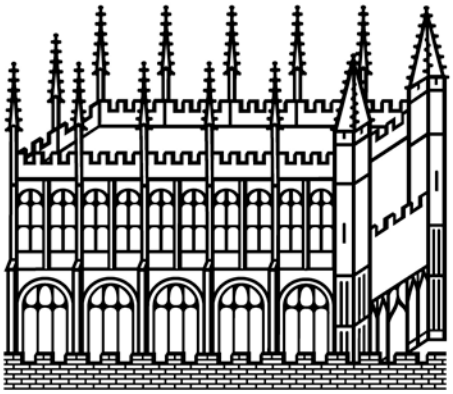

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The Wiſdom and Goodneſs of GOD, *in having made both Rich and Poor:*

A

SERMON, &c.

[Price One Shilling.]

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

STEWARDS

OF THE

WESTMINSTER DISPENSARY

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING,

IN

CHARLOTTE STREET CHAPEL, APRIL 1785.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

BY R. WATSON, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF LANDAFF.

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A

SERMON, &c.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXII. VER. 2.

THE RICH AND THE POOR MEET TOGETHER, THE LORD IS THE MAKER OF THEM ALL.

IT would be foreign to the purpoſe of this meeting to enter into a diſquiſition concerning the origin of property—Suffice it to obſerve, that it is a ſtate of things which has taken place in every age and country of which we have any account: even the ſavage inhabitants of the uncultivated parts of the world, who derive their ſupport from the caſual ſucceſs of the chace, have their ſeparate diſtricts for hunting; and an infringement of that ſpecies of property is one of the chief cauſes of their barbarous hoſtilities. Amongſt all civilized nations, the ſecurity of property conſtitutes one of the principal branches of their juriſprudence. From a ſtate

of property, however introduced, ſprings up a diviſion of mankind into two claſſes, one poſſeſſing more, the other poſſeſſing leſs, or nothing at all: the more and the leſs may vary through a great many degrees, yet the diviſion ſtill remains certain; and the conſequent diſtinction of mankind into poor and rich has been generally eſtabliſhed. It is not poſſible to fix any preciſe mark by which theſe two claſſes may be diſcriminated from each other. We might, indeed, agree to call that man rich, who had any thing which ſtrictly ſpeaking was his own; and that man poor, who had no property at all: yet this would be a diſtinction oppoſite, in many inſtances, to our general notions; for he who can maintain himſelf by his manual labour or ingenuity, is often eſteemed, and juſtly eſteemed, richer than he who is poſſeſſed of a trifling property in land, money, or goods.

God gave the earth to be a means of ſupport to the whole human race; and we have all of us a right to be maintained by what it produces: but he never meaned that the idle ſhould live upon the labour of the induſtrious, or that the flagitious ſhould eat the bread of the righteous: he hath therefore permitted a ſtate of property to

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be every where introduced; that the induſtrious might enjoy the rewards of their diligence; and that thoſe who would not work, might feel the puniſhment of their lazineſs. In the Jewiſh government, which was formed according to the eſpecial appointment of God, he ſuffered ſome to ſell their property, and others to buy it; ſome to become poor, and others to become rich. He appointed, indeed, that the land which had been ſold out of any family ſhould, in the year of the Jubilee, return to that family again; but, even under this conſtitution, a man might reduce himſelf and his family to beggary for fifty years. And that many, either through misfortune or miſmanagement, would actually become poor, even in the Jewiſh ſtate, which was peculiarly calculated to preſerve an equality of poſſeſſion, was ſo naturally to be expected, that God expreſsly ſaid—*The poor ſhould never ceaſe out of the land.*

This diviſion of mankind into poor and rich, is of all others the moſt general; indeed it ultimately comprehends the reſt. Men are ſometimes claſſed into different orders, according to the diverſity of the profeſſions or trades which they purſue; but the end aimed at, by men of

every profeſſion and every trade, is to advance themſelves from a ſtate of poverty to a ſtate of riches, or from the poſſeſſion of a ſmaller portion of wealth to that of a larger. Men, on the other hand, are addicted to various vices, and purſue a ſtrange multiplicity of follies; but the uſual end of both vice and folly is to reduce men from riches to poverty. It may be truly ſaid, that all the purſuits of mankind, whether they be laudable or diſreputable, have a natural tendency to introduce a diſparity of property; to eſtabliſh the great diſtinction of the human ſpecies into rich and poor. This diſtinction, ariſing, as it were neceſſarily, from the ſituations and diſpoſitions of mankind, cannot be otherwiſe conſidered than as the natural appointment of God himſelf—*The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all.* The Lord hath made every thing for the beſt; all his diſpenſations are the reſult of his wiſdom, and the fruit of his goodneſs: let us try whether it may not be ſhewn that this, amongſt the reſt, ſprings from the ſame ſources.

I need employ no time in perſuading the rich that this is a very good ſyſtem of things; they feel, or they fancy that they feel, the advantages reſulting

reſulting from an unequal diſtribution of property, and would be ſorry to have any change made in this matter. The chief difficulty will be to reconcile the poorer ſort to their lot; yet I cannot help thinking that, if they will diveſt themſelves of prejudice, they will ſee reaſon to be perfectly contented with their condition, and be ſatisfied that things could not have been better ordered.

In the firſt place then it may be obſerved that, in this country at leaſt, ſlavery is not allowed; would to God that it exiſted no where! Every man amongſt us is equally capable of acquiring property; the reward of his induſtry and frugality cannot be raviſhed from him by the tyranny of an unfeeling maſter: through the faults or the misfortunes of his progenitors he may have been born in a low ſituation, but it muſt be through his own if he continues in it. Honeſty, diligence, and frugality, will go a great way in lifting him, if not to much eminence, at leaſt above indigence, and it may be to opulence. We ſee this frequently happening; thoſe who have been upright and careful ſervants often becoming reputable maſters and diſtinguiſhed citizens; and that it does not happen oftener, is not ſo much to

be attributed to the difficulty of the thing itſelf, as to the little pains men take to accompliſh it. The golden crown of diligence and œconomy is held out as a prize to all; every one who runs may reach it: but if, inſtead of running with alacrity and circumſpection the appointed courſe, we loiter away our time, ſuffering ourſelves to be carried from the purſuit by every little allurement of idleneſs or pleaſure, whom have we to blame but ourſelves? He who is idle and extravagant in his youth, who will not bow down his body to labour, or who labours but juſt enough to pamper his body in riotous living, as thouſands of manufacturers do, waſting in three days of beaſtly drunkenneſs what they have acquired by four days of induſtry, this man has no right to complain if he finds his old age deſtitute and comfortleſs, if he remains through life in the ſtate of poverty in which he was born. There is ſcarcely any old perſon but muſt confeſs that he might have brought up his family with credit, without being burthenſome to the pariſh, had he from his earlieſt youth uſed his beſt diligence in acquiring property, and his utmoſt caution in not needleſsly parting with it: ſo that it muſt be owned this unequal diſtribution of property is a great ſpur to induſtry and frugality in the lower claſſes

claſſes of life; and habits of induſtry and frugality bring with them modeſty, humility, temperance, indeed ſo many virtues, that a finer ſyſtem could not perhaps have been poſſibly formed, for exalting human nature, for bringing men to a right underſtanding of their duty, to a reverence for whatever is good and praiſe-worthy.

A ſecond conſideration of great weight in this matter is, that the poor would be no gainers by an equal diſtribution of property: the rich indeed might be loſers by it, they might be deprived of ſome ſuperfluities; but the poor would not be better provided with neceſſaries. For if all men were upon a level, he who is now doomed to labour muſt labour ſtill; he muſt ſtill continue to plough the ground, to thraſh the corn, to dig the fuel, to work at the loom, the anvil, and the mill; he would ſtill have occaſion for food, fire and clothing; and he could not expect that, in this ſo much and ſo wrongly admired ſtate of equality, another would undertake to procure theſe articles for him. At preſent the poor have a property in little but their labour, they are forced to labour for their ſubſiſtence; and if things were brought upon a level, I do not apprehend how they could procure ſubſiſtence without labour. They may

wiſh perhaps to change ſituations with the rich, but ſuch a change is not the caſe in point; the preſent rich would then become the poor, and would have an equal right to demand an alteration in their favour. The object of inquiry is, whether the poor would be in any-wiſe bettered, by having the lands of this or any other country equally divided amongſt its inhabitants; and it ſeems to me that they would not.—Let us look at this matter in another light. The rich cannot either eat or drink more viands than other men; their bodies are not above the common ſize, nor do they require any extraordinary quantity of covering to protect them from the inclemency of the ſeaſons; upon any ſuppoſition of property they muſt be fed and clothed: they are at preſent fed ſomewhat more deliciouſly, and clothed ſomewhat more ſumptuouſly than other men are; but this ſeems not to be either any real advantage to them, or diſadvantage to others. The fortunes of the rich are expended in ſuperfluities, in things not neceſſary either for the being, or the well-being of the human race; and in being thus expended, they are diſperſed amongſt the poor in a thouſand ways. Every elegant entertainment which a man gives, every coſtly ſuit which he puts on, every magnificent building which he erects,

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every means by which he expends his property, are bleſſings to the poor, and reduce things as it were to a level. The rich man in all this may probably but conſult his vanity, or gratify his appetite; he may have no thought about the poor in what he does, yet the effect is the ſame as if he did think of them; and thouſands are more comfortably maintained by adminiſtering to the real or artificial wants of the rich, than they could be upon the taking place of an equal partition of property.

A third argument, to induce the poor to be contented with their ſituations, ariſes from the little contentment which rich men ſeem to have in theirs. Man conſiſts of two parts, body and mind: idleneſs is the bane of both; the body, by indolence, becomes enervated, unequal to fatigue, and prone to diſeaſe; if the wind blows freſhly on it, or the ſun happens to ſcorch it, or the rain to wet it, its languid poſſeſſor is filled with no cauſeleſs apprehenſion of ſucceeding maladies, and life itſelf is often endangered by the diſaſter. An idle mind is ſtill a more troubleſome companion than an idle body; it preys upon itſelf, becomes peeviſh and diſcontented; or elſe it exerts a ſort of activity

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in trifles, is eager in the purſuit of faſhionable follies, inſipid amuſements, or ruinous vices. Riches exempt the body from the wholeſome fatigue of labour, and the mind from the no leſs ſalutary fatigue of thought, and frequently become the cauſe of complete ruin to the whole man. There are many men of great wealth and diſtinguiſhed rank in our own, and in every other country, with bodies ſo ſhattered by debauchery, and minds ſo debaſed by folly, that a healthy day-labourer would not wiſh to exchange ſituations with them. Theſe evils do not neceſſarily attend riches: we have ſome illuſtrious examples of men, who enjoy their wealth with temperance and good ſenſe; yet the contrary happens ſo frequently, that a poor man has little cauſe to quarrel with his poverty, ſince there is a great chance that, had he been richer, he would have been leſs happy in himſelf, a leſs comfort to his family, leſs pleaſing to God, and leſs uſeful to mankind.

A fourth argument, in ſupport of the rectitude of this unequal diſtribution of property, may be taken from the equality with which God has diſpenſed the chief ingredients of human happineſs. If, indeed, you place the happineſs of life in drinking delicious wines, in wearing expenſive apparel,

apparel, in being attended by numerous ſervants, in exhibiting a great ſhew of magnificence to the world, in feeding your pride and pampering your ſenſuality, then may you wiſh for riches; but you will certainly make a wrong judgment of what is for your good; none of theſe things have any real worth in them, and thoſe who poſſeſs them will tell you ſo. The main bleſſings which conſtitute the ſupreme felicity of human life, are within the reach of almoſt every one of us. The laws of the country ſecure to the meaneſt, the object of the Apoſtle's contentment, food and raiment; and the God of nature has given us air, and light, and ſleep, the warmth of the ſun, and the dew of Heaven: theſe are the things eſſential to our well-being, and of theſe we have all an equal ſhare.

Thus, whether we conſider the unequal diſtribution of property as the mother of induſtry, and of thoſe many mild and modeſt virtues which adorn our nature; or whether we reſpect the little advantage which the loweſt claſs would hope to obtain, were all things brought upon a level; or look at the little ſolid comfort which riches ſeem to bring to their poſſeſſors, and the great evils to which they expoſe them; or laſtly, reflect upon

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the general bleſſings which God has beſtowed with a liberal hand upon us all, we may ſee reaſon enough to admire his wiſdom, and to adore his goodneſs for having made both rich and poor; the rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all.

It remains that I ſay a word or two, more particularly ſuited to the purpoſe of our meeting; and nothing can be more ſuitable than to purſue the ſubject we are upon by briefly ſtating the reſpective duties of the rich and poor: they are met together by God's appointment; and it is his will that they diſcharge with cheerfulneſs and fidelity the duties of their reſpective ſtations.

The firſt duty which the rich owe towards the poor, is to ſee that they want not the means neceſſary for the preſervation of life. All the laws in the world can never juſtly appropriate the earth and its productions to ſuch a degree as that any living ſoul muſt periſh for want of them. By whatever compact, tacit or expreſs, you ſuppoſe your property to have firſt commenced, or to have been afterwards ſecured to you, it is ſtill not yours in caſes of extreme neceſſity; life is the gift of God, and in giving life he

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gave the means to ſuſtain it, and no human juriſdiction can acquire any right to deprive us of this firſt gift of Heaven. But though it be here contended, that no man can have ſo excluſive a property in his goods, as with juſtice to debar the poor from partaking with him in caſes of extreme neceſſity, yet, let it be well remembered, that no ſanction is thereby given to theft and rapine, nor any encouragement to idleneſs; thoſe who can labour ought to do it, and thoſe who cannot labour are not at liberty to purloin by ſtealth, or ſeize by violence, what is neceſſary for their ſupport; the law has provided it for them; they have a right to demand it at the hands of the magiſtrate, and he will fail in his duty if he does not ſee that it is properly ſupplied to them. Perhaps it may be thought an hard caſe, that you an honeſt and induſtrious man, poſſeſſed of little more property than what is ſufficient for the maintenance of your own family, ſhould be compelled to contribute towards that of thoſe who have waſted their ſubſtance in riotous living, and are reduced to poverty through their own prodigality. There is, it muſt be owned, ſome hardſhip in this caſe; but every human inſtitution has its defects, and is liable to abuſe; it is poſſible now and then that a very unworthy member may

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be ſupported by the rates of your pariſh, but he is ſtill your fellow creature, and has a right to live; he is ſick, infirm, aged, ſome how or other incapable of labour; and, whatever may have been his paſt conduct, he is now become a certain object of compaſſion.

The duty next in importance to the ſupplying the poor with the means of preſerving life, is the treating them with a fellow-feeling kindneſs. Nothing breaks the heart of thoſe who are bowed down by misfortune, ſo much as the inſolence of thoſe who are above them. This is of all the kinds of pride the moſt ſenſeleſs and inhuman. Without a diverſity of ranks the affairs of this world cannot well go on; ſome there muſt be to perform the more ſervile offices of life; but their nature is not debaſed by the baſeneſs of their condition; they are not transformed to beings of an inferior order, by being deſtined to an inferior ſtation; they are ſtill our brethren in Chriſt, children of the ſame heavenly Father, and heirs of the ſame heavenly promiſes with the richeſt of the ſons of men; and as to their earthly condition, they are ſtill of the ſame ſhape with ourſelves, they have the ſame ſenſes, are equally ſuſceptible of pleaſure and pain, are ſprung from the

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ſame ſtock, compoſed of the ſame materials, liable to the ſame accidents, ſubject to the ſame diſorders, and in a few years will be hidden in the boſom of the ſame earth, and reduced to ſimilar maſſes of corruption. Thou whoſe heart is lifted up becauſe of thy riches, and who in the might of thy power deſpiſeſt the poor, and refuſeſt to relieve his diſtreſs, and makeſt light of his ſufferings: think of the cataſtrophe which awaits thee, and be not deceived by the pride of thine heart!

It muſt not, however, be thought that the rich are the only perſons who have duties to perform, and that the poor may urge the miſery of their lot as an excuſe for the neglect of theirs; I will briefly mention three duties which eſpecially belong to them.

Firſt, The poor owe to the rich gratitude, thankfulneſs, and reſpect for all the good they receive from them. If their wants are not ſupplied to the extent which they may wiſh, it does not become them to be tranſported with reſentment againſt their richer neighbours, nor preſently to pour forth calumnies and complaints as if there was no charity amongſt mankind. Charity is often a private virtue known only to a man's ſelf; and he who refuſes to give an alms is not therefore to be cenſured by the object

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that ſolicits it as an hard-hearted man: he may have a call for all he can ſpare, which you know not of; and it may be his charity is better placed than in relieving you: if it is otherwiſe, the matter is between God and himſelf; you are no judge of it; you will do no good by murmuring; you will deſervedly find the door of mercy faſt bolted againſt yourſelf. Another duty of the poor is foreſight. They ought in their years of youth and ſtrength to make ſome proviſion againſt the wants of old age, and not encourage themſelves in expenſive doings whilſt they are young, from the aſſurance of having a legal ſupport provided for them when they grow old. They muſt not in a ſpirit of hypocriſy make a greater ſhew of diſtreſs than they really feel, leſt they ſhould thereby dry up the ſtreams of general benevolence, or divert them from refreſhing thoſe who are in real want. They muſt not in a ſpirit of idleneſs neglect any opportunity of being honeſtly employed, but they are to work with quietneſs as much as they are able; for it is the Apoſtle's command, If any will not work, neither let him eat. When the hand of induſtry is diſabled by accident, enfeebled by diſeaſe, palſied by old age, any how rendered incapable of ſupporting its maſter, then and not till then ſhould

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it be ſtretched out to receive the contributions of the benevolent; and then we truſt it will never be drawn back empty.

A third duty of the poor is not to give way to either envy or deſpair. There is nothing indeed in the ſituation of rich men, if the matter be rightly conſidered, which can become a ſubject of envy; and if their means of happineſs were leſs exceptionable than they ſeem to be, yet have they as great a right to enjoy them, and probably will make as good an uſe of them, as the poor man would do, who looks upon every ſtation above him as his due, regarding with a malignant eye what he cannot attain: and as to deſpair, there is no need why any one ſhould give way to that; when he is in the worſt poſſible ſituation, he has the providence of God for his protection, and this will aſſuredly work out ſomething for his relief, unleſs by wickedneſs or deſpondency he counteracts the efficacy of its benign influence.

Laſtly, It is the duty of us all, rich and poor, to be kindly affectioned one towards another, well keeping in mind that we are all travellers on the ſame road, all ſervants of the ſame maſter, all accountable to him for every ſtep we take, all

of us entruſted with his property; and if he hath given more to ſome, and leſs to others, it is not out of partiality towards any of us, but that he might make trial of our temper, and ſee how we were diſpoſed to treat each other in the uſe of what he hath given us. Were all men upon a level, there would be no room for the exerciſe of charity and compaſſion on the one hand, nor of patience and gratitude on the other; the rich not being called upon to part with his property, would not know whether he was the ſervant of Mammon or of God. In a word, the unequal diſtribution of this world's goods, is a ſtate moſt admirably fitted for the producing in mankind the great Chriſtian virtues of content, patience, meekneſs, of univerſal benevolence, compaſſion, and good will, without which, though we ſhould poſſeſs the whole world, we ſhall certainly loſe our own ſouls; and with which, though we ſhould poſſeſs nothing at all in this world, we ſhall certainly have, which is the main thing to be conſidered by us all, never ending happineſs in that which is to come.

An occaſion is now offered to thoſe who abound in this world's goods to ſhew the benignity of their tempers; and it is an occaſion

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which is liable to no exception. Medicine is not palatable; no one will apply for it who can do without it; nor will any one uſe it longer than he wants it: there will be no fictitious claims on your benevolence; no waſte in the application of your bounty. I need not weary your attention in enlarging on the utility of the Inſtitution, which hath hitherto proſpered in your hands; it is univerſally acknowledged; it is ſpoken ill of by none but thoſe who do not underſtand it; thouſands of individuals have had cauſe to bleſs you, and the State itſelf is indebted to you for the life of every individual which has been ſaved to the community through your munificence. But it is not from the State that you muſt expect the reward of your well-doing, the bleſſings of the poor will be your paſſports to Heaven; God himſelf will reward you, and not ſuffer any one inſtance of your kindneſs to your fellow-creatures to be forgotten at the dreadful day of retribution. It is a day which is at hand to many of us, which is approaching with an haſty and unheeded pace upon us all! In that day the pride of learning will be abaſed, the towerings of ambition will be brought low, the inſolence of wealth will be ſubdued, all the mighty din and buſtle of the world will ceaſe, and nothing will remain

to comfort us but the remembrance of the good which we have done. It behoves us all to think ſoberly, ſeriouſly, and frequently of the event of that day; and if that reflection ſhould not be ſufficient to diſpoſe our hearts to further ſuch a work of mercy as now ſolicits our protection, all human means of exciting our compaſſion would be vain: we ought to pray to God, with all poſſible ſincerity, that he would remove from us that hardneſs of heart, that contempt of his word, that inſenſibility of our ſpiritual danger which threatens our eternal perdition; for unqueſtionably we are in the gall of bitterneſs, and our end will not be in peace.

APPENDIX.

THE Sermon which is now, for the firſt time, publiſhed, was written many years ago; it may, perhaps, on that account be more worthy of the attention of thoſe for whoſe benefit it is deſigned. If it ſhall have any effect in calming the perturbation which has been lately excited, and which ſtill ſubſiſts in the minds of the lower claſſes of the community, I ſhall not be aſhamed of having given to the world a compoſition in every other light unintereſting. I will take this opportunity of adding, with the ſame intention, a few reflections on the preſent circumſtances of our own, and of a neighbouring country.

With regard to France—I have no heſitation in declaring, that the object which the French ſeemed to have in view at the commencement of their revolution, had my hearty approbation. The object was to free themſelves and their poſterity from arbitrary power. I hope there is not a man in Great Britain ſo little ſenſible of the bleſſings

of that free conſtitution under which he has the happineſs to live, ſo entirely dead to the intereſts of general humanity, as not to wiſh that a conſtitution ſimilar to our own might be eſtabliſhed, not only in France, but in every deſpotic ſtate in Europe; not only in Europe, but in every quarter of the globe.

It is one thing to approve of an end, another to approve of the means by which an end is accompliſhed. I did not approve of the means by which the firſt revolution was effected in France.—I thought that it would have been a wiſer meaſure to have abridged the oppreſſive privileges, and to have leſſened the enormous number of the nobility, than to have aboliſhed the order.—I thought that the ſtate ought not in juſtice to have ſeized any part of the property of the church, till it had reverted, as it were, to the community, by the death of its immediate poſſeſſors.—I thought that the king was not only treated with unmerited indignity; but that too little authority was left him, to enable him, as the chief executive magiſtrate, to be uſeful to the ſtate.—Theſe were ſome of my reaſons for not approving the means by which the firſt revolution in France was brought about. As to other evils which took place

place on the occaſion, I conſidered them certainly as evils of importance; but at the ſame time as evils inſeparable from a ſtate of civil commotion, and which I conceived would be more than compenſated by the eſtabliſhment of a limited monarchy.

The French have abandoned the conſtitution they had at firſt eſtabliſhed, and have changed it for another. No one can reprobate with more truth than I do, both the means and the end of this change.—The end has been the eſtabliſhment of a republic—Now a republic is a form of government, which, of all others, I moſt diſlike —and I diſlike it for this reaſon; becauſe of all forms of government, ſcarcely excepting the moſt deſpotic, I think a republic the moſt oppreſſive to the bulk of the people: they are deceived in it, with the ſhew of liberty; but they live in it, under the moſt odious of all tyrannies, the tyranny of their equals. — With reſpect to the means by which this new republic has been erected in France, they have been ſanguinary, ſavage, more than brutal. They not merely fill the heart of every individual with commiſeration for the unfortunate ſufferers; but they exhibit to the eye of contemplation, an humiliating picture of human

nature, when its paſſions are not regulated by religion, or controlled by law.—I fly with terror and abhorrence, even from the altar of Liberty, when I ſee it ſtained with the blood of the aged, of the innocent, of the defenceleſs ſex, of the miniſters of religion, and of the faithful adherents of a fallen monarch.—My heart ſinks within me when I ſee it ſtreaming with the blood of the monarch himſelf.—Merciful God! ſtrike ſpeedily, we beſeech thee, with deep contrition, and ſincere remorſe, the obdurate hearts of the relentleſs perpetrators and projectors of theſe horrid deeds, leſt they ſhould ſuddenly ſink into eternal and extreme perdition, loaded with an unutterable weight of unrepented, and, except through the blood of Him whoſe religion they reject, inexpiable ſin.

The monarch, you will tell me, was guilty of perfidy and perjury.—I know not that he was guilty of either; but admitting that he has been guilty of both—who, alas! of the ſons of men, is ſo confident in the ſtrength of his own virtue, ſo aſſured of his own integrity and intrepidity of character, as to be certain that, under ſimilar temptations, he would not have been guilty of ſimilar offences? Surely it would have been no diminution of the ſternneſs of new republican virtue,

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no diſgrace to the magnanimity of a great nation, if it had pardoned the perfidy which its own oppreſſion had occaſioned—if it had remitted the puniſhment of the perjury of the king, to the tribunal of Him, by whom *kings reign and princes decree juſtice*.

And are there any men in this kingdom, except ſuch as find their account in public confuſion, who would hazard the introduction of ſuch ſcenes of rapine, barbarity, and bloodſhed, as have diſgraced France, and outraged humanity, for the ſake of obtaining—What?—Liberty and Equality.—I ſuſpect that the meaning of theſe terms is not clearly and generally underſtood: it may be of uſe to explain them.

The liberty of a man in a ſtate of nature, conſiſts in his being ſubject to no law but the law of nature—and the liberty of a man in a ſtate of ſociety, conſiſts in his being ſubject to no law, but to the law enacted by the general will of the ſociety to which he belongs.—And to what other law is any man in Great Britain ſubject? The king, we are all juſtly perſuaded, has not the inclination; and we all know that, if he had the inclination, he has not the power, to ſubſtitute his will in the place of the law. The houſe of lords

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has no ſuch power; the houſe of commons has no ſuch power; the church has no ſuch power; the rich men of the country have no ſuch power. The pooreſt man amongſt us, the beggar at our door, is governed—not by the uncertain, paſſionate, arbitrary will of an individual—not by the ſelfiſh inſolence of an ariſtocratic faction —not by the madneſs of democratic violence —but by the fixed, impartial, deliberate voice of law, enacted by the general ſuffrage of a free people.—Is your property injured? Law, indeed, does not give you property; but it aſcertains it. —Property is acquired by induſtry and probity; by the exerciſe of talents and ingenuity; and the poſſeſſion of it is ſecured by the laws of the community. Againſt whom think you is it ſecured? It is ſecured againſt thieves and robbers; againſt idle and profligate men, who, however low your condition may be, would be glad to deprive you of the little you poſſeſs. It is ſecured, not only againſt ſuch diſturbers of the public peace, but againſt the oppreſſion of the noble, the rapacity of the powerful, and the avarice of the rich. The courts of Britiſh juſtice are impartial and incorrupt; they reſpect not the perſons of men; the poor man's lamb is, in their eſtimation, as ſacred as the monarch's crown; with inflexible integrity they adjudge to every man his own. Your property

property under their protection is ſecure.—If your perſonal liberty be unjuſtly reſtrained, though but for an hour, and that by the higheſt ſervants of the crown—the crown cannot ſcreen them; the throne cannot hide them; the law, with an undaunted arm, ſeizes them, and drags them with irreſiſtible might to the judgment of whom? —of your equals—of twelve of your neighbours. —In ſuch a conſtitution as this, what is there to complain of on the ſcore of liberty?

The greateſt freedom that can be enjoyed by man in a ſtate of civil ſociety; the greateſt ſecurity that can be given him with reſpect to the protection of his character, property, perſonal liberty, limb, and life, is afforded to every individual by our preſent conſtitution.

The equality of men in a ſtate of nature, does not conſiſt in an equality of bodily ſtrength or intellectual ability, but in their being equally free from the dominion of each other.—The equality of men in a ſtate of civil ſociety, does not conſiſt in an equality of wiſdom, honeſty, ingenuity, induſtry,—nor in an equality of property reſulting from a due exertion of theſe talents; but in being equally ſubject to, equally protected by the

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ſame laws—And who knows not that every individual in this great nation is, in this reſpect, equal to every other? There is not one law for the nobles, another for the commons of the land—one for the clergy, another for the laity—one for the rich, another for the poor. The nobility, it is true, have ſome privileges annexed to their birth; the judges, and other magiſtrates, have ſome annexed to their office; and profeſſional men have ſome annexed to their profeſſions:—but theſe privileges are neither injurious to the liberty or property of other men. And you might as reaſonably contend, that the bramble ought to be equal to the oak; the lamb to the lion; as that no diſtinctions ſhould take place between the members of the ſame ſociety.—The burthens of the ſtate are diſtributed through the whole community, with as much impartiality as the complex nature of taxation will admit; every man ſuſtains a part in proportion to his ſtrength; no order is exempted from the payment of taxes.—Nor is any order of men excluſively entitled to the enjoyment of the lucrative offices of the ſtate. All cannot enjoy them, but all enjoy a capacity of acquiring them. The ſon of the meaneſt man in the nation may become a general or an admiral, a lord chancellor or an archbiſhop. If any perſons

have been ſo ſimple as to ſuppoſe that even the French ever intended, by the term equality, an equality of property, they have been quite miſtaken in their ideas. The French never underſtood by it, any thing materially different from what we and our anceſtors have been in full poſſeſſion of for many ages.

Other nations may deluge their land with blood in ſtruggling for liberty and equality; but let it never be forgotten by ourſelves, and let us impreſs the obſervation upon the hearts of our children, that we are in poſſeſſion of both, of as much of both as can be conſiſtent with the end for which civil ſociety was introduced amongſt mankind.

The proviſion which is made for the poor in this kingdom is ſo liberal, as, in the opinion of ſome, to diſcourage induſtry. The rental of the lands in England and Wales does not, I conjecture, amount to more than eighteen millions a year; and the poor rates amount to two millions. The poor then, at preſent, poſſeſs a ninth part of the landed rental of the country; and, reckoning ten pounds for the annual maintenance of each pauper, it may be inferred, that

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thoſe who are maintained by the community do not conſtitute a fortieth part of the people. An equal diviſion of land would be to the poor a great misfortune; they would poſſeſs far leſs than by the laws of the land they are at preſent entitled to. When we add to this conſideration, an account of the immenſe ſums annually ſubſcribed by the rich for the ſupport of hoſpitals, infirmaries, diſpenſaries—for the relief of ſufferers by fire, tempeſts, famine, loſs of cattle, great ſickneſs, and other misfortunes; all of which charities muſt ceaſe were all men on a level, for all men would then be equally poor; it cannot but excite one's aſtoniſhment that ſo fooliſh a ſyſtem ſhould have ever been ſo much as mentioned by any man of common ſenſe. It is a ſyſtem not practicable; and was it practicable, it would not be uſeful; and was it uſeful, it would not be juſt.

But ſome one may think, and, indeed, it has been ſtudiouſly inculcated into the minds of the multitude, that a monarchy, even a limited one, is a far more expenſive mode of civil government than a republic; that a civil liſt of a million a year, is an enormous ſum, which might be ſaved to the nation. Suppoſing that every ſhilling of this ſum could be ſaved, and that every ſhil-

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ſing of it was expended in ſupporting the dignity of the crown—both which ſuppoſitions are entirely falſe—ſtill ſhould I think the liberty, the proſperity, the tranquillity, the happineſs of this great nation cheaply purchaſed by ſuch a ſum; ſtill ſhould I think that he would be a madman in politics, who would, by a change of the conſtitution, riſk theſe bleſſings (and France ſupplies us with a proof that infinite riſk would be run) for a paltry ſaving of expence. I am not, nor have ever been, the patron of corruption. So far as the civil liſt has a tendency to corrupt the judgment of any member of either houſe of parliament, it has a bad tendency, which I wiſh it had not; but I cannot wiſh to ſee the ſplendor of the crown reduced to nothing, leſt its proper weight in the ſcale of the conſtitution ſhould be thereby deſtroyed. A great portion of this million is expended in paying the ſalaries of the judges, the interpreters of our law, the guardians of our lives and properties!—Another portion is expended in maintaining ambaſſadors at different courts, to protect the general concerns of the nation from foreign aggreſſion:—another portion is expended in penſions and donations to men of letters and ingenuity; to men who have, by naval, military, or civil ſervices, juſt claims to

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the attention of their country; to perſons of reſpectable families and connexions, who have been humbled and broken down by misfortunes. I do not ſpeak with accuracy, nor on ſuch a ſubject is accuracy requiſite; but I am not far wide of truth in ſaying, that a fifth part of the million is more than ſufficient to defray the expences of the Royal houſehold—What a mighty matter is it to complain of, that each individual contributes leſs than ſixpence a year towards the ſupport of the monarchy!

That the conſtitution of this country is ſo perfect as neither to require or admit of any improvement, is a propoſition to which I never did, or ever can aſſent; but I think it far too excellent to be amended by peaſants and mechanics. I do not mean to ſpeak of peaſants and mechanics with any degree of diſreſpect; I am not ſo ignorant of the importance, either of the natural or ſocial chain by which all the individuals of the human race are connected together, as to think diſreſpectfully of any link of it. Peaſants and mechanics are as uſeful to the ſtate as any other order of men; but their utility conſiſts in their diſcharging well the duties of their reſpective ſtations: it ceaſes when they affect to become legiſlators; when

when they intrude themſelves into concerns, for which their education has not fitted them.—The liberty of the preſs is a main ſupport of the liberty of the nation; it is a bleſſing which it is our duty to tranſmit to poſterity; but a bad uſe is ſometimes made of it: and its uſe is never more pernicious, than when it is employed to infuſe into the minds of the loweſt orders of the community, diſparaging ideas concerning the conſtitution of their country. No danger need be apprehended from a candid examination of our own conſtitution, or from a diſplay of the advantages of any other; it will bear to be contraſted with the beſt: but all men are not qualified to make the compariſon; and there are ſo many men, in every community, who wiſh to have no government at all, that an appeal to them on ſuch a point ought never to be made.

There are, probably, in every government upon earth, circumſtances which a man, accuſtomed to the abſtract inveſtigation of truth, may eaſily prove to be deviations from the rigid rule of ſtrict political juſtice; but whilſt theſe deviations are either generally not known, or, though known, generally acquieſced in as matters of little moment to the general felicity, I cannot think it to

be the part, either of a good man, or of a good citizen, to be zealous in recommending ſuch matters to the diſcuſſion of ignorant and uneducated men.

I am far from inſinuating, that the ſcience of politics is involved in myſtery; or that men of plain underſtandings ſhould be debarred from examining the principles of the government, to which they yield obedience. All that I contend for is this—that the foundations of our government ought not to be overturned, nor the edifice erected thereon tumbled into ruins, becauſe an acute politician may pretend that he has diſcovered a flaw in the building, or that he could have laid the foundation after a better model.

What would you ſay to a ſtranger who ſhould deſire you to pull down your houſe, becauſe, forſooth, he had built one in France or America, after, what he thought, a better plan? You would ſay to him—No, ſir—my anceſtors have lived in this manſion comfortably and honourably for many generations; all its walls are ſtrong, and all its timbers ſound: if I ſhould obſerve a decay in any of its parts, I know how to make the reparation without the aſſiſtance of ſtrangers; and

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I know too, that the reparation, when made by myſelf, may be made without injury either to the ſtrength or beauty of the building. It has been buffeted, in the courſe of ages, by a thouſand ſtorms; yet ſtill it ſtands unſhaken as a rock, the wonder of all my neighbours, each of whom ſighs for one of a ſimilar conſtruction. Your houſe may be ſuited to your climate and temper, this is ſuited to mine. Permit me, however, to obſerve to you, that you have not yet lived long enough in your new houſe, to be ſenſible of all the inconveniences to which it may be liable: nor have you yet had any experience of its ſtrength; it has yet ſuſtained no ſhocks; the firſt whirlwind may ſcatter its component members in the air; the firſt earthquake may ſhake its foundation; the firſt inundation may ſweep the ſuperſtructure from the ſurface of the earth. I hope no accident will happen to your houſe, but I am ſatisfied with mine own.

Great calamities of every kind attend the breaking up of eſtabliſhed governments:—yet there are ſome forms of government, eſpecially when they happen to be badly adminiſtered, ſo exceedingly deſtructive of the happineſs of mankind, that a change of them is not improvidently

purchaſed at the expence of the miſchief accompanying their ſubverſion. Our government is not of that kind: look round the globe, and ſee if you can diſcover a ſingle nation on all its ſurface, ſo powerful, ſo rich, ſo beneficent, ſo free and happy as our own. May Heaven avert from the minds of my countrymen the ſlighteſt wiſh to aboliſh their conſtitution!

" Kingdoms," obſerves Mr. Locke, " have been overturned by the pride, ambition, and turbulency of private men; by the people's wantonneſs and deſire to caſt off the lawful authority of their rulers, as well as by the rulers' inſolence, and endeavours to get and exerciſe an arbitrary power over the people." The recent danger to our conſtitution was in my opinion ſmall; for I conſidered its excellence to be ſo obvious to men even of the moſt unimproved underſtandings, that I looked upon it as an idle and fruitleſs effort, either in foreign or domeſtic incendiaries, to endeavour to perſuade the bulk of the people to conſent to an alteration of it in favour of a republic. I knew, indeed, that in every country the flagitious dregs of a nation were always ripe for revolutions; but I was ſenſible, at the ſame time, that it was the intereſt,

tereſt, not only of the opulent and powerful; not only of the mercantile and middle claſſes of life; but even of honeſt labourers and manufacturers, of every ſober and induſtrious man, to reſiſt the licentious principles of ſuch peſtilent members, ſhall I call them, or outcaſts of ſociety. Men better informed, and wiſer than myſelf, thought that the conſtitution was in great danger. Whether in fact the danger wasgreat or ſmall, it is not neceſſary now to enquire; it may be more uſeful to declare, that, in my humble opinion, the danger, of whatever magnitude it may have been, did not originate in any encroachments of either the legiſlative or executive power on the liberties or properties of the people; but inthe wild fancies and turbulent tempers of diſcontented or ill informed individuals. I ſincerely rejoice that, through the vigilance of adminiſtration, this turbulency has received a check. The hopes of bad men have been diſappointed, and the underſtandings of miſtaken men have been enlightened, by the general and unequivocal judgment of a whole nation; a nation not more renowned for its bravery and its humanity, though juſtly celebrated for both, than for its loyalty to its princes, and, what is perfectly conſiſtent with loyalty, for its

love of liberty, and attachment to the conſtitution. Wiſe men have formed it, brave men have bled for it, it is our part to preſerve it.

R. LANDAFF.

London, Jan. 25, 1793.

FINIS.