

# The Online Library of Liberty

A Project Of Liberty Fund, Inc.

---

John Trenchard, *Cato's Letters, vol. 3 March 10, 1722 to December 1, 1722 (LF ed.)* [1724]

---



## The Online Library Of Liberty

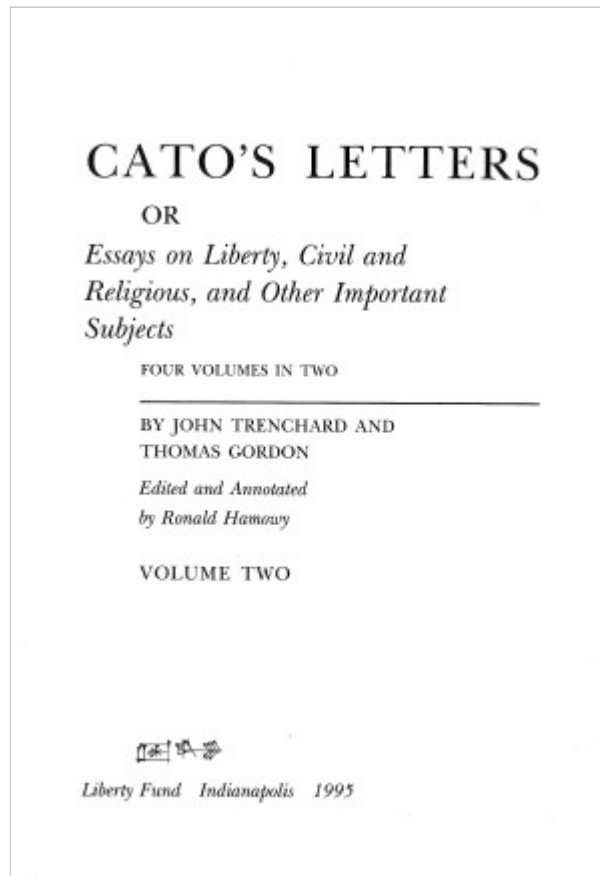
This E-Book (PDF format) is published by Liberty Fund, Inc., a private, non-profit, educational foundation established in 1960 to encourage study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals. 2010 is the 50th anniversary year of the founding of Liberty Fund.

It is part of the Online Library of Liberty web site <http://oll.libertyfund.org>, which was established in 2004 in order to further the educational goals of Liberty Fund, Inc. To find out more about the author or title, to use the site's powerful search engine, to see other titles in other formats (HTML, facsimile PDF), or to make use of the hundreds of essays, educational aids, and study guides, please visit the OLL web site. This title is also part of the Portable Library of Liberty DVD which contains over 1,000 books, audio material, and quotes about liberty and power, and is available free of charge upon request.

The cuneiform inscription that appears in the logo and serves as a design element in all Liberty Fund books and web sites is the earliest-known written appearance of the word “freedom” (amagi), or “liberty.” It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash, in present day Iraq.

To find out more about Liberty Fund, Inc., or the Online Library of Liberty Project, please contact the Director at [oll@libertyfund.org](mailto:oll@libertyfund.org).

LIBERTY FUND, INC.  
8335 Allison Pointe Trail, Suite 300  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250-1684



## Edition Used:

*Cato's Letters, or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*. Four volumes in Two, edited and annotated by Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995). Vol. 3.

Author: [John Trenchard](#)

Author: [Thomas Gordon](#)

## About This Title:

Volume 3 of a four volumes in 2 set. Almost a generation before Washington, Henry, and Jefferson were even born, two Englishmen, concealing their identities with the honored ancient name of Cato, wrote newspaper articles condemning tyranny and advancing principles of liberty that immensely influenced American colonists. The Englishmen were John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. Their prototype was Cato the Younger (95-46 B.C.), the implacable foe of Julius Caesar and a champion of liberty and republican principles. Their 144 essays were published from 1720 to 1723, originally in the *London Journal*, later in the *British Journal*. Subsequently collected as *Cato's Letters*, these "Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious" became, as Clinton Rossiter has remarked, "the most popular, quotable, esteemed source of political ideas in the colonial period." This new two-volume edition offers minimally modernized versions of the letters from the four-volume sixth edition printed in London in 1755.

## About Liberty Fund:

Liberty Fund, Inc. is a private, educational foundation established to encourage the study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals.

## Copyright Information:

The copyright to this edition, in both print and electronic forms, is held by Liberty Fund, Inc.

## Fair Use Statement:

This material is put online to further the educational goals of Liberty Fund, Inc. Unless otherwise stated in the Copyright Information section above, this material may be used freely for educational and academic purposes. It may not be used in any way for profit.

<i>Contents</i>	
VOLUME ONE	
VOLUMES ONE AND TWO OF THE SIXTH EDITION No. 1 through No. 68	
<hr/>	
VOLUME TWO	
VOLUME THREE OF THE SIXTH EDITION	
NO. 69.	<i>Address to the Freeholders, &amp;c. about the Choice of their Representatives.</i> 497
NO. 70.	<i>Second Address to the Freeholders, &amp;c. upon the same Subject.</i> 503
NO. 71.	<i>Polite Arts and Learning naturally produced in free States, and warred by such as are not free.</i> 514
NO. 72.	<i>In absolute Monarchies the Monarch seldom rules, but his Creatures instead of him. That Sort of Government a Gradation of Tyrants.</i> 525
NO. 73.	<i>A Display of Tyranny, its destructive Nature, and Tendency to dispeople the Earth.</i> 536
NO. 74.	<i>The Vanity of Conquerors, and the Calamities attending Conquests.</i> 544
NO. 75.	<i>Of the Restraints which ought to be laid upon publick Rulers.</i> 550
NO. 76.	<i>The same Subject continued.</i> 557
NO. 77.	<i>Of superstitious Fears, and their Causes natural and accidental.</i> 562
NO. 78.	<i>The common Notion of Spirits, their Power and Feats, exposed.</i> 569

## Table Of Contents

### Volume Three

- [No. 69. Saturday, March 10, 1722. Address to the Freeholders, &c. About the Choice of Their Representatives. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 70. Saturday, March 17, 1722. Second Address to the Freeholders, &c. Upon the Same Subject. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 71. Saturday, March 31, 1722. Polite Arts and Learning Naturally Produced In Free States, and Marred By Such As Are Not Free. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 72. Saturday, April 7, 1722. In Absolute Monarchies the Monarch Seldom Rules, But His Creatures Instead of Him. That Sort of Government a Gradation of Tyrants. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 73. Saturday, April 21, 1722. a Display of Tyranny, Its Destructive Nature, and Tendency to Dispeople the Earth. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 74. Saturday, April 28, 1722. the Vanity of Conquerors, and the Calamities Attending Conquests. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 75. Saturday, May 5, 1722. of the Restraints Which Ought to Be Laid Upon Publick Rulers. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 76. Saturday, May 12, 1722. the Same Subject Continued. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 77. Saturday, May 19, 1722. of Superstitious Fears, and Their Causes Natural and Accidental. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 78. Saturday, May 26, 1722. the Common Notion of Spirits, Their Power and Feats, Exposed. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 79. Saturday, June 2, 1722. a Further Detection of the Vulgar Absurdities About Ghosts and Witches. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 80. Saturday, June 9, 1722. That the Two Great Parties In England Do Not Differ So Much As They Think In Principles of Politicks. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 81. Saturday, June 16, 1722. the Established Church of England In No Danger From Dissenters. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 82. Saturday, June 23, 1722. the Folly and Characters of Such As Would Overthrow the Present Establishment. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 83. Saturday, June 30, 1722. the Vain Hopes of the Pretender and His Party. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 84. Saturday, July 7, 1722. Property the First Principle of Power. the Errors of Our Princes Who Attended Not to This. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 85. Saturday, July 14, 1722. Britain Incapable of Any Government But a Limited Monarchy; With the Defects of a Neighbouring Republick. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 86. Saturday, July 21, 1722. the Terrible Consequences of a War to England, and Reasons Against Engaging In One. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 87. Saturday, July 28, 1722. Gold and Silver In a Country to Be Considered Only As Commodities. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 88. Saturday, August 4, 1722. the Reasonableness and Advantage of Allowing the Exportation of Gold and Silver, With the Impossibility of Preventing the Same. \(trenchard\)](#)

- [No. 89. Saturday, August 11, 1722. Every Man's True Interest Found In the General Interest. How Little This Is Considered. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 90. Saturday, August 18, 1722. Monopolies and Exclusive Companies, How Pernicious to Trade. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 91. Saturday, August 25, 1722. How Exclusive Companies Influence and Hurt Our Government. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 92. Saturday, September 1, 1722. Against the Petition of the South-sea Company, For a Remittance of Two Millions of Their Debt to the Publick. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 93. Saturday, September 8, 1722. an Essay Upon Heroes. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 94. Saturday, September 15, 1722. Against Standing Armies. \(trenchard and Gordon\)](#)
- [No. 95. Saturday, September 22, 1722. Further Reasonings Against Standing Armies. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 96. Saturday, September 29, 1722. of Parties In England; How They Vary, and Interchange Characters, Just As They Are In Power, Or Out of It, Yet Still Keep Their Former Names . \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 97. Saturday, October 6, 1722. How Much It Is the Interest of Governors to Use the Governed Well; With an Enquiry Into the Causes of Disaffection In England. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 98. Saturday, October 13, 1722. Address to the Members of the House of Commons. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 99. Saturday, October 20, 1722. the Important Duty of Attendance In Parliament, Recommended to the Members. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 100. Saturday, October 27, 1722. Discourse Upon Libels. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 101. Saturday, November 3, 1722. Second Discourse Upon Libels. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 102. Saturday, November 10, 1722. the Contemptibleness of Grandeur Without Virtue. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 103. Saturday, November 17, 1722. of Eloquence, Considered Politically. \(trenchard\)](#)
- [No. 104. Saturday, November 24, 1722. of Eloquence, Considered Philosophically. \(gordon\)](#)
- [No. 105. Saturday, December 1, 1722. of the Weakness of the Human Mind; How Easily It Is Misled. \(trenchard\)](#)

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## VOLUME THREE

### NO. 69. SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 1722. *Address To The Freeholders, &C. About The Choice Of Their Representatives.* (Trenchard)

SIR,

I beg leave to interrupt my discourse upon general liberty for one post or more, as occasion shall present; and desire you will publish the enclosed letter in your journal, in the place which used to be filled with one to yourself.

TO THE FREEHOLDERS, CITIZENS, AND BURGHERS OF THE COUNTIES, CITIES, AND TOWNS OF GREAT-BRITAIN. GENTLEMEN,

There is no natural or political body but is subject to the variations and injuries of time. Both are composed of springs, wheels, and ligaments, all in perpetual motion, and all liable to wear out and decay: And as the parts are mortal, the whole must be mortal too. But as natural bodies may continue their existence, and preserve their duration, by action, by the addition of new particles, or by removing from time to time all occasional obstructions which clog their motion, and check their vigour, as long as their stamina, first principles, or original constitution, are capable of subsisting; so a political machine may do the same: And some writers in politicks have asserted, that the same might be immortal; which is not my opinion.

But whether this be true or not, certain it is, that in many respects a political body has the advantage of a natural one. We can often look into its inmost frame and contexture; and when any of its constituent parts are decayed or worn out, can supply it with new ones (which cannot be done in the other without a total dissolution of the fabrick): And we can frequently annex additional props and buttresses to support for some time a tottering building, and hinder it from falling upon our heads. This is often all that can be done in decayed governments, when a state is in a cachexy; and this is what is every honest man's duty to do, when he can do no better. But, I thank God, the constitution of England is yet sound and vigorous: Many of its parts are active and strong; and if some members be corrupted or decayed, there are materials at hand to supply the defect. There is wealth and power in being: Our country abounds with men of courage and understanding; nor are there wanting those of integrity and publick spirit: There is an ardent desire and diffusive love of liberty throughout the kingdom; and many begin to be tired, sick, and ashamed of party-animosities, and of quarrelling with their neighbours, their relations, and often with their best friends, to gratify the pride, the ambition, and rapine of those, who only sell and betray them. It is yet in our power to save ourselves; most men have inclination to do it; and it is only owing to the art and address of our common enemies, if we do not agree on the means of doing it.

I dare therefore affirm, that there is such a general disposition towards liberty through the whole kingdom, that if there should be found in the next House of Commons as many honest, bold, and wise men, as would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah, England is yet safe, in spite of all the efforts of delusion and bribery: And I dare as freely affirm, that if some vigorous and bold resolutions are not there taken, to assist our most excellent King towards discharging the publick debts, and in redressing all sorts of publick corruptions, the liberty of Great-Britain—my heart can speak no more.

It lies upon you, Gentlemen, to give motion to the machine: You are the first springs that give life to all virtuous resolutions: Such as you shew yourselves, such will be your representatives: such as is the tree, such will be the fruit. Choose honest men, free and independent men, and they will act honestly for the publick interest, which is your interest. It is not to be expected, that criminals will destroy their own handiwork; that they will either reform or punish themselves; or, that men, who have brought our misfortunes upon us, will go about in good earnest to redress them, or even own that there are any such. Besides, deep wounds must be probed and searched to the core, before they can be cured; and those who gave them can seldom bear to see the operation, much less will they pay for the cure, if they can be at ease by the death of the patient.

Let us not therefore, my countrymen, desert or deceive ourselves, or think we can be safe, if ever such men can get into power. Let us not again be deluded with false promises and deceitful assurances; but let us judge what men will do by what they have done. What warm and plausible remonstrances have you formerly heard and received? What impetuous storms and hurricanes of false and counterfeit zeal against oppressions and miscarriages in the late reigns; against exorbitant pensions, outrageous taxes, wild and expensive expeditions; against increasing the publick debts; against standing troops quartered up and down your countries; against oppressive companies, to the destruction of your trade and industry; against private men's raising immense estates upon your ruin; and against their bribing and corrupting the guardians of the publick liberty? And are you at last perfectly easy in every one of those complaints?

Now, therefore, my best friends, is the time to help yourselves: Now act honestly and boldly for liberty, or forget the glorious and charming sound. Let not a publick traitor come within the walls of your cities and towns, without treating him, as an enemy to your king and country deserves. Throw your eyes about your several countries, and choose your patrons, your protectors, your neighbours, and your known friends; choose for your representatives men whose interests are blended with your own; men who have no hands dipped in the public spoils, but have suffered by them as much as you yourselves have suffered; men who have not jobbed for stock, nor for wages, nor for you.

Make not so foolish a bargain, as for a little loose money to give up desperately all you have; your liberties, your estates, your families. Is it for your sakes, think you, that these jobbers of stocks, and of honesty, and of their country, come to caress you, flatter you, and bow to you? Do you, or can you believe that they come to impair their

own fortunes, to increase yours? Or think you not that they will have their pennyworths out of you? Depend upon it, they will; and, for every bucket of water thrown into your wells, they will pump out tuns.

Reason not therefore, as too many of you have done, and I fear yet do, that since those whom you trust make personal advantages of your confidence and credulity, you ought to share in those advantages. But throw your choice upon such who will neither buy you, nor sell you. Whoever purchases an office at more than it is honestly worth, must be supported by him who sells it, in all dishonest gains; or else he will call for his money again, if he know how to get it. No man will bribe you into your own interests, or give you money that he may have leave to serve you by his own labour, and at his farther expence; but will think himself at liberty to make reprisals: He will find no difficulty in himself to sell those, who have before sold themselves and their country: Nor can you have any right or pretence to reprove one that does so.

Mistake not, my countrymen, in believing that men in your condition and circumstances are too low for the scythe, and that you can shrink out of publick misfortunes. For you, gentlemen, are the first principles of wealth and power. From your labour and industry arises all that can be called riches, and by your hands it must be defended: Kings, nobility, gentry, clergy, lawyers, and military officers, do all support their grandeur by your sweat and hazard, and in tyrannical governments upon the people's spoils: They there riot upon the subsistence of the poor people, whose poverty is their riches. In corrupt administrations, your superiors of all kinds make bargains, and pursue ends at the publick expence, and grow rich by making the people poor.

You feel the first effects of tyrannical government; and great men are generally made the instruments of it, and reap the advantages. Exorbitant taxes, want of trade, decay of manufactures, discouragement of industry, insolence and oppression of soldiers, exactions of civil officers, ignorance, superstition, and bigotry, are all the constant concomitants of tyranny, always produce it, and are produced by it. And all these terrible evils must fall most signally upon the middle and inferior ranks of mankind: There must be a great number of slaves to furbish up one grand monarch, and the poor people must be those slaves. He must engage many in his interest, before he can establish a power which destroys the rest; all these many must be supported, and have their condition bettered by the change; and all this charge and expence the wretched people must work for and pay.

Forget therefore, Gentlemen, the foolish and knavish distinction of High Church and Low Church, Whig and Tory; sounds which continue in your mouths when the meaning of them is gone; and are now only used to set you together by the ears, that rogues may pick your pockets, I own myself to be one of those, whom one side in respect, and the other in contumely, call Whigs; and yet I never discoursed with a candid and sensible Tory, who did not concur with me in opinion, when we explained our intentions. We both agreed in our notions of old English liberty, in a passion for freedom to ourselves, and to procure it for every one else: We were both for preserving the English monarchy, and the legal constitution of the national church against its enthusiastick friends and enemies; and were for giving liberty of



conscience to those, who through a prejudiced education, or as we believed, a less capacity of judging, were so unhappy as to think differently from ourselves, in an affair which concerned us not, and which we had nothing to do with.

We both honoured and resolved to preserve upon the throne our most excellent sovereign King George, and to endeavour to continue him a glorious king over honest men, and freemen; and not to attempt to make him, what he scorns to be made, a patron of parasites, and a lord of slaves: And we thought we could not shew our duty to him more effectually, than in bringing to exemplary punishment all who had betrayed him and us:

We wished the old names of distinction and faction buried deep as the centre; and nothing heard in their room but court and country, Protestant and papist, freemen and slaves. It will lie at your door, Gentlemen, to put an end to the above silly and wicked gibberish. Choose those who have no interest to continue it, and it will not be continued.

Consider, my dear friends and countrymen, what I have said, and think what you are doing, while you are raising hue and cry after men who will betray you; while you are sending afar for courtiers, for directors of bubbles, for company-men, and publick pickpockets, to represent you; while you are giving up, perhaps for ever, to the mercy of bloodsuckers, your honest industry, and the just profits of your trade, for a poor momentary share of their infamous plunder; and thereby bringing a canker upon your subsistence, and the just resentment of heaven upon your endeavours. Shew yourselves once, and once for all, Britons and freemen, and not foreign and saleable slaves; shew that you know how to honour your king, and yet to keep your liberties; that you obey him out of choice, and not out of servile fear; that you know how to distinguish your loyalty to your prince, from a blind submission to his and your own servants; and that you can make your duty to him consistent with a vigorous resolution to punish all who betray him and you.

If you did but know, Gentlemen, how you are used above, by those who think it worth their time to flatter you below, and to your faces, you would not want my advice and admonitions. You are called the mob, the canaille, the stupid herd, the dregs and beasts of the people; and your interest is never thought of by those men, who thus miscall you; men who have no more wit, and much less honesty, than yourselves; and men whose insolence and sauciness are owing to wealth, which they have plundered from you. It depends now upon yourselves, whether you will deserve these base and reproachful names, or not; shew that you are men, and you will be used like men; but if you sell yourselves like the beasts in the field, the purchasers will have a right to sell you again, and make honest gains out of a villainous bargain.

For my own particular, I cannot give myself leave to despair of you, because I must at the same time despair of old English liberty: You are our Alpha and Omega, our first and last resource; and when your virtue is gone, all is gone. It is true, you have a wife and virtuous prince at present, who will not take advantage of your follies; and you may depend upon the same security from his son: but neither he nor his son, nor his family are immortal; and therefore I hope you will act wisely, and trust to yourselves

alone. But whatever part, gentlemen, you shall think fit to take, you shall not do it blindfold, and in the dark. You shall have the fair and dark side of your conduct laid before you, and then you may choose whether you will be freemen or vassals; whether you will spend your own money and estates, or let others worse than you spend them for you: Methinks the choice should be easy. You shall hear more from me upon this subject; and you may believe me.

T

Gentlemen,

your very sincere,

and most affectionate,

humble servant.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 70. SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1722. *Second Address To The Freeholders, &C. Upon The Same Subject.*(GORDON)

GENTLEMEN,

You are born to liberty, and it is your interest and duty to preserve it. The constitution which you live under is a mixed monarchy, where your governors have every right to protect and defend you, none to injure and oppress you. You have a large share in the legislature; you have the sole power over your own purses; you have an undoubted right to call to account and punish the instruments of your oppression: But it depends upon yourselves alone to make these rights of yours, these noble privileges, of use to you. The best laws give no security if they are not executed, but indeed become worse than no laws; and they never will be executed, unless those who are entrusted with the execution of them have an interest in their execution.

All men desire naturally riches and power; almost all men will take every method, just or unjust, to attain them. Hence the difficulty of governing men, and of instituting a government equally proper to restrain them and protect them; and hence the insufficiency of simple forms of government, to provide for the happiness and security of societies. An arbitrary prince will quickly grow into a tyrant; the uncontrolled dominions of the nobles will as certainly produce oligarchy, or the tyranny of a few; that is, pride, combination, and rapine in the sovereigns, and misery and dejection in the many; and the unrestrained licentiousness of the multitude will beget confusion and anarchy. To provide against these certain and eternal evils, mixed forms of government were invented; where dominion and liberty are so equally tempered, and so mutually checked one by another, that neither of them can have interest and force enough to oppress the other.

These institutions have provided against many evils, but not against all; for, whilst men continue in this state of degeneracy, that is, whilst men are men, ambition, avarice, and vanity, and other passions, will govern their actions; in spite of all equity and reason, they will be ever usurping, or attempting to usurp, upon the liberty and fortunes of one another, and all men will be striving to enlarge their own. Dominion will always desire increase, and property always to preserve itself; and these opposite views and interests will be causing a perpetual struggle: But by this struggle liberty is preserved, as water is kept sweet by motion.

The nature and reason of this sort of government, is to make the several parts of it control and counterpoise one another; and so keep all within their proper bounds. The interest of the magistracy, which is the lot and portion of the great, is to prevent confusion, which levels all things: The interest of the body of the people, is to keep people from oppression, and their magistrates from changing into plunderers and murderers; the interest of the standing senate, which is, or ought to be, composed of men distinguishable for their fortunes and abilities, is to avoid ruin and dissolution

from either of these extremes: So that, to preserve liberty, all these coordinate powers must be kept up in their whole strength and independency.

Names will not defend you, Gentlemen, when the thing signified by them is gone. The emperors of Rome were as absolute with the shew of a Senate, and the appearance of the people's choosing their praetors, tribunes, and other officers of the commonwealth, as the eastern monarchs are now without these seeming checks, and this shew of liberty: And in some respects they were more secure; as the infamy of their tyranny was shared by these assemblies, the advantages were all their own, and the condition of the people was rather the worse for these mock magistrates and pretended representatives, who, under the colour and title of the protectors of the people, were, at the people's expence, the real helpers and partakers of the iniquity of the tyrant. The kings of France have parliaments, but parliaments which dare not dispute their royal pleasure; and the poor people would not fare one jot the better, if these parliaments were bribed not to dispute it.

This wretched case, Gentlemen, will be yours and the wretched case of your posterity, if ever an ambitious prince and designing minister shall hereafter be able to corrupt or awe your representatives. And whatever wicked bargains are then made, will be made at your expence, and you must pay the terrible reckoning at last. You have a king at present, from whom you have none of these things to fear. But, alas! Gentlemen, how few Tituses and Trajans were there found amongst the Roman emperors! and how few can England shew since the Conquest! It requires therefore your best thoughts and most vigorous resolutions, to preserve your constitution entire in all its parts, without suffering any one part to prevail so far over the other, as to reduce it in effect, though not in name, to a simple form of government, which is always tyranny. It will be all one to you, whether this is brought about by confederacy or by force. Whatever be the villainous means, violence, oppression, and every rank of evil, will be the end.

In order to this honest or publick design, you ought to choose representatives, whose interests are at present the same with your own, and likely to continue the same; representatives, who are not already pre-engaged, nor, from their circumstances, education, profession, or manner of life, likely to be engaged, in a contrary interest. He will prove but a sorry advocate, who takes fees from your adversary; and as indifferent a plenipotentiary, who receives a pension from the prince whom he is commissioned to treat with: Nor can there be any security in the fidelity of one, who can find it more his interest to betray you, than to serve you faithfully.

Virtue and vice will be but ill balanced, when power and riches are thrown into the wrong scale. A great Protestant peer of France having changed his religion, in compliance with his master, Henry IV of France, who had changed too, was soon after asked by that monarch publicly, which of the two religions he thought the best? "The Protestant, sir, undoubtedly is the best," said the peer, "by your own royal confession; since, in exchange for it, your Majesty has given me popery, and a marshal's staff to boot." Where boot is given, there is always a tacit confession that the exchange is unequal without it. Choose not therefore such who are likely to truck away your liberties for an equivalent to themselves, and to sell you to those against whom it is their duty to defend you. When their duty is in one scale, and a thousand

pounds a year, or more, or even less, is thrown into the contrary scale, you may easily guess, as the world goes, how the balance is like to turn.

It is the right and duty of the freeholders and burghers of Great Britain, to examine into the conduct, and to know the opinions and intentions, of such as offer themselves to their choice. How can any of them be truly represented, when they know not who represents them? And as it was always their right, they had once the frequent means and opportunity to resent effectually the corruptions of those who had basely betrayed their sacred trust; of rejecting with scorn and detestation, such traitorous parricides; and of sending up honester and wiser men in their room. This, my dear countrymen, we had once the frequent means of doing: Make use now, O worthy and free Britons! make good use of this present dawn, this precious day of liberty, to recover once more that invaluable privilege. Do not wildly choose any one who has given up, or attempted to give up, your birthrights, and, above all, that right which secures all the rest. Admit no man to be so much as a candidate in your counties and boroughs, till he has declared, in the clearest manner, in the most express and solemn words declared, his most hearty and vigorous resolutions, to endeavour to repeal all laws which render you incapable to serve your king, or to punish traitors, or to preserve your original and essential rights. This, Gentlemen, is your time; which, if you suffer it to be lost, will probably be for ever lost.

There are a sort of men who prowl about the country to buy boroughs; creatures, who accost you for your votes with the spirit and design, and in manner of jockeys; and treating you like cattle, would purchase you for less or more, just as they think they can sell you again. Can you bear this insult, Gentlemen, upon your honesty, your reason and your liberties? Or if there be any amongst you, who countenance such vile and execrable bargains, which affect and involve you in all their consequences, ought they not to be treated like publick enemies, as indeed they are, and be hunted from amongst you? I have often wondered how a little contemptible corporation, consisting, as some of them do, of broom-makers, hedge-breakers, and sheep-stealers, could stand the looks and rebukes of a rich and honest neighbourhood, after these dirty rogues had openly sold at the market-cross, perhaps for forty shillings a-piece, not only their own liberties, but, as far as in them lay, the liberties of that rich neighbourhood and all England. Such saleable vermin ought to be treated as persons excommunicate, as the pests and felons of society, which they would sell for porridge: And if proper abhorrence were every-where shewn towards them, and no commerce held with them, they would soon grow honest out of necessity; or if they did not, they might justly fear, like guilty Cain, that every man whom they met would kill them. If this method were taken, it would cure corruption of this kind: Let those who sell their country be everywhere renounced and shunned by their neighbourhood and their country, and such sale will soon be over.

The majority of you, Gentlemen, are yet uncorrupted: Indeed none but a few of the worst and poorest of you are yet corrupted. The body of the freeholders know not what it is to take money; and choose their representatives from amongst themselves, and from a thorough acquaintance, either with the men, or with their characters. The little beggarly boroughs only are the pools of corruption; with them money is merit, and full of recommendation. They engage for men without knowing their names, and

choose them sometimes without seeing their faces; yet their members, when they are chosen, are as good as yours; that is, their votes are good. It is in your power, Gentlemen, and in that of your honest neighbours to cure this mighty evil, which has hitherto been incurable, or not suffered to be cured. They are but a few, and an inconsiderable few, in comparison of you; and cannot live without you, though you can without them.

Try the expedient which I propose; neither buy nor sell with those reprobate mercenaries, who sell themselves and you. Consider how much it imports you; your all is concerned in it. This is not a dispute about dreams or speculations, which affect not your property; but it is a dispute whether you shall have any property, which these wretches throw away, by choosing for the guardians of property men whom they know not, or who are only known to them by a very bad token, that of having corrupted them.

Lay not out your money with those who for money sell your liberties, which is the only source of your money, and of all the happiness which you enjoy. Remember, when your all is at stake, as it always is in an election of those who are either to guard, or to give up your all; I say, remember how wantonly and blindly upon that occasion, these wretches surrender themselves, and you, and your all, and all England, to the best bidder, without knowing, often, who he is. What mercy do these cruel slaves deserve at your hands? The most horrible thing that they can do against you and your posterity, they do.

When Hannibal had gained his last and greatest battle against the Romans, and many of the nobility were deliberating about leaving Rome, the young Scipio entered the room with his sword drawn, and obliged every man present to bind himself with an oath, not to desert their country. And will you, Gentlemen, suffer the little hireling inhabitants of boroughs, who receive from you and your neighbours their daily bread; will you, can you suffer them to betray you, to give up your fortunes, and to comprehend you as they do, in the sale which they make of themselves? Do you not know how much you are at the mercy of their honesty, how much it depends upon their breath whether you are to be freemen or slaves: Yet will you stand stupidly by, and see them truck you away for loose guineas? Would you allow the common laws of neighbourhood to such as steal or plunder your goods, rob you of your money, seize your houses, drive you from your possessions, enslave your persons, and starve your families? No, sure, you would not. Yet will you, can you continue to treat as neighbours and friends, those rash, wicked, and merciless profligates; who, as far as in them lies, would bring upon you and your posterity all those black and melancholy evils, by committing the mighty and sacred trust of all your lives and properties to men, who hire them to betray it; and having first made them rogues, may afterwards, for ought they know, make them slaves, and you with them?

Can you bear this, Gentlemen? It is the root of all your heavy sufferings, and may yet produce worse and more heavy. You are freemen, and men of reason and spirit; awaken your spirit, exert your reason, and assert your freedom. You have a right to petition the Parliament, you have a right to address the king, to propose your thoughts and grievances to both; and to be heard and relieved when you suffer any. And from

the same reason and equity, you, Gentlemen freeholders, have a right and a near concern to advise your neighbouring boroughs in the choice of their members, and to warn them of the consequences, if they make a bad one.

For God's sake, Gentlemen, and for your own, and for all our sakes, shew your spirit, your understanding, and your activity, upon this occasion; and the hearty prayers and wishes of every honest man will attend you.

Alas! Gentlemen, with tears I tell you, that the cure of corruption is left to you. A cure from another quarter is cruelly denied to us. A worthy attempt was lately made to destroy it effectually; and we hoped that no man, or set of men, pretending to common honesty, would have had the face to discourage or frustrate that attempt; but it was frustrated, and we know where, and by whom, and for what ends. Those who owe their whole figure, and fortune, and force to corruption, rather than part with it, seem determined to see the nation consumed and perish in it. Your help must be from God and yourselves; be honest, and make your neighbours honest; both are in your power, and I glory that they are. As you love your liberties exercise your virtue; they depend upon it. Remember the true but dismal picture that I have given you of slavery and arbitrary power; and if you would avoid them, be virtuous, scorn bribes, abhor the man that offers them and expose him. Consider him as an accursed tempter, and a barbarous ravisher, who would buy you out of your integrity, and spoil you of your liberties.

Give me leave now, Gentlemen, to mark out to you more particularly what sort of men you ought not to choose. Choose not those who live at a great distance from you, and whose abilities, probity and fortunes, are not well known to you. When you have chosen them, it will be too late to know them. Choose not the eldest sons of noblemen, who must be naturally in the interest of the nobility, as the nobility generally are in the interest of the court, whatever it be. Reject bigots of all kinds and sides: Those men, whose minds are shut up in band-boxes, and who walk upon stilts, have not thoughts large enough for governing society. Even their honesty, when they have any, is useless to the publick; and is often, on the contrary, made an ill instrument in the hands of those who have none. Reject also all timorous, fearful, and dastardly spirits; men, who having good principles, either dare not own them, or dare not act according to them. Choose not men who are noted for non-attendance, and who have been members of Parliament, without waiting upon the business of Parliament; men, who will probably be engaged in a fox-chase, in a tavern, or in other debauched houses, though the kingdom were undoing. While your happiness or misery depends so much upon the breath of your representatives, it is of great importance to you, that their attendance be as constant, as their behaviour be honest. What excuse can they offer for themselves, when by their wanton absence a vote may pass, which may cost you millions? We know what bold advantages have been taken in former Parliaments, of a thin House, to raise great and unexpected sums from the nation, to enable its worst foes to carry on an unnatural conspiracy against it.

Reject with indignation those men, who, in the late execrable South-Sea conspiracy, took stock for votes; and for an infamous bribe in stock, voted your liberties and purses into the merciless claws of the South-Sea traitors, and are since many of them

justly undone by the bargain. Think you, Gentlemen, that these men, who could sell their country, when they had a stake in it, will not sell it for less, when they have none? You ought to add to the same class, and treat in the same manner, all those who headed and abetted that destructive scheme, or endeavoured to protect those who did so.

You are to be particularly careful, that those whom you choose be duly qualified according to law, and that no deceit be practised in obtaining temporary qualifications. You ought to enquire into their estates, and how they came by them; and if they have none, as many who stand candidates, I am told, have not, you may guess who assists them, and what hopeful services are expected from them. Such men you may be sure will never speak your sense in Parliament, nor even their own, if they have any; nor be suffered to consult your interest. They must work for their masters against you, who ought to be so.

Neither can you expect to be well served by men, whose estates are embarked in companies: They themselves will be engaged with their fortunes in the particular interest of such companies, which are always against the interest of general trade; and they will be but too apt to fall into the juggling and artifices of courts, to raise their stock to imaginary values. A certain and known method to promote cheating, and to sink trade.

Shun likewise all those who are in the way of ambition; a passion which is rarely gratified by integrity, and an honest zeal for your good; shun all men of narrow fortunes, who are not for your purpose from obvious reasons; shun all lawyers, who have not established practice or good estates, and who are consequently more liable to corruption, and whom the court has more means of corrupting, than other men; shun all men involved in debt, all men of ill morals, and debauched, and dishonest lives; all gamesters, and all men who spend more than their income. Their extravagance makes them necessitous, and their necessities make them venal.

We do not ordinarily trust a man with a small sum without a note, or mortgage, or a bond; and such security is but reasonable: And is it not as reasonable, that, when we trust men with all that we have, as we do our representatives, we ought to seek and procure all the security which the nature of the thing will admit? Would it not be direct madness to trust our all, our whole accumulative portion in this life, to those whom no man would, in a private way, trust for five shillings? Call to mind, Gentlemen, whether some of you have never formerly made such a rash and dangerous choice; and for God's sake mend it now.

I suppose thus far you will all agree with me; as I dare say you will, when I tell you that the gentlemen of the sword are not proper representatives of a people, whose civil constitution abhors standing armies, and cannot subsist under them. The fortunes and expectations of these gentlemen depend upon observing the word of command; and it is but natural that they should support power in which they are sharers. You must not therefore expect that they will ever concur in a vote, or an address, to disband or reduce themselves; however desirable or necessary the same may be to you. Those of them who deserve well of you, as very many of the present officers do, are doubtless



entitled to thanks and good usage from you; but to shew them respect by giving them seats in Parliament, is by no means a proper, prudent, or natural way of doing it. Besides, it will create a great and unjust partiality to particular boroughs, and some shall be burdened with soldiers, when others shall be free from them; just at the mercy and expectations of the commanding officer.

It is indeed a misfortune to the army itself, to have any of its officers members of the House of Commons, since the greatest merit in the field shall not recommend a man so much to just preferment, as the want of merit sometimes shall in that House. A complaint, however, which, I hope, there is no ground for at present.

Choose not, Gentlemen, any sort of men, whose interest may, at any time, and in any circumstance, consist in confusion. Neither are men in employments the properest men for your choice. If ever your interest comes in competition with their places, you may easily guess which must give way. I think there are but few instances, where they themselves suffer, and fall in that struggle. Under this head, I would desire you, Gentlemen, to observe the behaviour of the officers of the customs and excise upon the ensuing elections; and remember, that they forfeit one hundred pounds, if they persuade or deal with any person to vote, or to forbear voting, and are made for ever incapable of holding any employment under the crown. If you find them busy and intermeddling in this election, take the advantage which the law gives you, and see it honestly put in execution against them. Besides, such conduct of theirs, and prosecution of yours, may give occasion to a new law, with more terrible penalties upon that sort of men, whom our misfortunes have made numerous.

For a conclusion. Consider, Gentlemen, Oh! consider what you are about, and whether you will bring life or death upon us. Oh! take care of yourselves, and of us all. We are all in your hands, and so at present are your representatives; but very quickly the scene will be shifted, and both you and we will be in theirs. Do not judge of them by their present humble speeches, and condescending carriage; but think what they are like to be, when they are no longer under your eye, when they are no longer suing to you, nor want you. These humble creatures, who now bow down before you, will soon look down upon you. Oh! choose such as are likely to do it with most pity and tenderness, and are most likely to relieve you of those burdens, under which we all sadly groan, and under which we must certainly sink, never to rise again, if we be not relieved.

I am, Gentlemen, with exceeding sincerity, and all good wishes,

*G* Your most affectionate humble servant.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 71. SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 1722. *Polite Arts And Learning Naturally Produced In Free States, And Marred By Such As Are Not Free. (GORDON)*

SIR,

In the first rise and beginning of states, a rough and unhewn virtue, a rude and savage fierceness, and an unpolished passion for liberty, are the qualities chiefly in repute. To these succeed military accomplishments, domestick arts and sciences, and such political knowledge and acquirements, as are necessary to make states great and formidable abroad, and to preserve equality, and domestick happiness, and security, at home. And lastly, when these are attained, follow politeness, speculative knowledge, moral and experimental philosophy, with other branches of learning and the whole train of the muses.

The Romans were long masters of the arts of war and policy, before they knew much of the embellishments of letters.

*Serus enim Graecis admovit acumina chartis,  
Et, post Punica bella, quietus quaerere coepit,  
Quid Sophocles & Thespis, & Aeschylus utile ferrent.*

These were the effects of ease, leisure, security, and plenty, and the productions of men retired from the hurry and anxieties of war, and sequestered from the tumults of the world; of men not ruffled by disappointment, nor scared with the noise of foreign invasions, nor disturbed with civil tumults; and of men not distressed by want, or wholly employed with the cares of life, and solicitous for a support to themselves and families;

—praeter laudem nullius avaris.

The Romans had secured their conquests, and settled their power, before they grew fond of the ornaments of life.

How should my Mummius have time to read,  
When by his ancestors fam'd glory led  
To noble deeds, he must espouse the cause  
Of his dear country's liberties and laws?  
Amongst rough wars how can verse smoothly flow,  
Or 'midst such storms the learned laurel grow?

L. Mummius was one of the principal men of Rome; yet so late as the taking of Corinth, he was so ignorant in the polite arts, that when he was shipping off the glorious spoils of that great city to Rome, he ridiculously threatened the masters of the vessels, that if they broke or lost any of the statues, paintings, or of the other curious

Greek monuments, they should be obliged to get others made in their room at their proper expence.

But the Romans quickly improved in their taste, quickly grew fond of works of genius of every kind, having now leisure to admire them, and encouragement to imitate them. And the Greeks, from whom the Romans had them, were first great in power, and their civil oeconomy was excellently established, before they grew eminent in politeness and learning.

But neither will the single invitations of leisure and ease prove sufficient to engage men in the pursuits of knowledge as far as it may be pursued. Other motives must be thrown in; they must find certain protection and encouragements in such pursuits, and proper rewards at the end of them. The laurel is often the chief cause of the victory. The Greeks who encouraged learning and the sciences more, and preserved them longer than any people ever did, kept stated, publick and general assemblies, on purpose for the trial and encouragement of wit and arts, and for the distinguishing of those who professed them. Thither resorted all who had any pretensions that way, or had engaged in performances of that kind: All the most illustrious men in Greece, the nobility, the magistracy, the ambassadors of princes, sometimes princes themselves, were the auditors and judges: By these merit was distinguished, the contention for glory decided, the victory declared, and by these the rewards of it were bestowed. Thus glorious was the price of excelling; thus equitable, publick, and loud was the fame of it. It is therefore no wonder that it was courted by the Greeks with as much ardour and application, as the chief dignities in a state are courted by others. And, considering how strong were the stimulations of the Greeks to study, Horace might well say,

*Graius ingenium, graius dedit ore rotundo  
Musa loqui. —————*

Before this august assembly, Herodotus repeated his history with great applause; which so animated Thucydides, then very young, that, in emulation of Herodotus, he wrote a better history than that of Herodotus. Here Cleomenes recommended himself, by only repeating some verses skilfully collected out of Empedocles; and here Euripides and Xenocles contended for preference in the drama.

Indeed, the honours attending a victory upon these occasions were excessive, and, according to Cicero, did almost equal those of a Roman triumph. The victors were reckoned to have arrived to the highest human felicity, to have entailed glory upon all that belonged to them, upon their families, friends, their native city, and the place of their education. Elogiums were made upon them, statues were erected to them, and, ever after, they met every-where the same preference, which they had met at the Olympick assemblies. A preference which so fired the emperor Nero, that, when he had ridiculously stood competitor at a singing-match, and taken a journey to Greece on purpose, he first declared himself victor, and then, to destroy all marks and memory of those who had been so before him, he commanded all their pictures and statues to be pulled down, and thrown into the privies.

The Romans, as soon as they had leisure from their long and many wars, fell quickly into the same studies, and into the same emulation to excel in them. They no sooner had any acquaintance with Greece, but they were possessed with a fondness for all her refinements.

*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit, & artes  
Intulit agresti Latio.*—————

The fierce Romans subdued Greece by their arms; and Greece made rustick Italy a captive to her arts. All the youth of Rome were charmed with the beauties of learning, and eager to possess them: Many of the Senators were caught by the same passions; even the elder Cato, who was at first against these improvements, which, he feared, would soften too much the rough Roman genius, yet changed his opinion so far afterwards, as to learn Greek in his old age.

This prodigious progress of the Romans in learning had no other cause than the freedom and equality of their government. The spirit of the people, like that of their state, breathed nothing but liberty, which no power sought to control, or could control. The improvement of knowledge, by bringing no terror to the magistrates, brought no danger to the people. Nothing is too hard for liberty; that liberty which made the Greeks and Romans masters of the world, made them masters of all the learning in it: And, when their liberties perished, so did their learning. That eloquence, and those other abilities and acquirements, which raised those who had them to the highest dignities in a free state, became under tyranny a certain train to ruin, unless they were prostituted to the service of the tyrant.

That knowledge, and those accomplishments, which create jealousy instead of applause, and danger instead of reward, will be but rarely and faintly pursued; and for the most part not at all. No man will take great pains, spend his youth, and lose his pleasures, to purchase infamy or punishment: And therefore when such obstacles are thrown in his way, he will take counsel of self-love, acquiesce in the fashionable stupidity, and prefer gilded and thriving folly to dangerous and forbidden wisdom.

Ignorance accompanies slavery, and is introduced by it. People who live in freedom will think with freedom; but when the mind is enslaved by fear, and the body by chains, inquiry and study will be at an end. Men will not pursue dangerous knowledge, nor venture their heads, to improve their understandings. Besides, their spirits, dejected with servitude and poverty, will want vigour as well as leisure to cultivate arts, and propagate truth; which is ever high-treason against tyranny. Neither the titles nor the deeds of tyrants will bear examination; and their power is concerned to stupify and destroy the very faculties of reason and thinking; Nor can reason travel far, when force and dread are in the way; and when men dare not see, their eyes will soon grow useless.

In Turkey, printing is forbid, lest by its means common sense might get the better of violence, and be too hard for the imperial butcher. It is even capital, and certain death there, only to reason freely upon their Alcoran. A sure sign of imposture? But by

imposture, stupidity, and janizaries, his throne is supported; and his vast, but thin dominions, know no inhabitants but barbarous, ignorant, and miserable slaves.

Nor is printing in other arbitrary countries of much use but to rivet their chains: It is permitted only on one side, and made the further means of servitude. Even in Christian countries, under arbitrary princes, the people are for the most part as ignorant and implacable bigots as the Turks are. And as it is rare to find a slave who is not a bigot, no man can shew me a bigot who is not an ignorant slave; for bigotry is a slavery of the soul to certain religious opinions, fancies, or stories, of which the bigot knows little or nothing, and damns all that do.

The least cramp or restraint upon reasoning and inquiry of any kind, will prove soon a mighty bar in the way to learning. It is very true, that all sorts of knowledge, at least all sorts of sublime and important knowledge, are so complicated and interwoven together, that it is impossible to search into any part of it, and to trace the same with freedom to its first principles, without borrowing and taking in the help of most, if not all, of the other parts. Religion and government, particularly, are at the beginning and end of every thing, and are the sciences in the world the most necessary and important to be known; and as these are more or less known, other knowledge will be proportionably greater or smaller, or none: But, where these cannot be freely examined, and their excellencies searched into, and understood, all other wisdom will be maimed and ineffectual, indeed scarce worth having.

Now, in all arbitrary governments, and under all created and imposing religions, nothing must be found true in philosophy, which thwarts the received scheme, and the uppermost opinions: The most evident mathematical demonstrations must not disprove orthodox dogmas, and established ideas; the finest poetical flights must be restrained and discouraged, when they would fly over the narrow inclosures and prison-walls of bigots: Nor must the best, the strongest, and the most beautiful reasoning dare to break through popular prejudices, or attempt to contend with powerful and lucrative usurpation. A bishop was burned before the Reformation, for discovering the world to be round; and, even in the last century, the excellent Galileo was put into the dismal prison of the Inquisition, for maintaining the motion of the Earth round the Sun, as her centre. This proposition of his, which he had demonstrated, he was forced to recant, to save his life, and satisfy the Church.

Where religion and government are most deformed, as religion ever is where it is supported by craft and force, and government ever is when it is maintained by whips and chains, there all examination into either, and all reasoning about them, is most strictly forbid and discouraged: And as one sort of inquiry and knowledge begets another; and as, when the wits of men are suffered to exert themselves freely, no body knows where their pursuits may end; so no tyranny of any kind is safe, where general, impartial, and useful knowledge is pursued. Inhuman violence, and stupid ignorance, are the certain and necessary stay of tyrants; and every thing that is good or valuable in the world is against them.

In the East (if we except China) there is not a glimmering of knowledge; though the eastern people are, from their natural climate and genius, vastly capable of all

knowledge. Bernier, mentioning the cruelty of the government, and the great misery of the people there, says,

From the same cause, a gross and profound ignorance reigns in those states: Nor is it possible there should be academies and colleges well founded in them. Where are there such founders to be met with? And, if they were, where are the scholars to be had? Where are those who have means sufficient to maintain their children in colleges? And, if there were, who durst appear to be rich? And if they would, where are those benefices, preferments, and dignities, which require knowledge and abilities, and animate young men to study?

I will not deny, but that, in arbitrary countries, there are sometimes found men of great parts and learning. But these are either ecclesiasticks, who, even in the greatest tyrannies, at least in Europe, are blessed with great liberty, and many independent privileges, and are freemen in the midst of slaves, and have suitable leisure and revenues to support them in their studies; or they are men invited and encouraged by the prince to flatter his pride, and administer to his pomp and pleasures, and to recommend his person and power. For these reasons alone they are caressed, protected, and rewarded. They are endowed with the advantages of freemen, merely to be the instruments of servitude. They are a sort of Swiss, hired to be the guards of their proud master's fame, and to applaud and vindicate all his wickedness, wildness, usurpations, prodigalities, and follies. This therefore is the worst of all prostitutions, and most immoral of all sort of slavery; as it is supporting servitude with the breath of liberty, and assaulting and mangling liberty with her own weapons. A creature that lets out his genius to hire, may sometimes have a very good one; but he must have a vile and beggarly soul, and his performances are at best but the basest way of petitioning for alms.

France could boast many men of wit and letters in the late reign, though it was a very severe one, and brought infinite evils upon all France and Europe. But these great wits were many of them the instruments and parasites of power, who bent the whole force of their genius to sanctify domestick oppression and foreign usurpation: Such were the characters and employment of Pelisson, Boileau, Racine, and several others. France saw at the same time several churchmen of great and exalted talents, such as the late Archbishop of Cambray, the Cardinal de Retz, Claude Joly,<sup>[2]</sup> the present Abbot Vertot, and many more excellent men, all lovers of liberty, which, by being churchmen, they possessed.

But though it be true, that the late French king encouraged all sorts of learning, that contributed to the grandeur of his name and court, and did not contradict his power, and courted great writers all over Europe, either to write for him, or not against him; yet the nature of his government was so constant a damp upon general learning, that it was at last brought to a very low pass in that kingdom, even in his time. Monsieur Des Maizeaux tells us, in his dedication of St. Evremond's works to the late Lord Halifax, that the great geniuses of France were, about the time I speak of, so constrained, as either to have forbore writing at all, or to have expressed what they thought by halves; that La Bruyere complains, that the French are cramped in satire; that Regis, the famous philosopher, solicited ten years for a licence to publish his course of

philosophy, and at last obtained it only on this condition, to retrench whatever displeased the censors; That monsieur de Fontenelle hath been obliged to depart from the freedom which he used in the first works he published; that but few of the present French authors distinguish themselves either by their learning or wit; and that all this is to be attributed to the nature of the government; which is unquestionably true.

What Mr. Des Maizeaux says upon this argument is so judicious and just, that I shall borrow another paragraph from the same dedication: "Liberty," says he,

inspires a noble and elevated confidence, which naturally enlarges the mind, and gives it an emulation to trace out new roads towards attaining the sciences; whereas a servile dependence terrifies the soul, and fills the mind with a timorous circumspection, that renders it mean and groveling, and even debars the use of its most refined natural talents. Greece and Italy never had illustrious writers, but whilst they preserved their liberty. The loss of that was followed by the decay of wit, and the ruin of polite learning. Greece, formerly the seat of the Muses, is now involved in a frightful barbarity, under the slavery of the Ottoman Empire; and Italy, which, under the influence of a Senate, was so fruitful in great and learned men, now subject to the tribunal of the Inquisition, produces no considerable works of erudition or politeness.

All the great geniuses, who lived in the days of Augustus, were born and educated in the days of liberty; and he borrowed from the commonwealth all the ornaments of his court and empire. In spite of all his boasted taste of letters, and the encouragement which he gave them, I do not remember one extraordinary genius bred under his influence: On the contrary, all that were so, died in his time, without leaving any successors. *Quicquid Romana facundia habet quod insolenti Graeciae aut opponat aut praeferat, circa Ciceronem effloruit. Omnia ingenia quae lucem studiis nostris attulerunt, tunc nata sunt. In deterius deinde quotidie data res est,* says Seneca. "Every improvement in the Roman eloquence, which either equals or excels that of assuming Greece, flourished in the time of Cicero. All the great wits, that now animate and direct our studies, were then born. But, ever since then, wit daily decays, and grows lower and lower."

This decay began in the time of Augustus, who began his reign with butchering Cicero, his patron, his father, and his friend, and the prodigy of Roman eloquence and learning; and that decay increased so fast, that from the first Roman emperor to the last, for the space of about five hundred years, the great city of Rome did not produce five great geniuses; and those that it did produce, were produced near the times of liberty, when they were yet warmed with its memory, before the tyrants had yet time utterly to abolish all that was good, though they made infinite haste. Tacitus was their last great historian, and Juvenal their last great poet, both passionate adorers of liberty. It is melancholy what the former says upon this subject, *Post bellatum apud Actium, atque omnem potestatem ad unum conferre pacis interfuit, magna illa ingenia cessere.* The Romans had no longer any great geniuses, than while they were free.

The Greeks preserved learning some time after the Romans had lost it; for, though they were conquered by the Romans, many of the Greek cities were suffered to enjoy their ancient liberties and laws: They paid only an easy homage, and no troops were

quartered among them, as in the other provinces. However, as they were at the mercy of foreign masters, the vigour of their spirit was gone, and they produced but few good authors: Dio and Plutarch are, I think, reckoned the chief. It is the observation of the learned, polite, and ingenious author of the *Reflexions critiques sur la poesie & sur le peinture*, that Greece had more great men of all kinds in the age of Plato alone, when its liberties flourished, than in all the many ages between Perseus, the last king of Macedon, and the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, amounting to seventeen hundred years.

The several attempts made by Vespasian, Titus, and Trajan, to restore learning, proved almost vain. The Muses, who, frightened by tyranny, were now fled out of the world, could not be allured back to Rome, where baseness, terrors, and servitude had long reigned, and where their seats were filled by pedantick praters, by babbling and hypocritical philosophers: For, the itch and name of learning still subsisted; and therefore Seneca says, *ut omnium rerum, sic literarum quoque intemperantia laboramus*.

The root of the evil remained; the empire of mere will had usurped the throne of the laws, and the place of learning. The genius, that bold and glorious genius inspired by liberty, was gone; and the trial to restore learning, without restoring liberty, only served to shew that they who would do good to a community, which is ill constituted or corrupted, must either begin with the government, and alter or reform that, or despair of success. All that the best Roman emperors could at last do, was, not to butcher nor oppress their people; which yet they could not restrain their ministers from doing. Mucianus blackened the reign of Vespasian by his pride, insolence, and cruelties; and the ministers of Nerva, under colour of punishing the informers, a crew of rogues licensed and encouraged by the former emperors, to ensnare and destroy their dreadful foes, the innocent and virtuous, made use of that good prince's authority, and his hatred of these vermin, to banish, plunder, kill, and ruin, many of the best men in Rome.

The government, the arbitrary single government, had long discouraged and banished every thing that was good; and, with the rest, learning irretrievably.

G I am, &c.

## ENDNOTES



[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 72. SATURDAY, APRIL 7, 1722. *In Absolute Monarchies The Monarch Seldom Rules, But His Creatures Instead Of Him. That Sort Of Government A Gradation Of Tyrants. (GORDON)*

SIR,

The advocates for absolute monarchy argue as ignorantly as perversely, and build without a foundation; since, while they contend for unlimited submission to the monarch's will, they must either suppose, that all acts of power proceed from his will, or else that the will of his ministers is also unlimited, and their orders are irresistible. So that either all his servants, instruments, and executioners, are absolute monarchs too; which none but a madman will say: Or that he himself does immediately direct every thing that is done; which no man of common sense will affirm. Indeed such princes have the least share of their own power, and seldom know what is done, or care.

Monsieur Thevenot tells us, that the Grand Seignior minds nothing but his pleasures, the pranks of mutes and buffoons, who are his constant attendants, and always studying new freaks and grimaces to divert him; and the dalliances of women, sent to him from all quarters by his bashaws. His power is absolutely despotick: His will, that is to say, his lust, his maggots, or his rage, is his only law, and the only bounds to the authority of this vicegerent of God. By virtue of his sacred power, he may rob any man, or all men, of their estates, and no man has a right to complain: He may put the best men to the most ignominious and barbarous death, and exalt the vilest criminals to the highest dignities; and no man must ask why. "This unlimited power of the Sultan," says Monsieur Thevenot, "is founded on the Mahometan religion, which enjoins a blind submission to all his commands, on pain of damnation."

A blessed and beneficent religion this! and a single sovereignty with a witness! But this monstrous and formidable power, which is holden by him, is directed by his ministers without him. They employ both him and themselves; him, far from his duty, in unmanly pleasures; themselves, in the mismanagement of his affairs, and in prostituting his name and authority, to serve their own views. He wears the crown, and lives in a brothel; they sway the sceptre, suck the people's blood, and fill their own coffers. The Grand Vizier, or first minister, is, in effect, king over his master: He has the custody of the imperial power, and discharges the office of the Grand Seignior: And as to the bashaws, who are likewise so many kings in their provinces, Thevenot says, they abuse their authority, and are more arbitrary than the Sultan himself, their design and business being to raise sudden fortunes by their spoils and oppression: And the Grand Seignior is forced to dissemble his knowledge of this rapine and exorbitancy, for want of power to punish or redress them; for that these men have the soldiers more at their devotion than he has.

As to the Turkish civil officers and judges, he says they do what they will, and judge as they please; for all their written laws being contained in the Alcoran, which is but a short book, they are so ambiguously expressed, and so loosely delivered, that the *cadi*, as well as the *bashaw*, wrests them as he pleases; and, judging without appeal, both these greedy and rapacious officers turn justice into oppression, and make it a stale to their avarice.

Such is the spirit and effects of lawless power, lodged in one man; every officer and creature of his will have it; and, by setting up one tyrant, a thousand are set up. As this power is never to be got or preserved, but by violence and oppression; all men who have any share in executing and ministering, and defending the same, must be oppressors too. As no man is an oppressor for the mere pleasure and security of another, but only for his own sake and gratification; so all the servants of tyranny do, in their master's name, but rob and spoil for themselves; and every servant is a master. All over the Ottoman Empire, there is a great Turk in every town, and he at Constantinople is perhaps the idlest and most harmless of them all; and the exercise of the Turkish government is nothing else but a daily and general plunder, a contention between the governors who shall spoil best and get most. Nor, let them plunder and butcher as they will, is there any redress to the oppressed and expiring people; for though the imperial oppressor often forces his ministerial oppressors to disgorge, and spoils the spoiler of his booty and his life, where he dares; yet, there being no restitution made, the condition of the oppressed is not mended: It is mock-justice, and worse than none; every act of power, every degree of office there, is robbery and violence, and every officer, the least and lowest, is an irresistible tyrant.

Single and absolute monarchy therefore, or the ruling all by the will of one is nonsense and a contradiction; it is rather a multiplication of monarchs, and in fact the worst sort of oligarchy. Now, suppose we were to obey blindly the will of the prince; are we also to obey blindly the will of his eunuchs, mistresses and janizaries, who oppress without his knowledge, or against his will? Sure the instruments and delegates of tyranny are not also the Lord's anointed. How therefore shall we know their mind from his, which perhaps contradicts theirs? Or how shall we know whether he wills any thing at all, and whether they do not will for him? This is almost always the case; and then here is a monarchy of ministers, and parasites, pathicks, buffoons, women, and butchers, rule for him, and over him.

Is this government too by divine right? If it be, let us rail no longer at anarchy; which, being the absence of all government, though it leaves every man to do what he lists, yet likewise leaves every man a right to defend himself: Besides this sort of anarchy, where every one is absolutely free, will quickly settle into order, and indeed cannot subsist long. But single monarchy, which is a long gradation of tyrants, where many on one side do what they will against the most on the other side; where cruelty and lust revel without control; where wanton and inhuman power has no limits, and heavy and sorrowful oppression no remedy nor end; where the innocent and harmless suffer most, and the worst and vilest thrive best, and where none are secure; where wickedness supports power, and property is the spoil of armies: I say, this absolute monarchy is worse than absolute anarchy, by not being so general. It is a partial anarchy, with worse effects, and no remedy.

All this still further proves, that men and societies have no possible human security but certain and express laws, setting express bounds to the power of their magistrates, ascertaining the measure of power as well as subjection, and restraining alike the exorbitances of both prince and people. It is eternally true, that such as is the nature of the government, such will be the nature of the people; and that as they are happy or miserable, so they will be good or bad, as their government and governors are good or bad; and that their whole integrity and virtue, or all their corruption and baseness, does arise from that single source.

*To pass by their many other sponging projects: One of their detestable schemes was to make laws against such and such things, and after these laws were published, they themselves would be the first to break them, and to encourage others to do the same: Nor was any man ever rebuked and punished for his unobservance, till they saw enough involved in the same penalty and praemunire; and then, forsooth, the laws were to be executed with all strictness and severity, not out of any zeal for justice, but from a ravenous appetite to be fingering the fines. From whence it followed, that, by grievous mulcts and explications, the people being impoverished, were constrained to use the same violences upon those, who were less potent than they themselves were. By which means the people were not corrected for doing evil, but instructed how to do it. And all these mischiefs proceeded solely from the baseness and iniquity of their princes.*

Thus it is that such courts, being continually in a conspiracy against the property and felicity of their people, and preying continually upon them by vile means and pretences, teach their people to conspire against honesty, and to prey upon one another; nay, by robbing them, they make it necessary for them to rob. Thus readily, necessarily, and naturally, is the spirit of the governors transfused into the governed, who are ever taught civil corruption by their superiors, before they practise it themselves.

Father le Compte, giving an account of the government of China, and shewing the wise provision made by the laws to check the great power of the Emperor, says,

Nor is interest a less motive than reputation to the Emperor, to be guided by the ancient customs, and to adhere to the laws, which are framed so much for his advantage, that he cannot violate them, without obvious prejudice to his own authority, nor alter them, without bringing his kingdom into confusion; for such is the temper of the Chinese, that when the Emperor is governed by violence and passion, and grows negligent of his affairs, the same perverse spirit possesses his subjects: Every mandarin thinks himself sovereign of his province or city: The chief ministers sell offices and places to worthless wretches: The vice-roys become so many little tyrants: The governors observe no rule of justice; and the people thus oppressed, are easily stirred up to sedition: Rogues multiply, and commit villainies in companies, and court all occasions to do mischief, and to break the peace. Such beginnings have occasioned fatal consequences, and put China under the command of new masters; so that the Emperor's surest way to preserve his crown, is to observe the laws, and give an entire obedience to them.

An absolute prince and his deputy-tyrants are only the instruments of one another. By their hands he executes his lust, avarice, and rage; by his authority they execute their own. He is their dupe; they are his tools: However they may differ in particular views; they are always strongly united in cruelty and oppression. And therefore, whenever there is any contention amongst them, it is only who shall be the uppermost tyrants; for tyranny is the aim, the darling and the practice of all: And when the superior and subordinate tyrants butcher one another, as they often do; the people, though they see the revenge, yet feel no relief. Whoever bears the iron rod, they feel its sharpness and its weight: For almost every tyrant grows worse and worse; yet generally leaves a successor worse than himself. What unutterable and increasing woe must be the lot of their poor subjects under continual harrows of iron, made daily more poignant and heavy! Nor is the killing of a tyrant any cure, unless the tyranny be killed with him. The nature of this power breaths nothing but destruction, private ruin, and publick desolation; the common maxims of justice and mercy are not known to him, or known only for high treason; the very contrary are constantly practised; and his ministers, to be faithful servants, must be the worst of men, and all of them tyrants like himself.

These kings (of the East) says Monsieur Bernier, see no men about them, but men of nothing; slaves, ignorants, brutes, and such courtiers as are raised from the dust to dignities; who, for want of good education, do almost always retain somewhat of their original, and of the temper of beggars enriched. They are proud, insufferable, cowardly, insensible of honour, perfidious, void of affection, and of all regard for their king and country.

These kings, says he, must ruin all, to find means to defray those prodigious expences, which they cannot avoid, for the support of their great court, which has no other source of subsistence, but their coffers and treasures; and for maintaining constantly the vast number of forces necessary to keep the people in subjection, and to prevent their running away, and to force them to work, in order to draw from them the fruits of their work. For the people being kept continually under the dreadful yoke of oppression, and made to labour through fear, for the benefit of their governors only, and perfectly wild and desperate, and ready to do any act of despair. Captain Perry says the same of the Muscovites; that, made desperate by oppression and want, they run eagerly into tumults, murders, and rebellions: And Dr. Fletcher says, that they are so enraged with hunger and cold, that they beg in a wild and desperate tone, "Give me, and cut me; help me, and kill me," &c.

I would observe here, how much more easy, as well as glorious, it is to govern freemen than slaves. It is true, that freemen go sometimes much farther in their opposition to unjust power, than slaves go or can go; because they have more spirit, sense, virtue, and force: But that they are with more difficulty governed, is absolutely false. It is indeed difficult to oppress them, and their rebellion is generally no more than their distinguishing of government from oppression; a distinction which their governors but too seldom make, and which slaves, born to oppression, know not how to make. In truth, government is a thing not so much as known in the greatest, by far the greatest part of the earth. Government supposes, on one side, a just execution of rational standing laws, made by the consent of society; and on the other side, a

rational subjection to those laws. But what has arbitrary will, wanton and outrageous lust, cruelty and oppression, to do with government, but to destroy it?

But to shew yet further the anarchy of absolute monarchy, I shall insert here what Monsieur Bernier says of the education of such sort of princes. He says, that one of the principal sources of the misery, of the misgovernment, of the dispeopling, and the decay of the eastern empires, proceeds from hence, that the children of their kings are brought up only by women and eunuchs, who generally are no other than wretched slaves from Russia, Circassia, Gurgistan, Mengrelia and Ethiopia; creatures of mean and insolent, servile and ignorant souls.

These princes become kings, without instruction worthy of men, and without knowing what it is to be a king. They are amazed when they come out of the seraglio, as persons coming out of another world, or out of some subterraneous cave, where they had spent their whole lives. They wonder at every thing which they meet, like so many ignorants. They either fear all and believe all, like children; or nothing at all, like idiots. They are commonly high and proud, and seemingly grave: But this their loftiness and gravity is so flat, so distasteful, and so unbecoming them, that it is visibly nothing but brutality and barbarousness, and the effect of some ill-studied documents. Sometimes they run into some childish civilities, still more unsavoury; or into such cruelties as are blind and brutal; or into the vile and mean vice of drunkenness, or into a gross and excessive luxury; and either ruin their bodies and understandings with their concubines, or abandon themselves to the pleasure of hunting, like some carnivorous animals, and prefer a pack of dogs before so many poor people, whom they force to follow them in the pursuit of their game, and suffer to perish with hunger, heat, cold, and misery.

In a word, they always run into one extreme or another, and are entirely irrational or extravagant, according as they are carried away by their temper, or by the first impressions made upon them. And thus remaining, almost all, in utter ignorance of their duty, and of the state of their country, and of all publick concernments, they abandon the reins of the government to some vizier (in English, a first minister), who entertains them in their ignorance, and encourages them in their passions and follies; and their ignorance, passions and follies, are the strongest supports that these viziers can have to maintain their dominions over their masters.

These kings are also frequently given up entirely to these slaves, to their mothers, and to their own eunuchs, who often know nothing but to contrive plots of cruelty to strangle and banish one another; sometimes they murder the king himself: Nor is any one else safe in life or property. Thus far Bernier.

Thus do these princes live shut up in brothels, strangers and enemies to their people; and when an appetite for war is added to their spirit of cruelty and oppression, all the advantage from it to their subjects is, that in the warlike havock a quicker end to put to their miseries, by ending their lives with a gun or a scimitar, instead of famine.

As to the redress of their grievances, and the doing justice upon the authors of them, it is absolutely impracticable in any country which has no states and representatives;

and certain and irretrievable misery, as absolute as its government, is entailed upon it to all generations, till there be an utter end either of the government or of the people. The governor of Schiras pays for his government, to the King of Persia, vast sums of ready money, with fine horses, and all the fine things and rarities to be found within his province: Besides these excessive presents to the king, he is obliged to make the like to all the great lords and favourites at court, who are never to be gained but by continual bribes; so that to defray this great and endless expence, the wretched people must suffer great and endless burdens and exactions, and the governor must be a tyrant to preserve his government. Nor can they have any possible relief, though they have sometimes attempted to find it: But when two or three villages at a time have come to complain to the king, they have, after long waiting, been forced away without any redress, with empty purses and hungry bellies, because they who should have given them admission, were bribed to debar them: So that they must stupidly submit to the barbarous extortions of a ravenous vizier. This, says Bernier, is the policy practised by all the governors and kans in the Persian dominions: And he tells us, that one day, when Sha Sefi was hunting (a prince whose justice and punishments were only acts of cruelty), a poor man deputed by a neighbouring village to make some complaint to the king, appeared behind a rock with a paper in his hand: But while the poor wretch was declaring his errand, and praying for justice, his most gracious Majesty, without making any answer, drew his bow, and shooting two arrows into his body, instantly slew him.<sup>16</sup>

Nor was this execrable royal act of his any more agreeable to the genius of that prince than to the genius of that sort of government, which is naturally barbarous and savage. An arbitrary prince is only the most exalted and successful beast of prey in his own dominions, and all the many officers under him are but so many subordinate beasts of prey, who hunt and rob and devour his people for him and themselves; and he and his officers do but constitute a long link of armed tigers terrible to behold, who leap furiously upon every man and every thing that tempts their eye or their appetite.

So that under a tyrant, there is no end of tyrants: From him that sways the scepter to him that carries a musket, all are tyrants, and every one for himself as far as he dare.

If any thing concerning these unintermitting pests of [the] human race, could possibly raise in a human soul any other passion but grief and horror, it would create mirth to hear mention made, as sometimes in books of history and travels there is mention made, of a tyrant's sitting in his seat of justice once in so many days, to hear equally all causes and persons. What mockery! It is really a farce, but a melancholy one, to hear the word *justice* come out of the mouth of a tyrant; who, by being so, is a settled enemy to the common laws of justice and mercy, and common sense, and to all that is good or lovely, or desirable amongst men. As well may he set apart one day in six to cure all the diseases of his subjects, or to make their clothes, and cook their victuals, if he leave them any to make and cook. As every subject in his dominions is oppressed, and he and his instruments are the oppressors, I know no way upon earth for him to do them any general justice, but to destroy himself and all his deputy tyrants.

*G I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 73. SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 1722. *A Display Of Tyranny, Its Destructive Nature, And Tendency To Dispeople The Earth.* (GORDON)

SIR,

I intend to finish in this paper, what I have so largely handled in so many others, the subject of liberty and tyranny; a noble subject, superior to all others, and to the greatest genius, but fit for the consideration of every genius, and of every rank of men. It concerns the whole earth, and children ought to be instructed in it as soon as they are capable of instruction. Why should not the knowledge and love of God be joined to the knowledge and love of liberty, his best gift, which is the certain source of all the civil blessings of this life? And I have shewn that religion cannot subsist without it. And why should not the dread and hatred of Satan be accompanied with the dread and hatred of tyrants, who are his instruments, and the instruments of all the civil miseries in this life? I have often thought that the barbarians, who worship the Devil, must have borrowed their idea of him from the character and behaviour of their own princes. One might indeed defy any thing out of hell, or even in it, and all that are in it, to do half the mischief upon this earth that tyrants do.

They reduce mankind to the condition of brutes, and make that reason, which God gave them, useless to them: They deprive them even of the blessings of nature, starve them in the midst of plenty, and frustrate the natural bounty of the earth to men; so that nature smiles in vain where tyranny frowns: The very hands of men, given them by nature for their support, are turned by tyrants into the instruments of their misery, by being employed in vile drudgeries or destructive wars, to gratify the lust and vanity of their execrable lords, who suffer neither religion, nor virtue, nor knowledge, nor plenty, nor any kind of happiness, to dwell within the extent of their power.

Nothing that is good or desirable can subsist under tyrants, nor within their reach; and they themselves subsist upon nothing but what is detestable and wicked. They are supported by general ruin; they live by the destruction of mankind: And as fraud and villainy, and every species of violence and cruelty, are the props of their throne; so they measure their own happiness, and security, and strength, by the misery and weakness of their people; and continued oppression and rapine are their studied and necessary arts of reigning, as is every art by which they can render their people poor, abject, and wretched; though by such methods they do in effect render themselves so, and consequently become easy preys to the next invader. That wealth, which dispersed amongst their subjects, and circulated in trade and commerce, would employ, increase, and enrich them, and return often again with interest into their coffers, is barbarously robbed from the people, and engrossed by these their oppressors, and generally laid out by them to adorn their palaces, to cover their horses or elephants, or to embellish their own persons, and those of their concubines and attendants, or else locked up in dark caverns far from human sight and use.

Whilst it is yet in the mine, it is within the reach of pickaxes and shovels; and by the labour and industry of men, may be made useful and beneficial to men: But in the den of a tyrant, it is more securely, more irretrievably buried and guarded from the use of men. Here are literally Pluto's brass walls, and adamantine gates; here are thousands of real Cerberuses, who never sleep; all to encompass and secure this dead treasure, and to restrain a general gift of God from the use of his creatures: From thence it is rarely fetched, even upon the greatest emergencies, or for any purposes but ill ones, 'till at last it becomes the prize and booty of a conquering enemy. Alexander found more riches in the Persian treasures, than in the hands of freemen would have conquered the world; and 'tis thought that there are more at this day in that of the Great Mogul, than would purchase the greatest and wealthiest kingdom in Europe; and it has been computed that there are thirty millions of wealth buried in the secret vaults of the Turkish seraglio, the plunder of the people, or of those who plundered them; yet they are still plundered and miserably oppressed, to increase this dead, useless, and pernicious store.

By these and the like inhuman means, the countries of tyrants are come to be in the condition which I have elsewhere described, desolate and uncultivated, and proper receptacles for such savage monsters, and ravening beasts of prey, who rather choose to live in barren fields, inhospitable deserts, and in dispeopled and empty towns, than amongst freemen in happy climates, filled with rich and numerous cities, abounding in inhabitants who are possessed of liberty, and will be bold to defend it.

Now where can all this dismal ruin, this growing depopulation end? If a continued decay in the natural body certainly ends in the extinction of life; in what can a continued and hasty decay of mankind end, but in the extinction of men? So that if the world last many centuries more in its present wasting and mournful situation, there must be a dissolution of [the] human race, before the world is dissolved.

Several new tyrannies have sprung up, like so many new plagues, within the memory of man, and like them have laid waste, but with a more regular and continued ruin, countries once strong in liberty and people: And as tyranny, like every other full-grown mischief, becomes more and more insupportable every day, the condition of mankind under it must necessarily, and does actually, grow every day worse and worse, and they themselves fewer. And even when their numbers and their substances are lessened, or rather exhausted, the demands of the tyrant upon them are not lessened, nor his rapine abated, nor his expences and exactions restrained.

When a tyrant has reduced a million of people to half that number by his cruelty and extortions, he madly expects from the remaining half the same revenue and assistance of men, which he had from the whole; and like the rest, they must perish to make good his expectations; and he often increases his troops as fast as his people decrease. So that his expence is enlarged as there becomes less to support it; but he will be supported, and his poor perishing people must do it, though they destroy themselves.

Such is the pestilent, savage, and unsatiable nature of this sort of monster, whose figure, throne and authority is established upon the ruins of reason, humanity, and nature: He takes all that his subjects have, and destroys them to get more.



A late great prince, when he had lost and destroyed two millions of his people out of twelve, and reduced the whole to a degree of poverty and servitude scarce to be expressed, what impositions did he recall, what taxes abolish, what troops disband, for their relief? Not one. On the contrary, the swellings of his insolent heart continued, as did his merciless extortions upon his people, and his perfidious designs and encroachments upon his neighbours; and he lived and died the plague and curse of Christendom. Nor can it be shewn, that other princes who govern by the same authority, that is, according to their own whims and caprice, leave their subjects more plenty or happiness, or cheat or harass their neighbours less, according to the measure of their power. In truth, the whole tribe are perpetually taking advantages, and usurping upon one another, and are constant goads and thorns in one another's sides, and in the sides of their people: nor can the subjects of a prince of this cast have one tolerable reason under the sun to defend him against another, but that he lives amongst them, and spends with them part of their own plunder, and probably the other would not: As his whole reliance must be upon his soldiers, he must increase them in proportion to his distrust of his people; which is a confession of mutual enmity: Neither is it enough that his soldiers oppress and famish his people, for his sake and their own (for both he and they are supported by the spoils of the people), but he must keep them as constantly employed as he can; because if they be not employed in plundering, invading, and shedding of blood, they will grow unfit for such beneficent and necessary work, and may probably degenerate into humanity and mercy; than which a more terrible change could not befall their royal master; so that in mere duty they must be constantly practising mischief and rapine at home or abroad.

Thus do these general destroyers proceed to lay waste the world: The best and most countries in it are already, many of them, almost desolate, and some of them altogether, as I have shewn in many instances; and the desolation gains ground daily: Nor, when some countries are dispeopled, are there sufficient recruits, or indeed any, to be had from others as formerly. The north, formerly the hive of nations, is now as much dispeopled as any of the southern countries, which some centuries ago, were peopled from it; and both north and south have been dispeopled by tyranny. Arabia, which once over-ran the world with multitudes, is now as desolate as the rest of the world which they overran. The country of the Chozari, which was a vast empire, within these four hundred years, is now quite uninhabited, though great part of it is a fertile and beautiful country; and in its last struggle with Tamerlane, brought five hundred thousand men into the field: Such a force of people were there so lately in a country where now there are none! I think Rubriquis says, that he travelled two months through it, and in all the time saw neither man nor beast, but many great ruinous towns and cities, particularly one which had eight hundred churches in it less than four hundred years ago, but now has not one inhabitant.

What can be more affecting than this instance! Not a single soul to be met with in a vast and noble country, which a few centuries ago was a potent empire, and contained millions! In all probability, countries and empires, which now make a great noise and bustle in the world, will be lying, two or three centuries hence, in the same woeful and silent solitude, if they last so long; for depopulation makes every-where, except in a few remaining free states, a prodigious and flying progress; even in Europe, as I have before proved in many instances. And in some of those free states, the seeds of

servitude, the true cause of depopulation, and of every misery, seem to be sown deep. Alas! Power encroaches daily upon liberty, with a success too evident; and the balance between them is almost lost. Tyranny has engrossed almost the whole earth, and striking at mankind root and branch, makes the world a slaughter-house; and will certainly go on to destroy, till it is either destroyed itself, or, which is most likely, has left nothing else to destroy.

The bulk of the earth being evidently almost a desert already, made so by tyrants; it is demonstration that the whole must be so, and must soon be entirely so, if the growth of tyranny be not restrained; else if the general and wide waste goes on, men will become too few for the management of societies, and for cultivation and commerce; all which are supported by numbers; and then degenerating into absolute savages, they will live straggling and naked in the woods and wildernesses, like wild beasts, and be devoured by them; or, like them, devour one another, or perish with hunger. And thus there will be an end of men; unless those states that are yet free, preserve, in the midst of this general waste, their own liberties and people, and, like the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, fill the world again, in process of time, with colonies of freemen.

That there is such a terrible waste of people in the world, cannot be denied; and it is as evident, that tyrants, are the constant, regular, and necessary cause of it. They are indeed so manifestly the authors of all that is ruinous and wicked, that if God Almighty had left it to Satan to invent an engine for the destroying of the world, and for defacing every thing beautiful, good, or desirable in it, that minister of vengeance, and enemy to God and man, would doubtless have invented tyrants, who by their wonderful success in such ministration, have ever shewn, and do still shew, their eminent fitness for it. They shew every-where such a constant and strong antipathy to the happiness of mankind, that if there be but one free city within their ken, they are restless in their designs and snares against it, and never defend it but against one another, and practice the vilest and the meanest rogueries to become masters of it. There are instances in this age of free cities falling into the claws of tyrants, and of the miserable difference between their former opulency, and their present poorness: They have never since put off their mourning, which grows daily more black and dismal.

The breath of a tyrant blasts and poisons every thing, changes blessings and plenty into curses and misery, great cities into gloomy solitudes, and their rich citizens into beggars and vagabonds: I could name cities, which, while they governed themselves, could maintain armies, and now enslaved can scarce maintain the poor proud rogues who govern them. It is certain, that whatever country or place is subdued by a prince who governs by his will, is ruined by his government.

It is confessed, that the arbitrary princes in Europe have not yet, like those in Asia, declared themselves masters of the soil; and their people have a sort of property. How long this will continue, I know not precisely. This is certain, that the condition of their subjects, which was always bad, grows hourly worse; and their nobility, which were once rich and powerful, are now reduced very low, and greatly impoverished. These, who were the supports of royalty, having created jealousy as if they had eclipsed it, have felt the terrible effects of arbitrary power as well as others, though not so much.

Besides, when the common people, already wholly exhausted, and starving under oppression, can supply the exorbitant demands of their prince no longer, the estates of the nobility will be the next resource; and, like the mastiff dog at the bee-hive, when he has sucked up all the honey, he will swallow the comb: And then most of Europe will be in the condition of Turkey, as many parts of it are at present not much better; and, like the Great Turk, most of its princes will be sole proprietors of the land, as they now make themselves of its product, which very near answers the same end. When tenants, exhausted by taxes, are unable to pay rent, the land yielding no profit, is as bad as none; and in some instances worse than none, as we are particularly told by the noble author of the *Account of Denmark*, where some landlords have begged the king upon their knees to ease them of their land, by taking it from them for good and all; for that it was taxed more than it was worth.

Most of the princes of Europe have been long introducing the Turkish government into Europe; and have succeeded so well, that I would rather live under the Turk than under many of them. They practice the cruelties and oppressions of the Turks, and want the tolerating spirit of the Turk; and if some unforeseen check be not thrown in their way, the whole polity of savage Turkey will be established by them in all its parts and barbarity; as if the depopulation which is already so quick, and taking such dreadful strides, were still too slow. It is not enough for tyrants to have consumed mankind so fast, that out of twenty parts, they have within these two thousand years destroyed perhaps nineteen (for so much at least I take to be the disproportion), but fresh machines of cruelty are still sought after, besides never laying aside any of the old, till the destruction be fully completed. They seem to think, that they shall have enemies as long as any men remain; which indeed is a reasonable apprehension: But it is astonishing at first view, that mankind should have so long borne these unrelenting slaughterers of mankind. But, alas! who knows not the force of corruption, delusion, and standing armies!

Oh liberty! Oh servitude! how amiable, how detestable, are the different sounds! Liberty is salvation in politicks, as slavery is reprobation; neither is there any other distinction but that of saint and devil, between the champions of the one and of the other.

And here I conclude this noble subject of liberty; having made some weak attempts to shew its glorious advantages, and to set off the opposite mischiefs of raging, relentless, and consuming tyranny: A task to which no human mind is equal. For neither the sublimest wits of antiquity, nor the brightest geniuses of late or modern time, assisted with all the powers of rhetoric, and all the stimulations of poetick fire, with the warmest and boldest figures in language, ever did, or ever could, or ever can, describe and heighten sufficiently the beauty of the one, or the deformity of the other: Language fails in it, and words are too weak.

Those who do not groan under the yoke of heavy and pointed vassalage, cannot possibly have images equal to a calamity which they do not feel: And those who feel it are stupefied by it, and their minds depressed; nor can they have conceptions large, bright, and comprehensive enough, to be fully sensible of their own wretched condition; and much less can they paint it in proper colours to others. We, who enjoy

the precious, lovely, and invaluable blessing of liberty, know that nothing can be paid too dear to purchase and preserve it. Without it the world is a wilderness, and life precarious and a burden: Death is a tribute which we all owe to nature, and must pay; and it is infinitely preferable, in any shape, to an ignominious life: Nor can we restore our beings back again into the hands of our great Creator, with more glory to him, more honour to ourselves, or more advantage to mankind, than in defence of all that is valuable, religious, and praise-worthy upon earth, or include whatever is so.

How execrable then and infamous are the wretches, who, for a few precarious, momentary, and perhaps imaginary advantages, would rob their country, their happy country, for ever, of every thing that can render human life desirable; and for a little tinsel pageantry, and false and servile homage, unworthy of honest men, and hated by wise men, would involve millions of their fellow-creatures in lasting misery, bondage, and woe, and charge themselves with their just hatred and bitter curses! Such unnatural parricides, unworthy of the human shape and name, would fill up the measure of their barbarity, by entailing poverty, chains, and sorrow, upon their own posterity. And often it has happened, that such men have, unpitied, suffered in their own persons, the sad effects of those cruel counsels and schemes, which they intended for the ruin of all but themselves; and have justly fallen into that pit, which they had traitorously digged for others.

—————Nec lex est justior ulla,

Quam necis artifices arte perire sua.

*G I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 74. SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 1722. *The Vanity Of Conquerors, And The Calamities Attending Conquests.*  
(GORDON)

SIR,

The condition of an absolute prince is thought the highest lot of human life, in point of splendor, plenty, and power; and is perhaps the lowest in point of happiness. The greatest appearances of pleasure are no certain proofs of pleasure; and he who can enjoy all things, has often the least enjoyment: Having little or nothing to expect, he is at a stand in life; than which there cannot be a greater unhappiness. It is an agreeable fallacy which men keep themselves under, that while they find themselves daily disappointed in the enjoyments from which they expected most pleasure, they still press forward to more enjoyments, without expecting to be disappointed in these, though they certainly will. Their happiness consists in being deceived without knowing it; and when they find that they are, they do not grow wiser, but go on to promise themselves satisfaction from things, which, upon a thousand trials, they have found gavethem none.

Our only lasting pleasure therefore is expectation. And what have absolute princes to expect; they who are in possession of all things? Yet they cannot live without expectation: They grow weary of pleasures within their power, and are therefore for stretching their power to procure more or better; which yet it will not procure. But thus their hopes beguile them.

Hence great and famous conquerors, never content with their present condition, come to be the incessant troublers of the world: And they who should have protected it, and preserved its peace, have often sought their pleasures in the tears, misery, and sorrows of millions; nay, often found their own grief, ruin, and ill fate in doing so. That this has been their character, is too universally true; and I believe it will be hard to shew one such prince in an hundred, who never laid snares either against his own people, or his neighbours; and though he never did, yet it was their duty and near concern to be upon their guard against him. They might have depended upon it, as a proposition that had infinite odds on its side, that he was not satisfied with its present condition, and that he would alter it, if he could, at their expence. Either his power was not absolute enough, or his dominions not wide enough; nor would they ever have been, whatever accessions of both accrued to him. There was still some darling point to gain, dearer than any before gained, though they were all so before they were gained.

It is the hard fate of conquerors, that their only, or chiefest remaining pleasure, is that of doing mischief: but the fate of their subjects and neighbours is harder. They are often undone to furnish out employment for their governors, who find their pleasure in destroying their people, or in doing that which destroys them. To increase power is, no doubt, the maxim of these princes; but their practice generally contradicts it, while they lessen their people and their wealth to enlarge their territory; every addition of

this kind being an addition to their weakness: And therefore great empires, from the moment they are at their height, are in a continual decay; the decay and discouragement of the people being the unnatural means of their first growth; and indeed their increase contained in it, and carried along with it, certain seeds of decrease and desolation.

It may seem a contradiction, to say, that the whole can be built upon the destruction of the parts: Yet it is true of absolute monarchy, which does ever subsist by ruining and destroying those by whom it subsists; and the people, without whom it is nothing, must be undone to make it what it is. It is a power erected upon the ruin of its own strength, which is the people; and when they are gone, the power must go, growing first impotent in proportion to their misery and thinness: And that it does make them miserable and thin, and must at last extinguish them, I have at large shewn in former letters; I think demonstrated. It may bounce and terrify for a while, and extend its bounds; but even at the time when it looks biggest and strongest, it is wearing out, and by its conquest does but dig its own grave the deeper, by consuming its old people to acquire new, whom it also consumes, and with whom it must also consume; like a debauchee in private life, the faster he lives, the less time he has to live.

The conquests of the Spaniards made a great noise in the world, and them very terrible for a time. But their gold and silver mountains of Mexico and Peru, though they be such glorious prizes as never before fell to the lot of any conqueror, have not made that nation amends for the loss and fewness of their people at home. Those that remain there cannot be said to be enriched by these vast acquisitions, whatever some particulars may be, who by their inequality and insolence oppress the whole. And for the Turkish empire, which frightened Europe and the world, and subdued great part of it, it is so wretchedly sunk in its discipline and forces, and its provinces are so desolate and poor, that, in all human probability, this generation will see it broken into an hundred pieces. It has spun itself out, as the Saracen empire did before it, into athread too long and too small to bear its own great burden without breaking.

People are like wire: The more they are extended, the weaker they become; and the closer they are together, the richer they grow, and more potent. This is the language of common sense and experience: But ambition speaks another and a different language, for extensive empire and uncontrolled dominion; and being too well heard, puts men upon sacrificing their real strength to that which is only imaginary. Hence they become really impotent in quest of false power, and destroy men in gross for the venal breath of a few flatterers, which they call glory. But horrid and detestable are the ways to such glory, which incites them to ravage and plague, to fetter and kill [the] human race, for the sake of a pleasant dream; to which too they sacrifice all their waking quiet, and make themselves and all others miserable for this delusive vision of their own separate happiness, which, like a phantom, mocks their sight, and flies from them the more they pursue it.

Besides, whosoever considers the many difficulties and dangers, the endless uncertainties and anxieties, and the general horror and hatred, inseparable from such pursuits, will see how poorly they reward him who makes them; having long stretched out his arms to embrace happiness, he is at last forced to draw them back empty, or

full of sorrows. He who seeks felicity this way, hunts a shadow, which he will never overtake: And, in truth, what can such a troubler of the earth expect, but the bitter aversion of his own people, whom he oppresses and exhausts; and the curses of mankind, whom he persecutes and lays waste? Conquest gives him no new security; but, far from it, multiplies those who have a mind to destroy him, and arms more hands against him. They who possess most, have more to fear; especially when coming to their possessions by injustice, they must maintain them by violence. Hence the endless fears and insecurity of conquerors and oppressors, and the many conspiracies against them;

*Sine caede & sanguine pauci* —————

Such therefore is the bitter fruit, and such often is the terrible and bloody end, of such wild and pernicious pursuits. No wise man would, for the empire of the earth, live in perpetual or strong apprehensions of any kind; much less under a tormenting opinion, that whole nations detested him, and sought his life for making them miserable, as conquerors always do, and must consequently be considered by them as their worst enemies.

But the strange madness of conquest appears from another consideration, namely, that there is not a prince in the world, let his territory be ever so small, but must find full employment to govern it, if he govern it as he should do; and therefore there never was a great empire so well governed as private cities; and no city so well as private families. Where the governed are but few, or live in little compass, the eye of the magistrate is over them, and the eye of the law over him, where he is not above it: Complaints can be easily examined, and violence and injustice be quickly overtaken, or readily prevented. But in wide and over-grown empires, especially where all depends upon the will and care of one, let his heart be ever so upright, a thousand evils and injuries will be done, which he can never hear of, nor they who suffer them have the means of representing to him; and which probably are done or connived at by his own deputies, whom he employs to prevent or punish them.

All princes have indeed more business than they can well do; and when they look out for new business, they must neglect the old, and throw off necessary cares, to assume wanton ones, inconsistent with the other. Harmless amusements they ought to have; and whatever amusements those are, is all one to their people, provided the general security be consulted, and property and peace be preserved: But to embark in wars, and make conquests at the expence of the people, and not for the people, is a preposterous way of protecting them, and of fulfilling the duties of reigning. Such a war was that of Troy; where all the princes of Greece, leaving their several countries in a state of anarchy, and drained of their bravest men, beat their heads against stone walls for ten years together, because these walls contained, as they were told, a Greek beauty who was a great strumpet. And having sacrificed their time, their navy, and the forces of their country, to this wise resentment, at last, by a stratagem, they got their chaste and important prize,<sup>[2]</sup> and for joy and anger, burnt the city, putting the king and all the inhabitants, who had done them no wrong, to the sword.

Most of the wars in the world have been Trojan wars; but most particularly those in the Holy Land, whither most of the princes in Christendom made lunatic and ruinous expeditions, to rescue from the Saracens a grave which could not be known from other graves. Great preparations were lately made for a Trojan war at Astracan; and in Italy a Trojan war is apprehended. We too, since the reigns of the Plantagenets, have had our Trojan wars; and our English Ajaxes and Achilleses have fought many bloody battles, in which England had no other interest, but the inward satisfaction and glory of losing its men and money.

Conquest, or fighting for territory, is, for the most part, the most shameless thing in the world. Government is either designed for the people's good, or else I know not what business it has in the world: And therefore in all contests among conquerors about territory, if natural justice and common sense were to decide it, that prince ought to carry it, who can satisfy the people that he will use them best. And sometimes they all vouchsafe to promise this, though very few of them perform it. But this consideration, which ought to be the only one, and is perhaps used by them in their manifestoes, has not the least weight with most of them. On the contrary, their chief argument to move people is often the most ridiculous, stupid, and absurd of all others, and really concerns the people the least of any other. As to the great point of using the people well, and promoting their prosperity, these are considerations so much below the thoughts of your conquerors, and so opposite to their practice, that if the people were to throw dice for one of them, they would do as wisely as if they chose him by deliberate voices, if they were at liberty to choose him, since there is rarely a better or a worse amongst them. And therefore the Persian nobles did not amiss, when they delegated the choice of such a sovereign to the horses which they rode. If Philip II of Spain had in the least aimed at governing the Seven Provinces for their good, he would never have disturbed their revolt; since he might see that they prospered a thousand times faster without him than ever they could with him. But as this reasonable and beneficent thought had no authority with him, he exhausted in vain the forces of that great monarchy, to reduce those new states under his tyranny, and to make them as wretched and desolate as he made his other dominions.

*G I am, &c.*

## ENDNOTES



[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 75. SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1722. *Of The Restraints Which Ought To Be Laid Upon Publick Rulers. (GORDON)*

SIR,

After all that has been said of arbitrary power, and of its hideous nature and effects, it will fall properly in, to say something here of the restraints which all wise and fortunate nations ought to put, and have ever put, upon their magistrates. This is what I promised nine months ago to do; and this is what I propose to do in this letter and the following.

No wise nation in the world ever trusted to the sole management, mere mercy, and absolute discretion of its own magistrates, when it could help doing it; and no series of magistrates ever had absolute power over any nation, but they turned the same to its ruin, and their own wild gratifications and ill-judged profit. As long as the passions of men govern them, they will always govern by their passions, and their passions will always increase with their power. And therefore, whenever a whole people, or any part of them, cross the passions of any man that governs them, he will turn his passions against a whole people, or any number of them that offend him, and will destroy a whole people, rather than stifle his passions. This is evident in ten thousand instances; and the publick will ever, and certainly, be sacrificed to private lust, when private lust governs the publick. Nothing but fear and selfish considerations can keep men within any reasonable bounds; and nothing but the absence of fear can set men at defiance with society, and prompt them to oppress it. It was therefore well judged of the Spartan Ephori, when they erected an altar to Fear, as the most proper divinity to restrain the wild ambition of men, and to keep their kings within the confines of their duty.

A nation has but two sorts of usurpation to fear; one from their neighbours, and another from their own magistrates: Nor is a foreign usurpation more formidable than a domestick, which is the most dangerous of the two, by being hardest to remove; and generally stealing upon the people by degrees, is fixed before it is scarce felt or apprehended: Like wild beasts in a wood, beset with toils as yet unseen by them, they think themselves free; but striving to escape, find themselves caught in the chains, which had long been preparing for them, and stealing upon them. Besides, for one people undone by foreign invaders, ten have been undone by their own native rogues, who were entrusted to defend them; but instead of it, either betrayed them to these invaders, or seized traitorously for themselves those rights which they were sworn to preserve for others; and then, by oppression and cruelty, and the other consequences of their treachery, reduced them to an utter disability of defending themselves against any invasion whatsoever.

What has made Italy and Asia deserts, and their remaining inhabitants starving and contemptible cowards? Not the inundation of barbarous nations; though that inundation was owing to the weakness of the inhabitants, weakened and undone by

their base and tyrannical governors: But they have been made deserts by the continued depredations of their execrable princes, who have acted as if they had been scythes in the hand of Satan to mow down the race of men. There is a certain old Italian tyrant, now living, who, though he has by studied rapine converted into a wilderness a country which nature has made a paradise, yet is not weary nor ashamed of his rapine, but goes on to suck and squeeze the remaining blood of his ghostly subjects; and next to his visiting seven altars a day (a way which he has of compounding with God for being a pestilent tyrant to his creatures), I say, his only employment, besides this his devout and impudent mockery of God, is to sit contriving with his faithful ministry, which of his subjects may probably be worth a hundred pounds, and how to cheat him or rob him of that hundred pounds.

This same grand prince has now scarce any other business for his soldiers, but that of employing them directly against his own people; nor are they fit for any other employment; for one English regiment would beat seven of his. So that his paltry forces, many of them, are placed upon his frontiers, not to defend him from an invasion, a task which they are not equal to, but to keep his wretched subjects from running away from famine and his government. A relief which is however barbarously denied them by this old polite tyrant! They must stay and perish under him; nor will he suffer them to seek elsewhere that support of life, of which his diabolical government deprives them at home; as if when he had robbed them of their labour and their life, he also wanted their skins.

There is not upon earth a nation, which having had unaccountable magistrates, has not felt them to have been crying and consuming mischiefs. In truth, where they are most limited, it has been often as much as a whole people could do to restrain them to their trust, and to keep them from violence; and such frequently has been their propensity to be lawless, that nothing but violence, and sometimes nothing but a violent death, could cure them of their violence. This evil has its root in human nature; men will never think they have enough, whilst they can take more; nor be content with a part, when they can seize the whole. We are, indeed told of some absolute princes, who have been very good men and no oppressors. But the nature of their power rendered their good qualities almost useless, and gave to others an opportunity of doing in their name, and by their authority, mischiefs which perhaps they themselves abhorred. Besides, in any series of arbitrary princes upon earth, scarce out of ten can one be named who was tolerable, and who either did not himself prove an inhuman tyrant, or suffered his ministers to be so: And when an absolute prince has had great parts, they generally went to his grave with him, and scarce ever proved hereditary. In truth, the children of great princes have almost always proved very unlikethem.

I own, the first of the line has sometimes acted plausibly, and gained, by doing so, dangerous credit and popularity. But if he were an angel, he is never to be forgiven, because it is out of his power what his successor shall prove. The crocodile's egg does no mischief whilst it continues an egg; but out of it is hatched a crocodile, and by it the cursed race of destroyers is continued. D. Heinsius says very justly, *Nec unquam servitus, ne speciosa quidem, legit quibus serviat, sed accipit*. "The most plausible slavery is attended with this eternal misfortune, that it has no choice of a master, but

must accept of a master, such a chance sends." Vespasian left to the Romans for their prince the beneficent Titus; but he also left them the raging and bloody Domitian.

If Julius Caesar and Augustus had been really gods, as their flatterers made them; yet their leaving behind them such a race of successors (who proved a race of daemons) entitles them to the characters of detestable tyrants to all eternity. Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, were the precious and bloody blessings which these beneficent princes left! Names universally abhorred, whilst those of Caesar and Augustus are generally adored: And yet to Caesar and Augustus were mankind indebted for these pests of mankind: Nor were they so great pests as were Caesar and Augustus, who did much more mischief, and destroyed the world more than either Nero or Caligula, besides leaving them to destroy it still further.

People rarely think of this, but it is literally true. What! will some say, the generous Caesar and the mild Augustus do more mischief than the wild Caligula and the savage Nero! Yes, fifty to one: Nero destroyed his twenties, Caesar and Augustus their twenty thousands; and for Nero, we may thank Julius and Augustus. Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, took Rome chiefly for the scene of their cruelty, and destroyed many great and good men, some out of wantonness, and more out of jealousy: But Caesar and Augustus made Rome and the world their slaughterhouse, and destroyed more great and good men by far than the other four, as butchering monsters as they were: And as to publick rapine and general depopulation, they exceeded them still further. Indeed, as to heroick and diffusive mischief and villainy, the difference between them was as great as between Jack Straw and a late Grand Monarque. The truth is, Caesar and Augustus had art and great qualities, which are far from excusing the evils which they did; and their successors, having all their ambition, but wanting their great qualities and discretion, took the direct road to hatred.

An unrestrained power in one man, or in a few, over all, is such an extravagant deviation from reason and nature, that neither Briareus with his many hands, nor the Hydra with its numerous heads, nor the Centaurs, half man and half beast, were things more unshapen, monstrous, and frightful: Nor would these fictions appear more fabulous and improbable, than such power would be to a free people, who never had heard of it before. What could seem to common sense a wilder chimera, than that one man, not created with features and endowments different from other men, should have a lasting right from his blood, or his pride, or his madness, to domineer over all men, and to rule, kill, starve, famish, banish, and imprison, as many as he pleased?

This power is indeed so monstrous, that it turns men that have it into monsters; and therefore the most amiable and unexceptionable man upon earth is not to be trusted with it. Men change with their stations, and power of any sort rarely alters them for the better; but, on the contrary, has often turned a very good man into a very bad. This shews that men forbear evil, chiefly to avoid the ill consequence of it to themselves, and for want of opportunity and protection; and finding both in power, they prove, by making use of them, that their virtue was only self-love, and fear of punishment. Thus men of the best and brightest characters have often done most mischief, and by well serving their country, have been enabled to destroy it: And they were good and evil

from one and the same motive; a passion for themselves, and their own security or glory.

Thus the house of the Medicis, by being very good commonwealth-men, and by serving and obliging almost every family in Florence, gained credit enough by this their generous behaviour, to enslave that great and powerful city. *Idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur, quod pars servitutis erat.* Pericles administered the government of Athens with great sufficiency; but he broke down the fences of its liberty, and ruled arbitrarily all his days. Agathocles fought successfully for the city of Syracuse, and as successfully against it; and having defended the citizens against their enemies, he afterwards shewed himself their greatest, by killing in one great massacre all the chief and best of them, and by crowning himself tyrant over all the rest. Marius and Sulla, Pompey and Caesar, were great and excellent commanders, and conquered many great kings and nations: But they made all the fruits of their victories their own; and from being very good soldiers, made themselves most pernicious and arbitrary magistrates.

Now all these great men derived, from the good which they did, a capacity to do much more evil: So that as a power to do great good, does naturally include in it an opportunity of doing much evil; so those who are in the possession of power, as all magistrates are, ought, above all other men, to be narrowly watched, and checked with restraints stronger than their temptations to break them; and every crime of theirs ought to be more penal, as it is evidently more pernicious, than the same crime in any other sort of men. For, besides that *quales in republica principes essent, tales reliquos solere esse cives*; that is, that people are generally virtuous or corrupt as their magistrates are; there is something exceeding solemn and important in the nature of this great trust; and accordingly as it is observed or betrayed, a country is happy or miserable: And when any one breach of it passes once off with impunity, another will soon follow it; and in time it will be considered no longer as a trust, but an estate.

So dangerous a thing is an ill precedent, which is often an inlet to an endless train of mischiefs; and so depraved is the nature of man, that we justify ourselves in wickedness by examples that cannot be justified. An action at first reckoned dishonest, by being practised once or twice, becomes unblameable; and that which was at first accounted an extortion, grows by use to be thought but a perquisite. Thus evil is mitigated, nay, cancelled, by repetition, which is a real aggravation of evil; and there are certain rogueries in office, which being long practised, and by many, are at last reckoned as sacred as the trust against which they are committed: A sufficient reason for providing, by great and certain penalties, that none be committed.

*G I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 76. SATURDAY, MAY 12, 1722. *The Same Subject Continued. (GORDON)*

SIR,

How cautiously and partially men in power are to be trusted, and how much to be restrained, appears from hence, that almost every civil evil begins from courts, and the redress of every civil evil from an opposition to the pretensions and excesses of courts. This is so universally true, that no nation ever continued happy, whose chief magistrate was its absolute master; and no nation miserable, whose supreme power was properly checked and divided. Nations are then free, when their magistrates are their servants; and then slaves, when their magistrates are their masters: The commonwealth does not belong to them, but they belong to the commonwealth. Tacitus says with great truth, *Nec unquam satis fida potentia ubi nimis est*: "Power without control is never to be trusted." Every nation has most to fear from its own magistrates; because almost all nations have suffered most from their own magistrates.

Cicero, mentioning the condition of Cilicia, of which he was proconsul, in a letter to Appius Pulcher, says, that he was "moved by pity, as well as justice, to relieve from their miseries the undone provincial cities; undone chiefly by their own magistrates." It seems Cicero was that sort of whimsical man, that he had really at heart to do good to the people whom he governed: An odd and impracticable character; which, had he lived since, would have rendered him utterly unfit for any manner of preferment. He did not so much as know that he was to make the most of his place and his power, let what would become of the people. A lesson which other governors have amply learned.

Aristotle makes it the great argument and proof of liberty, that they who command do also obey; and indeed all legal and just power being but a trust, whoever executes the same, does an act of obedience as well as command: And every trust is best executed, where those who have it are answerable for it, else it never will be executed; but, where it is great and publick, is much more likely to be abused, violated, and turned to the destruction of those, who, for their own preservation, gave it. Nor is a people to be told, that such as want to be trusted with extraordinary power of any kind, have always been enemies to arbitrary power; for so are all men when they have it not, and expect no advantage from it. Who was a greater patriot than Sir Thomas Wentworth? And who was a more arbitrary minister than Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford? All men are for confining power when it is over them; and for extending it when they are in it. Oliver Cromwell was once heartily in the principles of liberty, and afterwards more heartily in those of tyranny: And I could name two great parties in England, who, when they were out of power, seemed to place the sum of publick spirit, in intrenching upon the royal authority; and when they were in power, to know no other law but the prerogative royal. So unlike is the same man to himself in different situations; and yet still very consistent with the genius of human nature!

Men sometimes do actually good, in order to do evil, *Sejanus, incipiente adhuc potestate, bonis consiliis notescere volebat*: "Sejanus, in the beginning of his administration, would found the reputation of a good minister in laudable measures." But there never proved a worse minister than Sejanus. Solyman, the Turkish emperor, used to say, that a prince, to be well served by any minister, must never use any minister above once: And this saying is thus far true generally, that men, the longer they grow in power, the worse they grow. I think it is Tacitus who says, *Superbire homines etiam annua designatione; quid si honorem per quinquennium agitent?* "If an annual election to power make men insolent; what must be their pitch of insolence, if they hold it five or seven years?" Aristotle finds great fault with the senate of Sparta, for being perpetual; and I think he says, that an unchanged or an hereditary senate falls into dotage.

Many of the ecclesiasticks have been for trusting their favourite princes (and no other) with unlimited power over others: But in every thing that regarded themselves and their interest, they have never failed to stipulate for the strictest limitations upon all princes, even upon those whom over the rest of the world they wished arbitrary, and endeavoured by every means to make so. Nor did ever any man give up the freedom of his country, but he meant to preserve his own; and hoped to continue a freeman; as a reward of his helping to make other people slaves; and no man ever set up a tyrant, but in hopes of going shares in his tyranny: And upon these terms and expectations alone it is, that any body of men, or indeed any army, is brought to aid and establish any usurper. Passive obedience was always intended for other people than those who preached it. Interest cannot lie; though he does, who says that he will submit to servitude, when he can avoid it.

Who would establish a bank in an arbitrary country, or trust his money constantly there? In Denmark, the ministers and minions of the prince, think their money safest out of his dominions, and generally transmit the same to Hamburgh, and other free cities, where the magistrates have no divine right to lay violent hands upon what is none of theirs. Even what we gain by rapine in a land of oppression, we are willing to save by the just laws of liberty, in a country of liberty. In England itself, and in our own free constitution; if the Bank of England were put under the absolute direction and power of the court, I doubt stock would soon grow very cheap, and sellers multiply very fast. Or if the government of the Bank, which is purely republican, were improved into monarchical; I fancy our highest monarchy-men would rail at the change, and hasten to sell out, notwithstanding their inviolable attachment to the divine right of monarchy: Unless perhaps they think that absolute monarchy does best protect their power, but a free state their money. I am indeed of opinion, that upon such a change, the Bank would be broke, and shut up in three days.

All this shews, that even men who are against liberty in general, contend for it in particulars, and in all particulars which affect themselves. Even Lauderdale, a Tyrconnel, or a Jefferies, who were all for making the crown absolute, as long as they could be as they were, the absolute ministers of oppression under it, would none of them, I dare say, have encouraged the maxim of the prince's rewarding his ministers and faithful oppressors with the bow-string; as well as they themselves were entitled

to that reward, and as much as the Turkish genius of government did in other instances suit their own!

When we hear any sort of men complain, as some sort of men do frequently complain, that the crown wants power; we should ask them, whether they mean over themselves? And if they answer, no; as certainly they will, if they speak truth; we may further ask them, Why should they judge for themselves any more than others; or claim to themselves a liberty and an exemption which they will not allow to others? The truth is, they who complain thus, only want to increase the power of the crown, because by it their own would be increased, and other advantages acquired.

The fox in the fable, wanting to rob a hen-roost, or do some such prank, humbly besought admittance and house-room only for his head; but when he got in his head, his whole body presently followed: And courts, more crafty, as well as more craving, than that designing animal, have scarce ever gained an inch of power, but they have stretched it to an ell; and when they have got in but a finger, their whole train has followed. Pisistratus, having procured from the city of Athens fifty fellows armed only with cudgels, for the security of his person from false and lying dangers, improved them into an army, and by it enslaved that free state. And I have read somewhere, of the States of a country, who having wildly granted to their prince a power of raising money by his own authority, in cases of great necessity; every case, ever afterwards, was a case of great necessity; and his necessities multiplied so fast, that the whole wealth of the country was swallowed up to supply them: As it always will be in every country, where those who ask are suffered to judge what ought to be given. A practice contrary to common sense, and which renders liberty and property perfectly precarious; and where it is continued, will end in taking without asking.

I have heard of a court somewhere abroad, which having asked upon a particular occasion four hundred thousand pounds of the States, found ways and means of stretching that sum to two millions. It was observed of the same court, that it had the art of raising mole-hills into mountains, and of sinking mountains into mole-hills; of disbanding armies without breaking them; of increasing debts by the means of paying them; of being engaged in an expensive war during a profound peace; of gaining for the country at a vast charge, advantages which the country never reaped, nor saw; of employing money obviously against the interest of that nation, and yet getting the nation to pay it; of purchasing other countries at the expence of their own, and against its interest; of procuring from the country at one time a great sum, without telling why it was wanted, but promising to tell, and yet never telling; and, in fine, after many other the like feats, of obtaining, by an arret of security, remission for all their past faults, without owning any, and yet going on to commit more: For as Tully well observes, *Qui semel verecundiae fines transierit, eum bene & naviter oportet esse impudentem*. Cicer. epist. ad Luceium, Quinti fil.

But these things concern not us; and I only bring them for examples, like other old stories of Greece and Rome. I hope that we shall never fall into the like misfortunes and mismanagements ourselves.

G I am, &c.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 77. SATURDAY, MAY 19, 1722. *Of Superstitious Fears, And Their Causes Natural And Accidental. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

As my design in these letters is to endeavour to free and manumit mankind from the many impositions, frauds and delusions, which interrupt their happiness; so I shall, in this, and some of the succeeding ones, attempt to remove the popular impressions and fears of spirits, apparitions, and witches; which more or less afflict and terrify the greatest part of the world: and consequently it will conduce much to their ease and felicity, if I can lay these phantoms.

There is a strange propensity in human nature to prodigy, and whatever else causes surprize and astonishment, and to admire what we do not understand. We have immediate recourse to miracle, which solves all our doubts, and gratifies our pride, by accounting for our ignorance. We are not affected by things which we frequently see; or if we can trace but one link of the infinite chain of causes, our admiration ceases; though we are then as far from our journey's end, as when we set out: for all the works of providence are miraculous to us, who cannot do them ourselves, or know how he, who is the author of them, does them. And in this sense every thing is a miracle to us; though we ought to be no more surprized at seeing a blazing star, which makes its revolution but once in five hundred years, than in seeing the sun every day.

For many ages the phenomena of meteors, eclipses and comets seemed unaccountable; and the causes of thunder and lightning were unknown to the world; as they are to most people in it at this day. Great guns were esteemed, by the Americans, to be angry deities; ships, floating monsters; the sun to be the God of the world; watches to be living animals; paper and ink to be spirits, which conveyed men's thoughts from one to another: And a dancing mare was lately burnt for a witch in the inquisition of Portugal.

All nature is in perpetual rotation; and in the great variety of actions which it produces, some must appear very extraordinary and unaccountable to us, by all the powers of matter and motion which fall within our narrow observations; and yet may, and undoubtedly have as certain and regular causes and effects, as the most obvious mechanick operations. We see into the bottom and internal frame and constitution of no one thing in the world, and probably never can do so, whilst we continue in these frail bodies. We see not into the principles and contexture of animal or vegetable beings; and consequently cannot know what nature can spontaneously produce, or how she works. We see only the outside and film of things; and no more of them than what is necessary to the preservation or convenience of ourselves, and not the thousandth part of what is so. Almighty God hath hid all the rest from our eyes; to baffle our foolish curiosity, to raise our admiration of his power, and to excite our homage and adoration to him, the great author of all things.



Nature (as is said in print elsewhere) works by infinite ways; which are impenetrable to our vain and fruitless inquiries.

The loadstone draws iron to it; gold, quicksilver. The sensitive plant shrinks from the touch. Some sorts of vegetables attract one another, and twine together; others avoid one another, and grow farther apart. The treading upon the torpedo affects, and gives raging pains to, our whole bodies. The bite of a mad dog causes madness. Turkey-cocks and pheasants fly at red. A rattle-snake, by a sort of magical power in his eyes, will force a squirrel to run into his mouth. Musick will cure the bite of a tarantula. The frights and longings of women with child, will stamp impressions upon the babes within them. People, in their sleep, will walk securely over precipices and ridges of houses, where they durst not venture whilst awake. Lightning will melt a sword without hurting the scabbard.

And there are very many other surprizing instances of the powers of matter and motion, which we every day see and feel; and without doubt, there are infinite others which we know nothing of.

If some men could follow scents, like dogs, or see in the dark, like cats, or have the same presages and prognosticks of fair weather or tempests, which other animals seem to have; how many things would they know and do, unaccountable to the rest of mankind? If Almighty God had thought fit to have bestowed upon any man one or more senses above the rest of the species, many of his actions must have appeared miraculous to them.

But if these minute and pretty works of nature cause so much our surprize and astonishment, how ought we to admire and adore the Author of all nature, in the greater works of his creation! The Earth itself is but as a mustard-seed to the visible world; and doubtless that is infinitely less in comparison of the invisible one. It is very likely, that its many fellow-planets, which move about the sun, as we do, are filled with inhabitants, and some of them probably with more valuable ones than ourselves: And 'tis next to certain, that the numerous fixed stars, nightly seen by us, and the more numerous ones frequently discovered by new and better glasses, are so many different suns, and possibly with each a different chorus or system of worlds moving about them, and receiving vital warmth and nourishment from their beams; for 'tis impossible to believe, that the all-wise disposer of all things should place so many orbs, many thousand times greater than this Earth, in the vast abyss of space, far out of our sight, and of no use to us, unless to serve suitable purposes of his providence.

We are not, nor can we be, sure that there are no other beings who are inhabitants of the air or aether, with bodies subtle enough to be adapted to, and nourished by, these thin elements; and perhaps with senses and faculties superior to us: for the works of Almighty God are as infinite as is his power to do them. And 'tis paying greater deference to him, and having higher conceptions of his omnipotence, to suppose that he saw all things which have been, are, or ever shall be, at one view, and formed the whole system of nature with such exquisite contrivance and infinite wisdom, as by its own energy and intrinsic power, to produce all the effects and operations which we daily see, feel, and admire; than to believe him to be often interposing to alter and

amend his own work, which was undoubtedly perfect at first; though in the pursuit of his eternal decrees, and in the course, progress, and unbroken chain of his original system, he seems to us sometimes to act occasionally; when, in compliance to our weak comprehensions, and in condescension to our low capacities, he speaks and appears to act after the manner of men. We have not faculties to see or know things as they are in themselves, but only in such lights as our creator pleases to represent them in to us: He has given us talents suited to our wants, and to understand his will, and obey it; and here is our *ne plus ultra*, the farthest we can go. We may be very sure that we are not obliged to know what is beyond our power to know; but all such things are as non-entities to us.

Whensoever therefore we hear of, or see any surprizing appearances or events in nature, which we cannot trace and connect to their immediate causes; we are not to call in supernatural powers, and interest heaven or hell in the solution, to save our credit, and cover our own folly, when there are so very few things in the world which we know any thing of, and of those few we know but very little. We are not to measure the works of God by our scanty capacities; and to believe that he miraculously interposes in the course of human affairs, but only when he pleases to intimate to us that he does, or intends to do so; much less ought we to introduce daemons into his system of the universe, unless as objects or instruments and executioners of his vengeance; but not to intrude into his government of the world, to trepan and mislead his creatures, and to thwart and oppose himself, and every now and anon to cut the chain, stop the wheels, and interrupt the course of his providence.

We are very sure that God can do, and empower any other beings to do, every thing which he would have done; but we are not obliged, by any precept, moral or divine, to believe every thing which weak, crazed, or designing men tell us in his name; and the disbelieving their foolish and fantastical stories, is not questioning the power of God, but the veracity or judgment of the persons who tell them: For sure there can be no occasion of recurring to supernatural causes, to account for what may be very easily accounted for by our ignorance of natural ones, by the fraud or folly of others, or by the deception of ourselves. There can be no wonder at all in a man's telling a lie, or in his being deceived.

Which of our senses does not often deceive us? Strangling, or strong pressure of the eyes, causes all things to appear on fire; that of the ears, makes us hear noises; straight things in the water appear crooked; bodies by reflexion or refraction appear otherwise, and in other places, than they are in nature. All things appear yellow to men in the jaundice: To those in calentures, the sea appears like a green meadow; and if not restrained, they will leap into it: Melancholy and enthusiastick persons fancy themselves to be glass bottles, knives, and tankards; madmen often believe themselves gods or princes, and almost always see spirits; and a reverend divine, some time since, thought himself big with child, and could not be persuaded to the contrary, till a man midwife pretended to deliver him of a false conception.

In fevers and malignant distempers, people see visions and apparitions of angels, devils, dead men, or whatever else their imaginations render most agreeable or terrible to them; and in dreams all men see, or fancy that they see, such false appearances.

Their imaginations, in sleep, are often so lively and vigorous, that they can scarcely be persuaded of their mistake when they awake out of it, and would not be so, if they did not find themselves in bed; and therefore, if a credulous, fearful, or melancholy man, should carelessly nod himself to sleep in his closet or his garden, and receive a vigorous representation of an angel, daemon, or dead man, speaking to him, or delivering a message, and after wake on a sudden, without observing his own sleeping (as often happens) I cannot see how he should distinguish this appearing phantom from a real vision or revelation, and I should be glad to have a rule to do it by.

The frame and contexture of our bodies betrays us to these delusions. For, as all objects and images from without are let in upon the mind by the windows or conduits of the outward senses, and the mind afterwards ranges, methodizes, operates, and reasons upon them; so it can only work upon such materials as it receives: and consequently, when the organs of sensation are wrong framed in their original contexture, or depraved afterwards by sickness or accidents, the mind must be misled too, and often mistake appearances for real beings: When the spies, scouts, and out-guards, are seized, corrupted, or deceived, the intelligence will be fallacious, or none at all.

It is evident, in a thousand instances, that the mind and body mutually act and operate upon one another; both grow and increase by age and exercise, both are impaired and enervated by distempers and accidents, and all the noble faculties of the former are often destroyed and extinguished by accidental injuries done to the latter, and by other fortuitous events and occasional strokes of fortune. Common experience shews us, that if men are born without one or more of their senses, so many conduits of knowledge are stopt: If a child comes into the world without the faculties of seeing or hearing, he can have no understanding at all, unless he afterwards acquire them; and if he loses them again, all further progress is at an end: The vigour and capacity of our mind depend very much, if not altogether, upon the organization of our bodies; and are altered, improved, and increased, by proper diet, action, or education; and oppressed, lessened, and sometimes quite lost, by drunkenness, gluttony, laziness or misfortunes. I have often almost fancied that men may be dieted into opinions; as experience shews us, they may be educated into the most absurd ones by custom, conversation, and habit.

Every passion or affection of the mind produces visibly a suitable and correspondent disposition of the muscles and lineaments of the face, and consequently must affect and alter the whole mechanism of the body; and by like reason every thought or motion of the mind must do the same in a lesser degree (though not equally subject to common observation) by forcing or directing the blood, juices, or animal spirits, into peculiar tubes, conduits, or vessels: and when by frequent use those channels and passages become habitual to them, they will often flow thither of their own accord, or are easily driven thither; and so, by working backwards, will cause those passions and perceptions which at first caused them, and in consequence the same impressions and dispositions of the organs of sense.

If this observation be true, it will account for our delusions in dreams, when exterior objects are shut out, which must otherwise control and overpower the weaker and

more faint operations of the internal machine; and this too will account for the many panick and unreasonable fears and prejudices which we are subject to from education, custom, and constitution, as well as for the difficulty, if not impossibility, of our shaking off and conquering any other habits of mind or body acquired by early and continued practice.

I shall in my next apply these general principles to the system of spirits; and shew that philosophy and religion both contradict the commonly received opinions of them.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 78. SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1722. *The Common Notion Of Spirits, Their Power And Feats, Exposed. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

As I have shewn at large, in my last letter, that, in very many instances, our senses are subject and liable to be deceived in objects evidently material; so in this I shall endeavour as fully to shew, that we can have no possible ideas of any other. When we call God a spirit, we do not pretend to define his nature, or the modus of his existence, but to express the high conception which we have of his omnipotence, by supposing him most unlike to ourselves, and infinitely superior to every thing which we see and know; and then we are lost and buried in the abyss of our own ignorance: but we can have no other possible conception of what we mean by the word *spirit*, when applied to him.

We cannot have even the most abstracted images of things, without the ideas of extension and solidity; which are the mediums of conceiving all things that we can conceive at all. As the organs of our senses are all material, so they are formed only to receive material objects; and but a small part of those which are so. The ear cannot hear, the hands feel, the palate taste, the nose smell, or the eye see, bodies, but of certain magnitudes, dimensions, and solidity; and these vary too in different men, and in the same men at different times, and at different ages. There are millions of insects that cannot be seen without glasses; and probably infinite others, which cannot be seen with them: the subtle effluvia, or other minute causes of pestilential distempers, are not within the reach and observation of any of our senses. We cannot see wind and common air, much less pure aether, which are all too thin and too subtle bodies for the fabrick of the eye; and how should we see spirits, which we are told have no bodies at all, and in the dark too, when the contexture of the eye will not afford us the use of that organ.

I cannot conceive why the dreams of the old heathen philosophers should be adopted into the Christian system: or from what principles of reason or religion we should be told that the soul is *totum in toto*, and *totum in qualibet parte*; that is, that all of it is diffused through the whole body, and yet all of it is in every part of the body: That spirits take up no place; and that ten thousand of them may stand upon the point of a needle, and yet leave room for a million times as many more; that they may move from place to place, and not pass through the intermediate space; and that they are impenetrable themselves, and yet can penetrate every thing else. Is not this fine gibberish, and pretty divinity? And yet it is esteemed by some a sort of atheism to disbelieve it; but neither philosophy nor scripture tell us any such matter. It is true indeed, we are told, that spirits have neither flesh nor bones; no more than wind, air, or aether, and thousands of other things, which yet are bodies: but we are no where told, as I remember, that spirits have no extension or solidity: And if we were told so, we could understand no more by it, than that they were beings of which we neither had, nor could have, any other than negative ideas.

I think, therefore, that I may venture to assert, that either God hath created no beings independent of matter, or that such cannot be objects of our senses: But if there be any such, they are of a nature so different from us, and so incomprehensible by the faculties which he has given us, that we can form no propositions about them; and consequently are not obliged to believe or disbelieve any thing concerning them, till he pleases further to inform us.

But there are an humble sort of philosophers, who want the sagacity to conceive how any substance can exist without extension and solidity; and consequently are modest enough to confess, that they do not understand the distinction between material and immaterial substances; and that they cannot, with their most refined imaginations, have any notion of a middle state of things, between extended beings and no beings at all; between real essences and shadows, phantoms or images of disordered brains; or that any thing can exist in the universe, and at the same time in no part of it. And yet these gentlemen will not give up the general system of spirits, but suppose them to be beings of subtle aerial contexture, that in their own nature are not objects of our senses; but gave powers, by assuming more dense bodies, to make themselves so, and have capacities to do many things unaccountable to us, and beyond the limits and reach of our apprehensions. All which I think no man will affirm to be impossible; but I think any man may safely affirm, that such agents are not permitted to molest human affairs, and seduce or mislead men, by doing supernatural actions, or what must appear to us to be so.

A contrary supposition must destroy the very use of miracles: for if other beings, either by the energy of their own nature, or the will and permission of God, can do miracles, or actions which we cannot distinguish from miracles; then nothing can be proved by them, and we shall lose the best evidence of the truth of our holy religion. For if signs and wonders may be promiscuously shewn and performed by the best of all beings and by the worst, they may be done and used to promote error, imposture, and wickedness, as well as virtue and true religion; nor can I find out any criterion, or sufficient mark, whereby we can distinguish which are done by the preserver, and which by the professed enemy, of mankind. To say that the truth of the miracle shall be tried by the doctrine which it is brought to propagate, or the precepts which it commands, is to invert the very use and end of miracles, which is, to give credit and authority to the doer, who is always supposed to act by God's power, in order to declare his will; and consequently, if the wonders which he does are to be tried by the doctrine which he teaches, there would be no use of any wonders at all, to prove not only what proves itself, but what is to prove the truth of the miracle, which is to prove the truth of the doctrine.

We are very sure, that the great Creator of heaven and earth, and the sole author of all our happiness, does not leave us in these uncertainties, to be tossed and tumbled in the thick mist and dark chaos of ignorance and deceit. How can we know the truth of any revelation, without knowing the revealer himself to be true? We must be first certain, that a good and beneficent being speaks to us, before we can believe any thing which he tells us. Whenever therefore Almighty God, by means becoming his infinite wisdom, and from causes impenetrable to us, communicates his intentions by appearances and representations to our senses, or by any other ways out of the

ordinary course of his providence, he always gives us sure marks whereby we can distinguish his works from delusion and imposture, which often ape truth itself, and mislead ignorant and unwary men. We are told in Holy Writ, that "young men shall see visions, and old men dream dreams"; which frequently happens; and that "false prophets shall arise and do wonders, which shall deceive almost the elect"; but we are bid to disbelieve them; which, if they worked true miracles, we could not do, without rejecting all miracles. For how can we believe any thing to be miraculous, and at the same time disbelieve another thing to be so, without being able to shew any difference between them? And therefore we may acquiesce in an assurance that such pretenders must be cheats, and their actions impostures and deceits upon our senses.

Whenever God works wonders, or produces those events which shall appear as such to us, he always does them for wise reasons, either to warn and inform men, to make them examples of his justice, or to communicate his will, and teach us some doctrine; and he takes the most proper and effectual means to attain his ends, and coerce our belief, by making such applications to our outward senses, and such impressions upon our understandings, as we must submit to and acquiesce in, unless we resolve to give up all certainty; or else by predictions which are justified by the event, and which are undoubtedly miracles. He does them in the most open manner before crowds at once; but our modern miracle-mongers do them all in secret, in corners, and in the dark; and their spirits and apparitions are seen only by melancholy, enthusiastick, and dreaming old men and women, or by crazy young ones, whose heads are intoxicated and prepared for these stories long before; and they are generally seen but by one at once, who is always in a fright when he does see them; or else they are the tricks and juggles of heathen and popish priests, or pretended conjurers, to pick men's pockets, and promote some knavish and selfish design. They are never done before a House of Lords or Commons, or in a prince's court, or in the streets before multitudes of people, or in the sight of several men at the same time, of clear and unprejudiced understandings, or of unquestionable integrity.

When our Saviour appeared to all his disciples together, he appealed to their senses, and bid them not be afraid, but to put their hands into his side, and believe themselves: He made his ascension before five hundred people at once: His miracle of the loaves and fishes was before five thousand: His turning water into wine was at a publick wedding; and the rest were of the same kind: He went through Judea from place to place, publickly doing miracles, confirming and convincing all, who were not willfully blind, of the truth of his mission; and teaching a doctrine of infinite advantage to mankind: Whereas our present workers or seers of miracles never tell us any thing worth knowing; and we have no other evidence that they are seen or done, but the veracity of those who tell them, who may be deceived themselves, or invent lies to deceive others. The proof ought always to be equal to the importance of the thing to be believed: For, when it is more likely that a man should tell a lie, or be deceived, than that a strange phenomenon should be true, methinks there should be no difficulty to determine on which side of the question we should give our assent; though in fact most men are so prepared by education to believe these stories, that they will believe the relation of them in these cases, when they will believe the relations in nothing else.

If one or two men affirm that they saw another leap twenty yards at one leap, no one will doubt but they are liars; but if they testify that they saw a goblin with saucer eyes and cloven feet in a church-yard, leap over the tower; all the town is in a fright, and few of them will venture to walk abroad in a dark night. Sometimes these phantoms appear to one who is in company with others, and no one can see them but himself, and yet all the rest are terrified at his relation, without reasoning that they have the same or better faculties of seeing than he has; and therefore that his organs must either be indisposed, or that he designs to impose upon them: but it passes for a miracle; and then all doubts are solved, and all enquiries at an end. All men believe most of those stories to be false; and yet almost all believe some of them to be true, upon no better evidence than they reject the rest. The next story of an old woman inhabiting a cat, or flying in the air upon a broomstick, sets them a staring, and puts their incredulity to a nonplus. We often hear of a spirit appearing to discover a silver spoon, a purse of hidden money, or perhaps a private murder; but are never told of a tyrant, who by private murders has slaughtered thousands, and by publick butcheries destroyed millions, ever dragged out of his court by good or evil spirits, as a terror to such monsters: Such an instance would convince all mankind; and if Almighty God thought fit to work by such engines, and intended that we should believe in them, or any of them, it is impossible to believe but that he would take the properest method to gain our assent.

From what I have said, and much more which might be said, I think I may with great assurance conclude, that these capricious and fantastical beings are not suffered to interfere and mingle with human affairs, only to mislead men, and interrupt them in the pursuit of their duty; nor can I see any foundation, in nature, reason, or scripture, to believe that there are any such as they are usually represented to us; which neither agree and keep up to the characters, dignity, and excellence of good angels, or the sagacity, office, and use of bad ones. Where are we commanded to believe that the Devil plays hide and seek here on earth; that he is permitted to run up and down and divert himself, by seducing ignorant men and women; killing pigs, or making them miscarry; entering into cats, and making noises, and playing monkey-tricks in church-yards and empty houses, or any where else here on earth, but in empty heads?

We know that he was cast headlong from heaven, is chained fast in the regions of the damned, and kept by the power of the Almighty from doing mischief to his creatures; and to say the contrary seems to me the highest blasphemy against heaven itself: For when we every day see and feel the many delusions to which human condition is subject, how we are the properties of impostors, the slaves to tyrants, and perpetual dupes of one another, and indeed are subject to daily and endless frauds and impositions; how shall we be a match for the most subtle and most sagacious being out of heaven? And is it possible to believe, that the good, merciful, and all-wise God should desert, leave, and betray us to so unequal a combat, without giving us suitable precautions, capacities, and powers to defend ourselves?

I shall conclude by observing, that the heathen poets first invented these stories, and the heathen priests stole them from them; as badgers dig holes for themselves, and afterwards are stunk out of them by foxes.



*T* I am &c.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 79. SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1722. *A Further Detection Of The Vulgar Absurdities About Ghosts And Witches.*  
(Trenchard)

SIR,

I have endeavoured, in my last, to shew, that no such beings as spirits and daemons are permitted by the good God to mingle with, and perplex, human affairs; and if my reasoning be good, the whole system of conjurers and witches falls to the ground: For I think it is agreed by all, if they have any powers supernatural, they receive them from evil spirits; and if these have no such powers themselves, they can transmit them to none else.

But, methinks, the advocates for Satan's empire here on earth are not very consistent with themselves; and in the works which they attribute to him, do not give credit enough to his abilities and power.

*They make this prince a mighty emperor:  
But his demands do speak him proud and poor.*

They give him a power to do miracles; make him prince of the air, lord of the hidden minerals; wise, rich, and powerful, as well as false, treacherous, and wicked; and are foolish and presumptuous enough to bring him upon the stage as a rival for empire with the Almighty; but at the same time put a fool's coat and cap upon him. His skill has hitherto gone no farther than to cram pins down children's throats, and throw them into fits; to turn wort, kill pigs; to sell winds (dog cheap too), to put out candles, or to make half-blind people see two at once; to help hares to run away from the dogs; to make noises, or to discourage his faithful votaries at Newgate, by interloping upon their trade of discovering stolen goods; and such like important feats of daemonship. And, what is yet worse, I cannot find in these last eighteen hundred years, that with all his cunning he has invented one new trick, but goes on in the same dull road; for there is scarce a story told of a spirit, or a witch, who has played pranks in the next parish, but we have the same story, or one very like it, in Cicero's tract *De Divinatione*.

He always plays at small games, and lives mostly upon neck-beef. His intrigues are all with old women, whose teats he sucks (which, by the way, shews but a scurvy taste); and when he has gained his ends of them, feeds them only with bread and water, and gives them a groat in their pockets to buy tobacco; which, in my mind, is very ungallant, not to say niggardly and ungenerous, in so great a potentate, who has all the riches of the hidden world within his dominions. I cannot find, in all my reading, that he has expended as much in five hundred years last past as would have carried one election.

Methinks he might have learned a little more wit from his faithful emissaries here on earth, who throw and scatter about money, as if there was never to be an end of it; and

get him more votaries in a week, than he can purchase for himself in a century, and put him to not a penny of charge neither; for they buy people with their own money: But to keep such a coil and clutter about an old woman, and then leave her to be hanged, that he may get her into his clutches a month sooner, is very ungrateful; and, as I conceive, wholly unsuitable to a person of his rank and figure.

I should have imagined, that it would have been more agreeable to the wisdom and cunning always attributed to him, in imitation of his betters, to have opened his purse-strings, and have purchased people of more importance, and who could do him more real service. I fancy that I know some of them, who would be ready to take his money, if they knew where he was to be spoken with; and who are men of nice honour, and would not betray or break their word with him, whatever they may do with their countrymen.

Besides, I conceive it is very impolitick in one of his sagacity, and in one who has so many able ministers in his own dominions and elsewhere, to act so incautious a part. It is very well known, that a plot discovered, or a rebellion quelled, gives new credit and reputation to the conquerors, who always make use of them to settle their own empire, effectually to subdue their enemies, to lessen their powers, and to force them for the most part to change sides; and, in fact, one witch hanged or drowned, makes old Beelzebub a great many adversaries, and frightens thousands from having any more to do with him.

For these reasons, I doubt, he is shrewdly belied by those from whom he might expect better usage; and that all the stories commonly told about, and believed concerning him, are invented and credited by such only as have much less wit, or not much more honesty, than himself. To enter into a detail of them is endless, as well as unnecessary to my purpose; it having been unquestionably shewn already by the worthy Dr. Hutchinson, [?] from very many instances, that these stories are fictions, cheats, or delusions, and that the belief of them is neither consistent with reason nor religion. But I shall add some more observations of my own, to what he hath with great piety and judgment published upon this subject; and shall begin with tracing the genealogy of these phantoms.

The first inventers of them, as far as we know any thing of the matter, were the Egyptians; who believed, that the spirits of the deceased always attended their bodies where-ever they were deposited; and therefore embalmed them with rich gums and spices, to preserve their figure entire, and entombed them in stately mausoleums, with costly apartments for their souls to solace in: Which opinion gave occasion to their building the expensive and useless pyramids, to receive souls of a higher degree. From Egypt these airy beings were transplanted into Greece, and thence to Rome; and the Greek and Roman poets embellished their fictions with them, and the priests made their advantages of them; and both priests and poets added many more inventions of their own: They filled their woods, groves, rivers, rocks, houses, and the air itself, with romantick deities: They had their demi-gods, satyrs, dryads, hemi-dryads, penates, lares, fauns, nymphs, &c. And when the general belief of the existence of such beings was well established, without doubt they were often seen and talked with.

*For fear does things so like a witch,  
'Tis hard to find out which is which.*

They animated almost every thing in nature; and attributed even the passions and qualities of the mind to peculiar deities, who presided over them, or directed and caused them: Mars inspired courage and magnanimity; Venus, love; Mercury, cunning; and Apollo and his Muses, wisdom, and poetick raptures, &c. A good and evil genius attended every man, and his virtues and vices were esteemed to be spirits: A wicked man had an evil spirit; a virtuous man, a good one; a wrangler had a spirit of contradiction; people who could not speak, had a dumb spirit; a malicious man, a spirit of envy; and one who wanted veracity, a spirit of lying; and so on. Distempers too which were uncommon, and could not easily be accounted for, as apoplexies, epilepsies, and other fits and trances, were imputed to spirits and daemons; and at last these delusions, which were only the sallies of poets, or the inventions of priests, became the real opinions and religion of the common people, who are always ready to lick up the froth of their betters.

When the heathens came into Christianity, they brought in these phantoms with them, and accounted for oracular predictions, and the other cheats and juggles of their former priests, by the powers of these daemons; and the popish priests have since improved upon their pagan predecessors, and made their fictions turn to a much better account than putting them in verse. The heathen dryads and nymphs were changed into fairies; good and evil genii into conjurers and black and white witches; and saints are made to supply the offices of demi-gods: and by this lucky turn they made a very good penny of their charms, exorcisms, beads, relics, and holy water; and were paid for many masses, to invoke their saints; in whom, it seems, they had a very good interest.

There was scarce a church-yard, an old or empty house, which was not pestered with these airy inhabitants; nor a man who had murdered himself, or who was murdered by another, or had forgot something in his life-time, who did not appear to tell his own story; nor could be persuaded to quit his new abode, till the holy man had laid him in the Red Sea; who, without doubt, was very well paid for his skill and pains. We may be sure so gainful a trade was duly cherished and cultivated by constant juggles and impostures, and all advantages were taken of surprizing and unusual phenomena of nature. By the help of glasses, unusual voices and noises, phosphorus, magick lanthorns, feats of legerdemain, and collusion and confederacy, these prejudices were artfully kept up, and weak and enthusiastick people were made to believe, sometimes to see, and afterwards to publish to others their visions, or whatever else their deceivers had occasion for; whose power at the same time was so great, that the few intelligent men who saw and detested these impieties, durst not contend with the prejudices of the people, abetted by the rage of the popish priests.

Many of our first reformers were but weak men, and I doubt some of them were not very honest ones; and therefore generally fell into these stories: However, they lost a great deal of ground in Queen Elizabeth's reign; but were returned upon us with a full swing by her successor, who brought from Scotland with him whole legions of these subterranean inhabitants; who, methinks, should more properly have come from a

warmer climate. That bright, sagacious, and royal author wrote and published a very learned book of daemonology, which effectually confuted all disbelievers; for sure no man, who hoped for any preferment, ecclesiastical or civil, would have the ill manners to dispute his Majesty's great judgment and royal authority. When Nero proclaimed himself the best poet in his dominions by sound of trumpet, no man durst contend for the laurel with one who had fifty legions at his command. So an act of Parliament was passed for hanging of witches; and his Majesty himself was graciously pleased to inform his judges by what marks they might be known; and many of them were hanged accordingly: But, as ill luck would have it, they multiplied like the blood of the martyrs; and the more they hanged, the more were left behind, during his whole reign.

In King Charles I's time they began to decrease again, by letting them alone; till, at the end of the Civil War, a new set of saints got into the saddle; and then again a fresh persecution began against old women, who were hanged plentifully at every Assizes.

*Some only for not being drown'd,  
Others for sitting above ground  
Whole days and nights upon their breeches,  
And feeling pain, were hang'd for witches.*

There were professed witch-finders, who knew them at first sight; so that there was scarce a poor, withered, old wretch, with a mole or a wart in any part of her body, but was in danger of her life.

When King Charles II returned, and the nobility, clergy, and gentry resumed their proper seats, old women began again to live and die in quiet; and, during that prince's long reign, there were but few instances of witches hanged; and, considering the prepossessions of the people, occasioned by so many late murders, under the pretences of zeal, it is not to be wondered at if there were a few: But since the Revolution there has not, as I remember, been one witch hanged; nor do I think that one lawyer in England would condemn one, or any special jury of gentlemen find her guilty; though we are often told, and, if we may judge by other effects, have reason to believe, that Satan is as busy now as he has been in the memory of man.

But in a neighbouring country witches are almost as plentiful as ever; for as soon as the successors of the aforesaid holy men came into play again, and ruled the earth, they turned as they usually do upon their old benefactor, and hanged immediately a dozen or two of his accomplices; and did the same soon after in New-England, of which some were poor Quakers (whom they could not be permitted to hang merely for want of orthodoxy) and it is thought there was not an old woman in Fairyland (who was unfit for use), but would have undergone the same fate, if the government had not interposed.

Notwithstanding this, I do not find that the Devil has in the least changed his measures, or is more afraid of the saints than he used to be; but is constantly working under their noses, and every now and anon kidnapping some of their flocks; but it is always of such as can pay no tithes: for it is agreed by all, that a little money in their

pockets will keep him out: But what seems very remarkable is, that at the same time that he makes so bold with these holy men, who have power to cast him out, he keeps a respectful distance from men of carnal sense, and plain natural understandings; and most of all from those incredulous persons, who cannot be persuaded to believe that the merciful God will permit him to outwit and destroy ignorant and unwary Christians, whom the Saviour of the world died to redeem from his power.

This is so true, that those stories are believed through the world, in exact proportion to the ignorance of the people, and the

integrity of their clergy, and the influence which they have over their flocks. In popish countries there is a spirit or witch in every parish, in defiance of holy water, and of constant *pater nosters*; and there are more of them in ignorant popish countries than in knowing ones, in poor than in rich ones; and they appear oftener in arbitrary governments than in free states. The King of Spain's and Pope's dominions have more of them than France and the German principalities, where priest-craft does not ride so triumphant; and these have more than Venice, Genoa, and the popish Hans towns.

The same is equally true of Protestant countries: Muscovy, Sweden, Denmark, and Lapland, have more of them than Scotland and Ireland; and Scotland and Ireland more than England, where no clergymen of any credit abet these frauds; and consequently the Devil's empire here is almost at an end, how considerable soever it has been formerly: and in Holland he has nothing at all to do; though that country lies so near his other territories, that I wonder he should not sometimes shorten his journey, or at least now and then take it in his way, though only to try what may be done among the Hogan Mogans.

From all that has been said I think I may reasonably conclude, that he is kept at home by the will of the Almighty, suffering the punishment due to his rebellion; and has no power over others, till, for their disobedience to the commands of heaven, they are delivered into his custody to be tormented, and made just objects of divine vengeance: And I shall take the liberty further to add, that true religion is so well supported by reason and revelation, that there is no necessity of telling lies in its defence, and putting it upon the same bottom with the heathen superstitions, and the popish forgeries and impostures; which, when discovered will make twenty infidels for one true believer that is made by such methods.

*T I am, &c.*

## ENDNOTES

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

No. 80. SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 1722. *That The Two Great Parties In England Do Not Differ So Much As They Think In Principles Of Politicks. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

Machiavel tells us, that it is rare to find out a man perfectly good or perfectly bad: Men generally swim between the two extremes; and scarce any man is as good as he himself, his friends, or his party, make him; or as bad as he is represented by his personal or party enemies. Ask a Whig the character of a neighbouring Tory, and he represents him as a Jacobite, an enemy to publick liberty, and a persecutor; and, on the other side, if you enquire the other's character from his Tory godfather out of baptism, he shall pass for a commonwealth's man, an enemy to all sorts of monarchy, and an encourager of all kinds of licentiousness and faction: whereas an indifferent man, conversing with each of them, shall find both aim at the same thing, and their opposition to proceed only from their not conversing together, from an intention to thwart one another, or from the intrigues of those who reap advantage by setting them together by the ears. 'Tis too great a compliment to pay to our adversaries, to suppose them to act upon a mistaken principle against their real interest; and it is certainly the interest of every man to be free from oppression; and he will join in measures to be so, if he be not terrified by the fear of greater oppression. It is undoubtedly true, that there are many Jacobites in England; but it is thinking better of them than they deserve, to believe that they will be so against their own interests: And therefore, excepting the very few who can hope to receive the advantages of such a revolution, the rest may be converted, by shewing them that they can find better protection and security from the present establishment, than by hazarding their lives and estates, and their country's happiness, in bringing their designs to pass. The only dangerous Jacobites that I ever feared, were those who took the same methods to keep out the sonas turned out the father.

Whilst men enjoy protection, plenty, and happiness, they will always desire to continue them, and never look after revolutions; but when they lose, or fancy that they lose those advantages, which they ever will think they have a right to enjoy, they will endeavour to change their condition, though in the attempt they often change it for the worse. Whoever therefore would endeavour to preserve a present establishment, must make the people easy and contented under it, and to find their own account in the continuance of it. The instruments of tyranny (of which I hope we shall never have any amongst us) are never to be depended upon in any exigency; they will always be able to shift for themselves, and know how to make an interest with a new government, by betraying the old: which was the case of the late King James, and will ever be the case of others in the like circumstances.

Every man therefore, who is sincerely and heartily attached to the interest of his present Majesty, will endeavour to cherish, cultivate, and make a proper use of his excellent dispositions to protect and make his people happy, and to preserve our

constitution in church and state upon its true and solid basis. Old land-marks are never to be removed, without producing contests and law-suits, which for the most part ruin both parties. We have an excellent constitution at present; and if not the best which can be formed in an utopian commonwealth, yet I doubt the best that we are capable of receiving. The present distribution of property renders us incapable of changing it for the better; and probably any attempt to change it for the better, would conclude in an absolute monarchy. There are so many interests engaged to support it, that whoever gets power enough to destroy these interests, will have power enough to set up himself; as Oliver Cromwell did, and every one else will do, in the same circumstances; or at least, no wise man will trust to his moderation.

No man of sense and fortune will venture the happiness which he is in full possession of, for imaginary visions; and throw the dice for his own estate: Such desperate gamesters carry their whole about them; and their future expectations depend upon confusion, and the misery of others: but such as have much to fear, and little to hope for, will acquiesce in their present condition. This being the true circumstance of the nobility, clergy, gentry, rich merchants, and the body of the people, I hope they will concur in such measures as will most effectually preserve our present establishment, and support the just rights of the crown, and the liberties of the people, oppose all usurpations on either side, and endeavour, in the most exemplary manner, to punish all who shall dare to interpose between the king and the subject, and spoil that harmony which alone can make them both happy.

This is the interest of all parties, and of every man in them (except a very few, who make their market of the others' differences), and I could never yet see a just bone of contention between them. It can be of no consequence to either party, if they are governed well, whether a man of one denomination or another governs them: and if they are oppressed, it is no consolation, that it is done by one whom they formerly called a friend; whereas if they would agree together, no one durst oppress them. Those who are called Whigs, have no intention to injure the legal establishment of the church; and seven years' experience, when they have had the whole power in their hands, may convince any one that they did not intend it; and the Tories tell us, that they desire no more than that establishment, and have no thoughts of breaking in upon the Act of Toleration, which is the right of all mankind. The Whigs can have no motive to do the one, nor the Tories the other, when party opposition is laid aside: for how is a Whig injured by another's receiving advantages which he has no right to, and receives no prejudice by, but may receive benefit from, by providing for his children, relations, or friends? And how is a Tory injured in a quiet neighbour's worshipping God in his own way, any more than if he did not worship him at all; which is the case of thousands who are unmolested? The distinctions about government are at an end: Most of the Tories are ashamed of their old arbitrary principles, and many of the modern Whigs ought to be ashamed of taking them up; and indeed they have no right to reproach one another with either practices or principles: for both have shewn their wrong ends in their turns; and they have brought matters at last to that pass, that whilst they have been throwing the dice for victory, sharpers have been drawing the stakes.



Indeed, I cannot see what we differ about: we fight at blindman's-buff, and fall upon our friends, as well as enemies. All the grounds of distinction are now at an end, and the honest and wise men of all parties mean the same thing, and ought to lay aside and forget the old names, and become one party for liberty, before that name is forgotten too. It is yet in our power to save ourselves. We are sure we have a prince, who has every disposition to help us, if we lend our own assistance, and shew him the means of doing it; and we are answerable to God, our country, and ourselves, if we do not use our own endeavours. The means are easy, obvious, and legal; and the motives as strong as ever did, or ever can, happen in any circumstance of human affairs. It is no less than the safety and preservation of the best king, and the best constitution upon earth, and indeed of almost the only people amongst whom there are any remains of liberty, knowledge, or true religion; all which depend upon the steady, loyal, and uniform proceedings of the next Parliament.

For my own part, I have no quarrel to names or persons, and would join in any just measures, or with any party, to save the kingdom; and will oppose, to the utmost of my power, all who will not; and I believe that there are thousands of the same sentiments; and methinks great men should accept so favourable a disposition to forget the mischiefs which ambition, covetousness, or inadvertency have brought upon us. We will not look with eagle's eyes into past faults, provided a proper atonement is made by future services; nor envy particular men's growing rich, if they will let the publick thrive with them; and it is certainly safer, and more creditable, to do so by the consent of their countrymen, than by constant struggles, broils, and contention, to overcome popular opposition; which must get the better at last, or their country, and probably they themselves, must be buried in it.

England is yet in a condition to make the fortunes of a few men, if they are not in too much haste to make them; and will consent, or connive at their doing so, if they deserve well in other respects. There are many useless, and yet profitable, employments in England, and few men are concerned how they are disposed of; whether to lord's valets, or whether they are the perquisites of foreign or domestick favourites, provided the offices which regard the administration of justice, of the state, church, or revenue, be properly bestowed. Those who have the fortune to get into the highest stations, will expect to raise suitable estates, especially when they have in a great measure the means in their hands of making them, and the power of carving for themselves; and all but rivals will compound for their doing it by such ways as are consistent with the publick benefit, or such as the publick does not suffer much by; and I doubt the legal advantages belonging to few offices in England will answer the expectations of men in the first station.

It is often urged, that princes must be served upon their own terms, and their servants must sometimes comply against their inclinations, to prevent greater mischief; which I believe is rarely the case. I confess, princes ought and must be always treated with tenderness and delicacy, and regard must be had to their opinions or prejudices; but it is so much their interest to be honoured and beloved by their people (who from a thousand motives will be always ready to make them personally easy, and to gratify even their wanton desires, when they are not absolutely destructive to themselves), that there is much less address and management necessary to shew them their real

interest, and bring them into it, than to engage them in designs which will ever produce disaffection and danger; and it is certainly the interest of their ministers and servants, rather to set themselves at the head of publick benevolences, and receive the thanks and applause due to such benefits, than to have them extorted from them always with general curses and detestation, and often with personal hazard.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 81. SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 1722. *The Established Church Of England In No Danger From Dissenters.*  
(Trenchard)

SIR,

I have in my last letter said, that no wise man will remove ancient land-marks; and for the imaginary prospect of enjoying something which he does not enjoy, and has a mind to enjoy, run the hazard of losing what he is already in possession of. Those who have nothing to lose, can lose nothing by their feats of knight-errantry; but those that have, are seldom gainers by them. I considered this subject in that paper as it regarded the state; and I shall do it here with relation to our Church differences. The constitution of our Church is excellently well adapted to our civil government. The bishops answer to the Lords, and the inferior clergy to the Commons in the state; and all are subject to the legislative power mediately, and immediately to the crown. The king has the power of creating the chief ecclesiastical officers, as he has of creating the civil; and they both receive their beings and existence from him; and consequently they must ever be in the interest of monarchy; and the monarch must ever be in the interest of an establishment from which he derives so much power. The nobility and gentry too, whose birth, character, and fortunes always give them the means of easy access to the throne, must be equally in the same interest; for, as no man can suffer by another's enjoying possessions which he has no right or pretence to; so they will share largely in these possessions, by having more frequent and better opportunities than their fellow-subjects, of preferring their children, relations, friends, and dependents; not to mention what presentations they have in their own power. Indeed, every man, of any condition, has an interest in them, as he has a chance of sharing preferments himself, or getting them for his family: and therefore it is wild to fear that any interest in England can shake an establishment which so many interests must concur to support; unless those who are in possession of its advantages should, by endeavouring to take away from others their rights, force them to make reprisals, and to do what, I dare say, no man in England now intends, and but few desire.

I have wondered, therefore, to hear some men of good understanding and unquestionable integrity apprehend any danger to the legal constitution of the Church, and cannot guess from what quarter they can fear it. The Independents, Anabaptists, and Quakers, are no candidates for ecclesiastical power, but are by principle against all church establishments amongst themselves. The Quakers have no clergy at all; and the two former allow their ministers no superiority above the rest of their congregations; and it is certain, that all of them have much more favourable opinions of the national clergy than of the Presbyterians (the only rivals for church-power), from whom they apprehend, and have always found, much worse usage than from the Church. They desire nothing but liberty of conscience, and do not envy other preferments which they cannot enjoy themselves. It is true, the Presbyterians are candidates for church-dominion; and without doubt their priests have hawks' eyes at

the church preferments, and wish often for them, if wishes would get them; but what facility, or, indeed, possibility, have they of obtaining them? They are an inconsiderable body as to their number; and as to their figure less; and as they grow rich, and leave estates behind them, their sons (for the most part) desert their congregations and interest: Besides, they are divided now into two parties, *viz.* the Subscribers, and Nonsubscribers; the latter of which, much the most considerable for fortune and understanding, are come, for the most part, into the principles of general liberty and independency, nor will ever trust their clergy with the power which they pretend to, and which they claim from scripture; and bydegrees many of these, in all probability, will come into the Church.

No prince can ever be in the interest of Presbytery; and I believe that there never was one in the world who was a true Presbyterian: for, as that government is purely democratical, so it is calculated only for a popular state; and, in fact, subsists nowhere else in the world, unless in Scotland, where there have been frequent struggles between the crown and them. King James I was so plagued with them, that he was visibly partial to the papists against them: Charles I, by violence, destroyed their establishment; and King Charles II, though called in by them, and supported by them against his Parliament, yet immediately turned upon them: For, though they would have been glad to have had a king modelled to serve their purposes, yet that king had more wit than to have them. For the same reasons, the nobility and gentry of few countries, who by their births, fortunes, and near access to the throne, claim and enjoy a distinction above the inferior rank of mankind, can never be heartily in the interest of that sort of government; and it is certain, that many of the nobility and gentry in Scotland have never been favourable to it. And this is the true, perhaps the chief, reason why so many of them now are Jacobites.

The Presbyterian clergy claim a right, from scripture, to be independent of the civil power in all things which relate to spirituals, of which they pretend to be judges; and, in fact, their synods in Scotland, whatever they do now, formerly did not allow the crown power to adjourn or dissolve them, though they were forced to submit to it; and I am told, at present, they always adjourn by their own authority, though they take especial care it shall be to the same time that the crown appoints; which still keeps up their claim against a proper occasion. I do not avouch the truth of this, and hope that it is not true. Now it is certain, that the nobility and gentry of England, who have actually the power of governing their clergy, will never be governed by them, whatever visions weak men of any denomination may flatter themselves with; nor will ever submit to the Presbyterian discipline, and to let monks and cynics govern their families, turn the heads of their wives, children, and servants, and control their own actions. Nor will the other sectaries, as has been said, who are already possessed of a free liberty of conscience, endeavor to put power into the hands of those who will be sure to take it away; as they did in New-England, though they went there to get it for themselves. So that the danger of settling Presbytery in England is a mere chimera; and when, by the chance of a long Civil War, they were actually got in possession of a power, which during the continuance of it they disclaimed, they could not hold it even for a few years.

The only ball of contention which seems to be now amongst churchmen, is the Sacramental Test, which excludes dissenters from offices; which they think they have a right to in common with their fellow-subjects, having done nothing to forfeit it: But this seems to me to be a dispute only about a non-entity: for it is certain, that no one dissenter in England would be in any office of value, if that law was repealed, more than there are now; for they always qualify themselves, if they can get good places, and take advantage of the law to keep themselves out of chargeable ones: so that the churchmen alone suffer by the statute. The king, by act of Parliament, as well as interest and education, will be of the established Church; and the nobility are all, or almost all, so too, and no doubt but they will give the preference in all preferments to those of their own opinions: nor can it ever happen but that men, who can have qualifications to fill any considerable employments, will have wit enough to find out that there is no religious difference between the Church and Presbyterian establishments, except in the interests of their clergy; which no wise man will think considerable enough to differ about, and to separate upon that score from the national discipline, very few excepted, who will find their account in setting themselves at the head of a faction, and selling it. So that this question appears to me only to be a party puncto, and scarce worth asking on the one side, or denying on the other. Those amongst the Whigs, who most desire it, would not have the appearance of persecution stand in a law, when in effect there is no real persecution; and it is certainly the interest of the clergy to gratify and oblige their dissenting brethren in what costs them nothing: for one act of kindness will make more converts in a year, than they can make by preaching at them in twenty; however, till they see the advantage in doing it themselves, I think that no prudent man will give them any cause of jealousy, by doing it against their consent.

This being, as I conceive, the true state of our church differences, I shall conclude this letter, by application to our national clergy. It is not to be wondered at, that so many of their predecessors regretted the diminution which they suffered of their former revenues and grandeur at the Reformation; and that they often looked back with wishing eyes, and could not easily lose sight of so agreeable a prospect, without weighing enough the impossibility of recovering their lost power from the crown, and their lands from the nobility and gentry, who had got possession of them: Indeed it would have been a wonder if they had done otherwise. But now almost two hundred years' experience may convince them of the impossibility of succeeding in such a design. They have once lost all, by endeavouring to recover a part; and lately had like to have lost their possessions and religion too, by attempting to give the crown a power, which they intended should be employed for their own benefit, but was actually used against them; and I hope they are now pretty generally of opinion, that it is their interest to stand to their present establishment, and be contented with the same security for their own possessions as the rest of their fellow-subjects have, and to join with them in the defence of liberty, and the laws of the land.

I see, with a great deal of pleasure, many of them falling into these opinions; and hope, that it will soon be the opinion of the greatest part of them; and then I dare boldly affirm, that all religious distinctions will soon be at an end, which are now kept up more by party animosities, than any essential difference of opinion: for men will always fly from the sentiments of those whose persons they hate, and whose

oppression they fear; and such as are little concerned about metaphysical, and, as they think, useless, notions in divinity, will support any party against those who would oppress all; and therefore the most laudable, and indeed only way of the clergy's being safe themselves, is to make other people safe; and then they will have the good wishes, the respect, and protection of every honest man in England; and multitudes of the dissenters, who will not be frightened or bullied out of their opinions, will insensibly quit them of their own accord, if it be only to save the charge of paying separate ministers, and to be in the fashion, when they can once give themselves leave to consider coolly, that they differ about nothing, or nothing that is essential to religion, or their own interests. The heat of the sun made the traveller immediately quit his cloak, when the blustering of the north wind had made him wrap it closer about him.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

No. 82. SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 1722. *The Folly And Characters Of Such As Would Overthrow The Present Establishment. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

It gives equal occasion of mirth and concern to wise men, to see so many of the other sort, persons of seeming reverence, and with grave faces, exerting themselves with warmth and zeal for opinions and parties, with each a separate train or chorus of lesser and subordinate planets attending their motions, and dancing after them. Whoever views these solemn spectres at a distance, will see nothing but conscience, contempt of worldly honours and preferments, and minds superior to all temptations; whereas all this grimace, to a nice observer, will appear only to be a project for picking pockets, and getting away other people's money; which, in reality, at present makes, and ever did make, most of the squabbles which at any time have disturbed the world. This I may possibly hereafter shew to be true, in most of the conspicuous instances of publick and private life; but at present I shall confine myself to those gentlemen who deal in revolutions.

There are a considerable number of politicians in all governments, who are always enemies to the present establishment; not because it is an ill one, or because those who administer it betray their trust (which is a just and reasonable ground of complaint), but because they themselves are not in it: If they are so, all is well; but if they cannot be accepted upon their own terms, or are after wards turned out for misbehaviour, then upon a sudden there is no faith in man, fundamentals are struck at, no honest man can serve, and keep his integrity, and there is no remedy but a total change, and if that happen, and they can get into power, nothing is mended but their own faces and their fortunes. Without a doubt, every man has a right to liberty, and to come at it by all ways which do not bring a greater inconvenience with it than the benefit proposed promises advantage; and all just attempts of that kind are commendable: but I speak now of a sort of cattle, who think nothing but their fodder, who do not care who feeds them, or who is their master, provided they have a belly-full; nor whether it be lawful pasture, or trespass and encroachment upon the neighbouring soil.

I am so unfortunate as always to think, that a man who is a knave in his private dealings, will never be a saint in politicks; and whoever does not do reasonable and just things in respect to his neighbours, relations, and acquaintances, which he knows, will have little real concern for the titles of princes whom he knows not. Indeed it seems to me, that there cannot be a greater ridicule in nature, than for any man to pretend to be concerned for the personal interest of another, whom he is not acquainted with, has no means of being acquainted with, and probably would not be acquainted with upon equal terms, unless he can hope to find a farther account in it, in going snacks with him.

It is certain, that every man's interest is involved in the security and happiness of a good prince, from whom he receives protection and liberty; but for one who has no concern for publick or private justice, who does not care what becomes of his neighbour's rights and possessions, who would make no difficulty of cheating any prince whom he served, or oppressing those in his power; I say for such an one to set up for loyalty, and the right line, and to hazard his life and family, for conscience sake, is such a farce, that if men's thoughts were not so wholly taken up with their own cheating, that they minded not other people's, no one could be deceived by such false appearances.

I must beg leave, therefore, of these gentlemen to take it for granted, that all this zeal is for themselves, and only a struggle for money and employments, and to get that by a revolution, which they want merit or means to get without it; and I will endeavour to shew them, that they are taking abundance of pains, and running much hazard to attain what they never will catch. But I would not be understood here to apply myself to those men who are in desperate circumstances, and whose condition may be bettered, and cannot be made worse by confusion; nor to the poor visionaries and enthusiasts, who are the cat's-feet to the former, and are by nature prepared to be dupes and tools of ambition and design; but to the very few amongst them who are tolerably easy in their own affairs, and do not want common understanding; and to these I may safely say, that their passions and prejudices hurry them away from their real interests, to pursue shadows and imaginations, and to make those whose greatness they envy, yet much greater.

A prince long kept out of what he calls his dominions, will, upon a restoration, always bring back with him a junto of upstart Mamamouches, with a huge train of half-starved beggars dangling after them, who through necessity have followed his fortunes, flattered his vices, and will expect to have his ear, and the disposal of his favours. This ragged crew, who have been long the outcasts of fortune, know, for the most part, nothing of government, or the maxims necessary to preserve it, unless to talk about the divine right of their master, and the injury done to so good a prince; but with arbitrary principles picked up in their travels, minds soured with wants and disappointments, hungry bellies, and ravenous and polluted claws, finding themselves at once metamorphosed from mock ministers and magistrates to real ones, glutted with sudden plenty, and rioting in profusion, which they before enjoyed only in imagination, will become of course proud, insolent, and rapacious, and think of nothing but to redeem the time which they have lost, to raise hasty fortunes, and will endeavour to get them as they can; and consequently will sell their master to those who can or will give most for him, which will be ever those who have got most bykeeping him out.

The court language will be immediately changed: It will be said, that the prince must submit to the necessity of his affairs; that his enemies must be brought into his interest, who may be otherwise able to perplex his new government; and besides, having by long experience been used to employments, and the management of the publick revenue, must be continued till others are equally qualified to supply their offices; that his Majesty has a grateful memory of the faithful services of his true friends; that he will provide for them all by degrees, as fast as the others can be turned



out; but they must have a little patience, and not be too importunate: And so, after two or three years daily attendance, with old coats new furbished, some good words, now and then a good dinner, and the honour of whispering and joking with his lordship, they will find themselves just where they set out, only with less money in their pockets; will see their enemies in possession of all the employments; find out at last, that courts and courtiers are alike, become new malcontents, and form themselves into a faction against the government which they ventured their lives to bring about.

This was the case upon the restoration of King Charles II when the Round-heads had all the offices, having got money enough, whilst they were in power, to buy them; and the poor starved Cavaliers, who had nothing but a good conscience, and past services to plead, were laughed at, and could hardly get admittance into the ante-chamber. The descendants of these are the modern Whigs; and of the other, for the most part the present Tories. Nor can it happen otherwise in the nature of things: for those who have no merit to offer but their money, will always offer enough of it; and those who want it, will always take it. Besides, such as are conscious of their own demerit to their prince, will use double diligence to please him, and to wipe off past scores; whereas those who pretend that they have sacrificed all for him, will esteem his favours received only as payments of just debts; and their expectations are seldom to be satisfied, or they to be persuaded that their services are enough considered. And it must proceed from a consummate ignorance in human nature, not to know, that almost all men, and especially princes and great men, would rather engage new debtors to themselves, than pay off old debts to other people; would sooner create fresh dependents, by conferring favours which will be esteemed obligations, than satisfy the clamours and importunities of such pretended creditors and duns, who will never be satisfied.

Besides, princes, for the most part, think all that can be done for them is no more than duty; and will throw off old servants, who can do them no more good, as easily as old shoes; grow weary of their long-winded tales about past services, and will think themselves at liberty to pursue their present interests, and employ such who are most capable of serving them for the present, as those undoubtedly are who have established interests, most experience in affairs, and money always at hand to back their pretensions.

Besides, when matters in any country are prepared for a revolution, the poor starved followers, or discontented well-wishers to an abdicated prince, will never have the merit and honour of making it; and can never, or very rarely, have power enough to do so: for those who enjoy the advantages of the government in possession, who are deep in its councils, command its fleets and armies, and perhaps made it odious by their wicked councils and actions, are always the first to veer about, and make their interest with the new government, by being instrumental to bring it in: They have it often in their power to do it, and great sums of money always at command to buy their peace, and very frequently to keep their employments; and so to go on where they left off: for a poor wandering prince, eager to get a crown (which he will conceit to be his own), will fall into any measures, or join with any persons, to obtain it; and for the most part to be ready to drop his necessitous followers, as easily as they would drop him, if they found it equally their interest.

Of this sort we have pregnant instances in the triumviri of Rome; of General Monk, and others formerly among ourselves; and of a very great lord in the latter end of King James's time: But why should I name particular instances, when every revolution which almost ever happened in the world, furnishes us with numerous ones, and will ever do so to the end of the world? unless the power by which the revolution is made is so great, and so much in the prince's disposal, that he is under no necessity of keeping measures with any person or party, but is wholly at liberty to follow his inclinations, and gratify his revenge and passions; or is so entirely an instrument of the power which he makes use of, or rather which makes use of him, that he must do whatever they would have him do; as was the case in a good measure of Marius and Sulla, but I think cannot be the circumstance of any person now living; and I hope that few of those who wish for a revolution would accept it upon those terms.

The starved crew who deal in revolutions, are seldom conjurers in politicks: for no man of fortune, or a grain of understanding, would venture a single hair of his head for the interest of another, educated in pride and ingratitude, and very probably one too of whom he knows nothing, and who knows nothing of him, nor will have the least regard to his hazard and services. Besides, is not such an one a worthy hero, and his particular interest a worthy cause for a man of common sense, and tolerable fortune, to venture his life and estate for, by involving his country too in a civil war?

But there is another reason still behind, which I fear these doughty politicians never think of; namely, that they are doing the work which they pretend to oppose; which has sometimes inclined me to believe, that they have been employed and hired to act as they do. It is certain, that their ill-digested libels, without the least notions of the principles of government, or shewing the least disposition to mend it; their stupid cant of a right in princes independent of the happiness of the society; their ill-mannered reflections upon the person of the sovereign, whom most of them have sworn to; and their constant invectives and reproaches upon all men, who are honester and wiser than themselves, do more mischief to this country, than their united force, counsels, and understanding could do good, if they were inclinable to do it.

Weak men, who know or suspect their designs, will take no measures with them for a common good; and those who laugh at their follies, and are not afraid of being overreached and outwitted by them, are ever reproached with their silly designs. In fine, they are the only support of those whom they pretend most to abhor; and I believe I may venture to say, are the only friends in the kingdom, which some persons of figure lately had, without intending to be so.

In my next letter I will endeavour to shew, that it is impossible to bring their wild projects to bear; not with any hopes of making many of them wiser, but to convince better people, that they ought not to be bullied by the sound of Jacobitism, and so diverted from concurring in the necessary measures to serve their king, their country, and themselves, by bugbears and phantoms: for I dare venture to assert, that there is no possibility of restoring the Pretender to England, but by taking such measures to keep him out, as will be more terrible to the people than letting him in, if such can possibly be; and I am sure that every honest man ought to do all in his power to

prevent any attempts of that kind, which we are certain will receive no countenance from his Majesty, and, I hope, from none of his present ministry.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 83. SATURDAY, JUNE 30, 1722. *The Vain Hopes Of The Pretender And His Party. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

I have promised in my last to shew, that the Pretender's game is altogether desperate in England, unless those whose duty and interest in the highest manner oblige them to keep him out, pave the way for his return: And this I shall do, by shewing, that there is no interest within the kingdom, or out of it, capable of bringing about such a revolution, and willing to do it. Indeed, such a convulsion would shake the very foundations of the earth, and turn all nature topsy-turvy. God knows, one Revolution is enough for one age. I do not deny, but such an event might have been brought about, if favoured by the crown, by the ministers and officers in power under it, and abetted by a great neighbouring potentate. Which case many people (I hope falsely) think was ours in a late reign; and even then the success would not have been certain; and if it had succeeded, I dare venture to be positive, that those who had been most forward to have brought him in, would have been amongst the first to have turned him out again.

I think no man is now to learn, that conscience and the opinion of right have little or nothing to do in revolutions, but the resentments of men, and the gratifying the views and expectations of private persons, or of aggregate bodies; and no formidable set of men could have found their account amongst us, in continuing him upon the throne, upon the terms he must have sat there. He is certainly a very weak man, a great bigot, and of a saturnine and morose temper; and the near prospect of the possession of three crowns could not make him temporize with his then interest, nor disguise his religion to those who were contented to be deceived, that they might deceive others. And therefore it is impossible to believe, that a prince so qualified, provoked by his expulsion, acquainted personally with few or none amongst us, and educated in the religion and maxims of France and Rome, restored by their means, and supported by them, would act afterwards upon other maxims than what he had before imbibed, and what would be constantly inculcated into him by his foreign tutors abroad, and his priests at home.

Such conduct would quickly have made those who most espoused his interest at first, soon turn upon him, as they did before upon his father; and so many interests in Europe were concerned to separate England from a dependence upon France, that they would never have wanted a strenuous assistance, as his father found to his cost, when all the popish princes, except France, preferred the interests of their states before the interests of their religion, as France itself would have done upon the like motives. I hope I shall be forgiven by the gentlemen of this cast of loyalty, if I say, that they have sufficiently shewn to the world, that they will espouse the interest of no prince any longer than he serves theirs; and I conceive it impossible to suppose a circumstance which that prince could be in, to answer both their views, considering his prejudices and dependencies.

But whatever might have been practicable then, the case is far otherwise now. We have a King upon the throne, who will not be sung out of his dominions, as the late King James was: He will have some troops at home, who will certainly stand by him: He has great dominions of his own abroad, and is sure of the support of powerful neighbors: His strength, and that of his allies, at sea, is so great, that no invasion can be made upon him, but by stealth; and that must be always a very inconsiderable one, and cannot be supported but by accidents. Very many, and I hope by far the greatest part, of the nobility, gentry, and people, are devoted to his person and title, and would be glad to serve him upon the bottom of liberty and his true interest: The dignified clergy shew their loyalty in the manner which is most acceptable to him, and every month adds to their number by new creations; and we may reasonably hope, that the rest will not be long left behind.

All who were concerned in the publick funds, which contain a fourth or fifth part of the wealth of the kingdom, must support an establishment which supports them, and which if lost, they are undone and lost with it; and every man, who has property, or the means of acquiring property, and has an uncommon understanding, and a love for himself and liberty, must know that so many interests, and so supported, cannot be shaken but by a long civil war, and by making England the stage and field for all the nations in Europe to fight out their quarrels in; and that such a war must end in making us the prize of the victor, and subject us either to a foreign power or a domestic tyrant, if we have not the happiness to be restored to our present establishment again; and then we shall have had a civil war for nothing.

If we did not see by daily experience, that there is not an opinion in philosophy, religion, or politicks, so absurd, but it finds our heads wrong enough turned to embrace it; I should not think it possible, that any person, who is not a professed or concealed papist, could wish for such a revolution, or any one else fear it, and much less that they should fear it from abroad.

It is certain, that the Emperor has so many personal as well as political ties and motives to engage him in the king's interests, arising from obligations received, from more expected, and as it is said contracted for in regard to his Italian dominions, from their mutual dependencies upon one another in Germany, and above all, from the interests of their several dominions, that it is politically impossible but that he must do all in his power to support him in his throne: for when two nations are so situated, that they have nothing to fear from one another, and have a common interest to watch and oppose a third power formidable to both, they must be natural allies without the help of treaties; and whatever little occasional or personal differences may happen between the princes who govern them, yet whilst the interest of their dominions are friendly, they will never long continue enemies; and though they do so, yet will always help one another upon any emergency.

I think I may safely say, that the King has much to hope, and nothing to fear, from the lesser princes of Germany, in respect to his English dominions; for many of them can and will help him, and none of them can do him any harm.

The safety and preservation of Holland is so entirely dependent and wrapped up in our present establishment, that they must venture all to defend it. We are obliged, by interest as well as treaties, to support them against every power that is capable much to offend them; and their interest is, to keep us in a situation and condition to do so: And though, without doubt, they emulate and fear the great naval power of England, and our possession of Gibraltar; and would please themselves, and laugh in their sleeves, to see us increase our burdens, and enervate our state, by airy and romantick expeditions to do their business, whilst they lie still, ease their subjects, and pay off their debts; yet they will never suffer England to fall under the dependence of France, Spain or Rome; though they very well know how to make mercantile advantages of the weakness of those whom they have to do with.

The crowns of Sweden and Denmark can never have a joint interest to insult us; and at present neither of them have so: For it is said, that we are engaged by alliances to support them against one another, and every one else who has power enough much to annoy them; nor can they be sure that ever England again will find its glory and advantage in the heroick gallantry of engaging in the squabbles of the north, when France and Holland (vastly more concerned with the event) find theirs in lying still, and letting them agree as they fall out.

The Czar can have no motives, from the interest of his dominions, to quarrel with a people from whom his subjects enjoy an advantageous trade, and with a power too which he cannot hurt, and which can hurt him: We are no rivals for adjacent territories; and he cannot rival us in maritime power and trade; and both of us can find our account in friendship, and neither in enmity. His encroachments in the Baltic have hitherto done us no mischief; but on the contrary, have opened a new market for naval stores, and rendered our supplies from Sweden and Denmark less precarious: Indeed his conquering either of those crowns would be very mischievous, but much more so to other nations than to us, who may be easily supplied with naval stores from our own plantations; and therefore if his neighbouring or distant trading nations apprehend such an event, they will certainly join together to oppose it, and implore our assistance upon our own terms; though undoubtedly they will be much better pleased, if we do it for them without asking theirs.

If, therefore, any subjects of ours have given him just cause of offence, and made him a personal enemy to our country, we ought to deliver them up, or punish them at home; and if any nation in alliance with us, and in enmity with him, can find their interest in quarrelling with him, let them quarrel by themselves, and make up their squabbles as they can, or get the assistance of those who have political motives to oppose his progress, and put a stop to his growing power: I doubt we shall have enough to do to defend ourselves; and therefore I hope we shall not undo ourselves yet further to conquer for others, and in instances too which in times to come may prove fatal to ourselves.

The states of Italy are interested to preserve the naval power and greatness of England, if we pursue the measures which are most advantageous to ourselves; namely, to meddle no farther with their affairs, than to carry on an advantageous trade with them; and, by friendly offices, proper negotiations, and perhaps sometimes by

the shew of force, to protect them against the greater powers which threaten them. It is certainly their interest, that we should keep possession of Gibraltar and Port Mahon, if we make a right and honest use of them; for we have nothing to desire from them, but what it is their interest to give, nor they to fear from us, whilst we act as Englishmen: but if we should ever sacrifice our own interests to such as are not our own, we must thank ourselves if we make enemies of those who would be glad to be our friends.

It is certainly the interest of the kingdom of France, to have an impotent administration, and a distracted state of affairs in England, and a prince at the head of them, that either from weakness cannot, or from other motives and dependences will not, obstruct the union of the Spanish monarchy to their own, which would soon give them the possession of it as effectually as if they had conquered it; but the interest of the Regent, who governs France, is far otherwise: The appearing prospect, and probable chance of that crown's descending to him, or his posterity, will engage him to support a power which can alone support him, and which has every motive to do so. In such a circumstance of affairs, no interest in France, except his immediate dependents, can abet his personal pretensions against the interest of all France; and therefore he must depend upon foreign alliances; and England alone can be safely relied upon, who have no claim to any part of his dominions, or interest and desire to seize them; which cannot be said of the Emperor, or any other potentate, who has power and motives enough to assist him.

I have wondered therefore at the weakness of many among ourselves, who can be so often elated or terrified with the designs of the Regent, who can never conspire against us, without conspiring against himself; and no provocation even on our part could make him undermine or betray, in so tender an instance, his own interest. I doubt not but he wishes Gibraltar out of our hands; and if negotiations or big words can prevail upon us to part with it, I presume they are easily to be obtained, but he will never join with Spain to force it: This danger therefore is a mere bugbear, made use of to delude the Jacobites, and intimidate honest men, and, by making the first plot, or prate and bounce, to govern the others.

So that, the Pope excepted, who can do us no harm by his own force, the King of Spain alone is the power in Europe that can be concerned to favour the Pretender's interest; nor could he find his account in it, unless to open his way to the crown of France, in case of the young King's death.

The divine right of monarchy in the right line is so well established in arbitrary countries, that I dare say that prince will be sorry to depend upon a forced renunciation and the power of Spain, to defend himself against his nephew, if other powers were not at hand to assist him; and no power in Europe can do it effectually but England: and whilst there is a king at the head of it, who will pursue his own and his people's true interest in protecting him, and preserving the friendship which for more than an age has been propitious to both kingdoms, and has the means, by the possession of Gibraltar and Port Mahon, of resenting any injury done on his part; it is wild to think, that at great hazard and expence he would attempt to bring about a

revolution which may engage us in a long civil war, and disenable us to give him the protection he can receive no where else.

If, therefore, he is favourable to the Pretender's interest, it must be owing to personal resentments, or his views towards the crown of France. I hope that we shall give him no more cause for the first; and as to the latter, he has the interests of the Regent, of all Germany, Italy, the states of Holland, and indeed of all Europe, against him, as well as the united interest of his own subjects, who will not be contented to be a province to France; and I may venture to assert, that whilst we keep the possession of Gibraltar, and make a proper use of it, he can neither effect the one nor the other; namely, he can never make himself King of France, nor the Pretender King of England.

*T I am, &c.*



[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 84. SATURDAY, JULY 7, 1722. *Property The First Principle Of Power. The Errors Of Our Princes Who Attended Not To This. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

The subjects which men understand least are generally what they talk of most, and none so much as of government; which almost every man thinks he has talents to direct, and, like Sancho Pancha, believes he can make a very good viceroy: He thinks nothing is necessary, but to get at the helm, where his business is, to command, and that of others, to obey; and then, as the aforesaid Sancho (viceroy-like) says, "Who but I?" But to govern a state well, is the most difficult science in the world; and few men, who have ever been in the possession of power, have known what to do with it, or ever understood the principles upon which all power is founded; and their mistakes have made endless havock amongst mankind.

Government is political, as a human body is natural, mechanism: both have proper springs, wheels, and a peculiar organization to qualify them for suitable motions, and can have no other than that organization enables them to perform; and when those springs or principles are destroyed by accident or violence, or are worn out by time, they must suffer a natural or political demise, and be buried, or else smell above ground; and though neither of them ought to be murdered, yet, when they are dead, they ought to be interred.

Now it is most certain, that the first principle of all power is property; and every man will have his share of it in proportion as he enjoys property, and makes use of that property, where violence does not interpose. Men will ever govern or influence those whom they employ, feed, and clothe, and who cannot get the same necessary means of subsistence upon as advantageous terms elsewhere. This is natural power, and will govern and constitute the political, and certainly draw the latter after it, if force be absent; and force cannot subsist long without altering property; so that both must unite together, first or last, and property will either get the power, or power will seize the property in its own defence: for, it is foolish to think, that men of fortunes will be governed by those who have none, and be plundered to make such whom they despise, and have every day new reasons to hate, rich and insolent: And, on the other hand, men will contentedly submit to be governed by those who have large possessions, and from whom they receive protection and support, whilst they will yet always emulate their equals. Though the people of Rome extorted a law from the Senate, that commoners might be admitted into the chief offices of the state jointly with the nobles; yet all the address and power of the tribunes could not for a long time make them choose one of their own body into those offices, till commoners had got estates equal to the nobility; and then the balance of property turning to the people, they carried all before them.

The only true despotick governments now in the world, are those where the whole property is in the prince; as in the eastern monarchies, that of Morocco, &c. where every man enjoying what he has by the bounty of his sovereign, has no motive or means to contend with him, but looks upon him as his benefactor; and such as have no property, do not think themselves to be injured: But when men are in possession of any thing which they call their own, and think they have a right to enjoy it, they will ever contend for it, when they have the means to do so, and will always take advantage of every exigence in their prince's affairs to attain that right. Other princes, who have a mind to be as arbitrary as the former, and who want either the capacity or the power to acquire his natural dominion, seize by violence and productions of their subject' estates and industry; which is a constant state of force on one side, and oppression on the other: It perpetually provokes the people, and yet leaves them often the means of revenging the injustice done them, and must end in restoring the old government, or in setting up some new form by the extinction of the present usurpation; whereas in states truly despotick, though the monarchs be often destroyed, yet the monarchy is preserved entire, there being no interest in the state capable of shaking it.

But both these sovereignties have one mischief in common, and inseparable from them; *viz.* as they ever subsist by standing armies, so they must ever be subject to the caprices and disgusts of the military men, who often depose and murder their sovereigns; but in the latter much oftener than in the former: for whilst the people have the name, and, as they think, a right to property, they will always have some power, and will expect to be considered by their princes, and the soldiers will expect to have leave to oppress them, which will make continual struggles; and the prince, finding himself obliged to take part with one of them, often falls in the struggle; which was the case of the Roman emperors, most of whom were slaughtered either by the people, or their own soldiers: whereas in a natural absolute government, there is no danger but from the latter alone; and if he can please them, all is well, and he is safe.

But neither of these ought to be called by the name of government: both indeed are only violence and rapine, and the subjection of many millions of miserable wretches to the wild and wanton will of often the worst man among them: They deface human nature, and render the bountiful gifts of indulgent providence useless to the world; and the best which can be said of them is, that they make the grand tyrant and his inferior oppressors as miserable and unsafe as the poor wretches whom they oppress; nor should I have mentioned them as governments, but to make what I have further to say the better understood.

All other dominions are either limited monarchies, simple aristocracies, democracies, or mixtures of them; and the actions and operations in those governments, or the continuance of those governments, depend upon the distribution and alteration of the balance of property; and the not observing the variation and the frequent changes of the *primum mobile*, causes all the combustions that we see and feel in states. Men who fancy themselves in the same situation, as to outward appearances, stare about them and wonder what is become of the power which their predecessors enjoyed, without being able to judge how they lost it by the floating of property: They think

they have a right to enjoy the same still; and so, in spite of nature, use fraud and violence to attain what they cannot hold, if it were attained: However, they will struggle for it; and this struggle produces contentions and civil wars, which most commonly end in the destruction of one of the parties, and sometimes of both.

Now it seems to me, that the great secret in politicks is, nicely to watch and observe this fluctuation and change of natural power, and to adjust the political to it by prudent precautions and timely remedies, and not put nature to the expence of throws and convulsions to do her own work: I do not mean by altering the form of government, which is rarely to be done without violence and danger; and therefore ought not to be attempted when any thing else can be done, but by gentle and insensible methods. Suppose, for example, a limited monarchy, which cannot subsist without a nobility: If the nobles have not power enough to balance the great weight of the people, and support the crown and themselves, it is necessary to take some of the richest of the commoners into that order; if they have more power than is consistent with the dependence upon their monarch, it is right to create no more, but to let those already created expire and waste by degrees, till they become a proper balance: If the people by trade and industry grow so fast, that neither the crown nor nobles, nor both together, can keep pace with them; then there is no way left, but either, by using violence, to hazard, by an unequal contest, what the two latter are already in possession of, or, by using moderation and a beneficent conduct, to let the former enjoy all they can hope to get by a struggle, and voluntarily to give up all odious powers of doing mischief, though miscalled prerogative; which must ever be understood to be a power of doing good, when ordinary provisions fail and are insufficient.

Harry VII dreading the strengths of the nobles, who had always plagued, and sometimes destroyed his predecessors, found means to make them alienate a great part of their estates, which threw a proportionable power into the Commons; and his son, by seizing the revenues of the ecclesiasticks (who usually caballed with them), and dispersing those estates amongst the people, made that balance much heavier: which Queen Elizabeth wisely observing (though she loved power as well as any that went before her), yet caressed them with so much dexterity, that she preserved not only the crown upon her head, but wore it in its full lustre; and by encouraging trade, and letting nature take its course, still increased the people's wealth and power: which her successor early saw, and often lamented; but wanting her moderation, abilities, and experience, did not know how to temporize with an evil which he could not help, but took a preposterous way to cure it; and endeavoured, by the assistance of the governing clergy (who hoped by his means to recover what they lost by the Reformation) to regain a power, by pulpit-haranguing and distinctions, which he durst not contend for with the sword; and so his reign was a perpetual struggle between himself and his Parliaments: When they were quiet he bounced; and when he had thoroughly provoked them, he drew back, and gave good words again: but by such conduct he sowed the seeds of that fatal and bloody Civil War which sprang up in the reign of his son, and ended in the dissolution of the monarchy, and soon after of all liberty; for the general of the conquering army set himself (as all others will ever do in the same circumstance): But the property remaining where it was, this new tyranny

was violent, and against nature, and could not hold long, and all parties united against it; and so the nation was restored to its ancient form of government.

King Charles II came in with all the exterior advantages requisite to enslave a people: The nation was become weary of the sound of liberty, having suffered so much in their struggle for it, and lost all that they struggled for: The clergy were provoked by the loss of their dignities and revenues; the nobility and gentry were universally distasted and alienated by sequestrations, and by being so long deprived of the offices and distinctions which they claimed by their birth; and the body of the people had been harassed and exhausted by a long Civil War, and were weary of being tossed and tumbled once in a month out of one government into another; and all were prepared to accept and fall into any measures which might satiate their revenge upon those who had oppressed them, and to root out the very principles of liberty, the abuse of which had brought such mischiefs upon them.

That prince got a Parliament to his mind (as all princes will do upon a revolution, when parties run high, and will do any thing to mortify their opponents) and kept it in constant pension; but property remaining in the people, it insensibly gained ground, and prevailed at last: The people grew universally disaffected, and looked upon the Parliament as a cabal of perjured hirelings, and no longer their representatives; and the nation was worked up into such a ferment, that their betrayers would not or durst not serve the court, nor the court keep them any longer. That prince had wit enough to drive things no farther than they would go, and knew when it was time to give back; but his brother, with less understanding, and a much worse religion than his predecessor openly professed; hoped to accomplish what he had attempted, or despaired of bringing about; and how he succeeded we all know. I gladly throw a veil over what has happened since; and hope I shall hereafter have no reason to repent it.

I shall only observe, before I conclude this letter, that there is no need of the caballing of different interests, the uniting in joint councils, and concerting regular measures, to bring about some of the greatest events in human affairs; and consequently in great publick exigencies, oppressors will find no security in the appearing opposition of parties, who, like a pair of shears, will cut only what is between them, when they seem most to threaten one another. When nature has prepared the way, all things will tend to their proper center; and though men for some time will dally and play with their lesser interests, yet at last they will mechanically fall into their great ones, and often without intending or knowing it: Men will always feel their strength, when they cannot reason upon it, or are afraid to do so. I could name a party that for above thirty years together have acted in the interests of liberty, and for the greatest part of the time could not bear the sound of liberty, till at last great numbers of them are caught by the principles which they most detested; which I intend as a seasonable caution to all those who have the honour to sit at the helm of states, or to advise princes, who may at any time hereafter want such a memento.

I shall, in my next letter, endeavour to shew, upon the principles here laid down, that England at present is not capable of any other form of government than what it enjoys, and has a right to enjoy; and that another neighbouring state will, with very great difficulty, preserve the constitution which they now are in possession of.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 85. SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1722. ***Britain Incapable Of Any Government But A Limited Monarchy; With The Defects Of A Neighbouring Republick. (Trenchard)***

SIR,

Tacitus observed of the Romans in his time *Nec totam libertatem nec totam servitutum pati posse*; That they could neither bear full liberty, nor perfect slavery. This is certainly the case of England at present, if by liberty be understood what I presume he meant by it, a republican form of government. But I conceive that liberty may be better preserved by a well poised monarchy, than by any popular government that I know now in the world, whatever forms may exist in imagination. However, whether this be true or

not, it is certainly true that no man in his wits will lose the benefit of a very good present establishment, and run infinite hazards, to try to get one a little better, if he could have any prospect of attaining it: And I shall endeavour to shew, that the effecting such a project is impossible; and that during the present distribution of property, we can preserve liberty by no other establishment than what we have; and in the attempt to alter it, must run great hazard of losing what we are in possession of, or perhaps of falling into an absolute monarchy; or at best must return to the same form again, as we have done once already by such feats of gallantry.

It proceeds from a consummate ignorance in politicks, to think that a number of men agreeing together can make and hold a commonwealth, before nature has prepared the way; for she alone must do it. An equality of estate will give an equality of power; and an equality of power is a commonwealth, or democracy: An agrarian law, or something equivalent to it, must make or find a suitable disposition of property; and when that comes to be the case, there is no hindering a popular form of government, unless sudden violence takes away all liberty, and, to preserve itself, alters the distribution of property again. I hope that no one amongst us has a head so wrong turned, as to imagine that any man, or number of men, in the present situation of affairs, can ever get power enough to turn all the possessions of England topsy-turvy, and throw them into average, especially any who can have a will and interest in doing it; and without all this it is impossible to settle a commonwealth here; and I dare say, that few desire it, but such as having no estates of their own, or means and merit to acquire them, would be glad to share in those of other people.

Now it is certain, that the distribution of property in England is adapted to our present establishment. The nobility and gentry have great possessions; and the former have great privileges and distinctions by the constitution, and the latter have them in fact, though positive laws give but few of them: For their birth and fortunes procure them easy admittance into the legislature; and their near approach to the throne gives them pretences to honourable and profitable employments, which create a dependence from the inferior part of mankind; and the nature of many of their estates, and particularly

of their manors, adds to that dependence. Now all these must ever be in the interest of monarchy whilst they are in their own interest; since monarchy supports and keeps up this distinction, and subsists by it: For it is senseless to imagine, that men who have great possessions, will ever put themselves upon the level with those who have none, or with such as depend upon them for subsistence or protection, whom they will always think they have a right to govern or influence, and will be ever able to govern, whilst they keep their possessions, and a monarchical form of government, and therefore will always endeavour to keep it.

All the bishops, dignitaries, or governing clergy, all who have good preferments in the church, or hope to get them, are in the interest of monarchy, for the reasons which I gave in a former letter, and for some others which I choose not to give now. They know very well too, that a popular government would take away all possessions which it should think fit to call superfluous, would level all the rest, and be apt to reason, that Christianity would fare never the worse, if its professors were less politicians, of which they see before their eyes a pregnant and very affecting instance in Holland. All great and exclusive companies are in the interest of monarchy (whatever weak people have alleged to the contrary); for they can much easier preserve their separate and unwarrantable privileges by applications to the vices and passions of a court, than by convincing a popular assembly; and for the same reason, all officers who have great salaries and exorbitant fees must ever be sure friends to monarchy. Rich merchants, and indeed all rich men, will be equally in the same interest, and be willing to enjoy themselves, and leave to their posterity all the advantages and distinctions which always attend large fortunes in monarchies.

After these (many of whom are men of virtue and probity, and desire only to enjoy the rights which they are born to, or have acquired) there follows a long train of debauchees, and riotous livers, lewd women, gamesters, and sharpers; with such who get by oppression and unequal laws, or the non-execution of good ones: All these are ever for monarchy and the right line, as expecting much fairer quarter from the corruption of courtiers, than they can ever hope to meet with in popular states, who always destroy and exterminate such vermin, of which sort (I thank God) we have none amongst us at present; but who know how soon we may?

Now, without entering into the question, which is the best government in theory, a limited monarchy, or a democratical form of government? I think I may safely affirm, that it is impossible to contend against all these interests, and the crown too, which is almost a match for them all together; so that the phantom of a commonwealth must vanish, and never appear again but in disordered brains. If this be the true circumstance of England at present, as I conceive it indisputably is, we have nothing left to do, or indeed which we can do, but to make the best of our own constitution, which, if duly administered, provides excellently well for general liberty; and to secure the possession of property, and to use our best endeavours to make it answer the other purposes of private virtue, as far as the nature of it is capable of producing that end.

I have purposely declined the speaking of aristocracies, because there can be no imaginary danger of establishing such a government here: for the nobility have neither

property nor credit enough to succeed in such an act of knight-errantry, or will to attempt it; and the gentry will ever oppose them, unless their interests be also taken into the project; and both together are not able to contend with the crown and the body of the people, the latter of which will ever be in the interests of equality.

And now having mentioned aristocracies, I shall make some observations upon a neighbouring state, which is vulgarly mistaken for a commonwealth, and is so in nature, according to the balance of property there; but is politically an union of several little aristocracies, in many respects like some states of Italy in the first time of the Romans, but contrived with much worse policy. As it was jumbled together in confusion, so it seems to me to subsist by chance, or rather by the constant dread of the two great successive powers of Europe, *viz.* that of Spain formerly, and France since; for the natural power being in the people, and the political in the magistrates, it has all the causes of dissolution in its contexture. Every town is governed and subject to a little aristocracy within itself, who have no foundation of suitable property to entitle them to their dominion; and each of those is independent of its provincial state, and indeed of the States-General, nor have any check upon their own actions, but the tumult and insurrections of the people, who have the real and natural power: and indeed, to do the magistrates right, they judge so well of their own weakness and the power of the people, that they seldom or never give them just cause of provocation; but by frugality, public economy, wise and timely compliances, impartial justice, and not raising great estates to themselves at the other's expence, they make their subjects easy, and find their own account in the submission of those whom they want power to govern by the force of authority; and probably will continue to make them so, whilst they keep to the same maxims and their present conduct. But this is no steady and durable dominion; nor, unless mankind are formed there with other appetites and passions than in all other parts of the world, can the same prudence be always observed; which seems to me to be owing only to their necessities, and that virtue, moderation, and frugality, which is conspicuous in the first rise of states, and is not yet quite spent there, but cannot last much longer: for when they cease to be kept together by the constant dread of overgrown neighbours, they will certainly think themselves at liberty to play their own games at home. Those who are in possession of power will know what it is good for; and those who have great riches will fall into luxury, then into extravagance, at last into necessity; and others will vie with them, and follow their example.

When their magistrates have impaired their estates, or fancy that they want greater, they will plunder the publick; and others of equal condition will emulate them, and begin to ask what right the others have to the sole enjoyment of privileges and employments, which they think themselves to all respects equally entitled to, and will not be content to be always subjects to those who are no better than they are; and the people will be impatient in continuing to pay large taxes to such who pocket them, and will endeavour to right themselves, and have power enough to do so. These opposite interests must raise convulsions in the body politick, and produce all the mischiefs which have happened in other states upon the like occasions. Those who have power, will endeavour to keep it; those who suffer under it, will endeavour to take it away; and the event will be in the will of heaven alone, but in all likelihood will besome other form of government.



I take my account of the constitution of this state from others, who possibly may not be well informed of it, and I hope are not so: for I should be very sorry to see the most virtuous and flourishing state which ever yet appeared in the world, perish of an internal distemper; a state which, ever since its institution, has been the champion of publick liberty, and has defended itself, and in a great measure its neighbours, from the two greatest tyrannies which ever threatened Europe and the Christian religion.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 86. SATURDAY, JULY 21, 1722. *The Terrible Consequences Of A War To England, And Reasons Against Engaging In One. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

I propose in this letter to shew, and I hope to do it unanswerably, that nothing can be a greater disservice to his Majesty's interest, more fatal to his ministry, or more destructive to his people, than to engage them in a new war, if there be but a bare possibility of preventing it, let the pretences be what they will. A new fire seems to be now kindling in Italy, which in all likelihood will blaze out far and wide; and, without doubt, many princes will warm their hands at it, whilst their subjects will be burnt to death: But I hope we shall have wit enough to keep out of its reach, and not be scorched with its flames; but, like some of our wiser neighbours, lie still, and know how to make our markets of the follies and misfortunes of others. We have been heroes long enough, and paid the price of our gallantry and credulity. We are got near sixty millions in debt, and have nothing for it but Gibraltar and Port Mahon; and it is said, that some of our allies have had the presumption to expect these from us too; and I am sure, if they should be lost, or given away, we have nothing left wherewith to compensate any power which we shall vanquish hereafter.

I hope no man will be wild enough to make any proposition for a new war to us; nor can I guess at any one argument for it, but what I hope will be called treason to his sovereign and his country. Old threadbare reasons will hold no longer: People will not always deceive themselves, nor be deceived by others. We shall not bear being told again, that England need but send a message, or a bucket full of water, and the fire will be extinguished. That argument has already cost us the terror and expence of providing against two invasions, or intended invasions; has lost or spoiled several great fleets, destroyed numbers of our merchant ships, increased our national debts many millions, perhaps brought upon us that noble project to pay them off, and created the general want of trade, and, I doubt, that great disaffection which is so often complained of; and all the reward which we have met with, has been a struggle to keep what we were in possession of before, what was yielded to us by treaties, and what there was no pretence for demanding, if we had thought it our interest to have lain still.

I hope we shall never engage in a new war, before we have considered all the consequences which will necessarily or probably happen from such an engagement, and have thought how we shall get out of it, as well as how to get into it. The first step draws in all the rest; and when we are in, we must go through. We may begin with thousands, but must go on with millions. A message will produce a quarrel, but fleets and armies must end it.

We well know, and have long felt, the moderation of our allies. We can no sooner engage in their squabbles, but they become our own; and then we must pay them for

doing their own business, and largely too, or else they threaten to leave the war upon us; and when it is ended through our means, always divide the spoil amongst themselves, and endeavour to make us pay likewise for the peace. I would be glad to know what any of them have ever done for us, or would suffer us to do for ourselves, in return for all that we have done for them; or what courtesy they have ever shewn to us Englishmen, as Englishmen: I hope therefore, that we too shall at last, in our turn, consider only our own interests, and what is best for ourselves; and not ruin ourselves yet further, and let others have the whole advantage. But if we had no occasion given us for these complaints, we have another and shorter answer to give to our good allies; namely, that by helping them so long, we are rendered incapable of helping them any longer; and that all treaties must cease and become void, when it is impossible to perform them without utter ruin to one of the parties, and without destroying all the ends for which these treaties were made.

Let us take a short prospect of the journey which we are to go, and consider what will be the result of such an undertaking. All naval armaments must be made at our charge, and employed at a great distance from home, to the ruin of our ships and our seamen, and the obstruction of our commerce: Armies must be sent abroad, or money, in the name of subsidies, found out to pay those which are there already: More armies must be kept at home to oppose invasions, and keep the people quiet: Great land-taxes must be raised, our publick funds be every year increased, the people frightened with perpetual alarms, which will sink the price of the old stocks, and consequently set an exorbitant price upon the raising of new ones: We shall lose a beneficial trade to Spain and the Mediterranean; and probably Portugal will take that opportunity to execute what they lately attempted. The Czar too may think it a favourable one to acknowledge some past obligations; and other nations may judge it a proper time to bite the stone that was thrown at them; and then we shall have little or no trade at all, all our commodities and manufactures will lie upon our hands, and the people be starved, or subsist by ways which no honest man can wish, and allmen ought to dread.

If France engage on the different side, we must have her too for our enemy; if on the same side, there can be no need of our assistance. But if she think it her interest to lie still, she, who is the next neighbour to both the combatants, and is vastly more concerned in the event; what have we to do with them at this distance, we who are no wise concerned whether the emperor or Spain uses the Italians worst, or who has the Provinces contended for? When Spain had them, we suffered nothing by it; nor do I hear what we have got by the Emperor's being in possession of them. I purposely avoid saying any thing of the States-General, because they will certainly have wit enough to hug themselves in the folly of others, and profit by it.

And what shall we get by such feats of knight-errantry, but the disinterested glory of serving others to our own disadvantage, and the character of pious Christians, in treating those kindly who despitefully use us? Oh, but some tell us, that we are bound by treaties to preserve the neutrality of Italy. Whether this be true, or the contrary be true, I know not: but if it be true, I doubt not but we shall be told how England came to be a party to such a treaty; what were the motives for making it; what equivalent we had for it; what interest of ours was served by it; or what other country, which we were concerned to preserve, was to reap the advantage of it. And we ought to enquire

too, how treaties, made for our benefit, have been kept by our allies; because we are told (I hope falsely) that one of them had once in his custody the Pretender to the king's throne, with several other traitors to the government; and yet, instead of delivering them up, set them at liberty: and lately one of them refused, or declined, to deliver up a much greater traitor, when earnestly requested by the Parliament, and, without doubt, importunately pressed by the king's ministers.

I do not find that we have any thing to fear from the King of Spain, if we do not give him provocation; for the Secretary of State assured the Lord Mayor, in his letter since printed, that no foreign potentate abetted, or gave any countenance to, the last intended insurrection; and if he would not assist a conspiracy, actually, and, as we are told, deeply laid, there can be no reason to believe that he will form a new one against a state that intends him no harm, and can do him a great deal of good; and surely it is not our interest at this time of day to provoke him to do it in his own defence. If he and the Emperor have a mind to make a feast in Italy, let them bid whom they please to the banquet, which without doubt will be a long one, and many neighbouring princes will be gorged at it; but for us, we have no business there, unless to be caterers, to supply the greatest part of the provision, and to pay the reckoning for the rest. I once knew a wager of forty to one staked down to be spent. But instead of engaging our country in such expensive and wild whims, I hope we shall catch at so favourable an opportunity, when those who can most molest us are together by the ears, to do our own business, pay off our debts, settle our trade, and reform all the abuses of which we so justly complain.

But if such a war were ever so necessary, how shall it be supported? We find by woeful experience, that three shillings in the pound has not maintained the current expence of the government, but we have run still in debt. The money given for the Civil List has not defrayed that charge, but new and large sums have been given to pay off the arrears; which, it is said, are not yet paid off. New salaries and new pensions have been found necessary to satisfy the clamours of those who will never be satisfied; and the greater occasions which the courtiers have, and the greater necessities which they are in, the more will still be found necessary: for it is no news for artful men to engage their superiors in difficulties, and then to be paid largely for helping them out of them again. The customs and excise are anticipated and mortgaged almost beyond redemption: The salt, leather, windows, and almost every thing else that can be taxed, is already taxed, and some of them so high, as to lessen the produce, and they are appropriated to pay off debts due to private men.

What new sources will be found out to maintain a foreign war, and a much larger expence in our own country, which will be necessary to defend us against enemies abroad, whom we shall provoke, and against discontented people at home, who, it is to be feared, may say that they are oppressed and starved? One additional shilling in the pound upon land, if the Parliament can be persuaded to give, and the people be easy in paying it, will be but as a drop of water thrown into the ocean, whatever may be pretended at first; and then for all the remainder we must run in debt, if we can get any one to trust us; and, where shall we raise new funds? Here I doubt our publicans and inventors of new grievances will be at their wit' end: It is certain that the greater the difficulty is in raising them, the greater must be the price for raising them; and the

present stocks will be less valuable in proportion as new demands make more necessary.

But suppose, that, to the infinite dissatisfaction of the people, and the utter ruin and destruction of all trade, the little which is not already taxed could be taxed, and turned into funds, to create new markets for stock-jobbers, and enough could be raised to maintain a war two or three years; what shall we do next? It is most sure, that the difficulty of obtaining a peace will grow in exact proportion as we become less capable to carry on the war; and what assistance, think ye, my countrymen, shall we have from our good allies to obtain a peace? Without doubt we shall pay the piper at last, and they will parcel out the contended dominions amongst themselves, and attempt to make us give up Gibraltar and Port Mahon to bind the bargain; nay, to pay besides a large sum of money for the ships which we shall have destroyed, and the other mischiefs which we shall have done, and which we need not do. I hope it will never be our lot to assist some of our neighbours at a vast expence, and then reward them at a further expence for accepting our assistance; and to beat others of our neighbours, to our own loss as well as theirs, and pay them afterwards for having beat them: What would the world think of us in this case, but that as France had got the plague, England had got the frenzy; and that we were weakening ourselves as fast with our own hands, as the divine hand had weakened them?

But if, after all, we cannot get a peace, or shall think fit not to submit to the honourable conditions which our honest and faithful confederates shall judge good enough for hereticks, what shall we do then? They will have no motives to serve us when they have done their own business, or rather when we have done it for them: They have sufficiently shewn already what inclination they have to serve us; and if ever they have done it, they have been well paid for their pains. What condition shall we then be in to oppose one or more powerful neighbours, and perhaps victorious ones too, when we are enervated and exhausted, when our people are discontented at home, and we have no regular means to maintain fleets and armies, who must be forced to maintain themselves, if we cannot maintain them? These mischiefs (and terrible ones they are) may be easily foreseen, and ought to be prevented, if we would prevent absolute and conclusive ruin. What, think you, must, in such a circumstance of affairs, become of the funds? If we lie still, they are lost of course; and if we apply them to our necessary defence, thousands and thousands of innocent people must be undone and become desperate, and infinitely inflame the popular discontents, and still make more taxes, more oppressions, necessary: And yet who will be found so hard-hearted, as not to sacrifice the interests of thousands to the safety of millions, when no other resource is left?

Beware, my friends, of the first step, and know your whole journey before you move one foot; when you are up to the ears in mire, it will be too late to look back. At first we may be told by our confederates and their creatures, that we need only bounce a little, and make a shew of force, and every thing will go to our mind; but a burnt child will dread the fire: When we are engaged, we cannot retreat; one step will draw another; it will not depend upon ourselves, whether we shall go on or not; the game will be then in other hands, who will play it to their own advantage, without regarding ours; and what we begin in wantonness, will probably end in our confusion.

What then must we think of any men amongst us, who would draw all these mischiefs, these inevitable mischiefs, upon their country! They must certainly be egregiously foolish, or consummately wicked. I hope, and believe, there are no such; but if there be, without doubt they have taken their measures, and have thought how to save themselves, whatever becomes of their country; but in that too they may chance to be mistaken.

If it be necessary to the publick safety to keep eight or ten camps in readiness for action in times of full peace, when there is no outward appearance of publick disturbances, and no foreign power promotes or abets any such; how many camps will be necessary when we have enemies assaulting us from abroad, and combining and intriguing with our own native traitors at home; especially if the people should be made still more uneasy, by laying burdens upon them which they cannot bear nor stand under? For my own part, I can see no steady source or continuing cause for the disaffection so much complained of, but the great and heavy variety of taxes, of which our ancestors knew nothing, and which it is a sort of a science now to know; and I doubt that disaffection will not be cured by adding to the number.

We can never, therefore, behave ourselves with more true duty to his Majesty, give better advice and assistance to his ministry, or acquit ourselves with more fidelity to our country, than by opposing, in the most vigorous manner, such measures as threaten them all with ruin' and by shewing the utmost resentment against any ill-designing persons, who would wickedly and traitorously sacrifice a great, free, and opulent kingdom, to mad whimsies, or the pitiful mean interests of little states.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 87. SATURDAY, JULY 28, 1722. *Gold And Silver In A Country To Be Considered Only As Commodities. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

Boccalini tells us, that Archimedes was beat by the bravoes in Parnassus, for finding out a mathematical demonstration, by which it was plainly proved, that all the design of great, as well as private men, was dexterously to get money out of other people's pockets, and put it in their own. And it is certain, that this is the grand design and business of all mankind, the chief if not the only spring of all their actions, and animates and inspires their best as well as worst performances. And how commendable soever this may be in private men, who already enjoy all the conveniences of life, it is certainly the interest and duty of states, by all prudent and just methods to increase their wealth and power, and in consequence their security and protection. As government is only the union of many individuals for their common defence; so they cannot attain that desirable end, unless by accident of situation, superior policy, or by sufficient number, they can render themselves strong enough to repel the injuries, and oppose the insults, of ambitious and unruly neighbours; otherwise they must submit to be undone, or throw themselves under the protection of some greater potentate, and accept such conditions as he pleases to give, and for no longer duration than he pleases.

As this is the greatest mischief which human nature can suffer, so every honest and wise man will endeavour to free himself, his family, and his country, from such an abject, lamentable, and forlorn condition, and contribute all in his power to make the state which he lives under great, rich, and formidable. I have already at large shewn, that no state in a small tract of ground can be so, but by liberty, which always produces riches, and every quality, which can grace and adorn the mind, and render mankind preferable to the brute creation.

Now nothing can be called riches, but as it is applicable, or rather as it is applied, to the use of men. The vast tracts of North-America feed only a few scattered and half-starved inhabitants, whilst the barren rocks of Switzerland maintain in plenty great numbers of wealthy and happy people. All Greece, Macedon, and Epirus, together, have not so much power now as single cities in them had formerly. Countries without inhabitants will not defend themselves, nor are worth defending; nor will they maintain inhabitants without their own industry and application. Every nation is rich and powerful, in exact proportion to the numbers, the employment, or the idleness of the people; and the power of the state is the accumulative wealth of the whole; that is, what every man can spare for the common defence, over and above what is necessary for his own subsistence: so that to make a state great, the people must be made rich and happy: Their private happiness will make them willing to defend their country, and their wealth will enable them to do it.

The riches of private men are such things as are necessary or conducive to their personal support, convenience, or pleasure; but many other things are necessary for the defence and augmentation of states. There must be fortresses, artillery, armed ships, and magazines of war, and proper encouragements given to skillful persons to make use of them: There must be often great armies at land, and fleets at sea, maintained and paid at the publick expence, for the publick security; all which must be maintained out of the superfluities of those who stay at home; and if they have not all those materials necessary to their preservation, or conducive to their private happiness, in their own country (as few countries have), they must purchase them abroad with the produce of their own country, or by silver and gold, which purchases all commodities. Indeed, by the universal consent of mankind, silver and gold is become the medium of all commerce; and every state, as well as private man, is rich and powerful in proportion as he possesses or can command more or less of this universal commodity, which procures all the rest: All other things are riches only *hic & nunc*; but these will command every thing, and almost every person in the world.

Gold and silver are the natives but of few countries, and the propriety but of few persons in those countries, and can be obtained by others only by their consent, or by force and rapine; and consequently, no state can grow more considerable than their native soil will make them, but by robbing their neighbours of what they themselves want or desire, or by persuading them to part with it willingly; that is, either by arms or trade; and which of these two will conduce most to the happiness, security, and augmentation of empires, shall be the subject of this letter.

If we consider this question under the head of justice and humanity, what can be more detestable than to murder and destroy mankind, in order to rob and pillage them? War is comprehensive of most, if not all the mischiefs which do or ever can afflict men: It depopulates nations, lays waste the finest countries, destroys arts, sciences, and learning, butchers innocents, ruins the best men, and advances the worst; effaces every trace of virtue, piety, and compassion, and introduces confusion, anarchy, and all kinds of corruption in publick affairs; and indeed is pregnant with so many evils, that it ought ever to be avoided, when it can be avoided; and it may be avoided when a state can be safe without it, and much more so when all the advantages proposed by it can be procured by prudent and just methods.

All the advantage procured by conquest is to secure what we possess ourselves, or to gain the possessions of others, that is, the produce of their country, and the acquisitions of their labour and industry; and if these can be obtained by fair means, and by their own consent, sure it must be more eligible than to extort them by force.

This is certainly more easily and effectually done by a well regulated commerce, than by arms: The balance of trade will return more clear money from neighbouring countries, than can be forced from them by fleets or armies, and more advantageously than under the odious name of tribute. It enervates rival states by their own consent, and obligates them, whilst it impoverishes and ruins them: It keeps our own people at home employed in arts, manufactures, and husbandry, instead of murdering them in wild, expensive, and hazardous expeditions, to the weakening their own country, and the pillaging and destroying their neighbours, and only for the fruitless and imaginary



glory of conquest: It saves the trouble, expence, and hazard, of supporting numerous standing armies abroad to keep the conquered people in subjection; armies, who, for the most part too, if not always, enslave their own country, and ever swallow up all the advantages of the conquests. I have often wondered at the folly and weakness of those princes, who will sacrifice hundreds of thousands of their own faithful subjects, to gain a precarious and slavish submission from bordering provinces, who will seek all opportunities to revolt; which cannot be prevented but by keeping them poor, wretched, and miserable, and consequently unable to pay the charges of their own vassalage; when, if the same number of men and the sums of money were usefully employed at home, which are necessary to make and support the conquest, they would add vastly more to their power and empire.

It is not the extent of territory, and vast tracts of barren and uncultivated land, which make states great and powerful, but numbers of industrious people under a proper oeconomy, and advantageously and usefully employed; and the same number will be always more powerful in a small tract of ground than a great one: They are here always at hand to assist one another, to carry on manufactures, and to promote and execute any great designs: All the materials of trade and industry are in place, and by that means the charges of carriage prevented, which swallows the advantages of commerce, and renders it unprofitable. The impossibility of subsisting by idleness renders them industrious, emulation rouses their ambition, and the examples of others animate them to desire to live in splendor and plenty; and all these passions concur to set their hands and wits to work, and to promote arts, sciences, and manufactures, to strike out new trades, form new projects, and venture upon designs abroad, to enrich their own country at home.

Great numbers of people crowded together, are forced by their necessities to turn every stone, and try every method to support themselves and families, and by doing so will trace and discover by degrees all the sources of wealth. All ways will be found out to make trade commodious and profitable; numerous contrivances be thought on to come at the materials of manufactures easily and at cheap rates, and to work them again at the lowest prices. Rivers will be made navigable, engines invented, which with the assistance of few hands, shall supply the labour of multitudes; store-houses will be built to deposit goods in, whilst they wait for markets; fisheries will be erected, colonies planted to furnish new commodities and new materials of commerce, and will vent too and carry off those turbulent and unruly spirits, who are unfit to live in a peaceable state, and must rob, hang or starve there. By all these laudable methods, and many more, riches will be amassed, money become cheap, and the interest of it lessened; and the lowering the interest of money will open new trades, and still bring in more money, as well as improve the native territory, increase vastly the purchase of land, and encourage the building of cities and towns: for the less men expect for the interest or profit of their principal, the more they can afford to lay out in trade, building, or husbandry, to return but the same income; and consequently can grow rich by the commerce and the same improvements, which will undo nations where the interest of money is higher.

There are few countries in the world, but by a due culture would maintain many times the inhabitants which possess it, better than they are at present maintained. Our

indulgent mother will readily yield up her hidden stores to such of her children as make a proper courtship and application to her. The treasures of the earth and seas are inexhaustible: One acre of ground well manured, cultivated, and sowed with corn, will produce ten times as much for the sustenance of man, as ten acres not cultivated, or ill cultivated; and one acre in gardens will produce ten times as much as in corn; and it is much easier, cheaper, and profitable, to improve our own country, and so increase its productions, than to fetch the like productions by force from others. It is more safe, as well as virtuous, to accept the willing and chaste embraces of conjugal affection, than by violence to extort forbidden and dangerous pleasures, and which for the most part, if not always, fail our expectations.

But supposing the soil belonging to any nation should not be sufficient to support all its inhabitants, which I believe is the case of Holland; yet it is certain they may purchase from their neighbours what they want, for very much less than they can earn at home in arts and manufactures. Labour in husbandry is the least profitable employment in the world; and ten men so employed will not earn the wages of one good artist, and the meanest mechanicks and artificers earn more than husbandmen; and consequently have a surplus from their own labour, after they have bought the production of the other's industry. This is the circumstance of cities and trading towns, who have no growth of their own, and yet grow rich by retailing and manufacturing the growth of the neighbouring countries, over and above what they consume for their own subsistence and use; and the same is true of trading states. As Tyre, and other free states did formerly, so Holland at present grows vastly rich and formidable, by keeping its neighbours employed in the poor and menial trade of husbandry, whilst they employ their own people in arts and manufactures; a small part of which supplies them with the productions of the other's labour, and with the rest they purchase a great part of the riches of the world. By those means they have made themselves more considerable in that little spot of land, than great empires have done by conquest, which always corrupts, and often enslaves, the conquerors as well as the conquered.

*TI am &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 88. SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1722. *The Reasonableness And Advantage Of Allowing The Exportation Of Gold And Silver, With The Impossibility Of Preventing The Same.*  
(Trenchard)

SIR,

Having in my last letter considered silver and gold as the only certain durable, and universal riches; and since the attaining them is the chief view and design of all mankind; I shall in this consider a question which puzzles the greatest part of the world, and which, as I think, they for the most part determine wrongly; namely, when a nation is once possessed of them, whether it is their interest to let them be exported again? In this I have the opinion of most states against me, who prohibit the carrying them out under the severest penalties, sometimes before, and sometimes after they are converted into their current coin; and to me nothing seems more injurious, impertinent, and impotent, than to make such laws.

No soil or climate produces all commodities, and no nation works all sorts of manufactures, which are of common and necessary use; nor can any man by his own skill and labour, make or acquire any considerable part of such things as he wants or desires; and consequently he can have no means of attaining them, but by exchanging what he does not want for what he does. But since it does and will most commonly happen, that the person who is possessed of the commodity which one man desires, does not want what he has to give in lieu of it, or not enough of it to answer the value of what he parts with; therefore something else must be found out to make the account even.

From hence mankind have found themselves under a necessity to agree upon some universal commodity which shall measure the value of all the rest, and balance all accounts at last. Hitherto nothing has been discovered which will answer that purpose so effectually as silver and gold: Their contexture hinders them from being perishable, their divisibility qualifies them to answer all occasions, their scarcity enhances their price, so as to make a great value lie in a narrow compass, and easily portable; and the more regular and equal supplies of them than of other commodities, render them proper standards for the valuation of other things. These therefore being, by general and almost universal agreement, the mediums of commerce, the balance of all traffick, and the ultimate view and chief advantage proposed by it; we are to consider how far those ends and advantages can be answered by exporting them again.

Now it is certain, that many commodities of absolute and indispensable use are in the possession of nations who do not want those which we have to give in exchange for them; or, knowing our necessities will not part with them but for silver and gold; and therefore we must have them upon their terms, or not have them at all. Some of them are the materials of our manufactures, which will return to us again many times the

money which we advance in procuring them; and very often they are necessary to carry on trade in general, and enabling the merchants to make assortments of goods proper for particular markets; or are the materials of navigation, or magazines for war and common defence.

No country wants always the same supplies, or has the same growth and quantity of manufactures to purchase them; nor can any merchant have a clear view of the whole commerce of the country which he deals with; nor do the commodities always bear the same price: so that the balance will often vary, and must be paid at last in those universal commodities. No nation or private man will deal with another, who will not pay his debts; and if he has not other commodities to pay them with, or if those which he has are not wanted, or will not be accepted in payment, he must pay them in such as will; and, whatever it costs him, must deliver them into the custody, or to the order and satisfaction, of his creditor.

It is foolish to imagine, that any precautions, or the greatest penalties, will keep money in any country, where it is the interest of numbers to carry it out: The experience of every nation may convince us of this truth; gold and silver lie in so little compass, are so easily concealed, and there are so many conveniences, and opportunities to carry them off, that small encouragements will always find adventurers, and those adventurers will almost always succeed. There is no way in nature to hinder money from being exported, but by hindering the occasions of it; that is, by hindering the use and consumption of those things which it is sent out to buy; for when they are bought they must be paid for, or all traffick is at an end.

These propositions being, as I conceive, self-evident, it is next to be discussed, whether it be the interest of a state to permit their money to go out freely; or, by annexing penalties to the exporting it, enhance the difficulty, and raise the price of carrying it out, by obliging the exporter to pay himself largely for his own hazard, as well as the hazard of the seas: And I think nothing is more demonstrable, than that the greater the obstacle that is laid in his way, and the greater hazard which he runs, the more he will be obliged to export; for whatever he has agreed to pay beyond sea, must be discharged, whatever it costs him to get it thither, and he is to be paid besides all the charges of getting it thither.

Bills of exchange only serve the purpose, and save the expence of paying the carrier; for if one man has money due to him abroad, and the other wants the same sum here, they will both save the charges of carriage, by one's paying it where he does not want it, and the other's receiving it where he does: But if there be more demands by the merchants of one country upon their correspondents in another, than the others can pay by the produce of their effects, or from debts due to them elsewhere, which will be accepted as payment; the surplus must be returned in silver and gold, and they must pay too the persons who carry it; and other merchants seeing their necessity, will take advantage of it, and receive premiums for as much as they can return in bills, in proportion to the charge which it will cost to send it in specie, and the haste which their creditors are in to receive it: But herein they will not have regard only to the commerce between those particular nations, but to the course and balance of general trade; for bills often travel from country to country, and take a large circuit, before

they center, and the account is finally made up at home. And this I take to be the whole mystery of exchange, which is either paying, or saving the charge of paying, the carrier; and if you do not do it yourself, others who do it for you, will reap advantage from it.

Since then money or bullion must be exported, when debts are contracted abroad, I think it is eligible to send out the first rather than the latter, or at least to leave the people at liberty to export which they please. Indeed they are the same thing; for all money is bullion, and all bullion is easily converted into money; and all that is not otherwise manufactured, would be converted into it, if there were no disadvantage in doing so. The advantages are obvious, and the charge to the proprietors nothing; for the stamp of authority ascertains the weight and the fineness; and the dividing it into small parcels, makes it more useful for commerce, which renders it more valuable abroad as well as at home; and consequently foreigners will be contented to pay part, if not the whole, of the charge of coining it. It could in no circumstance be of less value, if it were not denied a privilege and advantage which it had before it was coined; which is the liberty of exportation, and being used in foreign as well as domestick trade: for, whilst free liberty of exportation is allowed to one, and denied to the other, and yet there are frequent and necessary occasions of exporting one or the other, it must happen that either money will be melted into bullion, and so the manufacture be lost, or bullion must be bought by money at a price answerable to the necessity or the hazard of carrying it in specie abroad, or of melting it down at home, and the expence of conscience afterwards in swearing it to be foreign bullion; which sometimes has raised the price 8 or 10 per cent.

Now it must be obvious to any one, who the least considers this question, how much such prohibitions must affect our general trade, they being equivalent to the putting an equal duty upon the exportation of our own commodities, which all wise nations encourage by all ways that they can, and often by giving premiums to the exporter. They give other nations the means and opportunity to trade so much per cent cheaper than we can; which must certainly carry away from us many valuable trades: They enhance the value of all foreign materials which we use in our manufactures, that are bought with bullion or money, as many of them are; which must in consequence raise the price of these manufactures, and hinder their sail; and above all, make the materials of navigation dear to us, upon which all trade in a great measure depends, and the carriage-trade wholly.

But not only those trades, which are altogether, or partly carried on by bullion or money, will be affected by them, but all trade whatsoever: For, as I have before shewn, that bullion, being the medium of the value of all commodities between nation and nation, as money is between people of the same nation; if the latter be of equal weight and fineness with the former, and yet less valuable; then of necessary consequence home commodities must be sold cheaper in foreign countries, and theirs must sell dearer here; which must alter the balance proportionably to our disadvantage: for we sell at home for our own money and buy abroad with bullion; which are equally valuable in themselves, the coinage excepted, and will be equally bought in foreign markets for the same quantity of commodities.

Suppose for example, that corn bore the same price in respect of silver and gold here as in Holland, and yet we must give more for it when that silver and gold is converted into money than they do, who get the difference by importing their silver; then it is evident that they can afford to buy it of us, and sell it again to foreign markets cheaper than we can, and sometimes to ourselves; and consequently must carry away that trade from us. These events are inevitable, unless we let our money be exported, or turn all our coin into bullion, and make that the medium of domestick as well as foreign commerce; which must soon be our case, and every day grows more and more so: for who will give himself the trouble of carrying his bullion to the mint, to have it made less valuable than before? Whereas if money had the same liberty of exportation as bullion has, all the silver not otherwise manufactured would immediately be carried thither and coined, and less of it be carried out afterwards for the reasons before given.

But whilst it remains upon the present foot, whatever contracts are made for English goods in English money, will be paid for with less bullion than will coin into the same quantity of money; and whatever are bought abroad will cost us more money than the same is worth in bullion: So that foreigners will choose to carry off our money, rather than our bullion or goods, and will afterwards melt it down, and find their account in returning it upon us again for more money; and so on till they have got all that we have; which can be prevented alone by putting coined and uncoined silver upon the same foot, and giving them equal advantages, the coinage excepted.

Till this be done, we must suffer in our exchange with most, if not all the countries in the world: For whilst our coin in quantity is less valuable than bullion, and theirs equal or more valuable, every thing that we buy or sell must be affected by it; and we must pay our debts with more silver, and receive them in less than they do; which must make a vast difference in the return of our whole trade.

This is so much the interest of every party, and almost every man in every party, that I have often wondered how so many able patriots that have sat at the helm should never once think of doing their country this great service. I cannot doubt but men of their great abilities must understand this plain proposition; and methinks they should sometimes find it their interest and duty to save a little money for their countrymen, and not always to be taking from them, especially when they themselves lose nothing by doing so much good to others; and though some people, who do not understand the benefit of such a law, may be at first distasted by it, yet I could wish to see that those who have had no regard to their opinions when they were doing mischief to them, would not be so over-scrupulous of offending them in once doing them and their country this great and general benefit.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 89. SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1722. *Every Man's True Interest Found In The General Interest. How Little This Is Considered. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

Most men see the advantage of trade to a country, and to every man in it; but very few know how to improve those advantages, and much fewer endeavour to do so. As soon as any law is enacted, or proposed for publick benefit, particular men set their wits to work how to draw separate advantages, from those provisions, whatever becomes of the publick; and indeed it is not to be hoped, must less expected, that they should ever do otherwise. But what is most to be lamented is, that the publick very often suffers by their not consulting their real interest, and in pursuing little views, whilst they lose great and substantial advantages. A very small part of mankind have capacities large enough to judge of the whole of things; but catch at every appearance which promises present benefit, without considering how it will affect their general interest; and so bring misfortunes and lasting misery upon themselves to gratify a present appetite, passion, or desire.

This is certainly true in almost every circumstance of publick and private life: The latter falls within all men's observation; and the other happens as often, though not as often taken notice of. How many are there, who do not prefer a servile office or pension before the general interest of their country, in which their own is involved; and so sacrifice their liberty and the protection which they receive from equal laws, for momentary and precarious advantages; and by such means lose or hazard a large inheritance, or make it much less valuable, for trifling benefits, which will not pay half the difference?

Nothing is so much the interest of private men, as to see the publick flourish: for without mentioning the pleasure and internal satisfaction which a generous mind must receive, in seeing all people about him contented and happy, instead of meagre and starved looks, nakedness and rags, and dejected and melancholy faces; to see all objects gay and pleasing; to see fruitful and well manured fields; rich splendid, and populous cities, instead of barren rocks, uncultivated deserts, and dispeopled and empty towns: I say, besides avoiding all this horror, every man's private advantage is so much wrapt up in the publick felicity, that by every step which he takes to depreciate his country's happiness, he undermines and destroys his own: when the publick is secure, and trade and commerce flourish, every man who has property, or the means of acquiring property, will find and feel the blessed effects of such a circumstance of affairs; all the commodities which he has to dispose of will find a ready vent, and at a good price; his inheritance will increase every day in value; he is encouraged, and finds it his interest, to build, and improve his lands, cultivate new trades, and promote new manufactures; and by these means the people will be employed, and enabled to live in plenty, to marry, increase, and pay for the productions of the land, which otherwise will have little or no production: foreigners

will be invited to partake of our happiness, and add to the publick stock; and even the poor and helpless will have their share in the general felicity, arising from the superfluities and charity of the rich. But the reverse of this glorious and happy scene shews itself in enslaved and corrupted nations.

But as this is abundantly the interest of private men, it is much more so of princes: The riches of a prince are the riches of his people, and his security and happiness are their affections: They do not consist in pompous guards, splendid courts, heaped up and extorted wealth, servile and flattering parasites, numerous, expensive, and glittering attendants, profusion, and extravagance; but in the steady and faithful duty and devotions of a grateful and contented people, who derive and own their happiness to flow from his care and beneficence. Flatterers and parasites often will find it their interest to betray him (and what else can be expected from those who betrayed their country first?), his guards often revolt from him, and sometimes murder him, and neither can be depended upon in any exigency of his affairs; his amassed wealth shall be often their plunder, and his destruction the price of their new engagements. But a whole people can never have an interest separate from the interests of a good prince: Their diffusive wealth will be always at his call, because it is to be expended for their own benefit: Their persons will ever be at his command, to defend themselves and him: This is a source of wealth and power, which can scarce ever be exhausted. When men fight for themselves and their all, they are not to be conquered till they are extinguished; and there are few instances where they have been ever conquered, at least till they were not worth conquering.

Besides, the superfluities and wanton gifts of a free and happy people will bring more money into his coffers, than racks and armies can extort from enslaved countries. The states of Brabant alone gave more money formerly to the Dukes of Burgundy and to Charles V than in all probability the whole seventeen provinces would have yielded to Spain since, if they had been all subdued; and I dare say, if England ever loses its liberties, its princes, in a little time, would not be able with whips and chains, to force as much money out of it in seven years, as we have seen it pay in one: They might fetch blood and tears from their subjects, but little else. It is undeniably therefore true, that the publick interest is the interest of both prince and people, which almost every one owns in words; and yet how few do so in their actions?

Every man sees the advantage of being formidable abroad, and safe at home, and knows that we cannot attain either but by being at the charge of it; and that the more equally and impartially taxes are laid, the fewer will be necessary, and more money raised: Yet how few men will come into equal and impartial taxes? And what have any got by contrary methods? It is certain, that less taxes than are now paid to one another, if fairly levied at first, would have ended all our wars, and not left us one penny in debt; whereas every landed man in England now owes the fourth or fifth part of his estate to the publick engagements, by declining the payment of perhaps the tenth part of it when it was due, or ought to have been due; and besides, has rendered all the rest insecure, by disabling the publick to defend it.

Who, that is interested in the national funds, does not see, that if some method be not soon taken to pay them off, they can never be paid at all; that no nation will deliver



themselves up to a foreign enemy, or be contented to languish, expire and perish, at home, to make good juggling and extorting bargains, cooked up between courtiers and brokers; that publick necessities will happen in the course of human affairs, and those necessities will justify or colour uncommon measures; and that corrupt ministers, in times to come, may advise their masters to extraordinary courses, and desperate acts of power? And yet how many are there among these gentlemen (the greatest part of whose fortunes depends upon these events) who will fall into any effectual measures to make the payment of these debts due to themselves practicable, or that are not ready to catch at and to promote the raising of a new fund; though they must see that every step which they take towards it renders the payment of the old ones desperate?

How many courtiers have we seen in our days, that have not done every thing which they condemned in their predecessors; though by doing so they undermined the ground upon which they stood and played the game into their enemies' hands again, who did the same before into theirs? How often have we seen them decline any means of raising money, though ever so fatal to trade or their country? Or when have we seen them expend it afterwards with frugality and prudence, to prevent the necessity of raising it over again? And yet, by acting thus, they lessened their own interest with the people, and in consequence too with their prince; who generally will find it necessary to discard them when they become odious and contemptible; and sometimes will think it prudent to recommend himself to his people by delivering them up as sacrifices to publick vengeance: whereas if they acted a faithful and just part, they might grow old in power, and be double blessings to their prince and to their fellow-subjects.

Who does not see the benefit of navigable rivers, which makes the carrying out our own commodities, and the bringing to us what we want, cheap and easy; and consequently increases the price of the former, and lessens the price of the latter? And yet a project of that kind always meets opposition from any people upon trifling motives, without ever considering the advantages on the other side, which most commonly must overbalance their imaginary losses, by computing their whole income and expence.

All private men see the benefit that would accrue to England, and to almost every man in it, by bringing all the materials of navigation, and particularly iron, from our own plantations, which are for the most part bought for money from rival states, who may be, and are often our enemies. Though this would settle our naval power upon a fixed and solid foundation, and leave it no longer to depend upon accidental and precarious supplies liable to the impositions and caprices of those nations, and subject to be intercepted by others who may be in war with us; yet we have seen, oftener than once, that gentlemen of great estates have denied their countries this general good, and preferred the little advantage of selling a particular wood at an advanced price, or the encouragement of a private iron-work, to so great a benefit to themselves and their country; without ever giving themselves leave to balance the much greater augmentation of wealth and security, which would accrue personally to them by keeping so much money in their country, and by bringing in a great deal more from foreign states, by making navigation easy and cheap, by supplying themselves and their tenants with the instruments and utensils of husbandry, building, and house-

keeping, at lower rates, and so enabling themselves to make greater profit of their lands, and their tenants to pay them greater rents; and, above all, by increasing the publick safety and power, of which every member will soon find the sensible effects in his own private affairs.

I confess it to be generally true, that the interest of any country is to make all sorts of manufactures themselves, rather than fetch them from neighbouring countries, or even from their own plantations; but it is always an exception to that truth, when those manufactures are necessary to carry on other trades which will return much greater benefit; and more so when they are necessary to carry on all trade in general, as iron and shipping undoubtedly are, upon the cheapness of which all the trade in the world in a great measure depends.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 90. SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 1722. *Monopolies And Exclusive Companies, How Pernicious To Trade. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

I have in my last letter given some instances of men, who, separating themselves from the publick, act against their own interest, by being too partial to it; but I confess it sometimes happens, that private persons may receive personal advantages from publick losses; and then, considering the depravity of human nature, we are not to hope, and less to presume upon their acting against themselves for other advantages. The chief inducement which men have to act for the interest of one state before another, is, because they are members of it, and that their own interest is involved in the general interest; and the same motives which for the most part engage them to promote the advantage of that peculiar society of which they are a part, before all others, will also engage them to prefer themselves and their own family before the interests of every member, or all the members together, of the same society, whatever becomes of conscience, honour, and generosity, men will be men, in spite of all the lectures of philosophy, virtue, and religion.

This will be often the interest of particular men, but can never be the interest of the whole society, or the major part of them; whose interest must ever be the general interest, that is, the diffusive advantage of the whole, which must suffer in proportion to what any man gets irregularly, and therefore it is their common duty to prevent the unfair gains and depredations of one another; which indeed is the business of the government; *viz.* to secure to every one his own, and to prevent the crafty, strong, and rapacious, from pressing upon or circumventing the weak, industrious, and unwary.

I have often wondered how whole societies (every one of which intends most religiously himself and his own benefit) can yet, all together, so easily be made the dupes of one another, or of lesser societies among themselves, not only in such matters as do not fall within vulgar observation, but in instances which are obvious to the meanest capacities. All the gentlemen through England have their estates ransacked, and are deprived of whatever makes their tables elegant and curious, to put fishmongers and poulterer' wives, at London, in laces and jewels, without adding to the plenty there, much of it being destroyed, or suffered to rot or stink, by those miscreants, to keep up the price: Their cattle sell for little in the country, and will not pay the grazier, who must pay them their rents; and yet, by the jugglings and combinations of butchers and salesmen, the markets are not cheaper supplied; but those insects swallow up the rents of the landlord, and the labour of the husbandmen; as some of the factors do that of the manufacturer: The old useful laws against regraters, forestallers, &c. all lie fast asleep, and no new ones are thought on to enforce them; yet the nobility and gentry of England spend many months every year in Parliament, see all this, buy their own productions at a price by many times greater than they sell them; but are so wholly taken up with other much less views, that they suffer this great mischief to go on, and every day to increase, upon no other pretence

than the privileges of particular societies of tradesmen, who pretend a right to oppression; as if any man could have a right or privilege inconsistent with the publick good, and were not ever to be subservient to it. It is true, that no government ought to take away men's natural rights, the business and design of government itself being to defend them; but sure such partial and adventitious advantages as they receive to the detriment of others by ill laws may be taken away by good ones: But no sooner any attempt is made to remedy these universal grievances, but the clamour and solicitation of these humble and inferior oppressors puts an end to the remedy.

I do not wonder, that those who subsist by oppression themselves should countenance all other sorts of it; it is their common interest to protect one another. But that the country gentlemen, who suffer by all kinds of it, and who have the means in their hands to prevent them, should suffer themselves to be plundered and impoverished, to enrich harpies and pick-pockets, and enable them to live in pride and luxury, is so stupendous, that it could not be believed, if we did not constantly see it.

But these are petty abuses, when compared to the much greater grievances of uniting great numbers of artful and wealthy merchants into conspiracies and combinations against general trade; and by that means giving or selling the industry and acquirements of a whole nation to satiate and glut a few over-grown plunderers, and in the end to destroy the trade itself; which must ever be the case, when trade is committed to the management of exclusive companies. The success and improvements of trade depend wholly upon supplying the commodities cheap at market; and whoever can afford those of equal goodness at but half per cent cheaper than his neighbour, will command any sale. Now it is impossible that any company can do this upon equal terms with a private merchant, nor would they if they could. Private men will think of every way to come at their goods cheap, will make it their whole business to work up the manufactures themselves, or buy them at the best hand, will search narrowly into their excellencies or defects, will procure carriage at the lowest prices, see them shipped themselves, and sometimes sell them in person, and as they find proper and advantageous opportunities; and the mutual emulation and contention with one another for the preference of markets, obliges them to sell often for little profit, and sometimes to loss, in expectation of better fortune at other times; but nothing of this is ever done by companies.

Those who have the direction of their affairs, have often but small part of their fortunes embarked in their stock, and always have an interest separate from that of the company, and commonly if not always, raise vast estates at their expence; the materials of their ships, and the commodities which they carry, are generally sold by themselves, or bought of their friends and relations by confederacy, at exorbitant prices: Favourite shipwrights are employed for presents; their relations or creatures are made captains or masters of their vessels, to carry on private commerce, to the detriment of the company; governors of forts, factors, and agents, are sent abroad to get great estates upon the publick, and perhaps share them with their patrons at home; their goods shall be set in such lots, and sold at such times as shall be most for the private interest of the governing directors, who will have them often bought up in trust for themselves or friends; and by these means, as the company oppresses the rest of the nation, the governors and directors cheat the company. But if these trustees be

ever so honest, they will not take the same pains for others as for themselves; nor can it be expected that men of their fortunes will employ their whole time for such allowances as are or can be afforded by the society who employs them.

Besides, it is the interest of the nation to sell their commodities at as good a price as the markets abroad can afford to buy them, and to bring in foreign commodities as cheap as they can afford to sell them; especially such as do not interfere with our own (which ought to be prohibited when it can be done without greater inconvenience) and the interest of companies is directly contrary to all this: for other people being prohibited to deal in the same commodities, they can put what price they please upon both, and ever will put what is most for their advantage, and so starve the manufacturer at home, at the same time that their agents charge great prices to the company, and sell the commodities which they bring in return of them at extravagant advantages, often to the discouragement of our own manufactures, which depend upon their cheapness; their business being always to increase the price of stock, without increasing trade.

Besides all this, they keep forts abroad at a great expence, to colour the necessity of such monopolies, and to oppress and rob the natives there with security; for it is a jest to imagine that they can any ways conduce to fair trade. Every nation in the world that has any thing to buy or sell, will see their account in doing so, and will find it their interest to encourage a fair commerce, which will be ever for their own advantage; and if they do not, there is no trading with them against their own consents, though their country be encompassed with forts, which will only provoke and make them enemies; and, in fact, the private traders to Africa pay the Company ten per cent towards their forts, and seldom or never come near them, or receive any benefit by them, and yet have broke the Company, whilst they thrive themselves. The same was true of the interlopers to India formerly, who neither desired nor were suffered to take any advantage of the Company's forts, and always were oppressed by their governors, or agents, and captains of ships, and yet wouldsoon have undone them, if they had been suffered to go on.

The Dutch make other advantages of their forts and garrisons, which is to keep great conquered realms and powerful kings in subjection, and secure to themselves the whole commerce of their countries, by which means they have almost the monopoly of the spices of the world; of which, it is said, they every year burn mountains to keep up the price, as all exclusive companies will ever do: But we have scarce any trade to some of those places, where we are at the charge of keeping forts, which stand there no mortal can tell why. But supposing that forts were necessary to carry on any particular trade, what colour is there to deny that they ought to be kept at the publick expence, or by the contributions of all the merchants, who are to receive advantage from them in proportion to the trade which they carry on; or what pretence is there to confine an advantageous trade to one town alone, and to but few men in that town?

So that, upon the whole, if we consider these companies only as they regard trade, which is the only pretence for establishing them, they are the bane of all fair commerce, the discouragement of our manufactures, the ruin of private and industrious traders, and must end in the ruin of themselves, and all trade whatever;

and no one receives advantages from them, but the governors, directors, commanders, or agents, at home and abroad, who have ever raised immense estates, whilst the kingdom has been impoverished, and the company undone. But there are other mischiefs still behind, which strike yet much deeper; namely, the influence and violence that they bring upon our constitution; which shall be the subject of my next letter.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## NO. 91. SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 1722. *How Exclusive Companies Influence And Hurt Our Government. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

In my last letter I have considered exclusive companies as they affect the trade and commerce of the kingdom: In this I shall view them in relation to our constitution; and shew, that they alter the balance of our government, too much influence our legislature, and are ever the confederates or tools of ambitious and designing statesmen.

Very great riches in private men are always dangerous to states, because they create greater dependence than can be consistent with the security of any sort of government whatsoever; they place subjects upon too near a level with their sovereigns; make the nobility stand upon too great an inequality in respect of one another; destroy, amongst the Commons, that balance of property and power, which is necessary to a democracy, or the democratic part of any government, overthrow the poise of it, and indeed alter its nature, though not its name: For this reason, states who have not an agrarian law, have used other means of violence or policy to answer the same ends. Princes often, either by extraordinary acts of power, by feigned plots and conspiracies, and sometimes by the help of real ones, have cut off these excrescent members and rivals of their authority, or must have run the hazard of being cut off by them. Aristocracies put them upon expensive embassies, or load them with honorary and chargeable employments at home, to drain and exhaust their superfluous and dangerous wealth; and democracies provide against this evil, by the division of the estates of particulars after their death amongst their children or relations in equal degree.

We have instances of the first in all arbitrary monarchies, as well as in all the Gothic governments formerly, and in Poland at present, which are constant states of war or conspiracy between their kings and nobles; and which side soever gets the better, the others are for the most part undone. By doing the second, the nobles of Venice keep up their equality; and Holland, Switzerland, and the free states of Germany, make the provision last named; which, as I have said, answers in some measure the purposes of an agrarian law: But by waiting for the division of overgrown substance in private hands, other states have been undone; and particularly Florence was enslaved by the overgrown power of the house of Medici.

And as great riches in private men is dangerous to all states, so great and sudden poverty produces equal mischiefs in free governments; because it makes those who by their birth and station must be concerned in the administration, necessitous and desperate; which will leave them the means, and give them the will, to destroy their country: for the political power will remain some time in their hands after their natural power and riches are gone; and they will ever make use of it to acquire that wealth by violence and fraud which they have lost by folly and extravagance. And as both of

these extremes are certainly true of particular men, so they are more dangerous in numbers of men joined together in a political union; who, as they have more wealth than any particular man ever had or can have, so they will have the separate interest of every individual to assist them, arising from the dependence of friendship, relation, acquaintance, or creatures, without that emulation and envy which will always be raised by the sudden and exorbitant riches of private men. It is certain, that they both make too violent an alteration in property, and almost always produce violent convulsions in government.

Now companies bring all these mischiefs upon us; they give great and sudden estates to the managers and directors, upon the ruins of trade in general, and for the most part, if not always, bring ruin upon thousands of families, who are embarked in the society itself. Those who are in the direction and the secret of the management besides all their other advantages, draw out and divide all their principal, and what they can borrow upon their credit; persuade innocent and unwary people to believe that they divide only the profits of their trade, and, by a thousand other artifices heightening their advantages, draw them in to share in them; and when they have wound up the cheat to the highest pitch that it can go, then like rats leave a falling house, and multitudes of people to be crushed by it. This was the case of the East-India and African Companies formerly, whose stock sold for 300 per cent when it was not worth a groat; and how far it is the case of the present East-India Company, their members are concerned to enquire.

What ruin, devastation, and havock of estates! What public misery, and destruction of thousands, I may say millions, have we seen by the establishment and wicked intrigues of the present South-Sea Company, only to make a few unshapely and monstrous members in the body politick! What has that Company done for the benefit of trade, which they were established, forsooth, to promote? They have suffered numbers of our manufactures to rot in their ships, hindered private traders from carrying on an advantageous commerce to the lower parts of America and the South-Sea; and, like the dog in the manger, will neither eat themselves, nor let any one else eat; and, it is said, by their wise conduct, have lost a million or two of the Company's principal.

The benefits arising by these companies, generally, and almost always fall to the share of the stock-jobbers, brokers, and those who cabal with them; or else are the rewards of clerks, thimble-men, and men of nothing; who neglect their honest industry to embark in those cheats, and so either undo themselves and families, or acquire sudden and great riches; then turn awkward statesmen, corrupt boroughs, where they have not, nor can have, any natural interests; bring themselves into the legislature with their pedling and jobbing talents about them, and so become brokers in politicks as well as stock, wanting every qualification which ought to give them a place there.

It is a strange and unnatural transition from a fishmonger or pedlar to a legislator: However, as such doughty statesmen, by their single abilities, can do no good, so they can do but little harm; but when united in a body under the direction of artful managers combining with great men, they can turn all things into confusion, and generally do so. When men have great sums of money to give, and will give it, they



will ever find people to take it; and there can be no standing against them in a body, how contemptible soever they are in particulars. How often have the cries of the whole kingdom of England been able to prevail against the interest of the East-India Company? What by proper application in former reigns made to our courts, to ministers and favourites, and to the members of each House of Parliament, they have been able to contend and get the better of the tears and complaints of the whole kingdom besides, and to lay asleep the true and real interest of those who assisted them; and if ever hereafter our three great companies should unite together (as it is to be feared they will always do when their interests do not clash), what power is there in being to oppose them, that will be able and willing to do it? In Holland, which is a more jealous government than ours, the East-India Company governs the state, and is in effect the state itself; and I pray God that we may never see the like elsewhere!

What have we been able to do to redress the ravages brought upon us by the South-Sea project? Which yet must have produced much greater, if we had not suffered these. When it was in its meridian, I have heard some persons argue the reasonableness of their having a monopoly of the trade of England, since they were possessed of most of the property of England; and I do not see by what means it could have been prevented. They would have filled the legislature with their own members, all our great men must have been their pensioners, and the crown itself been obliged to have kept measures with them; they would have been the only shop to have gone to for money, would not have parted with it but upon their own terms, and would have been ever lying upon the catch, to purchase more privileges and advantages: so that the nobility and gentry of England must either have embarked their fortunes and expectations in this monopoly, or have been humbly contented to have been governed by a faction composed for the most part of pedlars, grocers, and brokers, or such as lately were so; and the constitution itself had been gone, and changed into a stock-jobbing cabal.

We have seen but few instances where the private traders of England, and the interests of general trade, have been able to dispute with the interests of little companies or particular societies of tradesmen, or the peculiar privileges of corporations; though they are burdens and a dead weight on the estates of every person in both Houses, lessen their income, and increase their expences: Such is the fascination and witchcraft of political confederacy! What will be the event of these combinations no man can foresee, and every wise man must dread. Indeed, I do not see how we can prevent their dismal consequences, but by paying off our debts; and, by dissipating those factious combinations, dissolve the enchantment.

After all that I have said, I must confess that the East-India Company is liable to less objections than any other trading monopoly, but not for the reasons which they give, but for a reason which is worth an hundred of theirs: for as all beneficial trades are most successfully carried on by free and open commerce, so all losing ones do less mischief when monopolized; and as the first ought to receive all possible encouragement, so the other ought to be put under suitable discouragements: And since we can have no prospect at present of that trade's being put upon an advantageous foot, the next best thing that we can desire, is to let it go on upon the present establishment; which in all probability will soon destroy it, and perhaps put it

upon a good one, if that can be: for it is certain, that if it could be carried on with its full swing, it would ease us of every penny of our money, and destroy every manufacture in the kingdom, as well as every man in it; which in a proper time may be shewn at large.

In fine, monopolies are equally dangerous in trade, in politicks, in religion: A free trade, a free government, and a free liberty of conscience, are the rights and the blessings of mankind.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 92. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1722. *Against The Petition Of The South-Sea Company, For A Remittance Of Two Millions Of Their Debt To The Publick. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

It has been justly observed of corporations, or political combinations of men, that they have bodies, but no souls, nor consequently consciences. What calls this observation to my mind, is an *Address to his Majesty from the South-Sea Company*, which I have lately seen in print, most modestly requesting, that in this great profusion of money, general affluence, and overflowing of trade, the nation will give them two millions: and the reasons which they give for it are, 1st, that they want the money; next, that they have agreed with the Bank; and 3dly, that they will do what without doubt is the interest of all their members, except directors and brokers, to do; that is, they will consent that a considerable part of their stock shall be turned into annuities (and they had been the wiser if they had said all, for then no more of it could have been lost by management): And to wind up their whole oratory, they add a fourth reason, which is, the benefit that the publick has received already by their interest being reducible in a few years to four per cent, which reduction was part of their original bargain that was purchased for the seven millions, of which five have been remitted already, and now it is to be a consideration for remitting the other two.

I can never give myself leave to believe (whatever may be furnished by others) that any person (employed by his Majesty) in the present great exigencies of the kingdom, the almost universal poverty in the country, the want of trading stocks and credit in cities, and in great as well as little towns, the prodigious load of debt under which the nation groans, and the general uneasiness conspicuous in the faces, and too observable in the discourses, of people of all sects and denominations; I say, I cannot think that, under such circumstances of publick affairs, any minister can countenance so wild a proposition, as wantonly to desire us to give away two millions of the nation's money, only to bind a bargain between two stock-jobbing societies; which could not be obtained from a late assembly, who I presume will not be disoblighd if I say no more of them.

I must therefore believe, if any person in power has been concerned in this negotiation, that he has effectually taken care of the publick, and has comprehended its interest in the agreement; and I am the rather induced to believe this, because of an expression in the address itself, to wit, *that the company will be ready to do any thing for the publick service, &c.* with a caution notwithstanding, *that it be consistent with the security of their present fund*: I hope that this sentence has an allusion to some project intended to be proposed to buy off the two millions, and that they design to offer to sink one hundredthousand pounds *per annum* of their annuities, which is the interest oftwo millions: And this will answer all honest purposes, will indemnify the publick, ease them of the difficulty of raising so great a sum, and lessen the incomeof particular members, not above six or seven shillings per cent yearly.

It is impossible to suspect that those gentlemen, who for some years together opposed wild schemes and wilder expences in carrying them on, and who (if they are to be believed themselves) rather chose to throw up their then advantages and expectations, than comply with such gallantries, should at last lose the merit of so much virtue, by wantonly and unnecessarily discharging one company from their contract, only to prevent another from performing theirs, and this at two millions loss to their country: Sure England is not in a condition to discharge all reckonings at home and amongst foreign states too; if so, every man ought to bring in his bill, and then we shall all be upon the square.

On the contrary, I persuade myself that the gentlemen, whose deserts have now set them at the helm, have, during their retirement from business, observed the miscarriages of their predecessors, design to avoid the rocks upon which the others have split, and consequently have put on steady resolutions to extricate the kingdom out of its present calamities; and, possessed with this opinion, I am determined (as I believe many others are) to give them my hearty assistance to attain those good ends, and to forget past errors if new ones do not rub up our memories: I neither envy their preferments, nor I believe shall court them; but shall ever esteem my services to be overpaid, if I can contribute to save my country.

We all know what a noble project has been lately authorized; what ends were designed to be, and have been, served by it; how many thousands were directly ruined by it, and how many more by the fatal consequences which have ensued: but all the arts of the projectors could never have succeeded, if many well-meaning people had not been drawn in to consent to this iniquity, by the prospect of seeing the publick debts put in a method of being paid off; which they thought would atone for many evils that were foreseen by wise men, who yet did not foresee the hundredth part of the mischief which has since happened; and after we had suffered more than words can express, the greatest part of the consideration which drew us into these sufferings has been remitted, I will not say by any of those, but, to those, who brought all our misfortunes upon us; and now the poor remainder is modestly called for; and, if obtained, the wretched people, and, amongst the rest, all who vigorously opposed this vile project, must bear the loss, and the contrivers of the wickedness must carry off the plunder.

Sure such a proceeding sounds very odd, and ought to be supported by obvious reasons! It is a very singular sort of generosity, to punish the innocent, in order to reward the guilty; to fine or tax those who did their utmost to oppose the progress of publick mischiefs, to repair the losses of those who, through guilt, covetousness, or folly, contributed to it. In great publick calamities there must be many sufferers, and some who do not deserve to be so; yet I never heard that they called for reprisals upon their countrymen. Provinces are laid waste, cities and towns burnt, in war, and ships taken by pirates; and yet no bills brought in, or demands made, upon the publick: In pestilential distempers, families are shut up in their houses, and whole cities within their walls, where thousands die for want of food or proper necessaries, and those who are left alive are mostly undone; and yet no nations think themselves obliged to make good their losses: In such cases every one must bear his own misfortunes, even when they come from the hand of God, and he himself does not contribute to them; and all

that wise states can do, is to take care of the whole, relieve particulars as far as is consistent with the publick safety, and leave the rest to providence.

But, besides the shrewd reasons which are in print, and are above repeated, let us hear what others are offered to load the publick with this loss. First, we are told that the people's representatives have drawn the subscribers into it; and therefore the people are bound in conscience to repair them: A very notable way of arguing indeed! and which, if carried to its extent, would provide admirably well for the security of nations. Suppose the States of any country should make a foolish law, or engage it in a foolish war, by which a third part of the people are undone, must the rest make them amends, who perhaps are half undone themselves? The Pensioner Parliament, in King Charles II's time, were chosen by the people to act for the common benefit of the kingdom, and they betrayed their principals, and took money from the court to act against it; and was that a good reason for the next Parliament to give a sanction to all the mischief that their predecessors did, or to pray for it? Sure the last Parliament were as much the representatives of the South-Sea Company as of the rest of the kingdom, and acted as agreeably to their inclinations and their desires, or else their acknowledgments weremuch misplaced.

They tell us, that the publick is better able to bear the loss than private men; which certainly is not true at present; for the publick is much poorer than most private men in England, if regard be had to their occasions and their debts: But if it were so, are they therefore to take the ill bargains of all private men to themselves, and protect them in their good ones? Must every man who has suffered by playing the fool, or playing the knave, call upon the nation for reprisals? But supposing only innocent and unwary people (as all the members of the present South-Sea Company undoubtedly are) ought to be objects of publick compassion; who shall make recompence to the millions of others who have suffered in their estates, by the universal confusion occasioned by this worthy project? Who shall repair the many bankrupts, the many creditors who have lost their debts, the many young ladies who have lost their fortunes, the mechanicks and shopkeepers who have lost their business, spent their stocks, and yet have run in debt to subsist their families; and the gentlemen, merchants, and farmers, who can get little for their commodities and products of their estates, farms, and trades? And must all these contribute at last, out of what remains, to repair the misfortunes of those who brought all these evils upon them?

But because I would avoid giving offence to tender ears, by seeming to take too much part with the inconsiderable interests of men who are vulgarly called the mob, I shall represent the case of persons who much better deserve some people's consideration; I mean brokers, stock-jobbers, dealers in funds, and such who, for many years together, have supported the government, by making twice or thrice the advantage of their money that they could do any where else. Who shall repair the losses of the contractors for stock or subscriptions, or of those who lent them money at five, ten, and twenty per cent *per mensem*, and cannot be paid again? Who pay the many sums lost in the hands of goldsmiths, and by their pretended subscriptions of effects without the owner's consent? Who the losses of those who bought in the East-India Company and Bank at two or three hundred per cent all occasioned by this worthy project; or of those who bought in this Company at eight or nine hundred, and sold at one or two?

Who those who bought, or were hindered from selling out of the stocks of all companies by that honest and serviceable bargain to the publick made between the Bank and the South-Sea? Who shall pay the losses in the bubbles, some of which were established or countenanced by Parliament, and others by patents, all which have equal right to put in their claims? And lastly, who shall make satisfaction to the whole kingdom, who must be reduced by such means to an incapacity of paying its debts, and consequently of defending itself? I have heard of no project yet for lessening the public expences, or of the courtiers lessening their own stated incomes, or occasional gains.

And what, after all, are the particular merits of these gentlemen to whom so much favor is to be shewn; and who will receive the benefit of it? Those who remain of the original company have no pretence to it; and at present their capital, with the addition which they have received by the division of the fictitious stock, is more valuable than at first; I believe much more so: Those who have bought in since the fall, have as little pretence to be considered, because they knew the terms upon which they bought: Such as have raised fortunes by dabbling in the publick, ought not to complain if they have lost by one project what they got by another; and those who have great or plentiful offices in other respects, must be very immodest if they expect to repair their follies out of the estates of those who are more necessitous than themselves. So that the few that can hope for relief are the poor and helpless, who were trepanned by the rest to buy in at a great price, and could not sell out again before the fall; and I dare appeal to all mankind, whether such could get relief, if their interests were separated from their oppressors: If it be so, we have reason to sing *Te Deum*, for the world is finely mended; but till I can find some other instances of this tender regard to mercy and innocence, I must beg leave to suppose, that there is already, or is to be, some other consideration for the remitting these two millions, if ever they are remitted.

There is another reason left behind, and a shrewd one it is; namely, that we must support publick credit, by enabling the Bank to support the South-Sea, and in consequence enabling them both to sell their stocks for twice as much as they are worth (and so leave a new loss upon other people, who with equal reason must be again repaired); for it is certain, that all or most of the company-stocks fell at present above their real value. Now, with all due submission to the gentlemen of the Alley, it seems to me to be a very odd way of supporting credit, to render the publick incapable of paying its debts: But it is no new thing amongst some sort of people, to endeavour to support credit by the means which destroy all credit. My head has been ever so ill turned, as to think that nations must preserve the opinion of their integrity by the same rules and maxims that private men find necessary; that is, always by selling good merchandise, and not stuffing their bales and casks with counterfeit wares, and covering them at top with those which look well. But we have heard of those times when moonshine and shadows have sold for silver and gold, for lands and tenements; and the wisdom of states has been employed to keep up the imaginary, fraudulent value of this sort of airy merchandise; when thousands and thousands of unwary people have been undone by such purchases, new projects have been formed and countenanced by authority to do as many more: I mean, this has been lately done in France, whose example should not be followed by any who design not to introduce the government of France.

All wise and honest governments ought to protect their innocent, industrious, and unguarded, subjects, against the snares of cheats and frauds of pickpockets; and not combine with such wretches, and be perpetually forming schemes to ruin multitudes for the enriching a few, and to prostitute their power, and their publick honour, to patronize and establish combinations of oppression; and when one sort of it can be supported no longer, to set their wits to work to find out another. It puts me in mind of a story told of Dr. Barebone, who had once drawn an eminent merchant into a building project at Mile-End, whereby he lost many thousand pounds; and when he complained of it, the doctor promised to make him reparation, by letting him share in another which he had just begun at the farther end of Westminster, whereby he lost as much more; and when his Bubble, justly provoked, drew his sword upon the doctor, and bid him draw too, he, like a true stoick, with great calmness, and wholly unconcerned, asked, whither he would be drawn; for that he had drawn him from one end of the town to the other already? Whatever has been done in neighbouring countries, I am persuaded we are in no danger of any such attempts here.

And now having, as I conceive, fully answered the pretences of the South-Sea Company for getting the two millions remitted to them, which pretences they are pleased to call reasons; I shall offer them one of my own why they should not desire it, for that they will be losers upon the whole by it. As I remember, the price of their stock rather decreased than increased upon the remitting the five millions; and it is fallen now upon the expectation of having the rest remitted: and the reason is obvious; for nothing can keep up the credit of publick or private men, but an opinion that they are able to pay their debts, and are willing to do so; and no man in his wits will believe either, if he do not see them endeavour to pay off their old debts, and avoid all occasions of contracting new ones. When a man owes more than he can pay, he must compound with his creditors, lie in gaol, or run away, unless he has privilege; and then they have nothing left to do, for the most part, but to shake their ears, rail, and run away too. People must be very weak not to know, if ever a question should arise, whether a nation will be undone, or undo a small part of it? which it will choose; and therefore every wise man, whose fortune lies in publick securities, will think himself concerned to make the payment of them practicable, and therefore will consider whether it is not his interest to lose a small part of his income, to secure the whole; and every man would consider this over and over, if he did not design at all adventures to save one, and leave the storm to fall upon others: And how well all hitherto have succeeded in this honest intention, we have had as many instances as we have had publick calamities, and lately a very pregnant one, when every man designed to sell, and no one could do so but managers and brokers.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 93. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1722. *An Essay Upon Heroes.* (GORDON)

SIR,

I design this letter as a dissertation upon heroes, who were at first a sort of brave disinterested men, that having more courage and prowess than others, went about doing good to others, and to all, at their own expence and danger. They established and reformed communities, and taught them laws, and punished those who violated justice and law: They destroyed publick robbers and monsters, and the greatest of all publick robbers and monsters, tyrants; and lived the patterns of virtue and useful valour. Hence they were called heroes, a sort of middle beings, superior to other men, and akin to the gods.

But so wild is the nature of man, and so impudent the nature of ambition, that whereas the primitive heroes were the bulwarks of society, and the preservers of men, those who pretended to succeed them, were the disturbers of society, and the destroyers of men; and such tyrants and monsters as the old heroes had destroyed, did themselves (impudently) set up for heroes. With the same modesty, superstition, which destroys religion, has, in the greatest part of the world, usurped the place of religion; tyranny, which is the extirpation of government, calls itself government: And thus arose persecuting priests and lawless kings. But so are words and the world abused; and with so much safety, and even applause, is mischief committed, when it has but a good name.

Alexander deified himself, and Caesar was deified by others, for being universal murderers; and Coke of Bury was hanged for attempting one murder: Had he been at the head of a hundred thousand cut-throats, and murdered a million, he might have been recorded for a hero, his name been handed down to after-ages with elogiums, and publick declamations made in the schools upon his conduct and virtues.

Child, the highwayman, robbed the mail, and was put to death; but, instead of the mail, had he robbed a nation (I mean any nation but this) he might probably have governed it; and, instead of hanging in chains, led a whole people in chains, and been dubbed an able statesman, and a faithful minister.

Mischief is inseparable from the profession of a present hero, whose business and ambition is to multiply conquests, and consequently miseries, upon those whom he conquers. What a wild and inhuman spirit! to plague the world, in order to make a figure in it; to commit great villainies, for a good name; to destroy the peace and prosperity of mankind, to gain their esteem; and to shed their blood, to shew themselves fit to govern them! For none gain by such accomplishments of theirs, but their soldiers, whose lives too they throw away as wantonly as these take away the lives of others. The chief gainers therefore are only a few officers, servants and strumpets, who are about their persons, and execute their will and rage for their own



ends: And so, to glut a restless tyrant and his instruments, men and nations must be slaughtered or enslaved. This is the heroism, this the glory, of conquering!

Such is the difference between the old original heroes and these their apes, who, by fraud, violence, perjury, and restless cruelty, make war upon their subjects and neighbours; and, by sacrificing the virtuous and the brave, or, by making them their instruments to sacrifice others, and by distressing, exhausting, plundering, and chaining, all, push human misery as far as it can go. These are the wolves and tigers of [the] human race; imperial beasts of prey who if the world would preserve itself, ought to be driven out of the world, or hung up in it *in terrorem*; or, like these their more innocent brethren, who only kill for food, be locked up in dens, and shewn, as they are, for monsters: Or perhaps it would be still a more equitable punishment, if they could be caught, to shut up a number of them in a madhouse with their beloved arms about them, there to fight and tear one another's flesh, and spill their own detestable blood, till they had no more to spill. This would be giving a sort of satisfaction to mankind, for so much human blood outrageously and wantonly spilt.

But this is not the only mock-heroism in the world; there is yet another sort as mischievous, but still more ridiculous; and that is, a violent appetite for war, and victory, and conquest, without engaging personally in the danger, or coming near it; but being very valorous by proxy, and fond of fighting without drawing a sword. This was the prudent bravery of a late aged conqueror, who was never tired of war, yet never tired his own person in it: In the heat of a battle fought for his glory, he ran no risk, but sat securely at a great distance with the wise old woman his mistress, waiting for laurels of other people's winning. When his agents had bought a town for him treacherously, or his generals stolen a province as treacherously, still it was victory, still fair conquest; and the glory was his at three hundred league' distance: for every thing that he did was glorious, the meanest and the basest things; and by these means he became immortal, immortal in conquest without a scar.

The primitive heroes ventured their lives for the good of others: These mock-heroes expose others to danger and death for the good of themselves, and their own personal renown; and all the time stay at home, and wait for fame in a whole skin. They slaughter thousands who obey them, and undo millions who ought not to obey them; and all to enslave others, who neither wish nor do them any harm, and with whom they have nothing at all to do. Even most of the instruments which they make use of, are made as miserable as they make those whom they oppress; and few or none share the benefit of the plunder, but such as, wanting merit of their own to gain an honest subsistence, prey upon the industry of those that do. So strongly does misery thrive under their influence, and nothing else!

They keep themselves poor, suspicious, and in a state of war with their own subjects, whom they justly suspect for their worst enemies, because they supply them with constant reasons to be so; and therefore they live in a perpetual state of rapine and enmity towards them, and in a continued dread of violence and revolts from them; instead of giving them fatherly protection on one side, and receiving from them dutiful and sincere allegiance on the other; and all for the fruitless and imaginary

glory of conquest, and of dominion over their fellow creatures against their will; or, in other words, of being skillful pillagers and oppressors, and successful murderers.

It is, however, not to be wondered at, that whilst so many princes are beset with sycophants, always ready to applaud at a venture, their wildest sallies and designs; or with traitors, who, finding their own vile advantages in them, are ever determined to abet and execute them: I say, it is not strange, that princes in these circumstances should run frequently into wild freaks, and pernicious enterprises, to the ruin of themselves and their subjects. But it is stupendous, that these their baneful instruments and worst foes should be able, in any instance, to persuade nations to dance after their destructive maggots, and be contented to be undone, to make some of the worst of men amongst themselves rich and saucy.

What have the people in any monarchical government ever gained by the conquests made by their prince, but to be made slaves; or if they were slaves before, worse slaves, and to have their chains rivetted yet faster? For, besides that these conquests give him a pretence and an ability to keep more troops, and consequently increase his power over them; the conquered nation will find a sort of a revenge in joining to reduce their new masters to the same wretched condition with themselves, and perhaps find an opportunity of conquering the conquerors. One nation will be played upon another, and neither will be trusted to the guard of their own countrymen; but the soldiers of one country will be quartered upon the other, and kept at a great distance from home, lest by constant conversation with their relations, friends, and neighbours, they should, contrary to their duty, warp towards the love and interest of their country: And indeed in most countries where troops are kept, they are always removed from place to place, to prevent their friendship and correspondence with the natives.

What did England gain formerly by their conquests upon the Continent, but constant wars, slaughter, and poverty to themselves, and to their princes precarious foreign provinces at an English expence; and had standing armies been then the fashion of the world, England would doubtless have conquered itself into slavery. The Romans, when they had extended their conquests so far and wide, that they were forced to keep provincial armies to awe and preserve the conquered countries, became a prey to those armies; and their emperors afterwards durst no longer trust to Roman troops, but increased their slavery by the help of those nations whom they had conquered, and who became, in their turns, masters of those who had mastered them.

When Alexander had ventured his own army of Macedonians, and the best men in Greece, to ruin Persia, and a great part of the world, which had given him no provocation; what advantages did Greece and Macedon reap from his mighty victories and conquests; but to become a little province of a great barbarous empire, which by their arms and prowess he conquered, and exhausted them of all their bravest men to preserve? Their condition would still have been worse, if he had left a successor behind him to have preserved his whole empire entire, who would have made Persia, or some other province, the seat of it, and governed Greece at a distance by bashaws: As it was, he left it in a state of constant war and depredation, and they were tossed

and tumbled from one oppression to another, till they found a sort of relief in being conquered by the Romans.

What did the French gain by the long wars and many conquests of their late great monarch, but extreme poverty, straiter servitude, great depopulation, and general bankruptcy? So much did they suffer by his acquisitions, and so dear did they pay for his pernicious glory.

What did the Swedes gain by the conquests of the late king, but to lose them again, as they got them, at a vast expence of blood and treasure; and to be reduced to such weakness, as to want the assistance of their neighbours to preserve them from falling under the power of a prince, whom, by conquering him, they taught to conquer them?

And if the conquering countries are such miserable losers by conquest, what must be the doleful condition of the conquered, which are considered only as the sources of plunder, and the professed objects of oppression? Almost all Europe are witnesses of the brutish havock which the conquerors make, and of the dismal scenes of ruin that they leave behind them. If the late French king could have conquered, or bought, or surprized the United Provinces (which by all these generous means he endeavoured) from the richest and most populous republick upon earth, they would have been now a nest of beggarly fishermen, and in a lower condition, if possible, than any of the fine French provinces, which had the honour of being governed by that paternal prince. Never was such mockery, as for a prince to publish reasons to a people, with whom he had nothing to do, why they should be conquered by him; when, let their condition be as ill as it will, it is an hundred to one, nay it is almost certain, that he will make it ten times worse.

“Alas! for that nation whose prince is a hero!” says an excellent and amiable French writer, who saw, with sorrow, the woeful condition of his own nation, from the merciless and unnatural affectation of heroism in the then king.

The same admirable author, in another place, gives us a lively image of heroes and conquests in these words, which he makes Telemachus speak, as he views the field of battle filled with carcasses, and drenched with blood:

Such are the heavy evils that follow wars! What blind fury urges unhappy mortals! So few are the days that they have to live upon this earth, and so miserable do they make these few days! Why will they run thus headlong into the jaws of death, which is of itself making hasty approaches to devour them? Why add so many frightful desolations to a short and bitter life, made so by heaven already? Men are all brethren, and they tear and butcher one another, more unnaturally fierce and cruel than the wild beasts of the desert! Lions make not war upon lions, nor tigers upon tigers: They attack only animals of a different species. Man! Man alone, in spite of his reason, does things that creatures without reason would never do.

But why these consuming wars? Is there not land enough in the universe to satisfy all men with more than they can cultivate? Are there not vast tracts of desert lands, so vast that mankind is not sufficient to fill them? How then! A false glory, a vain title of

Conqueror, which a prince is fond of, kindles a war far and wide; and one single man, thrown by heaven into the world, in wrath, sacrifices brutally so many others to his vanity! His glory requires it, and all must perish before him: Countries swim in blood, towns and cities suffer devouring flames; and what escapes from the sword and the fire, famine, more cruel than both, must consume; and all that this man, who thus sports himself with throwing all human nature into pangs, may find in this general destruction his pleasure and his glory. What monstrous glory! Can we too much despise, too much abhor, these monstrous men who have thus forgot humanity? Without being men, they set up for demi-gods; and earn the curses, instead of, what they aim at, the admiration of ages to come.

Oh! with what tenderness should princes undertake wars! That they ought to be strictly just, is not enough; they must be strictly necessary, necessary for the publick good. The blood of the people ought never to be shed but to save the people; and the occasion ought to be extreme. But flattering counsels, false ideas of glory, vain jealousies, boundless rapaciousness under specious disguises, and rash engagements, draw almost all princes precipitately or insensibly into wars which prove fatal to them. In them they hazard all without necessity, and do as much mischief to their subjects as to their enemies.

Thus the divine late archbishop of Cambray, from whom I have translated this affecting passage. It is a book that has ten thousand excellencies, and ought to be read by all mankind.

I will conclude with wishing, that all nations would learn the wisdom of the prudent Sancho, who, when the hero his master madly attacked the wind-mills and the lions, stood at a safe distance in a whole skin. If their governing Don Quixotes will fight, right or wrong, let them fight by themselves, and not sit at home and wantonly sacrifice their people against wind-mills and fulling-mills.

*G I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 94. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1722. *Against Standing Armies. (Trenchard AND GORDON)*

SIR,

When, in King William's reign, the question was in debate, Whether England should be ruled by standing armies? the argument commonly used by some, who had the presumption to call themselves Whigs, and owned in the *Ballancing Letter* (supposed to be written by one who gave the word to all the rest), was, that all governments must have their periods one time or other, and when that time came, all endeavours to preserve liberty were fruitless; and shrewd hints were given in that letter, that England was reduced to such a condition; that our corruptions were so great, and the dissatisfaction of the people was so general, that the publick safety could not be preserved, but by increasing the power of the crown: And this argument was used by those shameless men, who had caused all that corruption, and all that dissatisfaction.

But that gentleman and his followers were soon taught to speak other language: They were removed from the capacity of perplexing publick affairs any more: The nation shewed a spirit that would not submit to slavery; and their unhappy and betrayed master, from being the most popular prince who ever sat upon the English throne, became, through the treachery of his servants, suspected by many of his best subjects, and was rendered unable by their jealousies, to defend himself and them; and so considerable a faction was formed against his administration, that no good man can recollect, without concern and horror, on the difficulties which that great and good King was reduced to grapple with during the remainder of his troublesome reign.

I have lately met with some creatures and tools of power, who speak the same language now: They tell us that matters are come to that pass, that we must either receive the Pretender, or keep him out with bribes and standing armies; that the nation is so corrupt, that there is no governing it by any other means; and, in short, that we must submit to this great evil, to prevent a greater: As if any mischief could be more terrible than the highest and most terrible of all mischiefs, universal corruption, and a military government. It is indeed impossible for the subtlety of traitors, the malice of devils, or for the cunning and cruelty of our most implacable enemies, to suggest stronger motives for the undermining and overthrow of our excellent establishment, which is built upon the destruction of tyranny, and can stand upon no other bottom. It is madness in extremity, to hope that a government founded upon liberty, and the free choice of the assertors of it, can be supported by other principles; and whoever would maintain it by contrary ones, intends to blow it up, let him allege what he will. This gives me every day new reasons to believe what I have long suspected; for if ever a question should arise, whether a nation shall submit to certain rules, or struggle for a remedy? these gentlemen well know which side they will choose, and certainly intend that which they must choose.

I am willing to think, that these impotent babblers speak not the sense of their superiors, but would make servile court to them from topics which they abhor. Their superiors must know, that it is raving and frenzy to affirm, that a free people can be long governed by impotent terrors; that millions will consent to be ruined by the corruptions of a few; or that those few will join in their ruin any longer than the corruption lasts: That every day new and greater demands will rise upon the corrupters; that no revenue, how great soever, will feed the voraciousness of the corrupted; and that every disappointment will make them turn upon the oppressors of their country, and fall into its true interest and their own: That there is no way in nature to preserve a revolution in government, but by making the people easy under it, and shewing them their interest in it, and that corruption, bribery, and terrors, will make no lasting friends, but infinite and implacable enemies; and that the best security of a prince amongst a free people, is the affections of his people; which he can always gain, by making their interest his own, and by shewing that all his views tend to their good. They will then, as they love themselves, love him, and defend him who defends them. Upon this faithful basis his safety will be better established than upon the ambitious and variable leaders of a few legions, who may be corrupted, disobliged, or surprised, and often have been so; and hence great revolutions have been brought about, and great nations undone, only by the revolt of single regiments.

Shew a nation their interest, and they will certainly fall into it: A whole people can have no ambition but to be governed justly; and when they are so, the intrigues and dissatisfactions of particulars will fall upon their own heads. What has any of our former courts ever got by corruption, but to disaffect the people, and weaken themselves? Let us now think of other methods, if it be only for the sake of the experiment. The ways of corruption have been tried long enough in past administrations: Let us try in this what publick honesty will do; and not condemn it before we have fully proved it, and found it ineffectual; and it will be time enough to try other methods when this fails.

That we must either receive the Pretender, or keep up great armies to keep him out, is frightful and unnatural language to English ears. It is an odd way of dealing with us, that of offering us, or forcing upon us, an alternative, where the side which they would recommend is full as formidable as the side from which they would terrify us. If we [are] to be governed by armies, it is all one to us, whether they be Protestant or popish armies; the distinction is ridiculous, like that between a good and a bad tyranny. We see, in effect, that it is the power and arms of a country that form and direct the religion of a country; and I have before shewn, that true religion cannot subsist where true liberty does not. It was chiefly, if not wholly, King James's usurped power, and his many forces, and not his being a papist, that rendered him dreadful to his people. Military governments are all alike; nor does the liberty and property of the subject fare a bit the better or the worse for the faith and opinion of the soldiery. Nor does an arbitrary Protestant prince use his people better than an arbitrary popish prince; and we have seen both sorts of them changing the religion of their country according to their lust.

They are therefore stupid politicians, who would derive advantages from a distinction which is manifestly without a difference: It is like, however, that they may improve in

their subtleties, and come, in time, to distinguish between corrupt corruption and uncorrupt corruption, between a good ill administration and an ill good administration, between oppressive oppression and unoppressive oppression, and between French dragooning, and English dragooning; for there is scarce any other new pitch of nonsense and contradiction left to such men in their reasonings upon publick affairs, and in the part which they act in them.

Of a piece with the rest is the stupid cunning of some sort of statesmen, and practised by most foreign courts, to blame the poor people for the misery which they bring upon them. They say, that they are extremely corrupt; and so keep them starving and enslaved by way of protection. They corrupt them by all manner of ways and inventions, and then reproach them for being corrupt. A whole nation cannot be bribed; and if its representatives are, it is not the fault, but the misfortune, of the nation: And if the corrupt save themselves by corrupting others, the people, who suffer by the corruptions of both, are to be pitied, and not abused. Nothing can be more shameless and provoking, than to bring a nation, by execrable frauds and extortions, against its daily protestations and remonstrances, into a miserable pass, and then father all those villainies upon the people, who would have gladly hanged the authors of them. At Rome the whole people could be entertained, feasted, and bribed; but it is not so elsewhere, where the people are too numerous, and too far spread, to be debauched, cajoled, and purchased; and if any of their leaders are, it is without the people's consent.

There is scarce such a thing under the sun as a corrupt people, where the government is uncorrupt: it is that, and that alone, which makes them so; and to calumniate them for what they do not seek, but suffer by, is as great impudence as it would be to knock a man down and then rail at him for hurting himself. In what instances do the people of any country in the world throw away their money by millions, unless by trusting it to those who do so? Where do the people send great fleets, at a great charge, to be frozen up in one climate, or to be eaten out by worms in another, unless for their trade and advantage? Where do the people enter into mad wars against their interest, or, after victorious ones, make peace without stipulating for one new advantage to themselves; but, on the contrary, pay the enemy for having beaten them? Where do the people plant colonies, or purchase provinces, at a vast expence, without reaping, or expecting to reap, one farthing from them; and yet still defend them at a farther expence? Where do the people make distracted bargains, to get imaginary millions; and, after having lost by such bargains almost all the real millions which they had, yet give more millions to get rid of them? What wise or dutiful people consent to be without the influence of the presence of their prince, and of his virtues; or of those of his family, who are to come after him? No, these things are never done by any people; but wherever they are done, they are done without their consent; and yet all these things have been done in former ages, and in neighbouring kingdoms.

For such guilty and corrupt men, therefore, to charge the people with corruption, whom either they have corrupted, or cannot corrupt, and, having brought great misery upon them, to threaten them with more; is in effect, to tell them plainly, "Gentlemen, we have used you very ill, for which you, who are innocent of it, are to blame; we therefore find it necessary, for your good, to use you no better, or rather worse: And,

if you will not accept of this our kindness, which, however, we will force upon you, if we can, we will give you up into the terrible hands of raw-head and bloody-bones; who, being your enemy, may do you as much mischief as we, who are your friends, have done you." I appeal to common sense, whether this be not the sum of such threats and reasonings in their native colours.

The partizans of Oliver Cromwell, when he was meditating tyranny over the three nations, gave out, that it was the only expedient to balance factions, and to keep out Charles Stuart; and so they did worse things to keep him out, than he could have done if they had let him in. And, after the king's restoration, when there was an attempt made to make him absolute, by enabling him to raise money without Parliament (an attempt which every courtier, except Lord Clarendon, came into), it was alleged to be the only expedient to keep the nation from falling back into a commonwealth: as if any commonwealth upon earth were not better than any absolute monarchy. His courtiers foresaw, that by their mad and extravagant measures they should make the nation mad, and were willing to save themselves by the final destruction of the nation: They therefore employed their creatures to whisper abroad stupid and villainous reasons, why people should be content to be finally undone, lest something not near so bad should befall them.

Those who have, by abusing a nation, forfeited its affections, will never be for trusting a people, who, they know, justly detest them; but, having procured their aversion and enmity, will be for fortifying themselves against it by all proper ways: and the ways of corruption, depredation, and force, being the only proper ones, they will not fail to be practised; and those who practise them, when they can no longer deny them, will be finding reasons to justify them; and, because they dare not avow the true reasons, they must find such false ones as are most likely to amuse and terrify. And hence so much nonsense and improbability uttered in that reign, and sometimes since, to vindicate guilty men, and vilify an innocent people, who were so extravagantly fond of that prince, that their liberties were almost gone, before they would believethem in danger.

It is as certain, that King James II wanted no army to help him to preserve the constitution, nor to reconcile the people to their own interest: But, as he intended to invade and destroy both, nothing but corruption and a standing army could enable him to do it; and (thank God) even his army failed him, when he brought in Irish troops to help them. This therefore was his true design, but his pretences were very different: He pleaded the necessity of his affairs, nay, of publick affairs; and of keeping up a good standing force to preserve his kingdoms, forsooth, from insults at home and from abroad. This was the bait; but his people, who had no longer any faith in him, and to whom the hook appeared threatening and bare, would not believe him, nor swallow it; and if they were jealous of him, restless under him, and ready to rise against him, he gave them sufficient cause. He was under no hardship nor necessity, but what he created to himself; nor did his people withdraw their affections from him, till he had withdrawn his right to those affections. Those who have used you ill will never forgive you; and it is no new thing wantonly to make an enemy, and then calumniate and destroy him for being so.



When people, through continual ill usage, grow weary with their present ill condition, they will be so far from being frightened with a change, that they will wish for one; and, instead of terrifying them, by threatening them with one, you do but please them, even in instances where they have no reason to be pleased. Make them happy, and they will dread any change; but while they are ill used, they will not fear the worst. The authors of publick misery and plunder may seek their own safety in general desolation; but to the people nothing can be worse than ruin, from what hand soever it comes: A Protestant musket kills as sure as a popish one; and an oppressor is an oppressor, to whatever church he belongs: The sword and the gun are of every church, and so are the instruments of oppression. The late directors were all staunch Protestants; and Cromwell had a violent aversion to popery.

We are, doubtless, under great necessities in our present circumstances; but to increase them, in order to cure them, would be a preposterous remedy, worthy only of them who brought them upon us; and who, if they had common shame in them, would conceal, as far as they could, under silence, the heavy evils, which, though they lie upon every man's shoulders, yet lie only at the doors of a few. The plea of necessity, if it can be taken, will justify any mischief, and the worst mischiefs. Private necessity makes men thieves and robbers; but publick necessity requires that robbers of all sizes should be hanged. Publick necessity therefore, and the necessity of such pedant politicians, are different and opposite things. There is no doubt, but men guilty of great crimes would be glad of an enormous power to protect them in the greatest; and then tell us that there is a necessity for it. Those against whom justice is armed will ever talk thus, and ever think it necessary to disarm her. But whatever sincere services they may mean to themselves by it, they can mean none to his Majesty, who would be undone with his subjects by such treacherous and ruinous services: And therefore it is fit that mankind should know, and they themselves should know, that his Majesty can and will be defended against them and their Pretender, without standing armies; which would make him formidable only to his people, and contemptible to his foes, who take justly the measure of his power from his credit with his subjects.

But I shall consider what present occasion there is of keeping up more troops than the usual guards and garrisons; and shall a little further animadvert upon the arts and frivolous pretences made use of, in former reigns, to reduce this government to the condition and model of the pretended *jure divino* monarchies, where millions must be miserable and undone, to make one and a few of his creatures lawless, rampant, and unsafe.

*T and G I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 95. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1722. *Further Reasonings Against Standing Armies. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

It is certain, that liberty is never so much in danger, as upon a deliverance from slavery. The remaining dread of the mischiefs escaped, generally drives or decoys men into the same or greater: for then the passions and expectations of some run high; the fears of others make them submit to any misfortunes, to avoid an evil that is over; and both sides concur in giving a deliverer all that they are delivered from. In the transports of a restoration, or victory, or upon a plot discovered, or a rebellion quelled, nothing is thought too much for the benefactor, nor any power too great to be left to his discretion, though there can never be less reason for giving it him than at those times; because, for the most part, the danger is past, his enemies are defeated and intimidated, and consequently that is a proper juncture for the people to settle themselves, and to secure their liberties, since no one is likely to disturb them in doing so.

However, I confess, that custom, from time immemorial, is against me, and the same custom has made most of mankind slaves. Agathocles saved the Syracusans, and afterwards destroyed them: Pisistratus, pretending to be wounded for protecting the people, prevailed with them to allow him a guard for the defence of his person; and by the help of that guard usurped the sovereignty: Caesar and Marius delivered the commons of Rome from the tyranny of the nobles, and made themselves masters of both commons and nobles: Sulla delivered the Senate from the insolence of the people, and did them more mischief than the rabble could have done in a thousand years: Gustavus Ericson delivered the Swedes from the oppression of the Danes, and made large steps towards enslaving them himself: The Antwerpians called in the Duke of Alençon to defend them against the Spaniards; but he was no sooner got, as he thought, in full possession of their town, but he fell upon them himself with the forces which he brought for their defence: but the townsmen happened to be too many for him, and drove these their new protectors home again: Which disappointment, and just disgrace, broke that good duke's heart. Oliver Cromwell headed an army which pretended to fight for liberty; and by that army became a bloody tyrant: As I once saw a hawk very generously rescue a turtle dove from the persecution of two crows, and then eat him up himself.

Almost all men desire power, and few lose any opportunity to get it; and all who are like to suffer under it ought to be strictly upon their guard, in such conjunctures as are most likely to increase and make it uncontrollable. There are but two ways in nature to enslave a people, and to continue that slavery over them; the first is superstition, and the last is force: By the one we are persuaded that it is our duty to be undone; and the other undoes us whether we will or no. I take it, that we are pretty much out of danger of the first, at present; and, I think, we cannot be too much upon our guard against the other: for, though we have nothing to fear from the best prince in the

world; yet we have every thing to fear from those who would give him a power inconsistent with liberty, and with a constitution which has lasted almost a thousand years without such a power, which will never be asked with an intention to make no use of it.

The nation was so mad upon the restoration of King Charles II that they gave him all that he asked, and more than he asked: They complimented him with a vast revenue for life, and almost with our liberties and religion too; and if unforeseen accidents had not happened to prevent it, without doubt we had lost both; and if his successor could have had a little patience, and had used no rogues but his old rogues, he might have accomplished the business, and popery and arbitrary power had been of divine institution at this day: But he made too much haste to be at the end of his journey, and his priests were in too much haste to be on horseback too; and so the beast grew skittish, and overthrew them both.

Then a new set of deliverers arose, who had saved us from King James's army, and would have given us a bigger in the room of it, and some of them foreigners. They told us that the King longed for them, and it was a pity that so good a prince should lose his longing, and miscarry: but he did lose it, and miscarried no otherwise than by losing a great part of the confidence which many of his best subjects before had in his moderation; which loss made the remainder of his reign uneasy to him, and to every good man who saw it. I remember that all men then declared against a standing army, and the courtiers amongst the rest, who were only for a land force, to be kept up no longer than till the King of France disbanded his, and till the kingdom was settled, and the people better satisfied with the administration; and then there was nothing left to do, in order to perpetuate them, but to take care that the people should never be satisfied: An art often practised with an amazing success!

The reasons then given for keeping up an army were, the great number of Jacobites, the disaffection of the clergy and universities, the power and enmity of France, and the necessity of preserving so excellent a body of troops to maintain the Treaty of Partition, which they had newly and wisely made. But notwithstanding that the army was disbanded, no plot, conspiracy, or rebellion, happened by their disbanding. The Partition Treaty was broke; a new army was raised, which won ten times as many victories as the former; and Europe, at last, is settled upon a much better foot than it would have been by the Partition Treaty. The Emperor is as strong as he ought to be. The Dutch have a good barrier. Another power is raised in Europe to keep the balance even, which neither can nor will be formidable to us without our own fault; France is undone, and the Regent must be our friend, and have dependence upon our protection: So that some few of these reasons are to do now, what all together could not do then, though we are not the tenth part so well able to maintain them as we were then.

I should be glad to know in what situation of our affairs it can be safe to reduce our troops to the usual guards and garrisons, if it cannot be done now. There is no power in Europe considerable enough to threaten us, who can have any motives to do so, if we pursue the old maxims and natural interest of Great Britain; which is, to meddle no farther with foreign squabbles, than to keep the balance even between France and Spain. And this is less necessary too for us to do now than formerly; because the

Emperor and Holland are able to do it, and must and will do it, without us, or at least with but little of our assistance; but if we unnecessarily engage against the interests of either, we must thank ourselves, if they endeavour to prevent the effects of it, by finding us work at home.

When the army was disbanding in King William's reign, a prince was in being who was personally known to many of his former subjects, had obliged great numbers of them, was supported by one of the most powerful monarchs in the world, that had won numerous victories, and had almost always defeated his enemies, and who still preserved his power and his animosity: His pretended son was then an infant, and, for any thing that then appeared, might have proved an active and a dangerous enemy; and it was to be feared, that his tutors might have educated him a half Protestant, or at least have taught him to have disguised his true religion. At that time the Revolution and revolution principles were in their infancy; and most of the bishops and dignified clergy, as well as many others in employment, owed their preferments and principles to the abdicated family; and the reverse of this is our case now.

France has been torn to pieces by numerous defeats, its people and manufactures destroyed by war, famine, the plague, and their Mississippi Company; and they are so divided at home, that they will find enough to do to save themselves, without troubling their neighbours, especially a neighbour from whom the governing powers there hope for protection. The prince who pretended to the thrones of these kingdoms is dead; and he who calls himself his heir is a bigoted papist, and has given but little cause to fear any thing from his abilities or his prowess. The principles of liberty are now well understood, and few people in this age are romantick enough to venture their lives and estates for the personal interests of one whom they knew nothing of, or nothing to his advantage; and we ought to take care that they shall not find their own interest in doing it; and, I conceive, nothing is necessary to effect this, but to resolve upon it. Almost all the dignified clergy, and all the civil and military officers in the kingdom, owe their preferments to the Revolution, and are as loyal to his Majesty as he himself can wish. A very great part of the property of the kingdom stands upon the same bottom with the Revolution. Every day's experience shews us how devoted the nobility are to gratify their King's just desires and inclinations; and nothing can be more certain, than that the present House of Commons are most dutifully and affectionately inclined to the true interest of the crown, and to the principles to which his Majesty owes it. And besides all this security, a new conspiracy has been discovered and defeated; which gives all occasion and opportunity to prevent any such attempts for the future; which can never be done, but by punishing the present conspirators, and giving no provocation to new ones: In both which, I hope, we shall have the hearty concurrence of those who have the honour to be employed by his Majesty; by which they will shew, that they are as zealous to prevent the necessity of standing armies, as I doubt not but the Parliament will be.

I presume, no man will be audacious enough to propose, that we should make a standing army part of our constitution; and if not, when can we reduce them to a competent number better than at this time? Shall we wait till France has recovered its present difficulties; till its king is grown to full age and ripeness of judgment; till he has dissipated all factions and discontents at home, and is fallen into the natural

interests of his kingdom, or perhaps aspires to empire again? Or, shall we wait till the Emperor and King of Spain have divided the bear's skin, and possibly become good friends, as their predecessors have been for the greatest part of two centuries; and perhaps cement that friendship, by uniting for the common interests of their religion? Or, till Madam Sobiesky's heir is at age, who may have wit enough to think, that the popish religion is dearly bought at the price of three kingdoms? Or, are we never to disband, till Europe is settled according to some modern schemes? Or, till there are no malcontents in England, and no people out of employments who desire to bein them?

It is certain, that all parts of Europe which are enslaved, have been enslaved by armies; and it is absolutely impossible, that any nation which keeps them amongst themselves can long preserve their liberties; nor can any nation perfectly lose their liberties who are without such guests: And yet, though all men see this, and at times confess it, yet all have joined in their turns, to bring this heavy evil upon themselves and their country. Charles II formed his guards into a little army, and his successor increased them to three or four times their number; and without doubt these kingdoms had been enslaved, if known events had not prevented it. We had no sooner escaped these dangers, than King William's ministry formed designs for an army again, and neglected Ireland (which might have been reduced by a message) till the enemy was so strong, that a great army was necessary to recover it; and when all was done abroad that an army was wanted for, they thought it convenient to find some employment for them at home. However, the nation happened not to be of their mind, and disbanded the greatest part of them, without finding any of these dangers which they were threatened with from their disbanding. A new army was raised again when it became necessary, and disbanded again when there was no more need of them; and his present Majesty came peaceably to his crown, by the laws alone, notwithstanding all his endeavours to keep him out, by long measures concerted to that purpose.

It could not be expected, from the nature of human affairs, that those who had formed a design for restoring the Pretender, had taken such large steps towards it, and were sure to be supported in it by so powerful an assistance as France was then capable of giving, should immediately lose sight of so agreeable a prospect of wealth and power, as they had before enjoyed in imagination: Yet it seems very plain to me, that all the disturbance which afterwards happened might have been prevented by a few timely remedies; and when at last it was defeated with a vast charge and hazard, we had the means in our hands of rooting out all seeds of faction and future rebellions, without doing any thing to provoke them; and it is certain, that his Majesty was ready to do every thing on his part for that purpose, which others over and over promised us; and what they have done, besides obliging the nation with a Septennial Parliament, increasing the publick debts a great many millions, and by the South-Sea project paying them off, I leave to themselves to declare.

However, I confess, an army at last became necessary; and an army was raised time enough to beat all who opposed it: Some of them have been knocked on the head, many carried in triumph, some hanged, and others confiscated, as they well deserved. And, I presume, the nation would scarce have been in the humour to have kept up an army to fight their ghosts, if a terrible invasion had not threatned from Sweden; which, however, was at last frightened into a fleet of colliers, or naval stores, indeed I

have forgot which. This danger being over, another succeeded, and had like to have stole upon us from Cadiz, notwithstanding all the intelligence that we could possibly get from Gibraltar, which lies just by it; and this shews, by the way, the little use of that place: But we have miraculously escaped that danger too; the greatest part of their fleet was dispersed in a storm, and our troops have actually defeated in the highlands some hundreds of the enemy, before many people would believe they were there. Since this we have been in great fear of the Czar; and last year one reason given by many for continuing the army was, to preserve us against the plague.

But now the King of Sweden is dead, the Czar is gone a Sophi-hunting, the plague is ceased, and the King of Spain's best troops have taken up their quarters in Italy, where (if I guess right) they will have employment enough; and what are we to keep up the army now to do, unless to keep out the small-pox? Oh! but there is a better reason than that, namely, a plot is discovered, and we cannot find out yet all who are concerned in it; but we have pretty good assurance, that all the Jacobites are for the Pretender; and therefore we ought to keep in readiness a great number of troops (which are to sleep on horseback, or lie in their jack-boots) which may be sufficient to beat them all together, if they had a twelve-month's time given them to beat up for volunteers, to buy horses and arms, to form themselves into regiments, and exercise them; lest, instead of lurking in corners, and prating in taverns, and at cock-matches, they should surprize ten or twelve thousand armed men in their quarters. I dare appeal to any unprejudiced person, whether this be not the sum of some men's reasonings upon this subject.

But I desire to know of these sagacious gentlemen, in what respect shall we be in a worse state of defence than we are now, if the army were reduced to the same number as in King William's time, and in the latter end of the Queen's reign; and that it consisted of the same proportion of horse and foot, that every regiment had its complete number of troops and companies, and every troop and company had its complement of private men. It is certain, that, upon any sudden exigency, his Majesty would have as many men at command as he has now, and, I presume, more common soldiers, who are most difficult to be got upon such occasions; for officers will never be wanting, and all that are now regimented will be in half-pay, and ready at call to beat up and raise new regiments, and fast as the others could be filled up, and they may change any of the old men into them, which reduces it to the same thing. By this we shall save the charge of double or treble officering our troops, and the terror of keeping up the corps of thirty or forty thousand men, though they are called only thirteen or fourteen; and sure it is high time to save all which can be saved, and, by removing all causes of jealousy, to unite all, who, for the cause of liberty, are zealous for the present establishment, in order to oppose effectually those who would destroy it.

I will suppose, for once, what I will not grant, that those called Whigs are the only men amongst us who are heartily attached to his Majesty's interest; for I believe the greatest part of the Tories, and the clergy too, would tremble at the thought of popery and arbitrary power, which must come in with the Pretender: But taking it to be otherwise, it is certain that the body of the Whigs, and indeed I may say almost all, except the possessors and candidates for employments or pensions, have as terrible

apprehensions of a standing army, as the Tories themselves. And dare any man lay his hand upon his heart, and say, that his Majesty will find greater security in a few thousand more men already regimented, than in the steady affections of so many hundred thousands who will be always ready to be regimented? When the people are easy and satisfied, the whole kingdom is his army; and King James found what dependence there was upon his troops, when his people deserted him. Would not any wise and honest minister desire, during his administration, that the publick affairs should run glibly, and find the hearty concurrence of the states of the kingdom, rather than to carry their measures by perpetual struggles and intrigues, to waste the Civil List by constant and needless pensions and gratuities, be always asking for new supplies, and rendering themselves, and all who assist them, odious to their countrymen?

In short, there can be but two ways in nature to govern a nation: One is by their own consent; the other by force: One gains their hearts; the other holds their hands. The first is always chosen by those who design to govern the people for the people's interest; the other by those who design to oppress them for their own: for, whoever desires only to protect them, will covet no useless power to injure them. There is no fear of a people's acting against their own interest, when they know what it is; and when, through ill conduct, or unfortunate accidents, they become dissatisfied with their present condition, the only effectual way to avoid the threatening evil is, to remove their grievances.

When Charles, Duke of Burgundy, with most of the princes of France, at the head of an hundred thousand men, took up arms against Lewis XI this prince sent an embassy to Sforza, Duke of Milan, desiring that he would lend him some of his veteran troops; and the duke returned him for answer, that he could not be content to have them cut to pieces (as they would assuredly have been) but told him at the same time, that he would send him some advice which would be worth ten times as many troops as he had; namely, that he should give satisfaction to the princes, and then they would disperse of course. The King improved so well upon the advice, that he diverted the storm, by giving but little satisfaction to the princes, and none at all to those who followed them. The body of the people in all countries are so desirous to live in quiet, that a few good words, and a little good usage from their governors, will at any time pacify them, and make them very often turn upon those benefactors, who, by their pains, expence, and hazard, have obtained those advantages for them. Indeed, when they are not outrageously oppressed and starved, they are almost as ready to part with their liberties as others are to ask for them.

By what I have before said I would not be understood to declare absolutely against continuing our present forces, or increasing them, if the importance of the occasion requires either, and the evils threatened be not yet dissipated: But I could wish, that if such an occasion appear, those who think them at this time necessary, would declare effectually, and in the fullest manner, that they design to keep them no longer than during the present emergency; and that, when it is over, they will be as ready to break them, as I believe the nation will be to give them, when just reasons offer themselves for doing so.

*T I am, &c.*



[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 96. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1722. *Of Parties In England; How They Vary, And Interchange Characters, Just As They Are In Power, Or Out Of It, Yet Still Keep Their Former Names.* (GORDON)

SIR,

The English climate, famous for variable weather, is not less famous for variable parties; which fall insensibly into an exchange of principles, and yet go on to hate and curse one another for these principles. A Tory under oppression, or out of a place, is a Whig; a Whig with power to oppress, is a Tory. The Tory damns the Whig, for maintaining a resistance, which he himself never fails to practice; and the Whig reproaches the Tory with slavish principles, yet calls him rebel if he do not practice them. The truth is, all men dread the power of oppression out of their own hands, and almost all men wish it irresistible when it is there.

We change sides every day, yet keep the same names for ever. I have known a man a staunch Whig for a year together, yet thought and called a Tory by all the Whigs, and by the Tories themselves. I have known him afterwards fall in with the Whigs, and act another year like a Tory; that is, do blindly what he was bid, and serve the interest of power, right or wrong: And then all the Tories have agreed to call him a Whig; whereas all the while he was called a Tory, he was a Whig: Afterwards, by joining with the Whigs, he became an apostate from Whiggism, and turned Tory.

So wildly do men run on to confound names and things: We call men opprobriously Tories, for practicing the best part of Whiggism; and honourably christen ourselves Whigs, when we are openly acting the vilest parts of Toryism, such parts as the Tories never attempted to act.

To know fully the signification of words, we must go to their source. The original principle of a Tory was, to let the crown do what it pleased; and yet no people opposed and restrained the crown more, when they themselves did not serve and direct the crown. The original principle of a Whig was, to be no farther for the interest of the crown, than the crown was for the interest of the people. A principle founded upon everlasting reason, and which the Tories have come into as often as temptations were taken out of their way; and a principle which the Whigs, whenever they have had temptations, have as vilely renounced in practice. No men upon earth have been more servile, crouching, and abandoned creatures of power than the Whigs sometimes have been; I mean some former Whigs.

The Tories therefore are often Whigs without knowing it; and the Whigs are Tories without owning it. To prove this, it is enough to reflect upon times and instances, when the asserting of liberty, the legal and undoubted liberties of England, has been called libelling by those professed patrons of liberty, the Whigs; and they have taken

extravagant, arbitrary, and violent methods to suppress the very sound of it; whilst the Tories have maintained and defended it, and put checks upon those, who, though they had risen by its name, were eager to suppress the spirit, and had appointed for that worthy end an inquisition, new to the constitution, and threatening its overthrow: An inquisition, where men were used as criminals without a crime, charged with crimes without a name, and treated in some respects as if they had been guilty of the highest.

Parties like or dislike our constitution, just as they are out of power, or in it: Those who are out of power like it, because it gives them the best protection against those who are in power; and those who have been in power have blamed it, for not giving them power enough to oppress all whom they would oppress. No power cares to be restrained, or to have its hands tied up, though it would tie up all hands but its own: Like sects in religion, who all abhor persecution, and disclaim its spirit, while it is over them, but fall almost all into it when they are uppermost. The papists among us make a great outcry against persecution and oppression; because, though they be protected in their lives and estates, their mass-houses are taken from them, and they are taxed double, though they do not pay double: Yet it is most certain, that their religion makes it a sin to tolerate any other religion, and obliges its votaries, on pain of damnation, to burn and destroy all who will not blindly, and against conscience, submit to its absurd and contradictory opinions, and to its impious and inhuman spirit.

The golden rule prevails little in the world; and no man scarce will bear, if he can avoid it, what almost all men will make others bear, if they can. Men who have the government on their side, or are in the government, will never see its excesses while they do not feel them; nay, they will be very apt to complain, that the government wants more power; and some, in those circumstances, have said, and called in God Almighty for a witness and a voucher, that it ought to be irresistible: But when they dislike the government, and the government is jealous of them, their tone is quickly and entirely changed, they are loud with the first against the long hands of power, and its encroachments and oppressions, and often make faults as well as find them.

In King Charles II's reign, at the trial of Mead and Penn, for preaching (a great crime, in those days, out of a church) one of the King's Counsel declared, that he now saw the wisdom, necessity, and equitableness of the Spanish Inquisition, and thought that it would never be well with the church and monarchy, till one was established here; or words to that effect. Now, can any one think that this wicked and impudent man, with all his malice against his country, would not have hated and dreaded the Inquisition as much as any other man, but that he was determined to be of the same side?

I never yet met with one honest and reasonable man out of power who was not heartily against all standing armies, as threatening and pernicious, and the ready instruments of certain ruin: And I scarce ever met with a man in power, or even the meanest creature of power, who was not for defending and keeping them up: So much are the opinions of men guided by their circumstances! Men, when they are angry with one another, will come into any measures for revenge, without considering that the same power which destroys an enemy, may destroy themselves; and he to whom I lend my sword to kill my foe, may with it kill me.

Men are caught, and ruled, and ruined, by a present appetite; and, for present gratification, give up even self-preservation. So weak is reason, when passion is strong! Most of the instruments of arbitrary power have been sacrificed to it as wantonly as they had sacrificed others; and were justly crushed under a barbarous Babel of their own raising. But that has been no lesson to others, who have been for complimenting their prince with a power which made all men, and themselves amongst the rest, depend for their life and property upon his breath; for no other reason, than that it made many others depend at the same time upon theirs.

Nothing is more wild, fickle, and giddy, than the nature of man; not the clouds, nor the winds. We swallow greedily to day what we loathed yesterday, and will loathe again to-morrow; and would hang at night those whom we hugged in the morning. We love men for being of our opinion, when we are in the wrong; and hate them afterwards, if they be in the right. We are enraged at those who will not renounce their sense, to follow us in our anger; and are angry at them for being angry, when we have made them so. We boast of being guided by our own sentiments; but will allow no body to be directed by theirs, if theirs thwart ours. We are governed by our own interest, and rail at those that are. We oppose those who will not purchase our friendship; and when they do, we oppose all that oppose them. Those who are for us with reason on their side, provoke us, if they are not so without reason. We commend human reason, and mean only our own folly. And our religion, however ridiculous, is always the best for all men, who are in a dangerous way, if they be not in our absurd one. If we adhere to our opinions, and will not alter our conduct, we cannot forgive those who will join with us; and if they do, we do not forgive them when we change, if they do not change too.

Thus inconsistent, foolish, and shameless, is the nature of men; selfish and prone to error. Methinks those who were once in our circumstances and sentiments, might, at least, forgive us, if, when they leave us and their own principles for a very bad reason, we still adhere to ours for a very good one: But this piece of plain equity is not to be expected. Men are so partial to themselves, that almost every man, if he could, would set up the arbitrary standard of his own will, and oblige all men blindly to follow it. The story of Procrustes is full of excellent instruction, and a lively emblem of human nature: That tyrant had an iron bed, which he seemed to intend for the standard of human stature; those who were too long for it, had their legs chopped off; those who were too short, had their bodies extended by a rack; and both the long and the short were made to fit the tyrant's bed. What is the Inquisition, what is tyranny, and what is any extravagant power, but Procrustes's bed? And who would not be Procrustes, if he had his will, in some respect or other?

The very name of France used to be an abomination to the Whigs: They hated the country for the sake of its government; and were eternally upbraiding the Tories with a fondness for that government. Who would have expected, after all this, that ever the Whigs, or any of them, could have spoken with patience, much less with approbation, of the French government? Any the least hint of this kind was shameful and unpardonable in a Whig. But there are Whigs, who, not content to shew their dislike and resentment of every thing said or done in behalf of liberty, and the English constitution, have boldly told people how such things would be rewarded in France:

That is to say, the government of France is defended by galleys, wheels, racks, and dragoons, and we want the same methods here; for, if they dislike such methods, how come they to mention them? If men commit crimes against the English government, there are English laws to punish them; but if they be guilty of no crime against the laws of England, why are they thought worthy of the arbitrary punishments of France, unless those who think that they are, thirst after the arbitrary power of France? Or, if they mean not thus, why do they talk thus; and, shewing rage without provocation, scatter words without a meaning? I know no sort of Englishmen worthy of French chains, and French cruelty, but such apostate Englishmen as wish for the power and opportunity of inflicting them upon their countrymen, and of governing those by terrors and tortures, who despise weak capacities, and detest vile measures.

And have Whigs at last the face to tell us how they rule in France? Here is an instance of Toryism which every modern Tory, of any sense, disclaims and abhors; and which some modern Whigs have modestly avowed, and are therefore become old Tories. Thus do parties chop and change. One party, by railing with great justice at another, gets into its place; and loses it as justly, by doing the very things against which it railed.

By these means, and by thus acting every one of them contrary to their professions, all parties play the game into one another's hands, though far from intending it; and no party has ever yet found their account in it, whatever their leaders may have done: For the most part, a revolution of five or six years subjects them to oppressions of their own inventing. Others get into their seat, and turn their own hard measures upon them; nor can they complain, with a good grace, that they suffer those evils which they have made others to suffer; and their own conduct having been as bad as that of which they complain, they have not sufficient reputation to oppose the progress of publick mischief and miscarriages, which perhaps they began.

It is therefore high time for all parties to consider what is best for the whole; and to establish such rules of commutative justice and indulgence, as may prevent oppression from any party. And this can only be done by restraining the hands of power, and fixing it within certain bounds as to its limits and expence. Under every power that is exorbitant, millions must suffer to aggrandize a few, and men must be strangely partial to themselves and their own expectations, if, in the almost eternal changes and revolutions of ministries they can hope to continue long to be any part of those few.

*G I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 97. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1722. *How Much It Is The Interest Of Governors To Use The Governed Well; With An Enquiry Into The Causes Of Disaffection In England.* (Trenchard)

SIR,

No man, or small number of men, can support themselves in power upon their own proper strength, without taking in the assistance of a great many others; and they can never have that assistance, unless they take in their interests too, and unless the latter can find their own account in giving it: for men will laugh at bare arguments brought to prove that they must labour, be robbed of that labour, and want, that others may be idle, riot and plunder them. Those governments therefore, which are founded upon oppression, always find it necessary to engage interests enough in their tyranny to overcome all opposition from those who are tyrannized over, by giving separate and unequal privileges to the instruments and accomplices of their oppression, by letting them share the advantages of it, by putting arms in their hands, and by taking away all the means of self-defence from those who have more right to use them.

But when a government is founded upon liberty and equal laws, it is ridiculous for those in the administration to have any hopes of preserving themselves long there, but by just actions, or the appearance of just actions; and by letting the people find, or fancy that they find, their own happiness in their submission. It is certain, that people have so just a dread of publick disturbances, that they will bear a great deal before they will involve themselves in tumults and wars; and mankind are so prone to emulation and ambition, and to pursue their separate interests, that it is easy to form them into parties, and to play those parties in their turns upon one another; but all parties will at last confer notes, and find out, that they are made use of only as cudgels in the hands of wicked men, to assault each other by turns, till they are both undone. It is downright madness, to hope long to govern all against the interests of all; and such knight-errants have qualifications only to be sent to Bedlam, or to be shut up in some other mad-house.

People will for some time be dallied with, and amused with false reasonings, misrepresentations, and promises, wild expectations, vain terrors, and imaginary fears; but all these hopes and apprehensions will vanish by degrees, will produce a quite contrary effect, and no wise man will think it prudent to provoke a whole people. What could the late King James do against his whole people? His ministers betrayed him, his family deserted him, his soldiers revolted from him: And it was foolish to expect any thing else; for how could he hope, that those who could have no motive to stand by him, besides their own personal interest, and every motive to oppose him arising from conscience and honour, would not leave him when that interest changed, and when they could serve themselves better by serving their country?

I laugh at the stupid notions of those, who think that more is due from them to their patrons, who are trusted to dispose of employments for the publick benefit, than to their country, for whose sake, and by whose direction, those employments were first instituted, out of whose pockets the profits of them arise, and from whose confidence or credulity their pretended benefactors derive all their power to give them. Those who receive them, accept the gift upon the terms of the constitution; that is, to execute them faithfully for the publick good, and not to take the people's money to destroy the people.

What did the whole power of Spain do against a few revolted provinces, when all the people were enraged by oppression? How many armies were lost, how many millions foolishly squandered, to recover by force what a few just concessions would have done at once? Her generals no sooner took one town, but two revolted; and they sometimes lost ten without striking a stroke, for one that they gained by the sword: What by the mutinies of her own soldiers, and other common events, which usually happen in such cases, they twice lost all together, and were forced to begin their game anew; and so destroyed a mighty empire, to oppress a little part of it, whose affections might have been regained by doing them but common justice.

It is senseless to hope to overcome some sorts of convulsive distempers, by holding the patient's hands, and tying him with ropes, which will only increase the malady; whereas the softest remedies ought to be used: Violent methods may stop the distemper for a little time; but the cause of the grief remains behind, and will break out again the more furiously. What did King James get by all his bloody executions in the west, by his manacling us with chains, and keeping up a military force, to lock them on, but to frighten his friends, still more to provoke his enemies, and at last to unite them all against himself? And yet, I believe, I may venture to assert, that if, instead of throwing his broad seal into the Thames, and deserting his people, he had suffered his Parliament to sit, and given up some of the instruments of his tyranny, and had permitted them to have taken a few proper precautions to have hindered it for the future, he need not have been a fugitive through the world.

It is certain, that if King Charles had made at first, and with a good grace, but half of those concessions which were extorted from him afterwards, that bloody war, so fatal to himself and his family, had been prevented, and the ambition or malice of his personal enemies had been suppressed, or turned to their own confusion, and he himself might have reigned a happy prince, with as much power as he had right to by the constitution: Whereas, if my Lord Clarendon [is] to be believed, the whole kingdom (very few excepted) took part against the court at first, and continued to do so, till some leading men in the House of Commons discovered intentions to overturn the monarchy itself. And I will add further, that if some men, whom I could name, had set themselves at the head of these prosecutions against the South-Sea directors, and their directors, agents, and accomplices, and had proposed, or shewn an inclination to have come into effectual methods to have paid off the publick debts, and to have lessened the publick expences, the name of a Jacobite had been as contemptible as it is now dreadful; and a few constables might possibly have saved the charge of a great many camps.

It is foolish therefore to be frightened with apprehensions which may be removed at pleasure: The way to cure people of their fears, is, not to frighten them further, but to remove the causes of their fears. If the kingdom be disaffected (as its enemies of all sorts would make us believe), let enquiry be made into the motives of that disaffection. It cannot be personally to his Majesty, who is a most excellent prince; and his greatest opponents neither do nor can object to him those vices, which too often accompany and are allied to crowns: Nor is there the least pretence to accuse him of any designs of enlarging his prerogative beyond its due bounds; but on the contrary it is said, that he was content by the Peerage Bill to have parted with a considerable branch of it in favour of his people, whatever use others intended to make of that concession. It is certain, that when he came to the crown, he had a large share in the affectionsof his people, and he himself has done nothing to make it less.

It cannot be to his title, which is the best upon earth, even the positive consent of a great and free nation, and not the presumptive consent of succession: Besides, all his subjects of any degree have sworn and subscribed to his title, and the ink is yet wet upon their fingers; nor can any formidable number of them (whilst they are governed justly and prudently) have any motives to call in a popish pretender, educated in principles diametrically opposite to their civil and religious interests.

Whence therefore should such disaffection arise, if there be any such, as I hope there is not? And it appears plainly, that there is not, or that it is not general, by the dutiful reception which his Majesty met with in all places throughout his late progress in the west. And the same loyal disposition would appear more and more every day, if those who have the honour to be admitted to his more immediate confidence would represent honestly to him, how acceptable his presence would always be to his people.

It is childish to say, that a few flies and insects can raise a great dust; or, that a small number of disappointed and unpreferred men can shake a great kingdom, with a wise prince at the head of it, supported with such powers and dependences. A great fire cannot be raised without fuel, and the materials which make it must have been combustible before. And if this be our case, we ought to ask, how they came to be so? and, who made them inflammable? Who laid the gunpowder? as well as, who fired, or intended to fire, it? When we have done this, we ought to remove the causes of the distemper, allay the heat of the fever by gentle lenitives, throw in no more fiery spirits to inflame the constitution, but do all that we can to soften and cool it.

Every country in the world will have many malcontents; some through want and necessity; others through ambition and restlessness of temper; many from disappointments and personal resentment; more from the fear of just punishment for crimes: But all these together can never be dangerous to any state, which knows how to separate the people's resentments from theirs. Make the former easy, and the others are disarmed at once. When the causes of general discontentare removed, particular discontents will signify nothing.

The first care which wise governors will always take, is, to prevent their subjects from wanting, and to secure to them the possession of their property, upon which every thing else depends. They will raise no taxes but what the people shall see a necessity

for raising; and no longer than that necessity continues: And such taxes ought to be levied cautiously, and laid out frugally. No projects ought to be formed to enrich a few, and to ruin thousands: for when men of fortune come to lose their fortunes, they will try by all means to get new ones; and when they cannot do it fairly, they will do it as they are able; and if they cannot do it at all, will throw all things into confusion, to make others as miserable as themselves. If people are poor, they will be desperate, and catch at every occasion, and join with every faction, to make publick disturbances, to shuffle the cards anew, and to make their own condition better, when they find it cannot be worse.

Wise statesmen will see all this at a distance; will use the best precautions, and most prudent measures, to procure general plenty, increase trade and manufactures, and keep the people usefully employed at home, instead of starving, and prating sedition in the streets. They will not be perpetually provoking them with constant injuries, giving them eternal occasions and reasons for dissatisfaction, and then quarrel with them for shewing it, and be still increasing their discontents, by preposterously endeavouring to put a stop to them by new shackles, armed bands, bribery and corruption, and by laying on them fresh burdens and impositions to maintain such oppressions; and so when they have raised resentment to the highest pitch, vainly hope to stop the tide with their thumbs. This is what the King of Spain did formerly in the Dutch provinces, and King James II lately in England, but what, I hope, will never be seen here again.

But it will be said, that people will be sometimes dissatisfied without any just provocations given to them by their governors: The necessities of all states will sometimes subject them to greater taxes and other seeming oppressions, than they can well bear; and then, like sick men, they will quarrel with their physicians, their best friends, and their remedies, and reproach all who have the direction of their affairs; as a countryman once cursed Cardinal Mazarine, when his ass stumbled (perhaps justly, for the oppressions of that ministermight have rendered him unable to feed his ass, and to keep him in good heart).

When this happens to be the case, there ought to be double diligence used to prevent any ill consequences from such disaffection: No war ought to be continued longer than is absolutely necessary to the publick security; nor any new one to be entered into out of wantonness, ambition, or, indeed, out of any other motive than self-defence: No more money ought to be raised than is strictly necessary for the people's protection; and they are to be shewn that necessity, and are to see from time to time, the accounts of what they give, that it is disbursed frugally and honestly, and not engrossed by private men, lavished upon minions, or squandered away in useless pensions to undeservers; and that the product of the whole people's labour and substance is not suffered to be devoured by a few of the worst of the people. For (as it is said elsewhere)

What can be more invidious, than for a nation, staggering under the weight and oppression of its debts, eaten up with usury, and exhausted with payments, to have the additional mortification to see private and worthless men riot in their calamities, and grow rich, whilst they grow poor; to see the town every day glittering with new and



pompous equipages, whilst they are mortgaging and selling their estates, without having spent them; to see blazing meteors suddenly exhaled out of their jakes, and their mud, as in Egypt, warmed into monsters?[\[?\]](#)

*T*I am &c.

ENDNOTES

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 98. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1722. *Address To The Members Of The House Of Commons. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

I have hitherto directed my letters to yourself; but I desire you will direct the enclosed to the illustrious deputies of the whole people of England. Not that I presume to think myself capable to inform them of their duty, or that they want such information, or would accept it from me; but I intend to shew my good wishes to my countrymen, and to prepare them to expect the blessed effects of their discreet choice; not in the least doubting but their worthy representatives will speak aloud the almost unanimous sentiments of the whole nation; and by so doing, preserve the dignity of the crown, and the liberty of the people whom they represent.

TO THE HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE PRESENT HOUSE OF COMMONS

GENTLEMEN,

You have now the political power of all the commons of Great Britain delegated to you; and, as I doubt not but you will make an honest use of it, so will you have their natural power too at your command; that is, you will have their thanks, their wishes, their prayers, and their persons, as well as their purses, to serve your king and country. This is the greatest trust that can be committed by men to one another; and contains in it all that is valuable here on earth, the lives, the properties, the liberties, of your countrymen, and in a great measure of all Europe, and your own present and eternal happiness too. This great trust, Gentlemen, is not committed to you for your own sakes, but for the protection, security and happiness of those whom you represent. And you are accountable to your own consciences, and to the high tribunal of heaven, for the just execution of this great authority: Not to mention the applauses and blessings of millions of people, which will attend the faithful discharge of your duty; and the detestation, reproaches, and curses, with their other worse consequences, which ought to pursue corruption and bribery, and which I am sure you will never deserve.

You have, Gentlemen, the purest religion in the world to cherish and support; the interests, reputation, and security, of the best of princes to guard and defend: You have a great and populous nation, abounding with men of understanding, integrity and courage, imploring your assistance; whom you are obliged, by all the ties of gratitude, justice, and generosity, by all the laws of God and man, to protect and preserve: A people loaded with debts, enervated by war, and in former reigns plundered by miscreants, and just ready to sink under those burdens, unless they can receive sudden help from your healing hands. Here is a scene of glory, an opportunity put by gracious heaven into your hands, to exercise your virtues, and to obtain a reputation far above the tinsel triumphs of fabulous and imaginary heroes. Virtuous men could not ask

more of providence; nor could providence bestow more upon mortal men, than to set them at the head of a corrupted and almost undone people, and to give them the honour of restoring their power, and reforming their manners. I cannot doubt, but these strong and forcible motives will call up all your virtue, generosity, and publick spirit; and inspire you with resolutions to assist our gracious sovereign in redressing all our grievances, and in making us once more a great and happy people. It is in your power to do so; and from your endeavours we hope and expect it.

Every man whom you represent has a right to apply to and to petition you for protection and redress, and with modesty and humility to complain of his own or his country's sufferings; and, by virtue of this undoubted right, I address to you in my own behalf, and in the behalf of millions of my fellow-subjects, who, next to God and our gracious sovereign, are to receive their preservation and whole happiness from your breath. Your own personal security too is nearly linked and blended with theirs; for you can make no laws, countenance no corruptions, nor bring or suffer any mischiefs upon your country, but what must fall upon yourselves and your posterity; and for these reasons, as well as from your known principles of honour and virtue, I assure myself that you will act for your own and the publick interest.

The most notorious conspirators, and chief instruments of power, who headed that detestable Parliament that gave up the liberties of a neighbouring nation, involved themselves in the general ruin, and were amongst the first who lost their estates. Even the Pensionary Parliament in King Charles II's time stopped short, and turned upon that corrupt ministry, when the last stroke was levelled against our liberties: They well saw that when they should become no longer necessary, they would be no more regarded, but be treated as traitors always are by those who take advantage of their treason: for it is a steady maxim always with oppressors, to court and gratify the people whom they enslave, by sacrificing the instruments which they make use of, when they can be no longer serviceable; a maxim which discharges all obligations to them, and gives some recompence to their unhappy and undone subjects, by shewing them the grateful sight of their worst and most implacable enemies caught in their own snare.

View, Gentlemen, the dismal and melancholy scene before your eyes: Behold, not above thirty years since, a powerful nation engaged in an expensive, but successful war, for defence of their own liberties, and of all Europe; which might have been equally carried on with less money than is now paid for interest, without leaving us one penny in debt; but a nation in late reigns almost undone by the vile and despicable arts of stock-jobbers, combining with others, from whom we expected preservation, and now loaded with numerous taxes: Their finances discomposed; their trade loaded with various and burdensome duties, or manacled with exclusive companies; and in debt almost sixty millions; and by that means (as we have lately experienced) unable to contend with small powers, without every year increasing our debts and burdens; and no effectual method ever yet taken to pay them off, or lessen them, but always new methods found out to enhance the account.

Sure, Gentlemen, none of you can hope that neighbouring nations will sit still, and not take advantage of our weakness; even those nations for whose sakes we are brought

into this forlorn condition. The vicissitude of human affairs must bring new wars among us, though none among ourselves could find their accounts in courting them; and how think you, in such a circumstance, we shall defend our country? For my own part, I can see but one remedy at hand, and that is a dreadful one; unless we take speedy and effectual methods to lessen the publick expences, to cut off all exorbitant fees, pensions, and unnecessary salaries, to encourage trade, regulate our finances, and all defects in the administration; and by such means save all which can be saved, and apply it to the discharge of the publick burdens.

I wish that our dabblers in corruption would count their gains, and balance their losses with their wicked advantages. Let them set down in one column their mercenary gifts, and precarious dependences; sometimes half purchased with money, sometimes by dividing the profits with parasites, and always with the loss of their integrity and reputation; and on the other side, let them write down expensive contentions, and constant attendance in town to the neglect of their families and affairs, and a manner of living often unsuitable to their fortunes, and destructive to their health, and at least one fourth part of their estates mortgaged, and liable to the discharge of the publick debts; and, above all the rest, the insecurity of what remains, which must be involved in every species of publick misery: And then let them cast up the account, and see where the balance lies. This is not a fictitious and imaginary computation, like South-Sea stock, but a real and true state of the unhappy case of twenty dealers in corruption, for one who has been a gainer by it; without mentioning the just losses which many of them have suffered by the last detestable project.

Consider too, what a figure they make in their several countries amongst their neighbours, their acquaintance, their former friends, and often even amongst their own relations. See how they have been hunted and pursued from place to place, with reproaches and curses from every honest man in England; how they have been rejected in countries, and populous and rich boroughs, and indeed only hoped for success any where by the mere force of exorbitant corruption, which has swallowed up a great part of their unjust extortions. Then let them set against all these evils a good conscience, a clear reputation, a disengaged estate, and being the happy members of a free, powerful, and safe kingdom; all which was once their case, and might have continued so, if they had acted with integrity. Sure it is worth no man's time to change an estate of inheritance, secured to him by steady and impartial laws, for a precarious title to the greatest advantages at the will of any man whatsoever.

But even these corrupt advantages are no longer to be had upon the same terms. The bow is stretched so far, that it must break if it goes farther. Corruption, like all other things, has its bounds, and must at last destroy itself, or destroy every thing else. We are already almost mortgaged from head to foot. There is scarce any thing which can be taxed, that is not taxed. Our veins have been opened and drained so long, that there is nothing left but our heart's blood; and yet every day new occasions arise upon us; which must be supplied out of exhausted channels, or cannot be supplied at all. How think you, Gentlemen, this can be done? What has been raised within the year, has not been found sufficient to defray the expences of the year: And will any one amongst you, in times of full peace, consent to new mortgage the kingdom to supply the current service? And if you could be prevailed upon to consent to it, how long do you

believe it can last, or you find creditors? And what can be the consequence of such credit? Sure it must make the payment desperate; and if ever that grows to be the case, what think you will be the event? Who do you imagine will have the sweeping of the stakes? Do you believe that those who brought your misfortunes upon you will pay the reckoning at last, or save themselves, by endeavouring to complete their wickedness? There is no way, Gentlemen, to prevent all these evils which lower over and threaten you and us, but by preventing or removing the causes of them; and I hope, that you will think it worthy of your best considerations, and most vigorous endeavours, to do so, rather than to suffer under, and be undone by, them.

By doing this great service to your country, you will not only consult your reputation, your own interests, and the interests of those whom you represent; but in the most effectual manner will serve your prince, by making him a glorious king, over an happy, satisfied, dutiful, and grateful, people. A great and rich people can alone make a great king; their diffusive and accumulative wealth is his wealth, and always at his command, when employed for his true glory, which is ever their happiness and security; and the figure which he does or can make among foreign states, bears exact proportion to the affections which he has amongst his own people: If his people be disaffected, his neighbours and his enemies will despise him; and the latter will insult him, if they think his subjects will not defend him. And therefore, since nothing is wanting on his Majesty's part, to make him beloved, honoured, I had almost said, adored, by his people; it lies upon you, Gentlemen, to remove all those causes, which at any time hereafter, by the fault of others, may sully and blemish his high character. It is your duty and your interest too, to acquaint him with all miscarriages in the inferior administration, which you have frequent opportunities of knowing, and which is next to impossible he should otherwise know. Princes are seated aloft in the upper regions, and can only view the whole of things, but must leave the detail and execution of them to inferior agents.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 99. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1722. *The Important Duty Of Attendance In Parliament, Recommended To The Members. (GORDON)*

SIR,

I know not a more laudable ambition in any man, than that of procuring, by his credit with the people, a place in the legislature; and when it is procured this way, it is a testimony given by his country to his uprightness, and to his capacity to serve it. This is as high an honour as an Englishman can arrive at, and few but Englishmen can arrive at it; and the trust is still as high as the honour, and increases it. The liberty, the property, nay the virtue, credit, and religion of his country, are in his hands. Can heaven or earth afford stronger motives for diligence, probity, and attendance? When the happiness or misery, the security or bankruptcy, the freedom or servitude, of a nation, and all the good or evil which this life affords, depend upon his behaviour, he will find sufficient cause, from virtue, tenderness, and duty, to call up all his care, industry, and zeal.

But so it has often happened in the world, that all the activity and attendance, or most of it, have been on the wrong side; and as the evil that is in the world does infinitely over-balance the good, they who pull down are vastly more numerous, as well as more busy, than they who build up. Vice reigns amongst men, while virtue scarce subsists; and in many countries the publick has been as vigorously assaulted, as it has been slowly and faintly defended. Thus it is that liberty is almost every where lost: Her foes are artful, united, and diligent: Her defenders are few, disunited, and unactive. And therefore we have seen great nations, free, happy, and in love with their own conditions, first made slaves by a handful of traitors, and then kept so by a handful of soldiers: I mean a handful in comparison of the people, but still enough to keep them in chains.

So that in most nations, for want of this particular zeal in every man for his country, in which all men are comprised, the publick, which is every man's business, becomes almost any man's prey. It was thus under the first triumvirate, when Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar, three citizens of Rome, were, by the assistance of Roman armies, sharing out the Roman world among themselves: Nay, they procured the authority of the Senate, and the sanction of the people, for this monstrous three-headed tyranny over Senate and people; and procured it by means that will always procure it: Some they bought, others they terrified, and all they deceived, corrupted, and oppressed. The tribunes of the people, who were the people's representatives, and should have been their protectors, they bribed; and the people were betrayed and sold by their tribunes.

Such is the misfortune of mankind, and so uncertain is the condition of human affairs, that the very power given for protection contains in it a sufficient power to destroy; and so readily does government slide, and often start into oppression! And only by watching and restraining power, is this monstrous and dreadful transition prevented.

For this good purpose we have Parliaments, to whom our ministers are accountable; and by whom the administration is supported, and its limits and power fixed. And to our having Parliaments, it is owing that we are not groaning under the same vile vassalage with the nations round about us. They had once their parliaments as well as we; but in the room of parliaments their governors have substituted armies, and consequently formed a military government, without calling it so: but, whatever it be called, that government is certainly and necessarily a military government, where the army is the strongest power in the country: And it is eternally true, that a free Parliament and a standing army are absolutely incompatible, and can never subsist together.

By parliaments therefore liberty is preserved; and whoever has the honour to sit in those assemblies, accepts of a most sacred and important trust; to the discharge of which all his vigilance, all his application, all his virtue, and all his faculties, are necessary; and he is bound, by all the considerations that can affect a worthy mind, by all the ties that can bind a human soul, to attend faithfully and carefully upon this great and comprehensive duty: A duty, which, as it is honestly or faithfully executed, determines the fate of millions, and brings prosperity or misery upon nations.

Whatever has happened in former reigns, we have reason to hope, that none come now into Parliament, with an execrable intention to carry to market a country which has trusted them with its all; and it would be ridiculous to throw away reason upon such banditti, upon publick enemies to human society. Such men would be worse than cannibals, who only eat their enemies to satisfy their hunger, and do not sell and betray into servitude their own countrymen, who trust them with the protection of their property and persons. But, as I have heard that some men formerly, to whom this important trust has been committed, have been treacherous enough, through negligence, to sacrifice their duty to laziness or pleasure, I shall endeavour to shew the deformity of such conduct.

The name of a Member of Parliament has a great and respectful sound; his situation is attended with many privileges, and an eminent figure! All which make men ambitious of acquiring a seat there; though I am told that some of them have scarce ever appeared there. The glory and terror of the name was enough for them; which glory they tarnished, and converted into their crime and their shame, by neglecting the duty which was annexed to it, and alone produced it. Small and ridiculous must be the glory of that general, who never attends the duties of war, and is always absent upon the day of battle; or of a minister, who, while he should be making dispatches, or concerting schemes for the publick, is wasting his time at ombre, at chess, or with a mistress.

It would scarce be believed, if it had not been felt, that the insensibility of men, as to all that is good and honourable, should go so far as to carry the directors and guardians of the publick to a cock-match, a race, or a drunken bout, when a question has been upon the stage which has concerned the very being of the publick. This passion for pleasure is strangely preposterous upon such occasions, and to follow it is cruel; cruel and disloyal to our country, and ever to ourselves. All our happiness, and consequently all our reasonable pleasures, are contained in the general happiness; and

when that is gone, or lessened, through our neglect, we need not be surprised, but may thank ourselves, if in the publick misfortunes and curse we find our own.

When a pernicious question has been carried, it is a poor apology to allege, and had better be left unalleged, that *I was not there*. Why were you not there? Was it not your duty to be there? And were you not bound, by the solemn and awful trust which you undertook, to have been there? Had you been there, perhaps it would not have been carried, perhaps not attempted; or if both, you would have acquitted your own soul, and had the honourable testimony of your country, and of a good conscience.

Every body knows, that in the pensionary Parliaments, in Charles II's time, the session was almost always drawn out into a tedious length, on purpose to tire the members, and drive them all out of town, except the trusty creatures of the court, who were in Parliament with no other view than to make a penny of their betrayed principles, and to pick the publick purse, for the promise of having shares with those who set them on. Were not the absent members answerable, in a great degree, for the treachery of those staunch and patient parricides, by leaving them an opportunity to commit it, when they knew that they would commit it? When a man leaves his wife with a known ravisher, and his money in the hands of a noted thief, he may blame himself if he suffer loss and dishonour.

Members of Parliament are set in a high place, as publick stewards and guards (the best and only sure guards that a free country can have) to watch for the publick welfare, to settle the publick expences, and to defend publick and private property from the unclean and ravenous hands of harpies; and they are obliged, by every motive that can oblige, to adhere to their station and trust: When the major part neglect or desert it, who knows but in times to come there may be always enough remaining to give it up, and be remaining for that very end? He who does not prevent evil when he may, does in effect commit it, by leaving others to do so, who he cannot be sure will not do it.

I have heard that some of these truants from Parliament have boasted that they never voted wrong: But how often have they been out of the way when they should have voted right, and opposed voting wrong? And is not this omission of voting well the next crime to voting ill? And where it is habitual, is it not worse than even now and then voting ill? He who commits but two murders is less guilty, as to the community, than he who robs ten thousand pounds from the publick, is a more innocent man than he who suffers it to be robbed of an hundred thousand: Or, if he who does not prevent a great evil, be less guilty in his own eyes than he who actually commits a less; the publick, which feels the difference between ten and twenty, must judge far otherwise, and consider him as the more pernicious criminal of the two, as they who are traitors within the law are the most dangerous traitors of all.

How ridiculous is it to take a great deal of pains, and to spend a great deal of money, to come into Parliament, and afterwards come seldom or never there, but keep others out, who would perhaps give constant attendance? It is foolish to allege, that the adversary is so strong, that your attendance will be useless; for it has rarely happened, that any dreadful mischief has been carried in a full house, or indeed attempted; but



opportunities have always been taken from the absence of the country members. Besides, how often has it happened, that one extravagant attempt has given a steady majority to the other side? The Pensionary Parliament itself, in King Charles II's time, turned upon that corrupt court: King James's first loyal and passive obedience Parliament did the same, when he declared for governing by armies; and in King William's time, the anti-court party, who for many years together could scarce ever divide above eighty or ninety, yet grew so very considerable, upon the attempt for a standing army, that the court, for several years after, could not boast of a much greater number of followers; and though I confess that this produced many real mischiefs to the publick, yet the courtiers had no one to blame but themselves for it. How absurd is it for men to bring themselves into such a dilemma, as either to submit to certain ruin, or, in some instances, to hazard their lives and estates to get rid of it, by an unequal struggle; when both may be easily prevented, by doing what they have promised to do, what is their duty, and ought to be their pleasure, to do, and what may be done without further expence, than making an honest use of two monosyllables?

The notions of honour generally entertained, are strangely wild, unjust, and absurd. A man that would die rather than pick a private pocket, will without blushing, pick the pockets of a million: And he who would venture his life to defend a friend, or the reputation of a harlot who has none, will not lose a dinner, or a merry meeting, to maintain the wealth and honour of his country. There have been gentlemen of this sort of honour, who really wished well to the publick; yet, rather than attend to a debate of the utmost consequence to the publick, would with infinite punctualness meet a company of sharpers, to throw away their estates at seven or eleven. So much stronger is pernicious custom than publick virtue and eternal reason, which alone ought to create and govern custom; and so much to the publick shame and misfortune are such wicked customs, from the influence of which even wise men are not entirely exempted! So weak and wild a thing is the nature of man!

It is observed of Cato the Younger, that he always came first to the Senate, and left it last. Pompey and his faction, finding that he would never be persuaded nor frightened into their execrable designs against their country, contrived a thousand treacherous devices to keep him out of the way: But he saw their ill arts, and disappointed them. He said, that he entered upon the business of the state, as the business of every honest man; that he considered the publick as the proper object of his care, zeal, and attendance, and not as a bank for his own private wealth, or a source of personal honours; that it was a hideous reproach for men who are guided by reason, and by it superior to all other creatures, to take less care of the society to which they belong, than such insects as bees and ants take of their hives and common stores; that he would never prefer private interest or pleasure to that of the publick, and that none of those considerations should ever withhold him from attending faithfully in the Senate.

Here is a virtuous and illustrious example, which I would leave upon the minds of my readers, and particularly recommend to those who may most want it. When Caesar had, by all manner of wicked ways, by violence, by fraud, and by bribery, procured the government of Gaul and Illyricum for five years, with an army of four legions, with which he afterwards enslaved Rome itself; Cato could not reproach his own

heart, that he had been absent when that fatal law passed: He opposed it with all his zeal and eloquence, and with the hazard of his life; and told those who made it, what they afterwards sadly felt, that they were placing an armed tyrant in their citadel.

Consider, for God's sake, Gentlemen, the extent and sacredness of your trust: Your country and constitution are in your hands: One unjust, one rash law, may overturn both at once, and you with them, and cancel all law and all property for ever; and one good and wise law may secure them to your latest posterity. Can it be indifferent to you, whether the one or the other of these laws pass? And if it be not indifferent, will you avoid attending? Be but as assiduous against evil as others have been for it, and you have a fair chance to prevent it for ages. Why should not honour, virtue, and good conscience, be as active and zealous as falsehood, corruption, and guilty minds? Consider the injustice, the barbarity, the treachery, and the terrible consequences, of sloth and absence. Liberty, when once lost, is scarce ever recovered, almost as rarely as human life, when it is once extinguished.

*G. I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## NO. 100. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1722. *Discourse Upon Libels. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

I intend in this, and my next letter, to write a dissertation upon libels, which are liberties assumed by private men, to judge of and censure the actions of their superiors, or such as have possession of power and dignities. When persons, formerly of no superior merit to the rest of their fellow-subjects, came to be possessed of advantages, by means which, for the most part, they condemned in another situation of fortune, they often have grown, on a sudden, to think themselves a different species of mankind; they took it into their heads to call themselves the government, and thought that others had nothing to do but to sit still, to act as they bade them, and to follow their motions; were unwilling to be interrupted in the progress of their ambition, and of making their private fortunes by such ways as they could best and soonest make them; and consequently have called every opposition to their wild and ravenous schemes, and every attempt to preserve the people's right, by the odious names of sedition and faction, and charged them with principles and practices inconsistent with the safety of all government.

This liberty has been approved or condemned by all men, and all parties, in proportion as they were advantaged or annoyed by it. When they were in power, they were unwilling to have their actions scanned and censured, and cried out, that such licence ought not to be borne and tolerated in any well-constituted commonwealth; and when they suffered under the weight of power, they thought it very hard not to be allowed the liberty to utter their groans, and to alleviate their pain, by venting some part of it in complaints; and it is certain, that there are benefits and mischiefs on both sides the question.

What are usually called libels, undoubtedly keep great men in awe, and are some check upon their behaviour, by shewing them the deformity of their actions, as well as warning other people to be upon their guard against oppression; and if there were no further harm in them, than in personally attacking those who too often deserve it, I think the advantages which such persons receive will fully atone for the mischiefs which they suffer. But I confess, that libels may sometimes though very rarely, foment popular and perhaps causeless discontents, blast and obstruct the best measures, and now and then promote insurrections and rebellions; but these latter mischiefs are much seldomer produced than the former benefits; for power has so many advantages, so many gifts and allurements to bribe those who bow to it, and so many terrors to frighten those who oppose it; besides the constant reverence and superstition ever paid to greatness, splendor, equipage, and the shew of wisdom, as well as the natural desire which all or most men have to live in quiet, and the dread which they have of publick disturbances, that I think I may safely affirm, that much more is to be feared from flattering great men, than detracting from them.

However, it is to be wished, that both could be prevented; but since that is not in the nature of things, whilst men have desires or resentments, we are next to consider how to prevent the great abuse of it, and, as far as human prudence can direct, preserve the advantages of liberty of speech, and liberty of writing (which secures all other liberties) without giving more indulgence to detraction than is necessary to secure the other: For it is certainly of much less consequence to mankind, that an innocent man should be now and then aspersed, than that all men should be enslaved.

Many methods have been tried to remedy this evil: In Turkey, and in the eastern monarchies, all printing is forbidden; which does it with a witness: for if there can be no printing at all, there can be no libels printed; and by the same reason there ought to be no talking, lest people should talk treason, blasphemy, or nonsense; and, for a stronger reason yet, no preaching ought to be allowed, because the orator has an opportunity of haranguing often to a larger auditory than he can persuade to read his lucubrations: but I desire it may be remembered, that there is neither liberty, property, true religion, art, sciences, learning, or knowledge, in these countries.

But another method has been thought on, in these western parts of the world, much less effectual, yet more mischievous, than the former; namely, to put the press under the direction of the prevailing party; to authorize libels to one side only, and to deny the other side the opportunity of defending themselves. Whilst all opinions are equally indulged, and all parties equally allowed to speak their minds, the truth will come out; even, if they be all restrained, common sense will often get the better: but to give one side liberty to say what they will, and not suffer the other to say any thing, even in their own defence, is comprehensive of all the evils that any nation can groan under, and must soon extinguish every seed of religion, liberty, virtue, or knowledge.

It is ridiculous to argue from the abuse of a thing to the destruction of it. Great mischiefs have happened to nations from their kings and their magistrates; ought therefore all kings and magistrates to be extinguished? A thousand enthusiastick sects have pretended to deduce themselves from scripture; ought therefore the holy writings to be destroyed? Are men's hands to be cut off, because they may and sometimes do steal and murder with them? Or their tongues to be pulled out, because they may tell lies, swear, or talk sedition?

There is scarce a virtue but borders upon a vice, and, carried beyond a certain degree, becomes one. Corruption is the next state to perfection: Courage soon grows into rashness; generosity into extravagancy; Frugality into avarice; justice into severity; religion into superstition; zeal into bigotry and censoriousness; and the desire of esteem into vainglory. Nor is there a convenience or advantage to be proposed in human affairs, but what has some inconvenience attending it. The most flaming state of health is nearest to a plethory: There can be no protection, without hazarding oppression; no going to sea, without some danger of being drowned; no engaging in the most necessary battle, without venturing the loss of it, or being killed; nor purchasing an estate, going to law, or taking physick, without hazarding ill titles, spending your money, and perhaps losing your suit, or being poisoned. Since therefore every good is, for the most part, if not always, accompanied by some evil,

and cannot be separated from it, we are to consider which does predominate; and accordingly determine our choice by taking both, or leaving both.

To apply this to libels: If men be suffered to preach or reason publicly and freely upon certain subjects, as for instance, upon philosophy, religion, or government, they may reason wrongly, irreligiously, or seditiously, and sometimes will do so; and by such means may possibly now and then pervert and mislead an ignorant and unwary person; and if they be suffered to write their thoughts, the mischief may be still more diffusive; but if they be not permitted, by any or all these ways, to communicate their opinions or improvements to one another, the world must soon be over-run with barbarism, superstition, injustice, tyranny, and the most stupid ignorance. They will know nothing of the nature of government beyond a servile submission to power; nor of religion, more than a blind adherence to unintelligible speculations, and a furious and implacable animosity to all whose mouths are not formed to the same sounds; nor will they have the liberty or means to search nature, and investigate her works; which employment may break in upon received and gainful opinions, and discover hidden and darling secrets. Particular societies shall be established and endowed to teach them backwards, and to share in their plunder; which societies, by degrees, from the want of opposition, shall grow as ignorant as themselves: Armed bands shall rivet their chains, and their haughty governors assume to be gods, and be treated as such in proportion as they cease to have human compassion, knowledge, and virtue. In short, their capacities will not be beyond the beasts in the field, and their condition worse; which is universally true in those governments where they lie under those restraints.

On the other side, what mischief is done by libels to balance all these evils? They seldom or never annoy an innocent man, or promote any considerable error. Wise and honest men laugh at them and despise them, and such arrows always fly over their heads, or fall at their feet. If King James had acted according to his coronation oath, and kept to the law, Lilly-Bulero might have been tuned long enough before he had been sung out of his kingdoms. And if there had been no South-Sea scheme, or if it had been justly executed, there had been no libels upon that head, or very harmless ones. Most of the world take part with a virtuous man, and punish calumny by the detestation of it. The best way to prevent libels, is not to deserve them, and to despise them, and then they always lose their force; for certain experience shews us, that the more notice is taken of them, the more they are published. Guilty men alone fear them, or are hurt by them, whose actions will not bear examination, and therefore must not be examined. It is fact alone which annoys them; for if you will tell no truth, I dare say you may have their leave to tell as many lies as you please.

The same is true in speculative opinions. You may write nonsense and folly as long as you think fit, and no one complains of it but the bookseller: But if a bold, honest, and wise book sallies forth, and attacks those who think themselves secure in their trenches, then their camp is in danger, they call out all hands to arms, and their enemy is to be destroyed by fire, sword, or fraud. But it is senseless to think that any truth can suffer by being thoroughly searched, or examined into; or that the discovery of it can prejudice true religion, equal government, or the happiness of society, in any respect: Truth has so many advantages above error, that she wants only to be shewn, to gain admiration and esteem; and we see every day that she breaks the bonds of

tyranny and fraud, and shines through the mists of superstition and ignorance: and what then would she do, if these barriers were removed, and her fetters taken off?

Notwithstanding all this, I would not be understood, by what I have said, to argue, that men should have an uncontrolled liberty to calumniate their superiors, or one another; decency, good manners, and the peace of society, forbid it: But I would not destroy this liberty by methods which will inevitably destroy all liberty. We have very good laws to punish any abuses of this kind already, and I well approve them, whilst they are prudently and honestly executed, which I really believe they have for the most part been since the Revolution: But as it cannot be denied, that they have been formerly made the stales of ambition and tyranny, to oppress any man who durst assert the laws of his country, or the true Christian religion; so I hope that the gentlemen skilled in the profession of the law will forgive me, if I entrench a little upon their province, and endeavour to fix stated bounds for the interpretation and execution of them; which shall be the subject of my next letter.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 101. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1722. *Second Discourse Upon Libels. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

I have been told that in some former reigns, when the attorney-general took it in his head to make innocent or doubtful expressions criminal by the help of forced innuendos, the method of proceeding was as follows: If the counsel for the prisoner insisted, that the words carried no seditious meaning, but might and ought to be understood in a reasonable sense; he was answered, that his exception would be saved to him upon arrest of judgment; in the mean time the information was tried, and the malign intention of the words was aggravated and left to a willing jury; and then, upon a motion in behalf of the prisoner, to arrest judgment, because the words were not criminal in law, he was told, that the jury were judges of the intention; and having found it an ill one, it was too late to take the exception. Whether this was ever the truth, I have not lived long enough to affirm from my own knowledge; or, whether this method of proceeding be law now, I have not skill enough in that science to determine: But I think I may justly say, that if it be law, it is worth the consideration of our legislature whether it ought to continue so.

It is certain, that there is no middle in nature, between judging by fixed and steady rules, and judging according to discretion, which is another word for fancy, avarice, resentment, or ambition, when supported by power, or freed from fear. And I have said in my former letter, that as there can be no convenience but has an inconvenience attending it, so both these methods of judging are liable to objections. There is a constant war between the legislature and the pleader; and no law was ever enacted with so much circumspection, but flaws were found out afterwards in it, and it did not answer all the purposes intended by the law-makers; nor can any positive law be framed with so much contrivance, but artful men will slip out of it, and particularly in relation to libels. There are so many equivoques in language, so many sneers in expression, which naturally carry one meaning, and yet may intend another, that it is impossible by any fixed and stated rules to determine the intention, and punish all who deserve to be punished. But to get rid of this inconvenience at the expence of giving any man, or number of men, a discretionary power to judge another's intentions to be criminal, when his words do not plainly denote them to be so, is subverting all liberty, and subjecting all men to the caprices, to the arbitrary and wild will, of those in power. A text in scripture cannot be quoted, without being said to reflect on those who break it; nor the ten commandments read, without abusing all princes and great men, who often act against them all.

I must therefore beg leave to think, that it is a strange assertion, which, as I have heard, has been advanced by lawyers in Westminster-Hall; *viz.* That it is an absurdity to affirm, that a judge and jury are the only people in England who are not to understand an author's meaning; which, I think, may be true in many instances, when they act judicially, and the words which he uses, candidly construed, do not import

that meaning. Tiberius put many Senators to death, for looking melancholy or dissatisfied, or enviously at his power; and Nero many others, for not laughing at his play, or laughing in the wrong place, or sneering instead of laughing; and very probably both judged right in their intentions; but sure no body will think amongst us, that such examples ought to be copied. A man, by not pulling off his hat, or not low enough, by a turn upon his heel, by a frowning countenance, or an over-pleasant one, may induce his spectators to believe that he intends a disrespect to one to whom it is criminal to own it; yet it would be a strange act of power to punish him for this unobservance. So words may be certainly chosen with such art, or want of it, that they may naturally carry a compliment, and perhaps may mean it; and yet other people, by knowing that the person intended does not deserve one, may think him abused And if this way of judging may be indulged in Westminster-Hall, the Lord have mercy upon poets, and the writers of dedications, and of the epitaphs too upon great men. Surely it is of less consequence to mankind, that a witty author should now and then escape unpunished, than that all men should hold their tongues, or not learn to write, or cease writing.

I do agree, when the natural and genuine meaning and purport of words and expressions in libelous writings carry a criminal intention, that the writer ought not to escape punishment by subterfuge or evasion, or by a sly interpretation hid in a corner, and intended only for a court of justice, nor by annexing new names to known things, or by using circumlocutions instead of single sounds and expressions; for words are only arbitrary signs of ideas; and if any man will coin new words to old ideas, or annex new ideas to old words, and let this meaning be fully understood, without doubt he is answerable for it. But when words used in their true and proper sense, and understood in their literal and natural meaning, import nothing that is criminal; then to strain their genuine signification to make them intend sedition (which possibly the author might intend too) is such a stretch of discretionary power, as must subvert all the principles of free government, and overturn every species of liberty. I own, that with such a power, some men may escape censure who deserve censure, but with it no man can be safe; and it is certain, that few men or states will be aggrieved by this indulgence, but such as deserve much worse usage.

It is a maxim of politicks in despotick governments, that twenty innocent persons ought to be punished, rather than one guilty man escape; but the reverse of this is true in free states, in the ordinary course of justice: For since no law can be invented which can give power enough to their magistrates to reach every criminal, without giving them, by the abuse of the same law, a power to punish innocence and virtue, the greater evil ought to be avoided: And therefore when an innocent or criminal sense can be put upon words or actions, the meaning of which is not fully determined by other words or actions, the most beneficent construction ought to be made in favour of the person accused. The cause of liberty, and the good of the whole, ought to prevail, and to get the better of the just resentment otherwise due to the impertinence of a factious scribbler, or the impotent malice of a turbulent babler.

This truth every man acknowledges, when it becomes his own case, or the case of his friends or party; and almost every man complains of it when he suffers by it: So great is the difference of men's having power in their hands or upon their shoulders! But at



present, I think that no party amongst us can find their account either in the suppression or in the restraint of the press, or in being very severe in their animadversion upon the liberties taken by it. The independent Whigs think all liberty to depend upon freedom of speech, and freedom of writing, within the bounds of manners and discretion, as conceiving that there is often no other way left to be heard by their superiors, nor to apprise their countrymen of designs and conspiracies against their safety; which they think ought to be done boldly, though in respect to authority, as modestly as can be consistent with the making themselves understood; and such among them as have lately quitted their independence, think themselves obliged to handle a subject tenderly, upon which they have exerted themselves very strenuously in another circumstance of fortune.

Very many of the Tories, who may be at present ranked amongst the former sort of men, and who every day see more and more the advantages of liberty, and forget their former prejudices, will not be contented hereafter to receive their religion and politicks from an ignorant licenser, under the direction of those who have often neither religion nor politicks. And even the Jacobites themselves are so charmed with their own doughty performances, that they would not lose the pleasure of scolding at or abusing those whom they cannot hurt. Many of our spiritual guides will not be deprived of doing honour to themselves, and advantage to their flocks, from informing the world what they ought to believe by their particular systems; and the dissenting preachers are willing to keep their own flocks, and would not have the reasonableness of their separation judged of alone by those who differ from them, and have an interest in suppressing them. And I believe that all our world would be willing to have some other news besides what they find in the *Gazette*; and I hope that I may venture to say, that there is no number of men amongst us so very popular, as by their single credit and authority to get the better of all these interests.

But, besides the reasons that I have already given, there is another left behind, which is worth them all; namely, that all the methods hitherto taken to prevent real libels have proved ineffectual; and probably any method which can be taken, will only prevent the world from being informed of what they ought to know, and will increase the others. The subjecting the press to the regulation and inspection of any man whatsoever, can only hinder the publication of such books, as authors are willing to own, and are ready to defend; but can never restrain such as they apprehend to be criminal, which always come out by stealth. There is no hindering printers from having presses, unless all printing be forbidden, and scarce then: And dangerous and forbidden libels are more effectually dispersed, enquired after, and do more mischief, than libels openly published; which generally raise indignation against the author and his party. It is certain, that there were more published in King Charles II's and King James's times, when they were severely punished, and the press was restrained, than have ever been since. The beginning of Augustus's reign swarmed with libels, and continued to do so, whilst informers were encouraged; but when that prince despised them, they lost their force, and soon after died. And, I dare say, when the governors of any country give no occasion to just reflexions upon their ill conduct, they have nothing to fear but calumny and falsehood.

Whilst Tiberius, in the beginning of his reign, would preserve the appearance of governing the Romans worthily, he answered a parasite, who informed him in the Senate, of libels published against his person and authority, in these words; *Si quidem locutus aliter fuerit, dabo operam ut rationem factorum meorum dictorumque reddam; si perseveraverit, invicem eum odero*: "If any man reflect upon my words or actions, I will let him know my motives and reasons for them; but if he still go on to asperse and hate me, I will hate him again." But afterwards, when that emperor became a bloody tyrant, words, silence, and even looks, were capital.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 102. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1722. *The Contemptibleness Of Grandeur Without Virtue. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

The first reasonable desire which men have, is, to be in easy circumstances, and as free from pain and dangers as human condition will permit; and then all their views and actions are directed to acquire homage and respect from others; and, indeed, in a larger sense, the latter are included in the former. Different ways are taken to attain this end; arts, arms, learning, power, but most of all, riches, are sought after; and when just and proper means are used to acquire them, the pursuit is reasonable, and always to be commended. But when they are gained by injustice, the end is frustrated for which alone they are valuable; that is, the respect is lost which they are intended to procure: For, who does not value an honest man in moderate circumstances, before another grown rich by oppression? Who does not esteem a steady patriot, who despises threats, bribes, and dignities, when they stand between him and his duty to his country, before an over-grown plunderer, who has sacrificed a nation to his ambition? Men will indeed bow down in the House of Rimmon, but they detest the idol in their heart. It is all false homage. Such men are adored publicly, and cursed privately; and most of those who seem to adore them, would with much more pleasure follow them to the scaffold.

How many have we seen in our days, who are thought to have died martyrs to their pride and covetousness, hooted with the reproaches and detestation of every honest man in England, and, I doubt not, with the private curses of many of their own followers? And how many are there in all countries, who are never seen or spoken of but with contempt and indignation, even in the midst of greatness?

What is there in this world worth being a knave for; especially a man's being so, who already enjoys all the conveniencies of life? Who would lose the just applause of honest men, wise men, and free men, for the servile incense of flatterers? How much more preferable is it, to make millions of people happy, and receive the grateful acknowledgments of a thankful nation, than to purchase their hatred and resentments, by making them abject, poor, and miserable, and themselves and their families so too in consequence? And what is all this for? To create false dependents, who flatter them, in order to cheat them, or otherwise make their advantages of them, instead of steady and true friends: For a certain degree of familiarity is necessary to friendship, or free conversation; without which no conversation is agreeable, or worth having. Few men take pleasure in the company of those who are much their superiors, who always strike them with awe, and most commonly with emulation; and what is got amongst them is generally spent among equals.

I have seen many supple and bowing guests at the table of a great man, whom, for his vanity, he treated magnificently, and at a great expence; none of which he would have kept company with in any other place, nor perhaps they with him. Men of virtue and

understanding are conscious of their own worth: They will be sought after, and can be brought rarely to contribute to the pride, grandeur, and ostentation of those whom they privately hate, fear, or contemn: And therefore the latter, in their own defence, are obliged to associate with the most worthless part of mankind, with flatterers and parasites, hunters of good tables, sharpers, and pick-pockets; which are the usual attendants and ornaments of their greatness. Their domestick followers are generally made up of insolent and debauched beggars, who fancy themselves to be gentlemen; and as they cheat their master to be so, so depending upon his protection, they insult his neighbours, ride over the country people, and are perpetually annoying the peaceable and industrious farmers and labourers, and giving examples of prodigality and lewdness; insomuch that an estate is some years' purchase less valuable that lies within the influence of such malignant constellations.

Their sons are educated in idleness, debauchery, and ignorance; taught to believe, that greatness consists in pride, insolence, and extravagance; and so, for the most part, want every qualification proper to adorn their characters, to serve their prince or country, or to direct their own conduct, govern their families, or manage their own estates; which generally become the property of their stewards, bailiffs, or debauched followers, whilst they themselves often pay large interest to them for their own money, run in debt to tradesmen and mechanicks for the common conveniences of life, whom they either pay not at all, or pay treble values to; till at last their necessities make them submit to a paltry pension; and, instead of being the generous asserters of publick liberty, they become the mean and humble instruments of power.

Their daughters partake of this happy education; they are bred up to be above looking to their own families, or to know any thing of their own affairs; and, indeed, it is become a qualification now, to be good for no one thing in the world, but to dance, dress, play upon the guitar, to prate in a visiting-room, or to play amongst sharpers at cards and dice: And when they cannot be exercising these laudable accomplishments, they are always in the vapours and the spleen; and so they can get no husbands, or ruin those who are indiscreet enough to marry them. The necessities of their parents, arising from their profusion in all other respects, will not afford fortunes great enough to marry them to men of their own quality, who run into the city for grocers' and mercers' daughters, to repair their shattered affairs, and generally use them as such. For all private gentlemen (whose alliance is worth courting) are ever afraid of her ladyship, and think themselves not worthy of so much honour; very few instances excepted of vain and inconsiderate young gallants, who are caught with outside shew and pageantry, and drawn in to make great settlements, and repent it all their lives after.

I do not say that this is always the case: For virtue and good sense is not confined to any order of men or women; and without doubt there are excellent men and ladies amongst the quality. But I appeal to general experience, whether what I have said be not most commonly the real truth. And who dares be so sanguine, as to hope that it will not be the case of his own posterity, if something be not done to mend the present education of youth; which never can be done, without mending that which must mend every thing else? For those who have an interest in keeping the nobility and gentry

ignorant, debauched, and extravagant, and consequently necessitous and dependent, will never voluntarily endeavour to lessen their own power and influence.

This is indeed a melancholy, but true, scene of modern greatness. And is this a condition to be envied or courted by any who have plentiful (though not great and exorbitant) fortunes? who have all the means of enjoying private happiness, and of educating their children in virtue, knowledge, and publick principles, and can make a modest provision for them after their death; and, by leaving them examples of frugality, and prudent oeconomy, enable them to abound in the true necessaries and conveniencies of life; which the other (like Tantalus) want in the midst of profusion?

Nature is easily contented, and with few things. The most luxurious palate may be gratified by what moderate circumstances can afford. Those who have the most magnificent palaces, choose to live in the least and meanest apartments of them; and such as have the richest and most expensive clothes, and other personal ornaments, wear the worst when by themselves; so that all the rest are only pride and ostentation, and often procure emulation and ill-will from neighbours and acquaintance, but seldom true and real respect. However, since the mind of man, like every thing else in nature, is in constant progression, and in perpetual pursuit of one thing or other, I do not condemn the moderate pursuit of wealth, if we do not buy it too dear, and at the price of our health or integrity; for riches in a wise man's hands are certainly conducive to happiness, though they are more often the causes of misery to others.

Men, for the most part, are not so solicitous to acquire them for the real pleasure that they give, and to satiate personal appetites, as in compliance with the custom of the world. We seldom examine ourselves, but enquire of others, whether we are happy or not; and provided we can make those whom we do not value, and who do not value us, envy and admire our felicity, are contented to know that we have none. Such is the force of prejudice, flowing from foolish vanity, pride, or custom! True happiness resides alone in the mind; and whoever hunts after it elsewhere, will never find it. All the hurry and tumults of faction, most of the eager pursuits after vice under the name of pleasure, and the vain and noisy chases of ambition, are but so many disguises to cover internal uneasiness, and stratagems to fly from ourselves; but *haeret lateri lethalis arundo*: The deer is struck, and where-ever he flies, must carry his griefs about him.

Nothing can fill the mind of a truly great man, but the love of God, of virtue, and of his country. All other pleasures ought to be but amusements, and subservient to these, and very often turn to misfortunes; but here is an inexhaustible source of inward satisfaction, which is the only true happiness, which wicked men never feel; and consequently they are the most unhappy of all men.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 103. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1722. *Of Eloquence, Considered Politically. (Trenchard)*

SIR,

In free states, where publick affairs are transacted in popular assemblies, eloquence is always of great use and esteem; and, next to money and an armed force, is the only way of being considerable in these assemblies. This talent therefore has been ever cultivated and admired in commonwealths, where men were dealt with by reason and persuasion, and at liberty to ratify or reject propositions offered, and measures taken, by their magistrates, to examine their conduct, and to distinguish them with honours or punishments as they deserved. But in single monarchies, where reason is turned into command, and remonstrances and debating into servile submission, eloquence is either lost, or perverted to sanctify publick violence, and to deify the authors of it.

In the free states of Greece and Rome this popular eloquence was of such force and consequence, that the best speakers generally governed them; and their greatest orators were often not only their chief magistrates, but their principal commanders. Rhetoric was the first and great study, because the first and great offices of the state were the sure price of rhetoric. By it Cicero came to be the first man in Rome, and Pericles the first man in Athens. Themistocles, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Alcibiades, could speak as well as they could fight: so could Sulla, Pompey, Caesar, Cato, Brutus, M. Antony, and many more; who were not only great orators, as well as great soldiers, but for the most part owed their military power to their powerful speaking. Not that eloquence is necessary to a soldier, no more than skill in war to a civil officer: But both were necessary parts, and indeed the principal parts of the Roman education; and the candidates for preferments were either good speakers, or supported by such. Pompey, though he principally derived his fame and credit from military glory, had been far from neglecting the other accomplishments of the gown and the bar. We have the testimony of Cicero, that he was a graceful and engaging speaker. His great employments, and many wars, had with-held him long from the exercise of declaiming, and his eminent authority in the state had made it for some time unnecessary: But he resumed it with great application in the latter years of his life; when Curio, a young tribune of vast spirit and eloquence, being gained by an immense sum of money, to the interest of Caesar, was by publick and perpetual harangues misleading the people into his party. Cicero continued this exercise till near his death; and Mark Antony and Augustus in the midst of their wars.

The chief power of the state being in the people, and all the great offices in their gifts, made eloquence a necessary qualification in every one who courted their favour, and sought their suffrages. And a candidate thus qualified, rarely missed gaining them; till money, more prevailing than eloquence, and every other accomplishment, corrupted their hearts, abolished their integrity, and finding their souls and their voices saleable, made them first the market, then the slaves, of ambition. But in the times of their purity, before their virtue was vanquished by irresistible gold, which has been ever an

over-match for the probity of the sons of men, it must be owned, to their honour, that in almost all the questions and debates in the Roman state, the justest side was the strongest; and he who spoke best, that is, with most reason and truth, had the most voices. Such was the equity and good sense of the Roman people! Even in the days of their degeneracy they gave many proofs, that it was with shame and pain they had departed from their ancient integrity and publick spirit: They continued to prefer many worthy citizens, merely for their worth: They carried Cicero, particularly, through all the considerable offices of the state, only because he deserved them. Cato they created their tribune, in spite of violence and opposition; and would have chosen him praetor, when he first stood for it, notwithstanding the influence and bribery of the faction of the first triumvirate, had they not been cheated and terrified by a religious lie of Pompey's, who by it broke up the assembly. Cato was however chosen next year; and, by the usual power of his eloquence and credit with the people, frustrated many of the pernicious designs of the triumvirate against his country, and consequently prevented, for a time, many public mischiefs, as he foretold them all.

The credit of eloquence among the Greeks was at least equally high, and its force as visible. However, in Greece itself it was differently esteemed and practised, according to the difference of the forms of government in the several Greek cities. In Sparta, where little riches were to be acquired, and the acting power of the state was chiefly in the Senate, the faculty of haranguing was less studied, in proportion to the smaller power of the people, who had only a negative vote, and the bare right of confirming or refuting the laws proposed to them, and none to debate about them, nor to explain them, much less to offer new laws. Their laws therefore, and their publick deliberations, being carried, as far as regarded the people, without popular speeches and cabals, that city was no proper scene for popular speakers; and, doubtless, it was the most perfect and best established state then in the world; but not being formed for conquest, nor indeed for trade, or increase of people, it was undone by an endeavour to enlarge it.

At Athens it was far otherwise: The multitude, the unrepresented multitude, being the legislature, governed all things, and were themselves governed by their orators; who therefore swarmed in that city, and filled all the great offices in it, as they always will do in such a state. They would never suffer any thing to remain fixed and quiet; but, to make themselves considerable, were for ever starting new projects, new treaties, and new wars; which, at last, ruined the state, as I shall shew in another letter. Aristotle finds just fault with their demagogues, who were making them continually drunk with torrents of inflammatory eloquence. There wanted a proper power to check and balance that of the people; the court of Areopagus being only a court of justice, and its credit and authority broken by Ephialtes and Pericles, two of the chief orators, who hated to see any authority in Athens but their own.

As eloquence itself is necessary, or checked, or quite discouraged, in different forms of government; so the manner of eloquence must vary, even where it is useful, according to the various classes of men to whom it is addressed. There is a considerable difference between the speeches spoken by Cicero in the Senate, and those which he spoke to the people. In an assembly of gentlemen, he who speaks with brevity and clearness, and strong sense, speaks best. The chief court is to be paid to

the understanding; and silence is better than a rote of good words, that carry with them no conviction. I do not deny, but in the most polite assembly, the manner of speaking, the voice, and the choice of words, will considerably recommend the speech and the speaker: But it is equally true, that a theatrical action, and an ostentation of language, prejudice both, as they break in upon propriety; and, instead of adorning good sense, disguise it with shew and sound.

But in speeches to assemblies of the people, much greater latitude is allowed; and vehemence of tone and action, a hurry and pomp of words, strong figures, tours of fancy, ardent expression, and throwing fire into their imaginations, have always been reckoned proper ways to gain their assent and affections. I think Valerius Maximus says of Pericles, that whenever he spoke to the people, he always left a sting in their souls: And hence, *sine armis tyrannidem gessit*, he was a tyrant without an army. Demosthenes gave many proofs of the same dictatorial force of speaking, not only at Athens, but all over Greece; which, in spite of all King Philip's arts, and power, and ambassadors, and bribes, he worked up into a general insurrection and confederacy against him. The Thebans, particularly, though terrified by Philip's name and conquests, and dreading to risk again the calamities of war which they had lately felt, no sooner heard Demosthenes, but they were subdued by the dint of his words; and, losing all terror of the Macedonians, ran headlong into the war. "He inflamed their minds," says the historian,

with a passion for glory and liberty, and covered all their wary considerations in the magical mist of his eloquence; so that, inspired by it, like men possessed, they took sudden, bold, and honourable resolutions.

The substance and reasoning part of this potent speech might have been comprised in a few plain and short propositions, more proper than a copious harangue for a cool council of wise men, taught by experience to weigh every step which they took, and to examine the soundness of the sense divested of deceitful words: But such a summary and dry representation of the orator's meaning would probably not have moved a fifth part of his auditory; or had the oration itself been read by a clerk, or uttered by one of our pleaders in Westminster-Hall, in an unassuming tone, and with an unanimated gesture, I doubt it would have had the same or no effect: But it was an oration, and an oration pronounced by an orator, with all the lightning of figures, and thunder of expression: He poured forth persuasion like a torrent; and in his voice, when he cried to war, they heard the sound of a trumpet.

By what I have said of our own pleaders, I mean no sort of reflections upon the gentlemen of the long robe, or upon their manner of speaking, which I think is the only proper manner for our bar; where the rules of proceeding being strict and ascertained, there is no room for haranguing. The judge is tied to the rigid letter of the law, and not to be moved from it by pity or resentment; and therefore an address to his passions would be ridiculous and offensive. In a speech to an assembly that acts by discretion, or to an absolute prince who has life and death in his hands, it is the business of the speaker, by flattering insinuations, to steal into the affections of his judges, and, by a hurricane of tropes and impetuous words, to animate their passions in his behalf: But a speech of this sort would be waste language in Westminster-Hall,



and the author of it would be thought fit for Moorfields, where the imagination has more scope. At our bar many excellent pleaders have been very bad orators; and some good speakers, very bad pleaders. To know law, and to speak to the point, is the only rhetoric approved, or indeed allowed, there; and therefore the jokes which witty men have made upon the cold and plain manner of speaking there return upon the makers.

In the pulpit there is much more latitude for oratory, and the preacher has the affections and imaginations of his hearers much more in his power; and, by distracting them with terrors, or elevating them with joys, may awaken and enkindle their passions almost as much as he will. He has a vast field, and full scope for decorations, fine phrases, lively descriptions, and all the pompous array of language; and if he has a fine tuneable voice and his audience a good ear, I know no wonders which he may not work. But as the plainest sermons have generally the best sense and most piety in them, I am almost amazed that the very fine figurative ones do no more harm.

If we enquire into the use and purposes of eloquence, and into the good and evil which it has done, we must distinguish between eloquence and eloquence. That which consists of good sense, put into good words, is every-where useful and commendable: But as to that which consists of fine figures and beautiful sounds, artfully and warmly applied to the passions, and may disguise and banish sense, embellish falsehood as well as truth, and recommend virtue as well as vice; it has done some good, and infinite mischief. It is the art of flattering and deceiving, as one of the ancients calls it: It fills the mind with false ideas; and, by raising a tempest in the heart, misleads the judgment: It confounds good and evil, by throwing false colours over them; and deceives men with their own approbation: And it has in many instances unsettled all good order, and thrown flourishing states into pangs and desolation. But though rhetoric in this sense be but a bad art, yet I do not think it possible to destroy it, without destroying with it most other good arts; for it almost always flourishes and decays with them: And where-ever politeness, liberty, and learning subsist, rhetoric will be cultivated as part of them. It is an evil growing out of much good; and nothing but the abolishing of all liberty and learning can absolutely cure it. In this cure the Turks have succeeded best; and they who would be like them in this, must be like them in all things. Besides, as the several states of Europe are now constituted, they do not seem to have much, or any thing to apprehend from the power of rhetoric, except that which comes from the popish ecclesiasticks, who in the midst of monarchies form a democracy every-where; and every village has one of many popular orators, who have but too successful a talent at turning the heads of the multitude, and inflaming their hearts; a misfortune which has cost many countries very dear: Insomuch that preaching monks have been reckoned publick plagues; as it would be, no doubt, a sort of a publick blessing, if they were all alike idle and dumb. Even the Lutheran monks at Hamburgh are every day preaching that free city into strife and confusion; and will at last, if they are not better controlled, preach it out of its liberty, as more than once they have well nigh done.

*T I am, &c.*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 104. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1722. *Of Eloquence, Considered Philosophically. (GORDON)*

SIR,

If we now enquire how eloquence operates upon the minds of men, we must consider three things or causes: The sense, the sound, and the action. The first is addressed to the understanding; and the other two to the passions, and have consequently the greatest force.

Nothing is too hard for sound, which subdues every thing, and raises the highest and most opposite perturbations. One sound lulls men to sleep; another rouses them from it: one sort sets them a fighting, another to embracing; and a third sets them a weeping: It makes them groan or rage; it melts them into compassion, or animates them to resentment. And as to action, in which I also comprehend the motions of the countenance, and of the eyes, it is of such force, that Demosthenes being asked, which was the first excellency of an orator? answered, *Action*; that the second was *Action*; and the third was *Action*. Here is a testimony of a great and experienced judge.

Now the power of action seems to arise chiefly from hence: As it is a sign that the speaker is in earnest, and vehemently means what he speaks, it begets an opinion, that what he says is just, and reasonable, and important: And so his hearers adopt his passions and opinions, and are equally animated with him who animates them, and often more. Hence it is possible for a man, who thus carries his spirit in his gestures, and his meaning in his face, to look another into his sentiments and out of his senses, only by shewing, in the energy of his countenance, that he himself is strongly affected with that passion which he would convey to another, and that his external motions are but the result of his internal. Men have been converted into Quakerism at the silent-meetings of Quakers; and solemn looks, dumb shew, and ghostly groans, have had all the most prevailing effects of eloquence.

Nothing is so catching and communicative as the passions. The cast of an angry or a pleasant eye will beget anger, or pleasure: One man's anger, or sorrow, or joy, can make a whole assembly outrageous, or dejected, or merry; and the same men are provoked or pleased by the same words spoken in different tones; because they who hear them, take them just as he who speaks them seems to mean them. I have seen a preacher of mean sense and language set a whole congregation a howling, merely because he himself howled. By repeating the words *heaven* and *hell*, with distortion and clamour, he possessed their imaginations with all the joys of the blessed, and all the torments and terrors of the damned; and, by making them feel both by turns, raised their passions higher than the reading of our blessed Saviour's crucifixion, or his Sermon upon the Mount, could have raised them.

The fancy when once it is heated, quickly improves the first spark into a flame; which being an assemblage of strong and glowing images, is, while it lasts, the strongest

motion, and consequently the greatest power, in a man; for all animal power is motion. And when a man has thus got a fire in his head, his reason, which is the gradual and deliberate weighing of things, and the cool comparing of one inward pulse with another, must shift its quarters till his brains grow cool again. I dare say, that many men, and still more women, who have without emotion heard the great Dr. Tillotson talk excellent sense and morality for half an hour, would have been powerfully edified, that is, violently transported, with the tuneful and humble reveries of John Bunyan, of Bishop Beveridge, or Daniel Burgess.

This aptness to be moved by sounds is natural, but improvable by education and the use of words. There are in the brain certain fibres, or strings, which naturally stretch and exert themselves as soon as certain sounds strike upon them; but without being able to annex to them any determinate idea, only, in general, that they feel pleasure or pain. It is like rubbing the hand of a man born deaf and blind with a file, or a flesh-brush: He feels the skin irritated, or soothed, but knows not with what. When these fibres are touched, they disperse the motion to the whole animal spirits, and create in them motions and agitations according to the force and quality of that sound which was the first mover. Hence people are said to be cured of the bite of the tarantula by musick; which, by quickening the motions of the animal spirits, raises in the blood such a ferment, as drives out the poison.

But when description is added to those sounds, when they convey particular and distinct images, when scenes of horror or of joy are represented in sounds proper to convey them; then the sense and the sound heightening vastly each other, their united power over the soul is infinite and uncontrollable. The word *hell*, for example, is, without doubt, capable of being pronounced in such a hideous tone and action, as to affect and affright even a Hottentot, who knows nothing of hell: But if, with the sound of *hell*, the description of hell be likewise conveyed; that it is a dark, immense, and baleful dungeon, guarded by frightful and implacable furies, armed with whips and torches; that it is filled with suffocating and burning sulphur, and unintermitting fire; that it is inhabited by the damned, whose incessant shrieks, hideous roarings, and dismal yells, are the chief entertainments there; and by devils, who by their endless insults add, if possible, to their intense tortures and horrible burning, which are never, never, to end. ...

—————*Sights of woe,*  
*Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace*  
*And rest can never dwell, hope never comes,*  
*That comes to all; but torture without end*  
*Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed*  
*With ever-burning sulphur unconsum'd*—————

I say, this idea of hell, added to the sound of *hell*, would dreadfully aggravate the horror even in a Hottentot. He might likewise be charmed with a soft and melodious sound of *heaven*, well pronounced, without having any conception of heaven; but still much more charmed, if the idea of it accompanied the sound, and all the celestial scenery of delight, a blessed immortality, God, and glory, were set, as it were, before his eyes.

Such force has sound over the human soul, to animate and calm its passions; and when proper action is added to proper sound, which two parts constitute the mechanical power of eloquence, the effects of it are as certain as the effects of wine, and its strength as irresistible. In this respect men resemble musical instruments, and may be wound up, or let down, to any pitch, by touching skillfully the stops and chords of the animal spirits. An expert hand can make a violin rage as violently, weep as bitterly, beg as heartily, and complain as mournfully, as words can express those several passions; and more than words, without proper modulation, can express them. Timotheus the musician played before Alexander the Great an air so martial and animating, that he started from the table in a warlike fury, and called for his horse and his arms; and by another soft air so quelled the hostile tumult in his mind, that he sat down quietly to meat again. Thus was the conqueror of the world himself conquered by sound! Drums and trumpets make men bold: And the Marquis de Biron, one of the bravest men that ever lived, died like a coward for want of them.

In a day of battle, when the onset is animated by all the awakening military sounds of a camp, the eager neighing of the horses, and even the busy and hollow treading of their feet; a general and warlike murmur of every man preparing to fight; the clattering of arms, calling into the imagination the sudden use that is to be made of them; the hasty thunder and vehement rattling of drums, inspiring an impatience for battle; the dead and sullen dubbing of the kettle-drums, creating a steady and obstinate bravery; and, above all, the loud and shrill clangor of the trumpet, rousing a cheerful and lively boldness: All these hostile sounds, each of them destructive of coldness and fear, must occupy and incense every spirit that a man has in him, set his soul in a flame, and make evencowards resolute and brave.

I have seen a beggar gain an alms by a heavy and affecting groan, when a speech of Cicero's composing, spoken without Cicero's art, would not have gained it. That groan struck the animal spirits sympathetically; and, being continued to the imagination, raised up there a thousand sudden conjectures and preoccupations in his favour, and a thousand circumstances of distress, which he who uttered it perhaps never felt, nor thought of. Looks and appearances have the like efficacy: Another beggar, shivering and naked in a cold wet day, with humble, pale, and hungry looks, or despairing ones, shall be as eloquent, without uttering a word, as the other by uttering a groan. The human sympathy in our souls raises a party for him within us, and our fancy immediately represents us to ourselves in the same doleful circumstances; and, for that time, we feel all that the beggar feels, probably much more; for he is used to it, and can bear it better. If to the above melancholy sound and miserable sight, we add the grievous symptoms of pain, sickness, and anguish (as one often meets with objects under all these terrible classes of misery), there is no pitch of human pity and horror, that such a group of human woes cannot raise.

Now, if single sound be thus bewitching, and gesture alone thus persuasive, and still greatly more when united; how vastly prevailing must be their force, when it comes arrayed and heightened by a swelling and irresistible tide of words, enlivened by the most forcible and rapid ideas, and bears down all before it? When the orator attracts your eyes, charms your ears, and forces your attention; brings heaven and earth into his cause, and seems but to represent them, to speak their sense, and to contend for

their interest? When he carries your passions in his hands, suspends or controls all your faculties, and yet persuades you that your own faculties guide you? When he lessens great things, magnifies little things, and disguises all; his very gesture is animated, and every muscle persuades; his words lighten, and his breath is on fire; every word glows, and every image flames; he fills, delights, kindles, and astonishes, your imagination; raises a storm in your heart, and governs you in that storm; rouses all that is human in you, and makes your own heart conspire against you! In this magicaland outrageous tempest, you are at the entire mercy of him who raised it.

Caesar was resolved to punish Q. Ligarius; but Cicero had a mind to save him, and undertook his defence. Caesar admitted him to speak, only out of the gaiety of his heart, and for the mere pleasure of hearing him; for he was determined not to be shaken from his purpose. But he was deceived: Cicero in the very beginning of his speech wonderfully moved him, and proceeded in it with such a variety of pathos, and such an amazing grace, that Caesar often changed countenance; and it was plain that his soul was in a hurricane, and that all his passions were agitated. But the orator touching artfully upon the battle of Pharsalia, so transported him, that he trembled all over; the papers which he held dropped out of his hands; and, being quite overcome, he acquitted Ligarius.

What an amazing instance of the power of speaking! Behold the great and conquering Caesar, the absolute master of Rome, and of all the Roman world, provoked at a man who had borne arms against him, fixed upon his doom, and life and death in his hands! Behold this great and arbitrary man, this angry, awful, and prepossessed, judge, overpowered by the force of eloquence, disarmed of his wrath, his designs wrested from him, his inclinations, when he thought himself best fortified in them, entirely changed, and himself, from being terrible, brought to tremble! Caesar too was a great orator, and had often tried upon others, with success, the power of his own rhetoric; but was not then aware how much it could do upon himself. It was Cicero, it was the orator, and not the cause, that triumphed here. The bare sense of that fine speech would not have suspended Caesar's displeasure for a moment: But the speaker was not to be resisted: All opposition fled, and every spark of resentment vanished, before him. The emperor was enchanted by the orator; and Caesar was, as it were, possessed of Cicero.

*I am, &c.*

*P.S.* I have in these two letters comprised all that I purposed to say upon eloquence: In my last I have considered it politically, in this philosophically; and in both I have shewn its force. I have likewise examined the several kinds of it, as far as it affects my present purpose; and shewn, how it affects government and human nature, and from what sources in both it proceeds. Those who would study it as an art, and know the many accomplishments necessary to excel in it, must read Cicero *de Oratore* and Quintilian.

*G*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

NO. 105. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1722. *Of The Weakness Of The Human Mind; How Easily It Is Misled.* (Trenchard)

SIR,

Things of the greatest seeming difficulty appear the easiest to us when found out. There was no wit necessary to set an egg on one end, when Columbus had shewn the way. Jugglers do many things by slight of hand, which to a gaping beholder appear to be witchcraft; and when he knows how they are done, he wonders at himself for wondering at them. A ship as big as a castle is sailed by a rudder and a puff of wind; and a weight, which a thousand men cannot move, may be easily managed by one, by the help of wheels and pullies. The same is true in the direction of mankind, who will be always caught by a skillful application to their passions and weaknesses, and be easily drawn into what they will be very difficultly driven. The fiercest horses are subdued by the right management of the bit; the most furious wild beasts tamed by gratifying their appetites, or working upon their fears; and the most savage tempers are made tractable by soothing their foibles, or knowing how to manage their panicks.

This is what is called the knowledge of mankind, which very few of them know any thing of. Pedants hope to govern them by distinctions and grave faces; tyrants by force and terror; philosophers by solemn lectures of morality and virtue. And all these have certainly a share in influencing their minds, and determining their actions; but, all together, not half so much as applying to their reigning appetites, appearing interests, and predominant foibles, and taking artful advantages of favourable opportunities, and catching at lucky conjectures, to effect at once what a long series of wise counsels, and the best concerted measures, cannot bring about.

Wise statesmen will understand this foible in human nature, and often take advantage from a plot discovered, or a rebellion quelled; from the transports of a restoration, or a victory obtained; or during the terrors of a pestilential distemper, or the rage of a prevailing faction, or the fears of a desponding one, to accomplish what neither threats nor armies could extort, nor bribes nor allurements persuade.

The same advantages have been as luckily taken by the leaders of popular parties, upon sudden discontents and unsuccessful acts of power, to obtain concessions and privileges which they durst not think of, much less hope for, at other times. My Lord Clarendon furnishes us with many instances of such concessions, which neither the crown would have granted, nor the people been prevailed upon to ask, nor perhaps accept, before, or possibly after.

Whereas a preposterous and ill-timed attempt, on either side, would have increased the power which they designed to lessen, or take away. The greatest secret in politicks is, to drive the nail that will go.

If a solemn soothsayer, a poet, or philosopher, talk of the dignity of human nature, man is lifted up to a resemblance with his great Creator: He is lord of the universe; all things are made for his use, even such as are of no use to him, but do him mischief. The sun is placed in the firmament to ripen his cabbage, and dry his linen; and infinite millions of stars are stuck there, many thousand times bigger than the earth, to supply the want of farthing candles, though vastly many of them are not to be seen but by glasses, and, without doubt, infinite others not to be seen with them. He is made wise, discerning, formed for virtue, mutual help and assistance; and probably it was all true before the fall: But as he is now degenerated, I fear that the reverse of all this is true. It is plain that he is foolish, helpless, perfidious, impotent, easily misled and trepanned, and, for the most part, caught by as thin snares and little wiles as his fellow-creatures, which, we are told, are made for his use; and his boasted faculty of reason betrays him to some from which the others are exempt.

True reason has little to do in his speculations or his actions. Enthusiasm or panick fear often supplies the place of religion in him: Obstinacy is called constancy; and indifference, moderation: His passions, which direct and govern all the motions of his mind, seem to me to be purely mechanical; which perhaps I may shew more at large hereafter: and whoever would govern him, and lead him, must apply to those passions; that is, pull the proper ropes, and turn the wheels which will put the machine in motion. When Chrysippus was introduced into the presence of Dionysius, and, according to the custom of the court, fell upon his face, and kissed the oppressor's feet; he was asked by Plato, how he, who was a Greek, a free man, and a philosopher, could fall prostrate before a tyrant, and adore him? He answered merrily, "That he had business with the tyrant; and if his ears were in his feet, he must speak to him where his ears lay."

Now most people's ears lie in the wrong place; and whoever will be heard, must apply accordingly: We rarely see a wise man, who does not carry a half-fool about him; one who, by soothing his vanities, flattering his passions, and taking advantages of his other weaknesses, can do more with him than all the world besides. Indeed most men are governed by those who have less wit than themselves, or by what ought least to influence them. Men, like other animals, are caught by springs, wires, or subtleties: Foxes are trepanned by traces, pheasants by a red rag, and other birds by a whistle; and the same is true of mankind.

A lucky thought, a jest, a fortunate accident, or a jovial debauch, shall bring about designs and revolutions in human affairs, which twenty legions in the field could not bring about. A filthy strumpet made Alexander, for a kiss, burn Persepolis, the august seat of the Persian empire; and I have heard, somewhere or other, of a great prince, who being prevailed upon to swear by his mistress's bum, that he would dissolve the States of his kingdom, religiously kept that oath against his interest, though he never valued all the rest that he took upon the evangelists. How often hath a merry story in our days turned a debate, when the most grave and solemn arguments, and the most obvious representations of publick advantage, could not prevail? And how many a fair and accomplished lady has been won by bribing her chambermaid, when perhaps all the solicitations of her parents and relations, and all the motives of self-interest, would have proved ineffectual?

The lucky adjusting of times and seasons, taking advantage of prevailing prejudices and panicks, and knowing how to humour and lay hold of the predominant enthusiasm of human nature, has given birth to most of the revolutions in religion and politicks which ever happened in the world. A juggler swallowing bibles and hour-glasses, shall do more with a modern mob than a philosopher; and a scarecrow prater, with distorted limbs and understanding, shall make thousands of them weep and wring their hands, when the oratory of Demosthenes, or the reasonings of Mr. Locke, would make them laugh or hoot. There is a certain assimilation of passions and faculties in men, which attract one another when they meet, and always strike together. As when two fiddles are tuned up to the same pitch, if you hit the one, the other sounds; so men are easiest operated upon by those of like understandings with their own, or those who the best know how to dally and play with their foibles, and can do the same thing with design as the others do naturally.

I doubt not but I shall be censured for making thus bold with the Lord of the Creation, by those who make much more bold with Him on other occasions, and who would have the monopoly of enjoying all the scandal to themselves. But, by the leave of those solemn gentlemen, I shall take the liberty of considering man as he is, since it is out of our power to give a model to have him new made by.

Since then, by the sins of our first parents, we are fallen into this unhappy and forlorn condition, all wise and honest men are obliged, in prudence and duty, not only by lectures of philosophy, religion, and morals, to fashion this sovereign of the universe into his true interest, but to make use of his weaknesses to render him happy, as wicked men do to make him miserable; in which I shall be more particular hereafter.

*T I am, &c.*

The End of the Third Volume.

[\[\[?\]\]](#) Claude Joly, Canon of Notre Dame, Paris, has published a treatise entitled *Recueil de maximes véritables et importantes pour l'institution du roy. Contre la fausse [et pernicieuse] politique du cardinal Mazarin [Paris, 1652]*, wherein he shows that the power of kings is limited by that of their estates and parlements, and gives authentic proofs that such is the original constitution of the government of France. He died 1700.

[\[\[?\]\]](#) Herodotus says, that Helena, during all that long war purposely made for her recovery, was not in Troy, but in Egypt.

[\[\[?\]\]](#) Bishop of Down and Connor in Ireland.

[\[\[?\]\]](#) Considerations upon the state of the nation, and of the civil list; written by Mr. Trenchard.