A

VINDICATION

OF THE

RIGHTS OF MEN,

IN A

LETTER

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE;

OCCASIONED BY

HIS REFLECTIONS

ON THE

REVOLUTION IN FRANCE.

By MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON,
NO. 72, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M. DCC. XC

ADVERTISEMENT.

MR. BURKE'S Reflections on the French Revolution firſt engaged my attention as the tranſient topic of the day; and reading it more for amuſement than information, my indignation was rouſed by the ſophiſtical arguments, that every moment croſſed me, in the queſtionable ſhape of natural feelings and common ſenſe.

Many pages of the following letter were the effuſions of the moment; but, ſwelling imperceptibly to a conſiderable ſize, the idea was ſug-

geſted of publiſhing a ſhort vindication of *the Rights of Men.*

Not having leiſure or patience to follow this deſultory writer through all the devious tracks in which his fancy has ſtarted freſh game, I have confined my ſtrictures, in a great meaſure, to the grand principles at which he has levelled many ingenious arguments in a very ſpecious garb.

A

LETTER

TO THE

Right Honourable EDMUND BURKE.

SIR,

IT is not neceſſary, with courtly inſincerity, to apologiſe to you for thus intruding on your precious time, not to profeſs that I think it an honour to diſcuſs an important ſubject with a man whoſe literary abilities have raiſed him to notice in the ſtate. I have not yet learned to twiſt my periods, nor, in the equivocal idiom of politeneſs, to diſguiſe my ſentiments, and imply what I ſhould be afraid to utter:

if, therefore, in the courſe of this epiſtle, I chance to expreſs contempt, and even indignation, with ſome emphaſis, I beſeech you to believe that it is not a flight of fancy; for truth, in morals, has ever appeared to me the eſſence of the ſublime; and, in taſte, ſimplicity the only criterion of the beautiful. But I war not with an individual when I contend for the *rights of men* and the liberty of reaſon. You ſee I do not condeſcend to cull my words to avoid the invidious phraſe, nor ſhall I be prevented from giving a manly definition of it, by the flimſy ridicule which a lively fancy has interwoven with the preſent acceptation of the term. Reverencing the rights of humanity, I ſhall dare to aſſert them; not intimidated by the horſe laugh that you have raiſed, or waiting till time has wiped away the compaſſionate tears which you have elaborately laboured to excite.

From

From the many juſt ſentiments interſperſed through the letter before me, and from the whole tendency of it, I ſhould believe you to be a good, though a vain man, if ſome circumſtances in your conduct did not render the inflexibility of your integrity doubtful; and for this vanity a knowledge of human nature enables me to diſcover ſuch extenuating circumſtances, in the very texture of your mind, that I am ready to call it amiable, and ſeparate the public from the private character.

I know that a lively imagination renders a man particularly calculated to ſhine in converſation and in thoſe deſultory productions where method is diſregarded; and the inſtantaneous applauſe which his eloquence extorts is at once a reward and a ſpur. Once a wit and always a wit, is an aphoriſm that has received the ſanction of experience; yet I am apt to conclude that the man who with ſcrupulous anxiety endeavours to ſupport that ſhining

character, can never nouriſh by reflection any profound, or, if you pleaſe, metaphyſical paſſion. Ambition becomes only the tool of vanity, and his reaſon, the weather-cock of unreſtrained feelings, is only employed to varniſh over the faults which it ought to have corrected.

Sacred, however, would the infirmities and errors of a good man be, in my eyes, if they were only diſplayed in a private circle; if the venial fault only rendered the wit anxious, like a celebrated beauty, to raiſe admiration on every occaſion, and excite emotion, inſtead of the calm reciprocation of mutual eſteem and unimpaſſioned reſpect. Such vanity enlivens ſocial intercourſe, and forces the little great man to be always on his guard to ſecure his throne; and an ingenious man, who is ever on the watch for conqueſt, will, in his eagerneſs to exhibit his whole ſtore of knowledge, furniſh an attentive obſerver with ſome

uſeful

uſeful information, calcined by fancy and formed by taſte.

And though ſome dry reaſoner might whiſper that the arguments were ſuperficial, and ſhould even add, that the feelings which are thus oſtentatiouſly diſplayed are often the cold declamation of the head, and not the effuſions of the heart—what will theſe ſhrewd remarks avail, when the witty arguments and ornamental feelings are on a level with the comprehenſion of the faſhionable world, and a book is found very amuſing? Even the Ladies, Sir, may repeat your ſprightly ſallies, and retail in theatrical attitudes many of your ſentimental exclamations. Senſibility is the *manie* of the day, and compaſſion the virtue which is to cover a multitude of vices, whilſt juſtice is left to mourn in ſullen ſilence, and balance truth in vain.

In life, an honeſt man with a confined underſtanding is frequently the ſlave of his habits

and the dupe of his feelings, whilſt the man with a clearer head and colder heart makes the paſſions of others bend to his intereſt; but truly ſublime is the character that acts from principle, and governs the inferior ſprings of activity without ſlackening their vigour; whoſe feelings give vital heat to his reſolves, but never hurry him into feveriſh eccentricities.

However, as you have informed us that reſpect chills love, it is natural to conclude, that all your pretty flights ariſe from your pampered ſenſibility; and that, vain of this fancied pre-eminence of organs, you foſter every emotion till the fumes, mounting to your brain, diſpel the ſober ſuggeſtions of reaſon. It is not in this view ſurpriſing, that when you ſhould argue you become impaſſioned, and that reflection inflames your imagination, inſtead of enlightening your underſtanding.

Quitting now the flowers of rhetoric, let us, Sir, reaſon together; and, believe me, I

ſhould not have meddled with theſe troubled waters, in order to point out your inconſiſtencies, if your wit had not burniſhed up ſome ruſty, baneful opinions, and ſwelled the ſhallow current of ridicule till it reſembled the flow of reaſon, and preſumed to be the teſt of truth.

I ſhall not attempt to follow you through "horſe-way and foot-path;" but, attacking the foundation of your opinions, I ſhall leave the ſuperſtructure to find a centre of gravity on which it may lean till ſome ſtrong blaſt puffs it into air; or your teeming fancy, which the ripening judgment of ſixty years has not tamed, produces another Chineſe erection, to ſtare, at every turn, the plain country people in the face, who bluntly call ſuch an airy edifice—a folly.

The birthright of man, to give you, Sir, a ſhort definition of this diſputed right, is ſuch a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is

compatible with the liberty of every other individual with whom he is united in a ſocial compact, and the continued exiſtence of that compact.

Liberty, in this ſimple, unſophiſticated ſenſe, I acknowledge, is a fair idea that has never yet received a form in the various governments that have been eſtabliſhed on our beauteous globe; the demon of property has ever been at hand to encroach on the ſacred rights of men, and to fence round with awful pomp laws that war with juſtice. But that it reſults from the eternal foundation of right—from immutable truth—who will preſume to deny, that pretends to rationality—if reaſon has led them to build their morality[a] and religion on

[a] As religion is included in my idea of morality, I ſhould not have mentioned the term without ſpecifying all the ſimple ideas which that comprehenſive word generalizes; but as the charge of atheiſm has been very freely banded about in the letter I am conſidering, I wiſh to guard againſt miſrepreſentation.

an

an everlaſting foundation—the attributes of God?

I glow with indignation when I attempt, methodically, to unravel your ſlaviſh paradoxes, in which I can find no fixed firſt principle to refute; I ſhall not, therefore, condeſcend to ſhew where you affirm in one page what you deny in another; and how frequently you draw concluſions without any previous premiſes:—it would be ſomething like cowardice to fight with a man who had never exerciſed the weapons with which his opponent choſe to combat, and irkſome to refute ſentence after ſentence in which the latent ſpirit of tyranny appeared.

I perceive, from the whole tenor of your Reflections, that you have a mortal antipathy to reaſon; but, if there is any thing like argument, or firſt principles, in your wild declamation, behold the reſult:—that we are to reverence the ruſt of antiquity, and term the

unnatural

unnatural cuſtoms, which ignorance and miſtaken ſelf-intereſt have conſolidated, the ſage fruit of experience: nay, that, if we do diſcover ſome errors, our *feelings* ſhould lead us to excuſe, with blind love, or unprincipled filial affection, the venerable veſtiges of ancient days. Theſe are gothic notions of beauty—the ivy is beautiful, but, when it inſidiouſly deſtroys the trunk from which it receives ſupport, who would not grub it up?

Further, that we ought cautiouſly to remain for ever in frozen inactivity, becauſe a thaw, whilſt it nouriſhes the ſoil, ſpreads a temporary inundation; and the fear of riſking any perſonal preſent convenience ſhould prevent a ſtruggle for the moſt eſtimable advantages. This is ſound reaſoning, I grant, in the mouth of the rich and ſhort-ſighted.

Yes, Sir, the ſtrong gained riches, the few have ſacrificed the many to their vices; and, to be able to pamper their appetites, and

ſupinely

ſupinely exiſt without exerciſing mind or body, they have ceaſed to be men.—Loſt to the reliſh of true pleaſure, ſuch beings would, indeed, deſerve compaſſion, if injuſtice was not ſoftened by the tyrant's plea—neceſſity; if preſcription was not raiſed as an immortal boundary againſt innovation. Their minds, in fact, inſtead of being cultivated, have been ſo warped by education, that it may require ſome ages to bring them back to nature, and enable them to ſee their true intereſt, with that degree of conviction which is neceſſary to influence their conduct.

The civilization which has taken place in Europe has been very partial, and, like every cuſtom that an arbitrary point of honour has eſtabliſhed, refines the manners at the expence of morals, by making ſentiments and opinions current in converſation that have no root in the heart, or weight in the cooler reſolves of the mind.—And what has ſtopped its progreſs?—

hereditary

hereditary property—hereditary honours. The man has been changed into an artificial monſter by the ſtation in which he was born, and the conſequent homage that benumbed his faculties like the torpedo's touch;—or a being, with a capacity of reaſoning, would not have failed to diſcover, as his faculties unfolded, that true happineſs aroſe from the friendſhip and intimacy which can only be enjoyed by equals; and that charity is not a condeſcending diſtribution of alms, but an intercourſe of good offices and mutual benefits, founded on reſpect for juſtice and humanity.

Governed by theſe principles, the poor wretch, whoſe *inelegant* diſtreſs extorted from a mixed feeling of diſguſt and animal ſympathy preſent relief, would have been conſidered as a man, whoſe miſery demanded a part of his birthright, ſuppoſing him to be induſtrious; but ſhould his vices have reduced him to poverty, he could only have addreſſed his

fellow-men

fellow-men as weak beings, ſubject to like paſſions, who ought to forgive, becauſe they expect to be forgiven, for ſuffering the impulſe of the moment to ſilence the ſuggeſtions of conſcience, or reaſon, which you will; for, in my view of things, they are ſynonymous terms.

Will Mr. Burke be at the trouble to inform us, how far we are to go back to diſcover the rights of men, ſince the light of reaſon is ſuch a fallacious guide that none but fools truſt to its cold inveſtigation?

In the infancy of ſociety, confining our view to our own country, cuſtoms were eſtabliſhed by the lawleſs power of an ambitious individual; or a weak prince was obliged to comply with every demand of the licentious barbarous inſurgents, who diſputed his authority with irrefragable arguments at the point of their ſwords; or the more ſpecious requeſts

of

of the Parliament, who only allowed him conditional ſupplies.

Are theſe the venerable pillars of our conſtitution? And is Magna Charta to reſt for its chief ſupport on a former grant, which reverts to another, till chaos becomes the baſe of the mighty ſtructure—or we cannot tell what?—for coherence, without ſome pervading principle of order, is a ſolecism.

Speaking of Edward the IIId. Hume obſerves, that 'he was a prince of great capacity, 'not governed by favourites, not led aſtray by 'any unruly paſſion, ſenſible that nothing could 'be more eſſential to his intereſts than to keep 'on good terms with his people: yet, on the 'whole, it appears that the government, at 'beſt, was only a barbarous monarchy, not 'regulated by any fixed maxims, or bounded 'by any certain or undiſputed rights, which in 'practice were regularly obſerved. The King

'conducted

'conducted himself by one set of principles; 'the Barons by another; the Commons by a 'third; the Clergy by a fourth. All these 'systems of government were opposite and 'incompatible: each of them prevailed in its 'turn, as incidents were favourable to it: a 'great prince rendered the monarchical power 'predominant: the weakness of a king gave 'reins to the aristocracy: a superstitious age 'saw the clergy triumphant: the people, for 'whom chiefly government was instituted, and 'who chiefly deserve consideration, were the 'weakest of the whole.'

And just before that most auspicious æra, the fourteenth century, during the reign of Richard II. whose total incapacity to manage the reins of power, and keep in subjection his haughty Barons, rendered him a mere cypher; the House of Commons, to whom he was obliged frequently to apply, not only for subsidies but assistance to quell the insurrections

that

that the contempt in which he was held naturally produced, gradually roſe into power; for whenever they granted ſupplies to the King, they demanded in return, though it bore the name of petition, a confirmation, or the renewal of former charters, which had been infringed, and even utterly diſregarded by the King and his ſeditious Barons, who principally held their independence of the crown by force of arms, and the encouragement which they gave to robbers and villains, who infeſted the country, and lived by rapine and violence.

To what dreadful extremities were the poorer ſort reduced, their property, the fruit of their induſtry, being entirely at the diſpoſal of their lords, who were ſo many petty tyrants!

In return for the ſupplies and aſſiſtance which the king received from the commons, they demanded privileges, which Edward, in his diſtreſs for money to proſecute the numer-

ous

ous wars in which he was engaged during the greater part of his reign, was conſtrained to grant them; ſo that by degrees they roſe to power, and became a check on b oth king and nobles. Thus was the foundation of our liberty eſtabliſhed, chiefly through the preſſing neceſſities of the king, who was more intent on being ſupplied for the moment, in order to carry on his wars and ambitious projects, than aware of the blow he gave to kingly power, by thus making a body of men feel their importance, who afterwards might ſtrenuouſly oppoſe tyranny and oppreſſion, and effectually guard the ſubject's property from ſeizure and confiſcation. Richard's weakneſs completed what Edward's ambition began.

At this period, it is true, Wickliffe opened a viſta for reaſon by attacking ſome of the moſt pernicious tenets of the church of Rome; ſtill the proſpect was ſufficiently miſty to

 authorize

authorize the queſtion—Where was the dignity of thinking of the fourteenth century?

A Roman Catholic, it is true, enlightened by the reformation, might, with ſingular propriety, celebrate the epoch that preceded it, to turn our thoughts from former atrocious enormities; but a Proteſtant muſt acknowledge that this faint dawn of liberty only made the ſubſiding darkneſs more viſible; and that the boaſted virtues of that century all bear the ſtamp of ſtupid pride and headſtrong barbariſm. Civility was then called condeſcenſion, and oſtentatious almſgiving humanity; and men were content to borrow their virtues, or, to ſpeak with more propriety, their conſequence, from poſterity, rather than undertake the arduous taſk of acquiring it for themſelves.

The imperfection of all modern governments muſt, without waiting to repeat the trite

trite remark, that all human inſtitutions are unavoidably imperfect, in a great meaſure have ariſen from this ſimple circumſtance, that the conſtitution, if ſuch an heterogeneous maſs deſerve that name, was ſettled in the dark days of ignorance, when the minds of men were ſhackled by the groſſeſt prejudices and moſt immoral ſuperſtition. And do you, Sir, a ſagacious philoſopher, recommend night as the fitteſt time to analyze a ray of light?

Are we to ſeek for the rights of men in the ages when a few marks were the only penalty impoſed for the life of a man, and death for death when the property of the rich was touched? when—I bluſh to diſcover the depravity of our nature—when a deer was killed! Are theſe the laws that it is natural to love, and ſacrilegious to invade?—Were the rights of men underſtood when the law authorized or tolerated murder?—or is power and right the ſame in your creed?

But in fact all your declamation leads ſo directly to this concluſion, that I beſeech you to aſk your own heart, when you call yourſelf a friend of liberty, whether it would not be more conſiſtent to ſtyle yourſelf the champion of property, the adorer of the golden image which power has ſet up?—And, when you are examining your heart, if it would not be too much like mathematical drudgery, to which a fine imagination very reluctantly ſtoops, enquire further, how it is conſiſtent with the vulgar notions of honeſty, and the foundation of morality—truth; for a man to boaſt of his virtue and independence, when he cannot forget that he is at the moment enjoying the wages of falſehood[b]; and that, in a ſkulking, unmanly way, he has ſecured himſelf a penſion of fifteen hundred pounds per annum on the Iriſh eſtabliſhment? Do honeſt men, Sir, for I am not riſing to the refined principle of

[b] See Mr. Burke's Bills for œconomical reform.

honour

honour, ever receive the reward of their public ſervices, or ſecret aſſiſtance, in the name of *another?*

But to return from a digreſſion which you will more perfectly underſtand than any of my readers—on what principle you, Sir, can juſtify the reformation, which tore up by the roots an old eſtabliſhment, I cannot gueſs—but, I beg your pardon, perhaps you do not wiſh to juſtify it—and have ſome mental reſervation to excuſe you, to yourſelf, for not openly avowing your reverence. Or, to go further back;—had you been a Jew—you would have joined in the cry, crucify him!—crucify him! The promulgator of a new doctrine, and the violator of old laws and cuſtoms, that not melting, like ours, into darkneſs and ignorance, reſted on Divine authority, muſt have been a dangerous innovator, in your eyes, particularly if you had not been informed that the Carpenter's Son was of the

ſtock and lineage of David. But there is no end to the arguments which might be deduced to combat ſuch palpable abſurdities, by ſhewing the manifeſt inconſiſtencies which are neceſſarily involved in a direful train of falſe opinions.

It is neceſſary emphatically to repeat, that there are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raiſed above the brute creation by their improvable faculties; and that, in receiving theſe, not from their forefathers but, from God, preſcription can never undermine natural rights.

A father may diſſipate his property without his child having any right to complain;—but ſhould he attempt to ſell him for a ſlave, or fetter him with laws contrary to reaſon; nature, in enabling him to diſcern good from evil, teaches him to break the ignoble chain, and not to believe that bread becomes fleſh,

and

and wine blood, becauſe his parents ſwallowed the Euchariſt with this blind perſuaſion.

There is no end to this implicit ſubmiſſion to authority—ſome where it muſt ſtop, or we return to barbariſm; and the capacity of improvement, which gives us a natural ſceptre on earth, is a cheat, an ignis-fatuus, that leads us from inviting meadows into bogs and dung-hills. And if it be allowed that many of the precautions, with which any alteration was made, in our government, were prudent, it rather proves its weakneſs than ſubſtantiates an opinion of the ſoundneſs of the ſtamina, or the excellence of the conſtitution.

But on what principle Mr. Burke could defend American independence, I cannot conceive; for the whole tenor of his plauſible arguments ſettles ſlavery on an everlaſting foundation. Allowing his ſervile reverence for antiquity, and prudent attention to ſelf-intereſt, to have the force which he inſiſts on,

the ſlave trade ought never to be aboliſhed; and, becauſe our ignorant forefathers, not underſtanding the native dignity of man, ſanctioned a traffic that outrages every ſuggeſtion of reaſon and religion, we are to ſubmit to the inhuman cuſtom, and term an atrocious inſult to humanity the love of our country, and a proper ſubmiſſion to the laws by which our property is ſecured.—Security of property! Behold, in a few words, the definition of Engliſh liberty. And to this ſelfiſh principle every nobler one is ſacrificed.—The Briton takes place of the man, and the image of God is loſt in the citizen! But it is not that enthuſiaſtic flame which in Greece and Rome conſumed every ſordid paſſion: no, ſelf is the focus; and the diſparting rays riſe not above our foggy atmoſphere. But ſoftly—it is only the property of the rich that is ſecure; the man who lives by the ſweat of his brow has no aſylum from oppreſſion; the ſtrong man

may

may enter—when was the caſtle of the poor ſacred? and the baſe informer ſteal him from the family that depend on his induſtry for ſubſiſtence.

Fully ſenſible as you muſt be of the baneful conſequences that inevitably follow this notorious infringement on the deareſt rights of men, and that it is an infernal blot on the very face of our immaculate conſtitution, I cannot avoid expreſſing my ſurpriſe that when you recommended our form of government as a model, you did not caution the French againſt the arbitrary cuſtom of preſſing men for the ſea ſervice. You ſhou'd have hinted to them, that property in England is much more ſecure than liberty, and not have concealed that the liberty of an honeſt mechanic—his all —is often ſacrificed to ſecure the property of the rich. For it is a farce to pretend that a man fights *for his country, his hearth, or his altars*, when he has neither liberty nor property.

perty.—His property is in his nervous arms—and they are compelled to pull a ſtrange rope at the ſurly command of a tyrannic boy, who probably obtained his rank on account of his family connections, or the proſtituted vote of his father, whoſe intereſt in a borough, or voice as a ſenator, was acceptable to the miniſter.

Our penal laws puniſh with death the thief who ſteals a few pounds; but to take by violence, or trepan, a man, is no ſuch heinous offence.—For who ſhall dare to complain of the venerable veſtige of the law that rendered the life of a deer more ſacred than that of a man? But it was the poor man with only his native dignity who was thus oppreſſed—and only metaphyſical ſophiſts and cold mathematicians can diſcern this inſubſtantial form; it is a work of abſtraction—and a *gentleman* of lively imagination muſt borrow ſome drapery from fancy before he can love or pity a *man*.—

Miſery,

Miſery, to reach your heart, I perceive, muſt have its cap and bells; your tears are reſerved, very *naturally* conſidering your character, for the declamation of the theatre, or for the downfall of queens, whoſe rank alters the nature of folly, and throws a graceful veil over vices that degrade humanity; whilſt the diſtreſs of many induſtrious mothers, whoſe *helpmates* have been torn from them, and the hungry cry of helpleſs babes, were vulgar ſorrows that could not move your commiſeration, though they might extort an alms. 'The tears that are 'ſhed for fictitious ſorrow are admirably 'adapted,' ſays Rouſſeau, 'to make us proud 'of all the virtues which we do not poſſeſs.'

The baneful effects of the deſpotic practice of preſſing we ſhall, in all probability, ſoon feel; for a number of men, who have been taken from their daily employments, will ſhortly be let looſe on ſociety, now that there is no longer any apprehenſion of a war.

The

The vulgar, and by this epithet I mean not only to deſcribe a claſs of people, who, working to ſupport the body, have not had time to cultivate their minds; but likewiſe thoſe who, born in the lap of affluence, have never had their invention ſharpened by neceſſity are, nine out of ten, the creatures of habit and impulſe.

If I were not afraid to derange your nervous ſyſtem by the bare mention of a metaphyſical enquiry, I ſhould obſerve, Sir, that ſelf-preſervation is, literally ſpeaking, the firſt law of nature; and that the care neceſſary to ſupport and guard the body is the firſt ſtep to unfold the mind, and inſpire a manly ſpirit of independence. The mewing babe in ſwaddling-clothes, who is treated like a ſuperior being, may perchance become a gentleman; but nature muſt have given him uncommon faculties if, when pleaſure hangs on every bough, he has ſufficient fortitude either to exerciſe his

mind or body in order to acquire perſonal merit. The paſſions are neceſſary auxiliaries of reaſon: a preſent impulſe puſhes us forward, and when we diſcover that the game did not deſerve the chace, we find that we have gone over much ground, and not only gained many new ideas, but a habit of thinking. The exerciſe of our faculties is the great end, though not the goal we had in view when we ſtarted with ſuch eagerneſs.

It would be ſtraying ſtill further into metaphyſics to add, that this is one of the ſtrongeſt arguments for the natural immortality of the ſoul.—Every thing looks like a means, nothing like an end, or point of reſt, when we can ſay, now let us ſit down and enjoy the preſent moment; our faculties and wiſhes are proportioned to the preſent ſcene; we may return without repining to our ſiſter clod. And, if no conſcious dignity whiſper that we are capable of reliſhing more refined pleaſures, the

thirſt

thirſt of truth appears to be allayed; and thought, the faint type of an immaterial energy, no longer bounding it knows not where, is confined to the tenement that affords it ſufficient variety.—The rich man may then thank his God that he is not like other men—but when is retribution to be made to the miſerable, who cry day and night for help, and there is no one at hand to help them? And not only miſery but immorality proceeds from this ſtretch of arbitrary authority. The vulgar have not the power of emptying their mind of the only ideas they imbibed whilſt their hands were employed; they cannot quickly turn from one kind of life to another. Preſſing them entirely unhinges their minds; they acquire new habits, and cannot return to their old occupations with their former readineſs; conſequently they fall into idleneſs, drunkenneſs, and the whole train of vices which you ſtigmatiſe as groſs.

A government that acts in this manner cannot be called a good parent, nor inſpire natural (habitual is the proper word) affection, in the breaſts of children who are thus diſregarded.

The game laws are almoſt as oppreſſive to the peaſantry as preſs-warrants to the mechanic. In this land of liberty what is to ſecure the property of the poor farmer when his noble landlord chooſes to plant a decoy field near his little property? Game devour the fruit of his labour; but fines and impriſonment await him if he dare to kill any—or lift up his hand to interrupt the pleaſure of his lord. How many families have been plunged, in the *ſporting* countries, into miſery and vice for ſome paltry tranſgreſſion of theſe coercive laws, by the natural conſequence of that anger which a man feels when he ſees the reward of his induſtry laid waſte by unfeeling luxury?—when his children's bread is given to dogs!

You have ſhewn, Sir, by your ſilence on theſe ſubjects, that your reſpect for rank has ſwallowed up the common feelings of humanity; you ſeem to conſider the poor as only the live ſtock of an eſtate, the feather of hereditary nobility. When you had ſo little reſpect for the ſilent majeſty of miſery, I am not ſurpriſed at your manner of treating an individual whoſe brow a mitre will never grace, and whoſe popularity may have wounded your vanity—for vanity is ever ſore. Even in France, Sir, before the revolution, literary celebrity procured a man the treatment of a gentleman; but you are going back for your credentials of politeneſs to more diſtant times.—Gothic affability is the mode you think proper to adopt, the condeſcenſion of a Baron, not the civility of a liberal man. Politeneſs is, indeed, the only ſubſtitute for humanity; or what diſtinguiſhes the civiliſed man from the unlettered ſavage? and he who is not governed by reaſon ſhould

ſquare

ſquare his behaviour by an arbitrary ſtandard; but by what rule your attack on Dr. Price was regulated we have yet to learn.

I agree with you, Sir, that the pulpit is not the place for political diſcuſſions, though it might be more excuſable to enter on ſuch a ſubject, when the day was ſet apart merely to commemorate a political revolution, and no ſtated duty was encroached upon. I will, however, wave this point, and allow that Dr. Price's zeal may have carried him further than ſound reaſon can juſtify. I do alſo moſt cordially coincide with you, that till we can ſee the remote conſequences of things, preſent calamities muſt appear in the ugly form of evil, and excite our commiſeration. The good that time ſlowly educes from them may be hid from mortal eye, or dimly ſeen; whilſt ſympathy compels man to feel for man, and almoſt reſtrains the hand that would amputate a limb to ſave the whole body. But, after

making this conceſſion, allow me to expoſtulate with you, and calmly hold up the glaſs which will ſhew you your partial feelings.

In reprobating Dr. Price's opinions you might have ſpared the man; and if you had had but half as much reverence for the grey hairs of virtue as for the accidental diſtinctions of rank, you would not have treated with ſuch indecent familiarity and ſupercilious contempt, a member of the community whoſe talents and modeſt virtues place him high in the ſcale of moral excellence. I am not accuſtomed to look up with vulgar awe, even when mental ſuperiority exalts a man above his fellows; but ſtill the ſight of a man whoſe habits are fixed by piety and reaſon, and whoſe virtues are conſolidated into goodneſs, commands my homage—and I ſhould touch his errors with a tender hand when I made a parade of my ſenſibility. Granting, for a moment, that Dr. Price's political opinions are Utopian reveries,

and

and that the world is not yet ſufficiently civilized to adopt ſuch a ſublime ſyſtem of morality; they could, however, only be the reveries of a benevolent mind. Tottering on the verge of the grave, that worthy man in his whole life never dreamt of ſtruggling for power or riches; and, if a glimpſe of the glad dawn of liberty rekindled the fire of youth in his veins, you, who could not ſtand the faſcinating glance of a *great* Lady's eyes, when neither virtue nor ſenſe beamed in them, might have pardoned his unſeemly tranſport,—if ſuch it muſt be deemed.

I could almoſt fancy that I now ſee this reſpectable old man, in his pulpit, with hands claſped, and eyes devoutly fixed, praying with all the ſimple energy of unaffected piety; or, when more erect, inculcating the dignity of virtue, and enforcing the doctrines his life adorns; benevolence animated each feature, and perſuaſion attuned his accents; the preacher

grew eloquent, who only laboured to be clear; and the reſpect that he extorted, ſeemed only the reſpect due to perſonified virtue and matured wiſdom.—Is this the man you brand with ſo many opprobrious epithets? he whoſe private life will ſtand the teſt of the ſtricteſt enquiry—away with ſuch unmanly ſarcaſms, and puerile conceits.—But, before I cloſe this part of my animadverſions, I muſt convict you of wilful miſrepreſentation and wanton abuſe.

Dr. Price, when he reaſons on the neceſſity of men attending ſome place of public worſhip, conciſely obviates an objection that has been made in the form of an apology, by adviſing thoſe, who do not approve of our Liturgy, and cannot find any mode of worſhip out of the church, in which they can conſcientiouſly join, to eſtabliſh one for themſelves. This plain advice you have tortured into a very different meaning, and repreſented the preacher

as actuated by a diſſenting phrenſy, recommending diſſenſions, 'not to diffuſe truth, 'but to ſpread contradictions[c].' A ſimple queſtion will ſilence this impertinent declamation. —What is truth? A few fundamental truths meet the firſt enquiry of reaſon, and appear as clear to an unwarped mind, as that air and bread are neceſſary to enable the body to fulfil its vital functions; but the opinions which men diſcuſs with ſo much heat muſt be ſimplified and brought back to firſt principles; or who can diſcriminate the vagaries of the imagination, or ſcrupuloſity of weakneſs, from the verdict of reaſon? Let all theſe points be demonſtrated, and not determined by arbitrary authority and dark traditions, leſt a dangerous ſupineneſs ſhould take place; for probably, in ceaſing to enquire, our reaſon would remain dormant, and delivered up, without a curb, to every impulſe of paſſion, we might

[c] Page 15.

ſoon loſe ſight of the clear light which the exerciſe of our underſtanding no longer kept alive. To argue from experience, it ſhould ſeem as if the human mind, averſe to thought, could only be opened by neceſſity; for, when it can take opinions on truſt, it gladly lets the ſpirit lie quiet in its groſs tenement. Perhaps the moſt improving exerciſe of the mind, confining the argument to the enlargement of the underſtanding, is the reſtleſs enquiries that hover on the boundary, or ſtretch over the dark abyſs of uncertainty. Theſe lively conjectures are the breezes that preſerve the ſtill lake from ſtagnating. We ſhould be aware of confining all moral excellence to one channel, however capacious; or, if we are ſo narrow-minded, we ſhould not forget how much we owe to chance that our inheritance was not Mahometiſm; and that the iron hand of deſtiny, in the ſhape of deeply rooted authority, has not ſuſpended the ſword of de-

ſtruction

ſtruction over our heads. But to return to the miſrepreſentation.

'Blackſtone, to whom Mr. Burke pays great deference, ſeems to agree with Dr. Price, that the ſucceſſion of the King of Great Britain depends on the choice of the people, or that they

' 'The doctrine of *hereditary* right does by no means 'imply an *indefeaſible* right to the throne. No man will, 'I think, aſſert this, that has conſidered our laws, conſti- 'tution, and hiſtory, without prejudice, and with any de- 'gree of attention. It is unqueſtionably in the breaſt of 'the ſupreme legiſlative authority of this kingdom, the 'King and both Houſes of Parliament, to defeat this he- 'reditary right; and, by particular entails, limitations, 'and proviſions, to exclude the immediate heir, and veſt 'the inheritance in any one elſe. This is ſtrictly conſo- 'nant to our laws and conſtitution; as may be gathered 'from the expreſſion ſo frequently uſed in our ſtatute 'books, of "the King's Majeſty, his heirs, and ſucceſ- "ſors." In which we may obſerve that, as the word "heirs" neceſſarily implies an inheritance, or hereditary 'right, generally ſubſiſting in "the royal perſon;" ſo the 'word ſucceſſors, diſtinctly taken, muſt imply that this 'inheritance may ſometimes be broken through; or, that

they have a power to cut it off; but this power, as you have fully proved, has been cautiouſly exerted, and might with more propriety be termed a *right* than a power. Be it ſo!—yet when you elaborately cited precedents to ſhew that our forefathers paid great reſpect to hereditary claims, you might have gone back to your favourite epoch, and ſhewn their reſpect for a church that fulminating laws have ſince loaded with opprobrium. The preponderance of inconſiſtencies, when weighed with precedents, ſhould leſſen the moſt bigotted veneration for antiquity, and force men

'there may be a ſucceſſor, without being the heir of the 'king.'

I ſhall not, however, reſt in ſomething like a ſubterfuge, and quote, as partially as you have done, from Ariſtotle. Blackſtone has ſo cautiouſly fenced round his opinion with proviſos, that it is obvious he thought the letter of the law leaned towards your ſide of the queſtion—but a blind reſpect for the law is not a part of my creed.

of

of the eighteenth century to acknowledge, that our *canonized forefathers* were unable, or afraid, to revert to reaſon, without reſting on the crutch of authority; and ſhould not be brought as a proof that their children are never to be allowed to walk alone.

When we doubt the infallible wiſdom of our anceſtors, it is only advancing on the ſame ground to doubt the ſincerity of the law, and the propriety of that ſervile appellation—OUR SOVEREIGN LORD THE KING. Who were the dictators of this adulatory language of the law? Were they not courtly paraſites and worldly prieſts? Beſides, whoever at divine ſervice, whoſe feelings were not deadened by habit, or their underſtandings quieſcent, ever repeated without horror the ſame epithets applied to a man and his Creator? If this is confuſed jargon — ſay what are the dictates of ſober reaſon, or the criterion to diſtinguiſh nonſenſe?

You

You further ſarcaſtically animadvert on the conſiſtency of the democratiſts, by wreſting the obvious meaning of a common phraſe, *the dregs of the people*; or your contempt for poverty may have led you into an error. Be that as it may, an unprejudiced man would have directly perceived the ſingle ſenſe of the word, and an old Member of Parliament could ſcarcely have miſſed it. He who had ſo often felt the pulſe of the electors needed not have gone beyond his own experience to diſcover that the dregs alluded to were the vicious, and not the lower claſs of the community.

Again, Sir, I muſt doubt your ſincerity or your diſcernment.—You have been behind the curtain; and, though it might be difficult to bring back your ſophiſticated heart to nature and make you feel like a man, yet the aweſtruck confuſion in which you were plunged muſt have gone off when the vulgar emotion of wonder,

wonder, excited by finding yourſelf a Senator, had ſubſided. Then you muſt have ſeen the clogged wheels of corruption continually oiled by the ſweat of the laborious poor, ſqueezed out of them by unceaſing taxation. You muſt have diſcovered that the majority in the Houſe of Commons was often purchaſed by the crown, and that the people were oppreſſed by the influence of their own money, extorted by the venal voice of a packed repreſentation.

You muſt have known that a man of merit cannot riſe in the church, the army, or navy, unleſs he has ſome intereſt in a borough; and that even a paltry exciſeman's place can only be ſecured by electioneering intereſt. I will go further, and aſſert that few Biſhops, though there have been learned and good Biſhops, have gained the mitre without ſubmitting to a ſervility of dependence that degrades the man.—All theſe circumſtances you muſt have known, yet you talk of virtue and liberty,

as the vulgar talk of the letter of the law; and the polite of propriety. It is true that theſe ceremonial obſervances produce decorum; the ſepulchres are white-waſhed, and do not offend the ſqueamiſh eyes of high rank; but virtue is out of the queſtion when you only worſhip a ſhadow, and worſhip it to ſecure your property.

Man has been termed, with ſtrict propriety, a microcoſm, a little world in himſelf.—He is ſo;—yet muſt, however, be reckoned an ephemera, or, to adopt your figure of rhetoric, a ſummer's fly. The perpetuation of property in our families is one of the privileges you moſt warmly contend for; yet it would not be very difficult to prove that the mind muſt have a very limited range that thus confines its benevolence to ſuch a narrow circle, which, with great propriety, may be included in the ſordid calculations of blind ſelf-love.

A brutal

A brutal attachment to children has appeared moſt conſpicuous in parents who have treated them like ſlaves, and demanded due homage for all the property they transferred to them, during their lives. It has led them to force their children to break the moſt ſacred ties; to do violence to a natural impulſe, and run into legal proſtitution to increaſe wealth or ſhun poverty; and, ſtill worſe, the dread of parental malediction has made many weak characters violate truth in the face of Heaven; and, to avoid a father's angry curſe, the moſt ſacred promiſes have been broken. It appears to be a natural ſuggeſtion of reaſon, that a man ſhould be freed from implicit obedience to parents and private puniſhments, when he is of an age to be ſubject to the juriſdiction of the laws of his country; and that the barbarous cruelty of allowing parents to impriſon their children, to prevent their contaminating their noble blood by following the

dictates

dictates of nature when they chose to marry, or for any misdemeanor that does not come under the cognizance of public justice, is one of the most arbitrary violations of liberty.

Who can recount all the unnatural crimes which the *laudable, interesting* desire of perpetuating a name has produced? The younger children have been sacrificed to the eldest son; sent into exile, or confined in convents, that they might not encroach on what was called, with shameful falsehood, the *family* estate. Will Mr. Burke call this parental affection reasonable or virtuous?—No; it is the spurious offspring of over-weening, mistaken pride —and not that first source of civilization, natural parental affection, that makes no difference between child and child, but what reason justifies by pointing out superior merit.

Another pernicious consequence which unavoidably arises from this artificial affection is, the insuperable bar which it puts in the way

of early marriages. It would be difficult to determine whether the minds or bodies of our youth are moſt injured by this impediment. Our young men become ſelfiſh coxcombs, and gallantry with modeſt women, and intrigues with thoſe of another deſcription, weaken both mind and body, before either has arrived at maturity. The character of a maſter of a family, a huſband, and a father, forms the citizen imperceptibly, by producing a ſober manlineſs of thought, and orderly behaviour; but, from the lax morals and depraved affections of the libertine, what reſults?—a finical man of taſte, who is only anxious to ſecure his own private gratifications, and to maintain his rank in ſociety.

The ſame ſyſtem has an equally pernicious effect on female morals.—Girls are ſacrificed to family convenience, or elſe marry to ſettle themſelves in a ſuperior rank, and coquet, without reſtraint, with the fine gentleman whom

whom I have already deſcribed. And to ſuch lengths has this vanity, this deſire of ſhining, carried them, that it is not now neceſſary to guard girls againſt imprudent love matches; for if ſome widows did not now and then *fall* in love, Love and Hymen would ſeldom meet, unleſs at a village church.

I do not intend to be ſarcaſtically paradoxical when I ſay, that women of faſhion take huſbands that they may have it in their power to coquet, the grand buſineſs of genteel life, with a number of admirers, and thus flutter the ſpring of life away, without laying up any ſtore for the winter of age, or being of any uſe to ſociety. Affection in the marriage ſtate can only be founded on reſpect—and are theſe weak beings reſpectable? Children are neglected for lovers, and we expreſs ſurpriſe that adulteries are ſo common! A woman never forgets to adorn herſelf to make an impreſſion on the ſenſes of the other ſex, and to extort

the

the homage which it is gallant to pay, and yet we wonder that they have ſuch confined underſtandings!

Have ye not heard that we cannot ſerve two maſters? an immoderate deſire to pleaſe contracts the faculties, and immerges, to borrow the idea of a great philoſopher, the ſoul in matter, till it becomes unable to mount on the wing of contemplation.

It would be an arduous taſk to trace all the vice and miſery that ariſe in ſociety from the middle claſs of people apeing the manners of the great. All are aiming to procure reſpect on account of their property; and moſt places are conſidered as ſinecures that enable men to ſtart into notice. The grand concern of three parts out of four is to contrive to live above their equals, and to appear to be richer than they are. How much domeſtic comfort and private ſatisfaction is ſacrificed to this irrational ambition! It is a deſtructive mildew

that blights the faireſt virtues; benevolence, friendſhip, generoſity, and all thoſe endearing charities which bind human hearts together, and the purſuits which raiſe the mind to higher contemplations, all that were not cankered in the bud by the falſe notions that 'grew with its growth and ſtrengthened with 'its ſtrength,' are cruſhed by the iron hand of property!

Property, I do not ſcruple to aver it, ſhould be fluctuating, which would be the caſe, if it were more equally divided amongſt all the children of a family; elſe it is an everlaſting rampart, in conſequence of a barbarous feudal inſtitution, that enables the elder ſon to overpower talents and depreſs virtue.

Beſides, an unmanly ſervility, moſt inimical to true dignity of character is, by this means, foſtered in ſociety. Men of ſome abilities play on the follies of the rich, and mounting to fortune as they degrade themſelves, they ſtand

in the way of men of ſuperior talents, who cannot advance in ſuch crooked paths, or wade through the filth which *paraſites* never boggle at. Purſuing their way ſtraight forward, their ſpirit is either bent or broken by the rich man's contumelies, or the difficulties they have to encounter.

The only ſecurity of property that nature authorizes and reaſon ſanctions is, the right a man has to enjoy the acquiſitions which his talents and induſtry have acquired; and to bequeath them to whom he chooſes. Happy would it be for the world if there were no other road to wealth or honour; if pride, in the ſhape of parental affection, did not abſorb the man, and prevent friendſhip from having the ſame weight as relationſhip. Luxury and effeminacy would not then introduce ſo much idiotiſm into the noble families which form one of the pillars of our ſtate: the ground would not lie fallow, nor would undirected activity

of mind ſpread the contagion of reſtleſs idleneſs, and its concomitant, vice, through the whole maſs of ſociety.

Inſtead of gaming they might nouriſh a virtuous ambition, and love might take place of the gallantry which you, with knightly fealty, venerate. Women would probably then act like mothers, and the fine lady, become a rational woman, might think it neceſſary to ſuperintend her family and ſuckle her children, in order to fulfil her part of the ſocial compact. But vain is the hope, whilſt great maſſes of property are hedged round by hereditary honours; for numberleſs vices, forced in the hot-bed of wealth, aſſume a ſightly form to dazzle the ſenſes and cloud the underſtanding. The reſpect paid to rank and fortune damps every generous purpoſe of the ſoul, and ſtifles the natural affections on which human contentment ought to be built. Who will venturouſly aſcend the ſteeps of

virtue,

virtue, or explore the great deep for knowledge, when *the one thing needful*, attained by leſs arduous exertions, if not inherited, procures the attention man naturally pants after, and vice 'loſes half its evil by loſing all its 'groſſneſs[e].' — What a ſentiment to come from a moral pen!

A ſurgeon would tell you that by ſkinning over a wound you ſpread diſeaſe through the whole frame; and, ſurely, they indirectly aim at deſtroying all purity of morals, who poiſon the very ſource of virtue, by ſmearing a ſentimental varniſh over vice, to hide its natural deformity. Stealing, whoring, and drunkenneſs, are groſs vices, I preſume, though they may not obliterate every moral ſentiment, and have a vulgar brand that makes them appear with all their native deformity; but overreaching, adultery, and coquetry, are venial offences, though they reduce virtue to an

[e] Page 113.

empty name, and make wiſdom conſiſt in ſaving appearances.

'On this ſcheme of things[f] a king *is* but a 'man; a queen *is* but a woman; a woman *is* 'but an animal, and an animal not of the 'higheſt order.'—All true, Sir; if ſhe is not more attentive to the duties of humanity than queens and faſhionable ladies in general are. I will ſtill further accede to the opinion you have ſo juſtly conceived of the ſpirit which begins to animate this age.—'All homage 'paid to the ſex in general, as ſuch, and with-'out diſtinct views, is to be regarded as *ro-'mance* and folly.' Undoubtedly; becauſe ſuch homage vitiates them, prevents their endeavouring to obtain ſolid perſonal merit; and, in ſhort, makes thoſe beings vain inconſiderate dolls, who ought to be prudent mothers and uſeful members of ſociety. 'Regi-'cide and ſacrilege are but fictions of ſuperſti-

[f] As you ironically obſerve, p. 114.

'tion

'tion corrupting juriſprudence, by deſtroying 'its ſimplicity. The murder of a king, 'or a queen, or a biſhop, are only com-'mon homicide.'—Again I agree with you; but you perceive, Sir, that by leaving out the word *father*, I think the whole extent of the compariſon invidious.

You further proceed groſsly to miſrepreſent Dr. Price's meaning; and, with an affectation of holy fervour, expreſs your indignation at his profaning a beautiful rapturous ejaculation, when alluding to the King of France's ſubmiſſion to the National Aſſembly[g]; he rejoiced to hail a glorious revolution, which promiſed an univerſal diffuſion of liberty and happineſs.

Obſerve, Sir, that I called your piety affectation.—A rant to enable you to point your

[g] In July, when he firſt ſubmitted to his people; and not the mobbing triumphal cataſtrophe in October, which you choſe, to give full ſcope to your declamatory powers.

venomous dart, and round your period. I ſpeak with warmth, becauſe, of all hypocrites, my ſoul moſt indignantly ſpurns a religious one;—and I very cautiouſly bring forward ſuch a heavy charge, to ſtrip you of your cloak of ſanctity. Your ſpeech at the time the bill for a regency was agitated now lies before me.—*Then* you could in direct terms, to promote ambitious or intereſted views, exclaim without any pious qualms—'Ought they to make a 'mockery of him, putting a crown of thorns 'on his head, a reed in his hand, and dreſſing 'him in a raiment of purple, cry, Hail! 'King of the Britiſh!' Where was your ſenſibility when you could utter this cruel mockery, equally inſulting to God and man? Go hence, thou ſlave of impulſe, look into the private receſſes of thy heart, and take not a mote from thy brother's eye, till thou haſt removed the beam from thine own.

Of

Of your partial feelings I ſhall take another view, and ſhew that 'following nature, which is,' you ſay, 'wiſdom without reflection, and *above it*'—has led you into great inconſiſtences, to uſe the ſofteſt phraſe. When, on a late melancholy occaſion, a very important queſtion was agitated, with what indecent warmth did *you* treat a woman, for I ſhall not lay any ſtreſs on her title, whoſe conduct in life has deſerved praiſe, though not, perhaps, the ſervile elogiums which have been laviſhed on the queen. But ſympathy, and you tell us that you have a heart of fleſh, was made to give way to party ſpirit and the feelings of a man, not to allude to your romantic gallantry, to the views of the ſtateſman. When you deſcanted on the horrors of the 6th of October, and gave a glowing, and, in ſome inſtances, a moſt exaggerated deſcription of

that

that infernal night, without having troubled yourſelf to clean your palette, you might have returned home and indulged us with a ſketch of the miſery you perſonally aggravated.

With what eloquence might you not have inſinuated, that the ſight of unexpected miſery and ſtrange reverſe of fortune makes the mind recoil on itſelf; and, pondering, traced the uncertainty of all human hope, the frail foundation of ſublunary grandeur! What a climax lay before you. A father torn from his children,—a huſband from an affectionate wife,—a man from himſelf! And not torn by the reſiſtleſs ſtroke of death, for time would then have lent its aid to mitigate remedileſs ſorrow; but that living death, which only kept hope alive in the corroding form of ſuſpenſe, was a calamity that called for all your pity.

The ſight of auguſt ruins, of a depopulated country—what are they to a diſordered ſoul!

when

when all the faculties are mixed in wild confuſion. It is then indeed we tremble for humanity — and, if ſome wild fancy chance to croſs the brain, we fearfully ſtart, and preſſing our hand againſt our brow, aſk if we are yet men?—if our reaſon is undiſturbed?—if judgment hold the helm? Marius might ſit with dignity on the ruins of Carthage, and the wretch in the Baſtille, who longed in vain to ſee the human face divine, might yet view the operations of his own mind, and vary the leaden proſpect by new combinations of thought: poverty, ſhame, and even ſlavery, may be endured by the virtuous man—he has ſtill a world to range in—but the loſs of reaſon appears a monſtrous flaw in the moral world, that eludes all inveſtigation, and humbles without enlightening.

In this ſtate was the King, when you, with unfeeling diſreſpect, and indecent haſte, wiſhed to ſtrip him of all his hereditary honours.—You were

were ſo eager to taſte the ſweets of power, that you could not wait till time had determined, whether a dreadful delirium would ſettle into a confirmed madneſs; but, prying into the ſecrets of Omnipotence, you thundered out that God had *hurled him from his throne*, and that it was the moſt inſulting mockery to recollect that he had been a king, or to treat him with any particular reſpect on account of his former dignity. — And who was the monſter whom Heaven had thus awfully depoſed, and ſmitten with ſuch an angry blow? Surely as harmleſs a character as Lewis XVIth; and the queen of Great Britain, though her heart may not be enlarged by generoſity, who will preſume to compare her character with that of the queen of France?

Where then was the infallibility of that extolled inſtinct which riſes above reaſon? was it warped by vanity, or *hurled* from its throne by ſelf-intereſt? To your own heart anſwer theſe

theſe queſtions in the ſober hours of reflection —and, after reviewing this guſt of paſſion, learn to reſpect the ſovereignty of reaſon.

I have, Sir, been reading, with a ſcrutinizing, comparative eye, ſeveral of your inſenſible and profane ſpeeches during the King's illneſs. I diſdain to take advantage of a man's weak ſide, or draw conſequences from an unguarded tranſport — A lion preys not on carcaſſes! But on this occaſion you acted ſyſtematically. It was not the paſſion of the moment, over which humanity draws a veil: no; what but the odious maxims of Machiavelian policy could have led you to have ſearched in the very dregs of miſery for forcible arguments to ſupport your party? Had not vanity or intereſt ſteeled your heart, you would have been ſhocked at the cold inſenſibility which could carry a man to thoſe dreadful manſions, where human weakneſs appears in its moſt awful form to *calculate* the

chances

chances againſt the King's recovery. Impreſſed as *you are* with reſpect for royalty, I am aſtoniſhed that you did not tremble at every ſtep, leſt Heaven ſhould avenge on your guilty head the inſult offered to its vicegerent. But the conſcience that is under the direction of tranſient ebullitions of feeling, is not very tender or conſiſtent, when the current runs another way.

Had you been in a philoſophizing mood, had your heart or your reaſon been at home, you might have been convinced, by ocular demonſtration, that madneſs is only the abſence of reaſon.—The ruling angel leaving its ſeat, wild anarchy enſues. You would have ſeen that the uncontrouled imagination often purſues the moſt regular courſe in its moſt daring flight; and that the eccentricities are boldly relieved when judgment no longer officiouſly arranges the ſentiments, by bringing them to the teſt of principles. You would

have

have ſeen every thing out of nature in that ſtrange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all ſorts of follies jumbled together. You would have ſeen in that monſtrous tragi-comic ſcene the moſt oppoſite paſſions neceſſarily ſucceed, and ſometimes mix with each other in the mind; alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate ſcorn and horror[h] —This is a true picture of that chaotic ſtate of mind, called madneſs; when reaſon gone, we know not where, the wild elements of paſſion claſh, and all is horror and confuſion. You might have heard the beſt turned conceits, flaſh following flaſh, and doubted whether the rhapſody was not eloquent, if it had not been delivered in an equivocal language, neither verſe nor proſe, if the ſparkling periods had not ſtood alone,

[h] This quotation is not marked with inverted commas, becauſe it is not exact. P. 11.

wanting

wanting force becauſe they wanted concatenation.

It is a proverbial obſervation, that a very thin partition divides wit and madneſs. Poetry therefore naturally addreſſes the fancy, and the language of paſſion is with great felicity borrowed from the heightened picture which the imagination draws of ſenſible objects concentred by impaſſioned reflection. And, during this 'fine phrenſy,' reaſon has no right to rein-in the imagination, unleſs to prevent the introduction of ſupernumerary images; if the paſſion is real, the head will not be ranſacked for ſtale tropes and cold rodomontade. I now ſpeak of the genuine enthuſiaſm of genius, which, perhaps, ſeldom appears, but in the infancy of civilization; for as this light becomes more luminous reaſon clips the wing of fancy—the youth becomes a man.

Whether the glory of Europe is ſet, I ſhall not now enquire; but probably the ſpirit of romance

romance and chivalry is in the wane; and reaſon will gain by its extinction.

From obſerving ſeveral cold romantic characters I have been led to confine the term romantic to one definition—falſe, or rather artificial, feelings. Works of genius are read with a prepoſſeſſion in their favour, and ſentiments imitated, becauſe they were faſhionable and pretty, and not becauſe they were forcibly felt.

In modern poetry the underſtanding and memory often fabricate the pretended effuſions of the heart, and romance deſtroys all ſimplicity; which, in works of taſte, is but a ſynonymous word for truth. This romantic ſpirit has extended to our proſe, and ſcattered artificial flowers over the moſt barren heath; or a mixture of verſe and proſe producing the ſtrangeſt incongruities. The turgid bombaſt of ſome of your periods fully proves theſe aſſertions; for

when the heart ſpeaks we are ſeldom ſhocked by hyperbole, or dry raptures.

I ſpeak in this decided tone, becauſe from turning over the pages of your late publication, with more attention than I did when I firſt read it curſorily over; and comparing the ſentiments it contains with your conduct on many important occaſions, I am led very often to doubt your ſincerity, and to ſuppoſe that you have ſaid many things merely for the ſake of ſaying them well; or to throw ſome pointed obloquy on characters and opinions that joſtled with your vanity.

It is an arduous taſk to follow the doublings of cunning, or the ſubterfuges of inconſiſtency; for in controverſy, as in battle, the brave man wiſhes to face his enemy, and fight on the ſame ground. Knowing, however, the influence of a ruling paſſion, and how often it aſſumes the form of reaſon when there is much

much ſenſibility in the heart, I reſpect an opponent, though he tenaciouſly maintains opinions in which I cannot coincide; but, if I once diſcover that many of thoſe opinions are empty rhetorical flouriſhes, my reſpect is ſoon changed into that pity which borders on contempt; and the mock dignity and haughty ſtalk, only reminds me of the aſs in the lion's ſkin.

A ſentiment of this kind glanced acroſs my mind when I read the following exclamation. 'Whilſt the royal captives, who followed in 'the train, were ſlowly moved along, amidſt 'the horrid yells, and ſhrilling ſcreams, and 'frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, 'and all the unutterable abominations of the 'furies of hell, in the abuſed ſhape of the 'vileſt of women.' Probably you mean women who gained a livelihood by ſelling vegetables or fiſh, who never had had any advan-

[1] Page 106.

tages of education; or their vices might have loſt part of their abominable deformity, by loſing part of their groſſneſs. The queen of France—the great and ſmall vulgar, claim our pity; they have almoſt inſuperable obſtacles to ſurmount in their progreſs towards true dignity of character; ſtill I have ſuch a plain downright underſtanding that I do not like to make a diſtinction without a difference. But it is not very extraordinary that *you* ſhould, for throughout your letter you frequently advert to a ſentimental jargon, which has long been current in converſation, and even in books of morals, though it never received the *regal* ſtamp of reaſon. A kind of myſterious inſtinct is *ſuppoſed* to reſide in the ſoul, that inſtantaneouſly diſcerns truth, without the tedious labour of ratiocination. This inſtinct, for I know not what other name to give it, has been termed *common ſenſe*, and more frequently *ſenſibility*; and, by a kind of *indefeaſi-*

ble

ble right, it has been *ſuppoſed*, for rights of this kind are not eaſily proved, to reign paramount over the other faculties of the mind, and to be an authority from which there is no appeal.

This ſubtle magnetic fluid, that runs round the whole circle of ſociety, is not ſubject to any known rule, or, to uſe an obnoxious phraſe, in ſpite of the ſneers of mock humility, or the timid fears of ſome well-meaning Chriſtians, who ſhrink from any freedom of thought, leſt they ſhould rouſe the old ſerpent, to the *eternal fitneſs of things*. It dips, we know not why, granting it to be an infallible inſtinct, and, though ſuppoſed always to point to truth, its pole-ſtar, the point is always ſhifting, and ſeldom ſtands due north.

It is to this inſtinct, without doubt, that you allude, when you talk of the 'moral 'conſtitution of the heart.' To it, I allow, for I conſider it as a congregate of ſenſations

and paſſions, *Poets* muſt apply, 'who have to 'deal with an audience not yet graduated in 'the ſchool of the rights of men.' They muſt, it is clear, often cloud the underſtanding, whilſt they move the heart by a kind of mechanical ſpring; but that 'in the theatre the 'firſt intuitive glance' of feeling ſhould diſcriminate the form of truth, and ſee her fair proportion, I muſt beg leave to doubt. Sacred be the feelings of the heart! concentred in a glowing flame, they become the ſun of life; and, without his invigorating impregnation, reaſon would probably lie in helpleſs inactivity, and never bring forth her only legitimate offſpring—virtue. But to prove that virtue is really an acquiſition of the individual, and not the blind impulſe of unerring inſtinct, the baſtard vice has often been begotten by the ſame father.

In what reſpect are we ſuperior to the brute creation, if intellect is not allowed to be the guide

guide of paſſion? Brutes hope and fear, love and hate; but, without a capacity to improve, a power of turning theſe paſſions to good or evil, they neither acquire virtue nor wiſdom. —Why? Becauſe the Creator has not given them reaſon[k].

But the cultivation of reaſon is an arduous taſk, and men of lively fancy, finding it eaſier to follow the impulſe of paſſion, endeavour to perſuade themſelves and others that it is moſt *natural*. And happy is it for thoſe, who indolently let that heaven-lighted ſpark reſt like the ancient lamps in ſepulchres, that ſome virtuous habits, with which the reaſon of others ſhackled them, ſupplies its place.— Affection for parents, reverence for ſuperiors or antiquity, notions of honour, or that worldly

[k] I do not now mean to diſcuſs the intricate ſubject of their mortality; reaſon may, perhaps, be given to them in the next ſtage of exiſtence, if they are to mount in the ſcale of life, like men, by the medium of death.

ſelf-intereſt that ſhrewdly ſhews them that honeſty is the beſt policy: all proceed from the reaſon for which they ſerve as ſubſtitutes;—but it is reaſon at ſecond-hand.

Children are born ignorant, conſequently innocent; the paſſions, are neither good nor evil diſpoſitions, till they receive a direction, and either bound over the feeble barrier raiſed by a faint glimmering of unexerciſed reaſon, called conſcience, or ſtrengthen her wavering dictates till ſound principles are deeply rooted, and able to cope with the headſtrong paſſions that often aſſume her awful form. What moral purpoſe can be anſwered by extolling good diſpoſitions, as they are called, when theſe good diſpoſitions are deſcribed as inſtincts: for inſtinct moves in a direct line to its ultimate end, and aſks not for guide or ſupport. But if virtue is to be acquired by experience, or taught by example, reaſon, perfected by reflection, muſt be the director of the whole hoſt of paſſions,

paſſions, which produce a fructifying heat, but no light, that you would exalt into her place.—She muſt hold the rudder, or, let the wind blow which way it liſt, the veſſel will never advance ſmoothly to its deſtined port; for the time loſt in tacking about would dreadfully impede its progreſs.

In the name of the people of England, you ſay, 'that we know *we* have made no diſco-'veries; and we think that no diſcoveries are 'to be made in morality; nor many in the 'great principles of government, nor in the 'ideas of liberty, which were underſtood long 'before we were born, altogether as well as 'they will be after the grave has heaped its 'mould upon our preſumption, and the ſilent 'tomb ſhall have impoſed its law on our pert 'loquacity. In England we have not yet been 'completely emboweled of our natural en-'trails; we ſtill feel within us, and we cheriſh 'and cultivate thoſe inbred ſentiments which

'are the faithful guardians, the active moni-
'tors of our duty, the true ſupporters of all
'liberal and manly morals[1].'—What do you mean by inbred ſentiments? From whence do they come? How were they bred? Are they the brood of folly, which ſwarm like the inſects on the banks of the Nile, when mud and putrefaction have enriched the languid ſoil? Were theſe *inbred* ſentiments faithful guardians of our duty when the church was an aſylum for murderers, and men worſhipped bread as a God? when ſlavery was authorized by law to faſten her fangs on human fleſh, and the iron eat into the very ſoul? If theſe ſentiments are not acquired, if our paſſive diſpoſitions do not expand into virtuous affections and paſſions, why are not the Tartars in the firſt rude horde endued with ſentiments white and *elegant* as the driven ſnow? Why is paſſion or heroiſm the child of reflection, the

[1] Page 128.

conſequence

conſequence of dwelling with intent contemplation on one object? The appetites are the only perfect inbred powers that I can diſcern; and they like inſtincts have a certain aim, they can be ſatisfied—but improveable reaſon has not yet diſcovered the perfection it may arrive at—God forbid!

Firſt, however, it is neceſſary to make what we know practical. Who can deny, that has marked the ſlow progreſs of civilization, that men may become more virtuous and happy without any new diſcovery in morals? Who will venture to aſſert that virtue would not be promoted by the more extenſive cultivation of reaſon? If nothing more is to be done, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die—and die for ever! Who will pretend to ſay, that there is as much happineſs diffuſed on this globe as it is capable of affording? as many ſocial virtues as reaſon would foſter, if ſhe could gain the ſtrength ſhe is able to acquire

even

even in this imperfect ſtate; if the voice of nature was allowed to ſpeak audibly from the bottom of the heart, and the *native* unalienable rights of men were recognized in their full force; if factitious merit did not take place of genuine acquired virtue, and enable men to build their enjoyment on the miſery of their fellow creatures; if men were more under the dominion of reaſon than opinion, and did not cheriſh their prejudices 'becauſe they were 'prejudices[m]?' I am not, Sir, aware of your ſneers, hailing a millennium, though a ſtate of greater purity of morals may not be a mere poetic fiction; nor did my fancy ever create a heaven on earth, ſince reaſon threw off her ſwaddling clothes. I perceive, but too forcibly, that happineſs, literally ſpeaking, dwells not here;—and that we wander to and fro in a vale of darkneſs as well as tears. I perceive that my paſſions purſue objects that the ima-

[m] Page 129.

gination

gination enlarges, till they become only a ſublime idea that ſhrinks from the enquiry of ſenſe, and mocks the experimental philoſophers who would confine this ſpiritual phlogiſton in their material crucibles. I know that the human underſtanding is deluded with vain ſhadows, and that when we eagerly purſue any ſtudy, we only reach the boundary ſet to human enquires.—Thus far ſhalt thou go, and no further, ſays ſome ſtern difficulty; and the *cauſe* we were purſuing melts into utter darkneſs. But theſe are only the trials of contemplative minds, the foundation of virtue remains firm.—The power of exerciſing our underſtanding raiſes us above the brutes; and this exerciſe produces that 'primary morality,' which you term 'untaught feelings.'

If virtue be an inſtinſt, I renounce all hope of immortality; and with it all the ſublime reveries and dignified ſentiments that have ſmoothed the rugged path of life: it is all a cheat,

cheat, a lying viſion; I have diſquieted myſelf in vain; for in my eye all feelings are falſe and ſpurious, that do not reſt on juſtice as their foundation, and are not concentred by univerſal love.

I reverence the rights of men.—Sacred rights! for which I acquire a more profound reſpect, the more I look into my own mind; and, profeſſing theſe heterodox opinions, I ſtill preſerve my bowels; my heart is human, beats quick with human ſympathies—and I FEAR God!

I bend with awful reverence when I enquire on what my fear is built.—I fear that ſublime power, whoſe motive for creating me muſt have been wiſe and good; and I ſubmit to the moral laws which my reaſon deduces from this view of my dependence on him.—It is not his power that I fear—it is not to an arbitrary will, but to unerring *reaſon* I ſubmit.—Submit—yes; I diſregard the charge of

arrogance,

arrogance, to the law that regulates his juſt reſolves; and the happineſs I pant after muſt be the ſame in kind, and produced by the ſame exertions as his—though unfeigned humility overwhelms every idea that would preſume to compare the goodneſs which the moſt exalted created being could acquire, with the grand ſource of life and bliſs.

This fear of God makes me reverence myſelf.—Yes, Sir, the regard I have for honeſt fame, and the friendſhip of the virtuous, falls far ſhort of the reſpect which I have for myſelf. And this, enlightened ſelf-love, if an epithet the meaning of which has been groſsly perverted will convey my idea, forces me to ſee; and, if I may venture to borrow a proſtituted term, to *feel*, that happineſs is reflected, and that, in communicating good, my ſoul receives its noble aliment.—I do not trouble myſelf, therefore, to enquire whether this is the fear the *people* of England feel:—

and,

and, if it be *natural* to include all the modifications which you have annexed—it is not [n].

Beſides, I cannot help ſuſpecting that, if you had the *enlightened* reſpect for yourſelf, which you affect to deſpiſe, you would not have ſaid that the conſtitution of our church and ſtate, formed, like moſt other modern ones, by degrees, as Europe was emerging out of barbariſm, was formed 'under the auſpices, and 'was confirmed by the ſanctions, of religion 'and piety.' You have turned over the hiſtoric page; have been hackneyed in the ways of men, and muſt know that private cabals and public feuds, private virtues and vices, religion and ſuperſtition, have all concurred to foment the maſs and ſwell it to its preſent form; nay more, that it in part owes

[n] *Vide* Reflections, p. 128. "We fear God; we look up with *awe* to kings; with *affection* to parliaments; with *duty* to magiſtrates; with *reverence* to prieſts; and with *reſpect* to nobility."

its

its ſightly appearance to bold rebellion and inſidious innovation. Factions, Sir, have been the leaven, and private intereſt has produced public good.

Theſe general reflections are not thrown out to inſinuate that virtue was a creature of yeſterday: No; ſhe had her ſhare in the grand drama. I guard againſt miſrepreſentation; but the man who cannot modify general aſſertions, has ſcarcely learned the firſt rudiments of reaſoning. I know that there is a great portion of virtue in the Romiſh church, yet I ſhould not chooſe to neglect clothing myſelf with a garment of my own righteouſneſs, depending on a kind donative of works of ſupererogation. I know that there are many clergymen, of all denominations, wiſe and virtuous; yet I have not that reſpect for the whole body, which, you ſay, characterizes our nation, 'emanating from a certain 'plainneſs and directneſs of underſtanding.'—

Now we are ſtumbling on *inbred* feelings and ſecret lights again—or, I beg your pardon, it may be the furbiſhed up face which you chooſe to give to the argument.

It is a well-known fact, that when *we*, the people of England, have a ſon whom we ſcarcely know what to do with—*we* make a clergyman of him. When a living is in the gift of a family, a ſon is brought up to the church; but not always with hopes full of immortality. 'Such ſublime principles are *not* '*conſtantly* infuſed into perſons of exalted 'birth;' they ſometimes think of 'the pal-'try pelf of the moment'*—and the vulgar care of preaching the goſpel, or practiſing ſelf-denial, is left to the poor curates, who, arguing on your ground, cannot have, from the ſcanty ſtipend they receive, 'very high and 'worthy notions of their function and deſtina-'tion.' This conſecration *for ever*; a word,

* Page 137.

that

that from lips of fleſh is big with a mighty nothing, has not purged the *ſacred temple* from all the impurities of fraud, violence, injuſtice, and tyranny. Human paſſions ſtill lurk in her *ſanctum ſanctorum*; and, without the profane exertions of reaſon, vain would be her ceremonial ablutions; morality would ſtill ſtand aloof from this national religion, this ideal conſecration of a ſtate; and men would rather chooſe to give the goods of their body, when on their death beds, to clear the narrow way to heaven, than reſtrain the mad career of paſſions during life.

Such a curious paragraph occurs in this part of your letter, that I am tempted to tranſcribe it[p], and muſt beg you to elucidate it, if I miſconceive your meaning.

The

[p] 'When the people have emptied themſelves of all the 'luſt of ſelfiſh will, which without religion it is utterly 'impoſſible they ever ſhould; when they are conſcious that 'they exerciſe, and exerciſe perhaps in an higher link of the

The only way in which the people interfere in government, religious or civil, is in electing repreſentatives. And, Sir, let me aſk you, with manly plainneſs—are theſe *holy* nominations? Where is the booth of religion? Does ſhe mix her awful mandates, or lift her perſuaſive voice, in thoſe ſcenes of drunken riot and beaſtly gluttony? Does ſhe preſide over thoſe nocturnal abominations which ſo

'order of delegation, the power, which to be legitimate muſt 'be according to that eternal immutable law, in which will 'and reaſon are the ſame, they will be more careful how 'they place power in baſe and incapable hands. In their 'nomination to office, they will not appoint to the exerciſe 'of authority as to a pitiful job, but as to an holy func-'tion; not according to their ſordid ſelfiſh intereſt, nor to 'their wanton caprice, nor to their arbitrary will; but 'they will confer that power (which any man may well 'tremble to give or to receive) on thoſe only, in whom they 'may diſcern that predominant proportion of active virtue 'and wiſdom, taken together and fitted to the charge, 'ſuch, as in the great and inevitable mixed maſs of hu-'man imperfections and infirmities, is to be found.' P. 140.

evidently

evidently tend to deprave the manners of the lower claſs of people? The peſtilence ſtops not here—the rich and poor have one common nature, and many of the great families, which, on this ſide adoration, you venerate, date their miſery, I ſpeak of ſtubborn matters of fact, from the thoughtleſs extravagance of an electioneering frolic.—Yet, after the effervescence of ſpirits, raiſed by oppoſition, and all the little and tyrannic arts of canvaſſing are over—quiet ſouls! they only intend to march rank and file to ſay YES—or NO.

Experience, I believe, will ſhew that ſordid intereſt, or licentious thoughtleſſneſs, is the ſpring of action at moſt elections.—Again, I beg you not to loſe ſight of my modification of general rules. So far are the people from being habitually convinced of the ſanctity of the charge they are conferring, that the venality of their votes muſt admoniſh them that they have no right to expect diſintereſted con-

duct. But to return to the church, and the habitual conviction of the people of England.

So far are the people from being 'habitually 'convinced that no evil can be acceptable, ei-'ther in the act or the permiſſion, to him whoſe 'eſſence is good[q];' that the ſermons which they hear are to them almoſt as unintelligible as if they were preached in a foreign tongue. The language and ſentiments riſing above their capacities, very orthodox Chriſtians are driven to fanatical meetings for amuſement, if not for edification. The clergy, I ſpeak of the body, not forgetting the reſpect and affection which I have for individuals, perform the duty of their profeſſion as a kind of fee-ſimple, to entitle them to the emoluments accruing from it; and their ignorant flock think that merely going to church is meritorious.

So defective, in fact, are our laws, reſpecting religious eſtabliſhments, that I have heard

[q] Page 140.

many

many rational pious clergymen complain, that they had no method of receiving their ſtipend that did not clog their endeavours to be uſeful; whilſt the lives of many leſs conſcientious rectors are paſſed in litigious diſputes with the people they engaged to inſtruct; or in diſtant cities, in all the eaſe of luxurious idleneſs.

But you return to your old firm ground. —*Art thou there, True-penny?* Muſt we ſwear to ſecure property, and make aſſurance doubly ſure, to give your perturbed ſpirit reſt? Peace, peace to the manes of thy patriotic phrenſy, which contributed to deprive ſome of thy fellow-citizens of their property in America: another ſpirit now walks abroad to ſecure the property of the church.—The tithes are ſafe!—We will not ſay for ever—becauſe the time may come, when the traveller may aſk where proud London ſtood? when its *temples*, its laws, and its trade, may be buried in one common ruin, and only

ſerve as a by-word to point a moral, or furniſh ſenators, who wage a wordy war, on the other ſide of the Atlantic, with tropes to ſwell their thundering burſts of eloquence.

Who ſhall dare to accuſe you of inconſiſtency any more, when you have ſo ſtaunchly ſupported the deſpotic principles which agree ſo perfectly with the unerring intereſt of a large body of your fellow-citizens; not the largeſt—for when you venerate parliaments—I preſume it is not the majority, as you have had the preſumption to diſſent, and loudly explain your reaſons.—But it was not my intention, when I began this letter, to deſcend to the minutiæ of your conduct, or to weigh your infirmities in a balance; it is only ſome of your pernicious opinions that I wiſh to hunt out of their lurking holes; and to ſhew you to yourſelf, ſtripped of the gorgeous drapery in which you have enwrapped your tyrannic principles.

That

That the people of England reſpect the national eſtabliſhment I do not deny; I recollect the melancholy proof which they gave, in this very century, of their *enlightened* zeal and reaſonable affection. I likewiſe know that, according to the dictates of a *prudent* law, in a commercial ſtate, truth is reckoned a libel; yet I acknowledge, having never made my humanity give place to Gothic gallantry, that I ſhould have been better pleaſed to have heard that Lord George Gordon was confined on account of the calamities which he brought on his country, than for a *libel* on the queen of France.

But one argument which you adduce to ſtrengthen your aſſertion, appears to carry the preponderancy towards the other ſide.

You obſerve that 'our education is ſo formed 'as to confirm and fix this impreſſion, (reſpect 'for the religious eſtabliſhment); and that our 'education is in a manner wholly in the hands

'of

'of eccleſiaſtics, and in all ſtages from in-'fancy to manhood[1].' Far from agreeing with you, Sir, that theſe regulations render the clergy a more uſeful and reſpectable body, experience convinces me that the very contrary is the fact. In ſchools and colleges they may, in ſome degree, ſupport their dignity within the monaſtic walls; but, in paying due reſpect to the parents of the young nobility under their tutorage, they do not forget, obſequiouſly, to reſpect their noble patrons. The little reſpect paid, in great houſes, to tutors and chaplains proves, Sir, the fallacy of your reaſoning. It would be almoſt invidious to remark, that they ſometimes are only modern ſubſtitutes for the jeſters of Gothic memory, and ſerve as whetſtones for the blunt wit of the noble peer who patronizes them; and what reſpect a boy can imbibe for a *butt*, at which the ſhaft of ridicule is daily glanced, I leave

[1] Page 148.

thoſe

thoſe to determine who can diſtinguiſh depravity of morals under the ſpecious maſk of refined manners.

Beſides, the cuſtom of ſending clergymen to travel with their noble pupils, as humble companions, inſtead of exalting, tends inevitably to degrade the clerical character: it is notorious that they meanly ſubmit to the moſt ſervile dependence, and gloſs over the moſt capricious follies, to uſe a ſoft phraſe, of the boys to whom they look up for preferment. An airy mitre dances before them, and they wrap their ſheep's clothing more cloſely about them, and make their ſpirits bend till it is prudent to claim the rights of men and the honeſt freedom of ſpeech of an Engliſhman. How, indeed, could they venture to reprove for his vices their patron: the clergy only give the true feudal emphaſis to this word. It has been obſerved, by men who have not ſuperficially inveſtigated the human heart, that

when

when a man makes his ſpirit bend to any power but reaſon, his character is ſoon degraded, and his mind ſhackled by the very prejudies to which he ſubmits with reluctance. The obſervations of experience have been carried ſtill further; and the ſervility to ſuperiors, and tyranny to inferiors, ſaid to characterize our clergy, have rationally been ſuppoſed to ariſe naturally from their aſſociating with the nobility. Among unequals there can be no ſociety;—giving a manly meaning to the term; from ſuch intimacies friendſhip can never grow; if the baſis of friendſhip is mutual reſpect, and not a commercial treaty. Taken thus out of their ſphere, and enjoying their tithes at a diſtance from their flocks, is it not natural for them to become courtly paraſites, and intriguing dependents on great patrons, or the treaſury? Obſerving all this—for theſe things have not been tranſacted in the dark—our young men of faſhion, by a common, though

erroneous, aſſociation of ideas, have conceived a contempt for religion, as they ſucked in with their milk a contempt for the clergy.

The people of England, Sir, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, I will not go any further back to inſult the aſhes of departed popery, did not ſettle the eſtabliſhment, and endow it with princely revenues, to make it proudly rear its head, as a part of the conſtitutional body, to guard the liberties of the community; but, like ſome of the laborious commentators on Shakeſpeare, you have affixed a meaning to laws that chance, or, to ſpeak more philoſophically, the intereſted views of men, ſettled, not dreaming of your ingenious elucidations.

What, but the rapacity of the only men who exerciſed their reaſon, the prieſts, ſecured ſuch vaſt property to the church, when a man gave his periſhable ſubſtance to ſave himſelf from the dark torments of purgatory; and

found

found it more convenient to indulge his depraved appetites, and pay an exorbitant price for abſolution, than liſten to the ſuggeſtions of reaſon, and work out his own ſalvation: in a word, was not the ſeparation of religion from morality the work of the prieſts, and partly achieved in thoſe *honourable* days which you ſo piouſly deplore?

That civilization, that the cultivation of the underſtanding, and refinement of the affections, naturally make a man religious, I am proud to acknowledge.—What elſe can fill the aching void in the heart, that human pleaſures, human friendſhips can never fill? What elſe can render us reſigned to live, though condemned to ignorance?—What but a profound reverence for the model of all perfection, and the myſterious tie which ariſes from a love of goodneſs? What can make us reverence ourſelves, but a reverence for that Being, of whom we are a faint image? That

mighty

mighty Spirit moves on the waters—confuſion hears his voice, and the troubled heart ceaſes to beat with anguiſh, for truſt in Him bade it be ſtill. Conſcious dignity may make us riſe ſuperior to calumny, and ſternly brave the winds of adverſe fortune,—raiſed in our own eſteem by the very ſtorms of which we are the ſport—but when friends are unkind, and the heart has not the prop on which it fondly leaned, where can a tender ſuffering being fly but to the Searcher of hearts? and, when death has deſolated the preſent ſcene, and torn from us the friend of our youth—when we walk along the accuſtomed path, and, almoſt fancying nature dead, aſk, Where art thou who gave life to theſe well-known ſcenes? when memory heightens former pleaſures to contraſt our preſent proſpects—there is but one ſource of comfort within our reach;—and in this ſublime ſolitude the world appears to contain only the Creator

Creator and the creature, of whoſe happineſs he is the ſource.—Theſe are human feelings; but I know not of any common nature or common relation amongſt men but what reſults from reaſon. The common affections and paſſions equally bind brutes together; and it is only the continuity of thoſe relations that entitles us to the denomination of rational creatures; and this continuity ariſes from reflection —from the operations of that reaſon which you contemn with flippant diſreſpect.

If then it appears, arguing from analogy, that reflection muſt be the natural foundation of *rational* affections, and of that experience which enables one man to riſe above another, a phenomenon that has never been ſeen in the brute creation, it may not be ſtretching the argument further than it will go to ſuppoſe, that thoſe men who are obliged to exerciſe their reaſon have the moſt reaſon, and are the

the perſons pointed out by Nature to direct the ſociety of which they make a part, on any extraordinary emergency.

Time only will ſhew whether the general cenſure, which you afterwards qualify, if not contradict, and the unmerited contempt that you have oſtentatiouſly diſplayed of the National Aſſembly, be founded on reaſon, the off-ſpring of conviction, or the ſpawn of envy. Time may ſhew, that this obſcure throng knew more of the human heart and of legiſlation than the profligates of rank, emaſculated by hereditary effeminacy.

It is not, perhaps, of very great conſequence who were the founders of a ſtate; ſavages, thieves, curates, or practitioners in the law. It is true, you might ſarcaſtically remark, that the Romans had always a *ſmack* of the old leaven, and that the private robbers, ſuppoſing the tradition to be true, only became

public depredators. You might have added, that their civilization muſt have been very partial, and had more influence on the manners than morals of the people; or the amuſements of the amphitheatre would not have remained an everlaſting blot not only on their humanity, but on their refinement, if a vicious elegance of behaviour and luxurious mode of life is not a proſtitution of the term. However, the thundering cenſures which you have caſt with a ponderous arm, and the more playful buſhfiring of ridicule, are not arguments that will ever depreciate the National Aſſembly, for applying to their underſtanding rather than to their imagination, when they met to ſettle the newly acquired liberty of the ſtate on a ſolid foundation.

If you had given the ſame advice to a young hiſtory painter of abilities, I ſhould have admired your judgment, and re-echoed your ſentiments.

timents[a]. Study, you might have ſaid, the noble models of antiquity, till your imagination is inflamed; and, riſing above the vulgar practice of the hour, you may imitate without copying thoſe great originals. A glowing picture, of ſome intereſting moment, would probably have been produced by theſe natural means; particularly if one little circumſtance is not overlooked, that the painter had noble models to revert to, calculated to excite admiration and ſtimulate exertion.

But, in ſettling a conſtitution that involved the happineſs of millions, that ſtretch beyond the computation of ſcience, it was, perhaps,

[a] Page 51. 'If the laſt generations of your country appeared without much luſtre in your eyes, you might have paſſed them by, and derived your claims from a more early race of anceſtors. Under a pious predilection to thoſe anceſtors, your imaginations would have realized in them a ſtandard of virtue and wiſdom, beyond the vulgar practice of the hour: and you would have riſen with the example to whoſe imitation you aſpired. Reſpecting your forefathers, you would have been taught to reſpect yourſelves.'

neceſſary for the Aſſembly to have a higher model in view than the *imagined* virtues of their foreſathers; and wiſe to deduce their reſpect for themſelves from the only legitimate ſource, reſpect for juſtice. Why was it a duty to repair an ancient caſtle, built in barbarous ages, of Gothic materials? Why were the legiſlators obliged to rake amongſt heterogeneous ruins; to rebuild old walls, whoſe foundations could ſcarcely be explored, when a ſimple ſtructure might be raiſed on the foundation of experience, the only valuable inheritance our forefathers could bequeath? Yet of this bequeſt we can make little uſe till we have gained a ſtock of our own; and even then, their inherited experience would rather ſerve as light-houſes, to warn us againſt dangerous rocks or ſand-banks, than as finger-poſts that ſtand at every turning to point out the right road.

Nor was it abſolutely neceſſary that they ſhould be diffident of themſelves when they

were diſſatisfied with, or could not diſcern the *almoſt obliterated* conſtitution of their anceſtors[1]. They ſhould firſt have been convinced that our conſtitution was not only the beſt modern, but the beſt poſſible one; and that our ſocial compact was the ſureſt foundation of all the *poſſible* liberty a maſs of men could enjoy, that the human underſtanding could form. They ſhould have been certain that our repreſentation anſwered all the purpoſes of repreſentation; and that an eſtabliſhed inequality of rank and property ſecured the liberty of the whole community, inſtead of rendering it a ſounding epithet of ſubjection, when applied to the nation at large. They

[1] Page 53. 'If diffident of yourſelves, and not clearly 'diſcerning the almoſt obliterated conſtitution of your an- 'ceſtors, you had looked to your neighbours in this land, 'who had kept alive the ancient principles and models of 'the old common law of Europe meliorated and adapted 'to its preſent ſtate—by following wiſe examples you would 'have given new examples of wiſdom to the world.'

ſhould have had the ſame reſpect for our Houſe of Commons that you, vauntingly, intrude on us, though your conduct throughout life has ſpoken a very different language; before they made a point of not deviating from the model which firſt engaged their attention.

That the Britiſh Houſe of Commons is filled with every thing illuſtrious in rank, in deſcent, in hereditary, and acquired opulence, may be true,—but that it contains every thing reſpectable in talents, in military, civil, naval, and political diſtinction, is very problematical. Arguing from natural cauſes, the very contrary would appear to the ſpeculatiſt to be the fact; and let experience ſay whether theſe ſpeculations are built on ſure ground.

It is true you lay great ſtreſs on the effects produced by the bare idea of a liberal deſcent[u]; but

[u] Page 49. 'Always acting as if in the preſence of 'canonized forefathers, the ſpirit of freedom, leading in 'itſelf

but from the conduct of men of rank, men of diſcernment would rather be led to conclude, that this idea obliterated inſtead of inſpiring native dignity, and ſubſtituted a factitious pride that diſemboweled the man. The liberty of the rich has its enſigns armorial to puff the individual out with inſubſtantial honours; but where are blazoned the ſtruggles of virtuous poverty? Who, indeed, would dare to blazon what would blur the pompous monumental inſcription you boaſt of, and make us view with horror, as monſters in human ſhape, the ſuperb gallery of portraits proudly ſet in battle array?

But to examine the ſubject more cloſely. Is it among the liſt of poſſibilities that a man

'itſelf to miſrule and exceſs, is tempered with an awful 'gravity. This idea of a liberal deſcent inſpires us with 'a ſenſe of habitual native dignity, which prevents that 'upſtart inſolence almoſt inevitably adhering to and diſ-'gracing thoſe who are the firſt acquirers of any diſtinc-'tion!'

of rank and fortune *can* have received a good education? How can he diſcover that he is a man, when all his wants are inſtantly ſupplied, and invention is never ſharpened by neceſſity? Will he labour, for every thing valuable muſt be the fruit of laborious exertions, to attain knowledge and virtue, in order to merit the affection of his equals, when the flattering attention of ſycophants is a more luſcious cordial?

Health can only be ſecured by temperance; but is it eaſy to perſuade a man to live on plain food even to recover his health, who has been accuſtomed to fare ſumptuouſly every day? Can a man reliſh the ſimple food of friendſhip, who has been habitually pampered by flattery? And when the blood boils, and the ſenſes meet allurements on every ſide, will knowledge be purſued on account of its abſtract beauty? No; it is well known that talents are only to be unfolded by induſtry, and

that

that we muſt have made ſome advances, led by an inferior motive, before we diſcover that they are their own reward.

But *full blown* talents *may*, according to your ſyſtem, be hereditary, and as independent of ripening judgment, as the inbred feelings that, riſing above reaſon, naturally guard Engliſhmen from error. Noble franchiſes! what a grovelling mind muſt that man have, who can pardon his ſtep-dame Nature for not having made him at leaſt a lord?

And who will, after your deſcription of ſenatorial virtues, dare to ſay that our Houſe of Commons has often reſembled a bear-garden; and appeared rather like a committee of *ways and means* than a dignified legiſlative body, though the concentrated wiſdom and virtue of the whole nation blazed in one ſuperb conſtellation? That it contains a dead weight of benumbing opulence I readily allow, and of ignoble ambition; nor is there any thing ſurpaſſing

paſſing belief in a ſuppoſition that the raw recruits, when properly drilled by the miniſter, would gladly march to the Upper Houſe to unite hereditary honours to fortune. But talents, knowledge, and virtue, muſt be a part of the man, and cannot be put, as robes of ſtate often are, on a ſervant or a block, to render a pageant more magnificent.

Our Houſe of Commons, it is true, has been celebrated as a ſchool of eloquence, a hot-bed for wit, even when party intrigues narrow the underſtanding and contract the heart; yet, from the few proficients it has accompliſhed, this inferior praiſe is not of great magnitude: nor of great conſequence, Mr. Locke would have added, who was ever of opinion that eloquence was oftener employed to make 'the worſe appear the better 'part,' than to ſupport the dictates of cool judgment. However, the greater number who have gained a ſeat by their fortune and here-

ditary

ditary rank, are content with their pre-eminence, and ſtruggle not for more hazardous honours. But you are an exception; you have raiſed yourſelf by the exertion of abilities, and thrown the automatons of rank into the back ground. Your exertions have been a generous conteſt for ſecondary honours, or a grateful tribute of reſpect due to the noble aſhes that lent a hand to raiſe you into notice, by introducing you into the houſe of which you have ever been an ornament, if not a ſupport. But, unfortunately, you have lately loſt a great part of your popularity: members were tired of liſtening to declamation, or had not ſufficient taſte to be amuſed when you ingeniouſly wandered from the queſtion, and ſaid certainly many good things, if they were not to the preſent purpoſe. You were the Cicero of one ſide of the houſe for years; and then to ſink into oblivion, to ſee your blooming honours fade before you, was enough to rouſe

all that was human in you — and make you produce the impaſſioned *Reflections* which have been a glorious revivification of your fame. — Richard is himſelf again! He is ſtill a great man, though he has deſerted his poſt, and buried in elogiums, on church eſtabliſhments, the enthuſiaſm that forced him to throw the weight of his talents on the ſide of liberty and natural rights, when the *will*[x] of the nation oppreſſed the Americans.

There appears to be ſuch a mixture of real ſenſibility and fondly cheriſhed romance in your compoſition, that the preſent criſis carries you out of yourſelf; and ſince you could not be one of the grand movers, the next *beſt* thing that dazzled your imagination was to be a conſpicuous oppoſer. Full of yourſelf, you make as much noiſe to convince the world

[x] Page 6. 'Being a citizen of a particular ſtate, and 'bound up in a conſiderable degree, by its *public will*,' &c.

that

that you deſpiſe the revolution, as Rouſſeau did to perſuade his contemporaries to let him live in obſcurity.

Reading your Reflections warily over, it has continually and forcibly ſtruck me, that had you been a Frenchman, you would have been, in ſpite of your reſpect for rank and antiquity, a violent revolutioniſt; and deceived, as you now probably are, by the paſſions that cloud your reaſon, have termed your romantic enthuſiaſm an enlightened love of your country, a benevolent reſpect for the rights of men. Your imagination would have taken fire, and have found arguments, full as ingenious as thoſe you now offer, to prove that the conſtitution, of which ſo few pillars remained, that conſtitution which time had almoſt obliterated, was not a model ſufficiently noble to deſerve cloſe adherence. And, for the Engliſh conſtitution, you might not have had ſuch a profound veneration as you have lately acquired; nay, it

is

is not impoſſible that you might have entertained the ſame opinion of the Engliſh Parliament, that you profeſſed to have during the American war.

Another obſervation which, by frequently occurring, has almoſt grown into a conviction, is ſimply this, that had the Engliſh in general reprobated the French revolution, you would have ſtood forth alone, and been the avowed Goliah of liberty. But, not liking to ſee ſo many brothers near the throne of fame, you have turned the current of your paſſions, and conſequently of your reaſoning, another way. Had Dr. Price's ſermon not lighted ſome ſparks very like envy in your boſom, I ſhrewdly ſuſpect that he would have been treated with more candour; nor is it charitable to ſuppoſe that any thing but perſonal pique and hurt vanity could have dictated ſuch bitter ſarcaſms and reiterated expreſſions of contempt as occur in your Reflections.

But

But without fixed principles even goodneſs of heart is no ſecurity from inconſiſtency, and mild affectionate ſenſibility only renders a man more ingeniouſly cruel, when the pangs of hurt vanity are miſtaken for virtuous indignation, and the gall of bitterneſs for the milk of Chriſtian charity.

Where is the dignity, the infallibility of ſenſibility, in the fair ladies, whom, if the voice of rumour is to be credited, the captive negroes curſe in all the agony of bodily pain, for the unheard of tortures they invent? It is probable that ſome of them, after the ſight of a flagellation, compoſe their ruffled ſpirits and exerciſe their tender feelings by the peruſal of the laſt imported novel.—How true theſe tears are to nature, I leave you to determine. But theſe ladies may have read your Enquiry concerning the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, and, convinced by your arguments,

may

may have laboured to be pretty, by counterfeiting weakneſs.

You may have convinced them that *littleneſs* and *weakneſs* are the very eſſence of beauty; and that the Supreme Being, in giving women beauty in the moſt ſupereminent degree, ſeemed to command them, by the powerful voice of Nature, not to cultivate the moral virtues that might chance to excite reſpect, and interfere with the pleaſing ſenſations they were created to inſpire. Thus confining truth, fortitude, and humanity, within the rigid pale of manly morals, they might juſtly argue, that to be loved, woman's high end and great diſtinction! they ſhould 'learn to 'liſp, to totter in their walk, and nick-name 'God's creatures.' Never, they might repeat after you, was any man, much leſs a woman, rendered amiable by the force of thoſe exalted qualities, fortitude, juſtice, wiſdom,

and

and truth; and thus forewarned of the ſacrifice they muſt make to thoſe auſtere, unnatural virtues, they would be authorized to turn all their attention to their perſons, ſyſtematically neglecting morals to ſecure beauty.—Some rational old woman indeed might chance to ſtumble at this doctrine, and hint, that in avoiding atheiſm you had not ſteered clear of the muſſulman's creed; but you could readily exculpate yourſelf by turning the charge on Nature, who made our idea of beauty independent of reaſon. Nor would it be neceſſary for you to recollect, that if virtue has any other foundation than worldly utility, you have clearly proved that one half of the human ſpecies, at leaſt, have not ſouls; and that Nature, by making women *little, ſmooth, delicate, fair* creatures, never deſigned that they ſhould exerciſe their reaſon to acquire the virtues that produce oppoſite, if not contradictory, feel-

ings. The affection they excite, to be uniform and perfect, ſhould not be tinctured with the reſpect which moral virtues inſpire, leſt pain ſhould be blended with pleaſure, and admiration diſturb the ſoft intimacy of love. This laxity of morals in the female world is certainly more captivating to a libertine imagination than the cold arguments of reaſon, that give no ſex to virtue. If beautiful weakneſs be interwoven in a woman's frame, if the chief buſineſs of her life be (as you inſinuate) to inſpire love, and Nature has made an eternal diſtinction between the quaities that dignify a rational being and this animal perfection, her duty and happineſs in this life muſt claſh with any preparation for a more exalted ſtate. So that Plato and Milton were groſsly miſtaken in aſſerting that human love led to heavenly, and was only an exaltation of the ſame affection; for the love of the Deity,

which

which is mixed with the moſt profound reverence, muſt be love of perfection, and not compaſſion for weakneſs.

To ſay the truth, I not only tremble for the ſouls of women, but for the good natured man, whom every one loves. The *amiable* weakneſs of his mind is a ſtrong argument againſt its immateriality, and ſeems to prove that beauty relaxes the *ſolids* of the ſoul as well as the body.

It follows then immediately, from your own reaſoning, that reſpect and love are antagoniſt principles; and that, if we really wiſh to render men more virtuous, we muſt endeavour to baniſh all enervating modifications of beauty from civil ſociety. We muſt, to carry your argument a little further, return to the Spartan regulations, and ſettle the virtues of men on the ſtern foundation of mortification and ſelf-denial; for any attempt to civilize the heart, to make it humane by im-

planting reaſonable principles, is a mere philoſophic dream. If refinement inevitably leſſens reſpect for virtue, by rendering beauty, the grand tempter, more ſeductive; if theſe relaxing feelings are incompatible with the nervous exertions of morality, the ſun of Europe is not ſet; it begins to dawn, when cold metaphyſicians try to make the head give laws to the heart.

But ſhould experience prove that there is a beauty in virtue, a charm in order, which neceſſarily implies exertion, a depraved ſenſual taſte may give way to a more manly one —and *melting* feelings to rational ſatisfactions. Both may be equally natural to man; the teſt is their moral difference, and that point reaſon alone can decide.

Such a glorious change can only be produced by liberty. Inequality of rank muſt ever impede the growth of virtue, by vitiating the mind that ſubmits or domineers; that

is ever employed to procure nouriſhment for the body, or amuſement for the mind. And if this grand example be ſet by an aſſembly of unlettered clowns, if they can produce a criſis that may involve the fate of Europe, and 'more than Europe[y],' you muſt allow us to reſpect unſophiſticated reaſon, and reverence the active exertions that were not relaxed by a faſtidious reſpect for the beauty of rank, or a dread of the deformity produced by any *void* in the ſocial ſtructure.

After your contemptuous manner of ſpeaking of the National Aſſembly, after deſcanting on the coarſe vulgarity of their proceedings, which, according to your own definition of virtue, is a proof of its genuineneſs; was it not a little inconſiſtent, not to ſay ab-

[y] Page 11. 'It looks to me as if I were in a great criſis, 'not of the affairs of France alone but of all Europe, per-'haps of more than Europe. All circumſtances taken 'together, the French revolution is the moſt aſtoniſhing 'that has hitherto happened in the world.'

ſurd, to aſſert, that a dozen people of quality were not a ſufficient counterpoiſe to the vulgar mob with whom they condeſcended to aſſociate? Have we half a dozen leaders of eminence in our Houſe of Commons, or even in the faſhionable world? yet the ſheep obſequiouſly purſue their ſteps with all the undeviating ſagacity of inſtinct.

In order that liberty ſhould have a firm foundation, an acquaintance with the world would naturally lead cool men to conclude that it muſt be laid, knowing the weakneſs of the human heart, and the 'deceitfulneſs of 'riches,' either by *poor* men, or philoſophers, if a ſufficient number of men, diſintereſted from principle, or truly wiſe, could be found. Was it natural to expect that ſenſual prejudices ſhould give way to reaſon, or preſent feelings to enlarged views?—No; I am afraid that human nature is ſtill in ſuch a weak ſtate, that the abolition of titles, the corner-ſtone of

deſpotiſm, could only have been the work of men who had no titles to ſacrifice. The National Aſſembly, it is true, contains ſome honourable exceptions; but the majority had not ſuch powerful feelings to ſtruggle with, when reaſon led them to reſpect the naked dignity of virtue.

Weak minds are always timid. And what can equal the weakneſs of mind produced by ſervile flattery, and the vapid pleaſures that neither hope nor fear ſeaſoned? Had the conſtitution of France been new modelled, or more cautiouſly repaired, by the lovers of elegance and beauty, it is natural to ſuppoſe that the imagination would have erected a fragile temporary building; or the power of one tyrant, divided amongſt a hundred, might have rendered the ſtruggle for liberty only a choice of maſters. And the glorious *chance* that is now given to human nature of attaining more virtue and happineſs than has hitherto bleſſed

our globe, might have been ſacrificed to a meteor of the imagination, a bubble of paſſion. The eccleſiaſtics, indeed, would probably have remained in quiet poſſeſſion of their ſinecures; and your gall might not have been mixed with your ink on account of the daring ſacrilege that brought them more on a level. The nobles would have had bowels for their younger ſons, if not for the miſery of their fellow-creatures. An auguſt maſs of property would have been tranſmitted to poſterity to guard the temple of ſuperſtition, and prevent reaſon from entering with her officious light. And the pomp of religion would have continued to impreſs the ſenſes, if ſhe were unable to ſubjugate the paſſions.

Is hereditary weakneſs neceſſary to render religion lovely? and will her form have loſt the ſmooth delicacy that inſpires love, when ſtripped of its Gothic drapery? Muſt every grand model be placed on the pedeſtal of property?

perty? and is there no beauteous proportion in virtue, when not clothed in a ſenſual garb?

Of theſe queſtions there would be no end, though they lead to the ſame concluſion;—that your politics and morals, when ſimplified, would undermine religion and virtue to ſet up a ſpurious, ſenſual beauty, that has long debauched your imagination, under the ſpecious form of natural feelings.

And what is this mighty revolution in property? The preſent incumbents only are injured, or the hierarchy of the clergy, an ideal part of the conſtitution, which you have perſonified, to render your affection more tender. How has poſterity been injured by a diſtribution of the property ſnatched, perhaps, from innocent hands, but accumulated by the moſt abominable violation of every ſentiment of juſtice and piety? Was the monument of former ignorance and iniquity to be held ſacred, to enable the preſent poſ-

ſeſſors

ſeſſors of enormous benefices to *diſſolve* in indolent pleaſures? Was not their convenience, for they have not been turned adrift on the world, to give place to a juſt partition of the land belonging to the ſtate? And did not the reſpect due to the natural equality of man require this triumph over Monkiſh rapacity? Were thoſe monſters to be reverenced on account of their antiquity, and their unjuſt claims perpetuated to their ideal children, the clergy, merely to preſerve the ſacred majeſty of Property inviolate, and to enable the Church to retain her priſtine ſplendor? Can poſterity be injured by individuals loſing the chance of obtaining great wealth, without meriting it, by its being diverted from a narrow channel, and diſembogued into the ſea that affords clouds to water all the land? Beſides, the clergy not brought up with the expectation of great revenues will not feel the loſs; and if biſhops ſhould happen to be choſen on account

count of their perſonal merit, religion may be benefited by the vulgar nomination.

The ſophiſtry of aſſerting that Nature leads us to reverence our civil inſtitutions from the ſame principle that we venerate aged individuals, is a palpable fallacy 'that is ſo like truth, 'it will ſerve the turn as well.' And when you add, 'that we have choſen our nature 'rather than our ſpeculations, our breaſts ra-'ther than our inventions[z],' the pretty jargon ſeems equally unintelligible.

But it was the downfall of the viſible power and dignity of the church that rouſed your ire;

[z] Page 50. 'We procure reverence to our civil inſti-'tutions on the principle upon which nature teaches us to 'revere individual men; on account of their age; and on 'account of thoſe from whom they are deſcended. All your 'ſophiſters cannot produce any thing better adapted to pre-'ſerve a rational and manly freedom than the courſe that 'we have purſued; who have choſen our nature rather than 'our ſpeculations, our breaſts rather than our inventions, 'for the great conſervatories and magazines of our rights 'and privileges.'

you

you could have excuſed a little ſqueezing of the individuals to ſupply preſent exigencies; the actual poſſeſſors of the property might have been oppreſſed with ſomething like impunity, if the church had not been ſpoiled of its gaudy trappings. You love the church, your country, and its laws, you repeatedly tell us, becauſe they deſerve to be loved; but from you this is not a panegyric: weakneſs and indulgence are the only incitements to love and confidence that you can diſcern, and it cannot be denied that the tender mother you venerate deſerves, on this ſcore, all your affection.

It would be as vain a taſk to attempt to obviate all your paſſionate objections, as to unravel all your plauſible arguments, often illuſtrated by known truths, and rendered forcible by pointed invectives. I only attack the foundation. On the natural principles of juſtice I build my plea for diſſeminating the property artfully ſaid to be appropriated to religious purpoſes, but, in reality,

ality, to ſupport idle tyrants, amongſt the ſociety whoſe anceſtors were cheated or forced into illegal grants. Can there be an opinion more ſubverſive of morality, than that time ſanctifies crimes, and ſilences the blood that calls out for retribution, if not for vengeance? If the revenue annexed to the Gallic church was greater than the moſt bigoted proteſtant would now allow to be its reaſonable ſhare, would it not have been trampling on the rights of men to perpetuate ſuch an arbitrary appropriation of the common ſtock, becauſe time had rendered the fraudulent ſeizure venerable? Beſides, if Reaſon had ſuggeſted, as ſurely ſhe muſt, if the imagination had not been allowed to dwell on the faſcinating pomp of ceremonial grandeur, that the clergy would be rendered both more virtuous and uſeful by being put more on a par with each other, and the maſs of the people it was their duty to inſtruct;—where was there room for heſitation? The charge of preſumption,

ſumption, thrown by you on the moſt reaſonable innovations, may, without any violence to truth, be retorted on every reformation that has meliorated our condition, and even on the improvable faculty that gives us a claim to the pre-eminence of intelligent beings.

Plauſibility, I know, can only be unmaſked by ſhewing the abſurdities it gloſſes over, and the ſimple truths it involves with ſpecious errors. Eloquence has often confounded triumphant villany; but it is probable that it has more frequently rendered the boundary that ſeparates virtue and vice doubtful.—Poiſons may be only medicines in judicious hands; but they ſhould not be adminiſtered by the ignorant, becauſe they have ſometimes ſeen great cures performed by their powerful aid.

The many ſenſible remarks and pointed obſervations which you have mixed with opinions that ſtrike at our deareſt intereſts, for-

tify

tify thoſe opinions, and give them a degree of ſtrength that render them formidable to the wiſe, and convincing to the ſuperficial. It is impoſſible to read half a dozen pages of your book without admiring your ingenuity, or indignantly ſpurning your ſophiſms. Words are heaped on words, till the underſtanding is confuſed by endeavouring to diſentangle the ſenſe, and the memory by tracing contradictions. After obſerving a hoſt of theſe contradictions, it can ſcarcely be a breach of charity to think that you have often ſacrificed your ſincerity to enforce your favourite arguments, and called in your judgment to adjuſt the arrangement of words that could not convey its dictates.

A fallacy of this kind, I think, could not have eſcaped you when you were treating the ſubject that called forth your bittereſt animadverſions, the confiſcation of the eccleſiaſtical revenue. Who of the vindicators of the rights

of

of men ever ventured to aſſert, that the clergy of the preſent day ſhould be puniſhed on account of the intolerable pride and inhuman cruelty of many of their predeceſſors[a]? No; ſuch a thought never entered the mind of thoſe who warred with inveterate prejudices. A deſperate diſeaſe required a powerful remedy. Injuſtice had no right to reſt on preſcription; nor has the character of the preſent clergy any weight in the argument.

You find it very difficult to ſeparate policy from juſtice: in the political world they have frequently been ſeparated with ſhameful dexterity. To mention a recent inſtance. According to the limited views of timid, or intereſted politicians, an abolition of the infernal ſlave trade would not only be unſound policy, but a flagrant infringement of the laws (which are allowed to have been infamous) that induced the planters to purchaſe their eſtates.

[a] *Vide* Page 210.

But

But is it not conſonant with juſtice, with the common principles of humanity, not to mention Chriſtianity, to aboliſh this abominable miſchief? [b] There is not one argument, one invective, levelled by you at the confiſcators of the church revenue, which could not, with the ſtricteſt propriety, be applied by the planters and negro-drivers to our Parliament, if it gloriouſly dared to ſhew the world that Britiſh ſenators were men: if the natural feelings of humanity ſilenced the cold cautions of timidity, till this ſtigma on our nature was wiped off, and all men were al-

[b] 'When men are encouraged to go into a certain 'mode of life by the exiſting laws, and protected in that 'mode as in a lawful occupation—when they have ac- 'commodated *all their ideas, and all their habits to it*,' &c.—'I am ſure it is unjuſt in legiſlature, by an arbitrary 'act, to offer a ſudden violence to their minds and their 'feelings; forcibly to degrade them from their ſtate and 'condition, and to ſtigmatize with ſhame and infamy that 'character and thoſe cuſtoms which before had been made 'the meaſure of their happineſs.' Page 230.

lowed to enjoy their birth-right—liberty, till by their crimes they had authorized ſociety to deprive them of the bleſſing they had abuſed.

The ſame arguments might be uſed in India, if any attempt were made to bring back things to nature, to prove that a man ought never to quit the caſt that confined him to the profeſſion of his lineal forefathers. The Bramins would doubtleſs find many ingenious reaſons to juſtify this debaſing, though venerable prejudice; and would not, it is to be ſuppoſed, forget to obſerve that time, by interweaving the oppreſſive law with many uſeful cuſtoms, had rendered it for the preſent very convenient, and conſequently legal. Almoſt every vice that has degraded our nature might be juſtified by ſhewing that it had been productive of *ſome* benefit to ſociety: for it would be as difficult to point out poſitive evil as unallayed good, in this imperfect ſtate. What indeed would become of

morals,

morals, if they had no other teſt than preſcription? The manners of men may change without end; but, wherever reaſon receives the leaſt cultivation—wherever men riſe above brutes, morality muſt reſt on the ſame baſe. And the more man diſcovers of the nature of his mind and body, the more clearly he is convinced, that to act according to the dictates of reaſon is to conform to the law of God.

The teſt of honour may be arbitrary and fallacious, and, retiring into ſubterfuge, elude cloſe enquiry; but true morality ſhuns not the day, nor ſhrinks from the ordeal of inveſtigation. Moſt of the happy revolutions that have taken place in the world have happened when weak princes held the reins they could not manage; but are they, on that account, to be canonized as ſaints or demi-gods, and puſhed forward to notice on the throne of ignorance? Pleaſure wants a zeſt, if experience cannot compare it with pain; but who courts pain to

heighten his pleaſures? A tranſient view of ſociety will further illuſtrate arguments which appear ſo obvious that I am almoſt aſhamed to produce illuſtrations. How many children have been taught œconomy, and many other virtues, by the extravagant thoughtleſſneſs of their parents; yet a good education is allowed to be an ineſtimable bleſſing. The tendereſt mothers are often the moſt unhappy wives; but can the good that accrues from the private diſtreſs that produces a ſober dignity of mind juſtify the inflictor? Right or wrong may be eſtimated according to the point of ſight, and other adventitious circumſtances; but, to diſcover its real nature, the enquiry muſt go deeper than the ſurface, and beyond the local conſequences that confound good and evil together. The rich and weak, a numerous train, will certainly applaud your ſyſtem, and loudly celebrate your pious reverence for authority and eſtabliſhments—they find it pleaſanter

ſanter to enjoy than to think; to juſtify oppreſſion than correct abuſes.—*The rights of men* are grating ſounds that ſet their teeth on edge; the impertinent enquiry of philoſophic meddling innovation. If the poor are in diſtreſs, they will make ſome *benevolent* exertions to aſſiſt them; they will confer obligations, but not do juſtice. Benevolence is a very amiable ſpecious quality; yet the averſion which men feel to accept a right as a favour, ſhould rather be extolled as a veſtige of native dignity, than ſtigmatized as the odious offſpring of ingratitude. The poor conſider the rich as their lawful prey; but we ought not too ſeverely to animadvert on their ingratitude. When they receive an alms they are commonly grateful at the moment; but old habits quickly return, and cunning has ever been a ſubſtitute for force.

That both phyſical and moral evil were not only foreſeen, but entered into the ſcheme of

Providence, when this world was contemplated in the Divine mind, who can doubt, without robbing Omnipotence of a moſt exalted attribute? But the buſineſs of the life of a good man ſhould be, to ſeparate light from darkneſs; to diffuſe happineſs, whilſt he ſubmits to unavoidable miſery. And a conviction that there is much unavoidable wretchedneſs, appointed by the grand Diſpoſer of all events, ſhould not ſlacken his exertions: the extent of what is poſſible can only be diſcerned by God. The juſtice of God may be vindicated by a belief in a future ſtate; but, only by believing that evil is educing good for the individual, and not for an imaginary whole. The happineſs of the whole muſt ariſe from the happineſs of the conſtituent parts, or the eſſence of juſtice is ſacrificed to a ſuppoſed grand arrangement. And that may be good for the whole of a creature's exiſtence, that diſturbs the comfort of a ſmall portion. The evil which

an

an individual ſuffers for the good of the community is partial, it muſt be allowed, if the account is ſettled by death.—But the partial evil which it ſuffers, during one ſtage of exiſtence, to render another ſtage more perfect, is ſtrictly juſt. The Father of all only can regulate the education of his children. To ſuppoſe that, during the whole or part of its exiſtence, the happineſs of any individual is ſacrificed to promote the welfare of ten, or ten thouſand, other beings—is impious. But to ſuppoſe that the happineſs, or animal enjoyment, of one portion of exiſtence is ſacrificed to improve and ennoble the being itſelf, and render it capable of more perfect happineſs, is not to reflect on either the goodneſs or wiſdom of God.

It may be confidently aſſerted that no man chooſes evil, becauſe it is evil; he only miſtakes it for happineſs, the good he ſeeks. And the deſire of rectifying theſe miſtakes, is the

noble ambition of an enlightened underſtanding, the impulſe of feelings that Philoſophy invigorates. To endeavour to make unhappy men reſigned to their fate, is the tender endeavour of ſhort-ſighted benevolence, of tranſient yearnings of humanity; but to labour to increaſe human happineſs by extirpating error, is a maſculine godlike affection. This remark may be carried ſtill further. Men who poſſeſs uncommon ſenſibility, whoſe quick emotions ſhew how cloſely the eye and heart are connected, ſoon forget the moſt forcible ſenſations. Not tarrying long enough in the brain to be ſubject to reflection, the next ſenſations, of courſe, obliterate them. Memory, however, treaſures up theſe proofs of native goodneſs; and the being who is not ſpurred on to any virtuous act, ſtill thinks itſelf of conſequence, and boaſts of its feelings. Why? Becauſe the ſight of diſtreſs, or an affecting narrative, made its blood flow with more velocity, and the heart,

heart, literally ſpeaking, beat with ſympathetic emotion. We ought to beware of confounding mechanical inſtinctive ſenſations with emotions that reaſon deepens, and juſtly terms the feelings of *humanity*. This word diſcriminates the active exertions of virtue from the vague declamation of ſenſibility.

The declaration of the National Aſſembly, when they recognized the rights of men, was calculated to touch the humane heart—the downfall of the clergy, to agitate the pupil of impulſe. On the watch to find fault, faults met your prying eye; a different prepoſſeſſion might have produced a different conviction.

When we read a book that ſupports our favourite opinions, how eagerly do we ſuck in the doctrines, and ſuffer our minds placidly to reflect the images that illuſtrate the tenets we have previouſly embraced. We indolently acquieſce in the concluſion, and our ſpirit animates and corrects the various ſubjects. But

when,

when, on the contrary, we peruſe a ſkilful writer, with whom we do not coincide in opinion, how attentive is the mind to detect fallacy. And this ſuſpicious coolneſs often prevents our being carried away by a ſtream of natural eloquence, which the prejudiced mind terms declamation—a pomp of words! We never allow ourſelves to be warmed; and, after contending with the writer, are more confirmed in our opinion; as much, perhaps, from a ſpirit of contradiction as from reaſon. A lively imagination is ever in danger of being betrayed into error by favourite opinions, which it almoſt perſonifies, the more effectually to intoxicate the underſtanding. Always tending to extremes, truth is left behind in the heat of the chace, and things are viewed as poſitively good, or bad, though they wear an equivocal face.

Some celebrated writers have ſuppoſed that wit and judgment were incompatible; oppoſite qualities,

qualities, that, in a kind of elementary ſtrife, deſtroyed each other: and many men of wit have endeavoured to prove that they were miſtaken. Much may be adduced by wits and metaphyſicians on both ſides of the queſtion. But, from experience, I am apt to believe that they do weaken each other, and that great quickneſs of comprehenſion, and facile aſſociation of ideas, naturally preclude profundity of reſearch. Wit is often a lucky hit; the reſult of a momentary inſpiration. We know not whence it comes, and it blows where it liſts. The operations of judgment, on the contrary, are cool and circumſpect; and coolneſs and deliberation are great enemies to enthuſiaſm. If wit is of ſo fine a ſpirit, that it almoſt evaporates when tranſlated into another language, why may not the temperature have an influence over it? This remark may be thought derogatory to the inferior qualities of the mind: but it is not a haſty one; and I mention it as

a prelude

a prelude to a concluſion I have frequently drawn, that the cultivation of reaſon damps fancy. The bleſſings of Heaven lie on each ſide; we muſt chooſe, if we wiſh to attain any degree of ſuperiority, and not loſe our lives in laborious idleneſs. If we mean to build our knowledge or happineſs on a rational baſis, we muſt learn to diſtinguiſh the *poſſible*, and not fight againſt the ſtream. And if we are careful to guard ourſelves from imaginary ſorrows and vain fears, we muſt alſo reſign many enchanting illuſions: for ſhallow muſt be the diſcernment which fails to diſcover that raptures and ecſtaſies ariſe from error.—Whether it will always be ſo, is not now to be diſcuſſed; ſuffice it to obſerve, that Truth is ſeldom arrayed by the Graces; and if ſhe charms, it is only by inſpiring a ſober ſatisfaction, which takes its riſe from a calm contemplation of proportion and ſimplicity. But, though it is allowed that one man has by nature more

fancy

ſancy than another, in each individual there is a ſpring-tide when fancy ſhould govern and amalgamate materials for the underſtanding; and a graver period, when thoſe materials ſhould be employed by the judgment. For example, I am inclined to have a better opinion of the heart of an *old* man, who ſpeaks of Sterne as his favourite author, than of his underſtanding. There are times and ſeaſons for all things: and moraliſts appear to me to err, when they would confound the gaiety of youth with the ſerioufneſs of age; for the virtues of age look not only more impoſing, but more natural, when they appear rather rigid. He who has not exerciſed his judgment to curb his imagination during the meridian of life, becomes, in its decline, too often the prey of childiſh feelings. Age demands reſpect; youth love: if this order is diſturbed, the emotions are not pure; and when love for a man in his grand climacteric takes place

of

of reſpect, it, generally ſpeaking, borders on contempt. Judgment is ſublime, wit beautiful; and, according to your own theory, they cannot exiſt together without impairing each other's power. The predominancy of the latter, in your endleſs Reflections, ſhould lead haſty readers to ſuſpect that it may, in a great degree, exclude the former.

But, among all your plauſible arguments, and witty illuſtrations, your contempt for the poor always appears conſpicuous, and rouſes my indignation. The following paragraph in particular ſtruck me, as breathing the moſt tyrannic ſpirit, and diſplaying the moſt factitious feelings. 'Good order is the 'foundation of all good things. To be 'enabled to acquire, the people, without 'being ſervile, muſt be tractable and obe-'dient. The magiſtrate muſt have his re-'verence, the laws their authority. The

'body

'body of the people muſt not find the prin-
'ciples of natural ſubordination by art rooted
'out of their minds. They *muſt* reſpect that
'property of which they *cannot* partake. *They*
'*muſt labour to obtain what by labour can be*
'*obtained*; *and when they find, as they commonly*
'*do, the ſucceſs diſproportioned to the endeavour,*
'*they muſt be taught their conſolation in the final*
'*proportions of eternal juſtice.* Of this conſo-
'lation, whoever deprives them, deadens their
'induſtry, and ſtrikes at the root of all acqui-
'ſition as of all conſervation. He that does
'this, is the cruel oppreſſor, the mercileſs
'enemy, of the poor and wretched; at the
'ſame time that, by his wicked ſpeculations,
'he expoſes the fruits of ſucceſsful induſtry,
'and the accumulations of fortune, (ah! there's
the rub) 'to the plunder of the negligent, the
'diſappointed, and the unproſperous[c].'

[c] Page 351.

This is contemptible hard-hearted ſophiſtry, in the ſpecious form of humility, and ſubmiſſion to the will of Heaven.—It is, Sir, *poſſible* to render the poor happier in this world, without depriving them of the conſolation which you gratuitouſly grant them in the next. They have a right to more comfort than they at preſent enjoy; and more comfort might be afforded them, without encroaching on the pleaſures of the rich: not now waiting to enquire whether the rich have any right to excluſive pleaſures. What do I ſay?—encroaching! No; if an intercourſe were eſtabliſhed between them, it would impart the only true pleaſure that can be ſnatched in this land of ſhadows, this hard ſchool of moral diſcipline.

I know, indeed, that there is often ſomething diſguſting in the diſtreſſes of poverty, at which the imagination revolts, and ſtarts back to exerciſe itſelf in the more attractive

attractive Arcadia of fiction. The rich man builds a houſe, art and taſte give it the higheſt finiſh. His gardens are planted, and the trees grow to recreate the fancy of the planter, though the temperature of the climate may rather force him to avoid the dangerous damps they exhale, than ſeek the umbrageous retreat. Every thing on the eſtate is cheriſhed but man;—yet, to contribute to the happineſs of man, is the moſt ſublime of all enjoyments. But if, inſtead of ſweeping pleaſure-grounds, obeliſks, temples, and elegant cottages, as *objects* for the eye, the heart was allowed to beat true to nature, decent farms would be ſcattered over the eſtate, and plenty ſmile around. Inſtead of the poor being ſubject to the griping hand of an avaricious ſteward, they would be watched over with fatherly ſolicitude, by the man whoſe duty and pleaſure it was to guard their happineſs, and ſhield from rapa-

city the beings who, by the ſweat of their brow, exalted him above his fellows.

I could almoſt imagine I ſee a man thus gathering bleſſings as he mounted the hill of life; or conſolation, in thoſe days when the ſpirits lag, and the tired heart finds no pleaſure in them. It is not by ſquandering alms that the poor can be relieved, or improved—it is the foſtering ſun of kindneſs, the wiſdom that finds them employments calculated to give them habits of virtue, that meliorates their condition. Love is only the fruit of love; condeſcenſion and authority may produce the obedience you applaud; but he has loſt his heart of fleſh who can ſee a fellow-creature humbled before him, and trembling at the frown of a being, whoſe heart is ſupplied by the ſame vital current, and whoſe pride ought to be checked by a conſciouſneſs of having the ſame infirmities.

What ſalutary dews might not be ſhed to refreſh this thirſty land, if men were more *enlightened!* Smiles and premiums might encourage cleanlineſs, induſtry, and emulation. —A garden more inviting than Eden would then meet the eye, and ſprings of joy murmur on every ſide. The clergyman would ſuperintend his own flock, the ſhepherd would then love the ſheep he daily tended; the ſchool might rear its decent head, and the buzzing tribe, let looſe to play, impart a portion of their vivacious ſpirits to the heart that longed to open their minds, and lead them to taſte the pleaſures of men. Domeſtic comfort, the civilizing relations of huſband, brother, and father, would ſoften labour, and render life contented.

Returning once from a deſpotic country to a part of England well cultivated, but not very picturesque—with what delight did I not obſerve the poor man's garden!—The homely

palings and twining woodbine, with all the ruſtic contrivances of ſimple, unlettered taſte, was a ſight which relieved the eye that had wandered indignant from the ſtately palace to the peſtiferous hovel, and turned from the awful contraſt into itſelf to mourn the fate of man, and curſe the arts of civilization!

Why cannot large eſtates be divided into ſmall farms? theſe dwellings would indeed grace our land. Why are huge foreſts ſtill allowed to ſtretch out with idle pomp and all the indolence of Eaſtern grandeur? Why does the brown waſte meet the traveller's view, when men want work? But commons cannot be encloſed without *acts of parliament* to increaſe the property of the rich! Why might not the induſtrious peaſant be allowed to ſteal a farm from the heath? This ſight I have ſeen;—the cow that ſupported the children grazed near the hut, and the cheerful poultry were fed by the chubby babes, who breathed

a bracing air, far from the diſeaſes and the vices of cities. Domination blaſts all theſe proſpects; virtue can only flouriſh amongſt equals, and the man who ſubmits to a fellow-creature, becauſe it promotes his worldly intereſt, and he who relieves only becauſe it is his duty to lay up a treaſure in heaven, are much on a par, for both are radically degraded by the habits of their life.

In this great city, that proudly rears its head, and boaſts of its population and commerce, how much miſery lurks in peſtilential corners, whilſt idle mendicants aſſail, on every ſide, the man who hates to encourage impoſtors, or repreſs, with angry frown, the plaints of the poor! How many mechanics, by a flux of trade or faſhion, loſe their employment; whom misfortunes, not to be warded off, lead to the idleneſs that vitiates their character and renders them afterwards averſe to honeſt labour! Where is the eye that

marks theſe evils, more gigantic than any of the infringements of property, which you piouſly deprecate? Are theſe remedileſs evils? And is the humane heart ſatisfied with turning the poor over to *another* world, to receive the bleſſings this could afford? If ſociety was regulated on a more enlarged plan; if man was contented to be the friend of man, and did not ſeek to bury the ſympathies of humanity in the ſervile appellation of maſter; if, turning his eyes from ideal regions of taſte and elegance, he laboured to give the earth he inhabited all the beauty it is capable of receiving, and was ever on the watch to ſhed abroad all the happineſs which human nature can enjoy;—he who, reſpecting the rights of men, wiſhes to convince or perſuade ſociety that this is true happineſs and dignity, is not the cruel *oppreſſor* of the poor, nor a ſhort-ſighted philoſopher—He fears God and loves his fellow-creatures.—Behold the whole duty

of

of man!—the citizen who acts differently is a ſophiſticated being.

Surveying civilized life, and ſeeing, with undazzled eye, the poliſhed vices of the rich, their inſincerity, want of natural affections, with all the ſpecious train that luxury introduces, I have turned impatiently to the poor, to look for man undebauched by riches or power—but, alas! what did I ſee? a being ſcarcely above the brutes, over which he tyrannized; a broken ſpirit, worn-out body, and all thoſe groſs vices which the example of the rich, rudely copied, could produce. Envy built a wall of ſeparation, that made the poor hate, whilſt they bent to their ſuperiors; who, on their part, ſtepped aſide to avoid the loathſome ſight of human miſery.

What were the outrages of a day[4] to theſe continual miſeries? Let thoſe ſorrows hide their diminiſhed head before the tremend-

[4] The 6th of October.

ous mountain of woe that thus defaces our globe! Man preys on man; and you mourn for the idle tapeſtry that decorated a gothic pile, and the droniſh bell that ſummoned the fat prieſt to prayer. You mourn for the empty pageant of a name, when ſlavery flaps her wing, and the ſick heart retires to die in lonely wilds, far from the abodes of men. Did the pangs you felt for inſulted nobility, the anguiſh that rent your heart when the gorgeous robes were torn off the idol human weakneſs had ſet up, deſerve to be compared with the long-drawn ſigh of melancholy reflection, when miſery and vice are thus ſeen to haunt our ſteps, and ſwim on the top of every cheering proſpect? Why is our fancy to be appalled by terrific perſpectives of a hell beyond the grave? — Hell ſtalks abroad; — the laſh reſounds on the ſlave's naked ſides; and the ſick wretch, who can no longer earn the ſcanty bread of unremitting labour, ſteals to a ditch

ditch to bid the world a long good night—or, neglected in ſome oſtentatious hoſpital, breathes his laſt amidſt the laugh of mercenary attendants.

Such miſery demands more than tears — I pauſe to recollect myſelf; and ſmother the contempt I feel riſing for your rhetorical flouriſhes and infantine ſenſibility.

- - - - - - - - - - - -

- - - - - - - - - - - -

Taking a retroſpective view of my haſty anſwer, and caſting a curſory glance over your *Reflections*, I perceive that I have not alluded to ſeveral reprehenſible paſſages, in your elaborate work; which I marked for cenſure when I firſt peruſed it with a ſteady eye. And now I find it almoſt impoſſible candidly to refute your ſophiſms, without quoting your own words, and putting the numerous contradictions I obſerved in oppoſition to each other. This would be an effectual refutation; but,

but, after ſuch a tedious drudgery, I fear I ſhould only be read by the patient eye that ſcarcely wanted my aſſiſtance to detect the flagrant errors. It would be a tedious proceſs to ſhew, that often the moſt juſt and forcible illuſtrations are warped to colour over opinions *you* muſt *ſometimes* have ſecretly deſpiſed; or, at leaſt, have diſcovered, that what you aſſerted without limitation, required the greateſt. Some ſubjects of exaggeration may have been ſuperficially viewed: depth of judgment is, perhaps, incompatible with the predominant features of your mind. Your reaſon may have often been the dupe of your imagination; but ſay, did you not ſometimes angrily bid her be ſtill, when ſhe whiſpered that you were departing from ſtrict truth? Or, when aſſuming the awful form of conſcience, and only ſmiling at the vagaries of vanity, did ſhe not auſterely bid you recollect your own errors, before you lifted the aveng-

ing

ing ſtone? Did ſhe not ſometimes wave her hand, when you poured forth a torrent of ſhining ſentences, and beſeech you to concatenate them—plainly telling you that the impaſſioned eloquence of the heart was calculated rather to affect than dazzle the reader, whom it hurried along to conviction? Did ſhe not anticipate the remark of the wiſe, who drink not at a ſhallow ſparkling ſtream, and tell you that they would diſcover when, with the dignity of ſincerity, you ſupported an opinion that only appeared to you with one face; or, when ſuperannuated vanity made you torture your invention?—But I forbear.

I have before animadverted on our method of electing repreſentatives, convinced that it debauches both the morals of the people and the candidates, without rendering the member really reſponſible, or attached to his conſtituents; but, amongſt your other contradictions, you blame the National Aſſembly for expect-

ing

ing any exertions from the ſervile principle of reſponſibility, and afterwards inſult them for not rendering themſelves reſponſible. Whether the one the French have adopted will anſwer the purpoſe better, and be more than a ſhadow of repreſentation, time only can ſhew. In theory it appears more promiſing.

Your real or artificial affection for the Engliſh conſtitution ſeems to me to reſemble the brutal affection of ſome weak characters. They think it a duty to love their relations with a blind, indolent tenderneſs, that *will not* ſee the faults it might aſſiſt to correct, if their affection had been built on rational grounds. They love they know not why, and they will love to the end of the chapter.

Is it abſolute blaſphemy to doubt of the omnipotence of the law, or to ſuppoſe that religion might be more pure if there were fewer baits for hypocrites in the church? But our manners, you tell us, are drawn from the

French,

French, though you had before celebrated our native plainneſs*. If they were, it is time we broke looſe from dependance——Time that Engliſhmen drew water from their own ſprings; for, if manners are not a painted ſubſtitute for morals, we have only to cultivate our reaſon, and we ſhall not feel the want of an arbitrary model. Nature will ſuffice; but I forget myſelf:—Nature and Reaſon, according to your ſyſtem, are all to give place to authority; and the gods, as Shake-

* Page 118. 'It is not clear, whether in England we 'learned thoſe grand and decorous principles, and manners, 'of which conſiderable traces yet remain, from you, or 'whether you took them from us. But to you, I think, 'we trace them beſt. You ſeem to me to be—*gentis incu-* 'nabula noſtræ. France has always more or leſs influenced 'manners in England; and when your fountain is choaked 'up and polluted, the ſtream will not run long, or not 'run clear with us, or perhaps with any nation. This 'gives all Europe, in my opinion, but too cloſe and con- 'nected a concern in what is done in France.'

ſpeare

ſpeare makes a frantic wretch exclaim, ſeem to kill us for their ſport, as men do flies.

Before I conclude my curſory remarks, it is but juſt to acknowledge that I coincide with you in your opinion reſpecting the *ſincerity* of many modern philoſophers. Your conſiſtency in avowing a veneration for rank and riches deſerves praiſe; but I muſt own that I have often indignantly obſerved that ſome of the *enlightened* philoſophers, who talk moſt vehemently of the native rights of men, borrow many noble ſentiments to adorn their converſation, which have no influence on their conduct. They bow down to rank, and are careful to ſecure property; for virtue, without this adventitious drapery, is ſeldom very reſpectable in their eyes—nor are they very quick-ſighted to diſcern real dignity of character when no ſounding name exalts the man above his fellows.—But neither open enmity

nor

nor hollow homage deſtroys the intrinſic value of thoſe principles which reſt on an eternal foundation, and revert for a ſtandard to the immutable attributes of God.

THE END.