

Ten letters to Dr. Joseph Priestly, in answer to his Letters to the inhabitants of Northumberland / from Noah Webster, Jun.

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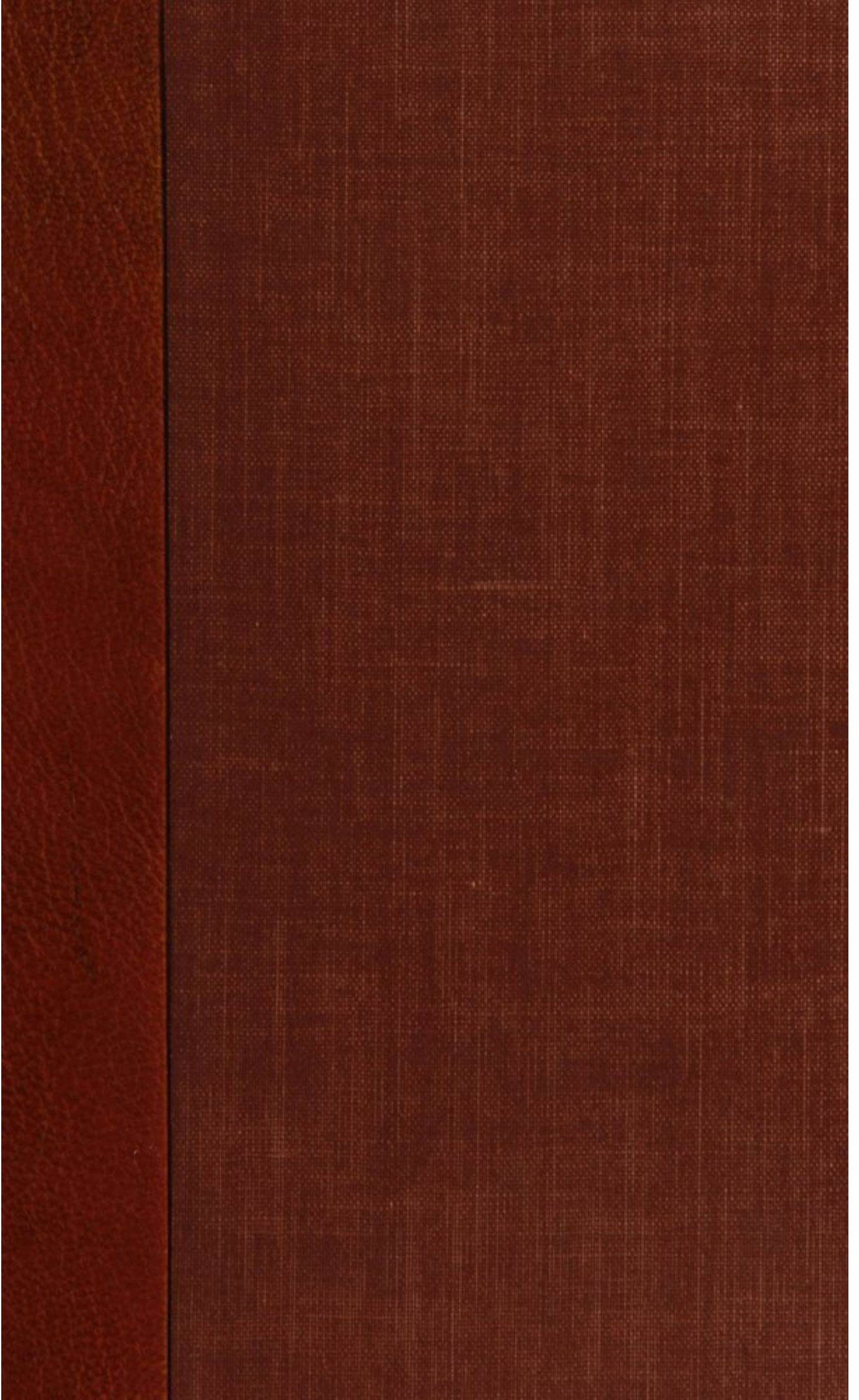
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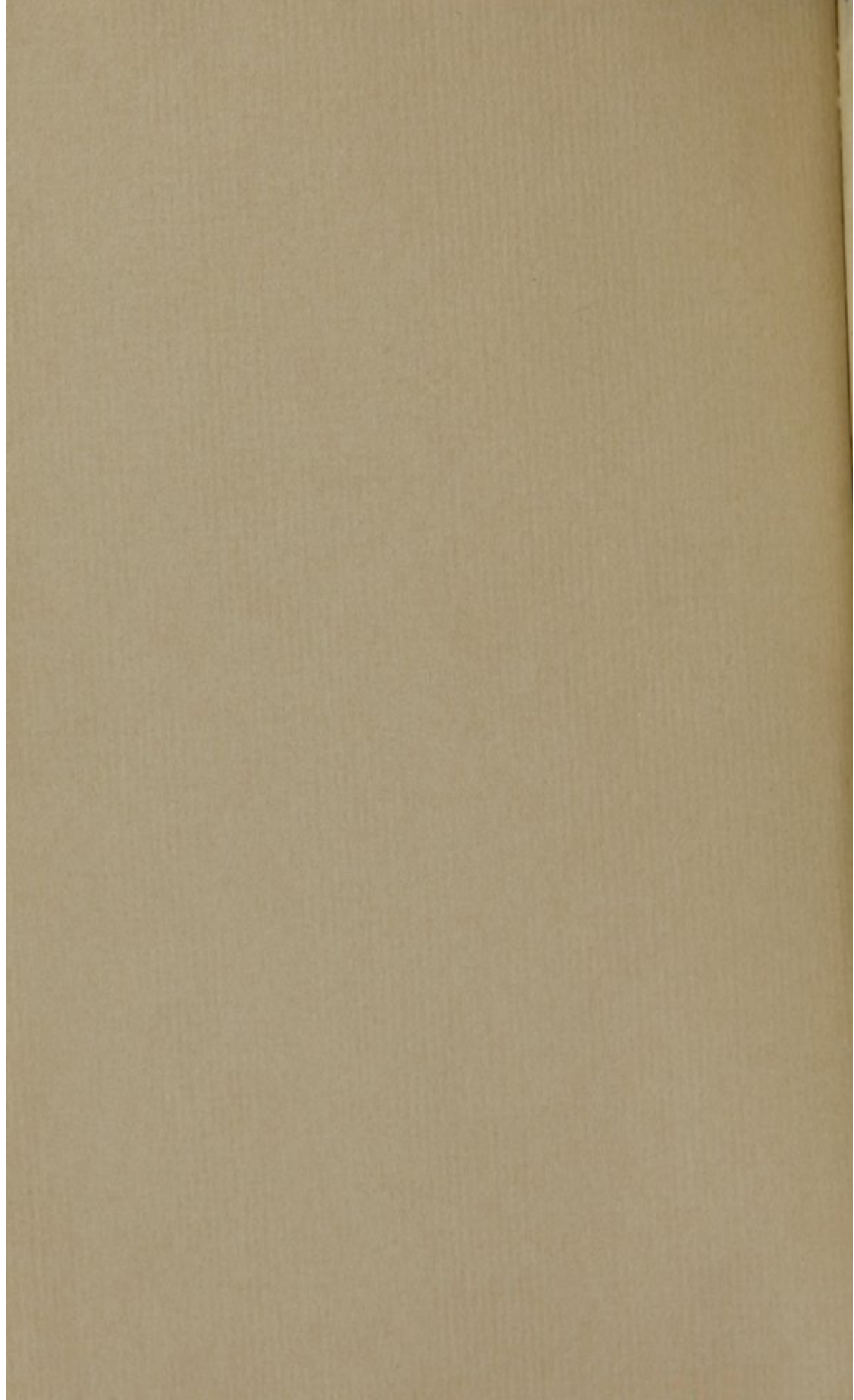


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WASHINGTON, D.C.





Webster, Noah, 1758-1843

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TEN LETTERS

March to the 4, 1800

Dr. Joseph Priestly,

IN ANSWER

TO HIS LETTERS

TO THE INHABITANTS

OF NORTHUMBERLAND;

FROM NOAH WEBSTER, JUN.

NEW HAVEN:

PRINTED BY READ & MORSE,

1800.

Box 1286

THE LETTERS

Dr. Joseph Pritchard

IN ANSWER

TO HIS LETTERS

TO THE INHABITANTS

OF NORTHUMBERLAND

LONDON: Printed by J. JOHNSON, in Pall-mall.

NEW EDITION

Printed by J. JOHNSON & CO.

1800

LETTER I.

TO DR. JOSEPH PRIESTLY.

SIR,

TWO pamphlets of your writing, addressed to the Inhabitants of Northumberland, by accident falling into my hands, have excited no small degree of surprize, and appear to merit a few comments. I had before thought that no man of ordinary reading, could be so little acquainted with the state of the public mind in the United States, as you appear to be. You say, you *see* almost all the News papers in Philadelphia; it is to be wished, Sir, that you would *learn* the opinions of the Inhabitants of New-England, before you assert things that have not the least foundation.

IN page 2 of part I, you speak of W. Cobbett as the "most popular writer in this Country, and as one who receives the greatest countenance from the persons in power." What countenance he receives from "persons in power," who, as I understand the words, are officers of government, I do not know; the gentlemen can answer for themselves. I think it most probable, Sir, that your assertion is a gross calumny.

BUT with respect to the popularity of Cobbett, in the Eastern States, I am acquainted with the facts, and can assure you, that your opinion is utterly groundless. Cobbett is the only writer who devotes his time and talents to support a British interest and party in our country; and it is natural that he should have the countenance and support of British subjects, and some Americans who were unfriendly to the American Revolution. These, in the whole union, make a considerable number; altho many of these disapprove of his writings; for you will please to observe that many of the American Royalists, and all of them who are men of candor and good sense, are reconciled to our form of government and are among its firmest supporters.

IN addition to the classes of men above described, Cobbett had, at the first publication of his Gazette, many friends and supporters among the Old Whigs, who are now the friends of administration; because they wished to encourage all papers that might expose the intrigues and lessen the influence of the French in this country. But many of these men, and I believe most of them, have withdrawn their patronage, from a conviction that Cobbett's objects were rather to make a British party in America, and exalt his own country, than to promote union of opinions and give stability to the neutral system of the United States; and from a conviction that his writings have a tendency to increase opposition to our government, and weaken the hands of administration. It is an opinion in New-England, that his indiscriminate abuse of characters, his low, scurrilous language, and avowed predilection for his native country, as far as they have had

any influence in Pennsylvania, have favored the election of Governor M'Kean; and by irritating the friends of the American Revolution in other states, have every where nursed a spirit of Jacobinism. I am persuaded, Sir, that half a dozen such writers scattered over the Eastern States, by insulting the friends of the revolution, and reviving animosities against Great Britain, now smothered, but not extinguished, would in a short time so irritate the people, that it would not be possible for administration to prevent their resentment from bursting forth into acts of violence.—As far therefore, as the writings of Cobbett have had any influence, it has been to excite uneasiness against Great Britain, and against our government for its pacific policy towards Great Britain. His papers however, are not generally read—very few indeed, are seen in New-England. A few persons, who are fond of low wit and scurrility, read his papers; for the same reason that they would go to see a mountebank. With the most influential men in the Eastern States, who occasionally see his Gazette, his opinions have no more weight than the howlings of a bull-bog.—Be assured, Dr. Priestly, that with men of character, it is all one whether a dog barks or Cobbett writes.—In the course of a journey of eight hundred miles through the Eastern States, in various directions, I every where heard the writings of Cobbett spoken of with the utmost contempt and abhorrence; and this without a single exception. His Gazette is universally ranked with the Aurora and Argus, in point of enmity to our government, and in point of decency, much below either of the Jacobin prints.

So much I thought it my duty to say, in explanation of the opinions of my countrymen. Dr. Priestly, you and Cobbett are both foreigners and aliens; and it would be much more decent for you both, not to trouble the citizens of America, with your pestiferous disputes, or your arrogant pretensions to instruct them in their duty. We expect many marks of indignity from Englishmen in their own country. We are not even surprised to see in a British review, the great change of opinions in America, wrought by the publication of the dispatches from our Envoys in Paris, ascribed to W. Cobbett.—Such gross errors are very congenial to the pride of Englishmen. But living as you do, in the United States, you ought not to calumniate the character of this country, by propagating a like doctrine. It is false, Sir, in toto,—it has not the least shadow of foundation—and if you would make yourself acquainted with the people of America, either by travelling or by means of correspondence with men of correct information, you *would know it to be false.*

LETTER II.

SIR,

THE next passage I shall notice, is, in your first pamphlet, Letter 2, page 7 and 8, in which you say, that in 1794 there was no complaint in America, of *French principles*, though they were the same then as they are now—they were then universally considered as the principles of general liberty, and the same with American principles, that is, *republican*, in opposition to *monarchial*—that the change which has taken place is not in *you*, but in the people here—that you do not see wherein French principles, that is, the principles of the French government, differ in any thing essential from those of our own, &c.

Is it possible, Dr. Priestley, that you can be so ill informed on the subject of the public opinion in the United States? This is the best apology I can make for your representation of the state of the question, in regard to French principles and American principles.

THE Americans, sir, are not at war with the abstract principles of the French Constitutions. I say, *Constitutions*, for the National Legislature has formed three or four; all of them *republican*, but none of them durable. If the present should stand, you will be pleased to observe, that it is a *free* government in speculation, maintained by a *military* despotism in fact. There are many people in this Country, some of them as old as you, sir, and as well versed in political history, who are inclined to believe that no republican *form* of government in France can be supported by any other means than *despotism*. They draw their conclusions from historical facts, experience, and the known principles of the human heart. But this is an abstract question, that has no influence on the conduct of our government towards France, nor on the general temper of our Citizens towards the French government.

IN 1794, sir, and for some years previous, the people of America generally believed the views of the French reformers to be pure and to be limited to the sole object of correcting the enormous abuses of their own government. While this was the general belief in America, our citizens were well wishers to the success of the Revolution. It was in 1793, that the conduct of Mr. Genet first excited suspicions that the French Revolutionists had other views. To men in the administration and many others, whose minds were intent upon the progress of the Revolution, it appeared *then* to be very obvious, that the French had views hostile to the peace, not only of Europe, but of the United States; although the bulk of the people in America, in the strength of their prepossessions for a Republican government, and in their honest credulity, continued to think well of the views of the French Reformers, until two or three years later.

FOR myself, sir, I can assure you, that in 1792, I was a warm admirer of the French reformation; and in some pieces which I

wrote for the public papers, will be seen my zeal to apologize for the excesses which marked the commencement of the Revolution.

THE first thing that excited alarm, was the conduct and declarations of Mr. Genet. His landing at Charleston in March 1793, and his arrogant display of power, gave great offence; but when it appeared that his solemn declarations that the French Government did not wish the United States to quit neutral ground, were contradicted by his secret intrigues, and especially by his positive instructions, which required him to use all his influence to persuade "the American Government to make a common cause with France"; and when it appeared that he came furnished with blank Commissions to put into the hands of the French and Americans; and at the very time that he was making fair declarations of the most pacific views, was arming privateers in our ports and raising a body of land forces in the heart of our country—When all this appeared, you may be assured that no honest American could see all this falsehood, duplicity and cunning, without suspecting the fundamental principles of the French Revolution.

EVERY year and every packet from Europe tended to strengthen our suspicions; and to shew you how well founded were our suspicions of the sincerity of French professions, I offer to your consideration a few other proofs, selected from official papers. The number might be greatly increased, but I would not swell this letter with facts well known in this country.

IN the Manifesto of the Convention, decreed Dec. 29, 1791, and sent to all the Courts of Europe, is the following passage. "The French nation renounces the undertaking of war, with the view of making conquests, and will never employ her forces against the liberty of any state. Such is the text of their constitution. Jealous of her own independence, she will never infringe the independence of other nations. In requiring other nations to respect her repose, she took an eternal engagement not to trouble others."

Now observe, sir. Savoy was conquered by general Montefquieu in Sept. 1792, and on the 27th of November following, less than eleven months from the date of their solemn manifesto, the Convention decreed that "Savoy shall be united with the French republic and shall form the 24th department under the name of Mont Blanc."

ON the 19th of November 1792, the Convention passed that famous decree, that they would "grant fraternity and assistance to all those people who wish to procure liberty"—a decree which alarmed all nations, and which, notwithstanding the attempts made to soften and explain away its true import, was an actual invitation to the people of every country to rebel against their government, without even a discrimination in favor of republican governments. In the Convention, Cambon declared on the 15th December 1792, that, "You must freely declare our revolutionary power in every country which we enter. You must overturn established constitutions and convoke primary assemblies." These declarations were made officially in the name of the military and diplomatic committees.

WHAT can you say, Dr. Priestly, to contradictions of this kind? Further :

IN a Manifesto read in Convention, December 5, 1793, and sent to all the departments, it is declared that "The French are not infected with the furor of rendering other nations free and happy against their own will."

In a letter from Mr. Chauvlin to Lord Grenville, dated December 27, 1792, it is declared that "The National Convention never meant that the French Republic should favor insurrection."—How well this accords, Sir, with Cambon's declaration that their revolutionary power, must be freely declared in every country?

AGAIN, Sir, In a letter from Mr. Chauvlin to Lord Grenville, dated June 2d, 1792, that minister declares that "France wishes to preserve her own limits—she *repels every idea of aggrandizement.*" In another letter dated January 13, 1793, he declares, "France has renounced and again renounces every conquest." But, Sir, it happens that this letter was written six weeks after Savoy had been *conquered and annexed to France.*

IN the Manifesto of December 29, 1791, The Convention say, "France will never infringe the Independence of other nations." What is, if possible, more infamous, the French Representatives in Holland, in a speech made to the States General in February 1795, after that country was *conquered and garrisoned with French troops*, declared "The national convention will be always faithful to the solemn engagements it has made, *not to intermeddle* in the government of foreign nations."

IN August 1794, Barrere made a report on the victories of the armies, in which he says, "Thus the armies of the Republic subdue Flanders, seize Belgium, *humble Holland*, contract the territories of the kingling of Sardinia, make Italy tremble, seize on the Palatinate and the borders of the Rhine."

ON the 30th of January 1795, the French Convention, adopted a report of Boissy d'Anglas, expressive of their principles—in which are these words :—"The sincere desire of rendering peace solid and durable, obliges us to extend our frontiers, to take for our limits great Rivers, the mountains and the ocean—at *this price*, the powers of Europe may depend on an inviolable peace."—In April 1795, Reubell, in his report on the Treaty with Prussia, says, "You have not yet pronounced on the limits of the territory of the Republic."—Although in 1793, in March, the Committee of Safety reported that the "natural boundaries of the Republic are the Alps, the Pyrenees, the two seas, and a free country, which had been their ally for two centuries."—And in another report of the same Committee in February 1795, it is declared, speaking of Belgium, that "Nature, the wish of the people, and the *interest of the French Republic*, require that this country should remain forever a conquest to liberty."

IN March 1795, Cambaceres declared in an official report, that "*France is called to direct and reform the politics of Europe.*"

IN a report of Carnot to the Convention February 18, 1795, the French are called the "*Conquerors*" of Holland, and the Dutch people the *vanquished*.

IN multitudes of instances we find the French making promises of fidelity to their allies—yet on the 22d of December 1794, they acknowledged in an official report of Johannot, that "with regard to the Americans, we have followed the example of the *perfidious English.*"

I CAN fill pages, Sir, with similar contradictions, and inconsistencies, taken from French official papers, before me; but they would swell this letter beyond the limits intended. You must certainly be acquainted with them, Sir; and I am surprized that a gentleman of your apparent good sense and candor, should pass by the *real reasons* of a change of public opinion in America, and write about a resemblance in the abstract principles of the French and American Governments. You *must* know, Sir, that this change has been produced solely by the discovery of the *real views* of the French Revolutionists—their contradictions—their insults to foreign nations—their domineering pride and ambition—their treachery towards the small peaceable States in their vicinity—their secret intrigues to influence the government of America—their rapaciousness in plundering trade—their infamous corruption and perfidy which may well put all kings and courtiers to the blush.—The people of America, Sir, abandoned the French cause, when the French themselves abandoned the principles of their own Constitution.

BY French principles are now meant, principles of Atheism, irreligion, ambition, and Jacobinism. The citizens of this part of America are firmly persuaded that French conquests, or attempts to reform Europe by the sword, are inconsistent, not only with their own professions, but with the peace of the world. They believe the opinion, that man can be governed by his *reason improved*, without the usual aids of religion and law, to be not merely a chimera, but a dangerous doctrine, calculated to undermine the foundation of morals and all social confidence and security. They wish the governments of Europe reformed—and will all espouse the cause of the Reformers, when their views shall be limited to that object.

WITH respect to *forms* of government, our citizens generally suppose the republican to be the best, for all countries on earth. I question this opinion myself. It appears to me that a free government arises naturally out of a state of society like that which exists in America; but that the state of society, in most parts of Europe, will not admit of that form, or will render it impracticable. The discussion of this question would lead me into a dissertation improper in this place—and I shall therefore close this letter with barely stating my opinion in general terms.

L E T T E R III.

SIR,

IN your second letter, page 8 and 9, you define *democracy*, with a view to explain away the odious sense annexed to the word *democrat*. You call the constitution of this country a *democracy*; and every man who is not a *democrat*, an enemy to this constitution. But whatever you may call the true meaning of these words, the practice of our country has annexed to them and established a different signification. By *democracy* is intended a government, where the legislative powers are exercised directly by all the citizens; as formerly in Athens and Rome. In our country, this power is not in the hands of the people, but of their representatives. The powers of the people are principally restricted to the direct exercise of the rights of suffrage. Hence a material distinction between our form of government and those of the ancient democracies. Our form of government has acquired the appellation of a *Republic*, by way of distinction, or rather of a *Representative Republic*.

Hence the word *Democrat* has been used as synonymous with the word *Jacobin* in France; and by an additional idea, which arose from the attempt to control our government by private popular associations, the word has come to signify a person, who attempts an undue opposition to, or influence over government, by means of private clubs, secret intrigues, or by public popular meetings, which are extraneous to the constitution. By *Republicans* we understand the friends of our Representative Governments, who believe that no influence whatever should be exercised in a state, which is not directly authorized by the Constitution and Laws.

FROM the signification of the word *democrat*, as above explained, the transition is easy to that of an opposer of administration generally.

IN letter 4, page 17 and 18, you say "the language and sentiments of the federalists appear to you to be very congenial to those of the friends of monarchy and high maxims of government in England."—In this passage, sir, you betray total ignorance of the general character and opinions of the Federalists, or rather friends to administration. You appear to have collected this opinion of yours from the English Gazette, lately published in Philadelphia, and other papers conducted by men of little talents and the humble imitators of Porcupine.—But whatever has been the source from which you have derived your opinion, you may rest assured of its fallacy—it is false and groundless. New England, sir, contains about a million of inhabitants; I have been born and educated among them—few men of my age have a more extensive acquaintance in all parts of the country—and I can declare to you that the great body of the people are as firmly attached to a republican government, as they ever were, at any period of our revolution. Our present Constitution is the government of our choice—the people are independent landholders—

free and accustomed to manage their own local concerns—to choose their Representatives—to *respect them when chosen—to place confidence in them—and obey their laws.* If bad laws happen to be enacted, as they will sometimes be, from haste or mistake, inconveniences are soon experienced and the laws repealed.—To this form of government our citizens are accustomed; they know no other, and will submit to no other. It is a government which has grown out of our state of society; which is interwoven into all the habits of life and opinions of our citizens; and I will repeat to you what I said to Mr. Genet in August 1793, in answer to his assertion, that General Washington and Mr. Hamilton had it in contemplation to bring us again under the dominion of Great Britain.—“Sir, there are a million of people in the Eastern States whom you have not seen—I am acquainted with those people—they are a free, intelligent people—they know their rights perfectly, and are able to defend them—and be assured, sir, it is no more in the power of Gen. Washinton or Mr. Hamilton to bring them under the government of Great Britain, or to change their government, than it is to make a world.”

LET this answer satisfy you and allay all democratic apprehensions about the introduction of monarchy or its maxims into this country. If there is any danger of the reception of such maxims, it arises from the unreasonable jealousies and disaffection of our democrats, to the administration. The incessant opposition made to a government which, on the whole, appears to be administered with great integrity, and purity, has alarmed, at times, our best republicans, and made them more willing to see strength added to the executive arm, than they would have been, under a more quiet submission to the general policy of administration.

YOU apologize for your interfering with the political concerns of this country, on the following grounds—That you are old and have read and thought much on political subjects—and with a sneer, page 15, you insinuate that you are much wiser than many *young native Americans.* This, sir, hardly deserves a sneer from a native American. 2d. That you were seven years in the family of the Marquis of Lansdowne, where you saw and conversed with the first politicians in Europe—That you knew many great political characters of France, as well as in England, such as Mr. Turgot, Mr. Neckar, Mr. Brissot, Mr. Pethion, and the Duc de Rochefocault, &c. [Such men by the way do not pass for politicians in the United States—They knew nothing about true politics, or the art of governing—and to their blunders must be ascribed the miseries of the French people, during the revolution.] 3d. That you have written a book or two on political subjects, and have been acquainted with the Abbe Raynal, Adam Smith, Dr. Franklin, and President Adams, &c.

ALL these circumstances, sir, give you very high pretensions to political skill and sagacity; but your political tenets prove that, from all these heterogeneous materials, you have *not* extracted a system of *sound politics.*

L E T T E R I V.

SIR,

IN your second pamphlet, page 5, you say, that all persons entrusted with the conduct of public affairs are the *servants* of the people and accountable to them for their conduct in office.

WITHOUT the least reserve, sir, I contradict you directly—and whenever the assertion is made, or wherever found, whether in your writings or in the constitutions of the States, it is a disgrace to those who make it. You, of all men, sir, ought to be better acquainted with the meaning of words, and the nature and duties of public stations.

A *servant* acts in *subordination to a master*—to whom he is responsible. But this is not true of any *Legislator* in our country. So far is a legislator from being a *servant* of the people, that his election constitutes him their *plenipotentiary substitute*—he takes the *place and all the powers*, quoad the object of his appointment, which the people themselves *would take*, if they were to attend the Legislature in person. He acts *not* in subordination to any will or commands, either express or implied, but in pursuance of his *own discretion*. In most cases, the people who send him, can have no will, for they do not, and cannot, know the questions on which he will be called to decide. Nor is he responsible to them for his decisions, in the common acceptance of the term. He may be punished for corruption; but in no other case, I believe, can a legislator be called in question for his opinions or decisions. In our country, indeed, most legislatures have bounds set to their authority in certain points, by the first social compact; but ten thousand cases occur in which the legislature is bound by no limits, except moral right and wrong, or political expediency—the same limits that nature and society prescribe for every citizen.

THE word *servant* therefore does not express the character and relation of a legislator to the people, and to call him by that name, is an abuse of words—it is more—it is the direct mode of bringing government and laws into contempt. The use of it originated in the enthusiasm of our revolution, when an opposition to the claims of the British parliament had driven our citizens into an extreme hatred of power, and into a neglect of some distinctions which are essential to a due support of the most free government.

IN page 9, you begin to state your objections to our Constitution. The first is, the eligibility of a man to the office of President for life. The reason assigned is, the danger of an enlargement of executive power, and you are pleased to say, that the more power men have, the more they wish to have.

IT is really strange, sir, that your candor should have overlooked one remarkable exception—the illustrious Washington—who disliked power and office so sincerely, that he was literally compelled to accept of the first office in our government. This may be a rare in-

stance ; but our government has so few attractions that it has been found very difficult to find men to fill the highest offices, who are confessedly competent to discharge them with honor and success. I believe, sir, you cannot be ignorant of this fact. So small are the emoluments, so fatiguing the duties, and so exposed to calumny, the stations, that many of the most able men in the United States could not be prevailed on to accept them. Under these circumstances, where is the ground for jealousy ?

EVERY high station requires exalted talents—Great time, great study, a life of labor are requisite to enable men to fill important offices. If you exclude a man from the power of holding the Presidency more than three or four years, according to your idea, you take from him the strongest incentive to qualify himself for the station, and inevitably degrade the office, by being obliged to fill it with incompetent men. Experience, in this case, is a better guide than theory. The jealousy of power, derived from theory, led the people in Georgia, to introduce, into their first constitution, a provision that prevented a man from being Governor, more than one year in three. In a few years it was found that no respectable man could be found to take the office. It was diverting a man from other business, to his great loss, without giving him any equivalent. In short the office, I have been told, sunk to a very low point in public estimation. This, among other things, induced the people to frame a new constitution, in which that provision is omitted, and the Governor is permitted to hold his office for two years under one election.

EXPERIENCE, sir, I repeat, is our best guide. In Connecticut, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and members of Council, are eligible while they live. Nothing like the evils you apprehend in the National Government have ever occurred—no undue extension of powers—no infringements of the people's rights—and this too in a state which has no written constitution.

BESIDES, is not a quadrennial election a sufficient security against corruption and mal-administration ? Cannot we trust the people with their own safety in this regard ? Surely, Sir, *your* unbounded confidence in the people ought to quiet your apprehensions. And if by chance a man is found to fill the office with talents and integrity, is it right to tie the hands of the people, that they shall not re-elect such a man ? Shall the constitution exclude the privilege of availing themselves of distinguished excellence ? For such would be the inevitable consequence of your doctrine. I question the *right* of the people thus to legislate for future generations. But certain I am of the inexpediency of the measure. In this particular, I am persuaded *our* experience, young as we are, is a safer guide, than the speculative wisdom of *your* old age, and vast acquaintance with books, and the great politicians of Europe.

THE parallel you draw between the Executive of France and of America, in the point under consideration, is a most unfortunate one.

You give the preference to the Constitution of France, because each Director has only a fifth of the power, and must be reduced to a private citizen, in five years. You say therefore he is under a less temptation to extend his power. It happens however, that *in fact* the Directory, with all these excellent precautions on paper, did in less than four years, assume nearly all the powers of the Constitution, and became the most absolute despots in Europe. This is agreed by the French themselves. The conclusion I draw from the fact is, what I wish you to ponder more than you appear to have done, that the security which a nation has for its rights, does not depend much on *paper limitations*. A written Constitution, where the powers of the departments of government and all its officers, are never so well defined, has not a tenth part of the influence in checking strides of power and preserving popular privileges, which is commonly supposed, and ascribed to that cause. In Connecticut, the powers of the Legislature have never been much restricted; and are now competent to alter or repeal almost every regulation or law, deemed, in other states, fundamental. Yet I presume no spot on the globe has enjoyed a longer period of uninterrupted freedom, with so few violations of natural and political rights. Nor is it possible for the Legislature to establish a law violating public rights. A law for the purpose could not exist, any more than serpents in Ireland, or an orange tree in Lapland. Government necessarily takes its character and tone from the character of the people, and the state of society. Among a people, independent in property, and accustomed to manage and control the concerns of government, it is physically impossible to introduce despotism. Among a people, corrupt, dependent on a few men, and torn into factions, limitations of power on paper are cobwebs, easily swept away by the breath of violence.

THESE remarks, I deem, a complete refutation of all your arguments on that subject. And I beg leave here to remark, that you and most of your well informed Countrymen, seem to have adopted principles on theoretical reasoning, without the benefit of that multifarious experience which our old citizens enjoy. I am persuaded, that more general and careful observation will, in time, correct many of your opinions.

L E T T E R V.

SIR,

YOUR second objection to our National Constitution, is, that "it contains no sufficient provision for guarding against violations of it by persons entrusted with its administration."

THIS, sir, is a speculative question, which cannot perhaps be now determined. The people of the United States have judged the Court of Impeachments and the Supreme Judicial Court, to be the safest depositories of the powers of punishing officers of government;

especially as the power of impeaching is vested in the *popular* branch. For further light on this subject, we must wait for the results of experiments.

BUT your proposed "Special Court, consisting of deputies, from all the States in the Union," is a projection of a most extraordinary nature. Suppose, sir, that in the several state Governments, it should be ordained that officers of government should be tried by a Special Court consisting of deputies from the several counties or towns, would you think it a wise provision? Much less would you think it wise to vest, in each town, the power of calling that court, at pleasure? I am sure, sir, you have not been eye witness to so many freaks of the populace as I have, or you would not think such a provision very well calculated to secure freedom and justice. Indeed, I am confident that an attendance on the several popular assemblies in this country, and a view of their passions, folly, precipitation, and sometimes violations of law and justice, would cure you of a great many of your errors. In no one point have the theoretical republicans in Europe and America, so egregiously mistaken just principles, as in their opinions of the wisdom and purity of popular Councils. For more than twenty years I have been particularly attentive to this subject; and without resorting to France for examples, I can produce numerous instances of extreme rashness, want of foresight, and base injustice, in the Legislatures of our own country. Some of them were arrested by a venerable Senate; others were matured into laws, and productive of most ruinous effects. Yet a great majority of the individuals composing the Legislatures, were honest, well meaning men; but misled by wrong conceptions of things, by their parsimony, or what was more common, by the insidious arts of designing leaders. In some instances, six months experience convinced the men of their error, and they were surprised they could have been so unwise. In short, sir, after a full consideration of the character of popular assemblies, in this country, where our citizens are as well informed perhaps as in any part of the world, I declare, that I should not value a political Constitution, however good in other respects, as the security of my freedom, without the negative of a Senatorial Branch, less prone to precipitancy, and less dependent on popular passions.

YOUR third exception to our Constitutions, is the requisition of *oaths of allegiance*, and *abjuration*. With respect to the first, allegiance is the duty of every citizen, independent of oaths or laws. An oath, in such a case, is no more than a formal, solemn public declaration or promise of fidelity, in a point in which a man was before bound by social obligation. It is only an *express* promise, in a case where an *implied* promise before existed. Such an oath can wound no conscience—can do no harm. In respect to *abjuration*, I think with you, it is worse than useless, to require it of any man; and am surprised, that such an oath is permitted to exist in any of the States.

YOUR exceptions to the alien and sedition laws contain no new arguments against them. I am among those who firmly believe in the constitutionality of them, as well as their expediency. It could never have been intended by the framers of the Constitution to cripple the national Legislature, in such a manner as to expose the government to convulsions and ruin, without a remedy in the powers of that body. The article relative to the migration of persons, anterior to 1808, as I was in Philadelphia at the time the Constitution was formed, I know was intended to refer to slaves only.—Your citation of that article seems to be designed ad captandum vulgus;—for your own opinion cannot justify you in applying the clause to other persons. With respect to the law to restrain sedition, you must certainly know, that it is in affirmance of the common law. Laws more severe than that have long existed in most of the states. It is a principle never disputed, that a state has a right to punish seditious writings. The law of the United States does *not* abridge the freedom of speech; you are at liberty to say and to publish just what you please, as before—subject only to certain *specific* penalties, in cases where, before the law, you were liable to *undefined* penalties.—The law is humane and wise; and I very much regret that several aliens, who have incessantly abused government, have not experienced its effects.—This remark does not allude to you or your friend Mr. Cooper, whose talents are well spoken of, but whose writings I have not seen. This however I can say, that if you continue to attack the government of the country, and excite uneasiness among the people—which the letters I am answering are calculated to do—I shall rejoice to see the alien law extend the arm of justice to you, as I think it ought to have done, long ago, to your friend Porcupine.

ONE remark further is applicable to the laws under consideration. They are both the offspring of a necessity induced by *aliens*. Never, sir, would our Legislators have thought of them, had not aliens intruded themselves into our national concerns, and attempted to render the measures of our government odious and unpopular.—The same circumstances have rendered such laws necessary in all European States; and the necessity will exist, as long as men busy themselves in making mischief.

L E T T E R VI.

SIR,

YOUR observations on the treaty-making power of the President and Senate, in page 15 and 16 are uncandid, or founded on a mistake, or rather your observations on the power of the House of Representatives to refuse appropriations.

THERE is an improper jealousy in many minds, respecting the Senate. This body is often compared to the House of Lords in England, without any points of resemblance, to warrant the comparison. It is unjust to reason from the powers of a body, holding their place

by hereditary right or royal appointment, to the powers of an elective Senate—a body possessing no exclusive property or privileges, but dependent on the suffrages of their fellow citizens.—Such a body is a *House of Representatives*, as well as the other. The duration of their office is rather in favor of their independence, and from twenty years observation, I can say, that the decisions of the Senates in the several States, have been as pure and patriotic, and much less precipitate and unwise, than the proceedings of the popular branches of the Legislatures. All your jealousies on this head are evidently the effect of base, less theory.

THAT the House of Representatives have no right to refuse appropriations to fulfil a treaty, has, I believe, never been asserted; although when the question was under discussion, I thought the supporters of administration, went farther than the constitution will warrant. The House of Representatives have an undoubted right to refuse such appropriations; but in doing that, they violate the treaty, and take on themselves the responsibility.—The question therefore must forever be determined by the *expediency* of the measure, and I believe, it stands on nearly the same ground between the King and Council, and the House of Commons.

IN page 18 you say, “the *characters* and *lives* of persons in office,—ought not to be considered in any other light than those of other individuals, under the protection of the same laws”—Five lines below you say “Not but that the *lives* of all public officers, civil or military, even that of a Constable, being of greater importance to the society, the crime of taking them away, is greater than that of the murder of private persons.”—If your ingenuity can reconcile those passages, you have more logic than I pretend to possess.

BUT the last passage is correct. The characters of public officers are of more importance than those of private citizens, because they represent the laws. A portion of the respect which men have for the laws, is inseparably attached to the personal character of the man; and a degradation of the man is always followed, in a greater or less degree, with contempt for the laws. This is the reason why libels on public officers are always considered as more hainous, than on private characters. And it is not one of the least surprising contradictions, in the arguments of men in opposition, that they forever exalt the excellence of a republican government and attempt to depress and vilify the characters of those who administer it. The *will of the people* is the incessant burden of their song, yet the men who are designated to execute that will, are called servants, and loaded with every species of indignity.

IN page 21, you write that had you been suffered to pursue your own concerns quietly, you would not have written these expostulatory letters on politics. I confess, sir, the letters to me wear the appearance, not so much of vindication of yourself, as of an insidious attack, on our government, under a pretext of self vindication. If

I am wrong in this opinion, I shall regret it ; but so many things evidently not connected with a vindication of yourself, are wrought into those letters, that I am compelled to believe you have taken this mode of publishing your opinions, on purpose to strengthen a party against administration.

I AM the more persuaded of this fact, as you had not the least occasion for self vindication. Who, sir, has attacked your character ? Has one *native* American ? You do not mention one. It does not appear that any mortal has disturbed your repose, except Cobbett, a countryman of *your own*, an *alien*—a low, scurrilous fugitive from your *own native land*—who is really too contemptible to excite the resentment of American citizens. You ought not therefore to charge *our* citizens with treating you ill—nor make the billingsgate of your own country, the pretext for spreading the principles of disaffection to the government and laws which protect you.—It is not the part of a good citizen.

THAT you befriended the American prisoners in England, during the late war, is a circumstance that entitles you to the sincere acknowledgements of my countrymen ; and for that kindness, if I had no other reasons in the common duties of humanity, my house should be always open in the most hospitable manner, to you and all your family, while I live.

YOU are pleased to say, that in England, “decency and good manners are never violated.” I will not attempt to disturb your enjoyment of this opinion ; but please to remark, sir, that four parts of five of all the indecency which disgraces the American papers, enough in all conscience to disgust *every person* and *all parties*, flows from the pens of natives of Europe, who have lately immigrated to this country, and a very large portion of it, from British subjects.

L E T T E R VII.

SIR,

IN your 12th letter, in which you treat of the policy of America with respect to foreign nations, you give it as your opinion, that while our treaty with France subsisted, a treaty should not have been made with England, without the knowledge, and without the concurrence, of the French Government.

I COULD not have believed a sentiment so degrading to the character of a free citizen, could have been harbored in the mind of the lowest of the French partizans in this country ; much less, in the mind of the philosophic Priestley. What ! ask the consent of a foreign nation to a negotiation ? Where is the independence of a nation thus tramelled ? I am ashamed, Sir, that a man breathing the air of a free country can be found capable of uttering that humiliating sentiment. Do you believe, Sir, that President Adams has solicited the consent of the British government, to a negotiation with France ?

Did President Washington ask the concurrence of France to a negotiation with Spain? Dr. Priestley—Old as you are, I beg of you still to learn, in a free country, to maintain the dignity of a freeman.

THE opinions here expressed are wholly independent of the *merits* of the treaty with Great-Britain, *which* are to be judged by other principles. In general, the treaty was not unfavorable to America; but one or two of the articles gave no small uneasiness to the friends of administration: Such was the article respecting contraband goods; nothing being more obvious than that a commercial nation should not consent, on any consideration, to an enlargement of the list of contraband articles. Yet after the treaty had been ratified by the Senate, it was judged most prudent to make no opposition to it.

THE only real advantage which I expected would be derived from the treaty, was, the adjustment of the old controversies about debts and the surrender of the western posts, which the British Government held as pledges for those debts. To effect this, by removing the causes of mutual complaint, and healing the wounds which were incessantly irritated by both parties, was an interesting object; and if that object alone should be effected, it would be an equivalent for great sacrifices. Whether it will or not, is yet uncertain; but certainly it was wise policy to attempt it.

THAT it was *right* and *honorable* to enter upon a treaty with Great Britain, without the knowledge or concurrence of the French Government, I have no doubt, although our Government could have no right to change the ground on which America and France stood. But, Sir, no man who regards the safety and independence of a nation, and especially of the United States, should suggest the idea, that one nation is bound to ask the consent of an ally to a negotiation with her enemy. The practice, if adopted, would lead to inextricable embarrassments. Good faith alone is the rule by which the Government of any nation is bound to regulate its conduct towards its allies.

ON the subject of the policy of a navy and an army, I differ from you; and in some measure, from most of my fellow citizens. But the subject cannot be discussed in these letters. I can only say, with regard to the present measures of defence, that in my opinion, they ought not to be abandoned, without an adequate substitute, which, there is no reason to believe, can be furnished.—In the present state of the world, no nation can be safe, without warlike skill and preparations. Military knowledge and spirit ought not to be lost; for it is impossible to foresee from what quarter danger may proceed. And I am one of those who believe, that this state of mankind will be durable as the human race. What man always has been, I believe he always will be—until the millennium; and I am not skilled enough in prophecy to discern, at present, the approaches of that happy period. Indeed the most convincing evidence that the world is growing no better, nor making any advances towards universal peace and

concord, is drawn from the conduct of the men who pretend to believe in the doctrine. In Europe and America, it is true, as a general remark, that the pretended believers in a regenerated state of society, and the advocates of universal peace, are the most seditious people when out of office, and the most bloodthirsty and tyrannical in power. With the sound of *liberty* and *toleration* on their tongues, they have usually obtained power by the most unjustifiable means, and when they possessed it, have exercised it with the most intolerant and unrelenting severity. With a few exceptions, the men in opposition in our country, are men either desperate in their circumstances, or profligate in their lives, or known to be unbelievers. And permit me to say further, that you, with all your apparent frankness, furnish a remarkable proof that man is not destined to enjoy uninterrupted harmony and peace. Under a government acknowledged by you to be the most free and best constituted of any on earth, you are not satisfied with the portion of rights enjoyed. You are uneasy, either at the administration, or at some speculative points in the constitution, and instead of acquiescing in the laws and measures of the constitutional authorities, you are endeavoring to encrease and strengthen a spirit of opposition; thus alarming your fellow citizens, and exciting one party to resist, and the other to defend the government. Such will certainly be the effect of your writings, if they make the impression, which, *if true*, they ought to make. You seem not to consider that the mass of the people may make more of your opinions than you intend; and that passions once inflamed, will not stop at the limit which your closet philosophy may prescribe. The ravages of the mob, which destroyed your house, your apparatus and papers, in England, ought certainly to have taught YOU, not to tamper with popular passions.—If the officers of government do actually violate the constitution—if they have monarchical views, as you allege or insinuate, the people will do right to make a vigorous opposition. Our only chance for peace and safety, therefore, is, a general persuasion in the public mind that *your charges are not just*; and I thank God, there is reason to believe, that on this ground, we have ample security.

L E T T E R V I I I .

SIR,

ON the general subject of withdrawing all marine defence, and leaving the merchant to defend himself or take his chance on the ocean, I will make only a few general remarks.

ON the calculations of arithmetic, perhaps a naval power costs more than it saves. This however is a very questionable point, because such is the state of the world, that no certain data can exist by which it can be determined. The expences of a navy may be ascertained; but what amount of property it saves, that is, what

amount would be lost, in case of no defense, it is never possible to know.

BUT I consider such calculations as useless, because your system is liable to much stronger objections.

IN the first place, some naval power is necessary to defend our ports. Experience teaches us that ships of war are our most effectual batteries : and I presume that you, if you had property in New York or Norfolk, would think it unwise to leave such towns exposed to the plunderers of the ocean. To say that we are safe, because no foreign nation can have the least occasion or excuse to attack us, may possibly satisfy you, in the interior of Pennsylvania ; but it will not satisfy us, who have houses and stores, which are liable every hour to be blown about our ears, by any 20 gun privateer or piratical ship.

IN the second place, it is very questionable whether the state of seclusion you recommend would be productive of the happiness and beneficial effects contemplated. The happiness of man seems not to depend so much on *property* as on the *pursuit* of it. Virtue, health, the vigor of the mind, intellectual improvements, every thing that goes into the composition of happiness and greatness, seem to depend on active industry and employment. And as a general remark, it will be found true, that all these qualities and circumstances are best promoted, where there is the least restraint on honest industry. The better way is to leave the mind of man as free from fetters as possible—and the nation that does this, will be great, and I believe, in general, will be more virtuous and happy, than a nation whose genius is limited to one spot on the globe.

THE example you offer for imitation is an unfortunate one.—The Chinese, if our accounts of them may be depended on, are not more rich, or more virtuous, or more learned, than the nations of Europe who carry on and protect foreign trade. On the other hand, we have reason to believe they are inferior to most nations in all these particulars. Nor does their mode of carrying on trade exempt them from the evils of war and conquest. It is true that instead of the expences of a fleet and army, they laid out a sum of money perhaps equal to the British debt, in raising an enormous wall to protect their country from the Tartars ; but that did not secure them from conquest. On the other hand, their pacific policy which you recommend, and their confidence in their wall, destroyed a military spirit and occasioned a neglect of other means of defence ; in this situation, the Tartars found a way through the wall, and easily subjected the peaceable Chinese to their government. Such examples, sir, do not recommend your policy, for the Tartars had no more reason for invading China, than France or Great Britain has for conquering this country. Your argument therefore, that “ France can have no imaginable motive for quarrelling with the United States,” is of no weight. Nations very often find motives for invading their neighbors, which a man who sits cool in his study, could not have conceived and will hardly believe.

As it regards science, as well as industry, I am persuaded that commerce is highly beneficial. I rejoice that my fellow citizens traverse the globe—they will probably be improved by their voyages, or furnish the means of improvement for others. A spirit of enterprise gives more elevation and expansion to the mind, it gives new and enlarged views of man and his Creator, thus contributing to liberality and the social affections—at the same time it produces the wealth necessary for defence—or if the balance in property is against a naval protection, I would still encourage it for the sake of the other advantages. I believe, sir, man was not made to be shut up in his own country, like a prisoner. It is his business to become acquainted with his species, to open a friendly intercourse with them, and to chastise the imperious nation that shall attempt to restrain this natural right. The nations which have hitherto done this, have been as great as others, and I believe quite as happy.

BUT lastly, a great objection to your policy, is, its utter impracticability. Our citizens have imbibed a love and a spirit of commerce; their habits are commercial—and no speculative advantages will induce them to renounce their opinions, or alter their habits.—On this subject, it has become fashionable for the opposers of our government to preach—but it is preaching to the winds. And I may say, as I before said in regard to the impracticableness of changing our government to a monarchy, that your system of withdrawing all protection from commerce, can no more be introduced, than a new world can be created.

IT is the great fault of all modern reformers to calculate systems for the moral and political conduct of mankind, that are very amusing in theory, but utterly repugnant to the nature of man, or to the state of society.—Such theories bewildered the reformers in France, and produced expedient after expedient, which covered the country with blood and terminated in a resort to the old system, *despotism*.—The theories of Helvetius, Rousseau, Condorcet, Turgot, Godwin and others, are founded on artificial reasoning, not on the nature of man; not on fact and experience. And hence the convulsions and miseries which have been occasioned by an attempt to carry them into practice, have every where exceeded the evils of the old tyrannies. Between these theories and the old corrupt establishments, there is a *mean*, which probably is the true point of freedom and national happiness. By aiming at too much perfection, as well as by pushing authority too far, men are liable to lose that portion of real liberty which the state of man permits him to enjoy.

L E T T E R IX.

SIR,

IN your maxims of political arithmetic, republished from the Aurora, are found some assertions and opinions not altogether correct, although many of your observations are, I confess, too well founded.

I AGREE with you fully that our Colleges are disgracefully destitute of Books and Philosophical apparatus, and that a duty on books without discrimination, is highly impolitic. Very many of the best authors cannot be printed in the United States for half a century or more; and I am ashamed to own, that scarcely a branch of science can be fully investigated in America, for want of books; especially original works. This defect of our libraries I have experienced myself, in searching for materials for the history of Epidemic Diseases.

IN regard to the state of learning in general, your remarks are not sufficiently discriminating. You say there is "less knowledge in America than in most of the countries of Europe." The truth seems to be that in the Eastern States, knowledge is more diffused among the laboring people than in any country on the globe. The learning of the people extends to a knowledge of their own tongue, of writing and arithmetic sufficient to keep their own simple accounts; they read not only the bible, and newspapers, but almost all read the best English authors, as the Spectator, Rambler, and the works of Watts, Doderidge and many others. If you can find any country in Europe where this is done, to the same extent, as in New-England, I am very ill informed.

BUT in the higher branches of literature, our learning is superficial, to a shameful degree. Perhaps I ought to except the science of law, which being the road to political life, is probably as well understood as in Great Britain; and Ethics and political science have been greatly cultivated, since the American revolution. On political subjects, I have no hesitation in saying, that I believe the learning of our eminent statesmen to be superior to that of most European writers; and their opinions far more correct. They have all the authors on these subjects, united with much experience which no European country can have had.—This has enabled our statesmen to correct many of the theories which lead astray European writers.

BUT as to classical learning, History, civil and ecclesiastical, Mathematics, Astronomy, Chymistry, Botany and Natural History—excepting here and there a rare instance of a man who is eminent in some one of these branches,—we may be said to have no learning at all, or a mere smattering.—And what is more distressing to me, I see every where a disposition to decry the study of ancient and original authors, which I deem far superior to the moderns and from which the best modern writers have drawn the finest parts of their productions.

THERE is another circumstance still more afflictive, to a man

who is attached, as I am, to a republican government ; and one that I perceive has not occurred to you. This is, that the equal distribution of estates, and the small property of our citizens—both of which seem connected with our form of government, if not essential to it, actually tend to depress the sciences. Science demands leisure and money. Our citizens have property only to give their sons a four years education—a time scarcely sufficient to give them a relish for learning—and far inadequate to wide and profound researches. As soon as a young man has closed this period of study, and while he is at the beginning of the alphabet of science, he must betake himself to a profession—he must hurry through a few books—which by the way are rarely original works, but compilations and abridgements—and then must enter upon practice, and get his living as well as he can. And as to libraries, we have no such things. There are not more than three or four tolerable libraries in America, and these are extremely imperfect. Great numbers of the most valuable authors have not found their way across the Atlantic.

BUT if our young men had more time to read, their estates will not enable them to purchase the books requisite to make a learned man.—And this inconvenience resulting from our government and the state of society, I know not how to remedy.—As this however is the government to which you are attached, you will certainly do us a great service, if you can devise a plan for avoiding its disadvantages.—And I can further inform you, that any application to Legislatures for money, will be unsuccessful. The utmost we can do, is, to squeeze a little money occasionally from the public treasuries, to furnish buildings and a professor or two. But as to Libraries, public or private, men who do not understand their value, will be the last to furnish the means of procuring them. Besides, our rage for gain absorbs all other considerations—science is a secondary object ; and a man who has grown suddenly from a dunghill, by a fortunate throw of the die, avoids a man of learning, as you would a tiger.—There are exceptions to this remark, and some men of taste, here and there scattered over our country, adorn the sciences and the moral virtues.

THE Americans want only the *means* of improvement—their genius and industry are no where exceeded. The mechanical inventions of the Americans testify to the powers of their genius ; and the distinction enjoyed in Europe by several American artists, while it is an honor to the country where the encouragement is found, is an evidence that the human race do not degenerate in the western world.—Opportunity, means, patronage alone are wanting, to raise the character of this country to an eminent rank among nations.

L E T T E R 10.

SIR,

IF the Americans are yet in their leading strings, as to some parts of literature, there is the more room for improvement; and I am confident that the genius of my fellow citizens will not be slack in the important work. You will please to recollect, sir, that during one hundred and sixty years of our childhood, we were in our nonage; respecting our parent and looking up to her for books, science and improvements. From her we borrowed much learning, and some prejudices, which time alone can remove. And be assured, Dr, Priestley, that the parent is yet to derive some scientific improvements from the child. Some false theories, some errors in science, which the British nation has imbibed from illustrious men, and nourished from an implicit reliance on their authority, are to be prostrated by the penetrating genius of America.

AND after all, sir, let candor confess, that something has been done, in the New World, which reflects honor on its inhabitants.—A wilderness converted into a garden and clothed with fruitful fields—many hundred miles of country covered with handsome towns and cities—numerous bridges and roads that equal those of the best improved parts of Europe—numerous inventions in mechanic arts—and some in other branches of science—a number of the first artists in Europe, with a few eminent philosophers—and were it not for offending you, I would add, a commerce extended to the remotest corners of the globe—are evidences of at least a small portion of genius, and a great deal of industry. If you will name any free country, or indeed any country, where the half has been done, in the same time, I will confess my ignorance of the state of the world. The experiment alone by which it has been decided that a government can be framed and put into operation by free deliberation and consent of the people, independent of artifice or violence, is the most precious tribute that mankind can receive from the new world; and ought of itself to rescue the character of its inhabitants from the imputation of dulness or barbarism.

THAT our morals are less pure than in Europe, may be true, especially as you may suggest, among the lower classes. But you will give me leave to question the fact as a general one, and as far as true, it is attributable to the nature of our government and the price of labor. With all the evils of despotism, sir, this one advantage is obvious, that people in general have less wages, and of course are compelled to labor more hours and days for a subsistence, than in our country. The consequence is, they have less time and less means to indulge themselves in vices; and after all, sir, industry does more to preserve morals, than laws or sermons.

BUT I apprehend that your acquaintance with America, has not been sufficient to enable you to be positive on this subject. You have seen but a small part of America, and that part only in which

the inhabitants have no national character—but a mixture of various different characters. A great proportion of the lower classes of people, which you have seen, are not Americans, but Europeans.—Nothing like a well defined national character exists in the middle States; and in no part of America, to the same degree as in New-England, which you have not visited. On this point and some others, it would have been wiser for you to suspend your judgment, until you had become better acquainted with the people.

THAT the United States want the money of emigrants from Europe, as you allege, is not true—a few holders of wild lands only are benefited by purchasers from Europe. But the country would be as prosperous and much more happy, if no European should set his foot on our shores. The natural progress of population would be sufficiently rapid for the public interest. We have no objection to the immigration of peaceable, industrious citizens; but for one such European, we receive three or four, discontented, factious men—who, accustomed to quarrel with the unjust laws of their own countries, do not lay aside their opposition here, although the same evils are acknowledged not to exist.

YOU speak of the violence of parties in this country, and seem to be surprized that they should be as inveterate as in Europe, where they have been of longer standing. Believe me, sir, the asperities of party are scarcely known, where they have not been inflamed by a mixture of European inhabitants; and no where are they violent without a tincture of European principles.

SHOULD a civil war be enkindled, you console yourself with the pious reflection that even that might produce some good; and for example, mention that in the plan of providence, Pharaoh occupied as important a station as King David.

IN reply to this, and in conclusion of these letters, I shall only remark, that this is the boldest apology for an opposition to government, that I have ever seen.

WITH great respect for your philosophical talents and literary character, and a sincere desire that you would not disturb the public peace by your political heresies, while you are not molested by the citizens of America,

I am,

SIR,

Your humble Servant,

N. WEBSTER, JUN.

New Haven, January 20, 1800.

P O S T S C R I P T.

JANUARY 30th, 1800.

WHILE these letters were in the press, news was received of another Revolution in France ; in which, Buonaparte, assisted by Roger Ducos and Sieyes, has seized on the government, calling themselves CONSULS, directed the Councils to remove to St. Cloud, and now act in conjunction with the Council of Elders. This is not a surprising event to reflecting men in America. On the other hand, it has evidently grown out of the distractions which have long oppressed the government and people of France. This event very ill accords with your prediction that all the kingdoms of Europe are to fall before the Republican principles, propagated from France. But should a revolution like that in France spread through Europe, [for the rage of reforming theorists knows no limits which are not prescribed by the want of power and ruffians to execute] I will stake a prediction against yours, that in ten years every throne would be again erected by the hands that overthrew it, or by a daring usurper—some Monk, some Cesar, some Buonaparte—some character which is always called into life and action, by inveterate factions and the miseries they occasion.

By the Proclamations of Buonaparte and the Consuls, it appears that this revolution had been planned “by men in whom the nation is accustomed to behold the defenders of liberty, of equality, and of property.”—Indeed is it obvious that it had been long in contemplation, and that Buonaparte was privately recalled from Egypt to be the instrument of its execution, as no other General's popularity could be relied on, to secure the obedience and fidelity of the troops.

ON this occasion, it should be remarked, that the violent, republicans, or Jacobins as they ought to be called, had recourse to their usual instrument for saving the Constitution, the *dagger*. Eight or ten times before, this bloody weapon had been employed to *save the republic*—a fine specimen of republican government in France.

THE justification of the Consuls, states that the Republic had been torn with discord and factions, and that the public authorities agreed only in one truth, “That the Constitution was half destroyed and was unable to save the cause of liberty—That assassins made terror prevail in the interior—That the Constitution had been violated at different times—That it had become an empty sound, serving the purposes of every faction—That the rights of the people had been violated—indeed that the Constitution had perished and the Republic been badly governed.”

ALL this is doubtless true—and what could be done ? Why, the leading men in France, finding it impossible to subdue factions by constitutional and legal means, had recourse to violence and a military force. And this, sir, is the *old*, the *usual* and the *only* alternative. In six or seven instances before, the stronger faction in the

Convention or Councils, had resorted to the same means. The king was sacrificed by the jacobins—Brissot and his party were sacrificed by a faction—Danton and party perished by a faction—Robespierre and party who had murdered *their* enemies, fell, in their turn, a prey to another faction.—All the factions, in the moment of triumph, entered the hall, with daggers reeking with the blood of traitors, and pronounced the *Republic safe*—they declared they had *saved the Republic*—the *Constitution—Liberty and Equality*.

AT last, it was discovered that a Legislature, with one branch, was subject to violent passions, disorderly proceedings, and inveterate factions, which impeded business, and compelled one or other party, to have recourse to pistols, the stiletto and the guillotine. That great *pretended improvement in legislation*, ONE HOUSE, which Dr. Franklin used to admire, and one of your great Instructors in politics, Turgot, wrote a book to defend, was given up, as a wild, visionary, impracticable scheme. A new government was formed, and as it would not be honorable to yield too much ground at once and come back to the old tried practice of a *single Executive*, it was determined to make an experiment of *five heads*.—This body, sir, you expressly declare to be preferable, in your opinion, to a single Executive. Very good, sir. But this Constitution had not been long in operation, before factions crept into the Councils, and what is more, into this *five headed Executive*. A resort is made to the old remedy, *force*.—One of the Directory escaped into exile or was murdered, and two others, confessedly among the ablest and most moderate and virtuous men in France, Barthelemi and Pichegrue, with a selection from the Councils, were seized without law or trial, and sent to perish in the fetid marshes of the torrid zone.—Now again the halls resounded with the praises of liberty, and the victorious faction proclaimed to all the world, their boundless merit in *saving the Republic, the Constitution and Liberty*.

PASSING over twenty instances of minor depredations on the rights of the nation, and of its suffrages, I come to the last scene of the drama. In the very month when you published your letters, praising the model of the French Directory, and bestowing encomiums on the Constitution and policy of France, with *much censure on the government and country that secure your life, liberty and property*, a violent inroad is made on the French Constitution—a military commander, with two others, supports one Council, in driving away the Directory and the other Council, and assumes the government. Now again we hear that the *Republic is safe*, and is going to inspire the world with awe and veneration, by the virtue and dignity of her government.

WHAT form of government is now to be established, time must manifest. But if such violences do not weaken your respect for the republican form, and at least lessen your confidence in the practicability of such a government in France, or any populous country, I

shall consider you as I do most modern theorists, an incorrigible political heretic. The rivalries of the ambitious, the ignorance and depression of the poor, the insolence of the rich, the corruption of great cities, all forbid Europe to enjoy repose under a government, continually subject to the impulse of popular passions. And hence, in *Republican France*, the government has actually been a most *bloody despotism*; at last, jaded with theoretical systems of liberty, with murders, plunder, civil war and proscriptions, France sees a *single arm, with absolute sway*, extended to her deliverance, and with joy, resorts to the standard of a Dictator.

IN the United States, we are not ripe for this dreadful alternative; but we are advancing towards the period, with gigantic strides. New England, if insulated from all the world, might enjoy a republican system, perhaps for centuries. But attached to sister states, in which faction already rears her audacious front, she may be destined to run the race of republicanism, in a much shorter period.

THE State of Pennsylvania is experiencing the calamities of faction. The free admission of foreigners into that state, while it has given to it some valuable citizens, has laid the foundation of evils that half a century will not cure. To this circumstance, must be added what is not peculiar to that state, a *too liberal extension of the right of suffrage* to persons who have neither education, principle, nor permanent attachments to the country. Whatever may be thought of the position, I am persuaded, from extensive reading and twenty years observation, that no truth is more certain, than that a republican government can be rendered durable, in no other way, than by excluding from elections, persons who have so little property, education or principle, that they are liable to yield their own opinions to the guidance of unprincipled leaders. No regulations for this purpose can be perfect—none can rid elections of all corrupt and corruptible men—none can be so framed as not to exclude some meritorious persons. But in all countries, where this species of government has been tried, it has been found that neither permanent laws, secure liberty, nor political tranquility could be enjoyed, unless severe regulations have placed the government beyond the reach of powerful demagogues, and the tumultuary passions of the populace.

THE New England states, where the people realize more freedom than any other people perhaps on the globe, owe the duration of their constitutions and laws to what may be called a *personal and adventitious aristocracy*—that is, the advantage and superior influence of particular men, derived from their property, their education, their age, their tried virtue and integrity, and their public services. In short, we owe our peace and happy state to the benign influence of venerable counsellors, a venerable clergy and venerable men. Some most insidious attempts have been made and are now making to destroy this species of influence, and place the destinies of the public at the mercy of young theoretical reformers. These attempts will not

soon succeed ; but if they should ever prostrate that *patriarchal influence and authority*, violent factions will follow and we shall be as often *blessed* with revolutions as France has been ; until the people, weary of discord and projects shall be prepared to rally round a Cesar or a Buonaparte.*

SOME evils attend this kind of influence exercised by elderly men and the clergy—Here and there a *weak man* or an *arrant hypocrite* makes his way into the public councils ; but in general, that influence is mild and pacific, wise and salutary. Such is an American Republic, and my sincere desire is to see it as durable as it is excellent.

I EQUALLY desire to see France free and prosperous ; but am confident the men who have attempted a Republic in that country, have totally mistaken the principles by which man is and *must be* governed. Should the revolution annihilate forever the ecclesiastical establishments, and destroy or modify the rights of the temporal nobility, France will have great acquisitions to console her for the miseries occasioned by the struggle. But some new model of government is necessary to keep the citizens quiet, and protect property. Should that model bear the general features of a Republic, its Executive must consist of a single WILL, and by whatever name called, that Will must be furnished with *Constitutional Energy*, adequate to a complete maintenance of its independence, and with a *military and legal energy* competent, at any time and at all times, to secure the Independence of the Legislature, to crush faction and to ensure a prompt execution of the Laws.

N O T E.

* It is worthy of remark that the word *aristocracy*, which has been perverted in Europe, has, in this country, resumed its primitive signification. The original was used to denote a government by the *best* or *most excellent men*—*Optimi* or *præstantissimi*, which is the true sense of the word. Under the corrupt systems of government in Europe, the word has been used to denote the government exercised by the richest men and men of noble rank, who have often, if not generally, been the *worst* men. Hence the odium justly attached to the aristocracies of Europe.

But the laws in America, especially in the Eastern States, having happily annihilated hereditary distinctions of rank, and with them the influence of a corrupt aristocracy, this word has no meaning in this country, except that which I have explained, which is its true primitive signification, viz. the government, counsels and influence of *learned, aged, experienced and virtuous men*.—This is the true *patriarchal government*. Such was the influence of Governor Trumbull in Connecticut—and of General Washington in the United States. It still exists in a good degree, in the Eastern States, and while it shall continue to exist, faction will hide its head, and we shall be a peaceable, united and a happy people. The destruction of that influence would be a most deplorable event.



