues, or of credit and inclination to disappoint them.

They will promote luxury, idleness, and expence, and a general depravation of manners, by their own example, as well as by connivance and publick encouragement. This will not only divert men's thoughts from examining their behaviour and politicks, but likewise let them loose from all the restraints of private and publick virtue. From immorality and excesses they will fall into necessity; and from thence into a servile dependence upon power.

In order to this, they will bring into fashion gaming, drunkenness, gluttony, and profuse and costly dress. They will debauch their country with foreign vices, and foreign instruments of vicious pleasures; and will contrive and encourage publick revels, nightly disguises, and

debauched mummeries.

They will, by all practicable means of oppression, provoke the people to disaffection; and then make that disaffection an argument for new oppression, for not trusting them any further, and for keeping up troops; and, in fine, for depriving them of liberties and privileges, to which they are entitled by their birth, and the laws of their country.

If such measures should ever be taken in any free country, where the people choose deputies to represent them, then they will endeavour to bribe the electors in the choice of their representatives, and so to get a council of their own creatures; and where they cannot succeed with the electors, they will endeavour to corrupt the deputies after they are chosen, with the money given for the publick defence; and to draw into the perpetration of their crimes those very men, from whom the betrayed people expect the redress of their grievances, and the punishment of those crimes. And when they have thus made the representatives of the people afraid of the people, and the people afraid of their representatives; then they will endeavour to persuade those deputies to seize the government to themselves, and not to trust their principals any longer with the power of resenting their treachery and ill-usage, and of sending honest and wiser men in their room.

But if the constitution should be so stubbornly framed, that it will still preserve itself and the people's liberties, in spite of all villainous contrivances to destroy both; then must the constitution itself be attacked and broken, because it will not bend. There must be an endeavour, under some pretence of publick good, to alter a balance of the government, and to get it into the sole power of their creatures, and of such who will have constantly an interest distinct from that of the body of the people.

But if all these schemes for the ruin of the publick, and their own impunity, should fail them; and the worthy patriots of a free country should prove obstinate in defence of their country, and resolve to call its betrayers to a strict account; there is then but one thing left for such traitors to do; namely, to veer about, and, by joining with the enemy of their prince and country, complete their treason.

I have somewhere read of a favourite and first minister to a neighbouring prince, long since dead, who played his part so well, that, though he had, by his evil counsels, raised a rebellion, and a contest for the crown; yet he preserved himself a resource, whoever got the better: If his old master succeeded, then this Achitophel, by the help of a baffled rebellion, ever favourable to princes, had the glory of fixing his master in absolute power: But, as his brave rival got the day, Achitophel had the merit of betraying his old master to plead; and was accordingly taken into favour.

Happy therefore, thrice happy, are we, who can be unconcerned spectators of the miseries which the greatest part of Europe is reduced to suffer, having lost their liberties by the intrigues and wickedness of those whom they trusted; whilst we continue in full enjoyment of ours, and can be in no danger of losing them, while we have so excellent a King, assisted and obeyed by so wise a Parliament.

T

I am, &c.

No. 18. SATURDAY, February 25, 1721.

The terrible Tendency of publick Corruption to ruin a State, exemplified in that of Rome, and applied to our own. [Trenchard] [↪](#)

[I-117]

SIR,

Venalis civitas mox peritura si emptorum invenias! “Mercenary city, ripe for destruction, and just ready to deliver up thyself, and all thy liberties, to the first bidder, who is able to buy thee!” said the great King Jugurtha, when he was leaving Rome. Rome the nurse of heroes, the mistress of nations, the glory of empires, and the source, the standard, and pattern of virtue and knowledge, and, indeed, of every thing which ever was praise-worthy and valuable amongst men, was soon after fallen, fallen ten thousand thousand fathoms deep in the abyss of corruption and impiety: No more of that publick spirit appeared, that rendered it amiable, as well as terrible, to the world: It had conquered by its virtue more than its arms: It had commanded a willing subjection from the numerous nations, who readily acknowledged its superior genius and natural right to empire, and afterwards their own condition to be graced by the dignity of such a mistress.

“But” (says the Abbot Vertot)

about this time another nation seemed to appear upon the stage: A general corruption soon spread itself through all degrees of the state: Justice was publickly sold in the tribunals: The voices of the people went to the highest bidder; and the consuls, having obtained that great post by intrigues, or by bribery, never now made war but to enrich themselves with the spoils of nations, and often to plunder those very provinces, which their duty bound them to protect and defend. The provinces were obliged to supply these prodigious expences: The generals possessed themselves of the revenues of the commonwealth; and the state was weakened in proportion as its members became powerful. It was sufficient colour for rifling the people, and laying new imposts, if they did but give those exactions a new name.

There arose on a sudden, and as it were by enchantment, magnificent palaces, whose walls, roofs, and ceilings were all gilded: It was not enough that their beds and tables were all of silver; that rich metal must also be carved and adorned with *basso relievo's*, performed by the most excellent artists. All the money of the state was in the hands of the great men, the publicans, and certain freed-men richer than their masters.

He says,

It would make a volume to represent the magnificence of their buildings, the richness of their habits, the jewels they wore, the prodigious number of slaves, freed-men, and clients, by which they were constantly attended, and especially the expence and profusion of their tables: They were not contented, if, in the midst of winter, the Falernian wine that was presented them was not strewd with roses; and cooled in vessels of gold in summer: Their side-boards groaned under the weight and load of plate, both silver and gold: They valued the feast only by the costliness of the dishes that were served up; pheasants must be fetched for them through all the dangers of the sea; and, to complete their

corruption, after the conquest of Asia, they began to introduce women-singers and dancers into their entertainments.

“What defenders of liberty,” says he,

are here? What an omen of approaching slavery? None could be greater, than to see valour less regarded in a state than luxury? to see the poor officer languishing in the obscure honours of a legion, whilst the grandees concealed their cowardice, and dazzled the eyes of the publick, by the magnificence of their equipage, and the profusion of their expence.

But what did all this profusion and magnificence produce? Pleasure succeeded in the room of temperance, idleness took place of the love of business, and private regards extinguished that love of liberty, that zeal and warmth, which their ancestors had shewn for the interest of the publick; luxury and pride became fashionable; all ranks and orders of men tried to outvie one another in expense and pomp; and when, by so doing, they had spent their private patrimonies, they endeavoured to make reprisals upon the publick; and, having before sold every thing else, at last sold their country.

The publick treasure was squandered away, and divided amongst private men; and new demands made, and new taxes and burdens laid upon the people, to continue and support this extravagance. Such conduct in the great ones occasioned murmurings, universal discontent, and at last civil wars. The people threw themselves under different heads or leaders of parties, who all aspired to make themselves masters of the commonwealth, and of the publick liberty; and, during the struggle, Rome and all Italy was but one slaughter-house. Thousands, hundreds of thousands, fell sacrifices to the ambition of a few: Rivers of blood ran in the publick streets, and proscriptions and massacres were esteemed sport and pastime; till at length two thirds of the people were destroyed, and the rest made slaves to the most wicked and contemptible wretches of mankind.

Thus ended the greatest, the noblest state that ever adorned the worldly theatre, that ever the sun saw: It fell a victim to ambition and faction, to base and unworthy men, to parricides and traitors; and every other nation must run the same fortune, expect the same fatal catastrophe, who suffer themselves to be debauched with the same vices, and are actuated by the same principles and passions.

I wish I could say, that the Abbot Vertot's description of the Roman state, in its last declension, suited no other state in our own time. I hope that we ourselves have none of these corruptions and abuses to complain of: I am sure, if we have, that it is high time to reform them, and to prevent the dismal evils which they threaten. It is wild to think that there is any other way to prevent the consequence, without preventing the corruption, and the causes which produce it: Mankind will be always the same, will always act within one circle; and when we know what they did a thousand years ago in any circumstance, we shall know what they will do a thousand years hence in the same. This is what is called experience, the surest mistress and lesson of wisdom.

Let us therefore grow wise by the misfortunes of others: Let us make use of the Roman language, as a vehicle of good sense, and useful instruction; and not use it like pedants, priests, and pedagogues. Let their virtues and their vices, and the punishment of them too, be an example to us; and so prevent our miseries from being an example to other nations: Let us avoid the rocks upon which they have suffered shipwreck, and set up buoys and sea-marks to

warn and guide posterity. In fine, let us examine and look narrowly into every part of our constitution, and see if any corruptions or abuses have crept or galloped into it. Let us search our wounds to the core, without which it is beyond the power of surgery to apply suitable remedies.

Our present misfortunes will rouse up our spirits, and, as it were, awaken us out of a deep lethargy. It is true, indeed, that they came upon us like a storm of thunder and lightning in a clear sky, and when the heavens seemed more serene; but the combustible matter was prepared before: Steams and exhalations had been long gathering from bogs and jakes; and though they some time seemed dispersed and far removed by the heat of a warm sun, yet the firmament was all the while impregnating with fire and brimstone; and now, on a sudden, the clouds thicken, and look black and big on every side, and threaten us with a hurricane.

Let us therefore act the part of skilful pilots, and call all hands to labour at the oars and at the ropes: Let us begin with throwing all our luggage and useless trumpery over-board; then let us lower or take down all superfluous sails, to prevent the boat from being overset; and when we have done all in our power to save the ship, let us implore the assistance of heaven; and I doubt not but we shall out-ride the storm.

Quid times? Caesarem vehis. We have King George on board, and at the helm; the favourite of heaven, and the darling of all good men; who not only gives us full leave, but encourages and assists us, to save ourselves: He will not, like some weak princes amongst his predecessors, screen guilty great men, suffer the faults of others to be laid at his door, nor permit his authority to be prostituted to patronize criminals; nor interpose and stand between his people's just resentment and the punishment of worthless favourites, of which sort of cattle he has none; so that it is our own fault if we are not happy, great, and free.

Indeed, we owe that justice and duty to our great benefactor, as not only fairly and impartially to represent to him our circumstances, and how we came into them; but to do all in our power to put our constitution on such a bottom, if any thing be wanting to it, that he may have the honour and pleasure of reigning over a free and happy people. This will be to make our gift complete, in presenting him with a crown, not beset with any difficulties; a glorious crown, and not to mock him with one of thorns.

I shall soon, in some other letter, offer my thoughts from what sources these mischiefs have flowed upon us, and what methods I conceive are essentially necessary to retrieve them.

T

I am, &c.

No. 19. SATURDAY, March 4, 1721.

The Force of popular Affection and Antipathy to particular Men. How powerfully it operates, and how far to be regarded. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[I-124]

SIR,

Opinion and reputation have often the greatest share in governing the affairs of the world. Misled by the great bias of superstition, every where found in human nature, or by ignorance and prejudices, proceeding as often from education itself, as from the want of it, we often take the appearance of things for things themselves, mistake our own imaginations for realities, our delusions for certainties and truth. A very small part of mankind is exempted from the delusive influence of omens, presages, and prognosticks.

These and the like superstitions enter into every scene of private and publick life: Gamesters throw away the cards and dice which they had lost by, and call for others, without any other preference than that they are not the same: Gardeners pretend to plant trees in a fortunate season: Many people will not marry, or do any business, but on certain days accounted prosperous: Even generals have had their fortunate and unfortunate times and seasons; and have often declined coming to battle, when the advantage was apparently on their side, merely because the day, or time of the day, was ill-boding.

Now, though all the whimsies of this kind have no foundation, but in opinion; yet they often produce as certain and regular events, as if the causes were adequate in their own nature to the events. The opinion of a physician or a medicine, does often effect the cure of a patient, by giving his mind such ease and acquiescence as can alone produce health. The opinion of a general, or of a cause, makes an army fight with double vigour; and a confidence in the wisdom and integrity of governors, makes a nation exert its utmost efforts for its own security; whereas by a distrust of its rulers, it often sinks into an universal indifference and dependency. The change alone of a general, or of a minister, has often changed the fortune and disposition of a people, even where there has been no superior endowments in the successor; for if they can be made to believe, that their misfortunes are owing to the ill conduct or ill genius of those who command them, the removal of the supposed cause of their misfortunes will inspire them with new courage and resolution; which are almost always rewarded with success and victory.

From hence the most famous legislators, princes and generals have endeavoured to instill into their followers an opinion of their being more than human, as being descended from, or related to, some god; or have asserted a familiar communion with the gods, a right to explain their wills, and to execute their commands. By these means they obtained an unlimited confidence in their abilities, a cheerful submission to their authority, an assurance of success under their conduct.

Where personal virtues and qualifications, by which the above pretensions are supported, are wanting, as in the successive eastern monarchies; other arts are used to gain admiration, to draw reverence to the persons of their princes, and blind obedience to their power. Those stately tyrants are, for the most part, shut up in their palaces, where every thing is august about them: They seldom shew themselves abroad to their people; and when they do, it is in

the most awful and astonishing manner, attended by numerous guards, richly habited, and armed; whilst their own persons are covered with gold and pearl, and glittering with diamonds; and perhaps the horses and elephants they ride on are all in a blaze of gold and precious stones.

The demure faces and deep silence of their ministers and attendants, contribute to spread the general awe; which is still heightened by the solemn clangor of trumpets, and other warlike sounds. All this prepares the gaping and enchanted multitude to swallow, with equal credulity and wonder, the plausible stories artfully given out amongst them, of the sublime and celestial qualities of their emperors, insomuch that even their very images are worshipped.

Indeed, in countries where liberty is established, and people think for themselves, all the above arts and pretences would be ridiculous, and such farce and grimace would be laughed at. The people have sense enough to know, that all this profusion and wealth are their own spoils; that they must labour and want, that others may be idle and abound; and they will see that their poverty is increased, and their miseries aggravated and mocked, by the pomp and luxury of their masters.

Amongst such people virtuous and just actions, or the appearance of virtuous and just actions, are the only ways of gaining esteem, reverence, and submission. They must see, or fancy they see, that the views and measures of their governors tend honestly and only to the publick welfare and prosperity, and they must find their own account in their obedience. A prince who deals thus with his people, can rarely be in danger from disaffected subjects, or powerful neighbours; his faithful people will be his constant guard; and, finding their own security in his government, will be always ready at his call to take effectual vengeance upon those who shall attempt to oppose or undermine his just authority.

However, the wisest and most free people are not without their superstitions and their foibles; and prudent governors will take advantage of them, and endeavour to apply them to the publick benefit. The Romans themselves had their *dies fastos & nefastos*, their fortunate and unfortunate generals; and sometimes empty names have been esteemed endowments and merit. Another Scipio was appointed by the Romans to demolish Carthage, which was first subdued by the great Scipio; and the Athenians called for another Phormio for their war at Lepanto.

Generals and ministers have been oftentimes disgraced, even by wise nations, for making unfortunate expeditions, or for unfortunate conduct in directing the publick affairs, when there was no deceit or want of virtue, in those generals and ministers; for if a nation or an army take an universal, though an unreasonable disgust at one or a few men, it is ridiculous to bring his or their interest in balance with the satisfaction and affections of millions, or much less than millions. Prudent princes therefore have been always extremely cautious how they employed men in any considerable station, who were either odious or contemptible, even though it happened that they were innocently and unfortunately so.

Indeed this can seldom happen; for a virtuous and modest man will never thrust himself into the service of his prince, nor continue longer in it than he is acceptable to the people: He will know that he can do no real good to a country, which will receive no good at his hands; that the publick jealousy will misrepresent his whole conduct, render his best designs abortive, his best actions useless; that he will be a clog and a dead weight upon the affairs of his prince; and that the general distaste taken at him, will, by degrees, make his prince the

object of general distaste.

But when ministers have deservedly incurred the general hatred; when they have been known to have employed their whole power and interest in opposition to the publick interest; when, being trusted with a nation's affairs, they have desperately projected, and obstinately pursued, schemes big with publick ruin; when they have weakened the authority of their prince to strengthen their own, and endangered his safety for the security of their own heads, and the protection of their crimes; when they have thriven by the publick ruin; and, being the known authors of universal calamities, have become the proper objects of such universal detestation, as not to have one real friend in their country, or one sincere advocate even amongst the many that they have bribed to be so: If, after all this, they will go on to brave a nation which they have before ruined, confidently continue at the head of affairs, and obstinately persist to overturn their king and country; this, I say, is aggravating their crimes, by an insolence which no publick resentment can equal.

This was the case of England under the influence of Gaveston and the two Spencers; and this was the case of the Netherlands under the administration of the Duke of Alva; which ministers severally ruined their masters and their country. Nations under such woeful conduct, and unlucky constellations, are often driven into revolts, or lose all courage to defend themselves, either against the attacks from their native traitors, or foreign invaders.

This is famously verified in the story of the Decemviri, a college of magistrates created by the Romans for one year, to compile and establish a body of laws. This term was thought long enough, and undoubtedly was so; but these designing men, under the plausible colour of adding two more tables to the ten already finished and published got their sitting prolonged for another year: Nor at the expiring of that, though the two tables were added, did they dissolve themselves; but, in defiance of the people who chose them, and now every where murmured against them, as well as suffered by them, continued their authority.

The city of Rome saw itself under a new government; *Deploratur in perpetuum libertas, nec vindex quisquam extitit, aut futurus videtur*: The constitution was gone; and though all men complained, yet none offered to help. Whilst the Romans were thus desponding at home, they were despised abroad: The neighbouring nations were provoked, that dominion should still subsist in a city, where liberty subsisted no longer. The Roman territories therefore were invaded by the Sabines and Aequians. This terrified the faction; but I do not find that it troubled the people, who neither feared nor hated foreign invaders half so much as their own domestick traitors. The desperate parricides determined rather to sacrifice their country, than lose their places; so to war they went, but with miserable success. They managed the war no better than they did the state; and had no more credit in the camp than in the city: The soldiers would not fight under the detested leaders, but ran away before the enemy, and suffered a shameful rout.

Nor did this loss and disgrace, at once unusual and terrible to Rome, at all move the traitors to resign: They went on misgoverning and debauching, till, the measures of their wickedness being full, they were driven out of their posts by the vigour of the state, and the assistance of the people. The two chief traitors were cast into prison, the rest into banishment.

This soon happily changed the state of affairs, and the spirit of the people; who, having got at length an honest administration, and governors whom they loved and trusted, quickly beat the enemy out of the territories of Rome, that very enemy, who in other circumstances had beaten them.

No. 20. SATURDAY, March 11, 1721.

Of publick Justice, how necessary to the Security and Well-being of a State, and how destructive the Neglect of it to the British Nation. Signal Instances of it. [Trenchard] [↪](#)

[I-131]

SIR,

Parcere subjectis, & debellare superbos; to pay well, and hang well, to protect the innocent, and punish the oppressors, are the hinges and ligaments of government, the chief ends why men enter into societies. To attain these ends, they have been content to part with their natural rights, a great share of their substance and industry: To quit their equality, and submit themselves to those who had before no right to command them: For this millions live willingly in an innocent and safe obscurity, to make a few great men, and enable them, at their expence, to shine in pomp and magnificence.

But all this pageantry is not designed for those who wear it. They carry about them the dignity of the commonwealth: The honours which they receive are honours paid to the publick, and they themselves are only the pillars and images upon which national trophies are hung; for when they are divested of these insignia, no more respect and homage is due to them, than what results from their own virtue and merit. Yet such is the depravity of human nature, that few can distinguish their own persons from the ensigns and ornaments which they wear, or their duty from their dignity: There seems to be a judgment upon all men in certain stations, that they can never think of the time when they have been, or may again be, out of them.

A good magistrate is the brightest character upon earth, as being most conducive to the benefit of mankind; and a bad one is a greater monster than ever hell engendered: He is an enemy and traitor to his own species. Where there is the greatest trust, the betraying it is the greatest treason. The fasces, the judge, and the executioner, do not make the crime, but punish it; and the crime is never the less, though it escape the vengeance due to it. Alexander, who robbed kingdoms and states, was a greater felon than the pirate whom he put to death, though no one was strong enough to inflict the same punishment upon him. It is no more just to rob with regiments or squadrons, than by single men or single ships; for unless we are determined by the justice of the action, there can be no criterion, boundary, or fixed mark, to know where the thief ends, and the hero begins.

Must little villains then submit to fate,
That great ones may enjoy the world in state?

Shall a poor pick-pocket be hanged for filching away a little loose money; and wholesale thieves, who rob nations of all that they have, be esteemed and honoured? Shall a roguery be sanctified by the greatness of it; and impunity be purchased, by deserving the highest punishment? This is inverting the nature of things, confounding virtue and vice, and turning the world topsy-turvy.

Men who are advanced to great stations, and are highly honoured and rewarded at the publick cost, ought to look upon themselves as creatures of the publick, as machines erected and set up for publick emolument and safety. They ought to reflect, that thousands, ten thousands of their countrymen, have equal, or perhaps greater, qualifications than themselves; and that blind fortune alone has given them their present distinction: That the estate of the freeholder, the hazard of the merchant, and the sweat of the labourer, all contribute to their greatness; and when once they can see themselves in this mirror, they will think nothing can be too grateful, nothing too great or too hazardous to be done for such benefactors.

They will consider, that no uncommon application, or distinguishing abilities, will justify this superiority; that many of their fellow-subjects, possessing equal merit, take much more pains for much less considerations; nay, that the business of their own employment is mostly executed by inferior officers, for small rewards; and, consequently, that their great appointments are given to secure their fidelity, and put them far above and out of the reach of bribery and corruption: They ought not to have a thought which is mean or little: Their minds are not to be in the dirt, whilst their heads are in the clouds: They ought to infuse and inspire virtue, resolution, and publick spirit, into the inactive mass, and be illustrious examples of every great and noble quality.

But if they can sink so low beneath themselves; if they can so far descend from the dignity of their characters; if they can choose so to grovel upon the earth, when they may ascend to the heavens; and be so poor and abject, as to combine and confederate with pick-pockets and common rogues; betray their most solemn trusts, and employ all their power and credit to destroy that people, whom they have every motive which heaven and earth can suggest to protect and defend: Then, I say, such wretches ought to be the scorn and detestation of every honest man; and new kinds of vengeance, new tortures, and new engines of misery ought to be invented to make their punishments as much exceed common punishments, as their crimes exceed those of the worst sort of common malefactors, and as their rewards surpass those of the best and worthiest citizens in other stages of life and circumstances of fortune.

There is no analogy between the crimes of private men and those of publick magistrates: The first terminate in the death or sufferings of single persons; the others ruin millions, subvert the policy and oeconomy of nations, and create general want, and its consequences, discontents, insurrections, and civil wars, at home; and often make them a prey to watchful enemies abroad. But amongst the crimes which regard a state, *peculatus*, or robbing the publick, is the greatest; because upon the careful and frugal administration of the public treasure the very being of the commonwealth depends. It is what my Lord Coke calls it, *tutela pacis, & firmamentum belli*; and the embezzling of it is death by the civil law, and ought to be so by all laws. It is the worst sort of treason, as it draws all other sorts of treason after it: It disconcerts all the measures of government, and lays the ground-work of seditions, rebellions, and all kinds of publick miseries.

But these, as well as all other crimes which affect the publick, receive their aggravation from the greatness of the persons who commit them; not only as their rewards are larger, and their temptations less, but as their example recommends, and, as it were, authorizes and gives a licence to wickedness. No one dares to punish another for an offence which he knows, and the other knows, that he every day commits himself. One great man, who gets an hundred thousand pounds by cheating the publick, must wink and connive at ten others who shall

wrong it of ten thousand pounds each; and they at ten times as many more, who shall defraud it of one thousand; and so on in lesser progression, till the greatest part of the publick revenue is swallowed and devoured by great and little plunderers.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to the security and happiness of any state, to punish, in the most exemplary manner, all those who are entrusted by it, and betray that trust: It becomes the wisdom of a nation, to give ten thousand pounds to purchase a head, which cheats it of six-pence. Valerius Maximus calls severity the sure preserver and avenger of liberty: It is as necessary for the preventing of tyranny, as for the support of it. After the death of the sons of Brutus, executed by the command of their own father, and in his presence, we hear no more of any conspirators in Rome to restore the Tarquins; and had Marius, Caesar, and other corrupters of the people, met with the same punishment, that glorious commonwealth might have subsisted to this day. Lenity to great crimes is an invitation to greater; whereas despair of pardon, for the most part, makes pardon useless. If no mercy were shewn to the enemies of the state, no state would be overturned; and if small or no punishment be inflicted upon them, no state can be safe.

Happy, happy had it been for this unhappy people, if these important and essential maxims of government had been duly regarded by our legislators at the Revolution (and I wish too, that the sincere and hearty endeavours of our present legislators to punish the betrayers of the late unfortunate Queen had met the desired success): For I doubt that all our misfortunes have flowed from these sources, and are owing to these disappointments.

All Europe saw, and all good men in it lamented to see, a mighty nation brought to the brink of destruction by weak and con-temptible instruments; its laws superseded, its courts of justice corrupted, its legislature laid aside, its liberties subverted, its religion overturned, and a new one almost introduced, and a violent and despotick government assumed, which was supported by legions and an armed force: They saw this brave people rise under the oppression, and, like Antaeus, gather strength by their late fall: They called for the assistance of the next heir to the crown, to avenge himself and them; and when they had, by his assistance, removed the usurpation, they rewarded him with the immediate possession of the crown. But when they had all the desired success, and subdued all that they had fought with; they soon found, that, by the treachery and corruption of their leaders, they had lost all that they had fought for.

Instead of completing their deliverance, and punishing the authors of their calamities, and sacrificing them to the Manes of their once lost liberties; upon the most diligent search, there was not a guilty person to be found; not one who had contributed to their misfortunes. Three kingdoms had been undone by mal-administra-tion, and no body had a hand in it. This tergiversation gave fresh heart and courage to the despairing faction: Some imputed it to weakness and fear; others to a consciousness of guilt for what we had done; and all cried out aloud, that if there were no criminals, there could be no crimes; whilst all honest men stood amazed and covered with shame and confusion at these proceedings.

All the while our new betrayers rioted in their sun-shine, laughed at the unseasonable simplicity and folly of a few Whimsi-cals, who did not know what a revolution was good for: They would not make a rod for themselves: On the contrary, numberless were their projects and stratagems to amass riches, and increase their power. They encouraged and protected a general prodigality and corruption, and so brought the kingdom into the greatest necessities; then took advantage of those necessities: They got publick money into their hands, and then

lent that money to the publick again for great premiums, and at great interest, and afterwards squandered it away to make room for new projects: They made bargains for themselves, by borrowing in one capacity what they lent in another; and, by a use of their prior intelligence, and knowledge of their own intentions, they wholly governed the national credit, and raised and depressed it at their pleasure, and as they saw their advantage; by which means they beggared the people, and mortgaged all the lands and the stock of the kingdom, though not (like the righteous Joseph) to their master, but to themselves.

Thus the Revolution and the principles of liberty ran backwards again. The banished Tarquin conceived new hopes, and made new attempts for a restoration: All who had shared in the benefits of the former wicked administration; all those who had ever been avowed enemies to an equal government, and impartial liberty; all the grim inquisitors, who had assumed an uncontrollable sovereignty over the free and ungovernable mind, men who have ever pretended a divine right to roguery, united in his interest: With these joined the riotous, the debauched, the necessitous, the poor deluded bigots, as well as all such who had not received rewards equal to their fancied merit, and would not bear to see others revel in advantages, which their own ambition and covetousness had before swallowed for themselves.

This formidable party combined against the new established government, made earnings of the miscarriages and corruptions of those miscreants, who, by their vile and mercenary conduct, betrayed the best prince and best cause in the world, and several times had almost overturned the new restored liberty; but that the gratitude and personal love of the people to that great prince, and the fresh and lively remembrance of the evils which they have suffered, or had been like to have suffered, from the abdicated family, still preserved him upon the throne, in spite of all attempts to the contrary. However, proper advantages were not taken, neither in this nor the following reign, from the many defeats of this restless faction, to settle the Revolution upon such a basis, as not to be shaken but together with the foundations of the earth. There was always a lion in the way; the figure or the number of the conspirators, or the difficulty of discovery, or their interest, alliance, or confederacy with men in power, were the reasons whispered; but the true one was concealed, namely, that one guilty person durst not heartily prosecute another: The criminals had stories to tell, secrets not to be divulged; for an innocent and virtuous man alone dares undertake to bring a great villain to deserved punishment: None but a Brutus could have destroyed Brutus's sons.

Nothing was ever done to rectify or regulate the education of youth, the source of all our other evils; but schools of literature were suffered to continue under the direction of the enemies to all sound literature and publick virtue: Liberty, being deserted by her old friends, fell of course into the hands of her enemies; and so liberty was turned upon liberty: By these means the discontents were fomented, the evils still increased, and the conspirators still went on. They had now got new tools to work with, just forged, and sent glowing hot from the universities: A new generation arose and appeared upon the publick stage, who had never seen or felt the misfortunes which their fathers groaned under, nor believed more of them than what they had learned from their tutors: So that all things seemed prepared for a new revolution; when we were surprized by a voice from heaven, which promised us another deliverance.

We have at last, by the bounteous gift of indulgent providence, a most excellent King, and a wise and uncorrupt Parliament; and yet—but what shall I say, or what shall be left unsaid? I will go on. We have a prince, I say, who is possessed of every virtue which can

grace and adorn a crown; a Parliament too, than whom England has never chosen one better disposed to do all those things which every honest man in it wished, and called for; and yet— by the iniquity of the times, or the iniquities of particular men, we are still to expect our deliverance; though I hope that we shall not expect it long.

Publick corruptions and abuses have grown upon us: Fees in most, if not in all, offices, are immensely increased: Places and employments, which ought not to be sold at all, are sold for treble values: The necessities of the publick have made greater impositions unavoidable, and yet the publick has run very much in debt; and as those debts have been increasing, and the people growing poor, salaries have been augmented, and pensions multiplied; I mean in the last reign, for I hope that there have been no such doings in this.

Our common rogues now scorn little pilferings, and in the dark; 'tis all publick robbery, and at noon-day; nor is it, as formerly, for small sums, but for the ransom of kings, and the pay of armies: Figures of hundreds and thousands have lost their use in arithmetick: Plumbs [*] alone are thought worth gathering; and they no longer signify hundreds of thousands, but millions: One great man, who is said in a former reign to have plundered a million and a half, has made his successors think as much to be their due too: Possession of great sums is thought to give a title to those sums; and the wealth of nations is measured out and divided amongst private men, not (as by the West-India pirates) with shovels, but by waggons.

The dregs of the people, and the scum of the Alley, can buy Italian and German sovereigns out of their territories; and their levees have been lately crowded with swarms of dependent princes, like Roman consuls, and Eastern monarchs; and I am told, that some of them have been seen ascending to, and descending from, their chariots, while they leaned upon the necks of prostrate grandees. Oh liberty! stop thy flight. Oh virtue! be something more than a name and empty sound: Return, oh return! inspire and assist our illustrious legislators in the great work which they have so generously undertaken! Assist, assist, if it be but to save those who have always devoutly worshipped thee, and have paid constant incense at they altars.

But what shall be done! Where is the remedy for all these evils? We hope for it, we expect it, we see it; and we call for it, from the healing hands of our most gracious King, and his dutiful Parliament. There is a crisis in the health of governments, as well as of private persons. When distempers are at the worst, they must mend, or the patient die: And when the case is desperate, bold and resolute methods must be taken, or he will be suffered to die, for fear of his dying. What then is the remedy? We must begin with letting out some of our adulterate and corrupt blood, one drop of which is enough to contaminate the ocean: We must first take full vengeance of all those whom we can discover to be guilty, and use them as citizens do shoplifters; that is, make those who are caught pay for all that is stolen. Let us not, oh let us not suffer the sins of all Israel to be at this time of day laid upon the head of the scape-goat!

When we have taken this first and necessary step, to prevent an apoplexy or malignant eruptions, let us prescribe strong emeticks, proper sudorificks, and effectual purgatives, to bring up or throw off the noxious juices and morbifick matter that oppresses us, and so wholly to eradicate the causes of our distemper. But, above all, let us avoid the beginning with lenitives and palliating medicines, which will only cover and foment our evils, make them break out more violently, at last perhaps turn into dangerous swellings and epidemical plague sores; and by such means spread a general infection: Let us not suffer any of our great

or little rogues to escape publick vengeance.

When we have, by these vigorous methods, removed the peccant humors which are the springs and sources of our distemper, let us use proper applications, gentle remedies, and wholesome diet, to correct and rectify the mass of remaining blood, to invigorate and renew our constitution, restore it to its first principles, and make it sound and active again: Let us see where it abounds, and where it wants; whether the sanguine, the phlegmatick, or the bilious predominates, and reduce them all to a proper balance: Let us look back and examine strictly, by what neglect, by what steps and gradations of intemperance or folly, we are brought into the present condition, and resolve to avoid them for the future.

Let us try no more projects, no more knavish experiments; let us have no more quacking, no more to do with empiricks. Let us act openly and above-board for the publick interest, and not hang out false colours, to catch unwary preys. Let us plainly tell at first what we mean, and all that we mean: If it be honest and advantageous, every good man will defend it, and assist in it; if otherwise, it ought not to be defended at all.

This is the way, and the only way, to preserve and continue the inestimable blessing of our present establishment: Let the people see the benefit of the change, and there is no fear that they will be against their own interest; but state-quacks may harangue and swear till they are black in the face, before they will persuade any one to believe that he is in perfect health, who feels himself sick at heart. Men in such circumstances are always restless, always tumbling about from side to side, changing every posture for present ease; and so often bring death upon themselves, by trying preposterous remedies to avoid it.

T

I am, &c.

No. 21. SATURDAY, March 18, 1721.

A Letter from John Ketch, Esq. asserting his Right to the Necks of the over-grown Brokers. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[I-144]

SIR,

In a general call for justice from an injured nation, I beg leave to put in my voice, being myself an eminent sufferer in the ill fate of my country, which no otherwise gains than as I do, by the exaltation of rogues. Our interests, in this respect, are the same. And as it would be very hard that the blood-suckers of the people should not make the people some amends, by restoring the blood that they have sucked; so it would be as hard that I, who am the finisher of justice, should not have justice done me.

From my best observation upon publick affairs, last summer, I promised myself that I should certainly have full hands this last winter; I therefore applied myself with singular diligence to gain the utmost perfection and skill in the calling wherein God and the law hath placed me: For, I did not think it at all laudable, or agreeable to a good conscience, to accept a post, without proper talents and experience to execute the same, however customary and common such a practice might be: And therefore, without presuming to follow the illustrious example of my betters, in this matter, I thought it became me to become my post. In truth, Sir, if this maxim had prevailed, where it should have prevailed; and if my brethren in place had as well understood, and as honestly executed, their several truths, as I do mine, we should have had a very different face of things, nor would I have had occasion for journeymen.

Thus, Sir, I was firmly and honestly resolved, that the execution of justice should not stick with me, where-ever else it stuck. Moreover, at a time when every thing, but honesty, bore a double price, I bought up a great quantity of silken halters, for the sole use and benefit of any of our topping pick-pockets, who should be found to have noble or genteel blood about them, N. B. This compliment was not intended for the directors, who must expect to wear the same valedictory cravat which is worn by small felons, who come under my hands every Sessions: But I have set apart a good round quantity of these delicate silken turnovers for the benefit and decoration of divers worthy gentlemen, whom I have marked out for my customers in the — — —; whom it would not be good breeding in me, as yet, to name; but I hope they will prove rare chaps.

I did likewise bespeak, at least, a dozen curious axes, spick and span new, with rare steel edges; the fittest that could be made, for dividing nobly betwixt the head and the shoulders of any dignified and illustrious customer of mine, who has, either by birth or by place, a right to die at the east end of the town.

Now, Sir, it unluckily happens, that I cannot pay for any of the implements of national justice, and of my trade, till I have used them: And my creditors, though they own me to be an honest man, yet, wanting faith in all publick officers, begin to fear that I shall never pay for them at all. It is, in truth, a sensible discouragement to them and me, that I have so little to do this winter, when there appear'd so much to be done in my way. Sure never poor deserving hangman had such a shameful vacation!

As having a post, I have consequently the honour of being a true member of the Church of England, as by law established; and therefore under these disappointments I comfort myself with some patience, and more beer. I have, besides that, this further consolation, that if our canary birds find wings to escape me, neither the blame nor the shame shall lie at my door.

You see, Sir, I have merit; and yet you see I labour under discouragements enough to scare any successor of mine from accepting this neglected and pennyless post, till he has a sufficient sum of money in hand paid, and a good pension for life, as is usual upon less occasions, together with ample provision for his children after him.

But, in spite of all these discouragements, I am determined to live in hopes of some topping customers before the Sessions is ended: The publick and I must certainly get at last: God knows we have been eminent sufferers; we have been defrauded on every side.

Being bred a butcher, I can comfort my said customers with an assurance, that I have a delicate and ready hand at cutting and tying; so let them take heart, the pain is nothing, and will be soon over; I am only sorry 'tis so long a coming: No man can be pleased with being defrauded of his just dues.

I have one consolation, Sir, which never leaves me; namely, that though my post has not been so profitable a one as for some time past it should have been, yet it has been a safe one. I doubt not but many of my brethren in place would be glad if they could say as much. I am moreover of opinion, that my post has, for a year past, been one of the most honest and creditable posts in England; nor would I change circumstances or character with some that hold their heads very high, and may hold them higher still before I have done with them. I am sure it cannot be denied, that the hangman of London has for the above space of time been a reputable officer, in comparison. The truth is, that they have got more money than I, but I have more reputation than they; and I hope soon to go snacks with some of them in their money.

I know that knaves of state require a great deal of form and ceremony before they are committed to my care; so that I am not much surprized, that I have not yet laid my hands upon certain exalted criminals. I hope, however, that, when they come, a good number will come at once. But there is a parcel of notorious and sorry sinners, called *brokers*: Fellows of so little consequence, that few of them have reputation enough to stand candidates for my place, were the same vacant (which God forbid!), and yet rogues so swollen with guilt, that poor Derwentwater and Kenmure (my two last customers) were babes and petty larceners to them. Now these are the hang-rogues with whom I would be keeping my hand in use.

Sir, I have been with counsel about them, and my lawyer stands amazed that I have not had them already: "But," says he, "Mr. Ketch, I foresaw that the brokers were only the pimps of great rogues, who were themselves the pimps of greater: So that were these vermin to go up to Tyburn, they would draw many more after them, who would likewise draw others. So, depend upon it, the lion, if it can, will save the jackal. And hence it proceeds, Mr. Ketch, that though it be hard, yet it is not strange, that those rogues, whom all men wish in your hands, are not yet there."

He then told me how the brokers have violated that act of Parliament, which allows them but two shillings and sixpence for transacting a hundred pounds stock, by taking, or rather exacting twenty shillings, and sometimes five pounds. I hope, when I come to strip them, or

to commute for stripping them, that I shall be allowed to mete out to them the same measure.

He told me likewise, that during the reign of roguery, they sold for no body but the directors, and their betters; whereas they were obliged in duty to have sold for all men alike, who employed them. Their office is an office of trust, as well as that of the directors. They act, or ought to act, under the restrictions of an act of Parliament, under the sacred obligation of an oath, and under the ties and penalties of a bond; by all which they are obliged to discharge their duty impartially betwixt man and man, and for one man as soon as another. Now it is well known, that they broke their trust to the publick; that they ceased to be common and indifferent officers in the Alley; and yet retaining the name and pretence of their office (by which they also retained the power of deceiving), they became only spies and liars for the directors and their managers, and sellers for them only. They were therefore criminals of the first class, and principal agents in the publick mischief; for, had they not acted thus for one side alone, the directors could not have sold out much at high prices, nor would others have bought in at those prices: So that they are to be considered not only as the instruments of greater traitors, though in that character they are liable to be hanged; but as wilful and deliberate confederates with those traitors; and, consequently, merit every punishment which those higher traitors merit.

My counsel said too, that there were some crimes of so high and malignant a nature, that, in the perpetration of them, all accessories were considered as principals; that those who held a man till he was murdered, were murderers; that those who voluntarily held a candle to others, who robbed a house, were themselves robbers; and that in committing of treason, all are traitors who have had a hand in that treason.

He said, that the brokers were free agents, independent of all companies, and no more attached, in point of duty, to the South-Sea, than to any other; that being *sui juris* (as he called it) they could not excuse their wicked dealings by the pretended commands and authority of any superiors, as some of the South-Sea officers might plead, for that the directors were not their superiors; that their rogueries therefore were voluntary and deliberate rogueries; and that having wilfully sinned with the directors, they ought in justice to suffer with the directors, and hang with them.

He told me, that having share of the gain of villainy with the directors, they ought to have their share of the halter too. They transacted great sums for themselves; though the law, which established them, enacts, that they shall neither buy nor sell for themselves; which is highly reasonable; for how can any man transact honestly for another, whilst he is selling to him his own stock?

He said, that they deceived every man into his own ruin; and ruined the nation, to enrich the directors and themselves: They sold their own stock, and that of the directors, under false and fictitious names, contrary to the obligation of their bond to the City, which obliges them to declare the name of the seller to the buyer, as well as the name of the buyer to the seller; for they knew that no man would have been willing to buy, had he known that the brokers and directors were in haste to sell. Thus they used false dice, and blinded men's eyes, to pick their pockets. "And surely, Mr. Ketch," says the counsellor, "if he who picks a man's pocket is to be hanged, the rogues that pick the pockets of the whole country, ought to be hanged, drawn, and quartered."

But what was most remarkable of all in what the counsellor told me, and what indeed gives me most heart, is, that unless the brokers are hanged, it will be scarce possible that any body else should be hanged. If this be true, their doom is certain, and I shall be able to support my squireship before Easter: For, surely, we shall never save mighty knaves, for the sake of saving little ones; and if so be it is determin'd to gratify the nation with a competent store of hanging and beheading, certainly we must do every thing necessary thereunto.

"Now," says my counsel, "if the brokers do not discover the secrets which they best know, but which they will never discover, if they can save their necks and purses without doing it; then, I doubt me, justice will be impotent for want of evidence. But if they find that they can save nothing by their silence, they will tell all to save something. They are hardened rogues; and, by false oaths, and under-hand dealing, will screen all that are as bad as themselves; but gripe them well, and ten to one but you squeeze the truth out of them."

"For all which reasons, Mr. Ketch," continued he, "I hope soon to give you joy of the brokers, as well as of better customers." And so he dismissed me, without taking a fee; for he told me, that he considered me as an eminent sufferer, by having as yet got nothing, where he wished that I had, before this time, got a great deal.

This, Sir, is the substance of what passed between us; for which I am so much obliged to him, that if ever he falls in my way, I'll use him with the like generosity; and I will owe you, Mr. Journalist, the same favour, if you will be so kind to publish this.

If you knew me, Sir, you would own that I have valuable talents, and am worth your acquaintance. I am particularly possessed of a praiseworthy industry, and an ardent desire of business. In truth, I care not to be idle; and yet it cruelly happens, that I have but one busy day in six weeks, and even then I could do twice as much. Besides, having a tender heart, it really affects me with pity, to be obliged to strangle so many innocents every Sessions; poor harmless offenders, that only commit murders, and break open houses, and rob men of guineas and half crowns; while wholesale plunderers, and mighty rogues of prey, the avowed enemies and hangmen of honesty, trade and truth, the known promoters of villainy, and the merciless authors of misery, want, and general ruin, go on to ride in coaches and six, and to defy a people whom they have made poor and desperate; potent parricides, who have plundered more from this kingdom in six months than all the private thieves and highwaymen ever did, or could do, since the creation.

Sir, I repeat it, that the hanging of such poor felons only, as things now stand, is, comparatively, shedding innocent blood: And so, for the ease of my mind, I beg that I may have those sent me, whom I may truss up with a safe conscience. My teeth particularly water, and my bowels yearn, at the name of the brokers; for God's sake, let me have the brokers.

Upon the whole, Sir, I have reason to hope, from the present spirit raised in the nation (and, they say, it is in a great measure owing to you, that there is such a spirit raised), I say, I hope soon to have the fingering of the throats of these traitors, who have fingered all the money in the nation. Their own guilt, and the incessant cry of the people, will weigh them down, in spite of all arts and screens.

N. B. I have a nice hand at touching a neck of quality; and when any customers come, I shall be ready to give you joy of it, as well as to receive the like from you. Who am,

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Sir,

your loving friend,

JOHN KETCH

No. 22. SATURDAY, March 25, 1721.

The Judgment of the People generally sound, where not misled. With the Importance and Probability of bringing over Mr. Knight. (Trenchard and Gordon) [↪](#)

[I-153]

SIR,

From the present spirit of this nation, it is still further evident to me, what I have always thought, that the people would constantly be in the interests of truth and liberty, were it not for external delusion and external force. Take away terror, and men never would have been slaves: Take away imposture, and men will never be dupes nor bigots. The people, when they are in the wrong, are generally in the wrong through mistake; and when they come to know it, are apt frankly to correct their own faults. Of which candour in them Machiavel has given several instances, and many more might be given.

But it is not so with great men, and the leaders of parties; who are, for the most part, in the wrong through ambition, and continue in the wrong through malice. Their intention is wicked, and their end criminal; and they commonly aggravate great crimes by greater. As great dunces as the governors of mankind often are (and God knows that they are often great enough), they are never traitors out of mere stupidity.

Machiavel says, That no wise man needs decline the judgment of the people in the distribution of offices and honours, and such particular affairs (in which I suppose he includes punishment) for in these things they are almost infallible.

I could give many instances where the people of England have judged and do judge right; as they generally would, were they not misled. They are, particularly, unanimous in their opinion, that we ought by no means to part with Gibraltar; and this their opinion is grounded upon the same reasons that sway the wisest men in this matter.

They likewise know, that an English war with Muscovy would be downright madness; for that, whatever advantage the same might be to other countries, it would grievously hurt the trade and navy of England, without hurting the Czar.

They know too, that a squabble between Spain and the Emperor about Italy, could not much affect England; and that therefore, were we to go to war with either, upon that account, as things now stand, it could not be for the sake of England.

They know, that our men of war might be always as honestly employed in defending our trade, by which our country subsists, from the depredations of pirates, as in conquering kingdoms for those to whom the nation is nothing obliged, or in defending provinces with which the nation has nothing to do, and from which it reaps no advantage.

They know, that it is of great concernment to any people, that the heir apparent to their crown be bred amongst them; not only that he may be reconciled, by habit, to their customs and laws, and grow in love with their liberties; but that, at his accession to the throne, he may not be engrossed and beset by foreigners, who will be always in the interest of another country; and, consequently, will be attempting to mislead him into measures mischievous to his kingdom, and advantageous to themselves, or their own nation.

The people know, that those are the best ministers, who do the most good to their country, or rather the least mischief: They can feel misery and happiness, as well as those that govern them; and will always, in spite of all arts, love those that do them a sensible good, and abhor, as they ought, those that load them with evils. Hence proceeds the popularity, and the great unenvied characters, of our present governors; who, besides the memorable and prosperous projects which they have brought to maturity, for the good of Great Britain and Ireland, would likewise have obliged us with another present, [✱] but very few years since, which would have completed all the rest, if we had had the courtesy to have accepted it.

It is certain, that the people, when left to themselves, do generally, if not always, judge well; we have just now a glaring instance of it in the loud and unanimous call of all men, that Mr. Knight may be brought over; I say, the call of all men, except the directors and their accomplices, nay, the people judge well, as to the cause of his going away; they more than guess for whose sake, and by whose persuasion, he went; and they are of opinion, that, were he here, the trials of guilt in the House of Commons would be much shorter, and the Tower of London still more nobly inhabited. I am indeed surprized that he is not already in London, considering of what consequence it is to have him here, both to publick and to private men.

Whether the directors and their masters shall be punished or no, is to me one and the same question, as to ask, whether you will preserve your constitution or no; or, whether you will have any constitution at all? It is a contention of honesty and innocence with villainy and falsehood; it is a dispute whether or no you shall be a people; it is a struggle, and, if it be balked, will, in all probability, be the last struggle for old English liberty. All this is well understood by the people of England.

Now, though the inferior knaves are in a fair way of being hanged, yet our top-traitors, having transacted all their villainies in the South-Sea with Mr. Knight alone, or with Mr. Knight chiefly, will think themselves always safe, so long as they can keep him abroad; and while he continues abroad, the nation's vengeance can never be half complete.

As to my own particular, I am so sanguine in this affair, that the very reasons commonly given why he will not be brought over, are to me very good reasons why he will be brought over: I cannot but wonder to hear any doubts about it. I am sure, that those who suggest such doubts, must suggest with the same breath very terrible crimes against some very considerable men.

The business of bringing over Mr. Knight is become the business of the ministry, and incumbent on them only. It is become their duty to their master King George, as they would preserve entirely to him the affections of a willing and contented people, by shewing them, that in consideration of their mighty wrongs (which the said ministry did all in their power to prevent) they shall have all fair play for justice and restitution. And it is in this respect too become the duty of the ministry to the people, whose humours it is their business to watch, whose interest it is their business to study, as much as the interest of the King himself; and it must be owned, to the praise of the present set, that they have constantly consulted and pursued the one as much as the other, with equal skill and honesty; and so far King and people are equally obliged to them.

As to the personal interests of the ministers themselves, I say nothing, the same being supposed always firmly linked with the other two; as doubtless it is at present. Let me only add here, that the bringing over Mr. Knight is a duty which they owe to themselves, their own characters being intimately concerned in it; otherwise. . . .

People indeed begin to say, that the suppressing of evidence ought to be taken for evidence, as in the case of Mr. Aislabie, who burned the book which contained the evidence. There is a noble person too, said to be mentioned in the report of the Committee, not to his advantage; but, I thank God, now fully vindicated by patriots as incorrupt as himself, upon the fullest proof of his innocence; and if his acquittal did not meet the universal concurrence of all present, it could be owing only to Mr. Knight's not being at hand to speak what he knew: Had he made his appearance, there had never been a division upon the question, but all would have been then as unanimous in their sentiments about that great man's integrity and clean hands, as all the rest of the kingdom at present are. However, reputation is so nice a thing, that it cannot be made too clear; and therefore we are sure of the hearty assistance of this illustrious patriot to bring over Mr. Knight, if possible, to make his vindication yet more complete.

It is also the interest of another great person, equal to the first in power and innocence, and who, without doubt, has taken common measures with him for the publick good, and will equally share in the grateful applause of good men, and the reproach of bad; for no degrees of virtue will put any one beyond the reach of envy and calumny, and therefore we cannot be sure that his strenuous and barefaced protection of innocent and oppressed virtue will not be misinterpreted by popular clamour, which often misapplies established and well-known truths; as, that no one who has not part of the gain, will adopt part of the infamy; that it is the property of innocence to abhor guilt in others, as well as not to practise the same itself, and to punish as well as to hate it; that no man who is not a thief, will be an advocate for a thief; that rogues are best protected by their fellows; and that the strongest motive which any man can have for saving another from the gallows, is the fear of the same punishment for the same crimes: And though these, and a thousand other such unwarrantable imputations, ought not, and have not made the least impression upon one conscious of his own virtue; yet it is every man's duty, as well as interest, to remove the most distant causes of suspicion from himself, when he can do it consistent with his publick duty; and therefore we are equally sure of this great man's endeavours too for bringing over Mr. Knight.

Even some of our legislators themselves have not been free from calumny, who are all concerned to have their characters vindicated; and therefore we may be sure will, in the highest manner, resent any prevarication, or trifling chicane, if such a procedure could be possibly supposed in an affair of this nice importance to all England, as well as to many of themselves.

Nay, the whole Parliament of England, who have generously undertaken the scrutiny of the late black knaveries, and the punishment of the knaves, are nearly concerned to see Mr. Knight brought over. They find, in their enquiries, his testimony often referred to, and that the evidence is not complete without him. They know already a good deal of what he could say; and I doubt not but he could say more than they know. They have once addressed his Majesty already, about bringing him over; and I suppose will again, if he do not come speedily. The business of the whole nation does, as it were, stand still for it; seeing it is become the business and expectation of the whole nation.

As to remoras from abroad, I cannot see room for any. Quite otherwise; I always thought it very fortunate for England, that Mr. Knight fell into the Emperor's hands; a prince, for whom we have done such mighty, such heroick favours; for whom we consumed our fleet in the Mediterranean, for whom we guarantee'd Italy, for whom we preserved and conquered kingdoms; a prince, in fine, for whose service we have wasted years, fleets, and treasures:

And can it be alledged or supposed, with the appearance of common sense, that this great prince, the strict friend, old confederate, and fast ally of England; a prince, who has been, as it were, the ward of England, and brought up in its arms; supported by its interest and counsels, protected and aggrandized by its fleets and armies, will, against all the principles of good policy, against all the ties of gratitude and honour, fly in the face of his friends and benefactors, by refusing to deliver up to this nation and this King, a little criminal, small in his character, but great in his crimes and of the utmost consequence to England in the pursuit of this great enquiry, which merits the consideration; and commands the attention of every Englishman.

We could draw up a long, a very long list of good deeds done, and expensive favours shewn, to the Emperor; without being afraid of being put out of countenance by any German catalogue of returns made us from Vienna. Perhaps there may have been some courtesies procured from thence by England; but we would ask, whether they were intended or procured for England? It seems to me, that this is the first time of asking for ourselves: And shall we, this first time, be denied? Will such an humble mite be refused for millions frankly bestowed, and bestowed beyond all conjecture and expectation? It cannot be; nor, if it could, ought it to be borne. We know how to shew, that we have sense as well as power, and resentment as well as liberality.

The Emperor therefore cannot be suspected in this matter; I dare say that he will comply with our demands, as soon as they are made, whatever they be. He will not put such contempt upon us, who have purchased more respect at his hands. Besides, it is confidently asserted, that Mr. Knight longs to be at home; which I am apt to believe: He knows, that the kind counsel given him, to go away, was not given him for his own sake; and has reason to fear, that those who sent him away, will keep him away. There is laudanum in Flanders, as well as in England; and that or a poignard may thwart his best inclinations to return. If that should happen, we are at liberty to think the worst; and, I doubt, we cannot think too bad. Unhappy man! he was not a knave for himself alone; and I am apt to believe, were he here, that he would honestly betray those men to the publick, for whom he wickedly betrayed the publick.

Thus then, in all likelihood, neither the Emperor nor Mr. Knight are to be blamed, if Mr. Knight does not return. But, whether he be willing or no, the Emperor has no right, no pretence to keep him. Who will then be to blame, if the universal cry of justice, and of the nation, should not have its effect? The question is easy, were the answer prudent to give. In truth, there needs no answer; all mankind will know how to solve this difficulty.

An honourable messenger has been gone near six weeks, and yet the Commons have occasion to address his Majesty to know what answer he has sent. Wonderful, in a case that is of so much importance, and which requires so much expedition, and so little ceremony! I have sometimes thought a courier must needs have been dispatched to England about it long since, but that he was way-laid, and murdered by our conspirators and their agents upon the road. This may seem a strange fancy; but, without being very aged, I have lived long enough to think nothing strange. I have not been once amazed these six months.

In the mean time, the business of the Committee, which is the business of Great Britain, is like to stand still. Those gentlemen have done their duty; and if their evidence be not complete (which however they deny), the fault is not chargeable on them, but they are answerable who keep them from better. This is a reproach not like to be wiped off, but by bringing over Mr. Knight; and then, perhaps, they that deserve it may dread a far worse thing.

Here is the riddle, and the solution of the riddle. There are those amongst us, who, clothed as they are with infamy, and cursed and detested by their fellow-creatures universally, do yet dread a greater evil. So precious and prevailing is the love of life! Continue me mine, sweet heaven, upon better terms, or not at all!

I shall conclude, by repeating an observation which I have already made in this letter; namely, that the suppressing the best evidence, contains in it the strongest evidence; and those men will stand condemned, who, in trials of innocence and guilt, stop the mouths of their judges, and deprive the accusers of their witnesses.

T and G

I am, &c.

No. 23. SATURDAY, April 1, 1721.

A memorable Letter from Brutus to Cicero, with an explanatory Introduction. [Gordon] ↪

[I-163]

SIR,

I am going to present you, and the town by your means, with the most valuable performance of all antiquity: It is not likely that it ever had, or ever will have, its fellow. The author of it was, perhaps, the most amiable character, the most accomplished man, that ever the world saw.

Excellent Brutus! of all human race
The best!

Cowley

He was the author of that glorious letter, which I now send you in English. It was written by the greatest man upon the noblest subject; BRUTUS upon LIBERTY. It was sent to Cicero, and the occasion this, as I find it very well explained by Monsieur Soreau, and prefixed to his French translation of Brutus's letters.

Octavius Caesar, afterwards called Augustus, having defeated Mark Anthony before Modena, and by that means raised the siege of that place, began now to conceive higher designs than he had yet shewn: He had hitherto declared for the commonwealth, and seemed to act for it; the Senate having trusted him with an army, by the persuasion and interest of Cicero. But after this victory over Anthony, he began to set up for himself, and to meditate the revenge of his uncle, and father by adoption, Julius Caesar; and, finally, to pave himself a way for absolute monarchy. He knew well, that Brutus and Cassius would never, while they lived, suffer him to possess what they would not suffer the first Caesar to enjoy; and therefore, to succeed his uncle, he must destroy them.

But Cicero, who equally loved and admired Brutus, and pretended to great power over the mind of the young Caesar, undertook to write to him in favour of the patrons of liberty, who slew his uncle, to seek their pardon; especially a pardon for Brutus, that he might return to Rome, and be there in safety. This letter of Cicero's contained in it also thanks to Octavius for his services to the Republick, and was entirely unknown to Brutus; but being informed of it by Atticus, he took extreme offence at this step of Cicero's, which seemed to him a confession of sovereignty in Octavius, by not only owning him master of the lives of the Romans in general, but of his too, who was the deliverer of the Romans, and scorned to owe life to Octavius.

Brutus had another spirit, and other views: He remembered the bold and free words of the great Cato, his uncle, to those of his friends who offered to procure for him the mercy of Caesar, by throwing themselves, on his behalf, at Caesar's feet. "No," says Cato, "I scorn to be beholden to tyranny. I am as free as Caesar; and shall I owe my life to him, who has no right even to my submission."

Brutus found reason to resent, that Cicero should, without his knowledge, thus treat him as a criminal, and Caesar as a sovereign, by begging of Caesar mercy for Brutus. That resentment gave occasion to this letter; in which he treats Octavius as a raw lad, and Cicero as a weak and fearful man. The reasoning through the whole shews Brutus to have been animated by a most sublime and glorious spirit of virtue and liberty; and is so stupendously strong, that his eloquence must have been great as his soul; and yet that great soul was not so dear to him as his liberty.

I am, &c.

BRUTUS TO CICERO

“I have seen, by the favour of Atticus, that part which concerns me in your letter to Octavius. The affection which you there express for my person, and the pains which you take for my safety, are great; but they give me no new joy: Your kind offices are become as habitual for me to receive, as for you to bestow; and, by your daily discourse and actions on my behalf, I have daily instances of your generous regard for myself and my reputation.

“However, all this hinders not but that the above-mentioned article of your letter to Octavius pierced me with as sensible a grief as my soul is capable of feeling. In thanking him for his services to the Republick, you have chosen a style which shews such lowness and submission, as do but too clearly declare, that you have still a master; and that the old tyranny, which we thought destroyed, is revived in a new tyrant. What shall I say to you upon this sad head? I am covered with confusion for your shameful condition, but you have brought it upon yourself; and I cannot help shewing you to yourself in this wretched circumstance.

“You have petition’d Octavius to have mercy upon me, and to save my life. In this you intend my good, but sought my misery, and a lot worse than death, by saving me from it; since there is no kind of death but is more eligible to me than a life so saved. Be so good to recollect a little the terms of your letter! and having weighed them as you ought, can you deny that they are conceived in the low style of an humble petition from a slave to his haughty lord, from a subject to a king? You tell Octavius, that you have a request to make him, and hope that he will please to grant it; namely, to save those citizens who are esteemed by men of condition, and beloved by the people of Rome. This is your honourable request; but what if he should not grant it, but refuse to save us? Can we be saved by no other expedient? Certainly, destruction itself is preferable to life by his favour!

“I am not, however, so desponding, as to imagine that heaven is so offended with the Roman people, or so bent upon their ruin, that you should thus choose, in your prayers, to apply rather to Octavius, than to the immortal gods, for the preservation, I do not say of the deliverers of the whole earth, but even for the preservation of the meanest Roman citizen. This is a high tone to talk in, but I have pleasure in it: It becomes me to shew, that I scorn to pray to those whom I scorn to fear.

“Has then Octavius power to save us, or destroy us? And while you thus own him to be a tyrant, can you yet own yourself his friend? And while you are mine, can you desire to see me in Rome, and at the mercy of an usurper? And yet, that this would be my case you avow, by imploring from a giddy boy, my permission to return. You have been rendering him a world of thanks, and making him many compliments; pray, how come they to be due to him, if he yet want to be petitioned for our lives, and if our liberty depend upon his sufferance?

Are we bound to think it a condescension in Octavius, that he chooses that these our petitions should rather be made to him than to Anthony? And are not such low supplications the proper addresses to a tyrant? And yet shall we, who boldly destroyed one, be ever brought basely to supplicate another? And can we, who are the deliverers of the commonwealth, descend to ask what no man ought to have it in his power to give?

“Consider the mournful effects of that dread and despondency of yours in our publick struggles; in which, however, you have too many to keep you in countenance. The commonwealth has been lost, because it was given for lost. Hence Caesar was first inspired with the lust of dominion; hence Mark Anthony, not terrified by the doom of the tyrant, pants and hurries on to succeed him in his tyranny; and hence this Octavius, this green usurper, is started into such a pitch of power, that the chiefs of the commonwealth, and the saviours of their country, must depend for their breath upon his pleasure. Yes, we must owe our lives to the mercy of a minor, softened by the prayers of aged Senators!

“Alas, we are no longer Romans! If we were, the virtuous spirit of liberty would have been an easy over-match for the traitorous attempts of the worst of all men grasping after tyranny; nor would even Mark Anthony, the rash and enterprizing Mark Anthony, have been so fond of Caesar's power, as frightened by Caesar's fate.

“Remember the important character which you sustain, the great post which you have filled: You are a senator of Rome, you have been consul of Rome; you have defeated conspiracies, you have destroyed conspirators. Is not Rome still as dear to you as she was? Or, is your courage and vigilance less? And is not the occasion greater? Or, could you suppress great traitors, and yet tolerate greater? Recollect what you ought to do, by what you have done. Whence proceeded your enmity to Anthony? Was it not, that he had an enmity to liberty, had seized violently on the publick, assumed the disposal of life and death into his own hands, and set up for the sole sovereign of all men? Were not these the reasons of your enmity, and of your advice, to combat violence by violence; to kill him, rather than submit to him? All this was well. But why must resistance be dropped, when there is a fresh call for resistance? Has your courage failed you? Or, was it not permitted to Anthony to enslave us, but another may? As if the nature of servitude were changed, by changing names and persons. No, we do not dispute about the qualifications of a master; we will have no master.

“It is certain, that we might, under Anthony, have had large shares with him in the administration of despotick power; we might have divided its dignities, shone in its trappings. He would have received us graciously, and met us half way. He knew that either our concurrence or acquiescence would have confirmed him monarch of Rome; and at what price would he not have purchased either? But all his arts, all his temptations, all his offers, were rejected; liberty was our purpose, virtue our rule: our views were honest and universal; our country, and the cause of mankind.

“With Octavius himself there is still a way open for an accommodation, if we choose it. As eager as the name of Caesar has made that raw stickler for empire to destroy those who destroyed Caesar; yet, doubtless, he would give us good articles, to gain our consent to that power to which he aspires, and to which, I fear, he will arrive: Alas! what is there to hinder him? While we only attend to the love of life, and the impulses of ambition; while we can purchase posts and dignities with the price of liberty, and think danger more dreadful than slavery, what remains to save us?

“What was the end of our killing the tyrant, but to be free from tyranny? A ridiculous motive, and an empty exploit, if our slavery survive him! Oh, who is it that makes liberty his care? Liberty, which ought to be the care of all men, as 'tis the benefit and blessing of all! For myself, rather than give it up, I will stand single in its defence. I cannot lose, but with my life, my resolution to maintain in freedom my country, which I have set free: I have destroyed a veteran tyrant; and shall I suffer, in a raw youth, his heir, a power to control the senate, supersede the laws, and put chains on Rome? A power, which no personal favours, nor even the ties of blood, could ever sanctify to me; a power, which I could not bear in Caesar; nor, if my father had usurped it, could I have borne in him.

“Your petition to Octavius is a confession, that we cannot enjoy the liberty of Rome without his leave; and can you dream that other citizens are free, where we could not live free? Besides, having made your request, how is it to be fulfilled? You beg him to give us our lives; and what if he do? Are we therefore safe, because we live? Is there any safety without liberty? or rather, can we poorly live, having lost it, and with it our honour and glory? Is there any security in living at Rome, when Rome is no longer free? That city, great as it is, having no security of her own, can give me none. No, I will owe mine to my resolution and my sword; I cannot enjoy life at the mercy of another. Caesar's death alone ascertained my liberty to me, which before was precarious: I smote him, to be safe. This is a Roman spirit; and whithersoever I carry it, every place will be Rome to me; who am Roman enough to prefer every evil to chains and infamy, which to a Roman are the highest of all evils. I thought that we had been released from these mighty evils, by the death of him who brought them upon us; but it seems that we are not; else why a servile petition to a youth, big with the name and the ambition of Caesar, for mercy to those patriots, who generously revenged their country upon that tyrant, and cleared the world of his tyranny? It was not thus in the commonwealths of Greece, where the children of tyrants suffered, equally with their fathers, the punishment of tyranny.

“Can I then have any appetite to see Rome? Or, can Rome be said to be Rome? We have slain our tyrant, we have restored her ancient liberty: But they are favours thrown away; she is made free in spite of herself; and though she has seen a great and terrible tyrant bereft of his grandeur and his life, by a few of her citizens; yet, basely depending of her own strength, she impotently dreads the name of a dead tyrant, revived in the person of a stripling.

“No more of your petitions to your young Caesar on my behalf; nor, if you are wise, on your own. You have not many years to live; do not be shewing that you over-rate the short remains of an honourable life, by making preposterous and dishonourable court to a boy. Take care that by this conduct you do not eclipse the lustre of all your glorious actions against Mark Anthony: Do not turn your glory into reproach, by giving the malicious a handle to say, that self-love was the sole motive of your bitterness to him; and that, had you not dreaded him, you would not have opposed him: And yet will they not say this, if they see, that, having declared war against Anthony, you notwithstanding leave life and liberty at the mercy of Octavius, and tolerate in him all the power which the other claimed? They will say that you are not against having a master, only you would not have Anthony for a master.

“I well approve your praises given to Octavius for his behaviour thus far; it is indeed praiseworthy; provided his only intention has been to pull down the tyranny of Anthony, without establishing a tyranny of his own. But if you are of opinion, that Octavius is in such a situation of power, that it is necessary to approach him with humble supplications to save our lives, and that it is convenient he should be trusted with this power; I can only say, that you

lift the reward of his merits far above his merits: I thought that all his services were services done to the Republic; but you have conferred upon him that absolute and imperial power which he pretended to recover to the Republic.

“If, in your judgment, Octavius has earned such laurels and recompences for making war against Anthony's tyranny, which was only the effects and remains of Caesar's tyranny; to what distinctions, to what rewards, would you intitle those who exterminated, with Caesar, the tyranny of Caesar, for which they felt the blessings and bounty of the Roman people! Has this never entered into your thoughts? Behold here how effectually the terror of evils to come extinguishes in the minds of men all impressions of benefits received? Caesar is dead, and will never return to shackle or frighten the city of Rome; so he is no more thought of, nor are they who delivered that city from him. But Anthony is still alive, and still in arms, and still terrifies; and so Octavius is adored, who beat Anthony. Hence it is that Octavius is become of such potent consequence, that from his mouth the Roman people must expect our doom, the doom of their deliverers! And hence it is too, that we (those deliverers) are of such humble consequence, that he must be supplicated to give us our lives!

“I, as I said, have a soul, and I have a sword; and am an enemy to such abject supplications; so great an enemy, that I detest those that use them, and am an avowed foe to him that expects them. I shall at least be far away from the odious company of slaves; and where-ever I find liberty, there I will find Rome. And for you that stay behind, who, not satiated with many years, and many honours, can behold liberty extinct, and virtue, with us, in exile, and yet are not sick of a wretched and precarious life; I heartily pity you. For myself, whose soul has never ebbed from its constant principles, I shall ever be happy in the consciousness of my virtue; owing nothing to my country, towards which I have faithfully discharged my duty, I shall possess my mind in peace; and find the reward of well-doing in the satisfaction of having done it. What greater pleasure does the world afford, than to despise the slippery uncertainties of life, and to value that only which is only valuable, private virtue, and publick liberty; that liberty, which is the blessing, and ought to be the birthright, of all mankind?

“But still, I will never sink with those who are already falling; I will never yield with those who have a mind to submit: I am resolved to be always firm and independent: I will try all expedients, I will exert my utmost prowess, to banish servitude, and set my country entirely free. If fortune favour me as she ought, the blessing and joy will be every man's; but if she fail me, and my best endeavours be thrown away, yet still I will rejoice single; and so far be too hard for fortune. What, in short, can my life be better laid out in, than in continual schemes, and repeated efforts, for the common liberty of my country?

“As to your part in this crisis, my dear Cicero, it is my strongest advice and request to you, not to desert yourself: Do not distrust your ability, and your ability will not disappoint you; believe you can remedy our heavy evils, and you will remedy them. Our miseries want no encrease: Prevent, therefore, by your vigilance, any new accession. Formerly, in quality of consul, you defeated, with great boldness, and warmth for liberty, a formidable conspiracy against Rome, and saved the commonwealth; and what you did then against Catiline, you do still against Anthony. These actions of yours have raised your reputation high, and spread it far; but it will be all tarnished or lost, if you do not continue to shew an equal firmness upon as great an occasion; let this render all the parts of your life equal, and secure immortality to that glory of yours, which ought to be immortal.

“From those, who, like you, have performed great actions, as great or greater are expected: By shewing that they can serve the publick, they make themselves its debtors; and it is apt to exact strict payment, and to use them severely if they do not pay: But from those who have performed no such actions, we expect none. This is the difference betwixt the lot of unknown talents, and of those which have been tried; and the condition of the latter is no doubt the harder. Hence it is, that though, in making head against Anthony, you have merited and received great and just praises, yet you have gained no new admiration: By so doing, you only continued, like a worthy consular, the known character of a great and able consul. But if now at last you begin to truckle to one as bad as him; if you abate ever so little in that vigour of mind, and that steady courage, by which you expelled him from the senate, and drove him out of Rome; you will never reap another harvest of glory, whatever you may deserve; and even your past laurels will wither, and your past renown be forgot.

“There is nothing great or noble in events, which are the fruit of passion or chance: true fame results only from the steady perseverance of reason in the paths and pursuits of virtue. The care, therefore, of the commonwealth, and the defence of her liberties, belong to you above all men, because you have done more than all men for liberty and the commonwealth: Your great abilities, your known zeal, your famous actions, with the united call and expectation of all men, are your motives in this great affair; would you have greater?

“You are not, therefore, to supplicate Octavius for our safety; do a braver thing, owe it to your own magnanimity. Rouse the Roman genius within you; and consider that this great and free city, which you more than once saved, will always be great and free, provided her people do not want worthy chiefs to resist usurpation, and exterminate traitors.”

G

No. 24. SATURDAY, April 8, 1721.

Of the natural Honesty of the People, and their reasonable Demands. How important it is to every Government to consult their Affections and Interest. [Gordon] ↩

[I-177]

SIR,

I have observed, in a former letter, that the people, when they are not misled or corrupted, generally make a sound judgment of things. They have natural qualifications equal to those of their superiors; and there is oftener found a great genius carrying a pitch-fork, than carrying a white staff. The poor cook preferred by the Grand Seignior to be his first vizier, in order to cure the publick disorder and confusion occasioned by the ignorance, corruption, and neglect of the former ministry, made good effectually his own promise, and did credit to his master's choice: He remedied the publick disorders, and proved, says Sir Paul Ricaut, an able and excellent minister of state.

Besides, there are not such mighty talents requisite for government, as some, who pretend to them without possessing them, would make us believe: Honest affections, and common qualifications, are sufficient; and the administration has been always best executed, and the publick liberty best preserved, near the origin and rise of states, when plain honesty and common sense alone governed the publick affairs, and the morals of men were not corrupted with riches and luxury, nor their understandings perverted by subtleties and distinctions. Great abilities have, for the most part, if not always, been employed to mislead the honest, but unwary, multitude, and to draw them out of the open and plain paths of publick virtue and public good.

The people have no bias to be knaves; the security of their persons and property is their highest aim. No ambition prompts them; they cannot come to be great lords, and to possess great titles, and therefore desire none. No aspiring or unsociable passions incite them; they have no rivals for place, no competitor to pull down; they have no darling child, pimp, or relation, to raise: they have no occasion for dissimulation or intrigue; they can serve no end by faction; they have no interest, but the general interest.

The same can rarely be said of great men, who, to gratify private passion, often bring down publick ruin; who, to fill their private purses with many thousands, frequently load the people with many millions; who oppress for a mistress, and, to save a favourite, destroy a nation; who too often make the publick sink and give way to their private fortune; and, for a private pleasure, create a general calamity. Besides, being educated in debauchery, and pampered in riot and luxury, they have no sense of the misfortunes of other men, nor tenderness for those who suffer them: They have no notion of miseries which they do not feel. There is a nation in Europe, which, within the space of an hundred years last past, has been blessed with patriots, who, void of every talent and inclination to do good, and even stunted in their ability for roguery, were forced to be beholden, for most of the mischief which they did, to the superior arts and abilities of humble rogues and brokers.

The first principles of power are in the people; and all the projects of men in power ought to refer to the people, to aim solely at their good, and end in it: And whoever will pretend to govern them without regarding them, will soon repent it. Such feats of errantry may do

perhaps in Asia: but in countries where the people are free, it is madness to hope to rule them against their wills. They will know, that government is appointed for their sakes, and will be saucy enough to expect some regard and some good from their own delegates. Those nations who are governed in spite of themselves, and in a manner that bids defiance to their opinions, their interests, and their understandings, are either slaves, or will soon cease to be subjects.

Dominion that is not maintained by the sword, must be maintained by consent; and in this latter case, what security can any man at the head of affairs expect, but from pursuing the people's welfare, and seeking their good-will? The government of one for the sake of one, is tyranny; and so is the government of a few for the sake of themselves: But government executed for the good of all, and with the consent of all, is liberty; and the word *government* is profaned, and its meaning abused, when it signifies any thing else.

In free countries the people know all this. They have their five senses in as great perfection, as have those who would treat them as if they had none. They are not wont to hate their governors, till their governors deserve to be hated; and when this happens to be the case, not absolute power itself, nor the affections of a prince invested with it, can protect or employ ministers detested by the people. Even the Grand Seigneur, with all his boundless authority, is frequently forced to give up his first minister (who is sometimes his son-in-law, or brother-in-law) a sacrifice to appease the people's rage.

The people, rightly managed, are the best friends to princes; and, when injured and oppressed, the most formidable enemies. Princes, who have trusted to their armies or their nobility, have been often deceived and ruined; but princes, who have trusted wholly to the people, have seldom been deceived or deserted: The reason is, that in all governments, which are not violent and military, the people have more power than either the grandees or the soldiery; and their friendship is more sincere, as having nothing to desire but freedom from oppression. And whilst a prince is thus beloved by his people, it will rarely happen that any can be so rash and precipitate as to conspire against him; and such conspiracies have never the intended success: but, as Machiavel well observes, When the people are dissatisfied, and have taken a prejudice against their governors, there is no thing nor person that they ought not to fear.

It is therefore of vast importance to preserve the affections of the people even in those governments where they have no share in the administration. The wise states of Holland are so apprized of the truth of this maxim, that they have preserved themselves and their state by religiously observing it. Their government consists of many little aristocracies, where the magistrates choose each other, and the people have nothing to do; but in spirit and effect it is a democracy, and the dispositions and inclinations of the people have above all things the greatest weight in their counsels. The jealousy of the people makes a vigilant magistracy, who are honest out of fear of provoking them, and, by never doing it, are in great safety.

But, thanks be to heaven and our worthy ancestors, our liberties are better secured. We have a constitution, in which the people have a large share: They are one part of the legislature, and have the sole power of giving money; which includes in it every thing that they can ask for the publick good; and the representatives, being neither awed nor bribed, will always act for their country's interest; their own being so interwoven with the people's happiness, that they must stand and fall together.

But what if our delegates should not be suffered to meet; or, when met, should be so awed by force (as formerly in Denmark) or so corrupted by places and pensions (as in the reign of Charles II) as to be ready to give up publick liberty, and betray the interest of their principals to secure their own? This we may be sure can never happen under his Majesty's most just and gentle reign: However, it has happened formerly; and what has been, may be again in future reigns.

What, in such a case, is to be done? What remedies have our laws provided against so fatal a mischief? Must the people patiently crouch under the heaviest of all evils? Or has our constitution pointed out the means of redress? It would be absurd to suppose that it has not; and, in effect, the people have a legal remedy at hand: It is their undoubted right, and acknowledged to be so in the Bill of Rights passed in the reign of King Charles I and since, by the Act of Settlement of the crown at the Revolution; humbly to represent their publick grievances, and to petition for redress to those whose duty it is to right them, or to see them righted: And it is certain, that in all countries, the people's misfortunes are greater or less, in proportion as this right is encouraged or checked.

It is indeed the best and only just way that they can take to breathe their grievances; and whenever this way has been taken, especially when it has been universally taken, our kings have always accepted so powerful an application. Our parliaments too, who are the keepers and barriers of our liberty, have shewn themselves ready and willing to receive the modest complaints and representations of their principals, and to apply quick remedies to the grievances contained in them. It has, indeed, been always thought highly imprudent, not to say dangerous, to resist the general groans and entreaties of the people, uttered in this manner.

This has been a method, which has always had great weight with good men, and has been always a great terror to bad. It has therefore always been encouraged or discouraged, according to the innocence or guilt of men in power. A prince, who minds the welfare and desires the affections of his subjects, cannot wish for a better expedient to know how his servants are approved, and how his government is liked, than by this way of countenancing his people in laying their hearts, their wishes, and their requests before him; and ministers never can be averse to such representations of the complaints of the people, unless they have given the people occasion to complain.

Titus and Trajan, conscious of their own virtuous administration, and worthy purposes, courted addresses and informations of this kind, from their subjects: They wisely knew, that if the Roman people had free leave to speak, they would not take leave to act; and that, whilst they could have redress, they would not seek revenge.

None but desperate parricides will make the people desperate.

G

I am, &c.

No. 25. SATURDAY, April 15, 1721.

Considerations on the destructive Spirit of arbitrary Power. With the Blessings of Liberty, and our own Constitution. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[I-184]

SIR,

The good of the governed being the sole end of government, they must be the greatest and best governors, who make their people great and happy; and they the worst, who make their people little, wicked, and miserable. Power in a free state, is a trust committed by all to one or a few, to watch for the security, and pursue the interest, of all: And, when that security is not sought, nor that interest obtained, we know what opinion the people will have of their governors.

It is the hard fate of the world, that there should be any difference in the views and interests of the governors and governed; and yet it is so in most countries. Men who have a trust frankly bestowed upon them by the people, too frequently betray that trust, become conspirators against their benefactors, and turn the sword upon those who gave it; insomuch that in the greatest part of the earth, people are happy if they can defend themselves against their defenders.

Let us look round this great world, and behold what an immense majority of the whole race of men crouch under the yoke of a few tyrants, naturally as low as the meanest of themselves, and, by being tyrants, worse than the worst; who, as Mr. Sidney observes, use their subjects like asses and mastiff dogs, to work and to fight, to be oppressed and killed for them. Even the good qualities and courage of such subjects are their misfortune, by strengthening the wicked hands of their brutal masters, and strengthening their own chains. Tyrants consider their people as their cattle, and use them worse, as they fear them more. Thus the most of mankind are become the wretched slaves of those, who are or should be their own creatures; they maintain their haughty masters like gods, and their haughty masters often use them like dogs: A fine specimen of gratitude and duty!

Yet this cruel spirit in tyrants is not always owing naturally to the men, since they are naturally like other men; but it is owing to the nature of the dominion which they exercise. Good laws make a good prince, if he has a good understanding; but the best men grow mischievous when they are set above laws. Claudius was a very harmless man, while he was a private man; but when he came to be a tyrant, he proved a bloody one, almost as bloody as his nephew and predecessor Caligula; who had also been a very good subject, but when he came to be the Roman emperor, grew the professed executioner of mankind.

There is something so wanton and monstrous in lawless power, that there scarce ever was a human spirit that could bear it; and the mind of man, which is weak and limited, ought never to be trusted with a power that is boundless. The state of tyranny is a state of war; and where it prevails, instead of an intercourse of confidence and affection, as between a lawful prince and his subjects, nothing is to be seen but jealousy, mistrust, fear, and hatred: An arbitrary prince and his slaves often destroy one another, to be safe: They are continually plotting against his life; he is continually shedding their blood, and plundering them of their property.

I think it was Justinian, the Emperor, who said, "Though we are above the law, yet we live according to the law." But, by his Majesty's favour, there was more truth in the saying; for princes that think themselves above law, act almost constantly against all law; of which truth Justinian himself is a known instance. Good princes never think themselves above it.

It is an affecting observation, that the power given for the protection of the world, should, in so many places, be turned to the destruction of it.

As if the law was in force for their destruction, and not for their preservation; that it should have power to kill, but not to protect, them: A thing no less horrid, than if the sun should burn us without lighting us, or the earth serve only to bury, and not feed and nourish us,

says Mr. Waller in a speech of his in Parliament.

Despotick power has defaced the Creation, and laid the world waste. In the finest countries in Asia, formerly full of people, you are now forced to travel by the compass: There are no roads, houses, nor inhabitants. The sun is left to scorch up the grass and fruits, which it had raised; or the rain to rot them: The gifts of God are left to perish; there being none of his creatures, neither man nor beast, left to use and consume them. The Grand Seignior, who (if we may believe some sanctified mouths, not addicted to lying) is the vicegerent of heaven, frustrates the bounty of heaven; and, being the father of his people, has almost butchered them all. Those few (comparatively very few) who have yet survived the miserable fate of their brethren, and are reserved for sacrifices to his cruelty, as occasion offers, and his lust prompts him, live the starving and wretched property of ravenous and bloody bashaws; whose duty to their master, as well as their own avarice, obliges them to keep the people, over whom they preside, poor and miserable.

But neither bashaws, nor armies, could keep that people in such abject slavery, if their priests and doctors had not made passive obedience a principle of their religion. The holy name of God is profaned, and his authority belied, to bind down wretchedness upon his creatures, and to secure the tyrant that does it. The most consummate of all wickedness, and the highest of all evils, are sanctified by the teachers of religion, and made by them a part of it. Yes, Turkish slavery is confirmed, and Turkish tyranny defended, by religion!

Sir Paul Ricaut tells us, that the Turks maintain, "That the Grand Seignior can never be deposed, or made accountable for his crimes, whilst he destroys carelessly of his subjects under a hundred a day": 'Tis made martyrdom to die submissively by the hand of the tyrant; and some of his highest slaves have declared that they wanted only that honour to complete their felicity. They hold, that it is their duty to submit, though their tyrant "command a whole army of them to precipitate themselves from a rock, or to build a bridge with piles of their bodies for him to pass a river, or to kill one another to afford him pastime and pleasure."

Merciful God! Is this government! And do such governors govern by authority from thee!

It is scarce credible what Monsieur de L'Estoille tells us: He says he travelled in the Indies for above twenty days together, through lanes of people hanged upon trees, by command of the King; who had ordered above a hundred thousand of them to be thus murdered and gibbeted, only because two or three robberies had been committed amongst them. Bayle, *Reponse aux Quest. d'un Provinc.* tom. I. p. 595.

It is one of the great evils of servitude, that let the tyranny be ever so severe, 'tis always flattered; and the more severe 'tis, the more 'tis flattered. The oppressors of mankind are flattered beyond all others; because fear and servitude naturally produce, as well as have recourse to, flattery, as the best means of self-preservation; whereas liberty, having no occasion for it, scorns it. Sir Paul Ricaut ascribes the decay of the Ottoman Empire to the force of flattery, and calls the Turkish court, a prison and banniard of slaves.

Old Muley, the Lord's anointed of Morocco, who it seems is still alive, is thought to have butchered forty thousand of his subjects with his own hands. Such a father is he of his people! And yet his right to shed human blood being a genuine characteristic of the church of Morocco, as by law established, people are greedy to die by his hand; which, they are taught to imagine, dispatches them forthwith to paradise: Insomuch that, though, as I am told, every time he mounts his horse, he slices off the head of the slave that holds his stirrup, to shew that he is as good an executioner as he is a horseman, yet there is a constant contention among his slaves, who shall be the happy martyr on that occasion; so that several of them crowding to his stirrup at once, for the gracious favour, his Majesty has sometimes the honour to cut off two heads, and to make two saints, with one blow.

The exercise of despotick power is the unrelenting war of an armed tyrant upon his unarmed subjects: it is a war of one side, and in it there is neither peace nor truce. Tacitus describes it, *Saeva jussa, continuas accusationes, fallaces amicitias, perniciem innocentium*: "Cruel and bloody orders, continual accusations, faithless friendships, and the destruction of innocents." In another place he says, that

Italy was one continual shambles, and most of its fair cities were defaced or overthrown; Rome itself was in many places laid in ashes, with the greatest part of its magnificent buildings: virtue was despised, and barefaced debauchery prevailed. The solitary islands were filled with illustrious exiles, and the very rocks were stained with slaughters: but, in the city itself, cruelty raged still more; it was dangerous to be noble, it was a crime to be rich, it was capital to have borne honours, and high treason to have refused them; and for virtue and merit, they brought sure and sudden destruction.

These were some of the ravages of absolute dominion! And as to the common people, the same author says, "They were debauched and dispirited, and given up to idleness and seeing shews." *Plebs sordida circo & theatris sueta.*

Oh! abject state of such as tamely groan
Under a blind dependency on one!

This is a sort of government, which is too great and heavy a curse for any one to wish, even upon those who are foolish enough, or wicked enough, to contend for its lawfulness; or, which is the same thing, for submission to it: But surely, if ever any man deserved to feel the merciless gripes of tyranny, it is he who is an advocate for it. Phalaris acted justly, when he hanelled his brazen bull with the wretch who invented it.

As arbitrary power in a single person has made greater havock in human nature, and thinned mankind more, than all the beasts of prey and all the plagues and earthquakes that ever were; let those men consider what they have to answer for, who would countenance such a monstrous evil in the world, or would oppose those that would oppose it. A bear, a lion, or a tiger, may now and then pick up single men in a wood, or a desert; an earthquake sometimes may bury a thousand or two inhabitants in the ruins of a town; and the pestilence may once in many years carry off a much greater number: But a tyrant shall, out of a wanton personal passion, carry fire and sword through a whole continent, and deliver up a hundred thousand of his fellow creatures to the slaughter in one day, without any remorse or further notice, than that they died for his glory. I say nothing of the moral effect of tyranny; though 'tis certain that ignorance, vice, poverty, and vileness, always attend it.

He who compares the world now with what it was formerly, how populous once, how thin now; and considers the cause of this doleful alteration, will find just reason to fear, that spiritual and temporal tyranny, if they go on much longer, will utterly extinguish the human race. Of Turkey I have spoken already: The great continent of America is almost unpeopled, the Spaniards having destroyed, 'tis thought, about forty millions of its natives; and for some kingdoms in Europe, especially towards the north, I do not believe that they have now half the inhabitants that they had so lately as a hundred years ago.

Blessed be God, there are still some free countries in Europe, that abound with people and with plenty, and England is the foremost. This demonstrates the inestimable blessing of liberty. Can we ever over-rate it, or be too jealous of a treasure which includes in it almost all human felicities? Or can we encourage too much those that contend for it, and those that promote it? It is the parent of virtue, pleasure, plenty, and security; and 'tis innocent, as well as lovely. In all contentions between liberty and power, the latter has almost constantly been the aggressor. Liberty, if ever it produce any evils, does also cure them: Its worst effect, licentiousness, never does, and never can, continue long. Anarchy cannot be of much duration: and where 'tis so, it is the child and companion of tyranny; which is not government, but a dissolution of it, as tyrants are the enemies of mankind.

Power is like fire; it warms, scorches, or destroys, according as it is watched, provoked, or increased. It is as dangerous as useful. Its only rule is the good of the people; but because it is apt to break its bounds, in all good governments nothing, or as little as may be, ought to be left to chance, or the humours of men in authority: All should proceed by fixed and stated rules, and upon any emergency, new rules should be made. This is the constitution, and this the happiness of Englishmen; as hath been formerly shewn at large in these letters.

We have a constitution that abhors absolute power; we have a King that does not desire it; and we are a people that will never suffer it: No free people will ever submit to it, unless it steal upon them by treachery, or they be driven into it by violence. But a state can never be too secure against this terrible, this last of all human evils; which may be brought upon them by many causes, even by some that at first sight do not seem to threaten any such thing: And of all those causes, none seems more boding than a general distress, which certainly produces general discontent, the parent of revolutions; and in what such a circumstance of affairs may end, no man can ever foresee: Few are brought about without armies; a remedy almost always worse than the disease. What is got by soldiers, must be maintained by soldiers; and we have, in this paper, already seen the frightful image of a military government; a government, which, at best, is violent and bloody, and eternally inconsistent with law and property.

It is therefore a dreadful wickedness to have any share in giving occasion for those discontents, which are so apt to burst into rage and confusion. A state sometimes recovers out of a convulsion, and gains new vigour by it; but it much oftener expires in it. Heaven preserve me from ever beholding contending armies in England! They are different things from what they once were. Our armies formerly were only a number of the people armed occasionally; and armies of the people are the only armies which are not formidable to the people. Hence it is, that, in the many revolutions occasioned by the strife between the two royal houses of York and Lancaster, there never was any danger of slavery from an armed force: A single battle decided the contention; and next day these popular soldiers went home, and resumed their ordinary arms, the tools of husbandry. But since that time armies have not been so easily parted with; but after the danger was over for which they were raised, have often been obstinately kept up, and by that means created dangers still as great.

Some quacks in politicks may perhaps venture publick disturbances, out of an opinion that they shall be able to prevent them by art, or suppress them by force. But this shews their capacity, as well as their wickedness: For, not to mention the malignity of their hearts, in risking publick ruin, to gratify a private appetite; how can any event be certainly foreseen, when the measure of the cause cannot be certainly known? They can never ascertain the degree of opposition; they cannot foreknow what circumstances may happen, nor into whose hands things may fall. Cicero did not dream, when he employed Octavius for the commonwealth, that his young champion for liberty would ever be the tyrant of his country. Who could foresee that Cromwell would enslave those whom he was employed to defend? But there is no trusting of liberty in the hands of men, who are obeyed by great armies.

From hence may be seen what a fatal and crying crime it would be, in any free country, to break the confidence between the prince and his people. When loyalty is once turned into indifference, indifference will soon be turned into hatred; hatred will be returned with hatred; resentment may produce tyranny, and rage may produce rebellion. There is no mischief which this mutual mistrust and aversion may not bring forth. They must therefore be the blackest traitors, who are the first authors of so terrible an evil, as are they who would endeavour to protect them.

Henry III of Castile said, that he feared the curse of his people more than he did the arms of his enemies: In which saying he shewed as much wisdom as humanity; since, while he was beloved at home, he had nothing to fear from abroad, and the curses of his subjects were the likeliest means to bring upon him the arms of his enemies.

G

I am, &c.

No. 26. SATURDAY, April 22, 1721.

The sad Effects of general Corruption, quoted from Algernon Sidney, Esq. [Gordon] ↪

[I-195]

SIR,

I send you, for the entertainment of your readers this week, two or three passages out of the great Algernon Sidney: An author, who can never be too much valued or read; who does honour to the English nobility, and to the English name; who has written better upon government than any Englishman, and as well as any foreigner; and who was a martyr for that liberty which he has so amiably described, and so nobly defended. He fell a sacrifice to the vile and corrupt court of our pious Charles II. He had asserted the rights of mankind, and shewed the odiousness of tyranny; he had exposed the absurdity and vileness of the sacred and fashionable doctrines of those days, passive obedience, and hereditary right; doctrines, which give the lie to common sense, and which would destroy all common happiness and security amongst men! Doctrines, which were never practised by those that preached them! and doctrines, which are big with nonsense, contradiction, impossibility, misery, wickedness, and desolation! These were his crimes, and these his glory.

The book is every way excellent: He had read and digested all history; and this performance of his takes in the whole business of government: It makes us some amends for the loss of Cicero's book *De Republica*. Colonel Sidney had all the clear and comprehensive knowledge, and all the dignity of expression, of that great master of eloquence and politics; his love of liberty was as warm, his honesty as great, and his courage greater.

G

“Liberty cannot be preserved, if the manners of the people are corrupted; nor absolute monarchy introduced, where they are sincere: Which is sufficient to shew, that those who manage free governments ought always, to the utmost of their power, to oppose corruption, because otherwise both they and their government must inevitably perish; and that, on the other hand, the absolute monarch must endeavour to introduce it, because he cannot subsist without it. 'Tis also so natural for all such monarchs to place men in power who pretend to love their persons, and will depend upon their pleasure, that possibly 'twould be hard to find one in the world who has not made it the rule of his government: And this is not only the way to corruption, but the most dangerous of all. For though a good man may love a good monarch, he will obey him only when he commands that which is just; and no one can engage himself blindly to do whatever he is commanded, without renouncing all virtue and religion; because he knows not whether that which shall be commanded is consistent with each, or directly contrary to the laws of God and man. But if such a monarch be evil, and his actions such as they are too often found to be; whoever bears an affection to him, and seconds his designs, declares himself an enemy to all that is good; and the advancement of such men to power, does not only introduce, foment, and increase corruption, but fortifies it in such a manner, that without an entire renovation of that state, it cannot be removed. Ill men may possibly creep into any government; but when the worst are placed nearest the throne, and raised to honours for being so, they will with that force endeavor to draw all men to a conformity of spirit with themselves, that it can no otherwise be prevented than by

destroying them, and the principle in which they live.

“Man naturally follows that which is good, or seems to him to be so. Hence it is, that in well-governed states, where a value is put upon virtue, and no one honoured unless for such qualities as are beneficial to the publick; men are from the tenderest years brought up in a belief, that nothing in this world deserves to be sought after, but such honours as are acquired by virtuous actions: By this means virtue itself becomes popular, as in Sparta, Rome, and other places, where riches (which, with the vanity that follows them, and the honours men give to them, are the root of all evil) were either totally banished, or little regarded. When no other advantage attended the greatest riches, than the opportunity of living more sumptuously or deliciously, men of great spirits slighted them. When Aristippus told Cleanthes, that if he would go to court and flatter the tyrant, he need not seek his supper under a hedge; the philosopher answered, that he who could content himself with such a supper, need not go to court to flatter the tyrant. Epaminondas, Aristides, Phocion, and even the Lacedemonian kings, found no inconvenience in poverty, whilst their virtue was honoured, and the richest princes in the world feared their valour and power. It was not difficult for Curius, Fabricius, Cincinnatus, or Emilius Paulus, to content themselves with the narrowest fortune, when it was no obstacle to them in the pursuit of those honours which their virtues deserved. ’Twas in vain to think of bribing a man, who supped upon the coleworts of his own garden. He could not be gained by gold, who did not think it necessary. He that could rise from the plough to the triumphal chariot, and contentedly return thither again, could not be corrupted; and he that left the sense of his poverty to his executors, who found not wherewith to bury him, might leave Macedon and Greece to the pillage of his soldiers, without taking to himself any part of the booty. But when luxury was brought into fashion, and they came to be honoured who lived magnificently, though they had in themselves no qualities to distinguish them from the basest of slaves, the most virtuous men were exposed to scorn if they were poor; and that poverty, which had been the mother and nurse of their virtue, grew insupportable. The poet well understood what effect this change had upon the world, who said,

Nullum crimen abest facinusque libidinis, ex quo Paupertas Romana perit
Juvenal

“When riches grew to be necessary, the desire of them, which is the spring of all mischief, followed. They who could not obtain honours by the noblest actions, were obliged to get wealth, to purchase them from whores or villains, who exposed them to sale: And when they were once entered into this track, they soon learned the vices of those from whom they had received their pre-ferment, and to delight in the ways that had brought to it. When they were come to this, nothing could stop them: all thought and remembrance of good was extinguished. They who had bought the commands of armies or provinces from Icelus or Narcissus, sought only to draw money from them, to enable them to purchase higher dignities, or gain a more assured protection from those patrons. This brought the government of the world under a most infamous traffick; and the treasures arising from it were, for the most part, dissipated by worse vices than the rapine, violence, and fraud with which they had been gotten. The authors of those crimes had nothing left but their crimes; and the necessity of committing more, through the indigency into which they were plunged by the extravagance of their expenses. These things are inseparable from the life of a courtier; for as servile natures are guided rather by sense than reason, such as addict themselves to the service of courts, find no other consolation in their misery, than what they receive from

sensual pleasures, or such vanities as they put a value upon; and have no other care than to get money for their supply, by begging, stealing, bribing, and other infamous practices. Their offices are more or less esteemed, according to the opportunities they afford for the exercise of these virtues; and no man seeks them for any other end than for gain, nor takes any other way than that which conduces to it. The useful means of attaining them are, by observing the prince's humour, flattering his vices, serving him in his pleasures, fomenting his passions, and by advancing his worst designs, to create an opinion in him that they love his person, and are entirely addicted to his will. When valour, industry, and wisdom advanced men to offices, it was no easy matter for a man to persuade the Senate he had such qualities as were required, if he had them not: But when princes seek only such as love them, and will do what they command, 'tis easy to impose upon them; and because none that are good will obey them when they command that which is not so, they are always encompassed by the worst. Those who follow them only for reward, are most liberal in professing affection to them; and by that means rise to places of authority and power. The fountain being thus corrupted, nothing that is pure can come from it. These mercenary wretches having the management of affairs, justice and honour are set at a price, and the most lucrative traffick in the world is thereby established. Eutropius, when he was a slave, used to pick pockets and locks; but being made a minister, he sold cities, armies, and provinces; [⌘] and some have undertaken to give probable reasons to believe, that Pallas, one of Claudius's manumised slaves, by these means, brought together more wealth in six years, than all the Roman dictators and consuls had done, from the expulsion of the kings to their passage into Asia. The rest walked in the same way, and the same arts, and many of them succeeded in the same manner. Their riches consisted not of spoils taken from enemies, but were the base product of their own corruption. They valued nothing but money, and those who could bribe them were sure to be advanced to the highest offices; and, whatever they did, feared no punishment. Like effects will ever proceed from the like causes. When vanity, luxury, and prodigality are in fashion, the desire of riches must necessarily increase in proportion to them: And when the power is in the hands of base mercenary persons, they will always (to use the courtier's phrase) make as much profit of their places as they can. Not only matters of favour, but of justice too, will be exposed to sale; and no way will be open to honours or magistracies, but by paying largely for them. He that gets an office by these means, will not execute it *gratis*: He thinks he may sell what he has bought; and would not have entered by corrupt ways, if he had not intended to deal corruptly: Nay, if a well-meaning man should suffer himself to be so far carried away by the stream of a prevailing custom, as to purchase honours of such villains, he would be obliged to continue in the same course, that he might gain riches to procure the continuance of his benefactor's protection, or to obtain the favour of such as happen to succeed them. And the corruption thus beginning in the head, must necessarily diffuse itself into the members of the commonwealth: Or, if any one (which is not to be expected) after having been guilty of one villainy, should resolve to commit no more, it could have no other effect, than to bring him to ruin; and he being taken away, all things would return to their former channel."

I am, &c.

No. 27. SATURDAY, April 29, 1721.

General Corruption, how ominous to the Publick, and how discouraging to every virtuous Man. With its fatal Progress whenever encouraged. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[I-202]

SIR,

Sallust, or whoever else was the author of the two discourses to Caesar about settling the commonwealth, observes to that emperor, that those magistrates judge wildly, who would derive their own security from the corruption of the people; and therefore make them wicked men, to make them good subjects: Whereas, says he, tis the interest of a virtuous prince to make his people virtuous; for, the debauched, having thrown off all restraint, are of all men the most ungovernable.”

Pliny tells Trajan, that all his predecessors, except Nerva and one or two more, studied how to debauch their people, and how to banish all virtue, by introducing all vices; first, because they were delighted to see others like themselves; secondly, because the minds of the Romans being depraved by the taste and vices of slaves, they would bear with greater tameness the imperial yoke of servitude.

Thus did these governors and enemies of Rome destroy virtue, to set up power. Nor was such policy at all new or strange:

It was then, and always will be, the direct road to absolute monarchy, which is in its nature at everlasting enmity with all goodness and honesty. The Roman virtue and the Roman liberty expired together; tyranny and corruption came upon them almost hand in hand.

This shews the importance of an honest magistracy; nothing certainly is more threatening, or more to be apprehended, than a corrupt one. A knave in power is as much to be dreaded, as a fool with a firebrand in a magazine of powder: You have scarce a bare chance for not being blown up.

From the wicked and worthless men, who engrossed all the places at Rome in the latter days of the commonwealth, and from the monstrous prodigalities, infamous briberies, and endless corruptions, promoted by these men, the sudden thralldom of that glorious city might easily have been foreseen. It was scarce possible to be honest, and preferred. Atticus would never accept of any employment, though he was offered the highest. “This refusal,” says Monsieur Bayle,

was doubtless owing to his virtue: There was no rising to offices then, but by means that were infamous; nor was there any such thing as executing these offices according to the rules of justice and the publick good, without being exposed to the resentment and violence of many and great wicked men. He therefore chose to be rather a virtuous private man, than an exalted and publick rogue.

How charming is this example, but how rare! If all men were like Atticus, there would be no danger of a state of anarchy. But as to that we may be easy; for there will be always more rogues and rooks at hand to be devouring and monopolizing places, by all proper vile means, than there will be places to

bestow.

Bayle goes on, and tells us of

a great traveller, who being rallied upon his rambling humour, answered, that he would cease travelling, as soon as ever he could find a country where power and credit were in the hands of honest men, and preferments went by merit. Nay then, says one who heard him, you will infallibly die travelling.

Corruption, bribery, and treachery, were such ways to power, as Atticus would not tread. Colonel Sidney says, that

a noble person in his time, who was a great enemy to bribery, was turned out from a considerable post, as a scandal to the court; for, said the principal minister, "he will make no profit of his place; and by that means cast a scandal upon those that do."

And Alexander ab Alexandro tells a story of a very honest man, well skilled in the languages, who having long struggled with difficulties and poverty, while he trusted in vain to his honesty and learning, bethought himself of a contrary road; and therefore turning pimp and pathick, instantly he prospered, and got great riches, power, and places.

Aude aliquid brevibus gyaris & carcere dignum.

Cicero, who lived to see dismal days of ambition and corruption at Rome, was sensible that he could do little or no good with all his abilities and his honesty. "If I saw," says he in a letter to Lentulus,

if I saw the commonwealth held and governed by corrupt and desperate men, as has happened in my days and formerly, no motive or consideration should engage me in their interests; neither their bribes could move me, nor could dangers, which often sway the boldest men, terrify me; nor could any of their civilities, or any of their obligations, soften me.

Talking, in another place, of the Senate, then awed by power, or governed by avarice, he says, *Aut assentiendum est nulla cum gravitate paucis aut frustra dissentiendum*: That is, you must either basely vote with Crassus and Caesar, and one or two men more in power, or vote against them to no purpose. These great men did not seek power, nor use it, to do good to their country, which is the end of power; but to themselves, which is the abuse of power. Where government is degenerated into jobbing, it quickly runs into tyranny and dissolution: And he who in any country possesses himself of a great post for the sake of gainful jobs, as a certain great person once owned that he did, ought to finish his last job under a gallows.

It is natural and necessary for those that have corrupt ends, to make use of means that are corrupt, and to hate all men that are uncorrupt.

I would lay it down as a rule for all nations to consider and observe, that where bribery is practised, 'tis a thousand to one but mischief is intended; and the more bribery, the more mischief. When therefore the people, or their trustees, are bribed, they would do well to consider, that it is not, it cannot be, for their own sakes. Honest and open designs, which will bear light and examination, are hurt and discredited by base and dark expedients to bring

them about: But, if you would persuade a man to be a rogue, it is natural that money should be your first argument; and therefore, whoever offers me a bribe, does tacitly acknowledge that he thinks me a knave.

Tacitus, taking notice of the woeful decline of virtue and liberty, towards the end of the Republick, says, that the greatest villainies were committed with impunity, and ruin was the price of honesty: *Deterrima quaequeimpune, ac multa honesta exitio fuere*. And indeed, where corruption and publick crimes are not carefully opposed, and severely punished, neither liberty nor security can possibly subsist.

The immense briberies practised by Julius Caesar, were sure and terrible presages of Caesar's tyranny. It is amazing what mighty sums he gave away: Caius Curio alone, one of the tribunes, was bought into his interest, at no smaller a price than half a million of our money. Other magistrates too had their shares; and all were bribed, who would be bribed. We may easily conceive how he came by such sums; he got them as wickedly as he gave them away. Nor can I call him generous in this vast liberality; since he purchased the Roman empire with its own money, and gave away a part to get the whole.

Unjust and unfrugal ways of throwing away money, make wicked and violent means necessary to get money; and rapine naturally follows prodigality. They that waste publick money, seldom stop there, but go a wicked step farther; and having first drained the people, at last oppress them. Publick frauds are therefore very alarming, as they are very big with publick ruin. What shall we say then of other times, when publick schemes have been concerted to confound all property, to put common honesty out of countenance, and banish it from amongst men; and when an appetite for power was only an appetite for mischief? Dreadful sure was the prospect! And yet this was the state of Rome in those days; as will be seen further before this letter is ended.

Nor would it have been any advantage or security to Rome, though Caesar and his party had been less able men than in truth they were: Having debauched the people, he did more by corruption towards enslaving them, than he did by his parts, as great as they were. It is somewhere observed, that to do good requires some parts and pains; but any man may be a rogue. The world, says the proverb, little knows what silly fellows govern it. Even the difficulties of doing good proceed from the pravity of some men's nature, ever prone to do evil; and so strong is that pravity, that many men frequently slight great temptations to be honest, and embrace slight temptations to be knaves.

It is an observation, which every body is capable of making, that a good character lost is hardly, if ever, recovered. Now the reason of this is, not so much from the malevolence of the world (often too ready to calumniate) as from the inability of a knave to become honest: He is, as it were, doomed to be one: The bias of his spirit is crooked; and if ever he act honestly, it is for a roguish reason. I have known a man, who, having wilfully lost all credit, rejected as wilfully all opportunities to regain it, even when thrown into his lap. He could not help earning fresh detestation, with great labour; when he might have acquired the highest renown with the greatest ease. From hence may be seen how dangerous it is ever to trust a man who has once been a knave; and hence too may be learned, that from men who have done eminent mischief, whether publick or private, greater still is to be dreaded. Vice is a prolifick thing, and wickedness naturally begets wickedness.

Olearius, giving an account of Muscovy, observes, that

the Great Duke's court hath this in common with those of other princes, that vice takes place of virtue, and gets nearest the throne. Those who have the honour to be nearest his person, are withal more subtle, more deceitful, and more insolent, than the others that have not. They know very well how to make their advantages of the prince's favour, and look for the greatest respects and humblest submissions imaginable, from those who make their addresses to them; which the others render them, as much to avoid the mischief they might do to them, as for the good they expect from them.

This is the character of a court, where one is not much surprized nor troubled to find out tyranny and corruption in abundance: But one is at once amazed and affected with the mournful account Sallust gives us of the Romans in his time; the Romans, who had been so virtuous a people, so great and so free!

The same author says, that it would have lessened his concern, had he seen such great wickedness perpetrated by men of great qualities. But his grief had not this mitigation: For, says he, wretched creatures with little souls, whose whole genius lay in their tongue and whose utmost talent and ability was to prate glibly, exercised with insolence that power which they had acquired by chance, or by the sloth of others. *Ac me quidem mediocris dolor angeret, si virtute partam victoriam more suo per servitium exercerent: Sed homines inertissimi quorum omnis vis virtusque in lingua sita est, forte, & alterius socordia, dominationem oblatam insolentes agitant.* And for the Roman nobility of that time, he says, that, like stupid statues, their names and titles were their only ornament: *Inertissimi nobiles, in quibus, sicut in statua praeter nomen, nihil est additamenti.* Sallust. ad C. Caesarem, de repub. ordinand.

We see what a market these men made of power, and what a degree of degeneracy they introduced. The end of all was, the utter loss of liberty, and a settled tyranny.

G

I am, &c.

No. 28. SATURDAY, May 6, 1721.

A Defence of Cato against his Defamers. [Gordon]↵

TO CATO↵

[I-210]

SIR,

See what it is to be conspicuous! Your honesty, and the truths which you tell, have drawn upon you much envy, and many lies. You cannot be answered; therefore it is fit to abuse you. Had you kept groveling near the earth, in company with most other weekly writers, you might have lulled the town asleep as they do, with great safety to your person, and without any body's saying an unkind word of you: But you have galloped away so fast and so far before them, that it is no wonder the poor vermin, conscious of their own heaviness and want of speed, crawl after you and curse you. It is natural, human sight is offended with splendor: This is exemplified in a man looking at the sun; he makes all the while a world of wry mouths and distorted faces.

Consider yourself, Sir, as the sun to those authors, who behold you with agonies, while they behold you with admiration. Great minds alone are pleased with the excellencies of others, and vulgar souls provoked by them. The mob of writers is like the weaver's mob; all levellers. This appears by their unmannerly and seditious speeches concerning you, their monarch. Strange instance of impudence and ingratitude! They live upon you, and scold at you. Your lot is the same with that of many other eminent authors; you feed vermin before you are dead.

Your slanderers, as they are below even contempt, so are they far below all notice: But it is worth considering who set them at work; from whom they receive the wages of prostitution; and what contradictory things the poor creatures are taught to say. Scarce a paper appeared for a considerable time together in which Cato's letters were not extolled; and those who did it endeavoured, to the best of their skill, to write after him: But finding that his labours made theirs useless, and that the recommending of publick spirit was too mighty a task for humble hirelings, they suddenly, and without ceremony, tack about, and, by calumniating Cato, make themselves liars: Such deference have they for their customers, and for themselves!

It is no wonder, therefore, that the same worthy, but waggish pens, represent him, with the same breath, as an abandoned atheist, and a bigoted Presbyterian; while others as plainly prove him a flaming Jacobite, and an arrant republican; that is, one who is high for monarchy, and one who is against all monarchy. I could shew you these pretty consistencies in one and the same paper.

Cato had described and shewed the horrid effects of publick confusion, and contended for punishing the authors of our own: Hence Cato is represented as an enemy to government and order, and a promoter of confusion.

Cato had bestowed real and unfeigned encomiums upon his Majesty, and done all justice to the abilities and honesty of his ministers: Hence Cato is charged with casting reproaches, and making sarcasms upon his Majesty and his ministry.

Cato has writ against Turkish, Asiatick, and all sorts of tyranny: Hence Cato is said to be a great incendiary, and an open enemy to our constitution.

Cato contends, that great traitors ought to be hanged: Hence Cato is traduced, as if he affronted the ministry.

Cato asserts, that the good of mankind is the end of government: Hence Cato is for destroying all government.

Cato lays down certain rules for farther establishing his Majesty's throne, and for ensuring to him for ever the minds of his people: Therefore Cato is a Jacobite.

Cato has shewn at large the blessings of a limited monarchy, especially of our own: Therefore Cato is a republican.

Cato has shewn the dreadfulness of popular insurrections and fury; the misery of civil wars, the uncertainty of their end: Therefore Cato stirs up the people to sedition and rebellion.

Cato laments, that great criminals are seldom brought to the gallows: Hence Cato is represented as one that deserves the gallows.

Cato, talking of Turkey, observes with warmth and concern, that the holy name of God was belied, and religion prostituted, to bind down wretchedness upon his creatures, and to protect the tyrant that does it: therefore Cato scurrilously reviles the Church of England.

Cato has shewn the destructive terms of arbitrary power, and how it had almost dispeopled the earth: In answer to this it is said, that Cato wears a dark wig.

Cato has complained, that this great nation has been

abused, cheated, and exhausted; its trade ruined; its credit destroyed; its manufactures discouraged, &c. and affirmed, that vengeance is due to those traitors who have done it; that none but traitors will protect traitors; that publick honesty and publick spirit ought to be encouraged, in opposition to publick corruption, bribery, and rapine; that there is regard to be had to the rights, privileges, and tempers of the people: That standingarmies are dreadful things; that a military government is violent and bloody: That they are the blackest traitors, who would break the confidence between a prince and his subjects: That great men mind chiefly the getting of plumbs; and that honest measures are the best measures. To all which it is replied, that Cato is a whimsical unreasonable man, who talks and expects strange things; and, in fine, that he dreams odd dreams.

By such powerful arguments is Cato answered; by such pretty arts decried. He is really a great criminal; he asserts the rights and property of the people, and calls for justice upon those who would destroy them. He is surely a Jacobite, who would not let certain elevated sages do what they would, and get what they pleased. I would ask, whether the obliging, protecting, and avenging, the injured people, be likely ways to bring in the Pretender? Yet these are the ways which Cato contends for. Or, whether the deceiving, loading, and squeezing of the harmless people, be natural ways to make and keep them well affected? Yet

these are the ways which Cato condemns and exposes.

Being detached from all parties, eminently guiltless of all personal views of his own, and going upon principles certainly true in themselves, certainly beneficent to human society; it is no wonder that he is read and approved by every intelligent man in England, except the guilty, their screens, hirelings, and adherents. What he writes, the people feel to be true: If men can be great knaves, in spite of opposition; how much greater would they be, if there were none? And if justice be opposed, openly, shamelessly, and violently opposed, in spite of her champions and defenders; she must certainly be destroyed, if she had none. It is a dismal reflexion, that justice must sometimes be sought for inch by inch, before it can be obtained, and at last is not half obtained; and that the higher and blacker the villainy is, the greater is the security. I hope that this will never be our case; but I could name many a country whose case it has been.

I am not surprized that certain tall traitors are very angry with Cato. "Good now hold your tongue," said a quack to his complaining patient, under agonies into which he had been cast by the doctor's infallible specifick: "Good now hold your tongue, and be easy; leave the matter to me, and the matter will go well": That is, lie still and die, and I will warrant you. Great grief and distress will have utterance, in spite of art or terror.

On Ascension Day, when the Doge of Venice weds the sea with a ring, the admiral, who conducts the *bucentauro*, or vessel in which that ceremony is performed, does a bold thing: He pawns his head to the Senate, to ensure them, against the danger and effects of tempests and storms. But the thing would still be bolder, if he had first wilfully raised a storm, or bored a hole in the vessel.

I appeal to the sense of the nation, daily uttered in their addresses to the Parliament for relief and vengeance; whether Cato's sentiments be not the same with theirs; I appeal to the sufferings, the heavy, melancholy sufferings of the people, whether either Cato or they speak thus without grounds.

The grounds are too visible, and their allegations too true. Hence the rage of guilt, which is more galled by truth, than innocence is hurt by lies: And hence I have heard it observed, concerning a set of worthies, that they do not care what falsehoods you publish concerning them, but will never forgive you if you meddle with facts.

For certain gentlemen to find fault with Cato's letters, is to avow their own shame. Why was there occasion given for those letters? Some other questions might be asked too, which would discover fresh blackness in these betrayers, were they not already all over black. Who is it that might have checked, and yet did not check, rampant rogues last summer? And from what motives proceeded such omission? Who is it that openly screens open guilt? Who is it that conceals the evidence of guilt? Who is it that brow-beats the pursuers of guilt? Who is it that throws obstacles in the Parliament's way? Who is it that lengthens out the process? Who is it that strives to defeat the enquiry? Who is it that makes malcontents, and then reproaches them for being so?

In vain they fall upon Cato, with lying reproaches, false pictures, and ugly names: Their conduct betrays them; by making him of every party, they shew him to be of none; as he has shewed himself to be of none. I thought it, however, not amiss, thus, once for all, to make his apology, and to shew what are his crimes, and who his enemies. His great guilt is, that he will not spare guilt; and the great objection to his writings is, that they cannot be answered. Let

the reader judge whether I have misrepresented him or his foes, who are no other than the late directors, their friends and confederates.

As to the poor weekly journeymen of the press, whose principle is the ready penny, and who, for a morsel, defile paper, and blot reputations without hurting them, they deserve no resentment. It is their profession to do what they are bid, when they are paid for it. A church is not the less sacred, because curs frequently lift up their leg against it, and affront the wall: It is the nature of dogs. They therefore are and ought to be pitied and overlooked; the business of this letter to you being to expose the false and unjust censures of some, who bear a greater figure than such harmless weekly writers, without possessing more honesty.

The conjectures of these creatures about the person of Cato afford matter of mirth. They will needs know him, right or wrong. Let them guess on; whatever they guess, I will venture to pronounce them liars, though they should guess truly: Since without being able to do any thing more than guess, they yet go on to affirm; which no honest man would do without competent evidence. I am,

G

Sir

Your humble servant,

PORTIUS

No. 29. SATURDAY, May 13, 1721.

Reflections occasioned by an Order of Council for suppressing certain impious Clubs that were never discovered. [Gordon][↗](#)

[I-218]

SIR,

I would willingly propagate and preserve the following Order of Council, as a monument of his Majesty's great zeal for virtue and religion. It is published in the *Gazette* of the 29th of April, in the following words:

At the Court of St. James's, the 28th day of April, 1721

Present,

The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council

His Majesty having received information, which gives great reason to suspect, that there have lately been, and still are, in and about the cities of London and Westminster, certain scandalous clubs or societies of young persons, who meet together, and, in the most impious and blasphemous manner, insult the most sacred principles of our holy religion, affront Almighty God himself, and corrupt the minds and morals of one another; and being resolved to make use of all the authority committed to him by Almighty God, to punish such enormous offenders, and to crush such shocking impieties before they increase and draw down the vengeance of God upon this nation: His Majesty has thought fit to command the Lord Chancellor, and his Lordship is hereby required to call together his Majesty's Justices of the Peace of Middlesex and Westminster, and strictly to enjoin them in the most effectual manner, that they, and every of them, do make the most diligent and careful enquiry and search for the discovery of any thing of this and the like sort, tending in any wise to the corruption of the principles and manners of men; and to lay before his Lordship such discoveries as from time to time may be made, to the end that all proper methods may be taken for the utter suppression of all such detestable practices. His Lordship is further directed to urge them to the due execution of their office, in detecting and prosecuting, with vigour, all profaneness, immorality, and debauchery, as they value the blessing of Almighty God, as they regard the happiness of their country, which cannot subsist, if things sacred and virtuous are trampled upon, and as they tender his Majesty's favour, to which they cannot recommend themselves more effectually, than by shewing the utmost zeal upon so important an occasion; to which end his Lordship is to acquaint them, that as his Majesty for himself has nothing more at heart than to regard the honour of God, so impiously struck at, and is determined to shew all marks of displeasure and discouragement to any who may lie even under the suspicion of such practices; so he shall always account it the greatest and most substantial service they can do to his Majesty or his government, to exert themselves in discovering any who are guilty of such impieties, that they may be openly prosecuted, and punished with the utmost severity and most publick ignominy which the laws of the land can inflict.

Edward Southwell

To this it is added, in the same *Gazette*,

That his Majesty has been pleased to give orders to the principal officers of his household, to make strict and diligent enquiry, whether any of his Majesty's servants are guilty of the horrid impieties mentioned in the Order of Council inserted above, and to make a report thereof to his Majesty.

These societies must certainly be as distracted as they are impious. I have indeed been in doubt till now, whether there really were any such; but I am in no doubt about the punishment which they deserve: I think that it ought to be the most severe that is due to such raving wickedness, which is such, as neither youth nor wine can excuse, nor indeed extenuate; and till they are further punished, I think that the darkest holes in Bedlam ought to be their portion. But outrageous and godless as they are, they do not merit more detestation and severity, than do those who inhumanly give out, that gentlemen, who abhor such clubs, are members of them: The authors of so dreadful a calumny are much worse than murderers; because they endeavour to take away from men something much dearer than life: They are therefore in the class with daemons, and earn such mighty vengeance as God only can inflict.

The above Order of Council is very just and religious, and of excellent use and example: So much zeal cannot stop at a club or two of pernicious though private sinners; but doubtless extends to other criminals more publick and considerable, and even more destructive. The greatest part of the wickedness done by those thoughtless young wretches, is done to themselves, and like to remain with them; there being little probability that they will ever make many proselytes to their astonishing frenzies: Whereas the other great criminals, for the sole sake of doing good to themselves, have undone almost every man in England, with England itself into the bargain. They set three nations to sale; and themselves fixing the price, were themselves the buyers: They purchased our happiness, and paid us in want and sorrow. Every good man is proof against the contagion of profaneness; but virtue and goodness stood us in no stead against our money-monsters, who, having robbed all honest men, made a jest of honesty itself. Can there be greater evils under the sun, than rampant plunderers, abandoned corruption, and devouring calamity? Or are there any other evils which these do not produce?

We therefore take it for granted, that

as his Majesty is determined to shew all marks of displeasure and discouragement to any who may even lie under the suspicion of such destructive practices; so he will always account it the most substantial service that we can do to him and his government, to exert ourselves in discovering any who are guilty of such unparalleled frauds, such national wickedness; that they may be openly prosecuted, and punished with the utmost severity, and most publick ignominy, that the legislature can inflict.

And,

as his Majesty has been pleased to give orders to the principal officers of his household, to make strict and diligent enquiry, whether any of his Majesty's servants are guilty of the horrid impieties mentioned in the Order of Council inserted above, and to make report thereof to his Majesty:

So we may assure ourselves, that the same severe enquiry has been already made, whether any of those in trust under his Majesty, or about his person, have stained their hands, dishonoured their master, and provoked Almighty God, by promoting or embarking in any of the horrid and spreading mischiefs practised last year by the late South-Sea directors, and

their confederates.

An enquiry into religion, and the private morals of men, is not inconsistent with an enquiry into civil and publick villainies; nor can the former ever prove a bone of contention to divert the latter, whatever the wicked and the guilty may hope, and the honest and distressed may apprehend. Fresh objects of horror and aversion cannot lessen our general detestation for those who ought to be beyond all others detested. While we pursue wolves and tigers, and the mightier beasts of prey, who, if they be not destroyed, will continue to destroy, we are not to be diverted by the scent of a fox or badger, though they may annoy a private neighbourhood, and dispeople hen-roosts.

Our publick virtue is the best and surest proof that we can give of our private piety: Piety and justice are inseparable; and prayers said ten times a day, will not atone for a murder or a robbery committed once a month: Appearances go for nothing, when facts contradict them. The readiest way therefore to shew that our hearts are pure, is to shew that our hands are clean, and that we will punish those that have foul ones.

Here is a test of our virtue and innocence!

Let us hang up publick rogues, as well as punish private blasphemers. The observance of religion, and the neglect of justice, are contradictions. Let any man ask himself, whether a nation is more hurt by a few giddy, unthinking, young wretches, talking madly in their drink; or by open, deliberate, and publick depredations committed by a junto of veteran knaves, who add to the injury, and to their own guilt, by a shew of gravity, and a canting pretence to religion? The late directors all pretended to be good Christians. I would ask one question more; namely, whether it had not been better for England, that the late directors, and their masters, had spent their nights and their days in the Hell Fire Club, than in contriving and executing execrable schemes to ruin England? Pray, which of the two is your greater enemy, he who robs you of all that you have, but neither curses nor swears at you; or he who only curses you or himself, and takes nothing from you?

Where justice is exactly observed, religion will be observed; and to pretend to be very strict about the latter, without minding the former, would be highly absurd and ridiculous. Virtue necessarily produces religion, and is itself religion; and profaneness and irreligion will ever and necessarily follow corruption, the prolifick parent of numberless mischiefs.

Private profaneness is not therefore half so terrible to human society, as publick roguery and publick robbery. The happiness of mankind is surely the cause of God; and whenever I hear of arrests and edicts made by popish and tyrannical foreign princes, in favour of religion; I consider them as so many mockeries of God, whose creatures they, at the same time, grind and destroy. As consistently might they pretend great zeal for observing religiously the sixth command, and yet murder by war and famine ten thousand of their subjects a week.

James Naylor was severely punished for blasphemy; is there any comparison, as to their effects, between the crime of James Naylor, and the crimes of the late directors, their seconds, and abettors? James Naylor (being himself deluded) misled a few ignorant people, whose error was their greatest crime: But our modern impostors, our South-Sea deceivers have actually and wilfully plundered their country of near thirty millions of money, and involved it in universal confusion and want.

It is therefore a sensible pleasure to us, to behold his Majesty and his ministry engaged with so much zeal in vindicating our property, as well as our religion. His Majesty, in particular, has condescended, with unparalleled, I am sure uncommon, goodness, to tell the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, that *he has no share in the late wicked management*. This is a piece of royal grace, with which, I believe, never any subjects were blessed before. From hence we may draw a fresh assurance of his Majesty's alacrity and readiness to punish the execrable authors of that wicked management, who are also the greatest enemies to his crown and dignity.

His Majesty being resolved to make use of all the authority committed to him by Almighty God, to punish such enormous offenders, and to crush such shocking impieties, before they increase and draw down the vengeance of God upon this nation:

I say, his Majesty being thus zealous for religion and the nation, will never suffer the authors of the greatest evil, the highest villainy ever committed in this nation, to escape unpunished. Has ever a heavier judgment befallen our nation, than the last year's merciless rapine? And can there be greater enemies to God and man, than the authors of it? Monsters who were for plucking up all virtue and all property by the roots. Oh, that their success had not increased their guilt! They acted as if they did not believe that there was a God who judged the world, and as if they defied all human tribunals, as well as the divine. These are the atheists terrible to society; this is the atheism woefully and universally felt. Desolation and misery are the occupation and sport of devils, and they their vicegerents who promote them.

He who talks profanely of things sacred, is a wicked man, and as ill bred as he is wicked: But he who wantonly fills a country, a glorious and happy country, with want, woe, and sorrow; what name, what torture, what death, does he not deserve? He is a destroyer-general: He is a mad dog, with ten thousand mouths, who scatters poison, wounds, and death all around him.

I shall conclude in the strong words of the above Order of Council; namely, that as we value the blessing of Almighty God, as we regard the happiness of our country, which cannot subsist, if things sacred and virtuous (and such are private property, publick faith, and publick justice) are trampled upon; and as we tender his Majesty's favour, to which we cannot recommend ourselves more effectually, than by shewing the utmost zeal upon so important an occasion: I say, as we value all these, let us be warm, bold, and active in the discovery and punishment of such enormous offenders; and to crush such shocking mischiefs, before they increase and draw down the vengeance of God upon this nation.

G

I am, &c.

P.S. I, who hate to see the punishment of any sort of great wickedness linger, do here propose an expedient to come at a certainty about the blasphemous clubs: [*] Let a reward be publickly offered for the discovery of any of their members, to be paid upon their legal conviction; and, in the mean time, let us not cast random reproaches upon particular men; lest, by falling upon the innocent, they return double upon ourselves. It is base and dishonest to feign crimes that are not; and where they really are, it is barbarous and diabolical to father them upon the guiltless: He who charges upon another a crime that deserves the gallows,

does, if it prove false, pronounce sentence against himself, and proclaim his own right to Tyburn: As, on the other hand, he who screens from the gallows those that deserve it, adopts their title to the halter, and ought to swing in their room.

Can there be greater justice and impartiality than this? And I assure you, Sir, I heartily wish that they may take place.

No. 30. SATURDAY, May 20, 1721.

An excellent Letter from Brutus to Atticus; with an explanatory Introduction. [Gordon] ↪

[I-227]

SIR,

I send you another excellent letter of the great Brutus. They who say that I forged the last, make me as great a compliment as ever was made to man; since whoever could write that letter, is, without reflecting on my contemporaries, certainly the greatest man of the age.

To the former letter I gave you an historical introduction; I shall give you another to this, and own myself obliged for it to Monsieur Soreau.

Brutus and Cassius, after the death of Caesar, having left Rome, Octavius, Caesar's nephew, arrived there: He was no more than nineteen years old; and the first thing of note that happened to him, was a quarrel with Mark Anthony, who treated him like a child, with contempt, and indeed was grown insupportable to all the world. Cicero and Anthony being then declared enemies, Octavius was persuaded by his friends to throw himself into the arms of Cicero. Hence began their friendship, equally desirable to both: Cicero governed the Senate, and Octavius had the hearts of his uncle's soldiers, with great treasure to gain new friends, and carry on new designs. Mark Anthony was the common enemy of both, and of the Republick, which he as outrageously attacked, as Cicero warmly defended.

This quarrel gave occasion to those orations of Cicero, called philippicks; which are eternal monuments of his love for his country, as well as of the marvelous eloquence of that great man.

Cicero and Octavius succeeded; they got the better of Mark Anthony, and drove him out of Rome. But, by his interest and activity, he soon gathered such a force, as he thought sufficient to make himself master of Rome; which therefore he prepared to attack and possess by downright violence. But Octavius having levied, at his own expence, an army, composed mostly of the veteran troops of Caesar, opposed the march of Anthony, and diverted that dreadful storm from the city. Cicero, who had undertaken the defence of Octavius from his first arrival at Rome, and laboured to fortify his cause by the authority of the Senate, was not wanting to extol this first service of Octavius for the Republick. Hence extraordinary honours were decreed him; that he should be made proprætor, and in that quality commander of the army; that a recompence should be given to his troops; that he should be received into the number of the Senators; that he might, before he came of age, demand all the other greatest dignities of the commonwealth; and even that a statue should be erected to him.

In the mean time Anthony, thus repulsed by Octavius, marched into Cisalpine Gaul, to drive from thence Decimus Brutus, its governor, a kinsman of our Brutus, and one of the tyrannicides. That governor, being unprovided of forces sufficient to fight Anthony, retired into the city of Modena, a Roman colony; and there shutting himself up, expected succour from the Senate. Anthony in the interim laid siege to the place, in hopes that being once master of that city, he would soon be so of Gaul, and afterwards be enabled to return into Italy, with a power sufficient to conquer Rome, where he meant to erect a dominion as absolute as was that of Caesar.

That siege occasioned fresh meetings of the Senate; where, in fine, Mark Anthony was declared an enemy to the commonwealth; and both the consuls, Hirtius and Pansa, were sent with an army to relieve Decimus Brutus: With the consuls, Octavius was likewise sent.

During all these transactions, our Brutus and Cassius having staid some time in Italy, after their leaving Rome, were now retired to their governments, Brutus to Macedonia, and Cassius to Syria; and both were levying men, and forming armies, for the defence of the commonwealth.

As to Cicero, he was now in the zenith of power, and governed all things at Rome: He particularly presided in the Senate, as the most antient consular, during the absence of the two consuls. In this situation he was wonderfully curious to know what was the opinion of Brutus concerning himself and his administration. It is certain that Brutus had his highest esteem; and he thought that if he could procure the esteem of Brutus, it would be an eminent proof of his own virtue and merit, as well as the most glorious reward of that virtue and merit. Brutus had, in all his letters, been very silent with him upon this head. Cicero therefore makes use of Atticus, their common friend, to sift Brutus, and know his sentiments. As soon, therefore, as it was known at Rome, that the siege of Modena was raised, and Anthony defeated by the two consuls and Octavius, Atticus dispatched the news to Brutus, and in his letter sounded him about his thoughts of Cicero.

The following letter is a frank and open answer to that of Atticus. In it he justly condemns Cicero's over violent hatred to Mark Anthony, which betrayed him into as unreasonable an affection and deference for Octavius, his champion against Anthony. Cicero saw his error at last, but saw it too late; the power and credit to which he had raised Octavius, cost him his life, and Rome her liberty. Cicero, who was the author of all the greatness and authority of Octavius, was by Octavius given up to the rage and sword of Mark Anthony, against whom Octavius had been generously defended and supported by Cicero: And Octavius enslaved the commonwealth with those very arms, which the commonwealth had trusted with him for her protection. So early had the pious Augustus learned the arts and gratitude of an absolute monarch!

G

I am, &c.

BRUTUS TO ATTICUS

“You tell me, that Cicero wonders why, in any of my letters, I have never discovered to him my sentiments concerning his management and administration at Rome; I therefore discover those sentiments to you, since you are so earnest to know them.

“I know well the sincerity and great uprightness of Cicero's intentions: His passion for the good of the commonwealth is indeed evident and remarkable. But prudent and wise as he is, he has given proofs of a zeal which is imprudent, and a heart that is vain: I leave it to you to judge, which of these swayed him, when, more forward than well advised, he drew upon himself the hatred of so terrible a foe as Mark Anthony. This he meant for the good of the commonwealth; but it has had a contrary effect, since by it, instead of bridling, as he proposed, the dangerous power of Octavius, he has further animated his ambition, and raised his aims. Besides, such is the fatal complaisance of Cicero for that man, that he cannot help speaking of myself and the patriots of my country, with severe and bitter language; which,

however, returns double upon himself: If we have put one man to death, he has put many. We killed Caesar, and he the associates of Catiline. If therefore Casca, who gave Caesar the first blow, be a murderer, as Cicero, to please Octavius, calls him; Cicero himself is one, and must confess himself one, and his great enemy Bestia is justified in calling him so.

“How! because we have not the Ides of March, in which we dispatched Caesar, eternally in our mouths, as Cicero has the Nones of December, in which he suppressed the conspiracy of Catiline, and which he is for ever celebrating upon all occasions; does he take advantage of our modesty and his own vanity, and find from hence more reason to blame a glorious deed done by us for mankind, than Clodius and Bestia had to condemn, as they always did, his own severe conduct when he was consul?

“Cicero every where boasts, that he sustained the war against Anthony; yet no body ever saw Cicero out of a gown, and words were his weapons. But let it be so, that he has defeated Anthony; where is the victory, if, curing one mischief, it introduce a worse? And what avails it to have extinguished the tyranny of Anthony, if he who has done it erect another in its room more terrible, by being more durable? And yet thus will it be if we suffer it. These are articles in the conduct of Cicero, which shew that it is not the tyrant nor the tyranny that he fears; but it is only Anthony that he fears. If a man will have a tyrant, it is all one to me, whether he be more or less outrageous; it is the thing, it is the having a tyrant, which I dread.

“That Cicero is hastening to set up a tyrant, is plain, from actions as visible as sad. Octavius is all in all; a triumph is decreed him; his troops have largesses given them; he is loaded with flatteries, he is covered with honours. What shame for Cicero, to behold all this, and his own abject posture! His publick behaviour, and the speeches and motions which he makes in the Senate, all centering in his master; are they not a scandal to the great figure of that great consular, and a stain upon the renowned name of Cicero?

“You will read this with pain, as with pain I write it; but it is a task which you have put upon me. Besides, I know your thoughts of our publick affairs, and that desperate and extraordinary as they are, you think that, contrary to all appearance, they may be remedied by means that are ordinary. I do not however blame you, my dear Atticus; comfort yourself with hope; it is agreeable to your age, to the sweetness of your temper, and to your regard for your children: I do not therefore wonder that you are indolent and sanguine; which disposition of yours appears still farther to me, from the account which my friend Flavius gave me of what passed between you and him.

“But to return to Cicero: Pray where is the difference between him and the servile Salvidenus? Could that base retainer to Octavius struggle for the glory of his master with more labour and zeal than does Cicero? You will say, perhaps, that Cicero dreads still the remains of the civil war. This is wild: Can any one dread a beaten enemy, and yet apprehend nothing from the formidable power of one who commands a great army, elevated by victory? nor from the rashness of a young man, who may conquer the commonwealth by the means which enabled him to conquer for it? Does Cicero therefore make this mighty court to Octavius, because, having given him so much, he thinks it dangerous not to give him all! Oh the wretched folly of cowardice! thus to lessen your own security by consulting it; and to increase tyranny because you fear it! Is it not better to have nothing at all to fear, than thus to compound for the degrees of fear?

“The truth is, we too much dread poverty, banishment, and death; and our imagination swells their terrors beyond bounds. There are greater evils than these; and Cicero is mistaken if he thinks that there are not. And yet all goes well with him, if he be but humoured, if his opinion be regarded, if his suits be granted; if he be courted and extolled: He has no quarrel to servitude, provided it be accompanied with honour and lustre; if there can be any such thing as honour and lustre in this lowest, this vilest lot of human nature.

“Octavius may indeed call him Father Cicero, refer every thing to his counsel, sooth him with praises, and shew great gratitude and fondness towards him, while he loses nothing by all this, which is only a fair outside and fine words. Facts speak the plainest truth, and they effectually contradict the above appearances. For, can there be a greater insult upon common-sense, than for Octavius to take for a father that man who is no longer in the number of freemen?

“Whither then tend all these compliances, all this zeal of Cicero for Octavius? Why, only to this; that Octavius may be propitious to Cicero. In this little, worthless, shameful point center all the actions and designs of the great Cicero! Hence it is that I value no longer, in the person of Cicero, those arts and accomplishments with which, doubtless, his soul is vastly replenished. What is he the better, himself, for so many excellent precepts, so many noble discourses, every where found in his works, concerning publick liberty, true and solid glory, the contempt of death, exile, and want? How much better does Philippus understand all those fine rules laid down by Cicero, than Cicero himself does, who pays more homage to Octavius than Philippus, who is father-in-law to Octavius, pays?

“Let Cicero therefore cease glorying thus vainly in our grief, which also ought to be his: For, to repeat what I have already said, what advantage can we draw from a victory, which only translates the pernicious power of Mark Anthony to a new usurper? And yet, by your letter, I perceive that it is still a doubt whether Mark Anthony be entirely defeated.

“After all, since Cicero can live a dependant and a slave, let him live a dependant and a slave. It ought not to be otherwise, if he can thus shamefully forget his reverend age, the illustrious honours which he has borne, and the memorable parts which he has performed.

“For myself, while I live, I will make war upon tyranny; that is, upon all exorbitant power that lifts men above the laws: Nor can any condition of servitude, however advantageous and alluring, divert me from this great, this worthy purpose: Nor could Anthony shake it, though he really were, what you say he is, a man of worth; a character which contradicts my constant opinion of him. The judgment and spirit of our ancestors are mine; they would not have their father for their tyrant, nor would I.

“All this openness to you is the result of my affection for you; nor could I have said so much, had I not loved you as well as Cicero thinks he is beloved by Octavius. That all these sad truths affect not you so much as they do me, is my concern; especially since to an eminent fondness for all your friends, you have added a particular fondness for Cicero. As to myself, I beg you to believe that my affection for him is still the same, though my esteem of him is greatly abated: Nor can I help it, it being impossible to judge ill or well of men and things, but according as they appear ill or well. . . .”

No. 31. SATURDAY, May 27, 1721.

Considerations on the Weakness and Inconsistencies of human Nature. [Gordon] ↗

[I-237]

SIR,

The study of human nature has, ever since I could study any thing, been a principal pleasure and employment of mine; a study as useful, as the discoveries made by it are for the most part melancholy. It cannot but be irksome to a good-natured man, to find that there is nothing so terrible or mischievous, but human nature is capable of it; and yet he who knows little of human nature, will never know much of the affairs of the world, which every where derive their motion and situation from the humours and passions of men.

It shews the violent bent of human nature to evil, that even the Christian religion has not been able to tame the restless appetites of men, always pushing them into enormities and violences, in direct opposition to the spirit and declarations of the gospel, which commands us to *do unto all men what we would have all men do unto us*. The general practice of the world is an open contradiction and contempt of this excellent, this divine rule; which alone, were it observed, would restore honesty and happiness to mankind, who, in their present state of corruption, are for ever dealing treacherously or outrageously with one another, out of an ill-judging fondness for themselves.

Nay, the peaceable, the beneficent, the forgiving Christian religion, is made the cause of perpetual hatred, animosity, quarrels, violence, devastation, and oppression; and the apostles, in spite of all their poverty, disinterestedness, and love of mankind, are made to justify their pretended successors of the Church of Rome, in engrossing to themselves the wealth and power of the earth; and in bringing mankind under a yoke of servitude, more terrible, more expensive, and more severe, than all the arts and delusions of paganism could ever bring them under: Of so much more force with the corrupt world are the destructive villainies and falsifications of men, than the benevolent and heavenly precepts of Jesus Christ.

The truth is, and it is a melancholy truth, that where human laws do not tie men's hands from wickedness, religion too seldom does; and the most certain security which we have against violence, is the security of the laws. Hence it is, that the making of laws supposes all men naturally wicked; and the surest mark of virtue is, the observation of laws that are virtuous: If therefore we would look for virtue in a nation, we must look for it in the nature of government; the name and model of their religion being no certain symptom nor cause of their virtue. The Italians profess the Christian religion, and the Turks are all infidels; are the Italians therefore more virtuous than the Turks? I believe no body will say that they are; at least those of them that live under absolute princes: On the contrary, it is certain, that as the subjects of the Great Turk are not more miserable than those of the Pope, so neither are they more wicked.

Of all the passions which belong to human nature, self-love is the strongest, and the root of all the rest; or, rather, all the different passions are only several names for the several operations of self-love. Self-love, says the Duke of Rochefoucauld, is the love of one's self, and of every thing else for one's own sake: It makes a man the idolater of himself, and the

tyrant of others. He observes, that man is a mixture of contrarities; imperious and supple, sincere and false, fearful and bold, merciful and cruel: He can sacrifice every pleasure to the getting of riches, and all his riches to a pleasure: He is fond of his preservation, and yet sometimes eager after his own destruction: He can flatter those whom he hates, destroy those whom he loves.

This is a picture of mankind; and they who say it is a false one, ought to shew that they deserve a better. I have sometimes thought, that it was scarce possible to assert any thing concerning mankind, be it ever so good, or ever so evil, but it will prove true. They are naturally innocent, yet fall naturally into the practice of vice; the greatest instances of virtue and villainy are to be found in one and the same person; and perhaps one and the same motive produces both. The observance or non-observance of a few frivolous customs shall unite them in strict friendship and confederacy, or set them cutting one another's throats.

They never regard one another as men and rational beings, and upon the foot of their common humanity; but are cemented or divided by the force of words and habits. Considerations that are a disgrace to reason! The not being born in the same climate, or on this side such a river, or such a mountain, or the not wearing the like garments, or uttering the like sounds, or having the same thoughts or taste, are all so many causes of intense hatred, sometimes of mortal war. Whatever men think or do, especially if they have found a good name for it, be it ever so foolish or bad, is wisest and best in their own eyes: But this is not all; we will needs be plaguing our neighbours, if they do not quit upon our authority their own thoughts and practices for ours.

It fills me with concern, when I consider how men use one another; and how wretchedly their passions are employed: They scarce ever have proper objects for their passions; they will hate a man for what he cannot help, and what does them no harm; yet bless and pray for villains, that kill and oppress them. There never was such a dreadful tribunal under the sun as the Inquisition: A tribunal, against which the most innocent is not safe, to which the most virtuous men are most exposed; a tribunal, where all the malice, all the sagacious cruelty, all the bitterness, and all the fury and falsehood of devils are exerted, and all the tortures of hell are imitated and practised; yet this very tribunal is so dear to the people, though it terrifies them, enslaves them, and destroys them, that rather than part with it, they would part with all that is left them. Upon the surrender of Barcelona, in the late war, the inhabitants capitulated, that the Inquisition should not be taken from them: And even here in England, we may remember the time when men have been knocked down for saying that they had a right to defend their property by force, when a tyrant attempted to rob them of it against law. To such a pitch of stupidity and distraction are people to be brought by those who belie Almighty God, and falsify his word to satiate worldly pride; and such dupes and furies are men to one another!

Every thing is so perverted and abused, and the best things most, that a very wise man had but too much reason to say, that truth did not so much good in the world, as the appearance and pretence of it did evil. Thus the saving of men's souls is so universally understood to be a great and glorious blessing, that for the sake of it men have suffered, and do suffer, the highest misery and bondage from the impostors who pretend to bestow it, in the dark parts of the world, which are by far the greatest parts of the world. And thus civil government is the defence and security of human society; yet Dr. Prideaux makes it a doubt, whether the benefit which the world receives from government be sufficient to make amends for the calamities which it suffers from the follies, mistakes, and mal-administration of those

that manage it. And thus to come home to ourselves, a project to pay off the nation's debts was so tempting; so popular and plausible, that almost every body came into it; and yet—the consequences speak themselves.

The Roman Senate could flatter and adore a Nero and a Caligula; the Roman soldiers could butcher a Piso and a Pertinax: It is hard to say which were the most guilty, the Senate while they worshipped tyranny, or the army while they destroyed virtue. So prone are men to propagate publick destruction for personal advantages and security! I can never think without horror and trembling upon that dismal, that bloody maxim of Philip II of Spain, that he would rather be master of a kingdom ruined, miserable, and quiet; than of a kingdom rich, powerful, and turbulent. In pursuance of this maxim, he made his kingdom a desert, by destroying and expelling the most industrious of its inhabitants, the Moors: But Philip was very devout, and would frequently wash a pilgrim's feet; that is, he was very civil and charitable to an idle religious stroller, and a cruel enemy to the general happiness of mankind.

This puts me in mind of the history of John Basilowitz, Great Duke of Muscovy:

No history of his time but speaks of the unheard-of cruelties exercised by him on all sorts of persons through his whole reign: They are so horrid, that never any tyrant did the like; and yet Bishop Paulus Jovius gives him the character of a good and devout Christian, though he deserves not to be numbered even amongst men: It is true, he would go often to church, say the service himself, sing, and be present at ecclesiastical ceremonies, and execute the functions of the monks: but he abused both God and man, and had no sentiments of humanity. *Ambassadors Travels*, p. 73, 74.

What a medley is here of devotion and cruelty in the same men! Nor are these examples singular. Louis XI of France was a false, a wicked, and an oppressive prince, and one of the greatest bigots that ever lived; and some of the greatest saints in the Roman calendar were pernicious villains, and bloody monsters. No sect of bigots, when they are uppermost, are willing to tolerate another; and all ground their ungodly severity upon their zeal for religion; though their want of charity is a demonstration that they have no religion. It is certain, that without universal charity and forbearance, a man cannot be a Christian.

It is wonderful and affecting, to behold how the ideas of good and evil are confounded! The Turks place great devotion in releasing captive birds from their cages, in feeding indigent and mangey dogs, and building hospitals for them, and in paying a religious reverence to camels: But at the same time that they thus use birds and beasts like men and Christians, they use men and Christians worse than they do beasts; and with them it is a lighter offence to deny bread to a poor Christian, who is famished in his chains, than to the dogs of the street, which are fit for nothing but to breed infection. They will load a poor Christian with irons, cover him with stripes, and think that they do well and religiously in it; yet make it a matter of conscience not to overload a beast of burden.

In popish countries, in cases where nature is left to itself, as much compassion is shewn for the distressed as in other places: Even thieves, robbers, and murderers, are accompanied to the gallows or the wheel with sighs and tears; especially of the tender sex: But when an unhappy innocent is going to be burned, to be cruelly and slowly burned, for his sincerity and piety in speaking truth, and reading the Bible himself, or teaching it to others; nothing is to be seen but a general joy, nor to be heard but loud cries of approbation and consent; and all piety, all sympathy, is denied in an instance which calls for the highest. Tell a Spanish lady of

a popish priest hanged in England for sedition or murder, she instantly falls into tears and agonies: Tell her of a kinsman of hers burned for denying transubstantiation, she gives glory to God, and feels a sensible joy.

And, in Protestant countries, how many men are there, who cheat, starve, and oppress all their life long, to leave an estate at their death to religious uses? As if men were to be rogues for God's sake. I have heard of a man, who having given half of his estate to mend highways, for the good of his country, said, that he would willingly give the other half, that England had never aship, nor a merchant, nor a dissenter from the Church, belonging to it. Strange inconsistency! By one act of his, two or three miles of causeway were kept in good repair, which was only a kindness to horses' hoofs; by another act of his, he would have made all England miserable and desolate!

The hardships and distresses of this year shew too manifestly the rogueries and depredations of the last: Villainy was let loose amongst us, and every man endeavoured to entrap and ruin another, to enrich himself. Honesty was brow-beaten and driven into corners; humanity was extinguished; all friendship was abolished; and even the distinction of kindred and ties of blood were discarded: A raging passion for immoderate gain had made men universally and intensely hard-hearted: They were every where devouring one another. And yet the directors and their accomplices, who were the acting instruments of all this outrageous madness and mischief, set up for wonderfully pious persons, while they were defying Almighty God, and plundering men; and they set apart a fund of subscriptions for charitable uses: That is, they mercilessly made a whole people beggars, and charitably supported a few necessitous and worthless favourites. I doubt not, but if the villainy had gone on with success, they would have had their names handed down to posterity with encomiums; as the names of other publick robbers have been! We have historians and ode-makers now living, very proper for such a task. It is certain, that most people did, at one time, believe the directors to be great and worthy persons: And an honest country clergyman told me last summer, upon the road, that Sir John was an excellent publick-spirited person, for that he had beautified his chancel.

Upon the whole, we must not judge of one another by our fair pretensions and best actions; since the worst men do some good, and all men make fine professions: But we must judge of men by the whole of their conduct, and the effects of it. Thorough honesty requires great and long proof; since many a man, long thought honest, has at length proved a knave. And it is from judging without proof, or too little, of false proof, that mankind continue unhappy.

G

I am, &c.

[I-246]

SIR,

I design in this letter to lay before the town some thoughts upon libelling; a sort of writing that hurts particular persons, without doing good to the publick; and a sort of writing much complained of amongst us at this time, with great ground, but not more than is pretended.

A libel is not the less a libel for being true. This may seem a contradiction; but it is neither one in law, or in common sense: There are some truths not fit to be told; where, for example, the discovery of a small fault may do great mischief; or where the discovery of a great fault can do no good, there ought to be no discovery at all: And to make faults where there are none, is still worse.

But this doctrine only holds true as to private and personal failings; and it is quite otherwise when the crimes of men come to affect the publick. Nothing ought to be so dear to us as our country, and nothing ought to come in competition with its interests. Every crime against the publick is a great crime, though there be some greater than others. Ignorance and folly may be pleaded in alleviation of private offences; but when they come to be publick offences, they lose all benefit of such a plea: We are then no longer to consider only to what causes they are owing, but what evils they may produce; and here we shall readily find, that folly has overturned states, and private ignorance been the parent of publick confusion.

The exposing therefore of publick wickedness, as it is a duty which every man owes to truth and his country, can never be a libel in the nature of things; and they who call it so, make themselves no compliment. He who is affronted at the reading of the ten commandments, would make the decalogue a libel, if he durst; but he tempts us at the same time to form a judgment of his life and morals not at all to his advantage: Whoever calls publick and necessary truths, libels, does but apprise us of his own character, and arm us with caution against his designs. I doubt not but if the late directors had been above the Parliament, as they once thought themselves, they would have called the votes of the House of Commons against them, false and scandalous libels.

Machiavel says, Calumny is pernicious, but accusation beneficial, to a state; and he shews instances where states have suffered or perished for not having, or for neglecting, the power to accuse great men who were criminals, or thought to be so; and hence grew the temptation and custom of slandering and reviling, which was the only remedy that the people had left them: So that the evil of calumny was owing to the want of justice, and the people were more blameless than those whom they reviled; who, having forced them upon a licentiousness of speech, did very unkindly chide and punish them for using it. Slander is certainly a very base and mean thing: But surely it cannot be more pernicious to calumniate even good men, than not to be able to accuse ill ones.

I have long thought, that the world are very much mistaken in their idea and distinction of libels. It has been hitherto generally understood that there were no other libels but those against magistrates, and those against private men: Now, to me there seems to be a third sort of libels, full as destructive as any of the former can possibly be; I mean, libels against the people. It was otherwise at Athens and Rome; where, though particular men, and even great men, were often treated with much freedom and severity, when they deserved it; yet the people, the body of the people, were spoken of with the utmost regard and reverence: "The sacred privileges of the people," "The inviolable majesty of the people," "The awful authority of the people," and "The unappealable judgment of the people," were phrases common in these wise, great, and free cities. Other modes of speech are since grown fashionable, and popular madness is now almost proverbial: But this madness of theirs, whenever it happens, is derived from external causes. Oppression, they say, will make a wise man mad; and delusion has not less force: But where there are neither oppressors nor impostors, the judgment of the people in the business of property, the preservation of which is the principal business of government, does rarely err. Perhaps they are destitute of grimace, mystery, refinements, shrugs, dissimulation, and reserve, and the other accomplishments of courtiers: But as these are only masks to conceal the absence of honesty and sense, the people, who possess as they do the substance, have reason to despise such insipid and contemptible shadows.

Machiavel, in the chapter where he proves that a multitude is wiser and more constant than a prince, complains, that the credit which the people should be in declines daily; for, says he, every man has liberty to speak what he pleases against them; but against a prince no man can talk without a thousand apprehensions and dangers. I have indeed often wondered, that the inveighing against the interest of the people, and calling their liberties in question, as has been and is commonly done among us by old knaves and young fools, has never been made an express crime.

I must own, I know not what treason is, if sapping and betraying the liberties of a people be not treason, in the eternal and original nature of things. Let it be remembered for whose sake government is, or could be, appointed; then let it be considered, who are more to be regarded, the governors or the governed. They indeed owe one another mutual duties; but if there be any transgressions committed, the side that is most obliged ought doubtless to bear the most: And yet it is so far otherwise, that almost all over the earth, the people, for one injury that they do their governors, receive ten thousand from them: Nay, in some countries, it is made death and damnation, not to bear all the oppressions and cruelties, which men made wanton by power inflict upon those that gave it them.

The truth is; if the people are suffered to keep their own, it is the most that they desire: But even this is a happiness which in few places falls to their lot; they are frequently robbed by those whom they pay to protect them. I know that it is a general charge against the people, that they are turbulent, restless, fickle, and unruly: Than which there can be nothing more untrue; for they are only so where they are made so. As to their being fickle, it is so false, that, on the contrary, they have almost ever a strong bent to received customs, and as strong a partiality to names and families that they have been used to: And as to their being turbulent, it is as false; since there is scarce an example in an hundred years of any people's giving governors any uneasiness, till their governors had made them uneasy: Nay, for the most part, they bear many evils without returning one, and seldom throw off their burdens so long as they can stand under them.

But intending to handle this subject more at large in another letter, I return more directly to the business of libels.

As to libels against government, like all others, they are always base and unlawful, and often mischievous; especially when governments are impudently charged with actions and designs of which they are not guilty. It is certain, that we ought not to enter into the private vices or weaknesses of governors, any further than their private vices enter into their publick administration; and when they do, it will be impossible to stop people's mouths: They will be provoked, and shew that they are so, in spite of art and threats, if they suffer hardships and woe from the private gratifications of their superiors, from whom they have a right to expect ease and happiness; and if they be disappointed, they will be apt to deal very freely with their characters.

In truth, most libels are purely personal; they fly at men rather than things; which proceeding is as injudicious as it is unmanly. It is mean to be quarrelling with faces, names, and private pleasures; things perfectly indifferent to the world, or things out of a man's own power; and 'tis silly, as it shews those whom we attack, that we attack them not for what they do, but for what they are: And this is to provoke them without mending them. All this therefore is libelling; an offence against which the laws of almost every country, and particularly of our own, have furnished a remedy in proportion to the consequence and quality of the person offended. And it is as just that reputation should be defended by law, as that property should.

The praise of well-doing is the highest reward that worthy and disinterested men aim at, and it is villainous and ungrateful to rob them of it; and those that do it, are libellers and slanderers. On the other hand, while censure and infamy attend evil-doers, it will be some restraint, if not upon them, yet upon others, from following their example: But if men be ever suffered to do what they please without hearing of it, or being accountable for it; liberty and law will be lost, though their names may remain. And whether acting wickedly with impunity, or speaking falsely with impunity, be likely to do most hurt to human society and the peace of the world, I leave all the world to judge: common equity says, that they both ought to be punished, though not both alike.

All libels, the higher they aim, the more malignity they acquire; and therefore when they strike at the person of the prince, the measure of their guilt is complete. The office of a prince is to defend his people and their properties; an excellent and a painful office; which, where it is executed with honesty and diligence, deserves the highest applause and reward; and whoever vilifies and traduces him, is an enemy to society and to mankind, and will be punished with the consent of all who love either. And yet it is scarce possible, in a free country, to punish by a general law any libel so much as it deserves; since such a law, consisting of so many branches, and being of such vast latitude, would make all writing whatsoever, how innocent soever, and even all speaking, unsafe. Hence it is, that in Turkey, though printing were permitted, it would be of no use, because no body would dare to make any use of it.

As long as there are such things as printing and writing, there will be libels: It is an evil arising out of a much greater good. And as to those who are for locking up the press, because it produces monsters, they ought to consider that so do the sun and the Nile; and that it is something better for the world to bear some particular inconveniencies arising from general blessings, than to be wholly deprived of fire and water.

Of all sorts of libels, scurrilous ones are certainly the most harmless and contemptible: Even truth suffers by ill-manners; and ill-manners prevent the effect of lies. The letter in the *Saturday's Post* of the 27th past does, I think, exceed all the scurrilities which I have either heard, or seen, from the press or the pulpit. The author of it must surely be mad: he talks as if distraction were in his head, and a firebrand in his hand; and nothing can be more false, than the insinuations which he makes, and the ugly resemblances which he would draw. The paper is a heap of falsehood and treason, delivered in the style and spirit of billingsgate; and indeed most of the enemies to his Majesty's person, title, and government, have got the faculty of writing and talking, as if they had their education in that quarter.

However, as bad as that letter is (and, I think, there cannot be a worse), occasion will never be taken from scurrilous and traitorous writing, to destroy the end of writing. We know that in all times there have been men lying upon the watch to stifle liberty, under a pretence of suppressing libels; like the late King James, who, having occasion for an army to suppress Monmouth's Rebellion, would needs keep it up afterwards; because, forsooth, other rebellions might happen, for which he was resolved to give cause.

I must own, that I would rather many libels should escape, than the liberty of the press should be infringed; yet no man in England thinks worse of libels than I do; especially of such as bid open defiance to the present Protestant establishment.

Corrupt men, who have given occasion for reproach, by their base and dark practices with the late directors, being afraid of truths that affect them from the press, may be desirous of shutting it up: But honest men, with clear reputations, which they know foul mouths cannot hurt, will always be for preserving it open, as a sure sign of liberty, and a cause of it.

The best way to escape the virulence of libels, is not to deserve them; but as innocence itself is not secure against the malignity of evil tongues, it is also necessary to punish them. However, it does not follow that the press is to be sunk, for the errors of the press. No body was ever yet so ridiculous to propose a law for restraining people from travelling upon the highway, because some who used the highway committed robberies.

It is commonly said, that no nation in the world would allow such papers to come abroad as England suffers; which is only saying, that no nation in the world enjoys the *liberty* which England enjoys. In countries where there is no liberty, there can be no ill effects of it. No body is punished at Constantinople for libelling: Nor is there any distinction there between the liberty of the press, and the licentiousness of the press; a distinction ever to be observed by honest men and freemen.

G

I am, &c.

Cautions against the natural Encroachments of Power. [Gordon] ↪

[I-255]

SIR,

Considering what sort of a creature man is, it is scarce possible to put him under too many restraints, when he is possessed of great power: He may possibly use it well; but they act most prudently, who, supposing that he would use it ill, inclose him within certain bounds, and make it terrible to him to exceed them.

Men that are above all fear, soon grow above all shame. *Rupto pudore & metu, suo tantum ingenio utebatur*, says Tacitus of Tiberius. Even Nero had lived a great while inoffensively, and reigned virtuously: But finding at last that he might do what he would, he let loose his appetite for blood, and committed such mighty, such monstrous, such unnatural slaughters and outrages, as none but a heart bent on the study of cruelty could have devised. The good counsels of Seneca and Burrhus were, for some time, checks upon his wolfish nature; and doubtless he apprehended, that if he made direct and downright war upon his people, they would use resistance and make reprisals: But discovering, by degrees, that they would bear any thing, and his soldiers would execute every thing, he grew into an open defiance with mankind, and daily and wantonly wallowed in their blood. Having no other rival, he seemed to rival himself, and every day's wickedness was blacker than another.

Yet Nero was not the worst of all men: There have been thousands as bad as he, and only wanted the same opportunity to shew it. And there actually have been many princes in the world who have shed more blood, and done more mischief to mankind, than Nero did. I could instance in a late one, who destroyed more lives than ever Nero destroyed, perhaps an hundred to one. It makes no difference, that Nero committed butcheries out of cruelty, and the other only for his glory: However the world may be deceived by the change of names into an abhorrence of the one, and an admiration of the other; it is all one to a nation, when they are to be slaughtered, whether they be slaughtered by the hangman or by dragoons, in prison or in the field; nor is ambition better than cruelty, when it begets mischief as great.

It is nothing strange, that men, who think themselves unaccountable, should act unaccountably, and that all men would be unaccountable if they could: Even those who have done nothing to displease, do not know but some time or other they may; and no man cares to be at the entire mercy of another. Hence it is, that if every man had his will, all men would exercise dominion, and no man would suffer it. It is therefore owing more to the necessities of men, than to their inclinations, that they have put themselves under the restraint of laws, and appointed certain persons, called magistrates, to execute them; otherwise they would never be executed, scarce any man having such a degree of virtue as willingly to execute the laws upon himself; but, on the contrary, most men thinking them a grievance, when they come to meddle with themselves and their property. *Suarum legum auctor & eversor*, was the character of Pompey: He made laws when they suited his occasions, and broke them when they thwarted his will. And it is the character of almost every man possessed of Pompey's power: They intend them for a security to themselves, and for a terror to others. This shews the distrust that men have of men; and this made a great philosopher call the state of nature, a

state of war; which definition is true in a restrained sense, since human societies and human laws are the effect of necessity and experience: Whereas were all men left to the boundless liberty which they claim from nature, every man would be interfering and quarrelling with another; every man would be plundering the acquisitions of another; the labour of one man would be the property of another; weakness would be the prey of force; and one man's industry would be the cause of another man's idleness.

Hence grew the necessity of government; which was the mutual contract of a number of men, agreeing upon certain terms of union and society, and putting themselves under penalties, if they violated these terms, which were called laws, and put into the hands of one or more men to execute. And thus men quitted part of their natural liberty to acquire civil security. But frequently the remedy proved worse than the disease; and human society had often noenemies so great as their own magistrates; who, where-ever they were trusted with too much power, always abused it, and grew mischievous to those who made them what they were. Rome, while she was free (that is, while she kept her magistrates within due bounds) could defend herself against all the world, and conquer it: But being enslaved (that is, her magistrates having broke their bounds) she could not defend herself against her own single tyrants, nor could they defend her against her foreign foes and invaders; for by their madness and cruelties they had destroyed her virtue and spirit, and exhausted her strength. This shews that those magistrates that are at absolute defiance with a nation, either cannot subsist long, or will not suffer the nation to subsist long; and that mighty traitors, rather than fall themselves, will pull down their country.

What a dreadful spirit must that man possess, who can put a private appetite in balance against the universal good of his country, and of mankind! Alexander and Caesar were that sort of men; they would set the world on fire, and spill its blood, rather than not govern it. Caligula knew that he was hated, and deserved to be hated; but it did not mend him. *Oderint dum metuant*, was his by-word: All that the monster aimed at, was to be great and terrible. Most of these tyrants died as became them; and, as they had reigned, by violence: But that did not mend their successors, who generally earned the fate of those that went before them, before they were warm in their place. *Invenit etiam aemulos infelix nequitia: Quid si floreat vigeatque?* "If unfortunate villainy thus finds rivals, what shall we say, when it exalts its head and prospers?"

There is no evil under the sun but what is to be dreaded from men, who may do what they please with impunity: They seldom or never stop at certain degrees of mischief when they have power to go farther; but hurry on from wickedness to wickedness, as far and as fast as human malice can prompt human power. *Ubi semel recto deerratam est, in praeceps perventur—a rectis in vitia, a vitiis in prava, a pravis in praecipitia*, says a Roman historian; who in this speaks the truth, though in other instances he tells many lies; I mean that base flatterer of power, Velleius Paterculus. So that when we see any great mischief committed with safety, we may justly apprehend mischiefs still greater.

The world is governed by men, and men by their passions; which, being boundless and insatiable, are always terrible when they are not controuled. Who was ever satiated with riches, or surfeited with power, or tired with honours? There is a tradition concerning Alexander, that having penetrated to the Eastern Ocean, and ravaged as much of this world as he knew, he wept that there was never another world for him to conquer. This, whether true or no, shews the spirit of the man, and indeed of human nature, whose appetites are infinite.

People are ruined by their ignorance of human nature; which ignorance leads them to credulity, and too great a confidence in particular men. They fondly imagine that he, who, possessing a great deal by their favour, owes them great gratitude, and all good offices, will therefore return their kindness: But, alas! how often are they mistaken in their favourites and trustees; who, the more they have given them, are often the more incited to take all, and to return destruction for generous usage. The common people generally think that great men have great minds, and scorn base actions; which judgment is so false, that the basest and worst of all actions have been done by great men: Perhaps they have not picked private pockets, but they have done worse; they have often disturbed, deceived, and pillaged the world: And he who is capable of the highest mischief, is capable of the meanest: He who plunders a country of a million of money, would in suitable circumstances steal a silver spoon; and a conqueror, who steals and pillages a kingdom, would, in an humbler fortune, rifle a portmanteau, or rob an orchard.

Political jealousy, therefore, in the people, is a necessary and laudable passion. But in a chief magistrate, a jealousy of his people is not so justifiable, their ambition being only to preserve themselves; whereas it is natural for power to be striving to enlarge itself, and to be encroaching upon those that have none. The most laudable jealousy of a magistrate is to be jealous *for* his people; which will shew that he loves them, and has used them well: But to be jealous *of* them, would denote that he has evil designs against them, and has used them ill. The people's jealousy tends to preserve liberty; and the prince's to destroy it. Venice is a glorious instance of the former, and so is England; and all nations who have lost their liberty, are melancholy proofs of the latter.

Power is naturally active, vigilant, and distrustful; which qualities in it push it upon all means and expedients to fortify itself, and upon destroying all opposition, and even all seeds of opposition, and make it restless as long as any thing stands in its way. It would do what it pleases, and have no check. Now, because liberty chastises and shortens power, therefore power would extinguish liberty; and consequently liberty has too much cause to be exceeding jealous, and always upon her defence. Power has many advantages over her; it has generally numerous guards, many creatures, and much treasure; besides, it has more craft and experience, less honesty and innocence: And whereas power can, and for the most part does, subsist where liberty is not, liberty cannot subsist without power; so that she has, as it were, the enemy always at her gates.

Some have said, that magistrates being accountable to none but God, ought to know no other restraint. But this reasoning is as frivolous as it is wicked; for no good man cares how many punishments and penalties lie in his way to an offence which he does not intend to commit: A man who does not mean to commit murder, is not sorry that murder is punished with death. And as to wicked men, their being accountable to God, whom they do not fear, is no security to use against their folly and malice; and to say that we ought to have no security against them, is to insult common sense, and give the lie to the first law of nature, that of self-preservation. Human reason says, that there is no obedience, no regard due to those rulers, who govern by no rule but their lust. Such men are no rulers; they are outlaws; who, being at defiance with God and man, are protected by no law of God, or of reason. By what precept, moral or divine, are we forbid to kill a wolf, or burn an infected ship? Is it unlawful to prevent wickedness and misery, and to resist the authors of them? Are crimes sanctified by their greatness? And is he who robs a country, and murders ten thousand, less a criminal, than he who steals single guineas, and takes away single lives? Is there any sin in preventing, and restraining, or resisting the greatest sin that can be committed, that of oppressing and

destroying mankind by wholesale? Sure there never were such open, such shameless, such selfish impostors, as the advocates for lawless power! It is a damnable sin to oppress them; yet it is a damnable sin to oppose them when they oppress, or gain by oppression of others! When they are hurt themselves ever so little, or but think themselves hurt, they are the loudest of all men in their complaints, and the most outrageous in their behaviour: But when others are plundered, oppressed, and butchered, complaints are sedition; and to seek redress, is damnation. Is not this to be the authors of all wickedness and falsehood?

To conclude: Power, without control, appertains to God alone; and no man ought to be trusted with what no man is equal to. In truth there are so many passions, and inconsistencies, and so much selfishness, belonging to human nature, that we can scarce be too much upon our guard against each other. The only security which we can have that men will be honest, is to make it their interest to be honest; and the best defence which we can have against their being knaves, is to make it terrible to them to be knaves. As there are many men wicked in some stations, who would be innocent in others; the best way is to make wickedness unsafe in any station.

I am, &c.,

P. S. This letter is the sequel of that upon human nature; and both are intended for an introduction to a paper which I intend to write upon the restraints which all wise nations put upon their magistrates.

G

The End of the First Volume.

Endnotes to Volume 1

- [*] Taunton in Somersetshire.
- [*] He was one of the commissioners of the forfeited estates in Ireland in the reign of King William.
- [*] This letter was written in October 1720.
- [*] This was said to have been spoken by a certain Lord Chancellor in former times.
- [*] A cant word, known to mean an hundred thousand pounds.
- [*] The Peerage Bill.
- [*]

—*Nunc uberiore rapina*
Peccat in urbe manus.

Claud.

- [*] Upon the strictest enquiry, it could not be discovered that any such clubs ever existed, except in common fame and the above Order of Council.