

JOHN TRENCHARD AND THOMAS
GORDON,
*Cato's Letters: or, Essays on Liberty, Civil
and Religious, and Other Important
Subjects. Volume 2 (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.

V O L. II.

The SIXTH EDITION, corrected.



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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

Table of Contents for [Volume II](#): June 24, 1721 to March 3, 1722

- [No. 34. SATURDAY, June 24, 1721. Of Flattery. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 3
- [No. 35. SATURDAY, July 1, 1721. Of publick Spirit. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 11
- [No. 36. SATURDAY, July 8, 1721. Of Loyalty. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 18
- [No. 37. SATURDAY, July 15, 1721. Character of a good and of an evil Magistrate. quoted from Algernon Sidney, Esq. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 28
- [No. 38. SATURDAY, July 22, 1721. The Right and Capacity of the People to judge of Government. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 34
- [No. 39. SATURDAY, July 29, 1721. Of the Passions; that they are all alike good or all alike evil, according as they are applied. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 43
- [No. 40. SATURDAY, August 5, 1721. Considerations on the restless and selfish Spirit of Man. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 50
- [No. 41. SATURDAY, August 19, 1721. The Emperor Galba's Speech to Piso, with an Introduction. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 56
- [No. 42. SATURDAY, August 26, 1721. Considerations on the Nature of Laws. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 64
- [No. 43. SATURDAY, September 2, 1721. The natural Passion of Men for Superiority. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 71
- [No. 44. SATURDAY, September 9, 1721. Men not ruled by Principle, but by Passion. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 44
- [No. 45. SATURDAY, September 16, 1721. Of the Equality and Inequality of Men. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 85
- [No. 46. SATURDAY, September 23, 1721. Of the false Guises which Men put on, and their ill Effect. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 91
- [No. 47. SATURDAY, October 7, 1721. Of the Frailty and Uncertainty of human Judgment. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 97
- [No. 48. SATURDAY, October 14, 1721. The general unhappy State of the World, from the Baseness and Iniquity of its Governors in most Countries. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 104
- [No. 49. SATURDAY, October 21, 1721. Of the Power of Prejudice. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 112
- [No. 50. SATURDAY, October 28, 1721. An Idea of the Turkish Government, taken from Sir Paul Ricaut. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 120
- [No. 51. SATURDAY, November 4, 1721. Popularity no Proof of Merit. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 128
- [No. 52. SATURDAY, November II, 1721. Of Divine Judgments; the Wickedness and Absurdity of applying them to Men and Events. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 135
- [No. 53. SATURDAY, November 18, 1721. Dr. Prideaux's Reasoning about the Death of Cambyses, examined; whether the same was a Judgment for his killing the Egyptian God Apis. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 144
- [No. 54. SATURDAY, November 25, 1721. The Reasoning of Dr. Prideaux about the Fate of Brennus the Gaul, and of his Followers, examined; whether the same was a Judgment for an Intention to plunder the Temple of Delphos. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 152
- [No. 55. SATURDAY, December 2, 1721. The Lawfulness of killing Julius Caesar considered, and defended, against Dr. Prideaux. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 165
- [No. 56. SATURDAY, December 9, 1721. A Vindication of Brutus, for having killed Caesar. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 177
- [No. 57. SATURDAY, December 16, 1721. Of false Honour, publick and private. \[Gordon\]](#) p. 192

- [No. 58. SATURDAY, December 23, 1721. Letter from a Lady, with an Answer, about Love, Marriage, and Settlements. \(A Woman, Trenchard, and Gordon\) p. 201](#)
 - [No. 59. SATURDAY, December 30, 1721. Liberty proved to be the unalienable Right of all Mankind. \[Trenchard\] p. 214](#)
 - [No. 60. SATURDAY, January 6, 1722. All Government proved to be instituted by Men, and only to intend the general Good of Men. \[Trenchard\] p. 226](#)
 - [No. 61. SATURDAY, January 13, 1722. How free Governments are to be framed so as to last, and how they differ from such as are arbitrary. \[Trenchard\] p. 236](#)
 - [No. 62. SATURDAY, January 20, 1722. An Enquiry into the Nature and Extent of Liberty: with its Loveliness and Advantages, and the vile Effects of Slavery. \[Gordon\] p. 244](#)
 - [No. 63. SATURDAY, January 27, 1722. Civil Liberty produces all Civil Blessings, and how; with the baneful Nature of Tyranny. \[Gordon\] p. 257](#)
 - [No. 64. SATURDAY, February 3, 1722. Trade and Naval Power the Offspring of Civil Liberty only, and cannot subsist without it. \[Trenchard\] p. 267](#)
 - [No. 65. SATURDAY, February 10, 1722. Military Virtue produced and supported by Civil Liberty only. \[Gordon\] p. 278](#)
 - [No. 66. SATURDAY, February 17, 1722. Arbitrary Government proved incompatible with true Religion, whether Natural or Revealed. \[Gordon\] p. 292](#)
 - [No. 67. SATURDAY, February 24, 1722. Arts and Sciences the Effects of Civil Liberty only, and ever destroyed or oppressed by Tyranny. \[Gordon\] p. 305](#)
 - [No. 68. SATURDAY, March 3, 1722. Property and Commerce secure in a free Government only; with the consuming Miseries under simple Monarchies. \[Gordon\] p. 321](#)
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CATO'S LETTERS.

VOL. II.

[June 24, 1721 to March 3, 1722]

No. 34. SATURDAY, June 24, 1721.

Of Flattery. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[II-3]

SIR,

Flattery is a poisonous and pernicious weed, which grows and prevails every where, but most where it does most harm; I mean in courts. If few dare speak the truth to their superiors, how shall he who has no superiors ever come to know the truth? Perhaps there never was an instance in the world, where a prince was told the sincere truth in every thing which concerned him to know, by any servant of his. Truth is of a plain, unalterable nature, and cannot be moulded into fashionable shapes; truth is therefore unfit to be a courtier: But falsehood, being the creature of the imagination, is capable of bearing all modish and pleasing forms; falsehood is therefore an agreeable guest in palaces. To illustrate this, endless examples might be brought; but unfortunate princes are the most pregnant examples. Galba, when he had lost all, and nothing remained to him but his life, which he was also soon to lose, had not one about him to tell him his condition and danger; so cruelly dishonest were his servants! Their flattery prevented the means of his preservation. They therefore were the first murderers of their master.

Nothing more is necessary in order to be flattered, than to be uppermost. Galba was hated for his avarice, and despised for his age and severity; yet, in compliance to an emperor, multitudes of people, and particularly of senators and gentlemen, addressed him to put Otho to death, and to banish all his accomplices: And a rumour being spread, that Otho was slain, the same set of flatterers ran to the palace with noisy congratulations, and deceitfully complained that fate had snatched the usurper from their vengeance.

What marks were here of loyalty to Galba's person, and of zeal and firmness to his interest! yet in so small a space as two hours after, Otho's power having prevailed in Rome, Otho had their hearts and their acclamations in his turn, and Galba's death was demanded of him with the same importunity that the death of Otho had been demanded of Galba, and by the same men.

A melancholy lesson of the vile fraudulency of flatterers, and of the blindness of princes who trust in them! Even Galba, who was thought proof against flatterers (*adversus blandientes incorruptus*) was deceived by them.

The Sieur Amelot de la Houssaye, from whom many of these observations are taken, says truly, that most princes are better armed against fear than against flattery: Terrors animate them, and threats whet their courage; but flattery softens their minds, and corrupts their manners; it makes them negligent and idle, and forget their duty. *Corrupta mens assiduis adulationibus*, says Tacitus of Domitian. Besides, mistaking flattery for complaisance (which is a sign of affection) they think that those who flatter them love them, and from that delusion come to trust and employ their most dangerous enemies. He further says, that Philip II of Spain was wont to interrupt those who went about to flatter him, by saying to them roundly, "Cease trifling, and tell me what it concerns me to know": Words worthy of all princes, who are never entertained by their flatterers but with things useless or pernicious. If princes never heard any thing but what they ought to know, they would never hear flatterers.

Flattery is a false and selfish thing, begot only by fear or favour; and having itself only in view, it observes no rule of equity or merit, but praises and calumniates, just according as men are exalted or depressed. Mezeray tells us, that as long as Henry III of France built magnificent monasteries, and plunged himself into monkish devotions, ill-becoming his dignity, the monks revered him as a saint, and called him one: But no sooner was the religious and seditious League formed against him, but these godly ingrates loaded him with all the reproaches and ill names that they could devise; tyrant, hypocrite, murderer, and abominable, were the titles which they gave him; and at last they butchered him as a heretick: So easily can flatterers make one and the same man a god or devil; and so true is it that flatterers love no man, and only court the fortunes of men. Flattery is venal, and always goes to the best bidder; and it is servile, and always crouches most to those who are uppermost, let them be what they will: *Adulationi foedum crimen servitutis inest*. Most of the evil that princes commit, comes from the lessons and compliance of flatterers; and to such most princes have owed their ruin: Few princes would have done what many of them did, if their false friends had not told them that they might do what they would: We have had many instances of this at home, and there have been more abroad. It would be a great advantage to princes, if they would remember that there never was a prince in the world but was flattered, and never a prince but was hurt by flattery, and many utterly undone by it. It has made good princes bad, and bad worse: By flattery they have been brought to think themselves more than men, and to act worse than brutes; and, in fine, to live and die as beasts of prey live and die, in blood. Their flatterers having made them worse than men, adored them like gods: But, as Pliny says, *principum exitus docuit ne a diis quidem amari nisi quos homines ament*.

Their business is to tell their great patron what pleases him, though it destroy him; and when they have deprived him of all his friends, his innocence, his felicity, and his possessions, they leave him too; or having ruined his fortune, they take away his life, which is their last and best civility: For flattery ends ever in ingratitude, and often in treason; and for princes to be often distressed by those whom they have obliged most, is nothing new.

Flattery is always great in proportion as its patrons are bad. And therefore Pliny observes, that those emperors who were most hated, were likewise most flattered: For he says, "that dissimulation is more ingenious and artful than sincerity, slavery than liberty, fear than love." Hence flattery is a sign of servitude, and inconsistent with equality, and with liberty, the offspring of equality. It is indeed one of the purposes of flattery to make men worse; it gains

by corruption, and lives upon credulity, folly, and vice. It is particularly at perpetual enmity with truth; and flatterers are like liars, not to be believed even when they speak truth. I have somewhere heard flatterers compared to thieves, who break into houses by night; the first thing that they do, is to extinguish the lights: So flatterers, when they have beset a prince, or any other great man, never fail to keep far from him all light and information.

Flattery is cruel, and gives bloody counsels; and flatterers are constant and merciless calumniators: Every word which they do not like, is a libel; every action that displeases them, is treason or sedition: Where there are no faults, they create them. The crimes objected to the honest and excellent Thrasea Petus, were such as these:

That he had never applauded Nero, nor encouraged others to applaud him; that when the Senate were running into all the extravagancies of flattery, he would not be present, and therefore had not been in it for three years; that he had never sacrificed for Nero's charming voice; that he would never own Madam Poppaea for a goddess, she who had been Nero's mistress, and was then his wife; that he would not vote that a gentleman who had made satirical verses upon Nero should be put to death, though he condemned the man and his libel; but he contended that no law made the offence capital; that they could not, without scandal, and the imputation of cruelty, punish with death, an offence for which the laws had already provided a punishment that was milder.

These were the honourable and virtuous crimes of that great and good man; but they were then high treason, and cost him his life. Memorable are the words of Philip de Comines, speaking of court flatterers:

If a six-penny tax be to be raised, they cry it ought by all means to be a twelve-penny one. If the prince be offended with any man, they are directly for hanging him. In other instances, they maintain the same character. Above all things, they advise their master to make himself terrible; as they themselves are proud, fierce, and overbearing, in hopes to be dreaded by that means, as if authority and place were their inheritance.

As all honest truths affect such men, whatever is said against ill men, they construe to be said against them: And even when they are praised, they cry they are abused, and that such praise is rank irony. Now all this is very impolitick: Good men neither fear libels, nor suspect applauses to be ironies. Pliny says justly to Trajan,

When I speak of your humanity, liberality, frugality, clemency, vigilance, &c. I have no apprehension that your Majesty will think yourself reproached with the contrary vices.

But it was not so in some preceding reigns, when virtue was dangerous, truth capital, and every book that contained either was burnt, and its author put to death: By which violent and unjust proceedings, they hoped to shut up for ever people's mouths, to abolish the liberty of the Senate, and utterly to extinguish the memories of good men. Not satisfied with killing the authors, they exercised their rage upon their works, and appointed a junto called *Triumviri*, to destroy the fruits of the greatest geniuses by fire.

I have scarce ever heard of a more gross or ingenious piece of flattery, than that of Vitellius to Caligula, upon the following occasion: That mad emperor had taken it into his head to be a god, and thought he might debauch some of the she-deities, as well as he had his sisters; he therefore asked Vitellius this question, "Pray, Vitellius," says he, "have you never seen me embrace the Moon?" "*O Sir,*" says the parasite, "*that is a mystery which none but a god, such as your Majesty, ought to reveal.*" Vitellius was one of those, *quibus principum honesta atque inhonesta laudare mos est; who praise every thing that their prince does, whether good or bad.* Flattery therefore is never at the height, till liberty and virtue are utterly lost; and with the loss of liberty, shame and honour are lost. Tacitus, who never mentions the woes of his country without seeming to feel them, talking of Sejanus, who having got the whole administration into his hands, was now the chief idol at Rome, makes M. Terentius, say with indignation,

We worshipped his manumised slaves, and prostituted ourselves to his former footmen; and to be acquainted with his porter, was a mighty honour.

As flatterers make tyrants, tyrants make flatterers; neither is it possible that any prince could be a tyrant without them: He must have servile hands to execute his will, servile mouths to approve it. It was with great fear that Nero ordered the murder of his mother, though he had wicked counsellors enough to advise and applaud it; and when he had done it, he was thunder-struck and distracted with apprehensions of the consequences: But finding flattery from all hands, instead of resentment from any, he grew outrageously abandoned, and plunged into all licentiousness and infamy: Had it not been for flatterers, the middle and end of his reign might have been as good as the beginning, than which there was scarce ever a better.

I have said enough to shew the vileness and mischief of flattery; a vice which has finally ruined many nations, and many princes, and one time or other hurt all. Let us be thankful that we are not at the cruel mercy of flatterers, and have a prince who we firmly believe will never be led or perverted by them; we hope that he will never have bad counsel given him, and would reject it, if it were: We know his honest purposes, and great moderation; and confess with gratitude, that during his whole reign no outrages have been committed upon the lives and fortunes of any of his subjects; and that the protection of the law has been as strong and extensive, as ever it was, or ought to be. I could say more, but I stop here; for the greatest honour that can be done a prince, is, to suppose him above flattery, and to avoid for his sake the appearance of it, when we speak to him, or of him.

G

I am, &c.

No. 35. SATURDAY, July 1, 1721.

Of publick Spirit. [Gordon] ↩

[II-11]

SIR,

The love of one's country, or publick spirit, is a phrase in every body's mouth, but it seldom goes deeper; it is talked of with out being felt: Some mention it without having any ideas at all of it, but only as a fine thing which every body likes, and a good quality which one would not seem to be without.

Others, when they name it, intend only some poor and selfish gratification of their own: Thus with great men, it is wealth and empire, to do what they list, and to get what they can; which is direct faction, or promoting, under colour of the publick, those views which are inconsistent with it. Thus with the trader and artificer, it is the encouraging only that sort of art or ware in which he himself deals; and this is monopoly and engrossing, ever mischievous to the publick.

In popish countries, it is publick spirit to build and beautify many churches, at the expense of the poor people; who must also maintain, at a further expense, a long band of luxurious ecclesiasticks, to play tricks in them; or, in other words, to keep the heads and pockets of their deluded hearers as empty as they can. It is moreover great publick spirit, to adorn an old skull with pearl and diamonds, and to enrich a venerable rotten tooth with gold and emeralds, of a value sufficient to maintain a city and all its inhabitants, who yet perhaps are starved by doing it. It is likewise very publick-spirited there, for a man to starve his family and his posterity, to endow a monastery, and to feed, or rather gorge, a fraternity of reverend gluttons, professed foes to truth and peace, and to the prosperity of the world; idlers, maintained to gormandize and deceive. This, forsooth, is publick spirit; to rob the country of its hands, to rear up a pernicious and turbulent mob of drones, in principles destructive of liberty, and to bring up enemies to a country at its own charges.

In arbitrary countries, it is publick spirit to be blind slaves to the blind will of the prince, and to slaughter or be slaughtered for him at his pleasure: But in Protestant free countries, publick spirit is another thing; it is to combat force and delusion; it is to reconcile the true interests of the governed and governors; it is to expose impostors, and to resist oppressors; it is to maintain the people in liberty, plenty, ease, and security.

This is publick spirit; which contains in it every laudable passion, and takes in parents, kindred, friends, neighbours, and every thing dear to mankind; it is the highest virtue, and contains in it almost all others; steadfastness to good purposes, fidelity to one's trust, resolution in difficulties, defiance of danger, contempt of death, and impartial benevolence to all mankind. It is a passion to promote universal good, with personal pain, loss, and peril: It is one man's care for many, and the concern of every man for all.

Consider this picture, O ye great patriots and guardians of the earth, and try if you resemble it! Whom have ye exalted for his own merits, whom cast down for the sake of your country? What advantages have you acquired to your nation, with loss to yourselves? And have you people's losses never been your gains?

Out of England these questions cannot well be answered; nor could they in England formerly.

If my character of publick spirit be thought too heroick, at least for the living generation, who are indeed but babes in that virtue; I will readily own, that every man has a right and a call to provide for himself, to attend upon his own affairs, and to study his own happiness. All that I contend for is, that this duty of a man to himself be performed subsequently to the general welfare, and consistently with it. The affairs of all should be minded preferably to the affairs of one, as every man is ready to own when his own particular is embarked with the whole; as indeed every man's will prove to be sooner or later, though for a while some may thrive upon the publick ruins, but their fate seldom fails to meet them at last, them or their posterity.

It is a favourable sign of publick spirit, though not a certain sign, when the interest and reputation of men rise and increase together; and there is policy and wisdom in it. He who acquires money in spite of fame, pays dear for his avarice, while it returns him hatred and curses, as well as gold; and to be rich and detested, is to me no pleasing character. The same holds true in regard to ambition, and every other passion, which breaks its bounds, and makes a captive of its owner. It is scarce possible to be a rogue and be beloved; and when men are arrived to an insensibility of popular censure and opinion concerning their honesty and dishonesty, it is a sign that they are at defiance with the community where they live, and that the rest ought to be upon their guard against them; they do as it were cut themselves off from the society, and teach the people what to call them.

It is true, that great ill men never fail to have great court paid to their fortunes; which court their own self-love always construes to be paid to their persons: But there is a way to undeceive them, and it often happens; let them but sink into meanness, and they will soon find themselves sunk into contempt, which is the end of hatred when the object of hatred diminishes.

There is a sort of men found almost every where, who having got a set of gainful and favourite speculations, are always ready to spread and enforce them, and call their doing so *publick spirit*, though it often turns the world topsy-turvy: Like the mad monk at Heidelberg, who was for knocking every man on the head who did not like Rhenish wine, which it seems was his beloved liquor; perhaps he thought it was as reasonable to make all the world swallow Rhenish, as to make them swallow transubstantiation.

Opinions, bare opinions, signify no more to the world, than do the several tastes of men; and all mankind must be made of one complexion, of one size, and of one age, before they can be all made of the same mind. Those patrons therefore of dry dreams, who do mischief to the world to make it better, are the pests and distressers of mankind, and shut themselves out from all pretence to the love of their country: Strange men! They would force all men into an absolute certainty about absolute uncertainties and contradictions; they would ascertain ambiguities, without removing them; and plague and punish men for having but five senses.

I would assert another proposition, as true as the last, though it may seem stranger; namely, that the taking a thousand or ten thousand pounds a year for the merit of helping to draw a hundred times as much from the people, is not publick spirit, whatever use may call it; and to grasp at all, and put a whole country in two or three pockets, is a sort of publick spirit, which I hope in God never to see, though there have been nations who have sorrowfully felt it.

As liberty can never subsist without equality, nor equality be long preserved without an agrarian law, or something like it; so when men's riches are become immeasurably or surprizingly great, a people, who regard their own security, ought to make a strict enquiry how they come by them, and oblige them to take down their own size, for fear of terrifying the community, or mastering it. In every country, and under every government, particular men may be too rich.

If the Romans had well observed the agrarian law, by which the extent of every citizen's estate was ascertained, some citizens could never have risen so high as they did above others; and consequently, one man would never have been set above the rest, and have established, as Caesar did at last, a tyranny in that great and glorious state. I have always thought, that an enquiry into men's fortunes, especially monstrous fortunes raised out of the publick, like Milton's infernal palace, as it were in an instant, was of more importance to a nation, than some other enquiries which I have heard of.

But, will some say, is it a crime to be rich? Yes, certainly, at the publick expense, or to the danger of the publick. A man may be too rich for a subject; even the revenues of kings may be too large. It is one of the effects of arbitrary power, that the prince has too much, and the people too little; and such inequality may be the cause too of arbitrary power. It is as astonishing as it is melancholy, to travel through a whole country, as one may through many in Europe, grasping under endless imposts, groaning under dragoons and poverty, and all to make a wanton and luxurious court, filled for the most with the worst and vilest of all men. Good God! What hard-heartedness and barbarity, to starve perhaps half a province, to make a gay garden! And yet sometimes even this gross wickedness is called publick spirit, because forsooth a few workmen and labourers are maintained out of the bread and the blood of half a million.

In those countries, were the judgment of the people consulted, things would go better: But they are despised, and esteemed by their governors happy enough, if they do not eat grass; and having no representatives, or share in the government, they have no remedy. Such indeed is their misery, that their case would be greatly mended, if they could change conditions with the beasts of the field; for then, being destined to be eaten, they would be better fed: Such a misfortune is it to them that their governors are not cannibals! Oh happy Britain, mayest thou continue ever so!

For a conclusion: As the preservation of property is the source of national happiness; whoever violates property, or lessens or endangers it, common sense says, that he is an enemy to his country; and publick spirit says, that he should feel its vengeance. As yet in England, we can speak such bold truths; and we never dread to see the day, when it will be safer for one man to be a traitor, than for another man, or for a whole people, to call him so. Where-ever publick spirit is found dangerous, she will soon be seen dead.

G.

I am, &c.

No. 36. SATURDAY, July 8, 1721.

Of Loyalty. [Gordon] ↻

[II-18]

SIR,

Loyalty is a very good word; but, like most others, being wrested first by design, and afterwards by ignorance and custom, from its original and virtuous signification, does now frequently bear a very bad one. In an honest sense, indeed in common sense, it means no more than the squaring our actions by the rules of good laws, and an attachment to a constitution supported by such: And the French word *loyauté*, comes from another French word, which signifies law.

Other meanings have since been fathered upon that word, such as it abhors. To bear stupidly the wild or deliberate ill acts of a tyrant, overturning all law, and to assist him in it, has been impiously called *loyalty*; though it was all the while on the other side: As it is the very office and genius of loyalty to defend law, virtue, and property; and to pull down, as traitors and disloyalists, all who assault them.

Whoever is lawless, is disloyal; and to boast of loyalty to disloyalty, is strange nonsense; a paradox first invented by solemn and pernicious pedants, whose trade it is to pervert the use of words and the meaning of things, to abuse and confound the human understanding, and to mislead the world into misery and darkness.

To obey a prince, who does himself obey the laws, is confessed on all hands to be loyalty: Now, from hence, one would naturally think, that, by every rule of reason, it might be inferred, that to obey one who obeys no law, is a departure from all loyalty, and an outrage committed upon it; and that both he who commands, and he who obeys, are outlaws and disloyalists: And yet these same ungodly pedants shall maintain it to your face, that though loyalty consist in obeying a good prince, it also consists in the very contrary, and in obeying a wicked prince; who, though he be an enemy to God, is the vicegerent of God; and though he commit all wickedness, yet does it by divine right; and though it be a sin to obey him, yet it is a damnable sin to resist him: In short, that all the instruments and partners of his crying crimes are loyalists; and all who defend law, virtue, and mankind, against such monsters, are rebels, and assuredly damned, for preventing or resisting actions which deserve damnation: And thus men become rebels, by acting virtuously against the worst of all rebels, who are restrained by no consideration, human or divine.

Was ever such impudence, impiety, and nonsense, broached amongst pagans? In truth, they never would have been broached amongst Christians, had not sanctity been made a cloak for those who sold godliness for gain, and propagated imposture at the price of all that was virtuous and sacred.

Disloyalty is indeed rarely the crime of subjects and private men; and they who charge it most upon others, are they who practice it most themselves. King Richard II and Edward II were the greatest rebels in England in their own time: The greatest rebel in all Italy, is the Pope. Every lawless prince is a rebel, and the Grand Seigneur is the greatest that is or can be in his own dominions. It is true, he is bound by no written law; but in this very thing he is a

rebel: No man ought to be exempt from the ties of laws; and the higher any man is, the more ties he ought to be under. All power ought to be balanced with equal restraints, else it will certainly grow mischievous: He who knows no law, but his own lust, seldom observes any other. Besides, there are such things as the external laws of mercy, justice, and truth, legible by every man's natural reason, when it is not blinded by craft; and whoever observes not these, let him be called by what name he will, is a rebel to all the world, and it is loyalty to all the world to pursue him to destruction.

Brutus, who expelled the royal and rebellious race of the Tarquins, was the most loyal man in Rome; and his sons, who would have restored them, were the greatest rebels in Rome: The Roman people therefore acted justly, when they rewarded the father with the chief magistracy; and the father acted justly, when he sacrificed the traitors of his own loins to the liberties and resentments of the Roman people.

Some play with the words *sovereign* and *subject*, and divert themselves with the ridicule of obedience resisting command: But their wit and reasoning are alike wretched, whether they proceed from ignorance or dishonesty, as they often do from both; as if the world were to be guided by sound rather than sense, in things essential to its well-being. The highest and first sovereignty is in the laws, of which the prince has only the sovereign execution: In other words, it is his office and duty to see the laws obeyed; an employment which implies their superiority, and his own subjection.

A learned prince, who knew not much of government, and practised less than he knew, did yet own, that a *King is only the chief servant of the state*. The law ought to be the measure of his power and actions, as much as of any private man's, and more; as his example is of greater influence, and as his opportunities and temptations to break them are greater than any private man's can be: And the only just reason that can be assigned why those crimes which are punished with death in a subject, have been often committed with impunity by a chief magistrate, was, because the station which he was in gave him such strength, and such a party, that to have punished him, the publick quiet must have been risked or shaken: And as to the inferior great traitors, the gain of their crimes and partners of their guilt protected them.

Exalted wickedness is the safest: I could name an English reign, in which, for above twenty years together, there scarce passed a week in which the prince did not venture his crown, and his ministers forfeit their heads. And yet not one of these forfeitures were exacted: So corrupt and wicked was the government, and so tame and acquiescing were the people! Indeed the people in every country deserve the best usage, and in almost all meet with the worst: Their lot is very hard and unequal: They often pay millions, not only in their own wrong, but frequently to strengthen the hands of their oppressors: And this they generally do, without so much as a tumult; yet for one of them to coin a silver sixpence, is death and confiscation.

These things are obvious; yet how little are they considered! It is safer for a great man to rob a country, than for a poor man to steal a loaf: But the wages of villainy protect villains, and justice is only blind where the object is naked. But these are only complaints, which, we hope, we Britons will never have cause to make.

We have been formerly stunned with the big word *prerogative*, by those who contend for unlimited loyalty: Men, who while they reserve to themselves a right to be the most turbulent of all subjects, would make all others the tamest and the blindest of all slaves. But what prerogative do they mean? I know no prerogative in the crown, which is not at the same time

a certain privilege of the people, for their sake granted, and for their sake to be exerted: And where a prerogative is claimed in opposition to the rights and interests of the people, so far a tyranny is claimed; tyranny being nothing else but the government of one man, or of a few men, over many, against their inclination and interest: And where prerogative is exercised more to the hurt than the good of the governed, it is no longer prerogative, but violence and usurpation; and therefore in England several prerogatives have from time to time been taken from the crown, because the crown had abused them.

A certain British king was wont to say, that so long as he could make bishops and judges, he would have what law and gospel he pleased. An impious and arbitrary saying, and a bold one coming from a prince of so mean a spirit, governing a brave and a free people, who were disgraced by his profuse and ridiculous reign, which is one of those that stain our annals. But for all the absurdity of his government, and the smallness of his soul, he found himself able, by the assistance of sycophants, to multiply and entail many evils upon these kingdoms. It is certain, that he and some of his posterity found such complaisant bishops and judges, that the religion and politicks of the court were generally the religion and politicks of Westminster-Hall, and of Henry VII's chapel: Absolute power in the crown was pleaded and granted in both those solemn places.

So wicked and merciless a thing is self-interest! Those grave men, who were by profession the guardians of truth and law, gave up both, to keep preferment, or to acquire it. How little are men to be trusted, and how little does religion bind them! They can break the strongest bands, violate the most awful oaths, and commit the most horrid, most extensive treacheries, for the vilest and most uncertain gratifications. I am therefore seldom surprized to hear of the most astonishing things and events, whether they be publick deprehdations and massacres, or private treacheries and parricides; having my mind constantly filled with examples that answer them, or exceed them, though perhaps they are not exactly of the same nature.

It is certain, that those judges, counsellors, and clergy, who have adjudged a dispensing and lawless power to kings, had, each of them, the guilt of a thousand private murderers upon their head: They, as it were, signed a dead-warrant for their country; and, as much as in them lay, made themselves the authors of universal barbarity, slavery, infamy, and wretchedness; and of every other evil and wickedness, which is produced by that great source of all evil and wickedness, arbitrary power.

Of this we are sure, that the least publick guilt is greater than the greatest private guilt: Let every man concerned in publick trust, every where, consider this, and examine his own heart: Every step which a publick man takes, every speech which he makes, and every vote which he gives, may affect millions. Whoever acts in a great station against his conscience, might perhaps with more innocence carry a dagger, and like Old Muley stab twenty men a day.

Now were these judges and counsellors above-mentioned, loyalists? Yes, doubtless, if there are such things as loyal traitors. For, even supposing loyalty centered wholly in the person of the prince, than which nothing can be more false; yet even here it loses its name, since it is doing him the highest unkindness, as it separates him from his people, and their hearts from him, and as it tempts him to evil, loads him with infamy and guilt, and lessens his security; in truth, such loyalty is perfidiousness and flattery, and has cost many princes their lives and their kingdoms.

No good prince will pretend that there is any loyalty due to him further than he himself is loyal to the law, and observant of his people, the makers of kings and of laws. If any man, misled by sound and delusion doubt this, let him consider what is the design of magistracy, and what the duty of magistrates; and if he has reason in him, he will find that his duty is only due to those who perform theirs; that protection and allegiance are reciprocal; that every man has a right to defend what no man has a right to take: That the divine right of kings, if they had it, can only warrant them in doing actions that are divine, and cannot protect them in cruelty, depredation, and oppression: That a divine right to act wickedly, is a contradiction and blasphemy, as it is *maledictio supremi numinis*, a reproach upon the Deity, as if he gave any man a commission to be a devil: That a King, in comparison with the universe, is not so much as a mayor of a town, in comparison with a kingdom; and that were Mr. Mayor called King, it would give him no new right; or, if a King were only called Mr. Mayor, it would not lessen nor abrogate his old jurisdiction: That they are both civil officers; and that an offence in the lesser is more pardonable than an offence in the greater: That the doctrines of unbroken hereditary right, and of blind obedience, are the flights and forgeries of flatterers, who belie heaven, and abuse men, to make their own court to power, and that not one of them will stand the trial himself: In fine, the government, honest and legal government, is *imperium legum non hominum*, the authority of law, and not of lust.

These are the principles upon which our government stands, the principles upon which every free government must stand; and that we Britons dare tell such truths, and publish such principles, is a glorious proof of our civil and religious freedom: They are truths which every Briton ought to know, even children and servants: They are eternal truths, that will remain for ever, though in too many countries they are dangerous, or useless, or little known: They are truths, to which we are beholden for the present succession, and the present mild administration; and they are the principles of English loyalty, as well as of English liberty.

Before I have done, I would take notice of another mistake very common concerning loyalty: It is indeed a trick, more than a mistake; I mean of those who would assert or rather create a sort of loyalty to ministers, and make every thing which they do not like an offence against their master.

How endless are the arts and instances of deceiving! Yet the stalest artifices are still new. The above is a method which bad ministers have ever taken, but which good ones want not: Innocent ministers will never prostitute the name and authority of the prince, to protect their own faults and mistakes; and every wise and indifferent man will be for preserving him from the imputation of the guilt and folly of his servants, who, whenever they are for thrusting in their master between themselves and the censure or odium of their own actions, do at once acknowledge that their own actions are evil, and that they would barbarously and ungratefully make a screen of their sovereign, and save themselves upon his ruin or disgrace.

What can be more vile, what more disloyal, than this! Yet who were louder in their prate about loyalty, than the worst ministers have ever been; even while they were weakening their master's hands, creating him enemies, and setting him at variance with his people? This is so true, that it has been sometimes impossible to love the prince without abhorring his servants, and to serve them without hurting or abusing him. Yet while they were very loyally undoing him, it was forsooth high disloyalty to resist or expose them. Whoever would recollect instances of this, need not go out of Europe, nor above forty years backwards: And for instances at home, as we can find no present ones, we fear none that are future.

No. 37. SATURDAY, July 15, 1721.

*Character of a good and of an evil Magistrate, quoted from Algernon Sidney, Esq.
[Gordon]*

[II-28]

SIR,

The following are the sentiments of Mr. Sidney: I know it is objected that he is a republican; and it is dishonestly suggested that I am a republican, because I commend him as an excellent writer, and have taken a passage or two out of him. In answer to this, I shall only take notice, that the passages which I take from him are not republican passages, unless virtue and truth be republicans: That Mr. Sidney's book, for the main of it, is eternally true, and agreeable to our own constitution, which is the best republick in the world, with a prince at the head of it: That our government is a thousand degrees nearer a-kin to a commonwealth (any sort of commonwealth now subsisting, or that ever did subsist in the world) than it is to absolute monarchy: That for myself, I hope in God never to see any other form of government in England than that which is now in England; and that if this be the style and spirit of a republican, I glory in it, as much as I despise those who take base methods to decry my writings, which are addressed to the common sense and experience of mankind. I hope that it is not yet made heresy in politicks, to assert that two and two make four.

G

“The good magistrate seeks the good of the people committed to his care, that he may perform the end of his institution: and knowing that chiefly to consist in justice and virtue, he endeavours to plant and propagate them; and by doing this he procures his own good, as well as that of the publick. He knows there is no safety where there is no strength, no strength without union, no union without justice, no justice where faith and truth in accomplishing publick and private engagements is wanting. This he perpetually inculcates; and thinks it a great part of his duty, by precept and example to educate the youth in a love of virtue and truth, that they may be seasoned with them, and filled with an abhorrence of vice and falsehood, before they attain that age which is exposed to the most violent temptations, and in which they may by their crimes bring the greatest mischiefs upon the publick. Me would do all this, though it were to his own prejudice. But as good actions always carry a reward with them, these contribute in a high measure to his advantage. By preferring the interest of the people before his own, he gains their affection, and all that is in their power comes with it; while he unites them to one another, he unites all to himself. In leading them to virtue, he increases their strength, and by that means provides for his own safety, glory, and power.

“On the other side, such as seek different ends must take different ways. When a magistrate fancies he is not made for the people, but the people for him; that he does not govern for them, but for himself; that the people live only to increase his glory, or to furnish matter for his pleasure; he does not enquire what he may do for them, but what he may draw from them: By this means he sets up an interest of profit, pleasure, or pomp in himself, repugnant to the good of the publick, for which he is made to be what he is. These contrary ends certainly divide the nation into parties; and while every one endeavours to advance that to which he is addicted, occasions of hatred, for injuries every day done, or thought to be

done, and received, must necessarily arise. This creates a most fierce and irreconcilable enmity; because the occasions are frequent, important, and universal, and the causes thought to be most just. The people think it to be the greatest of all crimes to convert that power to their hurt, which was instituted for their good; and that the injustice is aggravated by perjury and ingratitude, which comprehend all manner of ill; and the magistrate gives the name of sedition and rebellion to whatsoever they do for the preservation of themselves and their own rights. When men's spirits are thus prepared, a small matter sets them on fire; but if no accident happens to blow them into a flame, the course of justice is certainly interrupted, the publick affairs are neglected; and when any occasion, whether foreign or domestick, arises, in which the magistrate stands in need of the people's assistance, they whose affections are alienated, not only shew an unwillingness to serve him with their persons and estates, but fear that by delivering him from his distress, they strengthen their enemy, and enable him to oppress them; and he, fancying his will to be unjustly opposed, or his due more unjustly denied, is filled with a dislike of what he sees, and a fear of worse for the future. Whilst he endeavours to ease himself of the one, and to provide against the other, he usually increases the evils of both; and jealousies are on both sides multiplied. Every man knows that the governed are in a great measure under the power of the governor; but as no man, or number of men, is willingly subject to those that seek their ruin, such as fall into so great a misfortune, continue no longer under it than force, fear, or necessity may be able to oblige them. But such a necessity can hardly lie longer upon a great people, than till the evil be fully discovered and comprehended, and their virtue, strength, and power be united to expel it: The ill magistrate looks upon all things that may conduce to that end as so many preparatives to his ruin; and by the help of those who are of his party, will endeavour to prevent that union, and diminish that strength, virtue, power and courage, which he knows to be bent against him. And as truth, faithful dealing, and integrity of manners, are bonds of union, and helps to good, he will always, by tricks, artifices, cavils, and all means possible, endeavour to establish falsehood and dishonesty; whilst other emissaries and instruments of iniquity, by corrupting the youth, and such as can be brought to lewdness and debauchery, bring the people to such a pass, that they may neither care nor dare to vindicate their rights; and that those who would do it may so far suspect each other, as not to confer upon, much less to join in, any action tending to the publick deliverance.

“This distinguishes the good from the bad magistrate; the faithful from the unfaithful; and those that adhere to either, living in the same principle, must walk in the same ways. They who uphold the rightful power of a just magistracy, encourage virtue and justice, and teach men what they ought to do, suffer, or expect from others; they fix them upon principles of honesty, and generally advance every thing that tends to the increase of the valour, strength, greatness, and happiness of the nation, creating a good union among them, and bringing every man to an exact understanding of his own and the publick rights. On the other side he that would introduce an ill magistrate, make one evil who was good, or preserve him in the administration of injustice when he is corrupted, must always open the way for him by vitiating the people, corrupting their manners, destroying the validity of oaths, teaching such evasions, equivocations, and frauds, as are inconsistent with the thoughts that become men of virtue and courage; and overthrowing the confidence they ought to have in each other, make it impossible for them to unite amongst themselves. The like arts must be used with the magistrate: He cannot be for their turns, till he is persuaded to believe he has no dependence upon, and owes no duty to, the people; that he is of himself, and not by their institution; that no man ought to enquire into, nor be judge of, his actions; that all obedience is due to him, whether he be good or bad, wise or foolish, a father or an enemy to his country. This being

calculated for his personal interest, he must pursue the same designs, or his kingdom is divided within itself, and cannot subsist. By this means, those who flatter his humour come to be accounted his friends, and the only men that are thought worthy of great trusts; while such as are of another mind are exposed to all persecution. These are always such as excel in virtue, wisdom, and greatness of spirit: They have eyes, and they will always see the way they go; and leaving fools to be guided by implicit faith, will distinguish between good and evil, and choose that which is best; they will judge of men by their actions, and by them discovering whose servant every man is, know whether he is to be obeyed or not. Those who are ignorant of all good, careless, or enemies to it, take a more compendious way: Their slavish, vicious, and base natures, inclining them to seek only private and present advantage, they easily slide into a blind dependence upon one who has wealth and power; and desiring only to know his will, care not what injustice they do, if they may be rewarded. They worship what they find in the temple, though it be the vilest of idols; and always like that best which is worst, because it agrees with their inclinations and principles. When a party comes to be erected upon such a foundation, debauchery, lewdness, and dishonesty are the true badges of it; such as wear them are cherished; but the principal marks of favour are reserved for them who are the most industrious in mischief, either by seducing the people with the allurements of sensual pleasures, or corrupting their understandings with false and slavish doctrines.”

I am, &c.

No. 38. SATURDAY, July 22, 1721.

The Right and Capacity of the People to judge of Government. [Gordon] ↪

[II-34]

SIR,

The world has, from time to time, been led into such a long maze of mistakes, by those who gained by deceiving, that whoever would instruct mankind, must begin with removing their errors; and if they were every where honestly apprized of truth, and restored to their senses, there would not remain one nation of bigots or slaves under the sun: A happiness always to be wished, but never expected!

In most parts of the earth there is neither light nor liberty; and even in the best parts of it they are but little encouraged, and coldly maintained; there being, in all places, many engaged, through interest, in a perpetual conspiracy against them. They are the two greatest civil blessings, inseparable in their interests, and the mutual support of each other; and whoever would destroy one of them, must destroy both. Hence it is, that we every where find tyranny and imposture, ignorance and slavery, joined together; and oppressors and deceivers mutually aiding and paying constant court to each other. Where-ever truth is dangerous, liberty is precarious.

Of all the sciences that I know in the world, that of government concerns us most, and is the easiest to be known, and yet is the least understood. Most of those who manage it would make the lower world believe that there is I know not what difficulty and mystery in it, far above vulgar understandings; which proceeding of theirs is direct craft and imposture: Every ploughman knows a good government from a bad one, from the effects of it: he knows whether the fruits of his labour be his own, and whether he enjoy them in peace and security: And if he do not know the principles of government, it is for want of thinking and enquiry, for they lie open to common sense; but people are generally taught not to think of them at all, or to think wrong of them.

What is government, but a trust committed by all, or the most, to one, or a few, who are to attend upon the affairs of all, that every one may, with the more security, attend upon his own? A great and honourable trust; but too seldom honourably executed; those who possess it having it often more at heart to increase their power, than to make it useful; and to be terrible, rather than beneficent. It is therefore a trust, which ought to be bounded with many and strong restraints, because power renders men wanton, insolent to others, and fond of themselves. Every violation therefore of this trust, where such violation is considerable, ought to meet with proportionable punishment; and the smallest violation of it ought to meet with some, because indulgence to the least faults of magistrates may be cruelty to a whole people.

Honesty, diligence, and plain sense, are the only talents necessary for the executing of this trust; and the public good is its only end: As to refinements and finesses, they are often only the false appearances of wisdom and parts, and oftener tricks to hide guilt and emptiness; and they are generally mean and dishonest: they are the arts of jobbers in politicks, who, playing their own game under the publick cover, subsist upon poor shifts and

expedients; starved politicians, who live from hand to mouth, from day to day, and following the little views of ambition, avarice, revenge, and the like personal passions, are ashamed to avow them, yet want souls great enough to forsake them; small wicked statesmen, who make a private market of the publick, and deceive it, in order to sell it.

These are the poor parts which great and good governors scorn to play, and cannot play; their designs, like their stations, being purely publick, are open and undisguised. They do not consider their people as their prey, nor lie in ambush for their subjects; nor dread, and treat and surprize them like enemies, as all ill magistrates do; who are not governors, but jailers and sponges, who chain them and squeeze them, and yet take it very ill if they do but murmur; which is yet much less than a people so abused ought to do. There have been times and countries, when publick ministers and publick enemies have been the same individual men. What a melancholy reflection is this, that the most terrible and mischievous foes to a nation should be its own magistrates! And yet in every enslaved country, which is almost every country, this is their woeful case.

Honesty and plainness go always together, and the makers and multipliers of mysteries, in the political way, are shrewdly to be suspected of dark designs. Cincinnatus was taken from the plough to save and defend the Roman state; an office which he executed honestly and successfully, without the grimace and gains of a statesman. Nor did he afterwards continue obstinately at the head of affairs, to form a party, raise a fortune, and settle himself in power: As he came into it with universal consent, he resigned it with universal applause.

It seems that government was not in those days become a trade, at least a gainful trade. Honest Cincinnatus was but a farmer: And happy had it been for the Romans, if, when they were enslaved, they could have taken the administration out of the hands of the emperors, and their refined politicians, and committed it to such farmers, or any farmers. It is certain, that many of their imperial governors acted more ridiculously than a board of ploughmen would have done, and more barbarously than a club of butchers could have done.

But some have said, It is not the business of private man to meddle with government. A bold, false, and dishonest saying; and whoever says it, either knows not what he says, or cares not, or slavishly speaks the sense of others. It is a cant now almost forgot in England, and which never prevailed but when liberty and the constitution were attacked, and never can prevail but upon the like occasion.

It is a vexation to be obliged to answer nonsense, and confute absurdities: But since it is and has been the great design of this paper to maintain and explain the glorious principles of liberty, and to expose the arts of those who would darken or destroy them; I shall here particularly shew the wickedness and stupidity of the above saying; which is fit to come from no mouth but that of a tyrant or a slave, and can never be heard by any man of an honest and free soul, without horror and indignation: It is, in short, a saying, which ought to render the man who utters it for ever incapable of place or credit in a free country, as it shews the malignity of his heart, and the baseness of his nature, and as it is the pronouncing of a doom upon our constitution. A crime, or rather a complication of crimes, for which a lasting infamy ought to be but part of the punishment.

But to the falsehood of the thing: Publick truths ought never to be kept secrets; and they who do it, are guilty of a solecism, and a contradiction: Every man ought to know what it concerns all to know. Now, nothing upon earth is of a more universal nature than government; and every private man upon earth has a concern in it, because in it is concerned,

and nearly and immediately concerned, his virtue, his property, and the security of his person: And where all these are best preserved and advanced, the government is best administered; and where they are not, the government is impotent, wicked, or unfortunate; and where the government is so, the people will be so, there being always and every where a certain sympathy and analogy between the nature of the government and the nature of the people. This holds true in every instance. Public men are the patterns of private; and the virtues and vices of the governors become quickly the virtues and vices of the governed.

Regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis.

Nor is it example alone that does it. Ill governments, subsisting by vice and rapine, are jealous of private virtue, and enemies to private property. *Opes pro crimine; & ob virtutes certissimum exitium.* They must be wicked and mischievous to be what they are; nor are they secure while any thing good or valuable is secure. Hence it is, that to drain, worry, and debauch their subjects, are the steady maxims of their politicks, their favourite arts of reigning. In this wretched situation the people, to be safe, must be poor and lewd: There will be but little industry where property is precarious; small honesty where virtue is dangerous.

Profuseness or frugality, and the like virtues or vices, which affect the publick, will be practised in the City, if they be practised in the court; and in the country, if they be in the City. Even Nero (that royal monster in man's shape) was adored by the common herd at Rome, as much as he was flattered by the great; and both the little and the great admired, or pretended to admire, his manners, and many to imitate them. Tacitus tells us, that those sort of people long lamented him, and rejoiced in the choice of a successor that resembled him, even the profligate Otho.

Good government does, on the contrary, produce great virtue, much happiness, and many people. Greece and Italy, while they continued free, were each of them, for the number of inhabitants, like one continued city; for virtue, knowledge, and great men, they were the standards of the world; and that age and country that could come nearest to them, has ever since been reckoned the happiest. Their government, their free government, was the root of all these advantages, and of all this felicity and renown; and in these great and fortunate states the people were the principals in the government; laws were made by their judgment and authority, and by their voice and commands were magistrates created and condemned. The city of Rome could conquer the world; nor could the great Persian monarch, the greatest then upon earth, stand before the face of one Greek city.

But what are Greece and Italy now? Rome has in it a herd of pampered monks, and a few starving lay inhabitants; the Campania of Rome, the finest spot of earth in Europe, is a desert. And for the modern Greeks, they are a few abject contemptible slaves, kept under ignorance, chains, and vileness, by the Turkish monarch, who keeps a great part of the globe intensely miserable, that he may seem great without being so.

Such is the difference between one government and another, and of such important concernment is the nature and administration of government to a people. And to say that private men have nothing to do with government, is to say that private men have nothing to do with their own happiness and misery.

What is the publick, but the collective body of private men, as every private man is a member of the publick? And as the whole ought to be concerned for the preservation of every private individual, it is the duty of every individual to be concerned for the whole, in which himself is included.

One man, or a few men, have often pretended the publick, and meant themselves, and consulted their own personal interest, in instances essential to its well-being; but the whole people, by consulting their own interest, consult the publick, and act for the publick by acting for themselves: This is particularly the spirit of our constitution, in which the whole nation is represented; and our records afford instances, where the House of Commons have declined entering upon a question of importance, till they had gone into the country, and consulted their principals, the people: So far were they from thinking that private men had no right to meddle with government. In truth, our whole worldly happiness and misery (abating for accidents and diseases) are owing to the order or mismanagement of government; and he who says that private men have no concern with government, does wisely and modestly tell us, that men have no concern in that which concerns them most; it is saying that people ought not to concern themselves whether they be naked or clothed, fed or starved, deceived or instructed, and whether they be protected or destroyed: What nonsense and servitude in a free and wise nation!

For myself, who have thought pretty much of these matters, I am of opinion, that a whole nation are like to be as much attached to themselves, as one man or a few men are like to be, who may by many means be detached from the interest of a nation. It is certain that one man, and several men, may be bribed into an interest opposite to that of the publick; but it is as certain that a whole country can never find an equivalent for itself, and consequently a whole country can never be bribed. It is the eternal interest of every nation, that their government should be good; but they who direct it frequently reason a contrary way and find their own account in plunder and oppression; and while the publick voice is pretended to be declared, by one or a few, for vile and private ends, the publick know nothing of what is done, till they feel the terrible effects of it.

By the Bill of Rights, and the Act of Settlement, at the Revolution; a right is asserted to the people applying to the King and to the Parliament, by petition and address, for a redress of publick grievances and mismanagements, when such there are, of which they are left to judge; and the difference between free and enslaved countries lies principally here, that in the former, their magistrates must consult the voice and interest of the people; but in the latter, the private will, interest, and pleasure of the governors, are the sole end and motives of their administration.

Such is the difference between England and Turkey; which difference they who say that private men have no right to concern themselves with government, would absolutely destroy; they would convert magistrates into bashaws, and introduce popery into politicks. The late Revolution stands upon the very opposite maxim; and that any man dares to contradict it since the Revolution, would be amazing, did we not know that there are, in every country, hirelings who would betray it for a sop.

G.

I am, &c.

No. 39. SATURDAY, July 29, 1721.

Of the Passions; that they are all alike good or all alike evil, according as they are applied.
[Gordon] ↩

[II-43]

SIR,

Nothing is more provoking than to hear men talk magisterially, and with an air of teaching, about things which they do not understand, or which they have an interest to have understood wrong. We have, all of us, heard much of the duty of subduing our appetites, and extinguishing our passions, from men, who by these phrases shewed at once their ignorance of human nature, and yet that they aimed at an absolute dominion over it.

Wrong heads and knavish designs are frequently found together; and creatures that you would not trust with laying out ten shillings for you in an instance where you trust to your own understanding, shall sometimes, by the mere sound of their voice, and an unmeaning distinction, make themselves masters of your mind and your fortune. It is by trusting to these that men come to know so little of themselves, and to be so much the prey of others as ignorant and more dishonest. I know no man so fit as himself to rule himself, in things which purely concern himself. How happy would this plain rule make the world, if they could be brought to observe it, and to remember that brown is as virtuous a colour as black; that the Almighty possesses alike every quarter of the world; and that in his sight fish and flesh in point of merit and innocence are the same! These things are self-evident, and yet the misery of mankind is in a great measure owing to their ignorance of them.

The ancient Stoicks had many admirable and virtuous precepts, but their philosophy was too rigid to be very popular; they taught men an absolute indifference for sensual pain and pleasure; but in this their doctrine was neither useful nor practicable. Men were not to be thus dealt with; they could not cease to be men, nor change nature for philosophy. Besides, these teachers being pagans, and arguing only from the topicks of wisdom strained too high, had no equivalent to offer to their disciples for parting with their appetites and their senses. But when some of their Sophists came into Christianity, and brought along with them the severe notions of their sect, they spread and recommended the same with more success, by tacking to these their opinions the rewards and terrors of the world to come, which had nothing to do with them: However, they said that it had, and quickly found credit enough to make it dangerous to contradict them.

These favourite dreams of theirs, added to some sayings and passages of the gospel, ill understood, were vehemently urged, as if they had been so many certain passports to paradise; and soon turned men's brains, and made them really fond of poverty, hardships, and misery, and even of death itself: Enthusiasm conquered reason, and inflamed nature; and men, to be devout, grew distracted.

This came of stifling the passions, and subduing nature, as the phrase was. But the folly and mischief of this doctrine thus extravagantly pushed, were not greater than its falsehood: For, as there is no such thing as departing from nature, without departing from life, it is certain that they who were remarkable for restraining some of their appetites, were as remarkable for indulging others; so that their boasted mortification was no more than the

exchange of one passion for another, and often of a better for a worse. Thus there are many saints in the Romish calendar, who practised a religious abstinence from all sorts of flesh living or dead, and yet made it the duty of their profession, and the business of their lives, to stir up dissension and war amongst men, and to promote slaughter and desolation: They abstained from women, and yet were the authors of infinite rapes and adulteries: Their gentle and sanctified souls would not allow them to kill, much less to eat any part of an animal made to be killed and eaten; but they avowedly and piously preached up human and Christian butcheries, and have smiled over the carcasses of a nation massacred at their instigation.

It is the weakness and misfortune of the human race, that a man, by the means of one virtue, or the appearance of it, is often able to do a thousand mischiefs; and it is the quality of human nature, that when any one of its appetites is violently restrained, others break out into proportionable excesses. Thus men grow rash and precipitate, by trampling upon caution and fear; and thus they become cowards, by stifling the love of glory: Whereas, if the appetite for danger were checked by the appetite of self-preservation, and the lazy love of safety by the love of fame, rashness and cowardice would be no more.

It is the highest stupidity to talk of subduing the passions, in the common acceptance of that phrase; and to rail at them in gross, is as foolish. The greatest evils often proceed from the best things abused, or ill applied; and this is particularly true of the passions, which are the constituent parts of a man, and are good or ill as they are managed.

The exercise therefore of reason is nothing else, but the indulging or controlling of the passions, with an impartial hand, and giving them all fair play; it is an equal administration of the appetites, by which they are restrained from outrunning one another: Thus, for example, if men's fears were always as powerful as their hopes, they would rarely run into danger; or, if their hopes balanced their fears, they would never despair.

Every one of the leading passions is as necessary as another; all the difficulty is to keep them well marshalled: They are only terrible by breaking out of their ranks, and when they do, they are all alike terrible, though the world generally thinks otherwise. But it is certain, that those passions to which the kindest ideas are annexed, do as much mischief when they get out of their bounds, as do those to which we annex the harshest ideas; and love and hope, which bear soft and mild names, are in their excesses as active and as formidable passions, as are anger and revenge, the names of which are apt to shock us; and anger and revenge are, in their proper limits, more desirable passions than are love and hope out of their proper limits; that is, they are all equally good, or all equally evil, just as they are let loose or restrained. A man who cuts another's throat out of love to his wife, commits the same wickedness as if he did it out of revenge. Extravagant joy for the Restoration (which was doubtless a great and extraordinary blessing) had well nigh cost England its religion and liberty; and afterwards the awakening fears of popery saved both. No nation has been more fleshed in blood than the Turks; principally, because the false hopes of Mahomet's lascivious paradise animated them in their butcheries.

The only way therefore of dealing with mankind, is to deal with their passions; and the founders of all states, and of all religions, have ever done so: The first elements, or knowledge of politicks, is the knowledge of the passions; and the art of governing, is chiefly the art of applying to the passions. When the publick passions (by which I mean every man's particular warmth and concern about publick transactions and events) are well regulated and honestly employed, this is called government, or the art of governing; and when they are

knavishly raised and ill employed, it is called faction, which is the gratifying of private passion by publick means.

And because passion and opinion are so nearly related, and have such force upon each other, arbitrary courts and crafty churchmen have ever endeavoured to force, or frighten, or deceive the people into an uniformity of thoughts, especially of religious thoughts. A thing tyrannical and impossible! And yet a whole people do often, through ignorance or fear, seem of one mind; and but seem: For, if they come to explain, they would find their ideas differ widely, though their words agree. Whereas in a well-governed free state, diversity of speculations is so far from clogging the publick good, that it evidently promotes the same; all men being equally engaged in the defence of that, by which all men are indifferently protected. So that to attempt to reduce all men to one standard of thinking, is absurd in philosophy, impious in religion, and faction in the state. And though the mortifying of the appetites be a very plausible phrase, and, in a restrained sense, a laudable thing; yet he who recommends it to you does often mean nothing but this, *Make your passions tame, that I may ride them.*

There is scarce any one of the passions but what is truly laudable when it centers in the publick, and makes that its object. Ambition, avarice, revenge, are all so many virtues, when they aim at the general welfare. I know that it is exceeding hard and rare, for any man to separate his passions from his own person and interest; but it is certain that there have been such men. Brutus, Cato, Regulus, Timoleon, Dion, and Epaminondas, were such, as were many more ancient Greeks and Romans; and, I hope, England has still some such. And though, in pursuing publick views, men regard themselves and their own advantages; yet if they regard the publick more, or their own in subserviency to the publick, they may justly be esteemed virtuous and good.

No man can be too ambitious of the glory and security of his country, nor too angry at its misfortunes and ill usage; nor too revengeful against those that abuse and betray it; nor too avaricious to enrich it, provided that in doing it he violates not the rights of others.

Tacitus giving the character of the emperor Galba, who doubtless was an honest man, and had many virtues, after saying that he coveted no man's money, and was sparing of his own, adds, that he was solicitous to save publick money: *Pecuniae alienae non appetens, suae parcus, publicae avarus*; which publick avarice in him was a publick virtue, and cost him his life; he was not suffered to reign, because would not lavish away the publick money in bribes; *Milites a se eligi, non emi*. So dangerous, and even fatal, was personal virtue in that corrupt state; and so hard and impossible is it, in any state, to stay the progress of corruption! Galba would have reformed the Roman state: But the vices of his predecessors, and long use, made it impracticable; and he lost his life in the attempt. The passions of men were detached from the commonwealth, and placed upon their own personal security or gain; and they had no sense of the publick, and as little knowledge of its affairs: For that great people, and almost the whole world had been long the sole property of a single man, who took counsel only of his lust,

G.

I am, &c.

No. 40. SATURDAY, August 5, 1721.

Considerations on the restless and selfish Spirit of Man. [Gordon] ↪

[II-50]

SIR,

It is melancholy to consider how every thing in the world is abused: The reason is, that men having themselves chiefly in view, consider all things with an eye to themselves only; and thus it is that general blessings cease to be so by being converted into private property, as is always done where it is safe or possible to be done.

Enquiring how it comes to pass that the best things in the world, such as religion, property, and power, are made to do so much hurt; I find it to proceed principally from hence, that men are never satisfied with their present condition, which is never perfectly happy; and perfect happiness being their chief aim, and always out of their reach, they are restlessly grasping at what they never can attain.

So chimerical is the nature of man! his greatest pleasures are always to come, and therefore never come. His content cannot possibly be perfect, because its highest objects are constantly future; and yet it is the more perfect for their being future. Our highest enjoyment is of that which is not: Our pleasure is deceit; and the only real happiness that we have is derived from non-entities. We are never satisfied with being just what we are; and therefore, though you give us all that we desire, or can conceive, yet we shall not have done desiring. The present possessions give but little joy, let them be ever so great; even as great as can be grasped: It is the enjoyment to come that is only or most valued. When we say, that if such a thing happened, we would be easy; we can only mean, or ought only to mean, that we would be more easy than we are: And in that too we are often mistaken; for new acquisitions bring new wants; and imaginary wants are as pungent as real ones. So that there is the same end of wishing as of living, and death only can still the appetites.

Publick blessings would really be so to every man, if every man would be content with his share: But every man would have more; nor would more satisfy him, whatever he may think; but his desires would rise with his possessions or his power, and his last wish would be to have all: Nor would the possession of all quiet the mind of man, which the whole world cannot fill. Indeed, he who has most, wants most; and care, anxious care, as it is the close companion of greatness, so it is furthest from him who has least to care for.

I own, that many have seemed to despise riches and power, and really declined the means of acquiring them: But they deceived themselves, if they thought that this conduct of theirs was owing to a real contempt for the things themselves; when in truth it was only a dislike of the terms upon which they were to be had. Disinterestedness is often created by laziness, pride, or fear; and then it is no virtue. There is not, perhaps, a man living but would be glad of wealth and grandeur, if he could acquire them with speed, and possess them with ease; and almost all men would risk, and do daily risk, ease, reputation, life, and all, to come at them. Do we not see that men venture being beggars to be rich, lose their rest for the sake of quiet, and acquire infamy to earn honour? We live in a hurry, in order to come at the resting-place; and in crowds to purchase solitude. Nor are we the nearer to our end, though the means

succeed: Human life is a life of expectation and care; and he who rejects the conditions, must quit it.

Every passion, every view that men have, is selfish in some degree; but when it does good to the publick in its operation and consequence, it may be justly called disinterested in the usual meaning of that word. So that when we call any man disinterested, we should intend no more by it, than that the turn of his mind is towards the publick, and that he has placed his own personal glory and pleasure in serving it. To serve his country is his private pleasure, mankind is his mistress; and he does good to them by gratifying himself.

Disinterestedness, in any other sense than this, there is none. For men to act independently of their passions, is a contradiction! since their passions enter into all that they do, and are the source of it: And the best actions which men perform, often arise from fear, vanity, shame, and the like causes. When the passions of men do good to others, it is called virtue and publick spirit; and when they do hurt to others, it is called selfishness, dishonesty, lust, and other names of infamy. The motive of every man's conduct is fetched from within, and has a good or an ill name according to its effect upon others; and sometimes the great difference between an honest man and a knave, is no other than a piece of humour, or a piece of chance. As the passions of men, which are only the motions raised within us by the motion of things without us, are soothed or animated by external causes, it is hard to determine, whether there be a man in the world who might not be corrupted by some means and applications; the nicety is, to choose those that are proper.

All these discoveries and complaints of the crookedness and corruption of human nature are made with no malignant intention to break the bonds of society; but they are made to shew, that as selfishness is the strongest bias of men, every man ought to be upon his guard against another, that he become not the prey of another. The too great confidence which many men have placed in one, has often ruined millions. How many sorrowful experiences have we, that men will be rogues where they dare; and that the greatest opportunities always make the greatest! Give them what you can, they will still want more than you give; and therefore the highest trusts are the most apt to be broken.

Those who have talked most of the dignity of human nature, seem to have understood it but little. Men are so far from having any views purely publick and disinterested, that government first arose from every man's taking care of himself; and government is never abused and perverted, but from the same cause. Do we not know that one man has slaughtered a million, and overturned nations, for the gaining of one point to himself? and that almost all men would follow evil, if they found their greatest advantage or pleasure in it.

Here therefore lies the source of all the evil which men suffer from men, that every man loves himself better than he loves his whole species, and more or less consults himself in all that he does. He naturally pursues what is pleasant or profitable in his own eyes, though in doing it he entail misery upon multitudes. So that we have no other security against the malice and rapine of each other, but the security of laws or our own force. By laws societies subsist within themselves; and by force they defend themselves against each other. And as in the business of faith and leagues between nation and nation, treaties are made by consent, but kept by fear and power; and observed or violated just as interest, advantage, and opportunities invite, without regard to faith and good conscience, which are only words of good-breeding, with which courts compliment one another and themselves; so between subject and subject, and between magistrates and subjects, concord and security are

preserved by the terror of laws, and the ties of mutual interest; and both interest and terror derive their strength from the impulses of self-love.

Thus one man is only safe, while it is the interest of another to let him alone; and men are knaves or honest men, according to the judgment which they make of their own interest and ease, and of the terms upon which they choose to live in the world. Many men are honest, without any virtue, or indeed a thought of honesty; as many others are rogues, without any malice: And both sorts mean only their own personal advantage; but take different roads to arrive at it. This is their great aim; and that constitution which trusts more than it needs to any man, or body of men, has a terrible flaw in it, and is big with the seeds of its own destruction. Hence arose tyrants, and tyranny, and standing armies: Marius, and Caesar, and Oliver Cromwell. How preposterously do men act! By too great confidence in one man, or a few men, they become slaves; and by a general distrust of each other, they continue so!

It may be objected, that since men are such a wretched race, made so by the apostasy of Adam, they are not worth serving; that the most unhappy of them are but what they themselves would make others, and therefore their fate is just upon them.

In answer to this, I readily own what I have been proving, that men are very bad where they dare, and that all men would be tyrants, and do what they please. But still let us preserve justice and equality in the world. Why should he, who is bad himself, oppress others who are no worse than him? Besides, the lot of humanity being an unhappy one, it is an honest ambition, that of endeavouring to mend it, to improve nature by virtue, and to mend mankind by obliging them to observe rules that are good. We do not expect philosophical virtue from them; but only that they follow virtue as their interest, and find it penal and dangerous to depart from it. And this is the only virtue that the world wants, and the only virtue that it can trust to.

G.

I am, &c.

No. 41. SATURDAY, August 19, 1721.

The Emperor Galba's Speech to Piso, with an Introduction. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[II-56]

SIR,

I send you a translation of the speech of the emperor Galba to Piso, when he adopted him his partner and successor in the Empire; a speech full of great sense, great honesty, and noble sentiments. Indeed Galba seems to have come to the government with worthy intentions to mend it. To restore the ancient liberty, was impossible. Things had run long in another channel; people were accustomed to the largesses and false bounty of their princes, to the awful and sounding names of the Caesars, and to the luxury, pomp, and tinsel of a court. The soldiers would have an emperor; nor could the Senate withstand the soldiers: The venerable orders of the commonwealth had been long abolished, her ancient virtues extinct; *Nihil usquam prisci & integri moris*; and the commonwealth itself was forgot: *Quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam vidisset!* says Tacitus, speaking of the end of the reign of Augustus. In short, the emperor was all in all: *Illuc cuncta vergere*. The state was overturned, mangled, and changed: The old laws of equality were utterly lost in the imperial power, and that was supported by the sword. There was no safety but in servitude; *Jussa principis aspectare*. All the other magistrates were but shadows with fine old names.

The chief aim therefore of Galba, since he could not restore, was to reform. A worthy attempt, but he failed in it: So irresistible was the tide of corruption! Two things principally obstructed his design, and shortened his life and reign; the avarice of the soldiery, and the vile conduct of his servants.

As to the soldiers, he had honestly, but unfortunately said, that he *would choose them, but not buy them*; a saying which they never forgave him. Besides, as he practised himself the rigid old Roman discipline, he would oblige his army to practise it; a thing new to them, and intolerable. They had been long used to luxury and sloth, and were grown as fond of the vileness and vices of their princes, as the old republican armies had been of the temperance, modesty, and other virtues of their commanders: They therefore could not bear the severity and frugality of Galba; nor would Galba depart from his temper and his purposes. Money would have made them his friends; but he would part with none. The reflection of the historian upon this conduct of his is fine, but melancholy; *Nocuit antiquus rigor, & nimia severitas, cui jam pares non sumus*: "He was ruined by reviving unseasonably the severe virtue of our ancestors: Alas! we are no longer equal to it." To conclude this head; the soldiers butchered an emperor that would not bribe them.

As to the part of Galba's servants in the tragedy of their master, it was no small one: They made him odious by their own crimes; and in his name committed cruelties and rapine, which blackened his character; and when they had brought him under a general dislike, none of his own good qualities could recover him his good name: *Inviso semel principe, seu bene seu male facta premunt*. Their avarice was imputed to him, and called his: *Jam offerebant venalia cuncta praepotentes liberti*. They were resolved to make the most of his short reign; and by doing so made it shorter: *Servorum manus subitis avidae, & tanquam apud senem festinantes*. He paid dear for their wickedness: *Odio flagitiorum oneratum destruebant*. His

character, in relation to his friends and servants, was, that he was indulgent to them, if they were good; and blind to their faults, if they were bad. *Ubi in bonos incidisset, sine reprehensione patiens: Si mali forent, usque ad culpam ignarus.*

The rest of his character, taken from Tacitus, from whom I have taken the whole, is, that being seventy years old, he had lived in prosperity during five reigns, more happy in them than in his own: That he was of a family ancient, great, and noble, and master of great wealth: That he had a moderate capacity, and more innocence than abilities: That he neither courted fame, nor despised it: That he coveted no man's money, was sparing of his own, and solicitous to save publick money: That a nobleman of his great birth and quality, having lived so securely in such dangerous times, was a thing so surprizing and rare, that his good fortune passed for wisdom, and his real indolence for real art: That in the vigour of his years he acquired great renown in the German wars: That being proconsul in Africa, he governed that province, and afterwards Spain, with great equity: That he seemed greater than a subject, while he was but a subject; and that, in the opinion of all men, he was equal to the empire, if he had never been emperor.

So much for the character of Galba; which I thought necessary to introduce his speech to Piso, who was every way worthy of the adoption and of a better fortune; which, however, was of a- piece: He was long an exile under Nero, who had murdered his brother Crassus; as had Claudius his brother Magnus: He himself was but four days Caesar, and then butchered; as was his eldest brother presently after him. He was of a noble race, both by father and mother, and had an amiable and popular character for the severity of his manners, and his many virtues; and during the few days of his highest power and adversity he behaved himself with great modesty and firmness, and seemed to make good every hope concerning him. But virtue and goodness were then pernicious, and we see what he got by having them. The whole story, and particularly his fate in it, affects me.

I am, &c.

THE SPEECH OF GALBA TO PISO↩

“Were I, as a private man, to adopt you for my son, by virtue of the law Curiata, in preference of the pontiffs, according to the ordinary usage; glorious even then would be the adoption to us both; as with the blood of the great Pompey and of Marcus Crassus my family would be enriched; and the nobility of your house derive fresh splendor from the signal lustre and renown of the Sulpitian and Lutacian race. I am now a publick person, by the united consent of gods and men called to the empire; and of this same sovereignty, for which our ancestors contended with arms, I, who by war have obtained it, do offer you the possession, while you are neither seeking nor pursuing it: A gift to which I am urged only by the love of my country and your own excellent qualifications. In this I follow the example of the deified Augustus, who assumed successively, for his partners in power, first his sister's son, Marcellus; next his son-in-law, Agrippa; afterwards his grandsons; lastly, his wife's son Tiberius. But Augustus, who would entail the empire upon his own house, in his own house sought a successor: I choose out of the commonwealth an heir to the commonwealth. Not that I am reduced to this choice by any want of relations to my blood, or of fellow-commanders in war. But neither did I, no more than you, arrive at supreme power by any efforts of ambition; and my thus overlooking your relations, as well as my own, is a proof and monument with what sincerity of intention I prefer you to all men. You have a brother, in nobility your equal, in age your superior; a man worthy of this fortune; did I not in you find one still more worthy. Such is your age, as to be past the giddiness and impetuosity of youth; such has been your course of life, that nothing in your conduct, thus far, is subject to blame. But hitherto you have only had an adverse fortune to contend with. More dangerous and keen are the stimulations of prosperity, to try the temper of the soul, and call forth its weaknesses. For, the strokes of calamity we struggle under and bear: By a flow of felicity we are utterly subdued and corrupted.

“You doubtless will still retain, with your usual firmness, the same honour, faith in friendship, candour and freedom of spirit; endowments which, above all others, adorn the mind of man. But the false complaisance of others will slacken your fortitude. Flattery will force its way to your heart; deceitful soothing, the most pestilent poison to every honest affection, will enchant you; and to his own sordid gain will every particular be wresting your honour and good inclinations. You and I upon this occasion converse together with hearts perfectly open and sincere: Others will choose to make their addresses to our fortune rather than to us. Indeed, to deal faithfully with princes, to reason them into their duty, is a mighty task, and with infinite difficulty performed. But easy is the art of cajoling any prince whatsoever, and in doing it the heart has no share. Could this immense empire subsist, and be swayed without a single ruler, I should glory in resigning, glory in being the first emperor who resigned the power of the Republick into her own hands. But such, long since has been the fatal situation of the state, that all the good which my old age enables me to do to the Roman people, is to leave them a good successor; nor can you, with all your youth, do more for them than afford them in yourself a benevolent prince. Under Tiberius and Caligula and Claudius, we were all of us no more, the Roman world was no more, than as the inheritance of one family. That the empire has in me begun to be elective, is a sign of our ancient liberty revived, and some equivalent for it; the only liberty we are capable of enjoying. Now the Julian and Claudian families being extinct, the best men are likely, in this way of adoption, to become the highest. To be sprung from a sovereign race, is the effect of chance, and further

than this requires no deliberation or regard. But in the work of adoption the judgment is exercised, free from bias and restraint; and whenever you want to choose, you are by the general consent directed to the person worthy to be chosen.

“Have always before your eyes the example of Nero, who, secure as he was, and swelling with the pride of his race, a long genealogy of the Caesars his ancestors, was not in reality dethroned by Julius Vindex, the governor of a province unprovided with forces, nor by me, assisted by one legion: No, it was his own brutal tyranny, his own beastly debaucheries, that flung down the tyrant from riding on the necks of mankind. Nor was there till then any instance of an emperor by publick sentence condemned and deposed. We who succeed him by a different title, by war and by publick approbation and choice, shall thence reap publick glory, however the malignity of particulars may pursue us. Nor must you be alarmed, if while the world itself continues in this general uproar, there are two legions which yet remain unreclaimed to obedience. It was my own lot to be called to an unsettled state; and as to my old age, the only objection to my government, it is no longer one, since, when it is known that I have adopted you, I shall seem young in my successor. The loss of Nero will ever be regretted by all the most profligate and bad. To us it belongs, to you and to me, so to govern, that he may not also be regretted by the good.

“To say more in this way of instruction, the present conjuncture suffers not; nor is it necessary; since if I have in you made a worthy choice, I have answered every purpose. One certain rule you have to observe, exceeding wholesome, as well as exceeding short; so to comport yourself towards your subjects, as, were you a subject, you would wish your prince to comport towards you. By this rule you will best distinguish the boundaries of justice and iniquity; best comprehend the art of reigning: for, you must remember that it is not with us as with other nations, such as are barbarous and tyrannized, where a particular lordly house is established, and where all besides are slaves without reserve. But you are about to govern the Romans; a people of too little virtue to support complete liberty, of too much spirit to bear absolute bondage.”

G

No. 42. SATURDAY, August 26, 1721.

Considerations on the Nature of Laws. [Gordon] ↗

[II-64]

SIR,

The mischiefs that are daily done, and the evils that are daily suffered in the world, are sad proofs, how much human malice exceeds human wisdom. Law only provides against the evils which it knows or foresees; but when laws fail, we must have recourse to reason and nature, which are the only guides in the making of laws. *Stirpem juris a natura repertam*, says Cicero; there never would have been any law against any crime, if crimes might have been safely committed, against which there was no law: For every law supposes some evil, and can only punish or restrain the evils which already exist.

But as positive laws, let them be ever so full and perspicuous, can never entirely prevent the arts of crafty men to evade them, or the power of great ones to violate them; hence new laws are daily making, and new occasions for more are daily arising: So that the utmost that wisdom, virtue, and law can do, is to lessen or qualify, but never totally abolish, vice and enormity. Law is therefore a sign of the corruption of man; and many laws are signs of the corruption of a state.

Positive laws deriving their force from the law of nature, by which we are directed to make occasional rules, which we call laws, according to the exigencies of times, places, and persons, grow obsolete, or cease to be, as soon as they cease to be necessary. And it is as much against the law of nature to execute laws, when the first cause of them ceases, as it is to make laws, for which there is no cause, or a bad cause. This would be to subject reason to force, and to apply a penalty where there is no crime. Law is right reason, commanding things that are good, and forbidding things that are bad; it is a distinction and declaration of things just and unjust, and of the penalties or advantages annexed to them.

The violation therefore of law does not constitute a crime where the law is bad; but the violation of what ought to be law, is a crime even where there is no law. The essence of right and wrong does not depend upon words and clauses inserted in a code or a statute-book, much less upon the conclusions and explications of lawyers; but upon reason and the nature of things, antecedent to all laws. In all countries reason is or ought to be consulted, before laws are enacted; and they are always worse than none, where it is not consulted. Reason is in some degree given to all men; and Cicero says, that whoever has reason, has right reason; that virtue is but perfect reason; and that all nations having reason for their guide, all nations are capable of arriving at virtue.

From this reasoning of his it would follow, that every people are capable of making laws, and good laws; and that laws, where they are bad, are gained by corruption, faction, fear, or surprize; and are rather their misfortune, than the effects of their folly. The acts of Caesar were confirmed by the Senate and the people; but the Senate was awed, and the tribunes and people were bribed: Arms and money procured him a law to declare him lawless. But, as the most pompous power can never unsettle the everlasting land-marks between good and evil, no more than those between pleasure and pain; Caesar remained still a rebel to his country,

and his acts remained wicked and tyrannical.

Let this stand for an instance, that laws are not always the measure of right and wrong. And as positive laws often speak when the law of nature is silent, the law of nature sometimes speaks when positive laws say nothing: *Neque opinione, sed natura constitutum esse jus*. That brave Roman, Horatius Cocles, was bound by no written law to defend the wooden bridge over the Tiber, against a whole army of Tuscans; nor was there any law, that I know of, in Rome, against adultery, when the younger Tarquin ravished Lucretia: And yet the virtue of Horatius was justly rewarded, and the vileness of Tarquin justly punished, by the Romans.

It is impossible to devise laws sufficient to regulate and manage every occurrence and circumstance of life, because they are often produced and diversified by causes that do not appear; and in every condition of life men must have, and will have, great allowances made to their own natural liberty and discretion: But every man, who consents to the necessary terms of society, will also consent to this proposition, that every man should do all the good, and prevent all the evil, that he can. This is the voice of the law of nature; and all men would be happy by it, if all men would practise it. This law leads us to see, that the establishment of falsehood and tyranny (by which I mean the privilege of one or a few to mislead and oppress all) cannot be justly called law, which is the impartial rule of good and evil, and can never be the sanction of evil alone.

It has been often said, that virtue is its own reward; and it is very true, not only from the pleasure that attends the consciousness of doing well, and the fame that follows it, but in a more extensive sense, from the felicity which would accrue to every man, if all men would pursue virtue: But as this truth may appear too general to allure and engage particular men, who will have always their own single selves most at heart, abstracted from all the rest; therefore in the making of laws, the pleasures and fears of particular men, being the great engines by which they are to be governed, must be consulted: Vice must be rendered detestable and dangerous; virtue amiable and advantageous. Their shame and emulation must be raised; their private profit and glory, peril and infamy, laid before them. This is the meaning of Tully, when he says, *Vitiorum emendatricem legem esse oportet, commendatricemque virtutum*.

Rewards and punishments therefore constitute the whole strength of laws; and the promulgation of laws, without which they are none, is an appeal to the sense and interest of men, which of the two they will choose.

The two great laws of human society, from whence all the rest derive their course and obligation, are those of equity and self-preservation: By the first all men are bound alike not to hurt one another; by the second all men have a right alike to defend themselves: *Nam jure hoc evenit, ut quod quisque ob tutelam corporis suifecerit, jure fecisse existimetur*, says the civil law; that is, "It is a maxim of the law, that whatever we do in the way and for the ends of self-defence, we lawfully do." All the laws of society are entirely reciprocal, and no man ought to be exempt from their force; and whoever violates this primary law of nature, ought by the law of nature to be destroyed. He who observes no law, forfeits all title to the protection of law. It is wickedness not to destroy a destroyer; and all the ill consequences of self-defence are chargeable upon him who occasioned them.

Many mischiefs are prevented, by destroying one who shews a certain disposition to commit many. To allow a licence to any man to do evil with impunity, is to make vice triumph over virtue, and innocence the prey of the guilty. If men be obliged to bear great and publick evils, when they can upon better terms oppose and remove them; they are obliged, by the same logick, to bear the total destruction of mankind. If any man may destroy whom he pleases without resistance, he may extinguish the human race without resistance. For, if you settle the bounds of resistance, you allow it; and if you do not fix its bounds, you leave property at the mercy of rapine, and life in the hands of cruelty.

It is said, that the doctrine of resistance would destroy the peace of the world: But it may be more truly said, that the contrary doctrine would destroy the world itself, as it has already some of the best countries in it. I must indeed own, that if one man may destroy all, there would be great and lasting peace when nobody was left to break it.

The law of nature does not only allow us, but oblige us, to defend ourselves. It is our duty, not only to ourselves, but to the society; *Vitam tibi ipsi si negas, multis negas*, says Seneca: If we suffer tamely a lawless attack upon our property and fortunes, we encourage it, and involve others in our doom. And Cicero says, "He who does not resist mischief when he may, is guilty of the same crime, as if he had deserted his parents, his friends, and his country."

So that the conduct of men, who, when they are ill treated, use words rather than arms, and practise submission rather than resistance, is owing to a prudential cause, because there is hazard in quarrels and war, and their cause may be made worse by an endeavour to mend it; and not to any confession of right in those that do them wrong. When men begin to be wicked, we cannot tell where that wickedness will end; we have reason to fear the worst, and provide against it.

Such is the provision made by laws: They are checks upon the unruly and partial appetites of men, and intended for terror and protection. But as there are already laws sufficient every where to preserve peace between private particulars, the great difficulty has hitherto been to find proper checks for those who are to check and administer the laws. To settle therefore a thorough impartiality in the laws, both as to their end and execution, is a task worthy of human wisdom, as it would be the cause and standard of civil felicity. In the theory nothing is more easy than this task: Yet who is able to perform it, if they who can will not?

No man in society ought to have any privilege above the rest, without giving the society some equivalent for such his privilege. Thus legislators, who compile good laws, and good magistrates, who execute them, do, by their honest attendance upon the publick, deserve the privileges and pay which the publick allows them; and place and power are the wages paid by the people to their own deputies and agents. Hence it has been well said, that a chief magistrate is *major singulis, omnibus minor*: "He is above the private members of the community; but the community itself is above him."

Where-ever, therefore, the laws are honestly intended, and equally executed, so as to comprehend in their penalties and operation the great as well and as much as the small, and hold in awe the magistrates as much as the subject, that government is good, that people are happy.

G.



No. 43. SATURDAY, September 2, 1721.

The natural Passion of Men for Superiority. [Gordon] ↪

[II-71]

SIR,

All men have an ambition to be considerable, and take such ways as their judgments suggest to become so. Hence proceeds the appetite of all men to rise above their fellows, and the constant emulation that always has been, and always will be, in the world, amongst all sorts of men. Nature has made them all equal, and most men seem well content with the lot of parts which nature has given them; but the lot of fortune never thoroughly satisfies those who have the best.

The first spring therefore of inequality is in human nature, and the next in the nature of society. In order that many may live together in perfect equality, it is necessary that some should be above the many, who otherwise will be using frauds and violence to get above one another. Some inequality there must be; the danger is, that it be not too great: Where there is absolute equality, all reverence and awe, two checks indispensable in society, would be lost; and where inequality is too great, all intercourse and communication is lost.

Thus in Turkey, where there are no natural links, nor proper degrees of subordination in the chain of their government, there is a monstrous gap between the subject and the throne. The Grand Seignior preserves no understanding with his people: Nothing is to be seen but the terrors of absolute monarchy, and the abject postures of crouching slaves. Power does not glide there, as it ought every where, down an even and easy channel, with a gentle and regular descent; but pours from a precipice with dreadful din, rapidity, and violence upon the poor and passive valleys below, breaking down all before it, and laying waste where-ever it comes.

All men in the world are fond of making a figure in it. This being the great end of all men, they take different roads to come at it, according to their different capacities, opinions, tempers, and opportunities. No man would choose to have any man his equal, if he could place himself above all men. All would be Pompeys. But though it has fallen to the share but of few men to be above all men; yet as every man may, or thinks he may, excel some men, there is a perpetual spur in every descendant of Adam to be aspiring. Every man has self-love, and self-love is never deserted by hope.

But this spirit in every man of rising above other men, as it constitutes the happiness of private individuals, who take great complacency in their favourable opinion of themselves and their own abilities; so is it the great cause of publick and private evils, wars, frauds, cruelty, and oppression. The ambition of excelling in every station by honest means, is not only lawful, but laudable, and produces great good to society: But as nothing produces good in this world, but what may, and generally does, produce evil; and as fame, riches, and power, may be honestly got, but wickedly used, it ought to be the care of society to provide that such emulation amongst its members be so directed and controlled, as to be always beneficial, but never dangerous. But this is a felicity at which few nations have arrived, and those that had it rarely preserved it long.

It is a nice point of wisdom, perhaps too nice for human judgment, to fix certain and lasting bounds to this spirit of ambition and emulation amongst men. To stop it too soon, frustrates its use; and not to stop it at all, invites its mischief. The Venetians, by discouraging it, have never, or very rarely, felt its advantages; and the Athenians found their ostracism, an expedient invented for this very purpose, ineffectual to prevent their great men, who had done great good to the state, from growing terrible to the state itself: Pericles in particular, by his arts, eloquence, and popularity, made himself master of it, and did almost what he pleased in it all his life; that single man was so potent in that free city, that he broke the power of the Areopagus, the senate of Athens, a court of magistrates that balanced the power of the populace; who, being set free from that restraint, ran into all manner of licentiousness and corruption.

The people of Athens became the subjects of Pericles: by having done them much good, he found credit enough to destroy their government and their virtue. From the character of a benefactor, he stole into that of a master: so narrow and invisible are the bounds between the benefactor and the betrayer! Valerius Maximus observes very finely, that “the only difference between Pisistratus and Pericles was, that the latter exercised by art the same tyranny that the other had exercised by arms.”

Good and evil thus often flowing from the same root, and mischief being frequently introduced by merit, it shews great discernment and virtue in a people, and a happy spirit in their laws, if they can encourage and employ the capacity and genius of their principal men, so as to reap only the good fruits of their services.

This was the practice and good fortune of the old Romans for several ages: Virtue was the only road to glory; it was admired, supported, applauded, and recompensed; but they who had shewn the greatest found no sanctuary from it, when they committed crimes that deserved none. This is particularly verified in the cases of Coriolanus and Manlius Capitolinus. They were both brave men, and had deserved well of their country; were both, in recompence, distinguished with great honours; yet were both afterwards condemned by their country, the one for a conspiracy against it, the other for despising its laws. Their services and crimes were properly separated and rewarded.

Emulation therefore, or the passion of one man to equal or excel another, ought to be encouraged, with these two restrictions: First, that no man, let his merit be what it will, should take his own reward; secondly, that he should have no more than comes to his share. Scipio, afterwards called Africanus, was chosen as the greatest and best man in Rome, to invade the territories of Carthage; and he performed it with great glory to himself, with great emolument to his country. He defeated Hannibal, and conquered Carthage. The like praise is also due to Metellus, Lucullus, to T. Flaminius, Paulus Emilius, and many other Roman commanders, who all conquered for their country, and were rewarded by their country with its laurels and its dignities.

Julius Caesar, being also employed by the commonwealth to conquer for it, succeeded in his commission; but, as a reward, took the commonwealth for his pains: He paid himself with the whole Roman world, for having conquered part of it. Alexander the Great, and most other conquerors, had the same modesty, and the same wages; they took all to themselves.

When men are left to measure their own merit, and the reward due to it, they rarely stint themselves; all that they can get is the least that they expect: And, to descend to lesser instances, the world has always abounded in men, who, though they deserved contempt or a

prison, yet could never be satiated with places and power. And all men who have observed the affairs of the world, will remember and acknowledge, that sometimes one man has possessed many posts, to whom the publick suffrage and consent never gave one.

In my reflections upon this subject, I have often amused, and even diverted myself, with an odd imagination; namely, what a wonderful and epidemical cessation of power and place would ensue a sudden and universal removal from thence of every man who deserved neither. I fancied that I saw the whole inhabitants of several countries, towards every quarter of the sky, gaping round them for magistrates, at least for one single magistrate, and finding none; and yet even in this state of anarchy congratulating one another and themselves upon the wonderful amendment of their government. I saw all Asia, the whole ample dominions of the Turk, and many potent kingdoms nearer home, all in an absolute state of nature: In the large bosom of the Romish Church, not a priest was to be seen; and in some Protestant countries, the good people were greatly put to it, where to get a man in a proper habit to say publick prayers. Here in England, indeed, I found a different face of things, and more comfort: For, though at present we have no Parliament sitting, and though in other places I saw dismal solitude, and numberless vacancies; yet I perceived many worthy persons in church and state doing their business, and counting their gains, with great attention and alacrity, but greatly distressed how to find new persons for old places.

Imagination apart: I shall conclude in the words of a great English writer. It is true that

consideration ought to be had of human frailty; and some indulgence may be extended to those who commit errors, after having done important services: But a state cannot subsist, which compensating evil actions with good, gives impunity to dangerous crimes, in remembrance of any services whatever. He that does well, performs his duty, and ought always to do so; justice and prudence concur in this; and it is no less just than profitable, that every action be considered by itself, and such a reward allotted to it as in nature and proportion it best deserves.

G.

I am, &c.

No. 44. SATURDAY, September 9, 1721.

Men not ruled by Principle, but by Passion. [Gordon] ↩

[II-77]

SIR,

Mr. Bayle, in the article of Epicurus, says, that “Multitudes of Christians believe well, and live ill: But Epicurus and his followers had, on the contrary, very ill opinions, and yet lived well.” The truth is, the worst opinions that are can do but little harm, when they are impracticable, or when no advantages are gained by reducing them into practice; and the best can do but little good, when they contradict the darling pleasures and prevailing interests of men.

Dry reasoning has no force: If you would have your doctrine successful, you must prove it gainful. And as in order to lay down good rules for well governing the commonwealth, you must first know the commonwealth; so in order to persuade and govern men, you must know what will please or frighten them. The good that they do to one another, they do not because it is just or commanded; nor do they forbear mutual evil, because it is unjust or forbid: But those things they do out of choice or fear, and both these center in themselves; for choice is pleasure, and fear is the apprehension of pain. So that the best things that men do, as well as the worst, are selfish; and self-love is the parent of moral good and evil.

What Mr. Selden says of humility, may be said of every other virtue. “Humility,” says that wise man,

is a virtue that all preach, none practise, and yet every body is content to hear: The master thinks it good doctrine for his servants, the laity for the clergy, and the clergy for the laity.

Thus we deal with all the virtues; we leave and recommend the practice of them to others, and reserve the advantage and praise of them to ourselves.

All this, and the rest of this letter, is meant to shew that this world is governed by passion, and not by principle; and it ever will be so as long as men are men.

There are rarely any men, never any body of men, but what profess some sort of religion; and every religion professes to promote the peace of mankind, the happiness of human society, and the security of the world; and, for proof of this, refers to its principles, doctrines, and decisions. And it is very true, that all parties in religion contend for submission to the state, as long as the state humours them, or submits to them; but their obedience and good humour never hold longer. All their principles ply in the day of trial, and are either thrown away, or distinguished away; which is the same thing, though not so honest. Nature is then the best guide, and passion the most popular preacher.

Men suit their tenets to the circumstances that they are in, or would be in; and when they have gained their point, they forget their tenets. I could give instances of this from all sorts of men, and even from many whose names are great and venerable.

Gregory Nazianzen, that eloquent and eminent Greek Father, being himself orthodox, contended for toleration to the Arians, while the Arians were uppermost, and had the emperor on their side: but as soon as things took a contrary turn, and his own party had the imperial power on their side, he changed his style; and then it was unpardonable boldness and a horrible attempt, for the Arians and Macedonians so much as to meet together to worship God their own way.

St. Austin had the same spirit and inconsistency: He was once in the sentiments of charity and toleration towards hereticks; but his dispute afterwards with the Donatists so inflamed him, that he changed without any ceremony from white to black, and maintained with violence, that hereticks ought to be compelled, persecuted, and exterminated.

Thus it is that men bear witness against themselves, and practise the evils which they condemn. The Puritans, says Mr. Selden,

who will allow no free will at all, but God does all; yet will allow the subject his liberty to do, or not to do, notwithstanding the king, who is God upon Earth: The Arminians, who hold that we have free-will, do yet say, when we come to the king, we must be all obedience, and no liberty is to be stood for.

“While Spain was the most renowned power in Europe, the Jesuits,” says Mr. Bayle,

were all Spaniards; as well those born at Paris, or Rome, as those born in old Castile. Ever since the decay of the house of Austria, and the elevation of Lewis le grand, the Jesuits are all French, at Rome, at Vienna, at Madrid, as well as in the College of Clermont. In those days the liberties of the Gallican church appeared to them not well grounded: They never ceased writing for the rights of the Pope against those of our kings. One might fill a library with the defences composed by the Society, and condemned by the parliament and the Sorbon. At present his Majesty has not trustier pens than theirs in his differences with the Pope. It is now the turn of the court of Rome to censure the books of the reverend fathers. It seems the king's prosperity and successes have afforded them new lights.

It is with laymen and civil societies, as with religious: They have one set of principles when they are in power; another, and a contrary, when they are out of it. They that command, and they that obey, have seldom or never the same motives. Men change with their condition, and opinions change with men. And thus is verified that maxim of Rochefoucauld's, that the understanding is the dupe or tool of the heart; that is, our sentiments follow our passions.

Nor has religion been suffered to mend nature: On the contrary, being instituted as a restraint, and an antidote against sin, it has been, and is frequently perverted into a reason for sinning: Yes, to the shame and misfortune of the world, men often make war upon truth, conscience, and honesty, in behalf of their religion; and there are others, who, when they have wantonly wounded virtue, have recourse to religion for a balsam.

All men speak well of religion, either natural or revealed, and readily practise every thing in religion that is easy, indifferent, or advantageous to them: But in almost every contention between religion and the appetites, the victory remains to nature; that is, men are never dishonest without temptation, and rarely honest against it.

Thus their principle is interest or pleasure; and when they say that they act from principle, how can we believe them, unless we see that they do it against interest? A proof which they rarely give us! Had the several contracts and treaties between nation and nation been observed, there would never have been war above once between any; or had every free nation observed its own laws, every free nation would have continued free; or, had private men observed the common laws of equity, and those of mutual compact between each other, every private man would have lived in peace and security. But treaties, compacts, and laws are only so far strong as no body dares break them.

I think it is Juvenal, who somewhere brings in a couple of false witnesses perjuring themselves for hire; one is a religious rogue, and believes in the gods; the other is an infidel, who disbelieves or despises them. But though they disagree in their sentiments, they agree in the thing, with this very small difference; the atheist forswears himself boldly without remorse; the believer for- swears himself too, but does it with a small qualm, which is presently over.

— — — *Vendet perjuria summa*
Exigua, Cereris tangens aramque pedemque.

Bayle very humourously engages a mandarin of China, of the sect of the Literati, in a dialogue with the Jesuits, and with a Dutch ambassador: The Jesuits tell the mandarin,

that the Emperor had no subjects in his dominions, whose obedience was so secure to him as that of their converts the Christians; and none whose allegiance was so precarious as that of the Literati, who were atheists.

“Hold,” cries the mandarin; “let us not assert too much without proving it: What reason have you to say that the submission of the Christians to the orders of the Emperor is more certain than that of all his other subjects?” “That book inspired by God,” answer the Jesuits; “that book, which is the rule of our faith, commands us expressly to submit ourselves to the higher powers: Take the trouble, my lord, to read in it such and such passages: Nothing is more clear, nothing so precisely determined.”

“But,” says the mandarin turning to the ambassador, are not you in Europe divided about the meaning of these passages?”

“So divided,” replies the Dutchman, “that one room would not contain the volumes written for and against the right of subjects to resist and depose their prince: And both sides take particular care in all their writings to examine accurately every text of scripture, which the reverend fathers refer you to. This discussion of texts has therefore begot two propositions, flatly contradicting each other. One party asserts, that in departing from your obedience, you depart from the Bible: The other says, they resist with the Bible on their side. We have in Christendom many instances of princes attacked by parties of their subjects, bereft of their sovereignty, banished, beheaded, assassinated, and generally for the interest of religion. Nor is there any end of the books published on this occasion; we have every day printed accusations, and every day printed apologies; and both they who accuse and they who defend appeal to God, and refer to his word. As to the Jesuits in particular, it becomes them the least of all men to talk in this manner; no society of men have ever written so much in

behalf of popular insurrections; they have openly contended for rebellion, and practised it; they have been the authors of royal assassinations, and have been turned out of states for disturbing them.”

“If these things are so,” concludes the mandarin, “you gentlemen of the Order of Jesus have no reason to boast in behalf of yourselves and your followers, as if you were better subjects than other men. This your pretended article of faith about the submission of the subject is couched so obscurely in your book of sacred laws, that you will never find it there when you have occasion for a rebellion or a revolution; events which I find are frequent enough in your country.”

The same Bayle observes, that the same party of Christians, namely, the French Catholicks, who had maintained, under Charles IX and Henry III that it was against all laws, human and divine, for subjects to take arms against their prince, did also maintain, even before the death of Henry III that it was agreeable to laws, human and divine, to take up arms against one's prince. The other party of Christians, namely, the Protestants, were not more consistent. They maintained, during the reigns of Charles IX and Henry III that laws, human and divine, allowed the smaller part of the subjects to arm themselves against the greater part even with the king at their head: But after the death of Henry III when they had got a king of their own religion, they maintained, that both the law of God and the law of man forbid even the greater part of the subjects to arm themselves against the smaller part with the king at their head.

It were needless to give more proofs, and endless to give all that might be given. Almost every thing that men do, is an evidence that their friendship for themselves does effectually extinguish their regard for all the rest of their species; and that they adopt or reject principles, just as these principles promote or contradict their interest and passions.

Nor are religious or moral principles the worse for being thus used; but men shew their own unconquerable malignity and selfishness in using them thus.

Upon the whole, I think it very plain, that if you separate from the principles of men the penalties and advantages which are annexed to them by laws human and divine, or which every man has annexed to them in his own mind, you will hardly leave such a thing as principle in the world; the world is therefore not governed by principle.

G.

I am, &c.

No. 45. SATURDAY, September 16, 1721.

Of the Equality and Inequality of Men. [Gordon] ↩

[II-85]

SIR,

Men are naturally equal, and none ever rose above the rest but by force or consent: No man was ever born above all the rest, nor below them all; and therefore there never was any man in the world so good or so bad, so high or so low, but he had his fellow. Nature is a kind and benevolent parent; she constitutes no particular favourites with endowments and privileges above the rest; but for the most part sends all her offspring into the world furnished with the elements of understanding and strength, to provide for themselves: She gives them heads to consult their own security, and hands to execute their own counsels; and according to the use that they make of their faculties, and of the opportunities that they find, degrees of power and names of distinction grow amongst them, and their natural equality is lost.

Thus nature, who is their parent, deals with men: But fortune, who is their nurse, is not so benevolent and impartial; she acts wantonly and capriciously, often cruelly; and counterplotting justice as well as nature, frequently sets the fool above the wise man, and the best below the worst.

And from hence it is, that the most part of the world, attending much more to the noisy conduct and glaring effects of fortune, than to the quiet and regular proceedings of nature, are misled in their judgment upon this subject: They confound fortune with nature, and too often ascribe to natural merit and excellency the works of contrivance or chance. This however, shews that reason and equity run in our heads, while we endeavour to find a just cause for things that are not just; and this is the source of the reverence which we pay to men whom fortune sometimes lifts on high, though nature had placed them below. The populace rarely see any creature rise, but they find a reason for it in his parts; when probably the true one will be found in his own baseness, or another man's folly.

From the same reasoning may be seen why it is, that, let who will be at the head of a party, he is always extolled by his party as superior to the rest of mankind; and let who will be the first man of his country, he will never fail being complimented by many as the first of his species. But the issue and their own behaviour constantly shew, that the highest are upon a level with the rest, and often with the lowest. Men that are high are almost ever seen in a false light; the most part see them at a great distance, and through a magnifying medium; some are dazzled with their splendor, many are awed by their power. Whatever appears shining or terrible, appears great, and is magnified by the eye and the imagination.

That nature has made men equal, we know and feel; and when people come to think otherwise, there is no excess of folly and superstition which they may not be brought to practise. Thus they have made gods of dead men, and paid divine honours to many while they were yet living: They saw them to be but men, yet they worshipped them as gods. And even they who have not gone quite so far, have yet, by their wild notions of inequality, done as much mischief; they have made men, and often wicked men, to be vice-gods; and then made God's power (falsely so called) as irresistible in the hands of men as in his own, and

much more frightful.

It is evident to common sense, that there ought to be no inequality in society, but for the sake of society; but these men have made one man's power and will the cause of all men's misery. They gave him as far as they could the power of God, without obliging him to practise the mercy and goodness of God.

Those that think themselves furthest above the rest, are generally by their education below them all. They are debased by a conceit of their greatness: They trust to their blood; which, speaking naturally, gives them no advantage; and neglect their mind, which alone, by proper improvements, sets one man above another. It is not blood or nature, but art or accident, which makes one man excel others. Aristotle, therefore, must either have been in jest, when he said, that he, who naturally excelled all others, ought to govern all; or said it to flatter his pupil and prince, Alexander the Great. It is certain, that such a man never yet was found in the world, and never will be found till the end of it. Alexander himself, notwithstanding the greatness of his spirit, and his conquests, had in his own army, and perhaps among the common soldiers, men naturally as great and brave as himself, and many more wise.

Whoever pretends to be naturally superior to other men, claims from nature what she never gave to any man. He sets up for being more than a man; a character with which nature has nothing to do. She has thrown her gifts in common amongst us; and as the highest offices of nature fall to the share of the mean as well as of the great, her vilest offices are performed by the great as well as by the mean: Death and diseases are the portion of kings as well as of clowns; and the corpse of a monarch is no more exempted from stench and putrefaction, than the corpse of a slave.

Mors aequo pulsat pede.

All the arts and endowments of men to acquire pre-eminence and advantages over one another, are so many proofs and confessions that they have not such pre-eminence and advantages from nature; and all their pomp, titles, and wealth, are means and devices to make the world think that they who possess them are superior in merit to those that want them. But it is not much to the glory of the upper part of mankind, that their boasted and superior merit is often the work of heralds, artificers, and money; and that many derive their whole stock of fame from ancestors, who lived an age or many ages ago.

The first founders of great families were not always men of virtue or parts; and where they were so, those that came after them did frequently, and almost generally, by trusting to their blood, disgrace their name. Such is the folly of the world, and the inconvenience of society, to allow men to be great by proxy! An evil that can scarce ever be cured. The race of French kings, called by their historians in contempt, *les rois faineants* and the succession of the Roman Caesars (in both which, for one good prince they had ten that were intolerable, either for folly, or cruelty, and often for both), might be mentioned as known proofs of the above truth; and every reader will find in his own memory many more.

I have been told of a prince, who, while yet under age, being reproved by his governor for doing things ill or indecent, used to answer, *Je suis roy; I am King*; as if his quality had altered the nature of things, and he himself had been better than other men, while he acted worse. But he spoke from that spirit which had been instilled into him from his cradle. *I am*

King! What then, Sir? The office of a king is not to do evil, but to prevent it. You have royal blood in your veins: But the blood of your page is, without being royal, as good as yours; or, if you doubt, try the difference in a couple of porringers next time you are ill; and learn from this consideration and experiment, that by nature you are no better than your people, though subject from your fortune to be worse, as many of your ancestors have been.

If my father got an estate and title by law or the sword, I may by virtue of his will or his patent enjoy his acquisition; but if I understand neither law nor the sword, I can derive honour from neither: My honour therefore is, in the reason of things purely nominal; and I am still by nature a plebeian, as all men are.

There is nothing moral in blood, or in title, or in place: Actions only, and the causes that produce them, are moral. He therefore is best that does best. Noble blood prevents neither folly, nor lunacy, nor crimes: but frequently begets or promotes them: And noblemen, who act infamously, derive no honour from virtuous ancestors, whom they dishonour. A man who does base things, is not noble; nor great, if he do little things: A sober villager is a better man than a debauched lord; an honest mechanick than a knavish courtier.

— — —Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus.

Prima mihi debes animi bona; sanctus haberi Justitiaeque tenax factis dictisque mereris? JUV. SAT. 8

We cannot bring more natural advantages into the world than other men do; but we can acquire more virtue in it than we generally acquire. To be great is not in every man's power; but to be good is in the power of all: Thus far every man may be upon a level with another, the lowest with the highest: and men might thus come to be morally as well as naturally equal.

G.

I am, &c.

No. 46. SATURDAY, September 23, 1721.

Of the false Guises which Men put on, and their ill Effect. [Gordon] ↪

[II-91]

SIR,

Men are often capable of doing as much, whether it be good or evil, by the appearance of parts, as by possessing them; and become really considerable by being thought so. Some, by pretending to great interest with the gods, have gained great interest among men; and plagued the earth, to prove themselves favourites of heaven: Others grow great at court, by being thought great in a party; and grow at the same time great in a party, by being thought great at court: Twice liars, they meet with the double wages of lying.

Thus is the world deceived; a thing so easily done, that rarely any man sets about it but he succeeds in it, let his parts be ever so scanty or starved. Murderers have passed for saints, buffoons for wits, and solemn dunces for wise men.

I have been often provoked to see a whole assembly, sometimes neither contemptible for number, nor figure, nor sense, give themselves up to the guidance and management of a silly ignorant fellow, important only in grimace and assurance: Nay, parties, potent parties, generally throw themselves into the hands and direction of men, who, though they chop them and sell them, yet want every talent for this sort of negotiation, but what they possess in the credulity of those that trust them. This is the best qualification, and it is sufficient. These are the sidrophils, the cunning men in parties, as ignorant as those in Moorfields; they only know more than those whom they deceive, by pretending to more.

The affectation of wisdom is a prevailing folly in the world; men fall naturally into the practise of it; and it would be pardonable, as it is common, if it went no further than the aiming at a little notice and reverence, which every body may be innocently fond of. But when men seek credit this way, in order to betray, and make use of their grimace as a trap to deceive; when they turn their admirers into followers, and their followers into money; then appearing wisdom becomes real villainy, and these pretenders grow dangerous impostors.

And this is what men frequently get by trusting more to the understanding of others than to their own, though often the better of the two; and therefore we find, in many instances, that fools mislead and govern men of sense. In things where men know nothing, they are apt to think that others know more than they; and so blindly trust to bold pretensions: And here is the great cause and first rise of sharpers and bubbles of all denominations, from demagogues and their followers, down to mountebanks and their mobs.

I think that there is not a more foolish figure in the world than a man affectedly wise: But it is not every body that sees it: and such a one is often the admiration of one sort of people, and the jest of another, at the same time. Where we see much of the outside of wisdom, it is a shrewd sign that there is but little within; because they who have the least often make the greatest shew: As the greatest hypocrites are the loudest prayers.

The inside of such a man is not worth knowing; and every man must have observed his outside: His words fall from him with an uncommon weight and solemnity; his gait is stately and slow, and his garb has a turn in it of prudence and gravity, of which he that made it is the author, and by that means becomes a considerable instrument and artificer of wisdom.

This will be better illustrated in the character of Lord Plausible, who having long set up for a wise man, and taking eloquence to be the most effectual sign of wisdom, is an orator and a wise man in every circumstance of his life, and to every body; he is eloquent to his footman, to his children, and at his table. Lord Plausible never converses; no, talking carelessly as other people do, would not be wise enough; he therefore does not converse in company, but makes speeches; he meditates speeches in his closet, and pronounces them where he visits. Even while he drinks tea, or plays at cards, his language is lofty and sounding; and in his gait you see the same sublime as in his words. Add to all this, an unrelenting gravity in his looks, only now and then softened by a studied smile. He never laughs without checking his muscles: mirth would be a blot upon wisdom; the good man only creates mirth in others.

Thus he grows important, without suffering in his character for his natural shallowness and acquired folly, unseen by the bulk of his party, who, being for understanding and breeding pretty much in the lower class, think him an oracle, and believe him deep in the counsels and reverence of great men, who use him civilly and laugh at him.

As a man can hardly be severely just and constant to the ways which he approves, without some degree of austereness, or what the world calls so; it is no wonder if this character, always esteemed and often beloved, becomes mimicked by those who have no pretence to it. But I am at a loss whether it be more provoking or merry, to see creatures setting up for a severity of behaviour, without one grain of justice and honour about them; pretending to wisdom, with great conceit and stupidity; complaisant in every step and degree of corruption, yet preserving a stiffness in their behaviour, as if they were so many rigid Stoicks.

Quid? Si vultu torvo & pede nudo
Exiguæque togæ simulet textore Catonem;
Virtutemque repræsentet moresque Catonis.

There are mimicks of wisdom and virtue in all ages, as well as in that of Horace.

A man may be a lord, or a minister, or a considerable man, without declaring war against gaiety and easiness. But grave fellows, who become grave to gain importance, are by all men of sense disappointed. A wise man may be a merry fellow; and a very silly fellow may be a very grave man. The wisest men of my acquaintance are the merriest men that I know; nor could I ever find what wisdom had to do with an unpleasing and rebuking stateliness, that contradicts it. Mirth, and what these solemn drones call folly, is a piece of wisdom which they want sense to know and practise. Besides, there is a wise way of playing the fool, which wise men know how to practise, without losing their character. But your grave fellows are perhaps afraid of playing the fool, because they would do it too naturally; yet even that would be better than being thus ridiculously wise against nature.

Some men's natural heaviness passes for wisdom, and they are admired for being blockheads. Sometimes forced gravity does the same thing. Nor is it any thing new to place wisdom in grimace; many of the old philosophers did the same, and made their long beards,

in particular, an eminent type of it.

Jussit sapientem poscere barbam.

Doubtless, like others who have lived since, they often possessed the sign only. The Schoolmen were reckoned deep and wise men, for talking unintelligibly, and their wisdom was jargon and obscurity.

They that are really wise, need not take much pains to be thought so; and they that do, are not really wise. We cannot live always upon the stretch, either of silence, or of eloquence, or of gaiety: and whoever endeavours it, shews his folly while he seeks renown.

A man of great quality and age, and of great reputation for wisdom, being once surprized by a foreign minister, while he was at play with his little children, was so far from confessing any shame for being thus caught indulging the fancy and fondness of a father, that he told the ambassador, who seemed to have found what he did not expect: "Sir, be in no pain for me; he who is accounted a wise man in the morning, will never be reckoned a fool at night." This is, no doubt, true of a man truly wise. But it is as true, that many men have passed for wise men in the morning, who have been found fools before noon.

Men, affectedly wise, need only be examined to be despised; and we find by experience, that starched gravity creates more jest and laughter amongst men of sense, who are generally frank and pleasant men, than the most remarkable levity and giddiness can do. The reverence therefore paid to such men, if it be real, is constantly the effect of ignorance: We admire them at a distance; but when we see them a little nearer, we begin to admire at our own admiration.

But such examination is never like to be very popular, and consequently such discoveries are not like to be very formidable; the multitude will never make them; there will always be a great deal in resolving to be great and wise, and great success will be ever attending it: *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*, is at all times a safe way of reasoning. And hence drones and coxcombs will, by a false show of wisdom, be always bidding fair for the reputation of wisdom, and often for its rewards. This is more easily shewn, than mended.

G.

I am, &c.

No. 47. SATURDAY, October 7, 1721.

Of the Frailty and Uncertainty of human Judgment. [Gordon] ↪

[II-97]

SIR,

Human judgment is the best and surest guide that we have to follow, in affairs that are human; and even in spirituals, where the immediate word of God interposes not. But it is so liable to be corrupted and weighed down by the biases that passion, delusion, and interest hang upon it, that we ought never to trust, without caution and examination, either to our own or that of others.

Men are hardly ever brought to think themselves deceived in contending for points of interest or pleasure. But as it is rare that one man's pursuits do not cross and interfere with the pursuits of others, and as every man contends for the reasonableness of his own; though it must be in the nature of things, that they may be both in the wrong, and only one can be in the right: Hence it proceeds that men, who are so naturally alike, become morally so unlike, that sometimes there is more resemblance between a man and a wolf, than between one man and another; and that one and the same man is not one and the same man in two different stations.

The difference therefore between one man's judgment and another's, arises not so much from the natural difference between them; though that too, the structure of their organs being different, may beget different sentiments; as from the difference of their education, their situation and views, and other external causes.

Men, who in private life were just, modest, and good, have been observed, upon their elevation into high places, to have left all their virtuous and beneficent qualities behind them, and to have acted afterwards upon a new spirit, of arrogance, injustice, and oppression. And yet, perhaps, their latter actions had as much the sanction of their own judgment as their first.

England could not boast of a greater patriot than the great Earl of Strafford, while he was yet a private commoner. No man exposed better, or more zealously, the encroachments and oppressions practised by the court upon the kingdom, or contended more loudly for a redress of grievances: But he was no sooner got into the court, but he began openly to counter-act the whole course of his past life: He devised new ways of terror and oppression, heightened all those grievances of which he had complained; and, as the excellent Lord Falkland said of him in the House of Commons, the oppressions which he committed were "so various, so many, and so mighty, as were never committed by any governor in any government since Verres left Sicily." But though the two great parts of his life, were thus prodigiously inconsistent, I do not remember that he ever condemned the worst, though he suffered for it, or recanted the best. It is probable, that his judgment in both cases approved his conduct.

Nor is the judgment of men varied by great and considerable causes only; to the disgrace of our reason we must own, that little ones do it as effectually. A wise man ruffled by an accident, or heated by liquor, shall talk and act like a madman or a fool; as a madman, with a little soothing and management, shall talk like a wise man: And there are instances of very able men, who, having done great service to their prince and country, have undone it all from

motives that are shameful to mention. Perhaps they missed a smile from him, when they expected one; or met with a satirical jest, when they expected none: and thus, piqued by a little real mirth or fancied neglect, they have run into all the excesses of disloyalty and rebellion, and either ruined their country, or themselves and their families in attempting it. Others, misled by a gracious nod, or a squeeze by the hand, or a few fair promises no better than either, have, by running all the contrary lengths of complaisance and subserviency, done as much mischief to their country, without intending it any, and perhaps thinking that they did it none. There are examples of the same men practising both these extremes.

So mechanical a thing is human judgment! So easily is the human machine disconcerted and put out of its tone! And the mind subsisting in it, and acting by it, is calm or ruffled as its vehicle is so. But though the various accidents and disorders happen ing to the body, are the certain causes of disorders and irregular operations in the mind; yet causes that are internal affect it still more; I mean the stimulations of ambition, revenge, lust, and avarice. These are the great causes of the several irregular and vicious pursuits of men.

Neither is it to be expected, that men disagreeing in interest, will ever agree in judgment. Wrong, with advantages attending it, will be turned into right, falsehood into truth; and, as often as reason is against a man, a man will be against reason: And both truth and right, when they thwart the interests and passions of men, will be used like enemies, and called names.

It is remarkable that men, when they differ in any thing considerable, or which they think considerable, will be apt to differ in almost every thing else. Their differences beget contradiction, contradiction begets heat, heat quickly rises into resentment, rage, and ill-will. Thus they differ in affections, as they differ in judgment; and the contention, which began in pride, ends in anger.

The acquiescing sincerely in the judgment of another, without the concurrence of our own, and without any advantage, real or fancied, moving us to such acquiescence, is a compliment which I do not know that one man ever paid to another: An unanswerable argument, why no man should be provoked at those whom he cannot convince; since they, having reasons, or thinking that they have reasons, on the contrary side, as strong as his, or stronger, have as much cause to be provoked with him for not acquiescing in theirs. Yet there are but few debates of consequence in this world, where the arguments are not seconded by wrath, and often supplied by it.

But this is not the way of dealing with men; nor is there any other way of persuading them into your judgment, but by shewing it their interest. Their minds are so corrupted by their appetites, that, generally speaking, their judgment is nothing but their interest in theory; and their interest is their judgment reduced into practice. This will account for the contradictory parts which men play, and the contrary parties that they occasionally choose. This serves them with reasons for the unreasonable things that they do, turns roguery into honesty, madness into merit.

In truth, whenever men leave their own judgment for the judgment of others, as they sometimes do, they either do it for gain, or glory, or pleasure, or for the avoiding of shame, or some such cause; all which motives are interest, as is every thing else that they do for their own sakes. Thus honesty is often only the fear of infamy, and honour the appetite of applause: Thus men rush into danger and death, to gratify love or anger, or to acquire fame: And thus they are faithful to their word and engagement, to avoid the reproach of treachery.

Men are so apt to link their approbation to their profit and pleasure, that their interest, though ever so vile, absurd, and unjustifiable, becomes really their judgment. I do not think that human art and imagination could have invented tenets more false and abominable, more chimerical or mischievous, than are those of the *infallibility of the Pope*, and the *irresistibleness of tyrants*; that is, that one man, living in the hourly practice of error, or vice, or folly, and often of them all, shall judge for the whole earth, and do what God has not done; that is, fashion the minds of all the human race like his own, and make them his sacrifices, where he cannot make them his slaves: And that another man shall have a divine right to represent God and govern man, by acting against God and destroying man.

These are such monstrous absurdities, such terrible, ridiculous, and inhuman inventions, as could arise from nothing but pride and avarice on one side, and fear and flattery on the other; and could be defended by nothing but the most brutish force, or the most abandoned impudence. Yet we have seen these monstrous absurdities defended, and God Almighty declared their defender; even him, who is the God of mercy and truth, made, blasphemously, the author of cruelty and lies.

In this light do these things appear to one who considers them without embarking in them, and receiving any advantage from them. But those who gain or subsist by them, see them in a different light: I doubt not but their judgment, as they call it, does actually blend with their interest, or for the most part does; and therefore they are really in earnest in maintaining it. Folly, falsehood, and villainy, are no longer called by their own names, nor thought to deserve them, by those that reap advantages from them. Even those, who have practised the greatest of all evils, even that of destroying God's people, have thought that in doing it they did God good service. Our blessed Saviour foretold it; and his words have been fulfilling ever since, and perhaps will be till he return.

Oliver Cromwell fought God in all his Oppressions; and though I am sure that he was an usurper, I am not sure that he was a hypocrite, at least all along; though it is most probable that he was one at first. But he had so long personated a saint, that he seems at last to have thought himself one; and when he saw his latter end approaching, he was so far from shewing any compunction for the part which he had acted, that he, on the contrary, boasted that he had been the cause of much good to this nation; and added such ejaculations and prayers, as shewed that he possessed his mind in peace, and was not without confidence in God.

The emperor of Morocco, than whom a more inhuman butcher never lived, makes God the author of all his barbarities; and when he murders a slave (as he does every day some) out of wantonness or wrath, he lifts up his eyes and says, "Tis God that does it": No man talks more of God and religion, and he certainly thinks himself a most religious man.

Let all this serve to shew, how little men's judgment is to be trusted when interest follows it, and is probably both the cause and the effect. Let it abate our confidence in particular men, who may make our trust in them the means of their misleading us: Let us learn to believe no man the more, for that he believes himself; since men are as obstinate in error, especially in gainful error, as they are in truth; and more so, where truth is not gainful: And lastly, let us swallow no man's judgments, without judging of it and him; and yield up our reason to no man's authority, nor our interest to any man's direction, any farther than prudence or necessity obliges us. Let us remember what the world has ever got by implicit faith of any kind whatsoever.

G.

I am, &c.

No. 48. SATURDAY, October 14, 1721.

*The general unhappy State of the World, from the Baseness and Iniquity of its Governors
in most Countries. [Gordon]* ↩

[II-104]

SIR,

While I have been reading history, or considering the state of human affairs, how woefully they are neglected, how foolishly managed, or how wickedly disconcerted and confounded, in the most and best countries: When I have remembered how large, every where, is the source of mischief, how easily it is set a running, and how plentifully it flows; how it is daily breaking into new channels, and yet none of the old ones are ever suffered to wax dry: I have been apt to wonder, that the general condition of mankind, though already vastly unhappy, is not still worse.

Pope Aeneas Sylvius must have had such reflections as these, when he said, that this world did, in a great measure, govern itself. He had many examples before his eyes, how easy it was to govern wretchedly, and yet continue to govern. The papacy itself might particularly have furnished him with many examples. It is a fairy dominion, founded upon non-entities, inventions, and abominations; supported by lies and terrors; exercised with cruelty, craft, and rapine; and producing meanness, delusion, and poverty, where-ever it prevails.

What could appear more strange, incredible, and shameful, than to see a mean monk, residing in a corner of the world, and ruling and plundering it all; living in crimes, pride and folly, and controlling Christendom by the sounds of humility, holiness, and infallibility; subsisting upon the spoils and industry of nations, and engaging nations in a blind conspiracy against themselves, for the defence of their oppressor; pronouncing the peace of God to mankind, and animating mankind to continual quarrels and slaughters; declaring himself the vicar of Christ, and making unrelenting war against the followers of Christ; and, finally, the father of Christendom, and the destroyer of Christians.

All this villainy and impudence was obvious to common sense, and felt by long experience. But how little do men see, when they are taught to be afraid of their eye-sight! Even the Reformation, one of the greatest blessings that ever befell Europe, has but partially removed this mighty and enormous usurpation. The root of the evil still remains: and men are not yet weary of fighting about words, subtleties, chimeras, and about the shape of their thoughts and imagination; a thing as much out of their own power, as the shape of their limbs, or the motion of the winds: The issue and design of all which is, that their leaders in strife reap the fruits of it, and gather the spoils, the whole spoils of those battles, in which craft only blows the trumpet, while ignorance wields the sword, and runs all the danger.

If in this, as in other wars, none would fight but those that are paid, or find their account in fighting, the combatants would soon be reduced to a few; and they too would quickly leave a field where there was no booty.

Will the world never learn, that one man's corn grows not the worse, because another man uses different words in his devotion? That pride and anger, wealth and power, are of no religion? And that religion is inseparable from charity and peace?

I am told, that the famous combustion raised some years ago at Hamburgh, by one Krumbultz, a divine, and in which that free city had like to have perished, was occasioned by this momentous question, namely, whether in the Lord's Prayer we should say, *Our Father*, or, *Father, our*. A hopeful point of debate, to be the cause of civil dissension, and a true specimen of the importance and consequences of ecclesiastical disputes, and of the spirit of those that manage them!

It is a shameful satire upon the wickedness of some, and the weakness of others, thus to endanger the peace of society and their own, for the sake of a sound; to be thus eager for trifles; thus to concern heaven and earth in behalf of conceits, which of themselves concern neither: but, as they are generally managed, do both provoke God, and hurt men. But so it will ever be, as long as men, in possession of reverence, find their ends and gratifications in fetching knotty distinctions out of the plain word of God and making them of equal importance with it.

Thus unhappy has the greatest part of the world been, and is, in its ghostly government; two words which are a contradiction to each other; since the mind and understanding, in which alone all religion that is rational doth reside, can never be altered or controlled by any other means than that of counsel, reasoning, and exhortation; which method is utterly inconsistent with force and positive authority, as the same are implied in the idea of government.

Nor can I say, that mankind have been more happy in their civil lot, and in the administration of their temporal affairs; which are almost every where in a wretched situation, and they themselves under the iron hand of the oppressor. The whole terraqueous globe cannot shew five free kingdoms; nor perhaps half so many kings, who make the ease and prosperity of their people their care.

In enslaved countries (that is, in all countries, except our own, and a very few more) the good of the governed is so far from entering into the hearts and counsels of the governors, that it is opposite to the genius of their politicks, either to do them good, or to suffer them to acquire it for themselves. Their happiness and security, which are the very ends of magistracy, would be terrible to their magistrates; who, being the publick enemies of their country, are forced, for their own safety, to leave their people none.

How vile is that government, and those governors, whose only strength lies in whips and chains; a sort of instrument of servitude, which it would much better become the baseness of these men's natures to wear themselves, than to inflict upon others! A prince of slaves is a slave; he is only the biggest and the worst; just as the chief of the banditti is one of them. Such a prince is but a national executioner, and for a scepter he carries a bloody knife.

Such, for the most part, by far the most part, are the governors of the world: They derive their whole greatness, plenty, splendor, and security, from the misery, poverty, peril, and destruction of the governed. Whoever makes just, equal, and impartial laws, does, by doing so, but declare to the people, *Be wicked at your peril*: But he who rules them by terrors and standing armies, does, in effect, tell them in a terrible tone, *Be happy if you dare*.

Who, that has human compassion, can help feeling the sorrows of his wretched race, and behold, unconcerned, the forlorn and abject state of mankind? Monks deceiving, alarming, and sponging them; their governors taxing, mulcting, and squeezing them! Soldiers harrasing, oppressing, and butchering them! And, in short, all the bitter evils and crying miseries in human power to inflict, deliberately and daily inflicted upon them! Nor do things mend; on the contrary, the mischiefs and misfortunes of the world grow hourly greater, and its inhabitants thinner.

All these black considerations would lead a man, who had no other spirit or guide but that of nature, to think that providence, tempted by the sins of men, had long ago renounced them, or signed a decree of vengeance against them, which has ever since been dreadfully executed, and continues to be.

If one was to consider mankind in theory only, his own species would make no small figure in his imagination; he would see them formed by a divine hand, and according to a divine model; possessed of all the advantages of strength and contrivance, guided by reason, made wise by observation, and cautious by their own foresight and the experience of others; directed by laws and human constitutions; rendered discerning by the frequent trials of good and evil, and many of them enlightened by divine revelation: He would see them lords of the creation, arbiters of their own condition and felicity, invested with the use and property of sea and land, and with dominion over every other creature.

Thus mankind appear in speculation, powerful, wise, just, equal, and happy. But viewed in another light, they make another appearance. They use one another worse than they do the beasts of the field; and, by the wretched and monstrous oeconomy and government, almost every where found amongst them, they would seem not to have more understanding, as they have certainly less happiness. The beasts no where appoint or suffer one of their own herd to monopolize the whole soil, to engross every advantage to himself, to deprive them of all, to kill and destroy, to disperse and to starve them at his pleasure. Every one of them equally enjoys the shelter and pasture, the air and the water, which nature makes common to them all.

But men, their masters, cannot boast such security and justice: they generally live at the mere mercy of one, one of themselves, whose views suffer him to have no mercy. He is often a madman, often an idiot, often a destroyer; and the whole art of his government consisting in oppressing and terrifying, no other talent is required but a merciless spirit and brutal force.

Such is an arbitrary prince, and the descendants of Adam know few others. Sometimes a creature is seen to start into imperial power, whom the world never knew before, or knew only for his infamy: Taken out of the stews or out of a dungeon, into a throne; and without knowing how to rule himself, he rules an empire; living a recluse, and seen by nobody, he governs all but the women or parasites, who govern him: Millions of men, and their properties, are at the sole discretion of one who has none; and a creature void of humanity disposes wantonly of a great part of human kind.

This is the dismal state of all Asia and of all Africa, except a few free towns. The spirit of their monarchs, which is generally alike, may be seen in a story (among many others) which Knox tells us of the King of Ceylon, who, being in danger of drowning, was saved by the officious affection or ambition of one of his slaves, who leaped into the water, and ventured his own life to preserve his master's. This, one would think, was the greatest and most heroick kindness that one man could do another. But mark how the monarch requites it! why, the first thing he did after he came to himself, was to order the belly of his preserver to be

ripped up, for daring to touch the person of his sacred Majesty.

Nature has prepared many advantages and pleasures for the use of mankind, given them taste to enjoy them, and sagacity to improve them: But their governors, almost universally, frustrate the kind purposes of nature, render her beneficence abortive, and mar all human happiness. They have successfully studied the arts of misery, and propagated the practice.

It is a melancholy reflection, that when human affairs are put into a bad way, where they do not speedily recover, they never recover, or rarely ever. One great reason is, that power is always on the worst side, either promoting mischief, or preventing its removal; and the champions of dishonesty and oppression are more artful and better paid than the patrons of justice and innocence.

It has hitherto been the good fortune of England (and I hope always will be) when attempts have been made upon its liberty, to recover it before it was gone, at least before the sense of it was gone. And therefore it still subsists in spite of all the powerful, popular, and sanctified attacks that have been made, and frequently made, upon it. Let us make much of it; while it remains, it will make us amends for all the losses and miscarriages which we have fallen under, or may fall under, and will enable us to get the better of them. It is the root of our felicity, and all our civil advantages grow from it. By it we exceed almost all other nations, many more degrees than some of them exceed us in sun and soil: We are men, and they are slaves. Only government founded upon liberty, is a publick blessing; without liberty, it is a publick curse, and a publick warrant for depredation and slaughter.

Let us therefore remember the mighty difference between ourselves and other nations, and the glorious cause of it, and always dearly cherish it. We are not the prey of monks, or janizaries, or dragoons, nor the blind slaves of unaccountable will and pleasure. Our lives and properties are secured by the best bulwark in the world, that of laws made by ourselves, and executed by our magistrates, who are likewise made by us; and when they are dishonestly executed, or wilfully neglected, our constitution affords a remedy, a tried and a practicable remedy. And as no nation ever lost its liberty but by the force of foreign invaders, or the domestick treachery of its own magistrates; we have the sea and a great navy for our defenders against the former; and exorbitancies of the other are prevented or restrained by an excellent counterpoise, in the frame of our legislature.

That we may be for ever able to boast of all these blessings, these glorious and uncommon blessings, is the cordial wish and passionate prayer of

G

Yours, &c.

No. 49. SATURDAY, October 21, 1721.

Of the Power of Prejudice. [Gordon] ↪

[II-112]

SIR,

Men boast of their reason, and might justly, if they used it freely, and applied it properly; but considering that generally in their moral conduct they are guided by such reasons as are a shame and a contradiction to reason, it seems to be thrown away upon them: Indeed so little, or so wrong, is the use which they make of it, that it would be really [better] for their reputation if they had none.

But though the many scarce use it all, and none so much as they ought; yet every man thinks he does, and never wants something which he calls reason, for the justification of his folly or wickedness. Prejudice or passion steps into its room, takes its name; and, under the appearance of reason, does things which reason abhors. And thus reason, as well as religion, is forced to furnish its enemies with arms against itself; and the abuse of it is worse and more dangerous than the absolute want of it; as an idiot is less terrible and less odious than a knave, and as a harmless pagan is a much more amiable character than an outrageous persecuting bigot. So that as no religion at all is better than a mischievous religion; that is to say, any religion that prompts men to hurt one another; so the absence or inactivity of the faculties is better than the quickness of faculties wickedly applied.

Of all the many false lights that mislead men from their reason, prejudice is one of the foremost and most successful; and though no two things upon earth are more opposite in their natures, or more destructive of each other, than reason and prejudice are; yet they are often made to pass for each other: And as some men will give you very good reasons for their being in the wrong themselves, there are those too, who will give you as good, why others should not be in the right; that is, the prejudices of some would be thought wisdom, and the wisdom of others is miscalled prejudice. The worst things that men do, called by a good name, pass for the best; and the best, blackened by an ill name, pass for the worst. Such is the force of prejudice in the world, and so successfully does this foe to reason ape reason!

Prejudice is an obstinate and unreasonable attachment to an opinion, supported only by a wilfulness to maintain it, whether regarding men or things: It links the good with the bad, the bad with the good, and hates or loves by the lump. Thus if a man be called a saint, his worst actions are sainted with him; his very ignorance and cruelty, and even his dirtiness and his dreams, are made sacred and meritorious; as may be seen at large in the Romish legends, where the principal qualification for saintship seems to have consisted in stark raving madness, and in an implacable and bloody fury towards all sense and sobriety. And thus, even with us, if a man passes for a good man, his bad deeds are often thought good ones, by those that think him so, and only because they think him so.

On the other side, if a man be called an atheist, the odium of that name, where it is believed true, is made a blot upon his best actions and greatest virtues, and to defeat them as well as soil them. That there are such men as atheists, can only be imagined by those, who, doubting of a deity themselves, may naturally enough suppose that there are others who quite

disbelieve one: For my own particular, I cannot think that there are any such men; but if there were, I cannot think that truth and sobriety in an atheist are worse than in another man. That black is not white, and that two and two make four, is as true out of the mouth of an atheist, as out of the mouth of an apostle: A penny given by an atheist to a beggar, is better alms than a half-penny given by a believer; and the good sense of an atheist is preferable to the mistakes of a good Christian: In short, whatever reputed atheists do well, or speak truly, is more to be imitated and credited, than what the greatest believers do wickedly, or say falsely; and even in the business of bearing testimony, or making a report, in which cases the credit and reputation of the witness gives some weight, or none, to what he says, more regard is to be had to the word of an unbeliever who has no interest on either side, than to the word of a believer who has.

So that as no man is to be believed an atheist, unless he is evidently proved one; which, where he himself denies it, can be done by God only: So neither are the good or bad actions of an atheist worse, with respect to the world at least, for his being one; though the sin of a saint is more sinful than that of a pagan. As it is therefore the blackest and most barbarous villainy to charge any man with atheism, who is no atheist; it is the greatest folly to think that any man's crimes are the less for the name of him that commits them; or that truth is less or more truth, for the ill or good name of him that speaks it.

Prejudice has long taught men, contrary to all reason, to think otherwise; and to consider, not what was done or said, but who were the men that said or did it. A happy expedient, I must own, to acquire dominion, and to exercise it, and to keep, for that end; mankind ignorant and base, as their teachers and governors too generally keep them! And therefore, in most parts of the world, truth is a capital crime; and the Pope and Mahomet, the Alcoran and the mass-book, and the like sounds, with a competent assistance of fire and sword, are sufficient to convince and govern all true Catholicks and Mussulmen.

But we live in a land of liberty; and have, I hope, well-nigh wiped off the scandal of being led or animated by noise or names, as were many of our forefathers; whose reason, being in other men's keeping, was generally turned upon them, and co-operated with other causes towards keeping them in bondage. They were decoyed or frightened into folly and chains; some saw not their condition, others wanted courage or power to mend it. But with liberty light has sprung in, and we have got rid of the terror and delusion occasioned by solemn and ill sounding names; a sort of bugbears that frighten only in the dark: We have learned, that we are as fit to use our own understandings, as they are whose understandings are no better than ours; and that there is no merit in sounds, nor in those actions which a wicked man may practise as well as a good man, without departing from his character.

True learning and prejudices cannot subsist together; and therefore, though in societies of pedants, little else is to be found but prejudices, bitterness, ignorance, and ill-breeding; I am amazed to hear, that in societies of gentlemen, formed for the promoting of knowledge, and liberty of enquiry, a province utterly inconsistent with the narrow spirit of prejudice, there are yet found instances of the greatest. I hope, however, that it is not true, what I am told, that the Royal Society refused admitting Mr. Whiston' and another ingenious gentleman as members, because the one was an Arian, and the other a Black. Who would imagine, that natural complexion, or religious opinions, could any way affect the discovery of fossils and cockleshells, or the improvement of mustard and pickles? But I dare say, that this is only a story raised, to bring that learned body into ridicule and contempt: If it were true, it would justify the jest made upon them by a gentleman, who, being asked by some of them, whether

he had a mind to be a member? told them, "No, gentlemen, 'tis impossible; you see I have a mole on my upper lip, and I am subject to talk in my sleep."

It is scarce credible, but that we see it, how violently and shamefully prejudice flies in the face of reason, and often gets the better of it, in instances too where reason seems to be strongest and most obvious. I shall mention a remarkable one.

Alexander and Caesar are never mentioned but with applause, or thought of but as amiable characters, and the true patterns of princes and heroes, though it is certain that there never lived more wicked men; they turned the world upside down, and usurped its power; they paved their way to dominion with dead bodies, and were the oppressors and butchers of [the] human race. Here is fact, plain undeniable fact, against prejudice and opinion.

Oliver Cromwell, on the contrary, is scarce ever mentioned but with detestation, or thought of but as a monster; though it is as certain that he never did the hundredth part of the mischief that was done by either of the other two. He had at least as good a right to Great Britain as they had to the globe, and ruled it with more equity and less blood. He was, doubtless, an usurper, but a little one; and though wicked enough, really an innocent man compared to them. Nor was he at all below them in parts and courage. What therefore is the cause of this mighty and unjust difference, where the lesser wickedness is most magnified, and least excused; and where the blackest criminals and the highest usurpers are admired and extolled?

There is yet one effect of prejudice more impious than all the rest; I mean, the daring presumption of those men who wantonly apply the judgments of God to others, and of calling those things judgments which are not so. Probably nothing ever yet happened to one man, but has happened to another, and a different man: The wicked live in as much prosperity, and die with as few agonies, as do the righteous; who, I think, are allowed to be here below much the more unhappy of the two. Who has told us, what God can only tell, that misfortunes are judgments, or that death is one? That death which is common to all men? And as to the different and disastrous manners of dying; have not fire and sword, famine and pestilence, poison and torture, wild beasts and accidents, destroyed as many good men as evil men?

How foolish and insolent are we! When we are angry, unreasonably angry with one another, we presumptuously think that God, the good and all-wise God, is so too; by which we profanely suggest, that he is a being as weak, ridiculous, and passionate as ourselves. Whereas that often pleases God, which is hated by man; and that which is really a blessing, is often thought a curse: and therefore some wickedly think the judgment of God due to others for things that entitle them rather to God's favour. So wickedly do men differ in their sentiments and affections!

They who call the misfortunes of others judgments upon them, plainly enough own, though not in words, that they wish for judgments upon others, or are glad when they happen. What can we say of such an anti-Christian spirit as this?

When the heathens were uppermost, they charged the Christians with being the cause of all the evils and misfortunes that befell the Roman empire, such as inundations, plagues, earthquakes, and the like; and one of the fathers writ a book, to prove, that all those things had been from the beginning; and whoever makes the like charge now against any man, or body of men, may be silenced, if he has modesty, sense, or shame, in him, by the same answer.

G.

I am, &c.

An Idea of the Turkish Government, taken from Sir Paul Ricaut. [Gordon] ↩

[II-120]

SIR,

Sir Paul Ricaut's *State of the Ottoman Empire*, is what I have quoted before in these letters: It is written with fidelity and judgment, and gives us a good idea of that horrible and destroying government; a government fierce and inhuman, founded in blood, supported by barbarity; and a government that has a declared enmity to all that is good and lovely in the eyes of mankind.

I have therefore transcribed the following passage from him, to shew my countrymen the abject, the deplorable condition of that people, and the brutish and destructive genius of their government, and I do it with a benevolent view, to make them more and more in love with their own, and passionate for its preservation.

No man's authority is, or ought to be, of any weight for or against truth, when every man sees it, or may see it: but since weak men, and they that are worse, make a difficulty of crediting the reasonings and relations of any men about any thing, unless they know and approve his opinions in every thing; I think it not amiss to acquaint my readers, that Sir Paul was a sincere monarchy-man, and an unquestionable friend to our civil and religious establishment; but having long seen the dismal terrors and desolations of absolute monarchy, he could not help observing the infinite distance between that and a limited one; as may be seen in the following quotation.

For my own particular, I think it contrary to common sense to concern myself with the character of a writer, in those writings which do not concern his character: And therefore in matters of reason or fact, Cicero is as much regarded by me as Dr. Tillotson; and I credit Livy and much as I do Dr. Prideaux. For this reason, in reading authors, Christian or heathen, monarchical or republican, I do not consider their system, but their sense; which I shall therefore, as often as I see necessary, give in their own words, where I cannot mend them: And as often as they speak my thoughts as well, or better than I could speak them myself, I shall not scruple being beholden to them.

G.

I am, &c.

“He that is an eye-witness and strict observer of the various changes and chances in the greatness, honours, and riches of the Turks, hath a lively emblem before him of the unconstancy and mutability of human affairs. Fortune so strangely sports with this people, that a comedy or a tragedy on the stage, with all its scenes, is scarce sooner opened or ended, than the fate of divers great men, who in the day-time being exhaled into high sublimity by the powerful rays of the Sultan's favour, fall or vanish in the night, like a meteor. The reason hereof, if duly considered, may be of great use as things stand here; that is, the power of the Grand Seignior; for in this constitution, the benefit of the emperor is consulted before the welfare of the people.

“And this course does not only evidence the power of the Grand Seignior; but likewise increases it: For none are advanced in these times to office, but pay the Grand Seignior vast sums of money for it, according to the riches and expectations of profit from the charge. Some pay, as the bashaws of Grand Cairo and Babylon, three or four hundred thousand dollars upon passing the commission; others one, others two hundred thousand; some fifty thousand, as their places are more or less considerable; and the money is most commonly taken up at interest at 40 or 50 per cent for the year, and sometimes at double, when they are constrained to become debtors to the covetous eunuchs of the seraglio. So that every one, at his first entrance into office, looks upon himself (as indeed he is) greatly indebted, and obliged, by justice or injustice, right or wrong, speedily to disburden himself of the debts, and improve his own principal in the world; and this design must not be long in performance, lest the hasty edict overtake him before the work is done, and call him to an account for the improvement of his talent.

“Taking then all circumstances together, the covetous disposition of a Turk, the cruelty and narrowness of soul in those men commonly that are born and educated in want; think what oppression, what rapine and violence must be exercised, to satisfy the appetite of these men, who come famished with immense desires and strange considerations to satisfy!

Diu sordidus, repente dives mutationem fortunae male [tegebat], accensis
egestate longa cupidinibus immoderatus. Tacit.

“So that justice in its common course is set to sale; and it is very rare, when any law-suit is in hand, but bargains are made for the sentence; and he hath most right, who hath most money to make him *rectus in curia*, and advance his cause; and it is the common course for both parties at difference, before they appear together in presence of the judge, to apply themselves singly to him, and try whose donative and present hath the most in it of temptation; and it is no wonder if corrupt men exercise this kind of trafficking with justice, for having before bought the office, of consequence they must sell the fruit.

“Add hereunto a strange kind of facility in the Turks, for a trifle or small hire, to give false witness in any case, especially (and that with a word) when the controversy happens between a Christian and a Turk; and then the pretence is for the Mussulmanleek, as they call it; the cause is religious, and hallows all falseness and forgery in the testimony.

“This consideration and practice made an English ambassador, upon renewing the Capitulations, to insert an article of caution against the testimony of Turks, as never to be admitted or pleaded in any court of Turkish justice, against the English interest.

“In the times of the best emperors, when virtue and deserts were considered, and the empire flourished and increased, men had offices conferred upon them for their merits, and good services were rewarded freely and with bounty, without sums of money and payments. But now it is quite contrary, and all matters run out of course; a manifest token, in my opinion, of the declension and decay of the empire! However, this serves in part the great end of the empire; for bashaws and great men, having a kind of necessity upon them to oppress their subjects, the people thereby lose their courage; and by continual taxes and seizures upon what they gain, poverty subdues their spirits, and makes them more patiently suffer all kind of injustice and violence that can be offered them, without thoughts or motion to rebellion: And so the Lord Verulam says in his *Essays*, that it is impossible for a people overladen with

taxes ever to become martial or valiant; for no nation can be the lion's whelp, and the ass between two burdens.

“By this means the Turk preserves so many different sorts of people, as he hath conquered, in due obedience, using no other help than a severe hand, joined to all kind of oppression: But such as are Turks, and bear any name of office or degree in the service of the empire, feel but part of this oppression, and live with all freedom, having their spirits raised by a licence they attain to insult over others that dare not resist them.

“But the issue and conclusion of the spoils that these great men make on subjects is very remarkable: For, as if God were pleased to evidence his just punishment more evidently and plainly here than in other sins, scarce any of all these bashaws that have made haste to be rich, have escaped the Grand Seignior's hands; but he either wholly divests them of all, or will share the best part of the prey with them. Amongst whom I have observed none passes so hardly as the bashaws of Grand Cairo, because it is the richest and most powerful of all the governments of this empire; and so, either in his journey home, or after his return, he loses his life by publick command, or at least is rifled of his goods as ill got, which are condemned to the Grand Seignior's treasury: And it is strange yet to see with what heat these men labour to amass riches, which they know by often experiences have proved but collections for their master; and only the odium and curses which the oppressed wretches have vented against their rapine; remain to themselves.

Rebus secundis avidi, adversis autem incauti. Tacit.

* * *

“The Turk understands well how profitable it is for the constitution of this estate, to use evil instruments, who may oppress and poll his people, intending afterwards for himself the whole harvest of their labours; they remaining with their hatred, while the prince, under colour of performing justice, procures both riches and fame together.

“If it be suspected that any great man intends to make combustion or mutiny in his government, or that his wealth or natural abilities render him formidable, without further inquisition or scrutiny, all discontent of the Grand Seignior is dissembled, and perhaps a horse, or sword, or sable vest, is reported to be presented, and all fair treatment is counterfeited, till the executioner gets the bow-string about his neck, and then they care not how rudely they deal with him: Just like the birds in Plutarch, that beat the cuckoo, for fear that in time he should become a hawk.

“And to make more room for the multitude of officers that crowd for preferments, and to act the cruel edicts of the empire with the least noise; oftentimes when a great personage is removed from his place of trust, and sent with a new commission to the charge, perhaps, of a greater government; and though he depart from the regal seat with all fair demonstrations of favour, yet before he hath advanced three days in his journey, triumphing in the multitude of his servants and his late hopes, the fatal command overtakes him, and, without any accusation or cause, other than the will of the Sultan, he is barbarously put to death, and his body thrown into the dirt of a foreign and unknown country, without solemnity of funeral or monument; and he is no sooner in his grave, than his memory is forgotten.

“Hence are apparent the causes of the decay of arts amongst the Turks; and of the neglect and want of care in manuring and cultivating their lands; why their houses and private buildings are made slight, and not durable for more than ten or twenty years; why you find there no delightful orchards, and pleasant gardens and plantations; and why, in those countries where nature hath contributed so much on her part, there are no additional labours of art to complete all, and turn it into a paradise: For men, knowing no certain heir, nor who shall succeed them in their labours, contrive only for a few years' enjoyment. And moreover, men are afraid of shewing too much ostentation or magnificence in their palaces, or ingenuity in the pleasures of their gardens, lest they should bring on them the same fate that Naboth's vineyard occasioned to its master. And therefore men neglect all applications to the studies of arts and sciences, but only such as are necessary to the mere course of living: For the fear and crime of being known to be rich, makes them appear outwardly poor; and so become naturally Stoicks and philosophers in all the points of a reserved and cautious life.

“And here I am at a stand, and cannot conclude, without contemplating a while, and pleasing myself with the thoughts of the blessedness, the happiness, the liberty of my own country; where men, under the protection and safe influence of a gracious and the best prince in the world [He might with more propriety have said, *the best constitution in the world*], enjoy and eat of the fruit of their own labour; and purchase to themselves, with security, fields and manors, and dare acknowledge and glory in their wealth and pomp, and yet leave the inheritance to their posterity.”

No. 51. SATURDAY, November 4, 1721.

Popularity no Proof of Merit. [Gordon] ↪

[II-128]

SIR,

Popularity is the fondness and applause of many, following the person of one, who, in their opinion, deserves well of them; and it must doubtless be a sensible pleasure to him who enjoys it, if he enjoy it upon good terms, and from reputable causes: But where it is only to be acquired by deceiving men with words, or intoxicating them with liquors, or purchasing their hearts with bribes, a virtuous man would rather be without it; and therefore virtuous men have been rarely popular, except in the beginning, or near the first rise of states, while they yet preserved their innocence.

Where parties prevail, a principal way to gain popularity is, to act foolishly for one side, and wickedly against the other: And therefore some publick talkers have grown popular, by calling those whom they disliked by bitter and ill-bred names; or by rioting and making a noise for some sounds, which they had taken a liking to; or by insulting and abusing those that affronted them, by being more sober and sensible than themselves: And some, to be revenged on those that never hurt them, have given themselves up a blind prey to certain leaders, who deluded them, and sold them, and yet earned popular applause of them for so serving them.

So that popularity is often but the price which the people pay to their chiefs, for deceiving and selling them: And this price is so implicitly paid, that the very vices and fooleries of a popular chief become popular too, and were perhaps amongst the first causes that made him so. Some gentlemen of this cast owe their figure to the weakness of their heads, or the strength of their barrels; and grow considerable by their having small parts, or by drinking away those that they have.

These are the instruments that cunning men work with; and therefore sometimes a knave, who is not popular, shall get a weak man, who is so, to do those things with applause, for which he himself would be hated and condemned: And the hand that executes shall be blessed, when the head that contrives would be cursed, for one and the same thing.

This shews that names are principal reasons to determine the multitude to popular love and hatred; and it proceeds not so much from their being untaught as ill taught: When they are instructed not to reason but to rage, not to judge but to mistake, a better discernment and wiser behaviour are not to be hoped from them.

Demetrius, and the other craftsmen, shrine-makers to Diana, at Ephesus, were more popular men than St. Paul, and raised a mob to confute his arguments for Christianity: For it had not yet entered into the heads of the people, that religion and rage were contradictory things, and that antiquity and reverence could not sanctify impiety, falsehood, and folly.

In like manner, Barabbas, a rioter and a murderer, had more votes to save him than our blessed Saviour had; who was thought by that zealous, deluded, and outrageous people, to be the greater criminal of the two, for having told them sober, and saving truth, which was new

to them, though everlasting in itself; and therefore condemned because it was new.

Now, in neither of these instances were the people, though they acted thus impiously and madly, originally in the fault; but those who taught them; and who, having for religion taught them trifles, folly, and fury, were alarmed by the rational and prevailing doctrines of mercy, wisdom, and truth. They therefore blaspheme against the author of truth, yet charge him with blasphemy. As to the populace, they did as they were taught, and uttered the cry which was put into their mouths.

The people, when they are left to themselves, and their own understandings and observation, will judge of men by their good or bad actions, and are capable of separating vice from virtue, and the just from the unjust: And therefore, when their government is not corrupted, the best and most virtuous men will always be the most popular, and he who does best will be esteemed best: But when strong liquor, or money, or false terrors intervene, and government is turned into faction; the judgment of the people is vitiated, and worse than none. They then prefer the worst men to the best, if they have stronger drink, or more money, or are covered with any other false merit, by those whose word they take, and whose authority they submit to; and the most popular man is he who bribes highest, or imposes upon them best.

That these things are common, and almost universal, is not strange: Generally speaking, where-ever there is power, there will be faction; and where-ever there is money, there will be corruption: So that the heads of faction, and the promoters of corruption, have from their very characters, which ought to render them detestable, the means of popularity.

Who was better beloved at Rome than Spurius Melius, while he was meditating the slavery of the Roman people? Who could ever boast such potent parties, such numerous followers, such high applause and regard, such trophies and statues, as Marius and Sulla, Pompey and Caesar, Augustus and Anthony could boast; while they were overturning the state, oppressing mankind, butchering one half of the world, and putting shackles upon the other? And, in fine, who was ever a greater impostor, and more admired prophet, than Mahomet was? All these men were enemies to liberty, truth, and peace; the plagues and scourges of the earth: But they deceived and destroyed their people with their own consent, and by the highest wickedness gained the highest popularity.

The two Dukes of Guise, Francis and Henry, father and son, were the two most popular men that ever France saw, and grew so by doing it more mischief than ever two men till then had done. They were perpetually, during a course of many years, destroying its peace, violating its laws, usurping its authority, pushing at the crown, raising and carrying on rebellions, committing massacres, and filling it with blood and desolation: They had no one publick end, and did no one publick thing, but what was pernicious to France; yet France adored them.

Whoever is the author of a civil war, is author of all its cruel consequences; plunders, devastations, burnings, rapes, slaughters, oppression and famine. A frightful catalogue of crimes to line at one man's door! yet both these dukes had them all to answer for over and over, yet were vastly beloved. Even when they were dead, they continued the authors of long publick miseries, by leaving their destructive schemes and their party behind them; a fierce, lawless, and powerful party, that maintained the civil war long after them; and having destroyed Henry III was like to prove too hard even for the great Henry IV nor did he overcome it but by infinite courage, industry, and patience, and the renouncing of his

religion: Nay, at last, his murder was owing to the spirit of the League, first concerted, and afterwards constantly headed and animated, by these two dukes successively.

Had ever any country two greater foes? yet were ever two men greater darlings of any country? For Henry, Duke of Guise, particularly, he had so much the hearts of the people, that their passion for him ran not only to dotage, but idolatry; and they blasphemed God, to do the duke honour: They worshipped his image; they invoked him in their prayers; they touched religiously the hem of his garment, and with the same spirit and design rubbed their beads upon his clothes; nay, following him in multitudes as he passed their streets, saluted him with hosannas to the son of David.

Thus they treated and adored this idol; a lewd man, a public incendiary and destroyer, but represented to them as their saviour. He had for the ends of ambition put himself at the head of the Catholick cause; the surest warrant in the world for mischief and homage!

Our good fortune, or our better constitution, has hitherto restrained us against our will from running into all these excesses of distraction and folly. But we have had our popular idols too; wretched idols, who could not furnish us from their parts or reputation with one reason for our stupidity in admiring them. Sometimes paltry and turbulent priests, destitute of all virtue and good-breeding, weak and immoral patricians, or loud and ignorant plebeians, have run away with our reverence, without being able to merit our esteem; without religion they have been popular in the cause of religion, and contended popularly for loyalty by faction and rebellion.

To every reader, instances of this nature will occur within his own memory and observation. To name them with the other great names above-mentioned, would be an honour too mighty for them, who were but small wicked men, though greatly popular.

I have often remembered, with compassion, an unfortunate great man still living, but utterly ruined by his popularity and false friends. His good-nature has been often mentioned, and is grown almost proverbial: Nor do I deny it; though by it he never served himself, his family, or the publick. On the contrary, it has proved his failing and his crime. If one were to enquire for the causes of his popularity in the probity of his life, the piety of his mind, his publick abilities, private oeconomy, or conjugal or domestick virtues, these are topicks upon which his friends do not extol him: And for his loyalty, take loyalty in what sense you will, he will be found to have given preposterous proofs of it, and to have been engaged in all the depths of rebellion and perjury, and is still engaged.

From what has been said, it will not seem strange that some of the most popular men in the world have been the most mischievous in their behaviour and opinions. What fighting and burning has there been for transubstantiation! what declaiming, damning, and rebelling, for passive obedience! what fierce contention, and how many foolish arguments for persecution! All which opinions are a contradiction to religion and scripture, an affront to common-sense, and utterly destructive of all civil and religious liberty, and of all human happiness: Nor would any of them, or any like them, have ever entered into the heart of any man, unless he were first deceived, or found his account in deceiving. But even crimes, contradictions, and folly, will be popular in a state, when they bring gain or selfish gratifications to those who are in possession of a power to render folly, contradiction, and crimes, advantageous to the pernicious pursuits which they are engaged in.



No. 52. SATURDAY, November II, 1721.

Of Divine Judgments; the Wickedness and Absurdity of applying them to Men and Events.
[Gordon] ↩

[II-135]

SIR,

I have in a former letter to you, not long since, shewn the rashness of men in applying to one another the judgments of God. I shall in this consider that subject farther, and endeavour to cure that prevailing and uncharitable spirit.

Almost all sorts of men pretend, in some instances, to be in the secrets of the Almighty, and will be finding out the unsearchable purposes of his providence; they will be prying into the hidden things of God, and assigning such ends and motives for his all-wise dispensations, as are only suitable to their own weakness, or prejudices, or malice: They give him the same passions that they themselves possess, and then make him love and hate what and whom they themselves love and hate: They are pleased with flattery and sounds, and provoked by trifles and names; and so they think is he. And as they thus sanctify all their own doings, affections, and fancies, with a fiat and approbation from heaven, and belie and provoke God, to make him their friend; so they take it for granted that he is an enemy to all their enemies; and that therefore every evil, or seeming evil, that befalls their enemies, or those whom they dislike, is a manifest judgment from God, and a justification of whatever they can do against them: So that God is often made the author of every mischief which they themselves commit; but they that feel it, think more rationally that they are animated by a contrary spirit.

God made man after his own likeness, perfect, amiable, merciful, and upright; and men are bold and foolish enough to make God after theirs; and almost every one has his own God, one fashioned according to his own temper, imaginations, and prejudices. In this sense they worship as many false gods, as they have wrong notions of the true one; and so in some sort polytheism does yet remain even in the Christian world. They only agree in calling what they worship by the same name; but they conceive him in such a different manner, they differ so widely about his nature and will, and either give him such contradictory attributes, or so contradict one another in explaining these attributes, that it is plain they do not mean one and the same being. Some make God hate what he certainly loves, others make him love what he certainly hates; and all take it amiss if you think that they own and adore any God but the true God. But let them think what they will, many of them still worship the old gods of the heathens, gods that were delighted with baubles, shew, and grimace, and with cruelty, revenge, and human sacrifices.

From this mistaken and impious spirit it proceeds, that when calamities and disasters befall others, especially those that differ from us, we call them judgments, and say that the hand of God is against them: But when the same evils or worse befall ourselves, the style is changed, and then *whom God loveth he chasteneth*; or if we own them to be judgments, yet still they are judgments upon us for other people's sins.

Thus all the misfortunes that happened to Spain for many hundred years, whether they came from the enemy, or the elements, were divine judgments upon them for suffering the idolatrous Moors to inhabit that good Catholick country; and therefore, like true Catholicks,

they brought the greatest judgment of all upon it, by destroying and banishing that numerous and industrious people. Thus the bigotted pagans, when Alarick, king of the Huns, sacked Rome, charged the Christians with being the cause of that and of every other calamity that befell the empire: The Christians despised their gods, and therefore their gods, out of a particular spite to the Christians, afflicted the whole world with miseries; and so plagues, wars, hurricanes, and earthquakes, which were evils that had been in the world from the beginning of it, and will be to the end, were, notwithstanding, all so many judgments, occasioned by the poor Christians! Hence the beginning of penalties, severities, and persecutions against them; and thus the Christians came in time to return the charge upon the heathens, to use the same way of reasoning, and to make the like reprisals, and with as little equity, truth, or clemency: And thus, lastly, all parties in religion have ever dealt with one another.

We are commanded *not to judge, lest we be judged*; and we are told that *vengeance is the Lord's*, and that judgments are in his hand: All which are to convince us, that we have no certain or probable rule to apply God's judgments by; and that the surest rule is the rule of charity, *which wisheth all things, hopeth all things*. The good and evil that happen to man in this world, are no sure marks of the approbation and displeasure of Almighty God, who makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust: Good-fortune and calamities are the portion of the good and of the bad; and if there be any inequality, the wicked seem to have the advantage. The world had more people and temporal prosperity in the times of heathenism, than since its abolishment; Mahometanism possesses much more of the globe than Christianity possesses; the papists are more numerous than the Protestants are, and have greater and better countries. The apostles and saints were the poorest men in the world, and debauched men are often uppermost, and thrive best; and as the righteous are at least as subject to distempers and affliction while they live, as the wicked are, so the wicked die with as little pain and as few pangs as the righteous die.

That there is a providence, and a gracious providence presiding over the world, is manifest and undeniable; but how it works, and from what particular motives, in a thousand instances, none but the author of it can tell; though almost all pretend to tell, and are for ever diving into the secret counsels of the most high, with as much temerity as ill success.

To the discredit of this practice, it is observable, that none but the fierce and uncharitable, none but ignorant and narrow-spirited bigots and barbarians come into it or encourage it. Men of charitable and benevolent minds, enlarged by reason and observation, condemn it as irreligious; they know that it is often malicious and dishonest, always ridiculous and dangerous; they know the ways of God to be past finding out; they see human affairs so perplexed and unaccountable; men sometimes rising and sometimes falling, both by virtue and vice; such vicissitudes and revolutions in the fortunes of men and of nations, often without any change in these men and nations from virtue to vice, or from vice to virtue; people growing greater without becoming better, and poorer without growing worse: They behold good and evil so promiscuously dispensed; sometimes thousands of men, women, and children, of different spirits, merit, and morals, suffering equally under the same publick calamity, and deriving equally the like advantages from publick prosperity; they behold the adversity of some to be the visible cause of the prosperity of others, who are no better than them; and the prosperity of some the visible cause of the adversity of others, who are no worse than the former; and one and the same thing producing good and evil to those who alike deserve or do not deserve good and evil: They see so little equity or consistency in the proceedings of men; sometimes good men exalted, without any regard had to their virtue;

sometimes wicked men cast down, without any resentment of their crimes; sometimes good men punished for being good, and wicked men raised and rewarded for being wicked; sometimes both good and bad suffering or prospering alike, sometimes good-fortunes following the good, and ill-fortune the bad, often taking a contrary freak. I say, wise and honest men, seeing all these things in this great confusion and uncertainty, find sufficient reason to be afraid of making bold with heaven, and of christening by the name of its judgments any of these events and evils that afflict any part of mankind.

But bigots, and they, who, to serve ill ends, interest heaven in all that they do, deal more freely and profanely with their great maker and judge, whose counsels and judgments being incomprehensible, it is impiety and a contradiction to go about to explain and apply them. The Turks make God the author of every thing that they do, and of every evil that others suffer from them. They measure his will by the event; and, with them, whatever is successful, is lawful and just: The murder of a prince, or his murdering of others, is never sinful if it succeed: God, they say, blesses and approves the event, else he would prevent it. So that, upon this principle, there can be no such thing as wickedness and villainy amongst them; for who knows but it may succeed, and then it is good? or if it does not succeed, who could foresee but it would? This impious tenet of that brutish people arms them with fierceness and outrage against one another, and all the world; it animates them to commit rapine and butcheries, and then sears their consciences, and prevents all remorse. Nay, they glory in executing cruelty, because it is the judgment of God, and they are his agents.

I wish I could keep this dreadful principle out of Christendom; but I am sorry to say, that it is common amongst us. Whoever applies the judgment of God to others, has this Turkish spirit in him: And all men that make such applications, reason so foolishly, so falsely, and often so maliciously in their defence, that every instance which I have ever yet met with in all my reading and observation (except the declared instances in sacred writ) exposes them.

Upon the murder of Henry III of France, by Jacques Clément, a Dominican friar, the deputy of the famous French League, then at Rome, tells the Pope, in an audience given upon that occasion, that the assassin was chosen by God, and divinely inspired to murder his prince, and calls it a glorious exploit: And though that execrable and bloody monk used all the methods of falsehood, lies, and forgeries, to get access to the King, in order to destroy him; yet the deputy solemnly tells his Holiness, that it was notorious that the thing came not from men. The League distressed, resisted, and at last murdered their prince: And all these their own wicked doings were, forsooth, the judgments of God upon him, for suffering heresy in the land.

The Huguenots, on the other hand, made a judgment of that murder too; but a judgment on their side, for his frequent breach of faith and edicts with them, and for his barbarities towards them. They said, it was a remarkable providence of God, that he was assassinated in the same chamber where he had concerted the furious massacre of St. Bartholomew — in the very chamber, nay, on the same day, the same hour, and on the same spot! Here are judgments encountering judgments! let who will reconcile them. I think both sides sufficiently rash and ridiculous in making them, as are all those that do, whatever side they are of.

The conquest of the Greeks by Mahomet II and their slavish subjection to the Turks, is ascribed by the Jesuit Maimbourg to the Schism, which he says they were guilty of in withdrawing their obedience from the See of Rome. Here, according to him, was the

judgment and the cause of the judgment. Bayle observes upon this occasion, that Rome being taken by Charles V in 1527, was as barbarously pillaged by his troops, as was Constantinople by the Turks, when they took it: And he asks, whether Maimbourg would take it well to be told by the Greeks that that desolation of Rome was a judgment upon her for her pride and ambition, in demanding, imperiously, of the Greek Church an absolute uniformity and obedience to her discipline and dictates? He says, that Maimbourg, since he was dealing in judgments, might as well have given this another turn, with which Chalcondylis would have furnished him. That historian relates, that when Mahomet invaded and subdued Greece, the then inhabitants of Rome, who thought themselves the descendants of the old Romans, who came from Aeneas, who came from Troy, asserted positively, that all the destruction brought upon the Greeks by the barbarians, was but a judgment upon them for all the ravages which their Greek ancestors had committed against the subjects of Priamus, and in the destruction of Troy some thousand years before.

The death of Oliver Cromwell was, it seems, attended or followed by a very high wind; which was nothing strange: But as Oliver had been a usurper, and a great deceiver, and was greatly hated; most of the vulgar, and many that would be thought much wiser took it into their heads, that that same storm was a loud judgment and declaration of the wrath of heaven against him, and that Satan was fetching away his soul in a whirlwind. But his friends turned it quite another way; particularly Mr. Waller, who made all that tumult and bellowing in the elements, to be partly the call of heaven, summoning away so great a man; partly the sighs and sympathy of nature for his last agonies and departure. The copy of verses that Waller made on that occasion is one of the noblest in our language; I shall conclude with a few lines out of it.

*We must resign; Heav'n his great soul does claim,
In storms as loud as his immortal fame.
His dying groans, his last breath shakes our isle;
And trees, uncut, fall for his fun'ral pile.
New Rome in such a tempest lost her king,
And, from obeying, fell to worshipping.
Nature herself took notice of his death,
And, sighing, swell'd the sea with such a breath,
That, to remotest shores, her billows roll'd,
Th' approaching fate of their great ruler told.*

G

I am, &c.

No. 53. SATURDAY, November 18, 1721.

Dr. Prideaux's Reasoning about the Death of Cambyses, examined; whether the same was a Judgment for his killing the Egyptian God Apis. [Gordon] ↩

[II-144]

SIR,

The talent of writing history is so rare on this side the Alps, and more on this side the Channel, that I think most of our southern neighbours have far exceeded us in it; as much, perhaps, as some of the ancients have exceeded them. By far the most part of our English histories are pitiful performances, unworthy of a free, polite, and learned nation. But though many of our neighbours excel us in the histories of their own countries, we can boast of two universal histories, which do honour to the authors, and their country. The first is Sir Walter Raleigh; one of the worthiest and ablest men that this or any other country ever produced. He had a soul as vast as the work which he undertook, and his work resembles him; for though it has much in it that is foreign to history, it is noble, nervous, and instructive; its spirit, clearness, and style, are admirable; and for narration, penetration, knowledge, sentences, and observation, he has few competitors in antiquity.

The other is the very reverend, learned, and aged Dr. Prideaux, Dean of Norwich; who has given us a body of universal history, written with such capacity, accuracy, industry, and honesty, as make it one of the best books that ever came into the world, and shew him to be one of the greatest men in it. No book was ever more universally read and approved. It is indeed a great publick service done to mankind, and entitles the author to the highest publick gratitude and honour.

But though I never saw any great work to which I found fewer objections; yet, as a memorable proof how inseparably mistakes and prejudices cleave to the mind of man, the great and candid Dr. Prideaux is not without them; I therefore do not upbraid him with them, but rather admire him for having so few. There are however some of his theological observations, which seem to me not only ill-grounded, but to have a tendency to create in his readers wrong notions of the Deity, and to encourage them to mistake the common accidents of life, and the common events of nature, for the judgments of God, and to apply them superstitiously as such.

Of this kind is the observation which he makes upon the death of Cambyses, the Persian emperor, who had slain the Egyptian Apis. For the better understanding of this, we must know, that the chief god of the Egyptians was Osiris; him they worshipped in the shape of a bull, and that not only in imagery, but also in reality; for they kept a bull in the temple of Osiris, which they worshipped in his stead. The Doctor adds, that in imitation of this idolatry was it that Aaron made the golden calf in the wilderness, and Jeroboam those in Dan and Bethel, and did set them up there to be worshipped by the children of Israel, as the gods that had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

When this the god and bull of the Egyptians died, they looked out for another, with such proper marks and spots as were certain indications of his divinity; and when they found one, they expressed their joy in great and publick festivity. In such a fit of rejoicing Cambyses found the city of Memphis, when he returned to it from his unprosperous expedition into

Aethiopia. The Egyptians had just then found a new god amongst the cattle, and had lodged him at his crib in his temple with great solemnity. Cambyses had a mind to see this deity of theirs: And, says Dr. Prideaux,

 this Apis being brought to him, he fell into a rage, as well he might, at the sight of such a god; and, drawing out his dagger, run it into the thigh of the beast; and then reproaching the priests for their stupidity and wretchedness in worshipping a brute for a God, ordered them to be severely whipped, and all the Egyptians in Memphis to be slain, who should be found any more rejoicing there on this occasion. The Apis being carried back to the temple, languished of his wounds, and died.

As to the death of Cambyses, and the manner of it, take it also in the Doctor's words.

 As he mounted his horse, his sword falling out of the scabbard, gave him a wound in the thigh, of which he died: The Egyptians remarking, that it was in the same part of the body where he had afore wounded the Apis, reckoned it as an especial judgment from heaven upon him for that fact; and perchance they were not much out in it: For it seldom happening in an affront given to any particular mode of worship, how erroneous soever it may be, but that religion in general is wounded thereby; there are many instances in history, wherein God had very signally punished the profanations of religion in the worst of times, and under the worst modes of heathen idolatry.

Without inquiring whether this be any compliment to truth and religion, I freely own, that the distressing or disturbing of any sort of people in any sort of worship, however false and ridiculous, where the same does not violate property or human society, is an invasion of the rights of nature and conscience, and no man can do it with a wise and honest design: And what men do of this kind, out of bitterness of spirit or self-ends, no one will justify. If people will play the fool in their devotion, they only expose themselves, but hurt not others; and whoever does hurt to them, does but warrant them to return it: And hence is the sure beginning of tyranny, and of eternal civil and religious war. Every man reckons every religion false or foolish, which he does not embrace; and his own the best, though it be the worst. And if in this universal obstinacy of every man in every religious opinion which he has imbibed, a dispute by the sword, and arguments of authority and force, were encouraged, or but permitted, confusion and slaughter would be their chief employment. Or if one man's will were to be a law to other men's thoughts, the effects would be every where alike; that is, the stupidity and slavery of Turks would be the portion and character of Englishmen.

But I cannot think that the wounding of a bull, even of a consecrated bull, and the whipping of his priests, were such crimes as, beyond all the other crimes of Cambyses, called for the avenging judgments of God upon him. He had others to answer for of a far more black, malignant, and detestable nature: He put his brother to death for his merit, and for a dream that he had concerning him. He killed, by a kick in the belly, his beloved wife Meroe, who was also his sister, and then with child by him, for lamenting the death of her murdered brother.

 He caused several of his principal followers to be buried alive, without any cause deserving of it, and daily sacrificed some or other of them to his wild fury. And when Croesus (formerly King of Lydia, the old and faithful friend and counsellor of his father Cyrus) advised him against those proceedings, and laid before him the ill consequences which they would lead to, he ordered him to be

put to death; and when those who received his orders, knowing he would repent of it next day, did therefore defer the execution, he caused them all to be executed for it, though at the same time he expressed great joy that Croesus was alive: And out of a mere humour, only to shew his skill in archery, he shot to death the son of Prexaspes, who was the chief of his favourites.

He caused the magistrates of Memphis to be put to death, for answering truly to a question which he asked them. In his mad march over the Lybian sands, to invade a people that had done him no harm, he destroyed most of his vast army, fifty thousand in one place: The rest were reduced by famine to feed on each other.

Which now is most likely, and most becoming the divine wisdom and goodness, that the great God of heaven and earth should be more offended with this black catalogue of cruelties and crimes, than with a hasty blow given to a brute worshipped as God; which the doctor owns had justly provoked the rage of Cambyses? And is the Almighty more provoked at an affront put upon an idol, and upon the attendants of an idol, which falsely and impudently is made to represent him, than at a terrible and raging tyranny, that spreads blood and desolation over the face of the earth?

Cambyses, upon his invading Egypt, did another thing as bad as the wounding of Apis; I shall relate it in the Doctor's own words:

Finding that the garrison of Pelusium, a strong frontier town, were all Egyptians, in an assault which he made upon the city, he placed a great number of cats, dogs, sheep, and others of those animals which the Egyptians reckoned sacred, in the front of the army; and therefore the soldiers not daring to throw a dart, or shoot an arrow, that way, for fear of killing some of those animals, Cambyses, made himself master of the place without any opposition. For these being the gods which the Egyptians then adored, it was reckoned the highest impiety to kill any of them; and when they died of themselves, they buried them with great solemnity.

The Doctor makes no reflection upon this; though, upon the same principle, it must have been an affront to religion; and if none of these sacred creatures were killed, it was owing to no tenderness in Cambyses, who exposed them to so much danger. But if true religion be hurt by putting an affront upon a false one, how came it to be a merit in the primitive Christians to pull down the heathen temples, and to destroy the idols of the heathen, as they almost every where did where they had power, often in opposition to power? And upon what foot and motive is it that penalties and incapacities are put upon any sect of religion in any country? And how came the Jews to exercise such fury upon the Gods and worship of the Gentiles, as many of the Jewish leaders, especially the Maccabees, did, often out of their own country, often without provocation?

The primitive Fathers are every where full of sarcasms against the heathenish worship, which they treat constantly with ridicule and reproach, with contempt and bitterness: Did Christianity suffer by this behaviour of theirs; or did not Christianity rather gain advantage and new beauties, by comparing it with the absurdities, the fopperies, nonsense, corruptions, and vanities of the pagans? Truth cannot suffer by exposing falsehoods, which can no more bear the face of truth, than darkness can the face of the sun. No two things are more unlike than true and false religion; and the same treatment can never affect both in any respect, as the same arguments cannot defend truth and error. Indeed, true religion is defended and recommended by the very means that expose and destroy a false one. I have therefore often

wondered at a saying of Mr. Collier's, though not that it was said by him; namely, that the transition is easy from ridiculing a false religion to the ridiculing a true one; or words to that effect. Than which nothing could be more unjustly said: They are as opposite as law and the violation of law; as unlike as justice and oppression, and as different as Christ and Belial. How should the worship of daemons resemble the worship of the true God? And if they cannot be mistaken for each other, how can they be annoyed by the same weapons? The Fathers were so far from such an imagination, that in their railleries and reasonings upon the devout fooleries of the Gentiles, they did not treat them with a bit the more reverence or regard for their being established by a law.

So much may serve to shew, that the true religion can have no sympathy with the false, nor suffer in its sufferings. As to the death of Cambyses, I do not see any sign of a judgment in it, unless every death occasioned by an accident, or an instrument, is a judgment. Indeed every disaster, before it can be called a judgment in this sense of the word, must be proved a miracle; and common effects from visible and common causes, as they are no miracles, so neither can they be called judgments, unless God, the author of judgments, declares them so, as he did not in the case before us. Many a good man has been killed in a more terrible manner, as were all the saints and martyrs.

Now where is the miracle of a sword falling out of the sheath, when a man is mounting his horse? And where was it more likely to fall than on his leg or his thigh? If indeed it had got out of the scabbard of its own accord, and mounted up to his head and cut it off, it might have looked like a judgment; but yet I should have looked out rather for any cause of it, than the killing of a deified bull.

G

I am, &c.

No. 54. SATURDAY, November 25, 1721.

The Reasoning of Dr. Prideaux about the Fate of Brennus the Gaul, and of his Followers, examined; whether the same was a Judgment for an Intention to plunder the Temple of Delphos. [Gordon] ↪

[II-152]

SIR,

I shall bestow this paper in considering what Dr. Prideaux says of Brennus the Gaul, his expedition, death, and crime. This man, at the head of a great number of his countrymen, sent abroad to seek new habitations, passing through Hungary, Illyriam, and Macedonia, plundering, pillaging, and destroying as they went, at last invaded Greece, and

marched on towards Delphos, to plunder the temple in that city of the vast riches which were there laid up. But he there met a wonderful defeat: For on his approaching the place, there happened a terrible storm of thunder, lightning, and hail, which destroyed great numbers of his men; and at the same time there was as terrible an earthquake, which rending the mountains in pieces, threw down whole rocks upon them, which overwhelmed them by hundreds at a time; by which the whole army being much dismayed, they were the following night seized with such a panick fear, that every man supposing him that was next to him to be a Grecian enemy, they fell upon each other; so that before there was day-light enough to make them see the mistake, one half of the army had destroyed the other. By all this the Greeks, who were now come together from all parts to defend their temple, being much animated, fell furiously on them; and although now Acichorus was come up with Brennus, yet both their forces together could not stand the assault; but great numbers of them were slain, and great numbers were wounded; and amongst these last was Brennus himself, who had received several wounds; and although none of them were mortal, yet seeing all now lost, and the whole expedition, which he had been the author of, thus ended in a dismal ruin, he was so confounded at the miscarriage, that he resolved not to outlive it: And therefore calling to him as many of the chief leaders as he could get together amidst calamitous hurry, he advised them to slay all the wounded, and with the remainder make as good a retreat backward as they could; and then having guzzled down as much wine as he could drink, he ran himself through and died. The rest being to march through enemies' countries, they were, as they passed, so distressed for want of provisions, which they were every where to fight for, so incommoded at night by lodging mostly upon the ground in a winter season, and in such a manner harrassed and fallen upon where-ever they came by the people of those countries through which they passed, that what with famine, cold, and sickness, and what with the sword of their enemies, they were all cut off and destroyed: So that of the numerous company which did first set out on this expedition, not so much as one man escaped the calamitous fate of miserably perishing in it.

This is the story of Brennus, which I have told in the Doctor's own words: Now follows his reflection upon it:

Thus God was pleased in a very extraordinary manner to execute his vengeance upon those sacrilegious wretches, for the sake of religion in general, how false and idolatrous soever that particular religion was, for which that temple at Delphos was erected. For, to believe a religion true, and offer

sacrilegious violences to the places consecrated to the devotions of that religion, is absolute impiety, and a sin against all religion; and there are many instances of very signal judgments with which God hath punished it even amongst the worst of heathens and infidels; and much more may they expect it, who, having the truth of God established among them, shall become guilty hereof.

If this unhappy end of Brennus and his followers was a judgment, as doubtless this reverend and worthy author thinks, I cannot see why an intention to pillage a stupid idol of his useless wealth and devout baubles, given and used for the ends of idolatry and delusion, should be reckoned the cause of it. I would be glad to know how any part of mankind would have suffered in their religion and fortune, though the shrine and temple of Apollo had been stripped of their superstitious and ill-got finery; or how God Almighty came to shew himself thus miraculously the guardian of an idol, set up to rival him, and to deceive the world by uttering oraculous lies; or, how the taking away those riches that were acquired by belying God and deceiving man, and employed for the ornament and support of a blasphemous imposture, could be called sacrilege or robbing of God, who was really robbed by an idol of that only which he can be robbed of, divine worship and homage.

But because people are apt to be misguided and terrified by words, especially by such as are applied to devotion and holy things, I shall here bestow some reflections upon the awful word *sacrilege*, and shew that it is ill understood.

Sacrilege, we are told by some, signifies the robbing or stealing from God any thing which is peculiarly his. Now nothing can be stolen from God, nor can any thing be concealed from him. Every thing being his, it is as much his in the hands of one man as in the hands of another; for, let who will have the use of it, the property cannot be altered: God, who has all things, can never be put out of possession of any thing; and as nothing can be taken from him, so neither can any thing be given to him, because all the world and every thing in it is already his; and it is absurd to imagine that any form of words, or change of place or position, can enlarge or lessen his property in any thing. All that we have, we have from him; and to return him his own gifts back again, which we want, and he does not, is no compliment nor any part of religion or of reason: It is shewing ourselves wiser than him, in setting apart for his use those things which he has graciously created and set apart for ours. Can we feed him? Or can we clothe, adorn, or enrich him? Can we build him a city to dwell in, or furnish him with guards for the security of his person?

Sacrilege therefore is either the robbing of men, or no robbery at all. And this crime is greater or less, according to the measure or mischief done. To rob a poor man of his loaf, is a greater crime, *in foro conscientiae*, than to rob a rich man of an ox: To rob a man of a small part of a thing that is necessary to him, is a greater crime, than the robbing him of a great superfluity; and if I rob a man of a thing that will do him hurt, I hope I do him less an injury, than if I robbed him of a thing which does him good. But if I take a thing which no man has a right to, I myself have a right to it, by possessing it.

To apply all this to the business of sacrilege; if a man take away any of the books, vestments, or utensils, made use of in devotion, he only robs the congregation, who must buy more; and many being more able than one to bear this loss, the offence, as to its effects, is less than if he robbed but one man. But if he take away from a heathen temple, plate, or hidden treasure, laid up there, but not used, he indeed does an action that he has no right to do, but an action that however does good to the world, by turning into use that which was of none, or of bad use.

Dead treasure, first drawn from the people in superstitious offerings, and then laid up in a heathen temple, and kept and used for impious and idolatrous ends, but never to return again into the world, for the necessary purposes of life and commerce, is the plunder of mankind; and the worst of all plunders, because it never circulates; and people are greatly the worse for it, in respect both of soul and body, but never can be the better. It is first taking from them, and afterwards denying them, the great and chief means of life and convenience. He therefore, whoever he be, that takes it from thence, let him take it in what manner he will, does a better and more publick thing than he who keeps it there.

No man can be robbed of a thing in which he has no property. Of this sort was Apollo's wealth; and no body was robbed in taking it away. So that whoever takes away golden images, or other dead wealth, the means and objects of false adoration, is guilty of no other crime, than that of disturbing erroneous consciences: Nor need such consciences be much disturbed, since the crime being committed without their consent, they have no share in it. And therefore if such idolatrous images, and such superstitious, useless, and pernicious riches, be taken away by a lawful authority, or in a lawful war, it is no crime at all. So that in every sense Brennus committed a greater crime in plundering one village, than he could have committed, had he plundered, as he intended, the temple of Delphos.

If Brennus had believed in Apollo, he sinned against his conscience, in designing to rob him. But we do not know that Brennus, or those that followed him, believed thus. I do not remember that Apollo was the god of the Gauls, or that the druids owned him: All nations agreed not in worshipping the same gods, but often disputed about the quality, birth, and precedence of their gods. And if Brennus despised or disregarded Apollo, he committed no sacrilege; at least with respect to himself, it was no sacrilege, but only rapine; but if, believing in him, though an idol, he would have sinned in pillaging him, as doubtless he would, here is an argument, that a good conscience may be an erroneous conscience; and that if no man must act against his own conscience, though it be erroneous, as doubtless he must not, then much less has any other man whatsoever a right to punish or distress him for it. If God approve, who is it that condemns? And none but God knows the heart of another.

If Brennus had worshipped Apollo, he was guilty of idolatry, in the opinion of all Christians: And if he had robbed him, he was guilty of sacrilege in the opinion of most. Now we hear of no judgment falling upon those that worshipped Apollo, and supported that idol with superstitious donations; all which was idolatry. And is idolatry, which God has declared abominable in his eyes, a less sin than robbing an idolatrous temple, which action God has nowhere declared a sin? The good kings of the Jews destroyed all idols and idolatrous temples, where-ever they had power; and the wrath of God was kindled against all that did not. If it was therefore a sin against the true God, not to destroy them; how came it to be sin only to rob them?

I think all this is enough to shew, that an intention to plunder Apollo of his idle and unhallowed wealth, was not the probable cause of any judgment upon Brennus and his followers: But if there must be a judgment in the case, there were reasons for it much more powerful, and much more likely to provoke God to send it. He was a wild and barbarous robber, at the head of an army of savages, who cruelly ravaged many nations, made spoil of all men's property, and inhumanly massacred those that defended their own. They were invaders, plunderers, and murderers, who, by numbers, barbarity, rapine, and slaughter, laid waste whole countries, and destroyed, unprovoked, men and property. In this general pillage, they had already passed through and desolated Hungary, Illyrium, Macedonia, and were now

got into Greece. Was not here guilt enough to call down a thousand judgments? And after all this bloody and brutish violence done to the world, and to the laws of God and man; can we imagine that these Gauls suffered that terrible doom for barely intending a thing, in which neither God would have been dishonoured, nor man injured? At least in any degree of comparison, with the least of the other great and terrible calamities, which they suffered from these destroying barbarians?

I shall now add something more particularly concerning the wretched end of these Gauls, and enquire how far it can be reckoned a judgment. And here I am of opinion, that either every calamity, publick or private, must be accounted a judgment; which doctrine, I believe, no man holds; or else we must determine, by what means we can know a judgment from a calamity: Nor do I know of any sufficient marks to direct us in this matter, but an immediate miracle, and declaration from Almighty God, that he means it so: And in such a miraculous declaration, the crime must be expressly specified, for which such judgment is inflicted; because for every crime judgments are not indicted, nor always for the latest crimes; but sometimes overtake the sinner, long after the sin is committed. All this I take to be self-evident. We must remember that men, biassed by passions and prejudices, do often confound good and evil, and mistake the greatest wickedness for the greatest merit, and the highest merit for the highest wickedness: Publick massacres have been applauded, publick incendiaries have been sainted, publick tyrants deified. While on the other side, public virtue has passed for a publick crime, truth for blasphemy, and Christianity has been rewarded with fire and sword. So that men thus blind and perverse do frequently entitle vice to the blessing and favour of God, and virtue and merit to his severest judgments.

Where-ever therefore there is a great complication of crimes, and sometimes of great crimes, how can we distinguish for which of them the judgment is sent, unless he that sends it declare the same? If he send it for more crimes than one, how shall we distinguish where he, who only can, does not? And if the judgment be sent for one sin only, by what certain token can we discover it? If one man hurt or disoblige twenty, in twenty different ways; rob one, steal from another, deceive a third, calumniate a fourth, wound a fifth, bear false witness against a sixth, and so on till he has as many enemies as crimes, and afterwards die by a disaster or the law; every one of the twenty will be apt to call it a judgment, and a particular judgment, for the particular offence done to himself. Now where is the rule, by which certainly to know either that this man's death was a judgment, or to find out the certain crime that brought it upon him? Or is ever such a rule like to be found, as long as all sorts of evils befall all sorts of men?

As to the thunder, lightning, hail, and earthquakes, that destroyed so many of the Gauls, were they not the usual operations and effects of nature? And have they not been from the beginning? Have not whole cities and countries been destroyed by them? And has not their impartial fury been felt by the good and the bad, without distinction? In destroying storms by land and sea, are the wicked only overtaken? And do not the virtuous perish undistinguished with the latter? And are not just men, going upon just expeditions, frequently overwhelmed by them? And do not wicked men, in wicked enterprizes, often escape them? When an impetuous shock of an earthquake overturns a city, or opens a devouring chasm to swallow it up; do the dwellings of the righteous remain unmoved, and their persons unhurt!

Nor is it at all wonderful and uncommon, that this ignorant multitude, dismayed by so many and so alarming misfortunes, thus suddenly checked in their progress, at a great distance from home, beset with enemies in an enemy's country, unskilled in the phaenomena

of nature, suffering many calamities, and dreading more, fell into a panick; and, having lost their senses, attacked one another, by a mistake, in the dark. Wicked armies have fallen into the like terror upon the sight of an eclipse: And the same unaccountable fear, but without the same effect, seized the victorious Macedonian army of Alexander the Great, the very night before they fought one of their greatest and most successful battles. And we have still a much later instance at home: At the battle of Naseby, King Charles I who was in it, being pressed by some of his own people that were behind them, bid them keep back; which words being repeated by others to those next them, and by these to others, the word *back* was caught up, and running from man to man through all the ranks, was understood as a sign to fly; and accordingly the royal army fled, and the field was lost. And thus a chance word threw a whole army into a panick. None of the royal party have yet told us, that this was a judgment upon that king and his cause; nor, I dare say, would they have believed the other party, had the other party alledged that it was.

Considering all these calamities and losses suffered by the Gauls, and the consternation which they were in, I suppose there was no great miracle in their being vanquished by the Greeks, who were now come together from all parts, to fall furiously on a defeated enemy. And as small is the wonder of Brennus's killing himself: He was a resolute man, and took this method to cure himself of that grief and disappointment which he could not bear, and to preserve himself from falling alive into the hands of his enemies, to whom he had given a right of using him very ill.

Neither is it any thing surprizing that the rest,

being to march through enemies' countries, were, as they passed, so distressed for want of provisions, which they were every where to fight for; so incommoded at night by lodging mostly on the ground in a winter season, and in such a manner, harassed and fallen upon where-ever they came by the people of those countries through which they passed, that what with famine, cold, and sickness, and what with the sword of their enemies, they were all cut off and destroyed.

All this misfortune is thus fairly accounted for, and the thing is not uncommon. The whole nation of the Cimbrians were destroyed in much greater numbers, when they left their old habitations in quest of new; though it does not appear that they intended to rob temples. And yet Xerxes destroyed and plunder'd all the idolatrous temples in the East, except that of Diana at Ephesus, without thriving the worse for it.

They were all cut off and destroyed! for which plain, natural, and necessary causes are assigned; and yet it was a judgment! Surely this is strange and unaccountable! Doubtless there were degrees and great differences of guilt and innocence amongst Brennus's followers; and why should they, who were not all equally guilty, all equally suffer? Why should subjects and soldiers be punished for the sins of a prince or a general? Soldiers are often pressed into the service, and rarely or never know the reasons of the commander's orders; and it is mutiny and death to disobey him. And princes often run into wild wars, without the consent of their subjects, and against their interest; and yet if their subjects oppose them in it, they are guilty of resistance, which is reckoned rebellion; a very terrible and crying crime, to which the judgment of God has been pronounced due: And yet the judgments of God, which sometimes fall upon princes for an unjust war, fall also upon their subjects, who were utterly guiltless of it, What strange doctrine is this? that every man in a nation shall suffer for the sins of one man, whom they could not restrain; or that any man shall suffer for the crimes of another?

And that the best men in an army or a nation shall bear the calamities inflicted upon them for the sins of the worst; as if it were a crime in a good man to live where his lot has cast him, without his own consent, next door to a wicked man, or within ten miles of him?

This paper, which I could make much longer, grows already too long. I shall conclude with observing, that we either apply God's judgments at random, without his authority, always in opposition to his commands, and, for aught we know, as often contrary to his ends and intention; or we do it out of prejudices to men and opinions: And by this we give advantage to infidels and men of no religion, to reproach us with presumption upon our own principles, in meddling with the secret councils of God, in confounding his mercy and justice, in making him act capriciously, and in confounding one religion with another, the good with the bad, as if we thought them all alike. Let us give no more ground for this reproach; and as a specimen of our candour and equitable judgment, let us own, in the instance before us, that the liberty, prosperity, and peace of the world, and, amongst the rest, the liberty of Greece, were things somewhat more sacred and inviolable than Apollo's consecrated baubles.

G

I am, &c.

P. S. The story about King Charles I relate upon memory, and may mistake in names or circumstances.

G

No. 55. SATURDAY, December 2, 1721.

The Lawfulness of killing Julius Caesar considered, and defended, against Dr. Prideaux.
[Gordon] ↩

[II-165]

SIR,

I shall, in this paper, consider and discuss a great point; namely, whether the killing of Julius Caesar was a virtue, or a crime? And because Dr. Prideaux, who condemns it, does not only speak his own sense, but that of a great party, I shall here transcribe what he says of it.

He was murdered in the Senate-house, by a conspiracy of Senators. This was a most base and villainous act; and was the more so, in that the prime authors of it, Marcus Brutus, Decimus Brutus, Cassius, and Trebonius, and some others of them, were such as Caesar had in the highest manner obliged; yet it was executed under the notion of an high heroick virtue, in thus freeing their country from one whom they called a tyrant; and there are not wanting such as are ready, even in our days, to applaud the act. But divine justice declared itself otherwise in this matter: For it pursued every one of them that were concerned herein with such a just and remarkable revenge, that they were every man of them cut off in a short time after, in a violent manner, either by their own or other men's hands.

These are the Doctor's words, and this his judgment, which is roundly passed; but how justly, I hope to make appear before I have ended this letter. He has not told us what it was, that, in his opinion, rendered the person of Caesar so very inviolable. That Caesar had for his title, only power and success gained by violence, and all wicked means, is most certain. That the acquiring and exercising of power by force, is tyranny, is as certain; nor did ever any reasonable man say, that success was a proof of right. They who make the person of Caesar sacred, declare the person of a tyrant, and an usurper to be sacred; for no man ever lived, to whom those two characters do more notoriously belong. And if all the privileges and impunity belonging to a lawful magistrate, who protects his people, and rules himself and them by law, and their own consent, do also appertain to a lawless intruder, who is stronger than all, by being worse than all; and under the mock name of a publick magistrate, is a publick oppressor, scourge, usurper, executioner, and plunderer; then all these blessed consequences follow: That there is an utter end of all publick and private right and wrong, every magistrate may be a tyrant, every tyrant is a lawful magistrate; it is unlawful to resist the greatest human evil; the necessary means of self-preservation are unlawful; though it be lawful and expedient to destroy little robbers, who have as much right, and more innocence, than great ones, and who are only so for subsistence; yet it is impious and unlawful to oppose great robbers, who, out of lust, avarice, cruelty, or wantonness, take away life and property, and destroy nations at pleasure: That real, great, and general mischief, is defended by giving it a good name, by which he who commits it is protected; violence, fraud, and oppression, may be committed with security, if they be but called magistracy; and the execrable authors of them are not only safe, but sacred, if they be but called magistrates: Though it be unlawful to be a publick destroyer and murderer, yet it is unlawful to destroy him; that is, it is unlawful to prevent or punish that which is most impious and unlawful: And, finally, that any man who can oppress and enslave the world, and destroy nations, with the most and best men in them, may do all this with impunity.

If Julius Caesar was a lawful magistrate, then every man who has force and villainy enough, may make himself a lawful magistrate; and lawful magistrates are, or may be made by force and villainy. But if magistracy is not acquired by overturning with the sword all law and magistracy, then Julius Caesar was no magistrate; and if he was not, how came he by the rights and impunity with which lawful magistrates only are vested?

Against any man using unlawful force, every man has a right to use force. What crime would it have been in any Roman, or body of Romans, even without any commission from Rome, to have slain Alarick, or Attila, or Brennus, when they invaded the Roman territories? And what more right had Caesar than they? In truth, his crime was infinitely greater than theirs, as he added the sins of ingratitude, treachery, and parricide, to that of usurpation. The Goths and Gauls did indeed violate the laws of nations, in molesting and invading a country, that owed them neither subjection nor homage: But Caesar violated the laws of nature, and of his country, by enslaving those whom he was entrusted and bound to defend.

Every body, I believe, will own, that when he first made war upon his country, his country had a right to make war upon him; and to destroy him, who fought to destroy them. How came that right to cease, after he had, by his success in villainy and usurpation, added to his crimes, and made death still more his due? Or, is it lawful to resist and kill a robber before he has taken away your money, but not after he has done it? And does a villain grow sacred and inviolable, by the mere merit of completing his villainy? If Caesar had forfeited his life, as he certainly had by all the laws of Rome; why was it not lawful to take it away by the hands of thirty men, as by the arms of thirty thousand, and in the Senate as well as in the field?

The reason why one private man must not kill another in society, even when he does that which deserves death, is, that in society no man must be his own judge, or take his own revenge; but the more equitable law must give it him, and there are judges established for that purpose. But if the offender set himself above the law and the judges, he leaves a right to the person injured to seek redress his own way, and as he can get it. Whoever puts himself in a state of war against me, gives me a right of war against him; and violence is a proper remedy for violence, when no other is left.

That right which, in the state of nature, every man had, of repelling and revenging injuries, in such a manner as every man thought best, is transferred to the magistrate, when political societies are formed, and magistracy established; but must return to private men again, when the society is dissolved: Which dissolution may happen either through the natural demise of the persons entrusted with the publick authority, where there is no provision made in the constitution for others to succeed them; or when, by a superior unlawful force, they are restrained from answering the great end of their trust, in protecting the innocent; an end for which alone men part with their natural rights, and become the members and subjects of society.

It is a most wicked and absurd position, to say, that a whole people can ever be in such a situation, as not to have a right to defend and preserve themselves, when there is no other power in being to protect and defend them; and much more, that they must not oppose a tyrant, a traitor, an universal robber, who, by violence, treachery, rapine, infinite murders and devastations, has deprived them of their legal protection.

Now, that all these black characters belonged to Caesar, is indisputable fact; nor was there ever a traitor and a tyrant in the world, if he was not one. He broke, outrageously broke, every tie that can bind a human soul; honour, virtue, religion, law, trust, humanity, and every thing that is sacred and valuable amongst men. He was a subject and servant of the Roman commonwealth, greatly honoured and trusted by it; he was a Senator and high priest; he had been consul; he was general of one of its greatest armies, governor of one of its greatest and best provinces. All this power and credit, all these offices and forces, he turned, ungratefully, barbarously, and traitorously, upon his masters, and made a prey of his country with its own money and arms.

The means by which he did this mighty and consummate evil, were suitable to the end. He stuck at nothing; nor was any pitch of baseness too high or too low for him. He even submitted his person to infamous and unnatural prostitution, for the ends of ambition; and from a boy was in every faction for embroiling and overturning the state; first in the bloody measures of Marius; afterwards in the more terrible conspiracy of Catiline, to murder the consuls and the Senate, to burn Rome, and to enslave the commonwealth: And though he failed in that conspiracy, he went on conspiring; he corrupted the people, and headed parties of desperadoes, to frighten those whom he could not bribe: He oppressed the provinces, and destroyed their inhabitants; he robbed the publick temples; he slaughtered the armies of the republick; he seized the publick treasure; at last, he seized the world, and extinguished its liberty. Hear the dismal dread of the Roman Senate and people, upon that dreadful occasion, as the same is described by Lucan.

— — *Fuit haec mensura timoris,*
Velle putant quodcunque potest — —
Omnia Caesar erat; privatae curia vocis
Testis adest. Sedere patres, censere parati,
Si regnum, si templa sibi, jugulumque senatus,
Exiliumque petat. — — —

LUCAN. PHARSAL. I. 3. v. 108

Thus fell Rome, the glory and mistress of the earth, and the earth with it, under the yoke of a tyrant, whose parts increased his guilt, and made him the more dreadful. From the numberless mischiefs which he had done to get power, the highest were apprehended from him now he was possessed of it; and it was not doubted, but he would have proceeded to massacre and conflagration, had he been provoked by opposition.

— — — *Namque ignibus atris*
Creditur ut captae rapturus moenia Romae.

LUCAN. UT SUPRA, V. 99

And therefore most of the Senators were fled with Pompey, and Rome was left defenceless to the sword of the usurper.

What now had the Romans to do in this calamitous case, under this enormous oppressor; owing them duty and allegiance as one of their own citizens, but, like a barbarous conqueror and an alien, holding them in bonds with his sword at their throats? Law, liberty, and appeals, were no more! A tyrant was their chief magistrate; his will their only law. Because he had murdered one half of the people, had he therefore a right to govern the rest? And because he

had robbed them of most of their property, were they obliged to give him the remainder? Does the success of a criminal sanctify his crime, or are crimes sanctified by their greatness? If only an intention to destroy the state, was high treason and death; how did the executing of that execrable intention become lawful government, and acquire a right of allegiance?

I say, what remained now to the Romans to be done for relief? As to legal process against Caesar, there could be none; *omnia Caesar erat!* Nor was there any publick force great enough to oppose him: He had before destroyed or corrupted the armies of the commonwealth. Or, if a new army could have been drawn together, ought an opportunity to have been given him to have destroyed that too? Or, was it lawful to kill him, and twenty or thirty thousand men with him, and perhaps with the like slaughter on the other side, and with the loss of the best and bravest Romans whom his ambition had left unmurdered; and yet was it unlawful to kill him, without all this apparatus, expence, and mischief? Strange! that the killing by surprize a single traitor and parricide, who had forfeited his life by all the laws of God and man, should be esteemed a heinous and crying crime; and yet that the surprizing and cutting to pieces a whole army should be reckoned heroick virtue!

It was a known maxim of liberty amongst the great, the wise, the free ancients, that a tyrant was a beast of prey, which might be killed by the spear as well as by a fair chase, in his court as well as in his camp; that every man had a right to destroy one who would destroy all men; that no law ought to be given him who took away all law; and that, like Hercules's monsters, it was glorious to rid the world of him, whenever, and by what means soever, it could be done.

If we read the stories of the most celebrated heroes of antiquity (men of whom the present world is not worthy) and consider the actions that gained them their highest reverence and renown, and recommended their names to posterity with the most advantage; we shall find those in the first rank of glory, who have resisted, destroyed, or expelled tyrants and usurpers, the pests, the burdens, and the butchers of mankind. What can be more meritorious, what more beneficent to the world, than the saving of millions of men at the expense of one grand murderer, one merciless and universal plunderer? And can there be any better or other reason given for the killing of any guilty man, but the preserving of the innocent? Indeed, an action so glorious to those that did it, and so benevolent and advantageous to those for whom it was done, could never have been censured in the world, if there had not lived in all ages abject flatterers, and servile creatures of power, always prepared to sanctify and abet any [of] the most enormous wickedness, if it were gainful: And these are they who have often misled good men in the worst prejudices.

Timoleon, one of the wisest and most virtuous men that ever blessed this earth, spent a long and glorious life in destroying tyrants; he killed, or caused to be killed, his own brother, when he could not persuade him to lay down an usurped power, and no other means were left to save his country. And if this action cost him afterwards much grief and melancholy, it was owing to his own tender heart, and the curses and reproaches of a mother otherwise indulgent. He was even censured for this his sorrow, as if it had got the better of his love to mankind; and when he at last overcame it, he shewed that it was not occasioned for having slain a tyrant, but his brother; for he immortalized the rest of his life in doing nothing else but destroying tyrants, and restoring liberty.

But if the killing Caesar were so great a crime, how comes Catiline to be still so universally detested, for only intending what Caesar accomplished! It is true, Caesar did not burn Rome; nor did he save it out of any tenderness to it, but saved it for himself: He spared fire, only because the sword was sufficient. I would here ask another question: If Oliver Cromwell had died by any of the numerous conspiracies formed to take away his life; would posterity have condemned the action for this reason alone, that it was done the only way that it could be done?

But there is an instance in the Roman history, that will set this matter yet in a fuller light; it is the story of Spartacus, a Thracian slave and gladiator, who bid fair for being lord of the Roman world. He seems to me to have had personal qualifications and abilities, as great as those of Caesar, without Caesar's birth and education, and without the measure of Caesar's guilt. For I hope all mankind will allow it a less crime in any man to attempt to recover his own liberty, than wantonly and cruelly to destroy the liberty of his country.

It is astonishing to consider, how a poor slave, from the whip and the chain, followed only by about seventy fugitive gladiators, should begin a revolt from the most powerful state that ever the world saw; should gather and form, by his courage and dexterity, a formidable army; should inspire resolution and fidelity into the very dregs of mankind; should qualify his sudden soldiers, composed of thieves and vagabonds, to face and defeat the Roman legions, that were a terror to the world, and had conquered it; should keep together, without pay or authority, a raw and lawless rabble, till he had vanquished two Roman armies, and one of them a Praetorian army: And even when Crixius, his fellow-commander, envying his glory and success, had withdrawn from him, and carried with him a great number of his forces, and was cut to pieces with twenty thousand of his men, by Q. Arrius the praetor, yet he still continued to conquer. He beat that very Arrius that had killed Crixius; he defeated Lentulus the consul; he overcame L. Gellius, another consul; and in all likelihood, had he not been weakened by the above defection of Crixius, he had beat Crassus too, and seen himself lord of Rome.

Now I would ask the advocates of lawless power, the friends to the life and name of Caesar, whether Spartacus, if he had succeeded in his last battle against Crassus, had been lawful and irresistible King of Rome? And whether the Senate and people of Rome, with the greatest part of the known world, would have owed him duty and allegiance? Or, would he not have continued still a thief and a robber? And if he had continued so, then, by all the laws of nature and self-preservation, as well as by the municipal laws of every country in the world, every man was at liberty to seize him how he could, and to kill him if he resisted, or ran away.

Tell me, O ye unlimited slaves, ye beasts of lawless power, ye loyal levellers of right and wrong! how came Caesar by a better title to dominion than Spartacus had, whose sword was as good, though not quite so prosperous and destructive, as Caesar's? Tell me where lay the difference between them, unless in their different success; and that Spartacus was as great a man, but Caesar a greater traitor and tyrant?

Indeed, had Sir Robert Filmer, or any other of the honest and sage discoverers of Adam's right heir, lived in those days (as they have done since, and plainly pointed him out) and complimented Caesar, as doubtless they would, with a lineal and hereditary title from Aeneas, wandering prince of Troy; he might have been called the Lord's Anointed, as well as others, and his assassination been accounted rebellion, and worse than the sin of witchcraft.

But as I do not find that Caesar, though he valued himself upon his descent from the pious Trojan hero, did yet claim any dictatorial right by virtue of his illustrious parentage; I have therefore taken liberty to treat him as a mere traitor, an usurper, and a tyrant.

G

I am, &c.

No. 56. SATURDAY, December 9, 1721.

A Vindication of Brutus, for having killed Caesar. [Gordon] ↪

[II-177]

SIR,

Having proved in my last, I think unanswerably, that Caesar was rightly killed; I will here enquire, whether Brutus and the other tyrannicides did right in killing him? And methinks, if it has been shewn that he ought to have been slain, as an enemy to every Roman citizen, and virtuous man; every Roman citizen, and every virtuous man, had a right to slay him.

But since there are in our world so many little and cramped spirits, who dare not think out of the vulgar path, though ever so crooked and dark, and perhaps first struck out by ignorance or fraud: Narrow minds, which, locked up in received systems, see all things through false mirrors, and as they are represented by strong prejudices, prevailing customs, and very often by corruption and party-interest: I shall, as I have occasion, endeavour to disperse these thick and deceitful mists from before weak eyes; and shall consider the present question, as well as all others that come before me, as they appear in their own nature, independent on the quirks of pedants, and the narrow jurisdiction of inferior tribunals: I shall bring them before the great tribunal of heaven; and assert the cause of liberty and truth, by arguments deduced from common-sense, and the common good of mankind.

It is generally alledged against Brutus, and some of those who joined with him in this great action, that they were highly obliged by Caesar; which is a strange objection. How were they obliged? He gave Brutus a life, which he could not take from him without murder; and did a mighty generous thing in not murdering Brutus for defending his country, animated by his own virtuous spirit, and the known laws of Rome! This is the obligation of a highwayman, who, taking away your money, which is all he wants, kindly leaves you your life. Are you obliged in honour, conscience, or common-sense, to spare the robber, because he was not a murderer? Or are you obliged not to pursue and take him, and to kill him, if he refuse to submit? In truth, Caesar was one of the greatest robbers and murderers that ever lived: Every man slain in that unjust, bloody, and unnatural war, which he wantonly and maliciously made upon his country, was murdered: And the world was the mighty spoil which he gained by universal murder and rapine. He was, in short, a man so consummately wicked, that the strongest words which you can use, and the bitterest instances which you can bring, to paint out him and his actions, will be but faint, compared to him and his actions.

As to the places and favours conferred upon Brutus, by Caesar; they were not Caesar's but Rome's. He was only *rapti largitor*. Caesar had no right to the publick, nor to dispose of it, or its emoluments. It was all barefaced usurpation. Besides, when favours of this, or any kind, with-hold a man from his duty, they are mischievous baits and corruptions, and ought to bind no man, as they never will a virtuous man: And we see how Brutus, who was the most virtuous man upon earth, understood and disregarded them.

They were only the artful shackles of a tyrant, intended to bind the bold and free mind of Brutus to his interest: But he, who owed no allegiance but to the commonwealth, scorned the deceitful smiles and generosity of its oppressor; who was bribing him to be his slave, with

the gifts and offices of his country, to which he himself had no title, but Brutus had every title. This therefore was a piece of impudent civility, which Brutus could not but detest, as it was a shameful and melancholy proof of Caesar's tyranny, and of his own and Rome's vassalage. They were hollow and destructive favours; it was high-treason to be the author of them: And was not death signally due to such high-treason? Brutus therefore made the properest return.

Caesar had usurped the Roman world, and was cantoning it out to his creatures as became a tyrant, and paying his personal creatures with the publick bounty. As the worst tyrants must have some friend; and as the best men do them the most credit, and bring them the most support, if such can be got; Caesar had sense enough to know, that he could never buy Brutus too dear; and so paid him great court. But Brutus saw the tyrant's design, and his own shame; and every civility was a fresh provocation. It was as if a thief breaking into a house to rob a lady of her jewels, spoke thus to her son; "Sir, pray permit me, or assist me, to cut your mother's throat, and seize her treasure, and I will generously reward you with your life, and lend you one or two of her diamonds to sparkle in as long as I think fit."

Could such a villainous civility as this engage the son, especially a virtuous son, to any thing but revenge? And would not the only way that he could take it, be the best way?

Caesar took from Brutus his liberty, and his legal title to his life and his estate, and gave him in lieu of it a precarious one during his own arbitrary will and pleasure: Upon the same terms he gave him some mercenary employments, as hire for that great good man's assistance to support his tyranny. Could the great and free soul of Brutus brook this? Could Brutus be the instrument or confederate of lawless lust? Brutus receive wages for an oppressor! That great, virtuous, and popular Brutus; who, if the commonwealth had subsisted, might, from his reputation, birth, abilities, and his excellent worth, have challenged the most honourable and advantageous offices in it, without owing thanks to Caesar.

So that the injuries done by Caesar to Brutus were great, heinous, and many; and the favours none. All the mercy shewn by Caesar was art and affectation, and pure self-love. He had found in the Roman people so universal a detestation of the bloody measures of Marius, Cinna, and Sulla: He saw the whole empire so reduced and enervated by repeated proscriptions and massacres, that he thought it his interest to establish his new-erected dominion by different measures; and to reconcile, by a false and hypocritical shew of clemency, the minds of men, yet bleeding with their late and former wounds, to his usurpation. That Caesar, the usurping and destructive Caesar, who had slaughtered millions, and wantonly made havock of the human race, had any other sort of mercy, than the mercy of policy and deceit, will not be pretended by any man, that knows his and the Roman story. Brutus therefore being the most revered and popular man in Rome, it became the craft of the tyrant to make Brutus his friend; it was adding a sort of sanctity to a wicked cause: Whereas the death of Brutus by Caesar, would have made Caesar odious and dreadful even amongst his own followers.

But it is said, that Brutus submitted to Caesar, and was bound by his own act. Here the allegation is true, but the consequence false. Did not Brutus submit to Caesar, as innocent men are often forced to submit to the galleys, the wheel, and the gibbet? He submitted, as a man robbed and bound submits to a house-breaker, who, with a pistol at his heart, forces from him a discovery of his treasure, and a promise not to prosecute him. Such engagements are not only void in themselves, but aggravate the injury, and become themselves fresh

injuries. By the law of nature and reason, as well as by the positive institutions of every country, all promises, bonds, or oaths, extorted by duress, that is, by unlawful imprisonments or menaces, are not obligatory: It is, on the contrary, a crime to fulfil them! because an acquiescence in the impositions of lawless villains, is abetting lawless villains.

Besides, it was not in the power of Brutus to alter his allegiance, which he had already engaged to the commonwealth, which had done nothing to forfeit the same. For how lawful soever it be for subjects to transfer their obedience to a conqueror, in a foreign war, when the former civil power can no longer protect them; or to a new magistrate made by consent, when the old had forfeited or resigned: It is ridiculous to suppose, that they can transfer it to a domestick traitor and robber, who is under the same ties and allegiance with themselves, and, by all acts of violence, treason, and usurpation, extorts a submission from his oppressed masters and fellow-subjects. At least such allegiance can never be pre-engaged, whilst any means in nature are left to rid the world of such a monster.

It is a poor charge against Brutus, that Caesar intended him for his heir and successor. Brutus scorned to succeed a tyrant: And what more glorious for Brutus, than thus to own that the dangerous and bewitching prospect of the greatest power that ever mortal man possessed, could not shake the firm and virtuous heart of Brutus, nor corrupt his integrity? To own that no personal considerations, even the highest upon earth, could reconcile him to a tyrant; and that he preferred the liberty of the world to the empire of the world!

The above charges therefore against Brutus can hardly come from any but those, who, like the profane and slavish Esau, would sell their birthright for a mess of pottage; would sacrifice their duty to their interest; and, unconcerned what becomes of the rest of mankind, would promote tyranny, if they might but shine in its trappings. But an honest mind, a mind great and virtuous, scorns and hates all ambition, but that of doing good to men, and to all men; it despises momentary riches, and ill-gotten power; it enjoys no vicious and hard-hearted pleasures, arising from the miseries of others: But it wishes and endeavours to procure impartial, diffusive, and universal happiness to the whole earth.

This is the character of a great and good mind; and this was the great and sublime soul of the immortal Brutus.

From this mention of the slippery and dangerous favours of tyrants, I would just observe, as I go along, that, to any man who values virtue or liberty, twenty pounds a year in a free country, is preferable to being first minister to the Great Turk; whose ministers, by their station and allegiance, are obliged to be oppressors, and are often rewarded with the bow-string for their most faithful services to their master, and for services perhaps performed by his command.

But to return to Brutus: He had on his side the law of self-preservation, the spirit of the Roman constitution, and of those laws of liberty, which had subsisted near five hundred years, but were now destroyed by the usurper. And during all those long and renowned ages of liberty, the destroying of tyrants was ever accounted glory and heroism. And, as every law of the commonwealth was against Caesar, who was an open enemy to the commonwealth; the commonwealth, and all its laws, were for Brutus, its greatest and best subject. Caesar's laws were none, and worse than none; but the whole life and actions of Brutus were agreeable to the constitution of his country.

Suppose Brutus, having killed Caesar, had succeeded him: He could not have been a greater usurper than Caesar was. And yet would he, in that case, have been less sacred and inviolable than Caesar? I hope the oppressing of mankind is not a less crime than the killing of their oppressor.

Our Brutus could not have greater ties of affection to the tyrant Caesar, who usurped Rome, and destroyed its liberties, than the elder Brutus had to his own sons, whom he put to death, for a plot to restore the tyrant Tarquin, a thousand times more innocent than Caesar: And as to the sudden manner of putting him to death, Mutius Scaevola is immortalized for a bold attempt, to kill by surprize the Tuscan king Porsenna, who was a foreign enemy, making unjust war upon Rome, to restore Tarquin: And the like immortality is bestowed upon Judith, for killing Holofernes deceit- fully, when it could be done no other way. Now both these men were publick enemies; but neither of them a publick traitor: Caesar was both; and *dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirat?* Was ever Aratus mentioned with reproach, or does Dr. Prideaux mention him with reproach, for surprizing and expelling Nicocles, tyrant of Sicyon; or has he not gained deathless fame by that worthy action? And how comes the little tyrant Nicocles to be less sacred than the greater tyrant Caesar, who did millions of mischiefs more than Nicocles?

Let us now see what Dr. Prideaux says of Caesar. After having told us, that he was excited by ambition and malice; that he justly had for the reward thereof that destruction by which he fell; the Doctor adds these words:

He is said to have slain eleven hundred and ninety-two thousand men; which proves him to have been a terrible scourge in the hand of God, for the punishment of the wickedness of that age. And, consequently, he is to be reputed the greatest pest and plague that mankind had therein: But notwithstanding this, his actions have with many acquired great glory to his name: Whereas true glory is due only to those who benefit, not to those who destroy, mankind.

All this is honestly and justly said; but I cannot reconcile it to what he has said before, about the death of that destroyer. Sure, upon his own principles, never was true glory more due to any mortal man, than to Brutus! His life and studies were laid out in doing good to mankind; whereas Caesar was indeed the greatest pest and plague that mankind had. For, besides all the wickedness that he did with his own wicked hands and counsels, he frustrated all the purposes, virtue, and bravery, of the old Romans, in establishing liberty, and in conquering, polishing, and setting free great part of the barbarous world. All the battles that they fought, were fought for him; all the blood that they spilt, was spilt for him. Caesar took all, and overturned all. Besides, all the numberless and heavy mischiefs that the Roman world suffered from succeeding tyrants, were, in a great measure, owing to Caesar, who established a government by tyrants. He was in this sense the author of all the barbarity, rapine, and butcheries, brought upon the empire, by the Goths, Huns, Vandals, and other barbarians, who easily mastered an empire, weakened, and already almost destroyed, by the folly, madness, cruelty, and prodigality, of the imperial tyrants, his successors.

The Doctor takes notice, that Cassus Parmensis, being the only remaining tyrannicide, was put to death by the command of Augustus. And he observes upon it, that murder seldom escapes the vindictive hand of God, and especially the murder of princes. All this may be true; and yet, what is all this to Julius Caesar? If Caesar was a prince, any robber or murderer that has force and villainy enough, may be a prince; and blood, and wounds, and treason, constitute a prince. Every soldier in Caesar's army had as good a right to the government of

Rome, as Caesar had. Was his style like that of a prince, or the father of his country, when he told his soldiers, according to Petronius, and agreeably to what he did afterwards;

———*Ite furentes,
Ite mei comites, & causam dicite ferro.
Judice fortuna cadat alea: Sumite bellum;
Inter tot fortes armatus nescio vinc.*

Was not this setting up open violence and the sword for a title? If Rob Roy had conquered Scotland, with his barbarous Highland host; would he have been a prince, Prince of Scotland? Was Cromwell a prince? And would Massianello and Jack Straw, had they succeeded, have been princes?

As to Caesar's parts, they added vastly to his crimes, and were, as he applied them, only a great capacity to do great mischief. *Curse on his virtues, they have undone his country!* Besides, there were doubtless many men in Rome who had equal parts, and infinitely more merit. Brutus particularly had. The Devil has much greater abilities than Caesar had, and is also a prince, a very great prince; the executioner of God's vengeance too, the greatest executioner: And yet are we not expressly commanded to resist him? The plague is often the instrument of God's judgment; are we therefore not to resist the plague, by proper diet and antidotes? The bite of an adder may be the judgment of God; is it therefore a sin to tread upon the adder's head, and kill him? Or are antidotes against all other plagues lawful; but none lawful against the worst, the most lasting and destructive of all plagues, the plague of tyranny? Or is an adder less sacred than a tyrant? And why? I hope God made adders as well as Caesar. A storm may be a judgment; must we not therefore discharge a great gun against it, in order to disperse it? Or pray how comes one sort of the instruments of God's judgment to be more sacred than another? I am sure, God detests tyrants; and if they be God's ministers, so are plagues and serpents, and so is Satan himself.

Brutus was one of the properest persons to kill Caesar; as he was of all the men in Rome the most revered and popular. His wisdom, and virtue, and publick spirit, were known and adored: The consent of the Senate, and of all good men, was with him; none but the prostitute creatures of power, and those that ambitiously sought it, with their deceived and hireling followers, condemned him; nor durst even they at first. But Brutus, out of his too great goodness and generosity, spared Anthony, who ought to have accompanied Caesar. But while the wild Anthony remained, the root of the evil was not quite plucked up. He began a new war upon his country. The Senate, however, declared for the tyrannicides; declared Mark Anthony a publick enemy for making war upon Decimus Brutus, who was one of them; and sent both the consuls with an army against Anthony, in defence of Brutus: And had it not been for the treacherous and ungrateful young Caesar, the commonwealth would have been, in all likelihood, thoroughly established. But this young traitor, like his uncle Julius, turned the arms of the commonwealth upon the commonwealth, and joined with its enemy Mark Anthony to oppress it.

The terrible proceedings and bloody proscriptions that followed this agreement are well known. Nor is it at all strange, that not one of the tyrannicides survived the civil war, or died a natural death. They were almost all soldiers and commanders, and were either mostly slain in battle, or by the command of the conquerors: Their enemies got the better, and they had no where to fly to. The world was possessed by the usurpers. If Brutus and Cassius killed themselves, rather than fall into their enemies' hands, and adorn the triumphs of successful

traitors; several of the chiefs of the other party did also kill themselves during the war; particularly Dolabella, and many of the principals of his party at Antioch, when Cassius besieged them there. Was this also a judgment?

Brutus and Cassius killed themselves! What then? Was it not done like Romans, like virtuous old Romans, thus to prefer death to slavery? It was a Roman spirit; and those who possessed it, did as much disdain to be tyrants, as to submit to tyranny; a spirit that scorned an ignominious life, held only at the mercy of an usurper, or by flattering his villainy, and abetting his usurpations; and a spirit, which those that want it can never admire. Great souls are not comprehended by small! It is undoubtedly true, that by the precepts of Christianity we are not at liberty to dispose of our own lives; but are to wait for the call of heaven to alleviate or end our calamities: But the Romans had no other laws to act by, but the natural dictates of uncorrupted reason. I call upon the great pretenders to philosophy and refined morals, to assign one fair reason, why a Roman, why Brutus and Cassius, should prefer a miserable life to an honourable death; should bear vassalage, chains, and tortures of body or mind, when all those evils were to be avoided by doing only that, which, by the course of nature, every man must soon do. It is better not to be, than to be unhappy; and the severest judgment on the wicked is, that they shall live for ever, and can never end their miseries: Much less can it be any service to society, to keep alive by art or force a melancholy, miserable, and useless member, grown perhaps burdensome too by age and infirmities.

In this light we must view the actions of the old Romans, guided only by nature, and unrestrained from suicide by any principles of their religion. We find, on the contrary, in history, many examples of the great and magnanimous heroes of antiquity, choosing voluntary death, often in the midst of health, with the greatest calmness of mind; sometimes from satiety of life and glory, either when they could gain no more, or apprehending that the future caprices of unconstant fortune might sully the past; and oftener still, to avoid submitting to disgrace and servitude.

A voluntary death from such motives as these, was, among the ancients, one of the paths to immortality; and, under certain circumstances, none but mean and abject minds declined it. Roman ladies often chose it. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, chose a long premeditated death, rather than be led captive to Rome. And when Perseus sent to P. Aemilius, beseeching him with all earnestness, that so great a prince, late lord of Macedon, and good part of Greece, might not be led, like a slave, in chains at his chariot wheel, to grace his triumph; he received this short answer, that "it was in his own power to prevent it": Thus signifying to him, that he deserved the disgrace, if he would live to bear it.

Even under the dispensations of a new religion, which God Almighty condescended personally to teach mankind; human nature has prevailed so far over revealed truths, that in multitudes of instances a voluntary death is approved, at least not condemned, by almost the greatest part of the world. Men in extreme pain and agonies do often refuse physick, and the means of preserving their lives, days, weeks, and months longer. Men in lingering and desperate distempers go, uncalled, to mount a breach in a siege, or into the midst of the battle, to meet certain death. Great commanders have done the same, when the day went against them, rather than survive being beaten. Commanders of ships have blown up themselves and their ships, rather than be the prey of the conqueror. Towns besieged, when they could defend themselves no longer, have first burnt their town, then precipitated themselves desperately amongst their enemies, to procure an honourable death and revenge. Even common malefactors often choose to die, rather than discover their accomplices; and

always get credit by doing so. And the stories of the Decii, of Celanus, of the great Cato, and even of Otho, and many other of the great examples of antiquity, made immortal by this act of ancient heroism, are still read with admiration.

I shall, for a conclusion of this long paper, give my readers the sentiments of the excellent Mr. Cowley, concerning Brutus and Caesar, in his ode entitled *Brutus*.

*Can we stand by and see
Our mother robb'd, and bound, and ravish'd be,
Yet not to her assistance stir,
Pleas'd with the strength and beauty of the ravisher?
Or shall we fear to kill him, if before
The cancell'd name of friend he bore?
Ingrateful Brutus do they call?
Ingrateful Caesar, who could Rome enthral!
An act more barbarous and unnatural
(In th' exact balance of true virtue try'd)
Than his successor Nero's parricide!*
* * *

*What mercy could the tyrant's life deserve
From him who kill'd himself rather than serve?*
* * *

*What joy can human things to us afford,
When we see perish thus by odd events,
By ill men and wretched accidents,
The best cause, and best man that ever drew a sword?
When we see
The false Octavius and wild Anthony,
God-like Brutus! conquer thee?*

G

I am, &c.

No. 57. SATURDAY, December 16, 1721.

Of false Honour, publick and private. [Gordon] ↪

[II-192]

SIR,

I have more than once complained in these letters, that the best things being most abused are capable of doing the greatest harm: Nor is it a new observation, whatever new occasion there may be, at all times, to repeat it. Men have been ever deceived by good names into an approbation of ill things, sanctified by these names. Imposture and delusion have been called religion, and thought so; oppression and rapine have been called government, and esteemed government. Teachers have degenerated into deceivers, submission into slavery, taxation into plundering, protection into destruction, and magistrates into murderers, without changing their names: Power and right have been ever confounded; and success, or the want of success, has turned villainy into virtue, and virtue into villainy.

Hence it is that little crimes and small criminals have been detested and punished, while great malefactors have been generally revered and obeyed: and that little rogues have been called thieves, and hanged; and great thieves have been styled conquerors and princes, and sometimes deified. Your Alexanders and Caesars were only felons above the gallows; and so have been many others of much less figure than they. Great crimes protect themselves, and one another; so that, in effect, crimes are not always punished because they are crimes, but because they are not mighty crimes: Nor, in the inflicting of punishments, has the offence or the offender been considered, but only the figure of the offender; who, if he were poor and necessitous, has been put to death; if great and ambitious, has been protected or preferred. And thus it is, that halters and garters, axes and white staves, palaces and dungeons, have been often miserably confounded and misplaced.

Thus are the boundaries and distinction between good and evil almost lost in the world. To illustrate this in every instance that deserves illustration, would be to write a folio instead of a letter; at present I shall confine myself to the consideration of false honour, which has done much more mischief to mankind than ever real honour did good, as it is more conducing to the little personal gratifications, and the crooked self-ends of particular men.

True honour is an attachment to honest and beneficent principles, and a good reputation; and prompts a man to do good to others, and indeed to all men, at his own cost, pains, or peril. False honour is a pretence to this character, but does things that destroy it: And the abuse of honour is called honour, by those who from that good word borrow credit to act basely, rashly, or foolishly.

A man cannot act honourably in a bad cause. That he thinks it a good cause, is not a good excuse; for folly and mistake is not honour: Nor is it a better excuse, that he is engaged in it, and has pledged his faith to support it, and act for it; for this is to engage his honour against honour, and to list his faith in a war against truth. To say that he is ashamed to desert it, is to say that he is ashamed to do an honest thing; and that he prefers false shame to true honour, which engages the man that possesses it to hate and break all criminal engagements. If a man enter into a party or society, because he thinks it an honest society; is he obliged to continue

in it, when he finds it a society of knaves? And does his honour oblige him to be a knave too, or to desert those that are knaves? Or, does a robber, who leaves the gang, violate his honour, which was only an obligation to rob?

A good conscience, an honest heart, and clean hands, are inseparable from true honour; nor does true honour teach any man to act against his judgment. It must be convinced before it acts, and mere authority has no weight with it. In human matters, it does not consider what is commanded, but what ought to be commanded; and before it executes an injunction, enquires whether the same be rational and just. When superior orders are unjust, the honour of obedience is taken away; for honour is not the instrument of evil; it is therefore false and pretended honour, to execute and vindicate a bad action by an unjust command. Indeed, no command of any consequence ought to be obeyed, but what is or ought to be law, and is not forbidden by any law.

But this is only reasoning, which has but little force with men when it combats their interest and worst passions. To them therefore who follow the guides of gain and ambition, what I have here said is not addressed; but to those who, contrary to their interest, follow and approve others whose only principle is interest.

False honour has more power over men than laws have; and those who despise all the ties of laws, and of religion and humanity, are often very exact in observing all the fantastical and wicked rules of false honour. There are no debts so punctually paid as those contracted at play: though there are express laws against play, and against paying of money won at play; nay, 'tis penal to pay such debts. And yet those that are thus exact in paying to their own ruin, and in defiance of law, whatever debts they contract to avowed sharpers, who live by cheating and picking pockets, and are the destruction of families, and a publick nuisance: I say, those men thus exact in unrighteousness and their own wrong, shall run in debt to honest tradesmen, without any purpose of paying them, and, unconcerned, see them broke, imprisoned, and undone, for want of such payment. So lawlessly just are they to rogues that ruin them, and so barbarously unjust to industrious and credulous men, who feed and clothe them!

Is this honour! What dupes are we to words and to our own vice and folly! It is but small comfort to us, that this voluntary madness prevailed of old amongst our barbarous German ancestors; of whose distracted propensity to gaming Tacitus gives us this astonishing account:

Aleam sobrii inter seria exercent, tanta lucrandi perdendive temeritate, ut cum omnia defecerunt, extremo ac novissimo jactu, de libertate & de corpore contendunt. Victus voluntariam servitatem adit, quamvis junior, quamvis robustior, adligari se ac venire patitur. Ea est in re prava pervicacia: ipsi fidem vocant.

Gaming is one of their most serious employments, and even sober they are gamblers! To this rash vice they are so violently addicted, that when they have wantonly lost all, they have not done, but desperately stake their liberty and their persons upon the last throw. The loser goes calmly into bondage; and though the younger and the stronger, suffers himself tamely to be bound and sold by him that wins. Such is their vicious perseverance in folly! they themselves call it honour.

Our modern gamesters do not indeed go quite this length; they only sell themselves, with their families and posterity, to beggary: For as to their bodies, no body will stake any thing against them. But in point of honour, in gaming, we still retain the strictness of these our polite ancestors at play, and generously pay to the last morsel of bread, and venture famine rather than a dun from one that has foiled us at the art of picking pockets. As to other duns, honest and necessitous duns, we matter them not; and debts of real honour and conscience, do not at all touch our honour.

Thus is honour set up against virtue and law. Good laws not executed are worse than none, and only teach men to despise law: whereas reverence and obedience go together. No law will or can ever be executed by inferior magistrates, while the breach of it is openly encouraged by the example of superior. Does any man think that the best laws, even inspired laws, against duelling, would have any effect, if there was at the same time a duelling-office kept open at St. James's? The example of those that should execute laws, or see them executed, is stronger than the authority of those that make them. The example of Vespasian did more towards the restraint of luxury, than all the sumptuary laws of Rome could do till his time.

Praecipuus adstricti moris auctor Vespasianus fuit. Obsequium inde in principem, & aemulandi amor, validior quam poena ex legibus & metus.

Vespasian was himself a special instance and author of temperance and frugality. From hence grew in the people a reverence for the example of the prince, and an emulation to conform their manners to his; a tie much stronger than the dread of laws and all their penalties.

It is moreover become a mighty piece of honour to repair one crime by another, and a worse; and when one has done you an injury, he must, by the rules of honour, fight to defend it. Having affronted or harmed you, contrary to justice and honour, he makes you satisfaction by taking away your life, according to the impulses of true honour; so here is a war of honour against honour and justice and common sense.

Another piece of honour is an adherence to error, after conviction, and not to change a bad religion for a better. To have been born in a certain faith, is just as good sense as to have been born a lawyer or mathematician; and yet that same is often the best and truest reason against change! And therefore we often adhere against all our reason, to what others said or did for us without our consent, and when we had no reason. Because perhaps some people promised for us when we were a day old, that we should forty years afterwards, and all our life, count beads, worship unsavoury bones, be governed by deceivers and believe contradictions; are we therefore obliged to do all this, though we find it to be against all religion? Must we be hypocrites, because our ancestors were fools? Are old falsehoods and fooleries the standard of our honour? Are we never to mend a wretched condition, and never to make use of our conscience? If so, then here is a war of honour against conscience, a war of faith against belief, and a war of religion against persuasion!

Another piece of false honour has sometimes been that of serving a prince at the expence of one's country, though the serving of that country was the only duty and only business of the prince, and of every man in office under him. But this, though a truth as self-evident as any in the Bible, has been so little understood or practised, that the wicked execution of impious engagements made to a tyrant, against those made to society, has been called honour. And it has frequently been the honour of a courtier, to execute all the ill purposes of a court

against his country. And here was the war of honour against duty.

The honour of a party is to adhere to one another, right or wrong; and though their chief be a knave and a traitor, their honour is engaged to be honest to him in all his rogueries and treason. And this is a war of honour against honesty.

The honour and *bona fide* of some princes have been of that odd and unprincely contexture, that they were never once restrained by the same, from deceiving, plaguing, invading, robbing, and usurping upon their neighbours, and doing things which would have entitled a plain subject to the gibbet. Their honour seems to have been deeply concerned to have no honour: And though their faith was engaged to protect their subjects; yet their honour, on the other side, was engaged to pillage and enslave them. And here grew the royal war of honour against faith and equity!

How many peaceable nations have been robbed, how many millions of innocents butchered, out of mere honour, princely honour? This honour is indeed so wild, mischievous, and extravagant, that words, the most warm and significant words, fail in describing it. I shall therefore subjoin a few instances of its spirit, and conclude.

His Grace, Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, engaged his country in two mad wars at once with the two greatest powers in Europe, because his honour had suffered a rebuff in his attempts to debauch two great foreign ladies. Europe was to be embroiled; lives, treasure, and the safety of kingdoms to be risked and thrown away, to vindicate, forsooth, his Grace's debauched honour.

Cambyses, to revenge an affront put upon his father many years before by an Egyptian king, in the business of sending him a wife, involved the world in a flame of war; and at the expence of perhaps a million of lives, and the destruction of kingdoms, did at last heroically vindicate his father's honour and his own, upon the bones of a dead king, whom he caused to be dug up, and, after many indignities, cast into the fire.

White elephants are rare in nature, and so greatly valued in the Indies, that the King of Pegu hearing that the King of Siam had got two, sent an embassy in form, to desire one of them of his royal brother, at any price: But being refused, he thought his honour concerned to wage war for so great an affront. So he entered Siam with a vast army, and with the loss of five hundred thousand of his own men, and the destruction of as many of the Siamese, he made himself master of the elephant, and retrieved his honour.

Darius (I think it was Darius the Mede) found his honour concerned to chastise the Scythians for having invaded Asia a hundred and thirty years before; and lost a great army to vindicate his honour, which yet was not vindicated; that is, he missed the white elephant.

In short, honour and victory are generally no more than white elephants; and for white elephants the most destructive wars have been often made. What man free, either by birth or spirit, could, without pity and contempt, behold, as in a late French reign he frequently might behold, a swarm of slavish Frenchmen, in wooden shoes, with hungry bellies, and no clothes, dancing round a maypole, because their *Grand Monarque*, at the expence of a million of their money, and thirty or forty thousand lives, had acquired a white elephant, or, in other words, gained a town or victory?

Instances are endless, or else I could name other people, who have employed themselves several years in catching white elephants by sea and land; but I am in haste to conclude.

No. 58. SATURDAY, December 23, 1721.

Letter from a Lady, with an Answer, about Love, Marriage, and Settlements. (A Woman, Trenchard, and Gordon) ↻

[II-201]

TO CATO

SIR,

Though love, abstracted from marriage, is a subject too low for a statesman, a politician, and I might add a philosopher; yet as it relates to that holy state (as our Church is pleased to call it) it is worthy the greatest notice; for though many take upon them to ridicule all lawful and honourable love, and marriage, which crowns and proves it, yet I will venture to affirm, that hardly any person lives a long life without desiring at some part of it to enter into that state: It is like religion, implanted in our natures; and all men have a notion that 'tis the way to happiness, though all do not practise it: The reasons of this want of practise are many; besides the degeneracy of human nature, the imperfections of both sexes make them afraid of so close an affinity; the want of constancy in the male sex, and, above all, the love of money in both, is the greatest scandal and hindrance to this most honourable state in life.

I cannot excuse either sex (though by this time, both from my subject and handling of it, you will guess me to be of the weakest) from this last vice, the love of money; and I might add to it ambition; for it seems to me grown the rule of marriage, there being few alliances contracted of late years, but where this is the chief motive on the man's side, and almost so on the woman's: No wonder the ladies should have caught the vice; for when a woman finds herself slighted for no other want but that of a large fortune, she must needs think it worth purchasing at any rate, and neglect all other merit as useless.

I do not pretend to say that virtue and merit, in our sex, is to be met with in every corner of the streets, as I am too sensible the contrary is; but sure I am it is to be found, and judgment was given to the men in order to distinguish it. But, say your sex, is money then to be despised? Must the contrary be sought? And has a lady less merit for having a large fortune? Not always, but indeed too often; nay, nothing can hinder it but natural good sense and temper, joined to great care taken in the education; without that a superior fortune makes a worse woman, consequently a worse wife.

I was led into this thought, and which occasioned this letter, by a disappointment that a young lady I had a friendship for met with lately, with relation to this subject, which cost her her life.

She was addressed to by a gentleman, whose good sense and agreeableness would, she thought, atone for some natural defects and infirmities, which she had penetration enough to find out in his temper and disposition; among which his love of money was not the least: He was superior to her in fortune; but she was a gentlewoman born, and bred so, and in every respect, but money, his equal: She resolved to suit herself to his humour; and fancied herself cut out to please and make him happy, not out of vanity, but inclination to do so. She had pride, and did not greatly care to be obliged, even by the man whom she loved; but fancied she could save up a fortune to him in a few years, and, with the refusing of presents, and

resigning of settlements, atone in great measure for the want of it. He thought it worth while to deceive her for a considerable length of time, for what reason I cannot guess, she being a woman of undoubted character, which he had known for some years before, and all her actions answered: But in short he left her, and that in so abrupt and rude a manner, as made her bear it worse; not shewing the least abatement of his passion the last time he saw her, more than at the first. I wish that he had trusted her with the secret of forsaking her; for I dare say she would have taken it handsomely, and (for his advantage) given him up.

The disappointment met her under an indisposition of body, else I believe she had good sense, reason, and resentment enough, to have got the better of it. But she died, and without reproaching of him, or behaving herself unhandsomely; she said she was inclined to believe that there was a fate in things of that nature, and wished him happier than (she doubted) he deserved.

He is now upon the brink of marriage to a lady, that I dare say he does not like half so well as this lady whom he left for her; but she had more money abundantly, which he does not want; and then, though, as I said before, money is no objection, nor need a woman be sought out that wants it, yet I would not have a man venture to leave a woman for no other reason, lest he (as too probably he may) chance to repent it.

Sir, if you think this subject, or our sex, worthy your notice, we shall be obliged to you; you are an author, I might say it to your face, capable of serving any cause that you undertake; ours is a charitable one: I am out of the question myself, with relation to making my fortune, or it might not have been so proper for me to have started this subject, though obscure; but I have a general love for mankind, and particularly for my own sex; whose cause I commit to you, as into the hands of a most powerful advocate, and (I hope) a willing patron. My sincerity on this subject cannot be doubted, when I most humbly subscribe myself of that sex whose cause I recommend; *viz.*

A WOMAN

TO THE LADY WHO WROTE THE FOREGOING

MADAM,

You will easily believe me, when I acquaint you, that I am not a little proud of the honour you have done me, in thinking me worthy of the correspondence of a lady, to whom nature has shewn herself so indulgent. She seldom leaves her own work imperfect; and therefore I doubt not but she has been propitious to you more ways than one: And I am persuaded, that if you had been the first object of the inconstant Strephon's adoration, he had never worshipped any false goddess.

I can assure you, madam, you could never have recommended yourself so much to me, or have obliged me more, than in engaging me in this agreeable manner in the cause of helpless innocence, and distressed virtue; and in giving me an opportunity to consider the greater and better half of the world in their nearest and most engaging relation. I am, by profession, a knight-errant: It is my business to right wrongs, and redress injuries; and none more than those done to your tender sex.

It is a subject which employs my softest and most delicate thoughts and inclinations; which I can in nothing gratify so much, as by contributing to the ease and happiness of that sex, to whom we owe most of our own.

*That cordial drop heav'n in our cup has thrown,
To make the nauseous draught of life go down;*

And to atone for the thousands, ten thousands of evils, to which human condition is subject.

Hercules himself laid down his club, and took up a distaff: And,

*— — — — furious Mars,
The only governor and god of wars,
When tir'd with heat and toil, does oft resort
To taste the pleasures of the Paphian court.*

I do not therefore depart from my character, or desert my duty, in considering this subject, and attending upon the concerns of the fair: With their cause the cause of liberty is blended; and scarce any man will be much concerned for publick happiness, unless he enjoys domestick: Publick happiness being nothing else but the magistrate's protecting of private men in their property, and their enjoyments. It is certain, that a man's interest, in point of happiness and pleasures, is in no instance so much concerned as in that of marriage; which being the happiest or unhappiest state in the world, must mostly contribute to his happiness or misery.

The beauty, the vigour, the wit, and consequently the preferment of his posterity, do much depend upon the choice of his wife, and possibly upon his inclinations to her, and hers to him. We are very careful of the breed of our horses, of our cocks, and our dogs, and as remarkably neglectful of the education of our children; and yet we dedicate two thirds of our substance to our posterity: For so much is the difference between the purchase of estates of inheritance, and of estates only for our own lives.

Our wealth does also depend in a great measure upon domestick sympathy and concord; and it is a true proverb, that *A man must ask leave of his wife to be rich*: So great a share of his substance and prosperity must remain in her power, and at her discretion, and under her management, that if he would thrive and be happy himself, he must make her so.

In order to this, he ought to choose one whose temper, good sense, and agreeableness, shall make him find his pleasure in obliging her; and by constancy and endearing actions make her wholly his own, and to do all in her power to oblige him. No man can live in a constant state of hypocrisy in his own family; but if he has distastes, they will certainly break out; or at least be found out by one who is always about him, and whose constant business it is to observe him, and his humours and affections. And therefore it is his best and only way to find out such a one as he need not counterfeit a kindness to.

In all my observation, a good husband rarely misses to make a good wife. The hearts of women are naturally so tender, their passions towards their husbands so strong, their happiness and the respect which they meet with in the world are so much owing to their husbands, that we seldom find a married woman who will not, with a little real, and often with but a seeming kindness, do whatever a prudent husband will desire of her; and often, to

oblige him, more than he desires. And what can be more barbarous, than to use one ill who throws herself into his power, and depends upon his protection; who gives up all that she has to his mercy, and receives it afterwards at his pleasure?

It is miserable folly, to put yourself in a circumstance of being uneasy in your own house, which ought to be a retreat from all the ruffles and disappointments that you meet with elsewhere: In consequence of this, you must seek your pleasures abroad at great expence, and the hazard of your health, and to the neglect of your affairs. Your wife too, when she finds herself neglected by one in whom she had fixed her whole happiness, will not bear the place and mansion of her misery, but will fall into a despondency, and an indifference to your interest; and will be apt to look out in her turn for pleasures abroad, when she can have none at home. Women for the most part place their felicity in their husbands, and in their families; and generally pursue those views, till the unkindness, neglect, and folly of their husbands render them impracticable.

Whatever excuse there may be for men overrun with debts, or otherwise very necessitous, to aim only at money in marriage, and thereby to throw themselves into a miserable and nauseous imprisonment for life, to prevent falling into one but little worse; I cannot find one tolerable reason in nature, why any man in easy circumstances, and who does not want the common necessaries of life, should purchase the superfluities at so dear a price. But it is stupendous that men of figure and fortune, who have in their power the means of enjoying not only the conveniencies, but the luxury and vices of life (if such can be called enjoyments), should yet barter away all their happiness for a little seeming additional wealth, which for the most part produces real poverty.

It is certain, that ten men of birth and estates have been undone by marrying great fortunes, for one who has been enriched by it. Most men pay twenty per cent for such portions, as long as they have any thing to pay. Ten thousand pounds additional fortune, when laid out in land, will not produce three hundred pounds a year clear; which sum will scarce maintain the tea-table, and keep the supernumerary baubles in repair; and it will cost as much more to shew them. Besides, when the usual presents are made, and an expensive marriage is solemnized, gaudy clothes and equipage are bought, and perhaps a London house furnished; a considerable part of this portion will be disbursed, and the forlorn hero of this shewy, noisy farce, will discover, too late, how much more eligible it had been to have married a lady well born, of a discreet, modest, and frugal education, and an agreeable person, with less money, than a haughty dame with all her quality airs about her, or Mr. Thimbleman's daughter, though bedecked with as many trinkets as Tallboy or Jerry Blackacre upon the stage.

But before we can complete this account, we must balance what must be given in lieu of this lady's wealth, besides the entire loss of conjugal and domestick happiness. It is truly said, that *gold may be bought too dear*; and I may safely say, that the dearest purchase now in England, is a wife with a great fortune, not excepting that of South-Sea stock last year.

For every thousand pounds the lady brings, she must have a hundred pounds a year, at least during her own life, and often a rent-charge, which alone is worth the purchase money which she brings, if she outlives her husband; and then she brings nothing towards the issue, which, modestly speaking, are as much hers as her husband's; and it is certain, that during her living with him, she spends more than the interest of it: For (besides her private expence) the gay furniture, the rich beds, the China ware, the tea-table, the visiting-rooms, rich coaches,

&c. must be chiefly placed to her account; and she shares equally in the table expence, and in that of the children and gardens: And yet, over and above all this, a man must settle the remainder of his estate and substance out of his own power, and entail it upon whatever heir chance and his wife bring him; perhaps upon an ungrateful and disobedient one, made so by his independency upon his father; often upon a foolish and unimprovable one; sometimes, perhaps, upon a spurious one.

I do not complain of this usual method of settlement, as thinking it reasonable that any man should give a large sum of money in dowry with his daughter, without taking proper precautions to provide for her and his own posterity: But I censure the present great abuse of giving and demanding such fortunes, which have inverted the very ends of marriage, and made wives independent on their husbands, and sons on their fathers; fortunes, which make men bargain for their wives, as they would for cattle; and, instead of creating conjugal friendship and affection, and all sorts of domestick happiness, have produced nothing but strife, aversion, and contention, where there ought to be perfect sympathy and unanimity; and have brought into the world a race of monkeys and baboons, instead of creatures with human shape and souls.

Why should men of fortune and understanding bring themselves, without any motive from reason or interest, into these unhappy circumstances? Why should any man, without any consideration, at least any valuable consideration, divest himself of the greatest part of the property of his own estate? Why make himself only tenant for life, when he is in possession of an inheritance; and render himself by that means unable to provide against the many emergencies of life? Why subject himself to the insolence of an ungrateful heir, or be forced to leave it to an unworthy one? Why be obliged to bear the caprices and dishonour of a wanton and peevish wife, perhaps made so by his neglect, arising from his aversion, the ordinary effect of marriage against inclination? when he might have chosen one every way suited to the same; and, by contenting himself with less fortune, have kept the greatest part of his estate in his own power, and with it the further means of obliging her, and of making her future fortune and expectations to depend upon her own conduct, complaisance, and affectionate behaviour?

T

You have given me, madam, a very pregnant and affecting instance of a gentleman, who, made false by avarice, has lost, and wickedly lost, a virtuous, prudent, and fond wife, while he sought money more than merit; and cruelly broke his faith, and with it a tender heart, for the infamous sake of lucre; which may deservedly prove a canker in his soul and his substance, and bring him a lady with qualities proper to revenge the other's just quarrel and barbarous wrongs. And I, on my part, can give you an instance of a gentleman of great fortune and figure, who, by acting according to the former wiser rules, has made himself happy in an amiable, discreet, and observant lady, and enjoys with her all the blessings of mutual confidence and tender affection. He is complaisant without art, and she without fear. I am,

G

With perfect respect,
MADAM,
Your most humble and most obedient servant,

POSTSCRIPT ↩

I have, in several of my late letters, observed some slips that have escaped from the pen of the great and learned Dr. Prideaux; but as I have done this with no design of blemishing a character which cannot be blemished, I think myself obliged to own once more, his great merit, the service done by him to man-kind, the honour to his country, and the pleasure and information which I in particular have received from his worthy labours.

It is possible, that out of detestation to principles which subvert and tear up by the roots all liberty and civil happiness, I may have used some warm expressions against those that maintain them. Such expressions therefore can be applied only to those who have been ever the avowed and active enemies of every thing lovely, valuable, or praiseworthy amongst men. But as to Dr. Prideaux, however he is fallen into prejudice, perhaps early imbibed, and not since examined by him with his usual accuracy; or however he might intend to serve a pious cause with adventitious helps and precarious supports, which it wanted not: Certain it is, from the whole course of his excellent performance, that he had sincerely at heart the interest of true religion and liberty. A spirit of virtue, piety, good sense, and integrity, and an aversion to oppression, cruelty, and tyranny, shine through his whole history, and animate the same; and neither he nor his history can be too much commended.

But the Doctor is an eminent instance, how little any man ought to be guided by the mere authority of another; since one of the greatest and worthiest men living is capable of falling into such obvious errors. From the greatness of his name and credit alone I was led to these animadversions, and with reluctance I made them. Falcons do not prey upon flies. Other writers, whose characters add no weight to their mistakes, are safe from any censure of mine. For this reason I shall not trouble myself with the party-falsehoods, and pious ribaldry, and blunders, of a modern voluminous writer of English history. His contract and dialogue between Oliver Cromwell and the Devil, is a harmless piece of history, and as entertaining as the rest.

T.

I am, &c.

No. 59. SATURDAY, December 30, 1721.

Liberty proved to be the unalienable Right of all Mankind. [Trenchard] ↩

[II-214]

SIR,

I intend to entertain my readers with dissertations upon liberty, in some of my succeeding letters; and shall, as a preface to that design, endeavour to prove in this, that liberty is the unalienable right of all mankind.

All governments, under whatsoever form they are administered, ought to be administered for the good of the society; when they are otherwise administered, they cease to be government, and become usurpation. This being the end of all government, even the most despotick have this limitation to their authority: In this respect, the only difference between the most absolute princes and limited magistrates, is, that in free governments there are checks and restraints appointed and expressed in the constitution itself: In despotick governments, the people submit themselves to the prudence and discretion of the prince alone: But there is still this tacit condition annexed to his power, that he must act by the unwritten laws of discretion and prudence, and employ it for the sole interest of the people, who give it to him, or suffer him to enjoy it, which they ever do for their own sakes.

Even in the most free governments, single men are often trusted with discretionary power: But they must answer for that discretion to those that trust them. Generals of armies and admirals of fleets have often unlimited commissions; and yet are they not answerable for the prudent execution of those commissions? The Council of Ten, in Venice, have absolute power over the liberty and life of every man in the state: But if they should make use of that power to slaughter, abolish, or enslave the senate; and, like the Decemviri of Rome, to set up themselves; would it not be lawful for those, who gave them that authority for other ends, to put those ten unlimited traitors to death, any way that they could? The crown of England has been for the most part entrusted with the sole disposal of the money given for the Civil List, often with the application of great sums raised for other publick uses; yet, if the lord-treasurer had applied this money to the dishonour of the King, and ruin of the people (though by the private direction of the crown itself) will any man say that he ought not to have compensated for his crime, by the loss of his head and his estate?

I have said thus much, to shew that no government can be absolute in the sense, or rather nonsense, of our modern dogmatizers, and indeed in the sense too commonly practised. No barbarous conquest; no extorted consent of miserable people, submitting to the chain to escape the sword; no repeated and hereditary acts of cruelty, though called succession, no continuation of violence, though named prescription; can alter, much less abrogate, these fundamental principles of government itself, or make the means of preservation the means of destruction, and render the condition of mankind infinitely more miserable than that of the beasts of the field, by the sole privilege of that reason which distinguishes them from the brute creation.

Force can give no title but to revenge, and to the use of force again; nor could it ever enter into the heart of any man, to give to another power over him, for any other end but to be exercised for his own advantage: And if there are any men mad or foolish enough to pretend to do otherwise, they ought to be treated as idiots or lunatics; and the reason of their conduct must be derived from their folly and frenzy.

All men are born free; liberty is a gift which they receive from God himself; nor can they alienate the same by consent, though possibly they may forfeit it by crimes. No man has power over his own life, or to dispose of his own religion; and cannot consequently transfer the power of either to any body else: Much less can he give away the lives and liberties, religion or acquired property of his posterity, who will be born as free as he himself was born, and can never be bound by his wicked and ridiculous bargain.

The right of the magistrate arises only from the right of private men to defend themselves, to repel injuries, and to punish those who commit them: That right being conveyed by the society to their publick representative, he can execute the same no further than the benefit and security of that society requires he should. When he exceeds his commission, his acts are as extrajudicial as are those of any private officer usurping an unlawful authority, that is, they are void; and every man is answerable for the wrong which he does. A power to do good can never become a warrant for doing evil.

But here arises a grand question, which has perplexed and puzzled the greatest part of mankind: Yet, I think, the answer to it easy and obvious. The question is, who shall be judge whether the magistrate acts justly, and pursues his trust? To this it is justly said, that if those who complain of him are to judge him, then there is a settled authority above the chief magistrate, which authority must be itself the chief magistrate; which is contrary to the supposition; and the same question and difficulty will recur again upon this new magistracy. All this I own to be absurd; and I aver it to be at least as absurd to affirm, that the person accused is to be the decisive judge of his own actions, when it is certain that he will always judge and determine in his own favour; and thus the whole race of mankind will be left helpless under the heaviest injustice, oppression, and misery, that can afflict human nature.

But if neither magistrates, nor they who complain of magistrates, and are aggrieved by them, have a right to determine decisively, the one for the other; and if there be no common established power, to which both are subject; then every man interested in the success of the contest, must act according to the light and dictates of his own conscience, and inform it as well as he can. Where no judge is nor can be appointed, every man must be his own; that is, when there is no stated judge upon earth, we must have recourse to heaven, and obey the will of heaven, by declaring ourselves on that which we think the juster side.

If the Senate and people of Rome had differed irreconcilably, there could have been no common judge in the world between them; and consequently no remedy but the last: For that government consisting in the union of the nobles and the people, when they differed, no man could determine between them; and therefore every man must have been at liberty to provide for his own security, and the general good, in the best manner he was able. In that case the common judge ceasing, every one was his own: The government becoming incapable of acting, suffered a political demise: The constitution was dissolved; and there being no government in being, the people were in the state of nature again.

The same must be true, where two absolute princes, governing a country, come to quarrel, as sometimes two Caesars in partnership did, especially towards the latter end of the Roman empire; or where a sovereign council govern a country, and their votes come equally to be divided. In such a circumstance, every man must take that side which he thinks most for the publick good, or choose any proper measures for his own security: For, if I owe my allegiance to two princes agreeing, or to the majority of a council; when between these princes there is no longer any union, nor in that council any majority, no submission can be due to that which is not; and the laws of nature and self-preservation must take place, where there are no other.

The case is still the same, when there is any dispute about the titles of absolute princes, who govern independently on the states of a country, and call none. Here too every man must judge for himself what party he will take, to which of the titles he will adhere; and the like private judgment must guide him, whenever a question arises whether the said prince be an idiot or a lunatick, and consequently whether he be capable or incapable of government. Where there are no states, there can be no other way of judging; but by the judgment of private men the capacity of the prince must be judged, and his fate determined. Lunacy and idiotism are, I think, allowed by all to be certain disqualifications for government; indeed they are as much so, as if he were deaf, blind, and dumb, or even dead. He who can neither execute an office, nor appoint a deputy, is not fit for one.

Now I would fain know, why private men may not as well use their judgment in an instance that concerns them more; I mean that of a tyrannical government, of which they hourly feel the sad effects, and sorrowful proofs; whereas they have not by far the equal means of coming to a certainty about the natural incapacity of their governor. The persons of great princes are known but to few of their subjects, and their parts to much fewer; and several princes have, by the management of their wives, or ministers, or murderers, reigned a good while after they were dead. In truth, I think it is as much the business and right of the people to judge whether their prince be good or bad, whether a father or an enemy, as to judge whether he be dead or alive; unless it be said (as many such wise things have been said) that they may judge whether he can govern them, but not whether he does; and that it behoves them to put the administration in wiser hands, if he be a harmless fool, but it is impious to do it, if he be only a destructive tyrant; that want of speech is a disqualification, but want of humanity, none.

That subjects were not to judge of their governors, or rather for themselves in the business of government, which of all human things concerns them most, was an absurdity that never entered into the imagination of the wise and honest ancients: Who, following for their guide that everlasting reason, which is the best and only guide in human affairs, carried liberty, and human happiness, the legitimate offspring and work of liberty, to the highest pitch that they were capable of arriving at. But the above absurdity, with many others as monstrous and mischievous, were reserved for the discovery of a few wretched and dreaming Mahometan and Christian monks, who, ignorant of all things, were made, or made themselves, the directors of all things; and bewitching the world with holy lies and unaccountable ravings, dressed up in barbarous words and uncouth phrases, bent all their fairy force against common sense and common liberty and truth, and founded a pernicious, absurd, and visionary empire upon their ruins. Systems without sense, propositions without truth, religion without reason, a rampant church without charity, severity without justice, and government without liberty or mercy, were all the blessed handy-works of these religious mad-men, and godly pedants; who, by pretending to know the other world, cheated and

confounded this. Their enmity to common sense, and want of it, were their warrants for governing the sense of all mankind: By lying, they were thought the champions of the truth; and by their fooleries, impieties, and cruelty, were esteemed the favourites and confidants of the God of wisdom, mercy, and peace.

These were the men, who, having demolished all sense and human judgment, first made it a principle, that people were not to judge of their governor and government, nor to meddle with it; nor to preserve themselves from publick destroyers, falsely calling themselves governors: Yet these men, who thus set up for the support and defenders of government, without the common honesty of distinguishing the good from the bad, and protection from murder and depredation, were at the same time themselves the constant and avowed troublers of every government which they could not direct and command; and every government, however excellent, which did not make their reveries its own rules, and themselves alone its peculiar care, has been honoured with their professed hatred; whilst tyrants and publick butchers, who flattered them, have been deified. This was the poor state of Christendom before the Reformation; and I wish I could say, of no parts of it since.

This barbarous anarchy in reasoning and politicks, has made it necessary to prove propositions which the light of nature had demonstrated. And, as the apostles were forced to prove to the misled Gentiles, that they were no gods which were made with hands; I am put to prove, that the people have a right to judge, whether their governors were made for them, or they for their governors? Whether their governors have necessary and natural qualifications? Whether they have any governors or no? And whether, when they have none, every man must not be his own? I therefore return to instances and illustrations from facts which cannot be denied; though propositions as true as facts may, by those especially who are defective in point of modesty or discernment.

In Poland, according to the constitution of that country, it is necessary, we are told, that, in their diets, the consent of every man present must be had to make a resolve effectual: And therefore, to prevent the cutting of people's throats, they have no remedy but to cut the throats of one another; that is, they must pull out their sabres, and force the refractory members (who are always the minority) to submit. And amongst us in England, where a jury cannot agree, there can be no verdict; and so they must fast till they do, or till one of them is dead, and then the jury is dissolved.

This, from the nature of things themselves, must be the constant case in all disputes between dominion and property. Where the interest of the governors and that of the governed clash, there can be no stated judge between them: To appeal to a foreign power, is to give up the sovereignty; for either side to submit, is to give up the question: And therefore, if they themselves do not amicably determine the dispute between themselves, heaven alone must. In such case, recourse must be had to the first principles of government itself; which being a departure from the state of nature, and a union of many families forming themselves into a political machine for mutual protection and defence, it is evident, that this formed relation can continue no longer than the machine subsists and can act; and when it does not, the individuals must return to their former state again. No constitution can provide against what will happen, when that constitution is dissolved. Government is only an appointment of one or more persons, to do certain actions for the good and emolument of the society; and if the persons thus interested will not act at all, or act contrary to their trust, their power must return of course to those who gave it.

Suppose, for example, the Grand Monarch, as he was called, had bought a neighbouring kingdom, and all the lands in it, from the courtiers, and the majority of the people's deputies; and amongst the rest, the church-lands, into the bargain, with the consent of their convocation or synod, or by what other name that assembly was called; would the people and clergy have thought themselves obliged to have made good this bargain, if they could have helped it? I dare say that neither would; but, on the contrary, that the people would have had the countenance of these reverend patriots to have told their representatives in round terms, that they were chosen to act for the interest of those that sent them, and not for their own; that their power was given them to protect and defend their country, and not to sell and enslave it.

This supposition, as wild as it seems, yet is not absolutely and universally impossible. King John actually sold the kingdom of England to his Holiness: And there are people in all nations ready to sell their country at home; and such can never have any principles to withhold them from selling it abroad.

It is foolish to say, that this doctrine can be mischievous to society, at least in any proportion to the wild ruin and fatal calamities which must befall, and do befall the world, where the contrary doctrine is maintained: For, all bodies of men subsisting upon their own substance, or upon the profits of their trade and industry, find their account so much in ease and peace, and have justly such terrible apprehensions of civil disorders, which destroy every thing that they enjoy; that they always bear a thousand injuries before they return one, and stand under the burdens as long as they can bear them; as I have in another letter observed.

What with the force of education, and the reverence which people are taught, and have been always used to pay to princes; what with the perpetual harangues of flatterers, the gaudy pageantry and outside of power, and its gilded ensigns, always glittering in their eyes; what with the execution of the laws in the sole power of the prince; what with all the regular magistrates, pompous guards and standing troops, with the fortified towns, the artillery, and all the magazines of war, at his disposal; besides large revenues, and multitudes of followers and dependants, to support and abet all that he does: Obedience to authority is so well secured, that it is wild to imagine, that any number of men, formidable enough to disturb a settled state, can unite together and hope to overturn it, till the publick grievances are so enormous, the oppression so great, and the disaffection so universal, that there can be no question remaining, whether their calamities be real or imaginary, and whether the magistrate has protected or endeavoured to destroy his people.

This was the case of Richard II, Edward II, and James II and will ever be the case under the same circumstances. No society of men will groan under oppressions longer than they know how to throw them off; whatever unnatural whimsies and fairy notions idle and sedentary babblers may utter from colleges and cloisters; and teach to others, for vile self-ends, doctrines, which they themselves are famous for not practising.

Upon this principle of people's judging for themselves, and resisting lawless force, stands our late happy Revolution, and with it the just and rightful title of our most excellent sovereign King George, to the scepter of these realms; a scepter which he has, and I doubt not will ever sway, to his own honour, and the honour, protection, and prosperity of us his people.

T

I am, &c.



No. 60. SATURDAY, January 6, 1722.

All Government proved to be instituted by Men, and only to intend the general Good of Men. [Trenchard] [↪](#)

[II-226]

SIR,

There is no government now upon earth, which owes its formation or beginning to the immediate revelation of God, or can derive its existence from such revelation: It is certain, on the contrary, that the rise and institution or variation of government, from time to time, is within the memory of men or of histories; and that every government, which we know at this day in the world, was established by the wisdom and force of mere men, and by the concurrence of means and causes evidently human. Government therefore can have no power, but such as men can give, and such as they actually did give, or permit for their own sakes: Nor can any government be in fact framed but by consent, if not of every subject, yet of as many as can compel the rest; since no man, or council of men, can have personal strength enough to govern multitudes by force, or can claim to themselves and their families any superiority, or natural sovereignty over their fellow-creatures naturally as good as them. Such strength, therefore, where-ever it is, is civil and accumulative strength, derived from the laws and constitutions of the society, of which the governors themselves are but members.

So that to know the jurisdiction of governors, and its limits, we must have recourse to the institution of government, and ascertain those limits by the measure of power, which men in the state of nature have over themselves and one another: And as no man can take from many, who are stronger than him, what they have no mind to give him; and he who has not consent must have force, which is itself the consent of the stronger; so no man can give to another either what is none of his own, or what in its own nature is inseparable from himself; as his religion particularly is.

Every man's religion is his own; nor can the religion of any man, of what nature or figure soever, be the religion of another man, unless he also chooses it; which action utterly excludes all force, power, or government. Religion can never come without conviction, nor can conviction come from civil authority; religion, which is the fear of God, cannot be subject to power, which is the fear of man. It is a relation between God and our own souls only, and consists in a disposition of mind to obey the will of our great Creator, in the manner which we think most acceptable to him. It is independent upon all human directions, and superior to them; and consequently uncontrollable by external force, which cannot reach the free faculties of the mind, or inform the understanding, much less convince it. Religion therefore, which can never be subject to the jurisdiction of another, can never be alienated to another, or put in his power.

Nor has any man in the state of nature power over his own life, or to take away the life of another, unless to defend his own, or what is as much his own, namely, his property. This power therefore, which no man has, no man can transfer to another.

Nor could any man in the state of nature, have a right to violate the property of another; that is, what another had acquired by his art or labour; or to interrupt him in his industry and enjoyments, as long as he himself was not injured by that industry and those enjoyments. No

man therefore could transfer to the magistrate that right which he had not himself.

No man in his senses was ever so wild as to give an unlimited power to another to take away his life, or the means of living, according to the caprice, passion, and unreasonable pleasure of that other: But if any man restrained himself from any part of his pleasures, or parted with any portion of his acquisitions, he did it with the honest purpose of enjoying the rest with the greater security, and always in subserviency to his own happiness, which no man will or can willingly and intentionally give away to any other whatsoever.

And if any one, through his own inadvertence, or by the fraud or violence of another, can be drawn into so foolish a contract, he is relievable by the eternal laws of God and reason. No engagement that is wicked and unjust can be executed without injustice and wickedness: This is so true, that I question whether there be a constitution in the world which does not afford, or pretend to afford, a remedy for relieving ignorant, distressed, and unwary men, trepanned into such engagements by artful knaves, or frightened into them by imperious ones. So that here the laws of nature and general reason supersede the municipal and positive laws of nations; and no where oftener than in England. What else was the design, and ought to be the business, of our courts of equity? And I hope whole countries and societies are no more exempted from the privileges and protection of reason and equity, than are private particulars.

Here then is the natural limitation of the magistrate's authority: He ought not to take what no man ought to give; nor exact what no man ought to perform: All he has is given him, and those that gave it must judge of the application. In government there is no such relation as lord and slave, lawless will and blind submission; nor ought to be amongst men: But the only relation is that of father and children, patron and client, protection and allegiance, benefaction and gratitude, mutual affection and mutual assistance.

So that the nature of government does not alter the natural right of men to liberty, which in all political societies is alike their due: But some governments provide better than others for the security and impartial distribution of that right. There has been always such a constant and certain fund of corruption and malignity in human nature, that it has been rare to find that man, whose views and happiness did not center in the gratification of his appetites, and worst appetites, his luxury, his pride, his avarice, and lust of power; and who considered any publick trust reposed in him, with any other view, than as the means to satiate such unruly and dangerous desires! And this has been most eminently true of great men, and those who aspired to dominion. They were first made great for the sake of the publick, and afterwards at its expence. And if they had been content to have been moderate traitors, mankind would have been still moderately happy; but their ambition and treason observing no degrees, there was no degree of vileness and misery which the poor people did not often feel.

The appetites therefore of men, especially of great men, are carefully to be observed and stayed, or else they will never stay themselves. The experience of every age convinces us, that we must not judge of men by what they ought to do, but by what they will do; and all history affords but few instances of men trusted with great power without abusing it, when with security they could. The servants of society, that is to say, its magistrates, did almost universally serve it by seizing it, selling it, or plundering it; especially when they were left by the society unlimited as to their duty and wages. In that case these faithful stewards generally took all; and, being servants, made slaves of their masters.

For these reasons, and convinced by woeful and eternal experience, societies found it necessary to lay restraints upon their magistrates or publick servants, and to put checks upon those who would otherwise put chains upon them; and therefore these societies set themselves to model and form national constitutions with such wisdom and art, that the publick interest should be consulted and carried at the same time, when those entrusted with the administration of it were consulting and pursuing their own.

Hence grew the distinction between arbitrary and free governments: Not that more or less power was vested in the one than in the other; nor that either of them lay under less or more obligations, in justice, to protect their subjects, and study their ease, prosperity, and security, and to watch for the same. But the power and sovereignty of magistrates in free countries was so qualified, and so divided into different channels, and committed to the direction of so many different men, with different interests and views, that the majority of them could seldom or never find their account in betraying their trust in fundamental instances. Their emulation, envy, fear, or interest, always made them spies and checks upon one another. By all which means the people have often come at the heads of those who forfeited their heads, by betraying the people.

In despotick governments things went far otherwise, those governments having been framed otherwise; if the same could be called governments, where the rules of publick power were dictated by private and lawless lust; where folly and madness often swayed the scepter, and blind rage wielded the sword. The whole weath of the state, with its civil or military power, being in the prince, the people could have no remedy but death and patience, while he oppressed them by the lump, and butchered them by thousands: Unless perhaps the ambition or personal resentments of some of the instruments of his tyranny procured a revolt, which rarely mended their condition.

The only secret therefore in forming a free government, is to make the interests of the governors and of the governed the same, as far as human policy can contrive. Liberty cannot be preserved any other way. Men have long found, from the weakness and depravity of themselves and one another, that most men will act for interest against duty, as often as they dare. So that to engage them to their duty, interest must be linked to the observance of it, and danger to the breach of it. Personal advantages and security, must be the rewards of duty and obedience; and disgrace, torture, and death, the punishment of treachery and corruption.

Human wisdom has yet found out but one certain expedient to effect this; and that is, to have the concerns of all directed by all, as far as possibly can be: And where the persons interested are too numerous, or live too distant to meet together on all emergencies, they must moderate necessity by prudence, and act by deputies, whose interest is the same with their own, and whose property is so intermingled with theirs, and so engaged upon the same bottom, that principals and deputies must stand and fall together. When the deputies thus act for their own interest, by acting for the interest of their principals; when they can make no law but what they themselves, and their posterity, must be subject to; when they can give no money, but what they must pay their share of; when they can do no mischief, but what must fall upon their own heads in common with their countrymen; their principals may then expect good laws, little mischief, and much frugality.

Here therefore lies the great point of nicety and care in forming the constitution, that the persons entrusted and representing, shall either never have any interest detached from the persons entrusting and represented, or never the means to pursue it. Now to compass this

great point effectually, no other way is left, but one of these two, or rather both; namely, to make the deputies so numerous, that there may be no possibility of corrupting the majority; or, by changing them so often, that there is no sufficient time to corrupt them, and to carry the ends of that corruption. The people may be very sure, that the major part of their deputies being honest, will keep the rest so; and that they will all be honest, when they have no temptations to be knaves.

We have some sketch of this policy in the constitution of our several great companies, where the general court, composed of all its members, constitutes the legislature, and the consent of that court is the sanction of their laws; and where the administration of their affairs is put under the conduct of a certain number chosen by the whole. Here every man concerned saw the necessity of securing part of their property, by putting the persons entrusted under proper regulations; however remiss they may be in taking care of the whole. And if provision had been made, that, as a third part of the directors are to go out every year, so none should stay in above three (as I am told was at first promised), all juggling with courtiers, and raising great estates by confederacy, at the expence of the company, had, in a great measure, been prevented; though there were still wanting other limitations, which might have effectually obviated all those evils.

This was the ancient constitution of England: Our kings had neither revenues large enough, nor offices gainful and numerous enough in their disposal, to corrupt any considerable number of members; nor any force to frighten them. Besides, the same Parliament seldom or never met twice: For, the serving in it being found an office of burden, and not of profit, it was thought reasonable that all men qualified should, in their turns, leave their families and domestick concerns, to serve the publick; and their boroughs bore their charges. The only grievance then was, that they were not called together often enough, to redress the grievances which the people suffered from the court during their intermission: And therefore a law was made in Edward III's time, that Parliaments should be holden once a year.

But this law, like the late Queen's Peace, did not execute itself; and therefore the court seldom convened them, but when they wanted money, or had other purposes of their own to serve; and sometimes raised money without them: Which arbitrary proceeding brought upon the publick numerous mischiefs; and, in the reign of King Charles I, a long and bloody civil war. In that reign an act was passed, that they should meet of themselves, if they were not called according to the direction of that law; which was worthily repealed upon the restoration of King Charles II: And in the same kind fit, a great revenue was given him for life, and continued to his brother. By which means these princes were enabled to keep standing troops, to corrupt Parliaments, or to live without them; and to commit such acts of power as brought about, and indeed forced the people upon the late happy Revolution. Soon after which a new act was passed, that Parliaments should be rechosen once in three years: Which law was also repealed, upon his Majesty's accession to the throne, that the present Parliament might have time to rectify those abuses which we labour under, and to make regulations proper to prevent them all for the future. All which has since been happily effected; and, I bless God, we are told, that the people will have the opportunity to thank them, in another election, for their great services to their country. I shall be always ready, on my part, to do them honour, and pay them my acknowledgments, in the most effectual manner in my power. But more of this in the succeeding papers.

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No. 61. SATURDAY, January 13, 1722.

How free Governments are to be framed so as to last, and how they differ from such as are arbitrary. [Trenchard] [↪](#)

[II-236]

SIR,

The most reasonable meaning that can be put upon this apothegm, that *virtue is its own reward*, is, that it seldom meets with any other. God himself, who having made us, best knows our natures, does not trust to the intrinsic excellence and native beauty of holiness alone, to engage us in its interests and pursuits, but recommends it to us by the stronger and more affecting motives of rewards and punishments. No wise man, therefore, will in any instance of moment trust to the mere integrity of another. The experience of all ages may convince us, that men, when they are above fear, grow for the most part above honesty and shame: And this is particularly and certainly true of societies of men, when they are numerous enough to keep one another in countenance; for when the weight of infamy is divided amongst many, no one sinks under his own burden.

Great bodies of men have seldom judged what they ought to do, by any other rule than what they could do. What nation is there that has not oppressed any other, when the same could be done with advantage and security? What party has ever had regard to the principles which they professed, or ever reformed the errors which they condemned? What company, or particular society of merchants or tradesmen, has ever acted for the interest of general trade, though it always filled their mouths in private conversation?

And yet men, thus formed and qualified, are the materials for government. For the sake of men it is instituted, by the prudence of men it must be conducted; and the art of political mechanism' is, to erect a firm building with such crazy and corrupt materials. The strongest cables are made out of loose hemp and flax; the world itself may, with the help of proper machines, be moved by the force of a single hair; and so may the government of the world, as well as the world itself. But whatever discourses I shall hereafter make upon this great and useful subject, I shall confine myself in this letter to free monarchical constitutions alone, and to the application of some of the principles laid down in my last.

It is there said, that when the society consists of too many, or when they live too far apart to be able to meet together, to take care of their own affairs, they can not otherwise preserve their liberties, than by choosing deputies to represent them, and to act for them; and that these deputies must be either so numerous, that there can be no means of corrupting the majority; or so often changed, that there shall be no time to do it so as to answer any end by doing it. Without one of these regulations, or both, I lay it down as a certain maxim in politicks, that it is impossible to preserve a free government long.

I think I may with great modesty affirm, that in former reigns the people of England found no sufficient security in the number of their representatives. What with the crowd of offices in the gift of the crown, which were possessed by men of no other merit, nor held by any other tenure, but merely a capacity to get into the House of Commons, and the disservice which they could and would do their country there: What with the promises and expectations given to others, who by court-influence, and often by court-money, carried their elections:

What by artful caresses, and the familiar and deceitful addresses of great men to weak men: What with luxurious dinners, and rivers of Burgundy, Champaign, and Tokay, thrown down the throats of gluttons; and what with pensions, and other personal gratifications, bestowed where wind and smoke would not pass for current coin: What with party watch-words and imaginary terrors, spread amongst the drunken 'squires, and the deluded and enthusiastick bigots, of dreadful designs in embryo, to blow up the Church, and the Protestant interest; and sometimes with the dread of mighty invasions just ready to break upon us from the man in the moon: I say, by all these corrupt arts, the representatives of the English people, in former reigns, have been brought to betray the people, and to join with their oppressors. So much are men governed by artful applications to their private passions and interest. And it is evident to me, that if ever we have a weak or an ambitious prince, with a ministry like him, we must find out some other resources, or acquiesce in the loss of our liberties. The course and transiency of human affairs will not suffer us to live always under the present righteous administration.

So that I can see no means in human policy to preserve the publick liberty and a monarchical form of government together, but by the frequent fresh elections of the people's deputies: This is what the writers in politicks call rotation of magistracy. Men, when they first enter into magistracy, have often their former condition before their eyes: They remember what they themselves suffered, with their fellow-subjects, from the abuse of power, and how much they blamed it; and so their first purposes are to be humble, modest, and just; and probably, for some time, they continue so. But the possession of power soon alters and vitiates their hearts, which are at the same time sure to be leavened, and puffed up to an unnatural size, by the deceitful incense of false friends, and by the prostrate submission of parasites. First, they grow indifferent to all their good designs, then drop them: Next, they lose their moderation; afterwards, they renounce all measures with their old acquaintance and old principles; and seeing themselves in magnifying glasses, grow, in conceit, a different species from their fellowsubjects; and so by too sudden degrees become insolent, rapacious and tyrannical, ready to catch at all means, often the vilest and most oppressive, to raise their fortunes as high as their imaginary greatness. So that the only way to put them in mind of their former condition, and consequently of the condition of other people, is often to reduce them to it; and to let others of equal capacities share of power in their turn: This also is the only way to qualify men, and make them equally fit for dominion and subjection.

A rotation therefore, in power and magistracy, is essentially necessary to a free government: It is indeed the thing itself; and constitutes, animates, and informs it, as much as the soul constitutes the man. It is a thing sacred and inviolable, where-ever liberty is thought sacred; nor can it ever be committed to the disposal of those who are trusted with the preservation of national constitutions: For though they may have the power to model it for the publick advantage, and for the more effectual security of that right; yet they can have none to give it up, or, which is the same thing, to make it useless.

The constitution of a limited monarchy, is the joint concurrence of the crown and of the nobles (without whom it cannot subsist) and of the body of the people, to make laws for the common benefit of the subject; and where the people, through number or distance, cannot meet, they must send deputies to speak in their names, and to attend upon their interest: These deputies therefore act by, under, and in subserviency to the constitution, and have not a power above it and over it.

In Holland, and some other free countries, the states are often obliged to consult their principals; and, in some instances, our own Parliaments have declined entering upon questions of importance, till they had gone into the country, and known the sentiments of those that sent them; as in all cases they ought to consult their inclinations as well as their interest. Who will say, that the Rump, or fag-end of the Long Parliament of forty-one, had any right to expel such members as they did not like? Or to watch for their absence, that they might seize to themselves, or give up to any body else, the right of those from whose confidence and credulity they derived the authority which they acted by?

With thanks to God, I own, that we have a prince so sensible of this right, and who owes his crown so entirely to the principles laid down, and I think fully proved in these letters; that it is impossible to suspect, either from his inclinations, his interest, or his known justice, that he should ever fall into any measures to destroy that people, who have given him his crown, and supported him in it with so much generosity and expense; or that he should undermine, by that means, the ground upon which he stands. I do therefore the less regard the idle suspicions and calumnies of disaffected men, who would surmise, that a design is yet on foot to continue this Parliament; a reflection the most impudent and invidious that can be thrown upon his Majesty, his ministers, or his two houses; and a reflection that can come from none but professed, or at least from concealed, Jacobites.

It is no less than an insinuation, that our most excellent sovereign King George has a distrust of his faithful subjects; that he will refuse them the means of their own preservation, and the preservation of that constitution which they chose him to preserve; that he will shut his ears against their modest, just, and dutiful complaints; and that he apprehends danger from meeting them in a new and free-chosen Parliament. This is contrary to the tenor of his whole life and actions; who, as he has received three crowns from their gift, so he lies under all the ties of generosity, gratitude, and duty, to cherish and protect them, and to make them always great, free, and happy.

It is a most scandalous calumny upon his faithful servants, to suggest that any of them, conscious of guilt and crimes, feared any thing from the most strict and rigorous inspection into their proceedings. Some of them have already stood the fiery trial, and come off triumphant with general approbation. They have, besides, the advantage of his Majesty's most gracious pardon, which they did not want, and which was not passed for their sakes. Who therefore can suspect, that patriots so uncorrupt, so prudent, and so popular, will dishonour their master, give up the constitution, ruin their country, and render themselves the objects of universal scorn, detestation, and cursing, by advising the most odious, dangerous, and destructive measures, that ever counsellors gave a prince?

It is a most ungrateful return to our illustrious representatives, to suggest, that men who have left their domestick concerns to serve their country at their own expence, and without any personal advantages, and have bestowed their labours upon the publick for a much longer time than their principals had at first a right to expect from them; and have, during all that time, been rectifying the abuses which have crept into our constitution; and have assisted his Majesty in going through two very useful and necessary wars, and have regulated our finances, and the expence of our guards and garrisons, and corrected many abuses in the fleet and the civil administration; and have taken effectual vengeance of all those who were concerned in promoting, procuring, aiding, or assisting the late dreadful South-Sea project: I say, after so many things done by them for the publick honour and prosperity, it is the basest ingratitude to surmise, that any of them would give up that constitution which they were

chosen, and have taken so much pains, to preserve.

I do indeed confess, if any invasion were to be feared from Muscovy, Mecklenburg, Spain, or Civita Vecchia; if new provinces were to be obtained abroad, new armies to be raised, or new fleets to be equipped, upon warlike expeditions; if new provision were wanting for the Civil List, and new taxes to be levied, or new companies to be erected to pay off the publick debts; if the universities were to be farther regulated, or any inspection were necessary into the increase of fees and exactions of civil officers; if there were the least ground to suspect bribery or corruption in a place where it should not be; or if there were any new project on foot to banish tyrannical and popish principles far out of the land: I say, that in such a scene of affairs, I dare not be altogether so positive in my assertion, that we ought to venture, and at all events to leave to chance, that which we are in possession of already. But as we are at present in the happy state of indolence and security, at peace with all the world and our own consciences; as little more money can be raised from the people, most of it being already in hand, which, according to the rules of good policy, unite dominion and property; as our benefactors too are generous and honourable, our boroughs not insensible or ungrateful, nor the counties themselves inexorable to shining merit; So it is much to be hoped, that another Parliament may be chosen equally deserving, and as zealous for the publick interest; or, at worst, there are honest and tried measures at hand, which will undoubtedly make them so. And I offer this as a conclusive, and I think a most convincing, argument, that the kingdom will be obliged with a new election.

T.

I am, &c.

No. 62. SATURDAY, January 20, 1722.

An Enquiry into the Nature and Extent of Liberty; with its Loveliness and Advantages, and the vile Effects of Slavery. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[II-244]

SIR,

I have shewn, in a late paper, wherein consists the difference between free and arbitrary governments, as to their frame and constitution;' and in this and the following, I shall shew their different spirit and effects. But first I shall shew wherein liberty itself consists.

By liberty, I understand the power which every man has over his own actions, and his right to enjoy the fruit of his labour, art, and industry, as far as by it he hurts not the society, or any members of it, by taking from any member, or by hindering him from enjoying what he himself enjoys. The fruits of a man's honest industry are the just rewards of it, ascertained to him by natural and eternal equity, as is his title to use them in the manner which he thinks fit: And thus, with the above limitations, every man is sole lord and arbiter of his own private actions and property. A character of which no man living can divest him but by usurpation, or his own consent.

The entering into political society, is so far from a departure from his natural right, that to preserve it was the sole reason why men did so; and mutual protection and assistance is the only reasonable purpose of all reasonable societies. To make such protection practicable, magistracy was formed, with power to defend the innocent from violence, and to punish those that offered it; nor can there be any other pretence for magistracy in the world. In order to this good end, the magistrate is entrusted with conducting and applying the united force of the community; and with exacting such a share of every man's property, as is necessary to preserve the whole, and to defend every man and his property from foreign and domestick injuries. These are the boundaries of the power of the magistrate, who deserts his function whenever he breaks them. By the laws of society, he is more limited and restrained than any man amongst them; since, while they are absolutely free in all their actions, which purely concern themselves; all his actions, as a publick person, being for the sake of society, must refer to it, and answer the ends of it.

It is a mistaken notion in government, that the interest of the majority is only to be consulted, since in society every man has a right to every man's assistance in the enjoyment and defence of his private property; otherwise the greater number may sell the lesser, and divide their estates amongst themselves; and so, instead of a society, where all peaceable men are protected, become a conspiracy of the many against the minority. With as much equity may one man wantonly dispose of all, and violence may be sanctified by mere power.

And it is as foolish to say, that government is concerned to meddle with the private thoughts and actions of men, while they injure neither the society, nor any of its members. Every man is, in nature and reason, the judge and disposer of his own domestick affairs; and, according to the rules of religion and equity, every man must carry his own conscience. So that neither has the magistrate a right to direct the private behaviour of men; nor has the magistrate, or any body else, any manner of power to model people's speculations, no more than their dreams. Government being intended to protect men from the injuries of one

another, and not to direct them in their own affairs, in which no one is interested but themselves; it is plain, that their thoughts and domestick concerns are exempted entirely from its jurisdiction: In truth, men's thoughts are not subject to their own jurisdiction.

Idiots and lunaticks indeed, who cannot take care of themselves, must be taken care of by others: But whilst men have their five senses, I cannot see what the magistrate has to do with actions by which the society cannot be affected; and where he meddles with such, he meddles impertinently or tyrannically. Must the magistrate tie up every man's legs, because some men fall into ditches? Or, must he put out their eyes, because with them they see lying vanities? Or, would it become the wisdom and care of governors to establish a travelling society, to prevent people, by a proper confinement, from throwing themselves into wells, or over precipices; or to endow a fraternity of physicians and surgeons all over the nation, to take care of their subjects' health, without being consulted; and to vomit, bleed, purge, and scarify them at pleasure, whether they would or no, just as these established judges of health should think fit? If this were the case, what a stir and hubbub should we soon see kept about the established potions and lancets? Every man, woman, or child, though ever so healthy, must be a patient, or woe be to them! The best diet and medicines would soon grow pernicious from any other hand; and their pills alone, however ridiculous, insufficient, or distasteful, would be attended with a blessing.

Let people alone, and they will take care of themselves, and do it best; and if they do not, a sufficient punishment will follow their neglect, without the magistrate's interposition and penalties. It is plain, that such busy care and officious intrusion into the personal affairs, or private actions, thoughts, and imaginations of men, has in it more craft than kindness; and is only a device to mislead people, and pick their pockets, under the false pretence of the publick and their private good. To quarrel with any man for his opinions, humours, or the fashion of his clothes, is an offence taken without being given. What is it to a magistrate how I wash my hands, or cut my corns; what fashion or colours I wear, or what notions I entertain, or what gestures I use, or what words I pronounce, when they please me, and do him and my neighbour no hurt? As well may he determine the colour of my hair, and control my shape and features.

True and impartial liberty is therefore the right of every man to pursue the natural, reasonable, and religious dictates of his own mind; to think what he will, and act as he thinks, provided he acts not to the prejudice of another; to spend his own money himself, and lay out the produce of his labour his own way; and to labour for his own pleasure and profit, and not for others who are idle, and would live and riot by pillaging and oppressing him, and those that are like him.

So that civil government is only a partial restraint put by the laws of agreement and society upon natural and absolute liberty, which might otherwise grow licentious: And tyranny is an unlimited restraint put upon natural liberty, by the will of one or a few. Magistracy, amongst a free people, is the exercise of power for the sake of the people; and tyrants abuse the people, for the sake of power. Free government is the protecting the people in their liberties by stated rules: Tyranny is a brutish struggle for unlimited liberty to one or a few, who would rob all others of their liberty, and act by no rule but lawless lust.

So much for an idea of civil liberty. I will now add a word or two, to shew how much it is the delight and passion of mankind; and then shew its advantages.

The love of liberty is an appetite so strongly implanted in the nature of all living creatures, that even the appetite of self-preservation, which is allowed to be the strongest, seems to be contained in it; since by the means of liberty they enjoy the means of preserving themselves, and of satisfying their desires in the manner which they themselves choose and like best. Many animals can never be tamed, but feel the bitterness of restraint in the midst of the kindest usage; and rather than bear it, grieve and starve themselves to death; and some beat out their brains against their prisons.

Where liberty is lost, life grows precarious, always miserable, often intolerable. Liberty is, to live upon one's own terms; slavery is, to live at the mere mercy of another; and a life of slavery is, to those who can bear it, a continual state of uncertainty and wretchedness, often an apprehension of violence, often the lingering dread of a violent death: But by others, when no other remedy is to be had, death is reckoned a good one. And thus, to many men, and to many other creatures, as well as men, the love of liberty is beyond the love of life.

This passion for liberty in men, and their possession of it, is of that efficacy and importance, that it seems the parent of all the virtues: And therefore in free countries there seems to be another species of mankind, than is to be found under tyrants. Small armies of Greeks and Romans despised the greatest hosts of slaves; and a million of slaves have been sometimes beaten and conquered by a few thousand freemen. Insomuch that the difference seemed greater between them than between men and sheep. It was therefore well said by Lucullus, when, being about to engage the great King Tigranes's army, he was told by some of his officers, how prodigious great the same was, consisting of between three and four hundred thousand men: "No matter," said that brave Roman, drawing up his little army of fourteen thousand, but fourteen thousand *Romans*: "No matter; the lion never enquires into the number of the sheep." And these royal troops proved no better; for the Romans had little else to do but to kill and pursue; which yet they could scarce do for laughing; so much more were they diverted than animated by the ridiculous dread and sudden flight of these imperial slaves and royal cowards.

Men eternally cowed and oppressed by haughty and insolent governors, made base themselves by the baseness of that sort of government, and become slaves by ruling over slaves, want spirit and souls to meet in the field freemen, who scorn oppressors, and are their own governors, or at least measure and direct the power of their governors.

Education alters nature, and becomes stronger. Slavery, while it continues, being a perpetual awe upon the spirits, depresses them, and sinks natural courage; and want and fear, the concomitants of bondage, always produce despondency and baseness; nor will men in bonds ever fight bravely, but to be free. Indeed, what else should they fight for; since every victory that they gain for a tyrant, makes them poorer and fewer; and, increasing his pride, increases his cruelty, with their own misery and chains?

Those, who, from terror and delusion, the frequent causes and certain effects of servitude, come to think their governors greater than men, as they find them worse, will be as apt to think themselves less: And when the head and the heart are thus both gone, the hands will signify little. They who are used like beasts, will be apt to degenerate into beasts. But those, on the contrary, who, by the freedom of their government and education, are taught and accustomed to think freely of men and things, find, by comparing one man with another, that all men are naturally alike; and that their governors, as they have the same face, constitution, and shape with themselves, and are subject to the same sickness, accidents, and death, with

the meanest of their people; so they possess the same passions and faculties of the mind which their subjects possess, and not better. They therefore scorn to degrade and prostrate themselves, to adore those of their own species, however covered with titles, and disguised by power: They consider them as their own creatures; and, as far as they surmount themselves, the work of their own hands, and only the chief servants of the state, who have no more power to do evil than one of themselves, and are void of every privilege and superiority, but to serve them and the state. They know it to be a contradiction in religion and reason, for any man to have a right to do evil; that not to resist any man's wickedness, is to encourage it; and that they have the least reason to bear evil and oppression from their governors, who of all men are the most obliged to do them good. They therefore detest slavery, and despise or pity slaves; and, adoring liberty alone, as they who see its beauty and feel its advantages always will, it is no wonder that they are brave for it.

Indeed liberty is the divine source of all human happiness. To possess, in security, the effects of our industry, is the most powerful and reasonable incitement to be industrious: And to be able to provide for our children, and to leave them all that we have, is the best motive to beget them. But where property is precarious, labour will languish. The privileges of thinking, saying, and doing what we please, and of growing as rich as we can, without any other restriction, than that by all this we hurt not the publick, nor one another, are the glorious privileges of liberty; and its effects, to live in freedom, plenty, and safety.

These are privileges that increase mankind, and the happiness of mankind. And therefore countries are generally peopled in proportion as they are free, and are certainly happy in that proportion: And upon the same tract of land that would maintain a hundred thousand freemen in plenty, five thousand slaves would starve. In Italy, fertile Italy, men die sometimes of hunger amongst the sheaves, and in a plentiful harvest; for what they sow and reap is none of their own; and their cruel and greedy governors, who live by the labour of their wretched vassals, do not suffer them to eat the bread of their own earning, nor to sustain their lives with their own hands.

Liberty naturally draws new people to it, as well as increases the old stock; and men as naturally run when they dare from slavery and wretchedness, whithersoever they can help themselves. Hence great cities losing their liberty become deserts, and little towns by liberty grow great cities; as will be fully proved before I have gone through this argument. I will not deny, but that there are some great cities of slaves: But such are only imperial cities, and the seats of great princes, who draw the wealth of a continent to their capital, the center of their treasure and luxury. Babylon, Antioch, Seleucia, and Alexandria, were great cities peopled by tyrants; but peopled partly by force, partly by the above reason, and partly by grants and indulgencies. Their power, great and boundless as it was, could not alone people their cities; but they were forced to soften authority by kindness; and having brought the inhabitants together by force, and by driving them captive like cattle, could not keep them together, without bestowing on them many privileges, to encourage the first inhabitants to stay, and to invite more to come.

This was a confession in those tyrants, that their power was mischievous and unjust; since they could not erect one great city, and make it flourish, without renouncing in a great measure their power over it; which, by granting it these privileges, in effect they did. These privileges were fixed laws, by which the trade and industry of the citizens were encouraged, and their lives and properties ascertained and protected, and no longer subjected to the laws of mere will and pleasure: And therefore, while these free cities, enjoying their own liberties

and laws, flourished under them, the provinces were miserably harrassed, pillaged, dispeopled, and impoverished, and the inhabitants exhausted, starved, butchered, and carried away captive.

This shews that all civil happiness and prosperity is inseparable from liberty; and that tyranny cannot make men, or societies of men, happy, without departing from its nature, and giving them privileges inconsistent with tyranny. And here is an unanswerable argument, amongst a thousand others, against absolute power in a single man. Nor is there one way in the world to give happiness to communities, but by sheltering them under certain and express laws, irrevocable at any man's pleasure.

There is not, nor can be, any security for a people to trust to the mere will of one, who, while his will is his law, cannot protect them if he would. The number of sycophants and wicked counsellors, that he will always and necessarily have about him, will defeat all his good intentions, by representing things falsely, and persons maliciously; by suggesting danger where it is not, and urging necessity where there is none; by filling their own coffers, under colour of filling his, and by raising money for themselves, pretending the publick exigencies of the state; by sacrificing particular men to their own revenge, under pretence of publick security; and by engaging him and his people in dangerous and destructive wars, for their own profit or fame; by throwing publick affairs into perpetual confusion, to prevent an enquiry into their own behaviour; and by making him jealous of his people, and his people of him, on purpose to manage and mislead both sides.

By all these, and many more wicked arts, they will be constantly leading him into cruel and oppressive measures, destructive to his people, scandalous and dangerous to himself; but entirely agreeable to their own spirit and designs. Thus will they commit all wickedness by their master's authority, against his inclinations, and grow rich by the people's poverty, without his knowledge; and the royal authority will be first a warrant for oppression, afterwards a protection from the punishment due to it. For, in short, the power of princes is often little else but a stalking-horse to the intrigues and ambition of their minister.

But if the disposition of such a prince be evil, what must be the forlorn condition of his people, and what door of hope can remain for common protection! The best princes have often evil counsellors, the bad will have no other: And in such a case, what bounds can be set to their fury, and to the havock they will make? The instruments and advisers of tyranny and depredation always thrive best and are nearest their ends, when depredation and tyranny run highest: When most is plundered from the people, their share is greatest; we may therefore suppose every evil will befall such a people, without supposing extravagantly. No happiness, no security, but certain misery, and a vile and precarious life, are the blessed terms of such a government—a government which necessarily introduces all evils, and from the same necessity neither must nor can redress any.

The nature of his education, bred up as he ever is in perpetual flattery, makes him haughty and ignorant; and the nature of his government, which subsists by brutish severity and oppression, makes him cruel. He is inaccessible, but by his ministers, whose study and interest will be to keep him from knowing or helping the state of his miserable people. Their master's knowledge in his own affairs, would break in upon their scheme and power; they are not likely to lay before him representations of grievances caused by themselves; nor, if they be the effects of his own barbarity and command, will he hear them.

Even where absolute princes are not tyrants, there ministers will be tyrants. But it is indeed impossible for an arbitrary prince to be otherwise, since oppression is absolutely necessary to his being so. Without giving his people liberty, he cannot make them happy; and by giving them liberty, he gives up his own power. So that to be and continue arbitrary, he is doomed to be a tyrant in his own defence. The oppression of the people, corruption, wicked counsellors, and pernicious maxims in the court, and every where baseness, ignorance, and chains, must support tyranny, or it cannot be supported. So that in such governments there are inevitable grievances, without possible redress; misery, without mitigation or remedy; whatever is good for the people, is bad for their governors; and what is good for the governors, is pernicious to the people.

G

I am, &c.

No. 63. SATURDAY, January 27, 1722.

Civil Liberty produces all Civil Blessings, and how; with the baneful Nature of Tyranny.
[Gordon] ↩

[II-257]

SIR,

I go on with my considerations upon liberty, to shew that all civil virtue and happiness, every moral excellency, all politeness, all good arts and sciences, are produced by liberty; and that all wickedness, baseness, and misery, are immediately and necessarily produced by tyranny; which being founded upon the destruction of every thing that is valuable, desirable, and noble, must subsist upon means suitable to its nature, and remain in everlasting enmity to all goodness and every human blessing.

By the establishment of liberty, a due distribution of property and an equal distribution of justice is established and secured. As rapine is the child of oppression, justice is the offspring of liberty, and her handmaid; it is the guardian of innocence, and the terror of vice: And when fame, honour, and advantages, are rewards of virtue, she will be courted for the dower which she brings; otherwise, like beauty without wealth, she may be praised, but more probably will be calumniated, envied, and very often persecuted; while vice, when it is gainful, like rich deformity and prosperous folly, will be admired and pursued. Where virtue is all its own reward, she will be seldom thought any; and few will buy that for a great price, which will sell for none. So that virtue, to be followed, must be endowed, and her credit is best secured by her interest; that is, she must be strengthened and recommended by the publick laws, and embellished by publick encouragements, or else she will be slighted and shunned.

Now the laws which encourage and increase virtue, are the fixed laws of general and impartial liberty; laws, which being the rule of every man's actions, and the measures of every man's power, make honesty and equity their interest. Where liberty is thoroughly established, and its laws equally executed, every man will find his account in doing as he would be done unto, and no man will take from another what he would not part with himself: Honour and advantage will follow the upright, punishment overtake the oppressor. The property of the poor will be as sacred as the privileges of the prince, and the law will be the only bulwark of both. Every man's honest industry and useful talents, while they are employed for the publick, will be employed for himself; and while he serves himself, he will serve the publick: Publick and private interest will secure each other; all will cheerfully give a part to secure the whole, and be brave to defend it.

These certain laws therefore are the only certain beginnings and causes of honesty and virtue amongst men. There may be other motives, I own; but such as only sway particular men, few enough, God knows: And universal experience has shewn us, that they are not generally prevailing, and never to be depended upon. Now these laws are to be produced by liberty alone, and only by such laws can liberty be secured and increased: And to make laws certainly good, they must be made by mutual agreement, and have for their end the general interest.

But tyranny must stand upon force; and the laws of tyranny being only the fickle will and unsteady appetite of one man, which may vary every hour; there can be no settled rule of right or wrong in the variable humours and sudden passions of a tyrant, who, though he may sometimes punish crimes, perhaps more out of rage than justice, will be much more likely to persecute and oppress innocence, and to destroy thousands cruelly, for one that he protects justly. There are instances of princes, who, being out of humour with a favourite, have put to death all that spoke well of him, and afterwards all that did not: Of princes, who put some of their ministers to death, for using one or two of their barbers and buffoons ill; as they did others of their ministers, for using a whole country well: Of princes, who have destroyed, a whole people, for the crimes or virtues of one man; and who, having killed a minion in a passion, have, to revenge themselves upon those who had not provoked them, destroyed in the same unreasonable fury, a hundred of their servants who had no hand in it, as well as all that had; who yet would have been destroyed, had they not done it: Of princes, who have destroyed millions in single mad projects and expeditions: Of princes, who have given up cities and provinces to the revenge or avarice of a vile woman or eunuch, to be plundered, or massacred, or burned, as he or she thought fit to direct: Of princes, who, to gratify the ambition and rapine of a few sorry servants, have lost the hearts of their whole people, and detached themselves from their good subjects, to protect these men in their iniquity, who yet had done them no other service, but that of destroying their reputation, and shaking their throne.

Such are arbitrary princes, whose laws are nothing but sudden fury, or lasting folly and wickedness in uncertain shapes. Hopeful rules these, for the governing of mankind, and making them happy! Rules which are none, since they cannot be depended upon for a moment; and generally change for the worse, if that can be. A subject worth twenty thousand pounds today, may, by a sudden edict issued by the dark counsel of a traitor, be a beggar tomorrow, and lose his life without forfeiting the same. The property of the whole kingdom shall be great, or little, or none, just at the mercy of a secretary's pen, guided by a child, or a dotard, or a foolish woman, or a favourite buffoon, or a gamester, or whoever is uppermost for the day; the next day shall alter entirely the yesterday's scheme, though not for the better; and the same men, in different humours, shall be the authors of both. Thus in arbitrary countries, a law aged two days is an old law; and no law is suffered to be a standing law, but such as are found by long experience to be so very bad, and so thoroughly destructive, that human malice, and all the arts of a tyrant's court, cannot make them worse. A court which never ceaseth to squeeze, kill, and oppress, till it has wound up human misery so high, that it will go no further. This is so much fact, that I appeal to all history and travels, and to those that read them, whether in arbitrary countries, both in Europe and out of it, the people do not grow daily thinner, and their misery greater; and whether countries are not peopled and rich, in proportion to the liberty which they enjoy and allow.

It has been long my opinion, and is more and more so, that in slavish countries the people must either throw off their cruel and destroying government, and set up another in its room, or in some ages the race of mankind there will be extinct. Indeed, if it had not been for free states, that have repaired and prevented in many places the mischiefs done by tyrants, the earth had been long since a desert, as the finest countries in it are at this day by that means. The gardens of the world, the fruitful and lovely countries of the lower Asia, filled formerly by liberty with people, politeness, and plenty, are now gloriously peopled with owls and grasshoppers; and perhaps here and there, at vast distances, with inhabitants not more valuable, and less happy; a few dirty huts of slaves groaning, starving, and perishing, under

the fatherly protection of the Sultan, a prince of the most orthodox standard.

The laws therefore of tyrants are not laws, but wild acts of will, counselled by rage or folly, and executed by dragoons. And as these laws are evil, all sorts of evil must concur to support them. While the people have common-sense left, they will easily see whether they are justly governed, and well or ill used; whether they are protected or plundered: They will know that no man ought to be the director of the affairs of all, without their consent; that no consent can give him unlimited power over their bodies and minds; and that the laws of nature can never be entirely abrogated by positive laws; but that, on the contrary, the entering into society, and becoming subject to government, is only the parting with natural liberty, in some instances, to be protected in the enjoyment of it in others.

So that for any man to have arbitrary power, he must have it without consent; or if it be unadvisedly given at first, they who gave it soon repent when they find its effects. In truth, all those princes that have such power, by keeping up great armies in time of peace, effectually confess that they rule without consent, and dread their people, whose worst enemies they undoubtedly are. An arbitrary prince therefore must preserve and execute his power by force and terror; which yet will not do, without calling in the auxiliary aids and strict allies of tyranny, imposture, and constant oppression. Let this people be ever so low and miserable, if they be not also blind, he is not safe. He must have established deceivers to mislead them with lies, to terrify them with the wrath of God, in case they stir hand or foot, or so much as a thought, to mend their doleful condition; as if the good God was the sanctifier of all villainy, the patron of the worst of all villains! He must have a band of standing cut-throats to murder all men who would sacrilegiously defend their own. And both his cut-throats and his deceivers must go shares with him in his tyranny.

Men will naturally see their interests, feel their condition; will quickly find that the sword, the rack, and the sponge, are not government, but the height of cruelty and robbery; and will never submit to them, but by the united powers of violence and delusion: Their bodies must be chained, their minds enchanted and deceived; the sword kept constantly over their heads, and their spirits kept low with poverty, before they can be brought to be used at the wanton and brutish pleasure of the most dignified and lofty oppressor. So that God must be belied, his creatures must be fettered, frightened, deceived, and starved, and mankind made base and undone, that one of the worst of them may live riotously and safely amongst his whores, butchers, and buffoons.

Men, therefore, must cease to be men, and in stupidity and tameness grow cattle, before they can become quiet subjects to such a government; which is a complication of all the villainies, falsehood, oppression, cruelty, and depredation, upon the face of the earth: Nor can there be a more provoking, impudent, shocking, and blasphemous position, than to assert all this group of horrors, or the author of them, to be of God's appointment.

*If such kings are by God appointed,
Satan may be the Lord's anointed.*

And whoever scatters such doctrine, ought, by all the laws of God, reason, and self-preservation, to be put to death as a general poisoner, and advocate for publick destruction.

All men own, that it is the duty of a prince to protect his people; And some have said, that it is their duty to obey him, when he butchers them. An admirable consequence, and full of sweet consolation! His whole business and office is to defend them, and to do them good;

therefore they are bound to let him destroy them. Was ever such impudence in an enlightened country? It is perfectly agreeable to the doctrines and followers of Mahomet: But shall Englishmen, who make their own laws, be told, that they have no right to the common air, to the life and fortune which God has given them, but by the permission of an officer of their own making; who is what he is only for their sakes and security, and has no more right to these blessings, nor to do evil, than one of themselves? And shall we be told this by men, who are eternally the first to violate their own doctrines? Or shall they after this have the front to teach us any doctrine, or to recommend to us any one virtue, when they have thus given up all virtue and truth, and every blessing that life affords? For there is no evil, misery, and wickedness, which arbitrary monarchies do not produce, and must produce; nor do they, nor can they, produce any certain, general, or diffusive good.

I have shewn, in my last, that an arbitrary prince cannot protect his people if he would; and I add here, that he dares not. It would disgust the instruments of his power, and the sharers in his oppression, who will consider the property of the people as the perquisites of their office, and claim a privilege of being little tyrants, for making him a great one: So that every kindness to his subjects will be a grievance to his servants; and he must assert and exercise his tyranny to the height for their sakes, or they will do it for him. And the instances are rare, if any, of any absolute monarch's protecting in earnest his people against the depredations of his ministers and soldiers, but it has cost him his life; as may be shewn by many examples in the Roman history: For this the emperor Pertinax was murdered, and so was Galba.

Machiavel has told us, that it is impossible for such a prince to please both the people and his soldiers: The one will not be satisfied without protection, nor the other without rapine: To comply with the people, he must give up his power; to comply with his soldiers, he must give up his people. So that to continue what he is, and to preserve himself from the violence of his followers, he must countenance all their villainies and oppression, and be himself no more than an imperial thief at the head of a band of thieves; for which character he is generally well qualified by the base and cruel maxims of that sort of power, and by the vile education almost always given to such a prince by the worst and most infamous of all men, their supple and lying sycophants.

Even the Christian religion can do but little or no good in lands of tyranny, since miracles have ceased; but is made to do infinite harm, by being corrupted and perverted into a deadly engine in the hands of a tyrant and his impostors, to rivet his subjects' chains, and to confirm them thorough wretches, slaves, and ignorants. I cannot indeed say, that they have the Christian religion at all amongst them, but only use its amiable name to countenance abominable falsehoods, nonsense, and heavy oppression; to defend furious and implacable bigotry, which is the direct characteristic and spirit of Mahometism, and destroys the very genius and first principles of Christianity. All this will be further shewn hereafter. I shall conclude with observing, that arbitrary monarchy is a constant war upon heaven and earth, against the souls as well as bodies and properties of men.

G

I am, &c.

No. 64. SATURDAY, February 3, 1722.

Trade and Naval Power the Offspring of Civil Liberty only, and cannot subsist without it.
[Trenchard] ↩

[II-267]

SIR,

I have in former letters begun to shew, by an induction of particulars, and shall hereafter more fully shew, that population, riches, true religion, virtue, magnanimity, arts, sciences, and learning, are the necessary effects and productions of liberty; and shall spend this paper in proving, that an extensive trade, navigation, and naval power, entirely flow from the same source: In this case, if natural advantage and encouragements be wanting, art, expence, and violence, are lost and thrown away. Nothing is more certain, than that trade cannot be forced; she is a coy and humorous dame, who must be won by flattery and allurements, and always flies force and power; she is not confined to nations, sects, or climates, but travels and wanders about the earth, till she fixes her residence where she finds the best welcome and kindest reception; her contexture is so nice and delicate, that she cannot breathe in a tyrannical air; will and pleasure are so opposite to her nature, that but touch her with the sword, and she dies: But if you give her gentle and kind entertainment, she is a grateful and beneficent mistress; she will turn deserts into fruitful fields, villages into great cities, cottages into palaces, beggars into princes, convert cowards into heroes, blockheads into philosophers; will change the coverings of little worms into the richest brocades, the fleeces of harmless sheep into the pride and ornaments of kings, and by a further metamorphosis will transmute them again into armed hosts and haughty fleets.

Now it is absolutely impossible, from the nature of an arbitrary government, that she should enjoy security and protection, or indeed be free from violence, under it. There is not one man in a thousand that has the endowments and abilities necessary to govern a state, and much fewer yet that have just notions how to make trade and commerce useful and advantageous to it; and, amongst these, it is rare to find one who will forego all personal advantages, and devote himself and his labours wholly to his country's interest: But if such a phoenix should arise in any country, he will find it hard to get access to an arbitrary court, and much harder yet to grapple with and stem the raging corruptions in it, where virtue has nothing to do, and vice rides triumphant; where bribery, servile flattery, blind submission, riotous expence, and very often lust and unnatural prostitutions, are the ladders to greatness; which will certainly be supported by the same methods by which it is obtained.

What has a virtuous man to do, or what can he do, in such company? If he pity the people's calamities, he shall be called seditious; if he recommend any publick good, he shall be called preaching fool; if he should live soberly and virtuously himself, they will think him fit only to be sent to a cloister; if he do not flatter the prince and his superiors, he will be thought to envy their prosperity; if he presume to advise his prince to pursue his true interest, he will be esteemed a formidable enemy to the whole court, who will unite to destroy him: In fine, his virtues will be crimes, reproaches, and of dangerous consequence to those who have none. As jails pick up all the little pilfering rogues of a country, so such courts engross all the great ones; who have no business there but to grow rich, and to riot upon the publick calamities, to use all the means of oppression and rapine, to make hasty fortunes before the

bow-string overtakes them, or a sudden favourite supplants them.

Now what encouragement or security can trade and industry receive from such a crew of banditti? No privileges and immunities, or even protection, can be obtained but for money, and are always granted to such who give most; and these again shall be curtailed, altered, abrogated, and cancelled, upon the change of a minister, or of his inclinations, interest, and caprices: Monopolies, exclusive companies, liberties of pre-emption, &c. shall be obtained for bribes or favour, or in trust for great men, or vile and worthless women. Some merchants shall be openly encouraged and protected, and get exemptions from searches and duties, or shall be connived at in escaping them; others shall be burdened, oppressed, manacled, stopped, and delayed, to extort presents, to wreak revenge, or to give preference of markets to favourites. Governors of port-towns, or of colonies, who have purchased their employments at court, shall be indulged and countenanced in making reprisals upon the traders, and to enable them to satisfy the yearly presents due to minions: Admirals and commanders of men of war shall press their sailors, to be paid for not doing it; and military officers and soldiers shall molest and interrupt them in the course of their commerce and honest industry.

Nor shall it be in the power of the most vigilant, active and virtuous prince, to prevent these and a thousand other daily oppressions; he must see with his ministers' eyes, and hear with their ears; nor can there be any access to him but by their means, and by their leave: Constant spies shall watch and observe the first intentions, or least approaches to a complaint; and the person injured shall be threatened, way-laid, imprisoned, perhaps murdered; but if he escape all their treacheries, and can get to the ear of his prince, it is great odds but he will be treated and punished as a calumniator, a false accuser, and a seditious disturber of his Majesty's government: No witness will dare to appear for him, many false ones will be suborned against him; and the whole posse of ministers, officers, favourites, parasites, pathicks, strumpets, buffoons, fiddlers, and pimps, will conspire to ruin him, as a common enemy to their common interests.

But if all these mischiefs could be avoided, the necessities of such a prince, arising from the profusion and vast expence of his court, from his foolish wars, and the depredations, embezzlements, and various thefts of his ministers and servants, will be always calling for new supplies, for new extortions, which must be raised by all the means by which they can be raised: New and sudden impositions shall be put upon trade, new loans be exacted from merchants; commodities of general use shall be bought up by the prince's order, perhaps upon trust, and afterwards retailed again at extravagant advantages: Merchants shall be encouraged to import their goods, upon promises of easy and gentle usage; these goods when imported shall be subjected to exorbitant impositions and customs, perhaps confiscated upon frivolous pretences. But if these, and infinite other oppressions, could be prevented for some time, by the vigilance of a wise prince, or the care of an able minister; yet there can be no probable security, or even hopes of the continuance of honest and prudent measures in such a government: For one wise prince so educated, there will be twenty foolish ones; and for one honest minister, there will be a thousand corrupt ones.

Under such natural disadvantages, perpetual uncertainties, or rather certain oppressions, no men will embark large stocks and extensive talents for business, breed up their children to precarious employments, build forts, or plant colonies, when the breath of a weak prince, or the caprice of a corrupt favourite, shall dash at once all their labours and their hopes; and therefore it is impossible that any trade can subsist long in such a government, but what is

necessary to support the luxury and vices of a court; and even such trade is, for the most part, carried on by the stocks, and for the advantage of free countries, and their own petty merchants are only factors to the others. True merchants are citizens of the world, and that is their country where they can live best and most secure; and whatever they can pick up and gather together in tyrannical governments, they remove to free ones. Tavernier invested all the riches he had amassed by his long ramble over the world, in the barren rocks of Switzerland: And being asked by the last king of France, how it came to pass that he, who had seen the finest countries on the globe, came to lay out his fortune in the worst? He gave his haughty Majesty this short answer, that he was willing to have something which he could call his own.

As I think it is evident, by what I have said before, that trade cannot long subsist, much less flourish, in arbitrary governments; so there is so close and inseparable a connection between that and naval power, that I dare boldly affirm, that the latter can never arrive to any formidable height, and continue long in that situation, under such a state. Where there is an extensive trade; great numbers of able-bodied and courageous sailors, men bred up to fatigues, hardships, and hazards, and consequently soldiers by profession, are kept in constant pay; not only without any charge to the publick, but greatly to its benefit; not only by daily adding to its wealth and power, but by venting and employing abroad, to their country's honour and safety, those turbulent and unruly spirits that would be fuel for factions, and the tools and instruments of ambitious or discontented great men at home. These men are always ready at their country's call, to defend the profession which they live by, and with it the publick happiness: They are, and ever must be, in the publick interest, with which their own is so closely united; for they subsist by exporting the productions of the people's industry, which they constantly increase by so doing: They receive their pay from the merchants, a sort of men always in the interests of liberty, from which alone they can receive protection and encouragement. And as this race of men contribute vastly to the publick security and wealth, so they take nothing from it: They are not quartered up and down their native country, like the bands of despotick princes, to oppress their subjects, interrupt their industry, debauch their wives and daughters, insult their persons, to be examples of lewdness and prodigality, and to be always ready at hand to execute the bloody commands of a tyrant.

No monarch was ever yet powerful enough to keep as many seamen in constant pay at his own expence, as single cities have been able to do without any at all: The pay of a sailor, with his provision, is equal to that of a trooper in arbitrary governments; nor can they learn their trade, by taking the sea-air for a few summer months, and wafting about the coasts of their own country: They gain experience and boldness, by various and difficult voyages, by being constantly inured to hardships and dangers. Nor is it possible for single princes, with all their power and vigilance, to have such regular supplies of naval provisions, as trading countries must have always in store. There must be a regular and constant intercourse with the nations from whom these supplies come; a certain and regular method of paying for them; and constant demands will produce constant supplies. There are always numerous magazines in the hands of private merchants, ready for their own use or sale. There must be great numbers of shipwrights, anchor-smiths, rope and sail-makers, and infinite other artificers, sure always of constant employment; and who, if they are oppressed by one master, may go to another. There must be numbers of ships used for trade, that, upon occasions, may be employed for men of war, for transports, for fireships, and tenders. Now all these things, or scarce any of them, can ever be brought about by arbitrary courts; stores will be embezzled, exhausted, and worn out, before new ones are supplied; payments will not be

punctually made; artificers will be discouraged, oppressed, and often left without employ: Every thing will be done at an exorbitant expence, and often not done when it is paid for; and when payments are made, the greatest part shall go in fees, or for bribes, or in secret trusts.

For these reasons, and many others, despotick monarchs, though infinitely powerful at land, yet could never rival Neptune, and extend their empire over the liquid world; for though great and vigorous efforts have been often made by these haughty tyrants of mankind, to subject that element to their ambition and their power, being taught by woeful experience, arising from perpetual losses and disappointments, of what vast importance that dominion was to unlimited and universal sovereignty; yet all their riches, applications, and pride, have never been able, in one instance, to effect it. Sometimes, indeed, trade, like a phantom, has made a faint appearance at an arbitrary court, but disappeared again at the first approach of the morning light: She is the portion of free states, is married to liberty, and ever flies the foul and polluted embraces of a tyrant.

The little state of Athens was always able to humble the pride, and put a check to the growing greatness, of the towering Persian monarchs, by their naval power; and when stripped of all their territories by land, and even their capital city, the seat of their commonwealth, yet had strength enough left to vanquish numerous fleets, which almost covered the sea, and to defeat an expedition carried on by armies that drank up rivers, and exhausted all the stores of the land.

The single city of Venice has proved itself an over-match in naval power to the great Ottoman Empire, though possessed of so many islands, useful ports, environed with so many sea-coasts, and abounding with all sorts of stores necessary to navigation; and in the year fifty-six gave the Turks so signal an overthrow at the Dardanelles, as put that state in such a consternation, that they believed their empire at an end; and it is thought if the Venetians had pursued their victory, they had driven them out of Constantinople, and even out of Europe; for the Grand Seignior himself was preparing to fly into Asia. The little island of Rhodes defended itself for some ages against the whole power of the Sultan, though encompassed by his dominions; and it was with great difficulty, hazard, and expence, that he at last overcame them, and drove the inhabitants to Malta, where they have ever since braved his pride, and live upon the plunder of his subjects: And notwithstanding all his numerous and expensive efforts to share with the Christians the dominion of the sea; yet there are no other seeds or traces of it left through his great and extensive territories, but what are found in the free piratical states of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli.

Neither the Sophi of Persia, the Great Mogul, the many kings who command the banks of the Ganges, nor all the haughty potentates of Asia and Africa, are able to contend at sea with the English or Dutch East-India Companies, or even to defend their subjects against but a few pirates, with all their population, and their mines of gold and diamonds.

Spain in all her pride, with the wealth of both Indies, with dominions so vast and extensive, that the sun rises and sets within them, and a sea-line, which if extended would environ the earth, yet was not able to dispute their title to that element with a few revolted provinces, who grew up through the course of an expensive war to that amazing greatness, that in less than a century they saw themselves, from a few fisher-towns encompassed with bogs and morasses, become a most formidable state, equal to the greatest potentates at sea, and to most at land; to have great kings in a distant world submit to be their vassals; and, in fine, to be protectors of that mighty nation from whom they revolted. Here is a stupendous

instance of the effects of liberty, which neighbouring monarchs with twenty times the territory tremble at, and posterity will hardly believe.

France, with all its oeconomy, address, and power, with its utmost and most expensive efforts, and the assistance of neighbouring and even rival kings, has not been able to establish an empire upon that coy element. She saw it, like a mushroom, rise in a night, and wither again the next day. It is true, that at an immense expence and infinite labour, she got together a formidable fleet, and with it got victories, and took thousands of rival ships; yet every day grew weaker as her enemies grew stronger, and could never recover a single defeat, which in Holland would have been repaired in a few more weeks than the battle was days in fighting: So impossible is it for art to contend with nature, and slavery to dispute the naval prize with liberty.

Sweden and Denmark, though possessed of the naval stores of Europe, nations who subsist by that commerce, and are constantly employed to build ships for their neighbours; yet are not able, with their united force, to equip, man out, and keep upon the sea for any considerable time, a fleet large enough to dispute with an English or Dutch squadron: And I dare venture my reputation and skill in politicks, by boldly asserting, that another vain and unnatural northern apparition will soon vanish and disappear again, like the morning-star at the glimmering of the sun, and every one shall ask, Where is it?

T

I am, &c.

No. 65. SATURDAY, February 10, 1722.

Military Virtue produced and supported by Civil Liberty only. [Gordon] ↩

[II-278]

SIR,

I have shewn in my last, that trade and naval power are produced by liberty only; and shall shew in this, that military virtue can proceed from nothing else, as I have in a good measure shewn already.

In free countries, as people work for themselves, so they fight for themselves: But in arbitrary countries, it is all one to the people, in point of interest, who conquers them; they cannot be worse used; and when a tyrant's army is beaten, his country is conquered: He has no resource; his subjects having neither arms, nor courage, nor reason to fight for him; He has no support but his standing forces; who, for enabling him to oppress, are sharers in his oppression; and fighting for themselves while they fight for him, do sometimes fight well: But his poor people, who are oppressed by him, can have no other concern for his fate, than to wish him the worst.

In attacks upon a free state, every man will fight to defend it, because every man has something to defend in it. He is in love with his condition, his ease, and property, and will venture his life rather than lose them; because with them he loses all the blessings of life. When these blessings are gone, it is madness to think that any man will spill his blood for him who took them away, and is doubtless his enemy, though he may call himself his prince. It is much more natural to wish his destruction, and help to procure it.

For these reasons, small free states have conquered the greatest princes; and the greatest princes have never been able to conquer free states, but either by surprizing them basely, or by corrupting them, or by forces almost infinitely superior, or when they were distracted and weakened by domestick divisions and treachery.

The Greeks thought scarce any number of Persians too great for their own small armies, or any army of their own too small for the greatest number of Persians. Agesilaus invaded the great Persian Empire, the greatest then in the world, at the head of no more than ten thousand foot, and four thousand horse, and carried all before him; he defeated the Asiatick forces with so much ease, that they scarce interrupted his march; he subdued their provinces as fast as he entered them, and took their cities without sitting down before them: And had he not been recalled by his countrymen to defend his own city against a confederacy of other Greek cities, much more terrible foes than the greatest armies of the great king, it is very probable that that brave old Spartan would have soon robbed him of his empire.

And not long before this, when Cyrus made war upon his brother Artaxerxes for the crown, thirteen thousand auxiliary Greeks entertained by him for that end, routed the emperor's army of nine hundred thousand men, and got the victory for Cyrus, had he outlived the battle to enjoy it. And though they had now lost the prince they fought for, and afterwards Clearchus their general, who with other of their officers was treacherously murdered by the Persians when they had brought him to a parley; though they were in great straits, destitute of horses, money, and provisions, far from home, in the heart of an enemy's country, watched,

and distressed by a great army of four hundred thousand men, who waited for an occasion to cut them off in their retreat, if they attempted it: yet these excellent soldiers, excellent by being freemen, commanded by the famous Xenophon, made good that retreat of two thousand three hundred miles over the bellies of their enemies, through provinces of Persians, and in spite of a vast host of Persians, who coasted and harassed them all the way.

Alexander of Macedon, with his free Greeks, attacked the Persians, and beat them at all disadvantages in the open fields, when they were five, ten, nay, twenty times his number; and having, passed the Hellespont, with not fifteen thousand pounds in his treasury, and not above thirty-five thousand men in his army, he made himself master of that great and overgrown empire, with as much expedition as he could travel over it; and though he fought three battles for it, he scarce lost in them all one regiment of his men.

Leonidas, at the head of four thousand Greeks, fought Xerxes at the head of six and twenty hundred thousand Persians, according to Herodotus, in the straits of Thermopylae for two days together, and repulsed them at every assault with vast slaughter; nor did they at last get the better of him, till being led by a treacherous Greek a secret way over the mountains, they fell upon him in the rear, and surrounded him with their numbers; neither did he then desert his post, though all his men retreated, except three hundred Spartans, who resolutely stood by him, and were all slain with him upon the spot, with twenty thousand Persians round them.

The Romans, enjoying the same liberty, and animated by it, vanquished all the enslaved nations of the known world, with the same ease, and upon the same unequal terms. The subduing of free countries cost them long labour and patience, great difficulty, and a world of blood; and they suffered many defeats before they got a decisive victory: The inhabitants being all freemen, were all brave, all soldiers, and were exhausted before their states could be conquered: And the Volscians, Aequians, Tuscans, and Samnites, preserved their liberties, as long as they had men left to defend them. The Samnites particularly declared in their embassy to Hannibal, that having often brought great numbers of men into the field against the Romans, and sometimes defeated the Roman armies, they were at last so wasted, that they could not resist one Roman legion.

But when the Romans came to war against great and arbitrary kings, they had little else to do but to shew their swords; they gained battles almost without fighting, and two or three legions have routed three or four hundred thousand men. One battle generally won a kingdom, and sometimes two or three. Antiochus was so frightened with one skirmish with Acilius at Thermopylae, that he ran away out of Greece, and left all that he possessed there to the Romans; and being beaten afterwards by Scipio, the brother of Africanus, he quitted to them all his kingdoms and territories on this side Mount Taurus. And Paulus Aemilius, by one battle with Perseus, became master of Macedonia. Tigranes, Ptolemy, and Syphax, all monarchs of mighty territories, were still more easily vanquished. So that the great kingdoms of Asia, Aegypt, Numidia, and Macedon, were all of them much more easily overcome, and suffered much fewer defeats, than the Samnites alone, though inhabiting a small barren province.

The only dreadful foes which the Romans ever found, were people as free as themselves; and the most dreadful of all were the Carthaginians. Hannibal alone beat them oftener, and slew more of their men in battle, than all the kings in the world ever did, or could do. But for all the great and repeated defeats which he gave them; though he had destroyed two hundred

thousand of their men, and many of their excellent commanders; though, at the same time, their armies were cut off in Spain, and with them the two brave Scipios; and though they had suffered great losses in Sicily, and at sea, yet they never sunk nor wanted soldiers, nor their soldiers courage; and as to great commanders, they had more and better than ever they had before: And having conquered Hannibal, they quickly conquered the world.

This vast virtue of theirs, and this unconquerable spirit, was not owing to climate or complexion, but to liberty alone, and to the equality of their government, in which every Roman had a share: They were nursed up in the principles of liberty; in their infancy they were instructed to love it; experience afterwards confirmed their affections, and shewed them its glorious advantages: Their own happy condition taught them a contempt and indignation for those wretched and barbarous governments, which could neither afford their subjects happiness nor protection: And when they attacked such governments and their wretched people, they found themselves like lions amongst sheep.

It is therefore government alone that makes men cowardly or brave: And Boccacini well ridicules the absurd complaint of the princes of his time, that their subjects wanted that love for their country which was found in free states, when he makes Apollo tell them, that no people were ever in love with rapine, fraud, and oppression; that they must mend their own administration, and their people's condition; and that people will then love their country, when they live happily in it. The old Romans were masters of mankind; but the present race of people in Rome are not a match for one of the Swiss cantons; nor could these cantons ever be conquered, even by the united forces of the house of Austria. Charles Duke of Burgundy was the last that durst invade them; but though he had been long a terror and constant rival to Louis XI of France, a crafty, politick, and powerful monarch, and often too hard for him; he paid dear for his bravery in attacking the Switzers, and lost by doing it three armies, and his own life. They were a free people, and fought in their own quarrel; the greatest incitement upon earth to boldness and magnanimity. The Switzers had a property, though in rocks; and were freemen, though amongst mountains. This gives them the figure which they make in Europe; such a figure, that they are courted by the greatest princes in it, and have supported some of them in their wars, when their own native slaves could not support them.

The Dutch, having revolted from the greatest potentate then in Europe, defended themselves against all his power for near a hundred years, and grew rich all the time, while he grew poor; so poor, that Spain has never yet recovered its losses in that war: And though they are in their constitution more formed for trade than war, yet their own bravery in their own defence is astonishing to those that know not what the spirit of liberty can do in any people: Even their women joined to defend their walls; as the women of Sparta once did, and as the women of Barcelona more lately did, though the united force of the two monarchies of France and Spain had at last the honour to take that city, especially when we, who had engaged them in the war, had also given them up.

These same Dutch in that war, when they were closely besieged in one of their towns by the Spanish Army, let in the sea upon their country, trusting rather to the mercy of that element, than to the mercy of an invading tyrant; and the sea saved them. It must be remembered too, that they had the power of the Emperor, as well as that of Spain, to contend with; both these mighty monarchs having joined their counsels and arms to subdue seven little provinces, which yet they never were able to subdue: The city of Ostend alone cost them a three years siege, and an hundred and thirty thousand men; and when they took it, they only took a heap of rubbish, to which it was reduced before it was surrendered.

In free states, every man being a soldier, or quickly made so, they improve in a war, and every campaign fight better and better. Whereas the armies of an absolute prince grow every campaign worse; especially if they be composed of his own subjects, who, being slaves, are with great difficulty and long discipline made soldiers, and scarce ever made good ones; and when his old troops are gone, his new ones signify little. This was eminently shewn in the late war with France, which degenerated in arms every year; while the English and Dutch did as evidently mend. And doubtless, if the French barrier of fortified towns had been quite broken through, as it was very near, one battle would have completed the conquest of France, and perhaps it would not have cost a battle.

And if free states support themselves better in a war than an absolute prince, they do likewise much sooner retrieve their losses by it. The Dutch, when they had been beaten twice at sea by Cromwell's admirals and English seamen, with great slaughter and loss of ships, did notwithstanding, in two months time, after the second great defeat, fit out a third fleet of a hundred and forty men of war, under the famous Van Trump: Upon this Lord Clarendon observes, that,

there cannot be a greater instance of the opulency of that people, than that they should be able, after so many losses, and so late a great defeat, in so short a time, to set out a fleet strong enough to visit those who had so lately overcome them.

This is what no arbitrary prince in Europe, or upon the face of the earth, could have done; nor do I believe, that all the arbitrary monarchs in Europe, Africa, and Asia, with all their united powers together, could do it at this day. The whole strength of the Spanish monarchy could not fit out their famous armada, without the assistance of money from the little free state of Genoa; and that invincible armada, being beaten by the English, and quite destroyed, Spain has never been able, with all her Indies, and her mountains of silver and gold, to make any figure at sea since, nor been able to pay that very money which equipped that its last great fleet.

The little city of Tyre gave Alexander the Great more resistance, and cost him more labour to take it, than to conquer the great monarchy of Asia; and though, when with infinite labour and courage he had taken it, he burnt it to the ground, slew eight thousand Tyrians in the sackage of their town, crucified two thousand more, and sold all the rest for slaves; yet some of the citizens, with their wives and children, having escaped to Carthage (a colony of their own), and others being conveyed away and saved by their neighbours the Sidonians during the siege, they returned and rebuilt their desolated city; and in so small a time as nineteen years afterwards, endured another siege of fifteen months from Antigonus, the most powerful of all Alexander's successors; nor could he take it at last, but upon honourable terms. What an instance of the blessings and power of liberty and trade!

From the moment that the Romans lost their liberty, their spirit was gone, and their valour scarce ever after appeared. In the beginning of Augustus's reign, the best and bravest of them perished by the sword, either in the civil war, where, Romans fighting against Romans, multitudes were slain, with Brutus and Cassius, the last brave men that ever drew a sword for the commonwealth; or in the bloody proscriptions that followed, in which all the excellent men and assertors of liberty, who escaped the battle, were gleaned up and murdered by soldiers and informers, and, amongst the rest, the divine Cicero. Afterwards, when Augustus had got the world to himself, *jura omnium in se traxit*; flatterers were his only

favourites, and none were preferred to magistracy, but the servile creatures of his power; liberty was extinct, and its spirit gone; and though there was a universal peace, yet the power of the empire continually decayed. Augustus himself was so sensible of this, that the loss of two or three legions under Varus in Germany, frightened him, and had almost broke his heart; not from any tenderness in it, for he had butchered myriads, and enslaved all; but he knew that now Roman legions were hard to be got, and scarce worth getting. Having destroyed so many brave Romans, and made the rest base by slavery, and by the corruptions which support it, he knew the difficulty of forming a Roman army.

His successors were worse; they went on in a perpetual series of slaughters, dreading and destroying every thing that had the appearance of virtue or goodness; and even so early as Tiberius's reign, that emperor, says Tacitus, knew *magis fama quam vi stare res suas*, that his empire was supported more by the reputation of Roman greatness, than by the real strength of the Romans, who grew every day more and more weak and wretched; and though they had now and then a little sun-shine in the reign of a good emperor, yet the root of the evil remained: They were no longer freemen, and for far the most part, their government was nothing else but a constant state of oppression, and a continual succession of massacres. Tyrants governed them, and soldiers created and governed the tyrants, or butchered them if they would not be butchers.

As to military virtue, it was no more: The Praetorian bands were only a band of hangmen with an emperor at their head; Italy and the provinces were exhausted; the Roman people were nothing but an idle and debauched mob, that cared not who was uppermost, so they had but a little victuals, and saw shews; The provincial armies were foreign hirelings, and there was not a Roman army in the Roman empire. *Inops Italia, plebs urbana imbellis nihil in exercitibus validum praeter externum*. This was said not long after the death of Augustus; nor do I remember an instance of one great Roman captain after Germanicus and Corbulo; the first murdered by Tiberius, his uncle and father by adoption; and the other by Nero, for whom he reconquered and settled the East; and after Vespasian and Titus, every Roman emperor of remarkable bravery was a foreigner, and every victory gained by them, was gained by foreigners; who, being all mercenaries, were perpetually setting up and pulling down their own monarchs. At length, being possessed of the whole power of the empire, they took it to themselves; and thus it ended, and became dismembered by several nations, and into several governments, according to their fortune; and it is remarkable, that though those nations had frequent wars amongst themselves about the countries which they invaded, yet they had nothing to apprehend from the Romans while they were seizing Roman provinces.

Tyrants are so sensible, that when they have lost their army, they have lost all, that amongst their other destructive expedients to preserve themselves, whatever becomes of their people, one of their methods is, to lay whole countries waste, and to keep them waste, to prevent an invader from subsisting; and their best provinces are by this means turned often into wildernesses. For this reason a march to Constantinople is scarce practicable to an enemy from any quarter.

I will conclude with answering an objection: It may be said, that the armies of tyrants often fight bravely, and are brave; and I own it to be true in many instances: But I desire it may be remembered, that in arbitrary countries nothing flourishes except the court and the army. A tyrant must give his spoilers part of the spoil, or else they will fight but faintly for it, or perhaps put him to death if he do not. The most absolute princes must therefore use their soldiers like freemen, as they tender their own power and their lives; and under the greatest

tyrants the men of war enjoy great privileges, even greater than in free states. The privileges and immunities which they enjoy, constitute a sort of liberty, dear to themselves, but terrible always to the subject, and often pernicious to the prince: It being the certain condition of a tyrant, that to be able to oppress his people, or plague his neighbours, he must empower his soldiers to destroy himself.

The chief forces therefore of an arbitrary prince consist of freemen: Such were the Praetorian bands of the Roman emperors, and such are the Turkish janizaries; and both of them, though they maintained the tyranny, have frequently killed the tyrants; and such are the Grand Seignior's zaims, timariots, or horsemen, who have lands given them in the provinces, and are the only nobility and gentry there: And such too were the Mamalukes of Egypt, which country at last they usurped for themselves, having put the king their master to death. I might mention here the Swiss Guards, and gendarmes of a neighbouring prince, which are his janizaries. As to the Turkish janizaries, I own the Sultan may put particular men of them to death, but no sultan dares touch their privileges as a body; and two or three of their greatest emperors were deposed and destroyed by them for attempting it.

Mere slaves can defend no prince, nor enable him even to rule over slaves: So that by giving liberty, or rather licentiousness, to a few, the slavery of all is maintained.

All this does, I think, fully prove, that where there is no liberty, there can be no magnanimity. It is true, enthusiasm has inspired armies, and most remarkably of all the Saracen armies, with amazing resolution and fury; but even that was fierceness for liberty of opinion to themselves, and for subduing all men to it; and besides, this courage of enthusiasm is rarely eminent, except in the first rise of states and empires.

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I am, &c.

No. 66. SATURDAY, February 17, 1722.

Arbitrary Government proved incompatible with true Religion, whether Natural or Revealed. [Gordon] ↩

[II-292]

SIR,

I shall shew, in this paper, that neither the Christian religion, nor natural religion, nor any thing else that ought to be called religion, can subsist under tyrannical governments, now that miracles are ceased. I readily confess, that such governments are fertile in superstition, in wild whimsies, delusive phantoms, and ridiculous dreams; proper to terrify the human soul, degrade its dignity, deface its beauty, and fetter it with slavish and unmanly fears, to render it a proper object of fraud, grimace, and imposition; and to make mankind the ready dupes of gloomy impostors, and the tame slaves of raging tyrants. For, servitude established in the mind, is best established.

But all these bewildered imaginations, these dark and dreadful horrors, which banish reason, and contract and embitter the heart, what have they to do with true religion, unless to destroy it? That religion, which improves and enlarges the faculties of men, exalts their spirits, and makes them brave for God and themselves; that religion, which gives them great and worthy conceptions of the Deity; and that religion which inspires them with generous and beneficent affections to one another, and with universal love and benevolence to the whole creation? No man can love God, if he love not his neighbour; and whoever loves his neighbour, will neither injure, revile, nor oppress him: Nor can we otherwise shew our love to God, than by kind, humane, and affectionate actions to his creatures: "A new commandment," says our blessed Saviour, "I give unto you, that ye love one another."

Almighty God, the great author of our nature, and of all things, who has the heavens for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, is raised far above the reach of our kindness, our malice, or our flattery. He derives infinite happiness from his own infinite perfections; nor can any frail power or actions of ours lessen or improve it: religion therefore, from which he can reap no advantage, was instituted by him for the sake of men, as the best means and the strongest motive to their own happiness, and mutual happiness; and by it men are taught and animated to be useful, assisting, forgiving, kind and merciful one to another. But to hurt, calumniate, or hate one another, for his sake, and in defence of any religion, is a flat contradiction to *his* religion, and an open defiance of the author of religion: And to quarrel about belief and opinions, which do not immediately and necessarily produce practical virtue and social duties, is equally wicked and absurd. This is to be wicked in behalf of righteousness, and to be cruel out of piety. A religion which begets selfishness and partiality only to a few, and its own followers, and which inspires hatred and outrage towards all the rest of the world, can never be the religion of the merciful and impartial maker and judge of the world. Speculations are only so far a part of religion, as they produce the moral duties of religion, general peace, and unlimited charity, publick spirit, equity, forbearance, and good deeds to all men: And the worship of God is no longer the worship of God, than as it warms our minds with the remembrance of his gracious condescensions, his indulgent care, bounty, and providence, exercised towards us; and as it raises and forms our affections to an imitation of such his divine and unrestrained goodness, and to use one another kindly by his great

example, who uses us all so. So that our worthy, tender, and beneficent behaviour to one another, is the best way to acknowledge his to us: It is the most acceptable way that we can worship him, and the way which he will best accept our worship: And whatever devotion has not this effect, or a contrary effect, is the dry or mad freaks of an enthusiast, and ought to be called by another and a proper name.

This is a general idea of true religion; these are the certain and only marks of it: All which, as they are opposite to the essence and spirit of an arbitrary government; so every arbitrary government is an enemy to the spirit of true religion, and defeats its ends. In these governments, in defiance of religion, humanity, and common sense, millions must be miserable to exalt an embellish one or a few, and to make them proud, arrogant, and great: Protection and security are no more; the spirit of the people is sunk, their industry discouraged and lost, or only employed to feed luxury and pride; and multitudes starve, that a few may riot and abound. All love to mankind is extinct, and virtue and publick spirit are dangerous or unknown; while vice, falsehood, and servile sycophancy, become necessary to maintain precarious safety and an ignominious life: And, in fine, men live upon the spoils of one another, like ravenous fishes and beasts of prey: They become rapacious, brutish, and savage to one another, as their cruel governors are to them all; and, as a further imitation of such masters, their souls are abject, mean, and villainous. To live upon prey, and worry [the] human race, is the genius and support of tyrants, as well as of wolves and tigers; and it is the spirit and practice of men to resemble their governors, and to act like them. Virtue and vice, in courts, run like water in a continual descent, and quickly overflow the inferior soil.

Torva Leaena lupum, &c.

Now, what can be found here to answer the spirit and precepts of the Christian religion, which is all love, charity, meekness, mutual assistance, and mutual indulgence; and must either destroy tyranny, which destroys all these, or be destroyed by it? A religion given by God, to inspire men with every social virtue, and to furnish them with every argument for social happiness, will never find quarter, much less protection, from a government, which subsists by an unrelenting war against every virtue, and all human felicity. On the contrary, all its divine doctrines shall be perverted, all its divine principles mangled, and both its principles and its precepts corrupted, disguised, and wrested, to be made free of the court: Truth will be made to patronize imposture, and meekness to support tyranny: Obedience to equal laws, and submission to just authority, shall be turned into a servile and crouching subjection to blind rage and inhuman fury; complaisant and respectful behaviour into slavish flattery, and supple homage to power; meekness and humility into dejection, poorness of spirit, and bodily prostrations; charity, benevolence, and humanity, into a fiery and outrageous zeal to propagate fashionable and gainful opinions: Christian courage shall be changed into cruelty and brutish violence; impartial justice into savage severity; protection into oppression and plundering; the fear of God into the fear of man; and the worship of the Deity into an idolatrous adoration of a tyrant.

Though God Almighty sent his only son into the world to teach his will to men, and to confirm his mission by wonders and miracles; yet, having once fully manifested himself and his law, he has left it to be propagated and carried on by human means only, according to the holy writings inspired by him; and if the powers of the world will not submit to those directions, and will neither pursue them themselves, nor suffer their subjects to pursue them, nor leave them the means of doing it; then the Christian religion must take the fate of all

sublunary things, and be lost from amongst men, unless heaven interpose again miraculously in its favour. Now the experience of all ages will convince us, that all tyrannical princes will be against the religion which is against them; and either abolish it, or, which is much worse, pervert it into a deadly and unnatural engine, to increase and defend that pride and power, which Christianity abhors; and to promote those evils and miseries, which Christianity forbids, and, were it left to itself, would prevent or relieve. A religion modelled by usurped power, to countenance usurpation and oppression, is as opposite to the Christian religion, as tyranny is to liberty, and wickedness to virtue. When religion is taught to speak court-language, and none are suffered to preach it, but such as speak the same dialect; when those who are ministers of the gospel, must be also the ministers of ambition, and either sanctify falsehood and violence, by the word of mercy and truth, or hold their tongues; when preferments and worldly honours are on the side of imposture, and galleys, racks and dungeons, are the rewards of conscience and piety; the good and efficacy of Christianity will be as effectually gone, as if it were formally exchanged for Mahometanism; and under those circumstances, if its name be retained, it is only retained to do evil, and might be as innocently banished with the thing.

The Christian religion has as rarely gained by courts, as courts have improved by the Christian religion; and arbitrary courts have seldom meddled with it, but either to persecute it, or debate and corrupt it; nor could the power and fury of tyrants ever hurt or weaken it so much, as their pretended favours and countenance have done: By appearing for it, they turn their power most effectually against it. Their avowed persecution of Christianity, did only destroy Christians; but afterwards, while they set up for protecting none but the true Christians, that is, those that were as bad as themselves, and having no religion of their own, adopted blindly the religion of their prince; and whilst they were for punishing all who were not true Christians, that is, all that were better than themselves, and would take their religion from no man's word, but only from the word of God; they lifted Christians against Christians, and disfigured, and undermined, and banished Christianity itself, by false friendship to its professors: And these professors thus corrupted, joining a holy title to an impious cause, concurred in the conspiracy, and contended fiercely in the name of Christ for secular advantages, which Christ never gave nor took, and for a secular sovereignty, which he rejected, and his gospel forbids. Thus one sort of tyranny was artfully made to support another, and both by a union of interests maintained a war against religion, under colour of defending it, and fought the author of it under his own banner; that is, as Dr. Tillotson finely says, they lied for the truth, and killed for God's sake.

The many various and contradictory opinions of weak enthusiasts, or of designing men, and all the different and repugnant interpretations of scripture, published and contended for by them, could have done but small prejudice to religion and society, if human authority had not interposed with its penalties and rewards annexed to the believing or not believing fortuitous speculations, useless notions, dry ideas, and the inconsistent reveries of disordered brains; or the selfish inventions of usurping Popes, ambitious synods, and turbulent and aspiring doctors, or the crafty schemes of discontented or oppressive statesmen: For all these have been the important causes, and the wicked fuel, of religious wars and persecutions.

It is so much the general interest of society to perform and to encourage all its members to perform the practical duties of religion, that if a stronger and more prevailing interest were not thrown by power into the contrary scale, there would be no difference amongst men about the nature and extent of their duties to magistrates, to parents, children, and to friends and neighbours: And if these social duties (the only duties which human society, as such, is

concerned to promote) were agreed upon and practised, the magistrate would have no more to do with their opinions than with their shape and complexion; nor could he know, if he would, by what method to alter them. No man's belief is in his own power, or can be in the power of another.

The utmost length that the power of the magistrate can in this matter extend, beyond that of exhortation, which is in every man's power, can be only to make hypocrites, slaves, fools, or atheists. When he has forced his subjects to belie their consciences, or to act against them, he has in effect driven them out of all religion, to bring them into his own; and when they thus see and feel the professed defender of religion overturning all its precepts, exhorting by bribes, rebuking by stripes, confiscations and dungeons, and making Christianity the instrument of fury, ambition, rapine, and tyranny; what can they think, but either that he is no Christian, or that Christianity is not true? If they come to suspect it of imposture, they grow infidels; if they grow into a belief that religion countenances bitterness, outrage, and severities, nay, commands all these, they become bigots; the worst and most mischievous character of the two: For, unbelievers, guided by the rules of prudence or good nature, may be good neighbors and inoffensive men; but bigotry, standing upon the ruins of reason, and being conducted by no light but that of an inflamed imagination, and a sour, bitter, and narrow spirit, there is no violence nor barbarity which it is not capable of wishing or acting.

Happiness is the chief end of man, and the saving of his soul is his chief happiness; so that every man is most concerned for his own soul, and more than any other can be: And if no obstruction be thrown in his way, he will for the most part do all in his power for his own salvation, and will certainly do it best; and when he has done all that he can, he has done all that he ought: people cannot be saved by force; nor can all the powers in the world together make one true Christian, or convince one man. Conviction is the province and effect of reason; when that fails, nothing but the grace of God can supply it: And what has the power and penalties of men to do either with reason or grace; which being both the gifts of God, are not to be conquered by chains, though they may be weakened, and even banished, by worldly allurements blended with Christianity, and by the worldly pride of its professors?

The methods of power are repugnant to the nature of conviction, which must either be promoted by exhortation, kindness, example, and arguments, or can never be promoted at all: Violence does, on the contrary, but provoke men, and confirm them in error; nor will they ever be brought to believe, that those who barbarously rob them of their present happiness, can be charitably concerned for their future.

It is evident in fact, that most of the different religious institutions now subsisting in the world, have been founded upon ambition and pride; and were advanced, propagated, and established, by usurpation, faction, and oppression: They were begun for the most part by enthusiasts, or by designing and unpreferred churchmen; or at least occasioned by the continued usurpations and insults of cruel and oppressive ones, and always in times of faction and general discontent. Turbulent and aspiring men, discarded and discontented courtiers, or ambitious and designing statesmen, have taken advantage from these general disorders, or from the hot and giddy spirits of an enthusiastical or oppressed people, and from thence have formed parties; and setting themselves at the head, formed national establishments, with the concurrence of weak princes, sometimes in opposition to them, by the assistance of factious clergymen and factious assemblies, often by tumults and popular insurrections; and at last, under pretence of saving men's souls, they seized their property. A small acquaintance with ecclesiastical history, and the history of the Turks and Saracens, will

shew such causes as these to have given rise to most of the national religious establishments upon earth: Nor can I see how any future one can arise by other means, whilst violence and worldly interest have any thing to do with them.

Such therefore as is the government of a country, such will be made its religion; and no body, I hope, is now to learn what is, and ever will be, the religion of most statesmen; even a religion of power, to do as little good and as much mischief as they please. Nor have churchmen, when they ruled states, had ever any other view; but having double authority, had generally double insolence, and remarkably less mercy and regard to conscience or property, than others who had fewer ties to be merciful and just: And therefore the sorest tyrants have been they, who united in one person the royalty and priesthood. The Pope's yoke is more grievous than that of any Christian prince upon earth; nor is there a trace of property, or felicity, or of the religion of Jesus Christ, found in the dominions of this father of Christendom; all is ignorance, bigotry, idolatry, barbarity, hunger, chains, and every species of misery. The Caliphs of Egypt, who founded the Saracen empire there, and maintained it for a great while, were at once kings and priests; and there never lived more raging bigots, or more furious and oppressive barbarians. The monarchy of Persia, which is also a severe tyranny, has the priesthood annexed to it; and the Sophi is at the same time the Caliph. The Turkish religion is founded on imposture, blended with outrageous and avowed violence; and by their religion, the imperial executioner is, next to their Alcoran, the most sacred thing amongst them: And though he be not himself chief priest, yet he creates and uncreates him at pleasure, and is, without the name of *mufti*, the chief doctor, or rather author of their religion; and we all know what sort of a religion it is.

In fact, as arbitrary princes want a religion suited to the genius of their power, they model their religion so as to serve all the purposes of tyranny; and debase, corrupt, discourage, or persecute all religion which is against tyranny, as all true religion is: For this reason, not one of the great absolute princes in Europe embraced the Reformation, nor would suffer his people to embrace it, but they were all bitter and professed enemies to it: Whereas all the great free states, except Poland, and most of the small free states, became Protestants. Thus the English, Scotch, the Dutch, the Bohemians, and Sweden and Denmark (which were then free kingdoms), the greatest part of Switzerland, with Geneva, and all the Hans-towns, which were not awed by the Emperor, threw off the popish yoke: And not one of the free popish states, out of Italy, could be ever brought to receive the Inquisition; and the state of Venice, the greatest free state there, to shew that they received it against their will, have taken wise care to render it ineffectual: And many of the popish free states would never come into persecution, which they knew would impoverish and dispeople them; and therefore the states of Arragon, Valencia, and Catalonia, opposed, as much as they were able, the expulsion of the Moors, which was a pure act of regal power, to the undoing of Spain; and therefore a destructive and barbarous act of tyranny. As to the Protestant countries, which have since lost their liberties, there is much miserable ignorance, and much bitter and implacable bigotry, but little religion, and no charity, amongst them.

We look upon Montezuma, and other tyrants, who worshipped God with human sacrifice, as so many monsters, and hug ourselves that we have no such sons of Moloch here in Europe; not considering, that every man put to death for his religion, by the Inquisition and elsewhere, is a real human sacrifice, as it is burning and butchering men for God's sake.

I think no body will deny, but that in King James's time, we owed the preservation of our religion to our liberties, which both our clergy and people almost unanimously concurred to defend, with a resolution and boldness worthy of Britons and freemen. And as the cause and blessings of liberty are still better understood, its spirit and interest daily increase. Most of the bishops, and many of the inferior clergy, are professedly in the principles of civil and religious liberty, notwithstanding the strong and early prejudices of education. And I hope soon to see them all as thorough advocates for publick liberty, as their predecessors were, upon grounds less just, in the times of popery; and then there will be an end of the pernicious and knavish distinction of Whig and Tory; and all the world will unite in paying them that respect which is due to their holy office.

I shall conclude with this short application; that as we love religion, and the author of it, we ought to love and preserve our liberties.

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I am, &c.

No. 67. SATURDAY, February 24, 1722.

Arts and Sciences the Effects of Civil Liberty only, and ever destroyed or oppressed by Tyranny. [Gordon] [↪](#)

[II-305]

SIR,

Having already shewn, that naval trade and power cannot subsist but in free countries alone, I will now shew, that the same is true of domestick arts and sciences; and that both these, and population, which is their constant concomitant, and their chief cause as well as their certain effect, are born of liberty, and nursed, educated, encouraged, and endowed, by liberty alone.

Men will not spontaneously toil and labour but for their own advantage, for their pleasure or their profit, and to obtain something which they want or desire, and which, for the most part, is not to be obtained but by force or consent. Force is often dangerous; and when employed to acquire what is not ours, it is always unjust; and therefore men, to procure from others what they had not before, must gain their consent; which is not to be gained, but by getting them in lieu of the thing desired, something which they want and value more than what they part with. This is what we call trade; which is the exchange of one commodity for another, or for that which purchases all commodities, silver and gold.

Men, in their first state, content themselves with the spontaneous productions of nature, the fruits of the field and the liquid stream, and such occasional supplies as they now and then receive from the destruction of other animals. But when those supplies become insufficient to support their numbers, their next resource is to open the bosom of the earth, and, by proper application and culture, to extort her hidden stores: And thus were invented tillage and planting. And an hundred men thus employed can fetch from the bowels of our common mother, food and sustenance enough for ten times their own number; and one tenth part more may possibly be able to supply all the instruments of husbandry, and whatever is barely necessary to support these husbandmen: So that all the rest of the people must rob or starve, unless either the proprietors of the land will give them the produce of their estates for nothing, or they can find something wherewithal to purchase it.

Now in countries where no other arts are in use, but only husbandry and the professions necessary to it, and to support those who are employed about it; all the other inhabitants have no means of purchasing food and raiment, but by selling their persons, and becoming vile slaves and vassals to their princes, lords, or other proprietors of the land; and are obliged, for necessary sustenance, to follow them in their wild wars, and their personal and factious quarrels, and to become the base instruments of their ambition and pride. Great men will rather throw their estates into forests and chases, for the support of wild beasts, and for their own pleasure in hunting them, than into farms, gardens, and fruitful fields, if they can get nothing from the productions of them.

This is the forlorn condition of mankind, in most of the wild empires of the East; this was their condition in all the Gothick governments; and this is the condition of Poland and of the highlands of Scotland; where a few have liberty, and all the rest are slaves. And nothing can free mankind from this abject and forlorn condition, but the invention of arts and sciences;

that is, the finding out of more materials and expedients to make life easy and pleasant; and the inducing people to believe, what they will readily believe, that other things are necessary to their happiness, besides those which nature has made necessary. Thus the luxury of the rich becomes the bread of the poor.

As soon as men are freed from the importunities of hunger and cold; the thoughts and desire of conveniency, plenty, ornament, and politeness, do presently succeed: And then follow after, in very quick progression, emulation, ambition, profusion, and the love of power: And all these, under proper regulations, contribute to the happiness, wealth, and security of societies. It is natural to men and societies, to be setting their wits and their hands to work, to find out all means to satisfy their wants and desires, and to enable them to live in credit and comfort, and to make suitable provision that their posterity may live so after them.

Necessity is the mother of invention; and so is the opinion of necessity. Whilst things are in their own nature necessary to us, or, from custom and fancy, made necessary; we will be turning every thought, and trying every method, how to come at them; and where they cannot be got by violence and rapine, recourse will be had to invention and industry. And here is the source of arts and sciences; which alone can support multitudes of people, who will never be wanting to the means which bring them support.

Where-ever there is employment for people, there will be people; and people, in most countries, are forced, for want of other employment, to cut the throats of one another, or of their neighbours; and to ramble after their princes in all their mad conquests, ridiculous contentions, and other mischievous maggots; and all to get, with great labour, hazard, and often with great hunger and slaughter, a poor, precarious, and momentary subsistence.

And therefore whatever state gives more encouragement to its subjects than the neighbouring states do, and finds them more work, and gives them greater rewards for that work; and by all these laudable ways makes [the] human condition easier than it is elsewhere, and secures life and property better; that state will draw the inhabitants from the neighbouring countries to its own; and when they are there, they will, by being richer and safer, multiply faster. Men will naturally fly from danger to security, from poverty to plenty, and from a life of misery to a life of felicity.

And as there will be always industry where-ever there is protection; so where-ever there is industry and labour, there will be the silver, the gold, the jewels, and power, and the empire. It does not import who they are that have conquered, or inhabit the countries where silver and gold are natives, or who they are that toil for them in the mines; since they will be the possessors of the coin, who can purchase it afterwards with the goods and manufactures which the proprietors of the mine and their people want. One artificer in England, or Holland, can make manufacture enough in a week to buy as much silver and gold at the mine, as a labourer there can dig and prepare in a month, or perhaps two; and all the while that Spain and Portugal lessen their inhabitants, we increase ours: They lose their people by sending them away to dig in the mines; and we, by making the manufactures which they want, and the instruments which they use, multiply ours. By this means every man that they send out of their country is a loss to it, because the reason and produce of their labour goes to enrich rival nations; whereas every man that we send to our plantations, adds to the number of our inhabitants here at home, by maintaining so many of them employed in so many manufactures which they take off there; besides so many artificers in shipping, and all the numerous traders and agents concerned in managing and venting the produce of the

plantations, when it is brought hither, and in bringing it hither: So that the English planters in America, besides maintaining themselves and ten times as many Negroes, maintain likewise great numbers of their countrymen in England.

Such are the blessings of liberty, and such is the difference which it makes between country and country! The Spanish nation lost much more by the loss of their liberties, followed with the expulsion of the Moors, than ever they got by the gold and silver mountains of Mexico and Peru, or could get by all the mines of gold, silver, and diamonds upon earth.

Where there is liberty, there are encouragements to labour, because people labour for themselves: and no one can take from them the acquisitions which they make by their labour: There will be the greatest numbers of people, because they find employment and protection; there will be the greatest stocks, because most is to be got, and easiest to be got, and safest when it is got; and those stocks will be always increasing by a new accession of money acquired elsewhere, where there is no security of enjoying it; there people will be able to work cheapest, because less taxes will be put upon their work, and upon the necessaries which must support them whilst they are about it: There people will dare to own their being rich; there will be most people bred up to trade, and trade and traders will be most respected; and there the interest of money will be lower, and the security of possessing it greater, than it ever can be in tyrannical governments, where life and property and all things must depend upon the humour of a prince, the caprice of a minister, or the demand of a harlot. Under those governments few people can have money, and they that have must lock it up, or bury it to keep it; and dare not engage in large designs, when the advantages may be reaped by their rapacious governors, or given up by them in a senseless and wicked treaty: Besides, such governors condemn trade and artificers; and only men of the sword, who have an interest incompatible with trade, are encouraged by them.

For these reasons, trade cannot be carried on so cheap as in free countries; and whoever supplies the commodity cheapest, will command the market. In free countries, men bring out their money for their use, pleasure, and profit, and think of all ways to employ it for their interest and advantage. New projects are every day invented, new trades searched after, new manufactures set up; and when tradesmen have nothing to fear but from those whom they trust, credit will run high, and they will venture in trade for many times as much as they are worth: But in arbitrary countries, men in trade are every moment liable to be undone, without the guilt of sea or wind, without the folly or treachery of their correspondents, or their own want of care or industry: Their wealth shall be their snare; and their abilities, vigilance, and their success, shall either be their undoing, or nothing to their advantage: Nor can they trust any one else, or any one else them, when payment and performance must depend upon the honesty and wisdom of those who often have none.

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Ignorance of arts and sciences, and of every thing that is good, together with poverty, misery, and desolation, are found for the most part all together, and are all certainly produced by tyranny. In all the great empires of Morocco, Abyssinia, Persia, and India, there is not amongst the natives such a thing as a tolerable architect; nor one good building, unless we except a palace built by a Portuguese for the Abyssinian emperor; and perhaps there may be in all these vast continents a few more good houses built by Europeans. The Aethiopians have scarce such a thing as an artificer among them; their only weavers are the Jews, who are

likewise their smiths, whose highest employment in iron is to make heads for their spears; and for artists of their own, their wretched trumpeters and horn-winders seem to be the highest. When the Jesuits built a few churches and chapels in their country, the whole nation were alarmed, taking them for so many castles and fortresses. The rest of their condition is a piece; they are abjectly miserable, in spite of their soil, which in many places is luxuriant, and yields three crops a year; Of such small effect are the gifts of God to his creatures, when the breath of a tyrant can blast them!

In Persia, the carpenters and joiners have but four tools for all their work, and we may guess what sort of work they make; they have a hatchet, a saw, and a chisel, and one sort of plainer, brought thither not long since by a Frenchman. As to printing, they have none; nor any paper but coarse brown stuff, which cannot be folded without breaking to pieces. In painting, they do not go beyond birds and flowers, and are utterly ignorant of figures and history.

Egypt was once the mother of arts and sciences, and from thence Greece had them: But Egypt losing its liberties, lost with them all politeness, as all nations do; and the pyramids were built by the first Egyptian tyrants, while the knowledge of arts was not yet lost in barbarism, and before the country was dispeopled, else they never had been built. Nor could all the power of the Ottoman Empire build such in the place now, though the Turks were not savages in the sciences, as they are. "Till the time of Ramphsinitus," says Herodotus, "the Egyptians report, that liberty flourished, and the laws were the highest power." Then he tells us, that Cheops, the successor of that king, falling into all debauchery and tyranny, employed a hundred thousand of his people in drawing of stone; Diodorus Siculus says, three hundred and sixty thousand were employed in this inhuman drudgery; and then he began a pyramid. The Egyptians grew afterwards in ignorance, barbarity, and vileness, and almost any body that invaded them, mastered them; and when they were defended, the free Greeks defended them, a band of them being generally entertained for that end by the Egyptian kings. It is true, one or two of the Ptolemies, particularly the first, attempted to revive arts and learning amongst them; but the attempt came to nothing: They were slaves, incapable either of tasting or producing the embellishments and excellencies of liberty, of which they had been long deprived; and therefore the Greek artists, and the Greek professors in Egypt, had the glory of every improvement to themselves, as indeed they were the authors of all. The Romans afterwards left there many monuments of their grandeur and politeness: But when their free government ended, as tyranny succeeded, so did barbarity all over the empire, and no where more than in Egypt, which is at this day the prey of robbing and thieving Arabs, and of oppressive and devouring Turks.

I shall here subjoin a summary account given us by that judicious traveller Monsieur Bernier, concerning the condition of the three great eastern empires, best known to us. It is in his last chapter of *The History of the Great Mogul*.

There is, says he,

almost no person secure from the violence of the governors, timariots, and farmers of the royal rents; nor can the princes, though they were disposed, hinder these violences, nor prevent the tyranny of their servants over their people; which should be the chief employment of a king. This tyranny is often so extensive, that it leaves to the peasant and tradesman neither food nor raiment, but robs them of the common necessaries of life, and they live in misery, and die with hunger: They either beget no children; or, if they do, see them perish in

their infancy, for want of food: Sometimes they desert their huts and land, to become lackeys to the soldiers, or fly to neighbouring nations (where their condition is not mended). In short, the land is not tilled but by force, and therefore wretchedly tilled; and great part of it lies waste and is lost: There is no body to clear the ditches and water-courses; no body to build houses, or to repair those that are ruinous. The timariot will not improve the ground for his successor, not knowing how soon he may come; nor will the peasant work for a tyrant, and starve while he does it: And neither timariot nor peasant will labour for bread which others are to eat. So the peasant is left to starve, and the land to become a desert.

Hence it is, that we see those vast states in Asia run and running to wretched ruin: Most of their towns are raised with dirt and earth; and you see nothing but ruinous towns, and deserted villages: And hence it is, that those celebrated regions of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Palestine, with those admirable plains of Antioch, and so many other countries, anciently so well manured, so fertile, and so full of people, are all at present half deserted, abandoned, and untilled, or become pestilent and uninhabitable bogs. Egypt is in the like condition; and within these fourscore years, above the tenth part of its incomparable soil is lost by poverty, and want of hands to scour the channels of the Nile, and remove the sand which covers their fields.

From the same causes, arts languish and starve in those countries: For with what heart can an artisan labour and study for ignorant beggars, who are not judges of his work, and cannot pay him for it, or for grandees who will not? He is so far from any prospect of reward, that he is not only without all hopes of wealth, office or lands; but, to avoid being thought rich, must live poorly: He must never eat a good meal, never wear a decent coat, never appear to be worth sixpence. Nay, he is happy if he can escape the korrah, a terrible whip exercised by the great lords upon the artists; proper encouragement of ingenuity!

Indeed, the knowledge and beauty of arts had been lost in those countries long since, were it not that the kings and grandees give wages to certain handicraftsmen, who work in their houses, and, to escape the whip, do their best: Besides, the rich merchants, who share their gains with men of power, to be protected by them, give these handicraftsmen a little more pay, and but a little. We must not therefore think, upon seeing rich eastern stuffs here, that the workman there is in any condition or esteem: He works not for himself: Only necessity and the cudgel makes him work; and let him work how he will, he is doomed to live miserably, to clothe himself meanly, to eat poorly.

Traffick also in those countries is faint and decaying: For how many are there that care to take much pains; to make dangerous voyages, and take long journeys; to be constantly running up and down; to write much, to live in perpetual anxiety and care, and to risk all hazards and chances; and all for a precarious gain, which is at the mercy of the next greedy governor?

This whole chapter of Bernier deserves every man's reading: I have only room to add part of another paragraph. talking of the Turkish empire: "We have travelled," says he,

through almost all the parts of it; we have seen how woefully it is ruined and dispeopled; and how in the capital city the raising of five or six thousand men requires three whole months: And we know what a fall it must have had before now, had it not been for the supplies of Christian slaves and captives brought thither every year from all parts. Without doubt, if the same sort of government continue, that state will destroy itself: It is at this day maintained by its own weakness, and must at last fall by it. The governors are frequently changed, to make room for new oppressors; but neither has any one governor, or one subject

in the whole empire, a penny that he can call his own, to maintain the least party; nor, if he had money, are there any men to be had in these wide desolate provinces. A blessed expedient this, to make a state subsist! An expedient, much like that of a brama of Pegu, who, to prevent sedition, commanded that no land should be tilled for some years together; and having thus destroyed half the kingdom with hunger, he turned it into forests: Which method, however, did not answer his end, nor prevent divisions in that state, which was reduced so low, that a handful of Chinese fugitives were like to have taken and mastered the capital city Ava.

Thus far Bernier. Sir Paul Ricaut tells us, that it is a reigning maxim in the Turkish policy, to lay a great part of their empire waste. A maxim, which they need take no pains to practise; since, without destroying deliberately their people and provinces, which yet they do, the dreadful spirit of their government creates desolation fast enough in all conscience.

The whole city of Dhili, the capital of India, is obliged to follow the Great Mogul their emperor, when he takes a journey, their whole dependence being upon the court and the soldiery; for they cannot support themselves: Nor is the country round them, which is either waste, or its inhabitants starving, able to support them. So that the citizens of this mighty metropolis, are only the wretched sutlers to a camp: They are forced to leave their houses empty, and stroll after their monarch, whenever he is graciously disposed to take a jaunt; and are absent sometimes from home a year and a half together.

The Jesuit Nicholas Pimenta, who was in Pegu about an hundred and twenty years ago, gives this account of it: "The last king," says he,

was a mighty king, and could bring into the field a million and sixty thousand men, taking one out of ten: But his son had, by his wars, his oppressions, his murders, and other cruelties, made such quick dispatch of his subjects, that all that were left did not exceed seven thousand, including men, women, and children. What an affecting influence is here of the pestilential nature of tyranny!

It is not unlikely that some of these fatal wars were made by this inhuman prince, for white elephants; and that he either made or provoked invasions upon that score, as I have instanced in another paper: And here I shall add something to make this conjecture still more probable. Mr. Ralph Fitch, a merchant of London, was at Pegu thirteen or fourteen years before Pimenta, in the reign of the above potent king; and he says,

Such is the esteem that this king has for an elephant of this colour, that amongst his other titles, he is called King of the White Elephants; a title, which to him seems as lofty as any of the rest. And that no other prince round about him may wear his glorious title, therefore none of them must keep a white elephant, though nature gave it them; but must send it to him, or an army shall fetch it; for rather than not have it, he will make war for it.

He says, that the houses of these creatures are splendidly gilt, and so are the silver vessels out of which they are fed. When they go to the river to be washed, which they do every day, six or seven men bear up a canopy of cloth of gold or silk over them; and as many more march with drums and musical instruments before them; and when they come out of the water, their feet are washed in great silver basins by persons of quality, whose office it is thus to serve them. Bernier says, the Great Mogul allows fixed pensions (sometimes very large ones) to every elephant, with proper attendance; nay, two men are employed in the sultry

months, to stand, one on each side, to fan them.

I only mention this, to shew how much more care these tyrants take of their beasts, than of their people. And it is too true of all arbitrary princes; their stable of horses is dearer to them than their subjects, and live infinitely better.

This is almost universally true where-ever there are such. Nay, they value their dogs more than they do the lives of men. When the Grand Seignior goes a hunting, a great number of peasants must enclose the ground for several leagues round, and keep in the game; this they must often do for many days together, sometimes in ice and snow, with hungry bellies. By which means their work is neglected, their grounds are destroyed, and they themselves are many times killed in the sport, or starved in attending it; and it often happens, that forty or fifty of his own followers perish in a day. Sultan Mahomet's grand falconer had once the honesty and boldness to represent to his master all this destruction and carnage which attended his endless passion for hunting; but all the answer which he received from this father of the faithful, was, "By all means take care of the dogs, let them have clothing and other accommodations."

This paper upon arts and population grows too long: I shall therefore reserve to another what I have to say further upon this subject.

G

I am, &c.



No. 68. SATURDAY, March 3, 1722.

Property and Commerce secure in a free Government only; with the consuming Miseries under simple Monarchies. [Gordon][↗](#)

[II-321]

SIR,

I here send you what I have to say further upon arts, industry and population. To live securely, happily, and independently, is the end and effect of liberty; and it is the ambition of all men to live agreeably to their own humours and discretion. Nor did ever any man that could live satisfactorily without a master, desire to live under one; and real or fancied necessity alone makes men the servants, followers, and creatures of one another. And therefore all men are animated by the passion of acquiring and defending property, because property is the best support of that independency, so passionately desired by all men. Even men the most dependent have it constantly in their heads and their wishes, to become independent one time or other; and the property which they are acquiring, or mean to acquire by that dependency, is intended to bring them out of it, and to procure them an agreeable independency. And as happiness is the effect of independency, and independency the effect of property; so certain property is the effect of liberty alone, and can only be secured by the laws of liberty; laws which are made by consent, and cannot be repealed without it.

All these blessings, therefore, are only the gifts and consequences of liberty, and only to be found in free countries, where power is fixed on one side, and property secured on the other; where the one cannot break bounds without check, penalties or forfeiture, nor the other suffer diminution without redress; where the people have no masters but the laws, and such as the laws appoint; where both laws and magistracy are formed by the people or their deputies; and no demands are made upon them, but what are made by the law, and they know to a penny what to pay before it is asked; where they that exact from them more than the law allows, are punishable by the law; and where the legislators are equally bound by their own acts, equally involved in the consequences.

There can be no good, where there are none of the causes of good; and consequently all the advantages of liberty must be lost with liberty, and all the evils of tyranny must accompany tyranny. I have in my last taken a view of the eastern monarchies, with regard to the miserable decay of their people and arts; I shall in this confine myself, for instances, to Europe, and begin with Muscovy, by far the greatest empire for territory in Christendom: And because the best short account that I have seen of that government, is given by Giles Fletcher, who was there in the latter end of Queen Elizabeth's time, I shall here recite part of that account.

Talking of the many wicked and barbarous arts used by the late czars of Russia, to drain and oppress their people, he says;

“They would suffer their people to give freely to the monasteries (as many do, especially in their last wills), and this they do, because they may have the money of the realm more ready at hand, when they list to take it, which is many times done; the friars parting freely with some, rather than lose all.

“John Basilowitz pretended to resign the crown to the Prince of Cazan, and to retire for the rest of his life to a monastery: He then caused this new king to call in all the ecclesiastical charters, and to cancel them. Then pretending to dislike this fact, and the misrule of the new king, he resumed the sceptre, possessed as he was of all the church lands; of which he kept what he would, and gave new charters for the rest. By this he wrung from the ecclesiasticks a vast sum; and yet hoped to abate the ill opinion of his government, by shewing a worse.

“When they want to levy a new tax, they make a shew of want, as was done by Duke Theodore; who, though left very rich by his father, yet sold most of his plate, and coined the rest, that he might seem in necessity: Whereupon presently came out a new tax upon his people.

“They would sometimes send their messengers into the provinces to forestall and engross the commodities of the country, taking them at small prices, what they themselves listed, and selling them again at excessive prices to their own merchants, or to strangers. If they refuse to buy them, then they force them into it: The like they do, when any commodity thus engrossed, foreign or native, such as cloth of gold, broad cloth, and the like, happens to decay, by lying upon hand; it is forced upon the merchants at the emperor's price, whether they will or no.

“Besides the engrossing of foreign commodities, and forcing them upon the merchants, they make a monopoly for a season of all such commodities as are paid the prince for rent or custom; and this they do to enhance the price of them: Thus they monopolize furs, corn, wood, &c. during all which time none must sell of the same commodity, till the emperor's be all sold.

“The above-mentioned John Basilowitz sent into Permia (a country of the poor Samoides) for certain loads of cedar, though he well knew that none grew there; and the inhabitants returned answer, that they could find none. Whereupon he taxed the country in twelve thousand rubles. Again, he sent to the city of Moscow to provide for him a measure full of fleas, for a medicine. They answered, that the thing was impossible; and if they could get them, yet they could not measure them, because of their leaping out. Upon which he set a mulct upon them of seven thousand rubles.

“To these may be added, their seizures and confiscations upon such as are under displeasure, and the connivance at the oppression and extortions of the governors of the provinces, till their time be expired; and then turning all their wicked plunder into the emperor's treasury, but never a penny back again to the right owner, how great or evident soever the injury be.

“As to the people, they are of no rank or account, and esteemed no better than villains; and so they subscribe themselves in all their writings to any of the nobility, as they of the nobility do to the emperor: And indeed, no bond slaves are kept more in awe and subjection, than the common people are, by the nobility, officers, and soldiers; so that when a poor *mousick* (one of the commonalty) meets any of them upon the highway, he must turn himself about, as not daring to look them in the face, and fall down with his head to the very ground.

“And as to the lands and goods of these miserable people, they are so exposed to the rapine of the nobility and soldiers, besides the taxes, customs, and seizures, and other publick exactions laid upon them by the emperor, that they are utterly discouraged from following their trades and professions; because the more they have, the more danger they are in, not

only of their goods, but even of their lives: And if they happen to have any thing, they convey it into monasteries, or hide it in woods or under ground, as men do when they are in fear of a foreign invasion. So that many villages and towns are entirely without inhabitants; and in the way towards Moscow, betwixt Volaghda and Yareslave, for about an hundred English miles, there are least fifty villages, some half a mile long, some a whole mile long, that stand wholly desolate, without a single inhabitant. The like desolation is seen in all other places of the realm, as I have been told by those that travelled the country.

“In every great town the emperor hath a drinking-house, which he rents out: Here the labouring man and artificer many times spends all from his wife and children. Some drink away all that they wear about them, to their very shirts, and so walk naked; and all for the honour of the emperor. Nay, while they are thus drinking themselves naked, and starving their families, no body must call them away, upon any account, because he would hinder the emperor's revenue.

“The capital punishments upon the people are very cruel; but if theft or murder be committed upon them by one of the nobility, he is seldom punished, or so much as called to account for it, because the people are the slaves of the nobility: Or if these crimes are committed by a gentleman soldier, perhaps he may be imprisoned at the emperor's pleasure, or perhaps fined—and that is all.”

I make this quotation chiefly upon memory, having only taken down some hints when I read it; but I can assert it to be a just one, and almost wholly in the Doctor's words.

I know much has been said of the improvements made by the present Czar, and of his many projects in favour of arts and trade: And it is very true, that he is a prince of a very active and inquisitive genius. But though he has made himself a more powerful prince than any of his predecessors were, I do not find that the numbers of his people are increased, or their general wretched condition much mended. He has a vast army constantly on foot; he keeps vast numbers of his poor subjects constantly employed in making havens and canals; great taxes are raised, great and daily waste is made of his people, who are likewise miserably oppressed by his boyars, to whom he still leaves the raising of money, and the direction of trade: So that the general oppression remains; trade is deadened and distressed; the people burdened beyond measure; sudden and arbitrary duties are laid upon commodities imported; the old way of monopolies is continued; the state of the exchange, and the allay and uncertain value of the current coin, are as bad as they can be; arts and ingenuity are really discouraged, and those who have skill in any art must conceal it, to avoid working for nothing; there are grievances without number, and like to be, for he who complains is certainly undone, and petitions are answered with stripes, sometimes with death itself. In short, the condition of the Russian people is much upon the same foot as it was in Dr. Fletcher's time; and whoever doubts it, may find full conviction from Captain Perry's state of Russia, under the present Czar.

In Poland, nothing can be more miserable than the condition of the peasants, who are subject to the mere mercy of the great lords, as to life and death and property; and must labour five days in a week, nay sometimes six, for these lords; and if they cannot subsist themselves and their families upon one day's labour in seven, they must famish. The state of the other northern kingdoms is, with respect to the people, as wretched as any yet named: They have many soldiers, endless taxes, dreadful poverty, few people, and gaudy courts. It is indeed said of some arbitrary princes in some parts of Europe, that they are merciful to their

subjects, and do not use them barbarously; that is, they do not deliberately butcher them, but only take all that they have, and leave them to starve peaceably upon the rest: All the riches of the country are to be seen at court, and the people are wretchedly poor. *Cantabit vacuus*. A countryman once complained to General Kirk, that his soldiers had plundered him of all that he had in the world: "Thou art a happy man," says the General, "for then they will plunder thee no more."

The woeful decay of people and plenty in many states in Italy is so astonishing, that were it not obvious to every eye that sees it, and so well attested to those who have not seen it, by those who have, it would seem beyond all belief.

"When I came into the Pope's territories at Pont Centino, says Dr. Burnet,

there was a rich bottom all uncultivated, and not so much as stocked with cattle: But as I passed from Montifiascone to Viterbo, this appeared yet more amazing; for a vast champaign country lay almost quite deserted. And that wide town, which is of so great compass, hath few inhabitants, and those looked poor and miserable. When I was within a day's journey of Rome, I fancied the neighbourhood of so great a city must mend the matter; but I was much disappointed: For a soil that was so rich, and lay so sweetly, that it far exceeded any thing I ever saw out of Italy, had neither inhabitants in it, nor cattle upon it, to the tenth part of what it could bear. The surprize this gave me increased upon me, as I went out of Rome on its other side, chiefly all the way to Naples, and on the way to Civita Vecchia; for that vast and rich champaign country, which runs all along to Terracina, which from Civita Vecchia is a hundred miles long, and is in many places twelve or twenty miles broad, is abandoned to such a degree, that as far as one's eye can carry one, there is often not so much as a house to be seen. The severity of the government hath driven away the inhabitants; and their being driven away hath reduced it to such a pass, that it is hardly possible to people it.

He adds, that in Rome itself,

it is not possible for the people to live and pay taxes; which has driven, as it is believed, almost a fourth part of the people out of Rome during this pontificate.

He tells us elsewhere, that the Pope buys in all the corn of St. Peter's patrimony.

He buys it at five crowns their measure, and even that is slowly and ill paid. So that there was eight hundred thousand crowns owing upon that score when I was at Rome. In selling this out, the measure is lessened a fifth part, and the price of the whole is doubled; so that what was bought at five crowns, is sold out at twelve; and if the bankers, who are obliged to take a determined quantity of corn from the chamber, cannot retail out all that is imposed upon them, but are forced to return some part of it back, the chamber discounts to them only the first price of five crowns.

It is observed by another noble author of our country, that Mario Chigi, brother to Pope Alexander the Seventh, by one sordid cheat upon the sale of corn, is said within eight years to have destroyed above the third part of the people in the ecclesiastical state; and that that country, which was the strength of the Romans in the Carthaginian wars, suffered more by the covetousness and fraud of that villain, than by all the defeats received from Hannibal.

The country of Ferrara was formerly very populous, and the lands being fertile, were well cultivated; but since the Pope has got possession of it, it is almost depopulated; the lands are nigh desolate; and, for want of people, it is like the rest of the ecclesiastical state, unhealthy to live in. His Holiness has reduced the inhabitants from above an hundred thousand, to about twelve thousand. In the city itself, grass grows in the streets, and most of the houses are empty.

The Great Duke's dominions lie much in the same dismal solitude. When Sienna and Pisa were free states, they swarmed with people, and were rich in trade and territory: Sienna alone was computed to have had above half a million of subjects; but in a matter of an hundred and fourscore years, during which time it has been in the possession of his Highness of Tuscany, they are sunk below twenty thousand, and these miserably poor. The same is the abject condition of Pisa, Pistoja, Arezzo, Cortona, and many other great towns. Florence, his capital particularly, which, in the days of liberty, could, by the ringing of a bell, bring together, of its own citizens and the inhabitants of the valley Arno, a hundred and thirty-five thousand well armed men in a few hours' time, is now so poor and low, that it could not bring together three tolerable regiments in thirteen months.

The city of Pisa alone was reckoned, when it was free, to have had a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, all happy in liberty and commerce; and now they are about ten thousand, without liberty, and commerce, and bread. Formerly an hundred of its citizens could fit out an hundred galleys, and maintain them during a war, at their own charge; and now the whole city could not furnish out nor maintain one. Their stately palaces are desolate, like their territory; or let out for stables, or any other sorry use, at three or four pounds a year rent. Their streets are covered with grass; their territory, by being waste, is grown unwholesome; and their few remains of people are starving. And that great state, which the Great Duke could not master without the armies of Spain, are not now able to contend with his infamous crew of tax-gatherers. The people are famished slaves, their houses are ruins, their trade is gone, their land unmanured, and yet their taxes are not lessened; and if there be any plenty amongst them, 'tis only plenty of beggars.

The same is the condition of the Milanese, and other countries under the same sort of government; the people starve in the best soils: Whereas in Switzerland, and in the territories of Genoa, Lucca, and the Grisons, they are numerous, and live happily in the worst. "The people in France" (says the author of the supplement to Dr. Burnet's travels),

especially the peasants, are very poor, and most of them reduced to great want and misery; and yet France is an extraordinary good country. The people of Switzerland (which is a country of mountains) cannot be said to be very rich, but there are very few, even of the peasants, that are miserably poor. The most part of them have enough to live on. Every where in France, even in the best cities, there are swarms of beggars; and yet scarce any to be seen throughout all Switzerland. The houses of the country people in France are extremely mean; and in them no other furniture is to be found, but poor nasty beds, straw chairs, with plates and dishes of wood and earth. In Switzerland, the peasants have their houses furnished with good featherbeds, good chairs, and other convenient household-stuffs; their windows are all of glass, always kept mended and whole; and their linen, both for bedding and their tables, is very neat and white.

This was written above thirty years ago, when France was in a much better condition than it has been since. The glory of their late Grand Monarch cost them much misery, and many myriads of people. And yet even thirty years ago their miseries were great and affecting! "As

I came from Paris to Lyons” (says Dr. Burnet),

I was amazed to see so much misery as appeared not only in villages, but even in big towns; where all the marks of an extreme poverty shewed themselves, both in the buildings, the clothes, and almost in the looks of the inhabitants. And a general dispeopling in all the towns, was a very visible effect of the hardships under which they lay.

What blessed circumstances that great kingdom is in now, Mr. Law, who is amongst us, can best tell; though we all pretty well know. It is really a science, and no easy one, to know the names, numbers, and quality of their taxes; which are so many, so various, and so heavy, that one of their own writers calls them, inventions proper to impoverish the people, and to enrich the dictionaries. Bulion, treasurer to Louis XIII, told his master, that his subjects were too happy, they were not yet reduced to eat grass. And the cruel spirit and politicks of that minister were afterwards so well improved, that I am apt to think their present felicity is no part of their misfortunes.

Such instances shew what hopeful methods such governors take to increase people, trade, and riches.

As to the politer arts, I own several of them have flourished under some of the Popes themselves, and some other arbitrary princes; such as painting, architecture, sculpture, and musick. But these arts, and the improvements of them, were so far from owing any thing to that sort of government, that by liberty alone, and the privileges given to the professors of them, they came to excel in them; nor would they ever have excelled upon the common foot and condition of their other subjects: So that to make them excellent, they made them free. And thus even tyrants, the enemies of liberty, were, for their furniture, luxury, pomp, pleasure, and entertainment, forced to be beholden to liberty; and for those particular purposes, they gave it to particular men. But for the rest of their subjects, they were left by them in the condition of brutes, both in point of livelihood and knowledge; For it is liberty more than shape, that makes the difference; since reason without liberty proves little better, and sometimes worse, than none. Servitude mars all genius; nor is either a pen or a pencil of any use in a hand that is manacled.

G

I am, &c.

The End of the Second Volume.