
CONSIDERATIONS

ON

LORD GRENVILLE'S AND MR. PITT'S BILLS;

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LORD GRENVILLE'S AND MR. PITT'S

BILLS,

CONCERNING

TREASONABLE AND SEDITIOUS

PRACTICES,

AND

UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLIES.

BY A LOVER OF ORDER.

William Godwin

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CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

IN the present irritated and unnatural state of political affairs, while one party will not endure to hear of any cautionary restraints upon freedom, and another party, impressed with apprehensions of anarchy, conceives that scarcely any restraint can be too vigilant or severe; it is the object of the following examination of the bills lately introduced into Parliament by Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt, to estimate their merits with the strictest impartiality. It is much to be desired, in moments pregnant with so important consequences, that an individual should be found, who could preserve his mind untainted with the headlong rage of faction, whether for men in power or against them; could judge, with

the sobriety of distant posterity, and the sagacity of an enlightened historian; and could be happy enough to make his voice heard, by all those directly or remotely interested in the event.

The great problem of political knowledge, is, how to preserve to mankind the advantages of freedom, together with an authority, strong enough to controul every daring violation of general security and peace. The prize of political wisdom is due to the man, who shall afford us the best comment upon that fundamental principle of civilization, Liberty without Licentiousness.

Great is the error, or sinister and alarming the policy, of those, who tell us that politics is a simple science, where the plainest understanding is in no danger of a fatal mistake. Politics, especially if we understand that term as relating to such societies of men as at present divide the earth, is the masterpiece of human sagacity.

To govern individuals in a petty and limited circle, is easy. They may be governed, if sufficient judgment be exercised upon the subject, by reason alone. But it is far otherwise with nations, with millions of men united
under

under a single head. In a petty and limited circle, all exercise an inspection over all. There are no deeds that are concealed; the general censure or applause, follows immediately in the rear of every action that is performed. But, in nations of men, there is no eye penetrating enough to detect every mischief in its commencement; craft is successful in escaping those consequences which justice would annex to injury. Men take pleasure in this species of dexterity, and the web of society is rent by the fallies of wantonness.

No variety can be more endless, than that which is to be found among the dispositions of mankind. Public interest and security require from men, to a certain degree, an uniformity of action, and an uniformity of submission. How is this uniformity to be found among the countless caprices of human character? Reason and exhortation here are not sufficient: there must be an arm to repress; a coercion, strict, but forbearing and mild. In all numerous collections of men, there will be individuals disposed to offend. No system of political arrangement can be so wise, but that some men will disapprove of

it. No system of equal administration can be so perfect, but that some men will be urged by necessity, and aggravated by distress. If offence be discountenanced by the sober and judicious, there will always be turbulent spirits who will pursue a contrary conduct; they will confirm the offender in his error, instead of recalling him to reason; they will harden him in his deviation, and encourage him to hold inoffensive remonstrance in contempt.

Human society is a wonderful machine. How great are the inequalities that prevail in every country in Europe! How powerful is the incitement held out to the poor man, to commit hostility on the property of the rich, to commit it in detail, each man for himself, or by one great and irresistible effort to reduce every thing to universal chaos! Political wisdom, when it is found such as it ought to be, is the great and venerable power, that presides in the midst of turbulent and conflicting passions, that gives to all this confusion the principles of order, and that extracts universal advantage from a nearly universal selfishness.

He that deliberately views the machine of human society, will, even in his speculations,
 approach

approach it with awe. He will recollect, with alarm, that in this scene,

—Fools rush in, where angels fear to tread.

The fabric that we contemplate is a sort of fairy edifice, and, though it consist of innumerable parts, and hide its head among the clouds, the hand of a child almost, if suffered with neglect, may shake it into ruins.

There is no good reason to conclude, that speculative enquiries ought not to be tolerated, or even that they may not, if consulted with soberness, afford materials for general utility. But it is with soberness and caution that the practical politician will alone venture to consult them. Do you tell me, “that there are great abuses in society?” No wise man will dispute it. But these abuses are woven into the very web and substance of society; and he that touches them with a sacrilegious hand, will run the risk of producing the widest and most tremendous ruin. Do you tell me, “that these abuses ought to be corrected?” Every impartial friend to mankind will confirm your decision with his suffrage, and lend his hand to the salutary work.

Yes,

Yes, my countrymen, abuses ought to be corrected. The effort to correct them ought to be incessant. But they must be corrected with judgment and deliberation. We must not, for the sake of a problematical future, part with the advantages we already possess; we must not destroy, faster than we rear.

There are persons indeed, to whom the edifice of society appears as nothing but one mass of deformity. With such persons it is not necessary here to enter into any regular argument. Is all that distinguishes the most enlightened genius of modern Europe from the American savage, nothing? Is the admirable progress of light and knowledge, that has been going on almost uniformly for centuries, and that promises to go on to an unlimited extent, —is this nothing? Where is the man hardy and brutish enough to put all this to peril, to set this immense and long earned treasure upon a single throw, for the chance, if universal anarchy and barbarism be introduced, of the more generous and auspicious scenes that will grow out of this barbarism?

These universal principles of political science it seemed necessary to premise, to a sober examination of the bills now depending in
parliament.

parliament. Every one will see, without the necessity of a direct application, how these principles are connected with the subject to be discussed. The persons at present concerned in the government of Great Britain, have a delicate and momentous task imposed upon them. Of all their duties, that which is perhaps paramount to the rest, is to preserve the blessings we already possess, from the rashness of presumptuous experiment. General security is the basis of all those things which society has to give, that are worthy the acceptance of mankind. In security only the cultivator plows his field, the manufacturer exercises his ingenuity, and the merchant brings home the produce of every distant climate. Without security all these would be neglected, would be done with an irresolute and nerveless temper, and would fall gradually into ruin. In security only science is extended, arts are cultivated, and the virtues expand themselves. Without security mankind would speedily become ignorant and blood-thirsty savages. To the governors of the earth, therefore, the slender band of wise and judicious citizens would say, "Give us security, we will provide for ourselves all other advantages."

is the most important duty of those who hold the reins of government, be, at all times, to take care of the public security, it is peculiarly so in the present crisis. We are never so well insured against anarchy and tumult, but that it is incumbent upon government to be vigilant. But the dangers of anarchy and tumult are greater now, than at any ordinary period. The foundations of society have been broken up in the most considerable kingdom of Europe. Dreadful calamities have followed. A great experiment has been made, and the happiness of mankind is eminently involved in the issue of the experiment. But there is something so beautiful and fascinating, to a superficial observation, in the principles that produced the French revolution, that great numbers of men are eager to adopt and to act upon them. The calamities that have attended their operation in France, do not deter them.

In the mean time, the success of the experiment of the French revolution has not been so unmixed and brilliant, but that a man of reflection will deliberate long, before he desires to see the experiment repeated in any other country. It is the duty of the governors of the earth, particularly at this time, to set
their

their faces against rash and premature experiments. They will not seek to preclude men from the exercise of private judgment. They will not involve in an undistinguishing censure all projects of better œconomy and moderate reform. But, if they remark with a certain degree of applause the high blood and impetuous mettle of the racer, they will, at least, look to the boundary posts, and endeavour to prevent his running out of the course.

Let us apply these common and unanswerable topics of reasoning to the objects embraced in Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's bills. These objects are, the influx of French principles, and the danger accruing from these principles to public security. There are two points, in which this influx of principles and their concomitant dangers have been more particularly conspicuous.

It is the purpose of these pages to enquire impartially. In the part of the subject upon which we enter in this place, what we undertake is, to probe recent evils. The evil must be probed, or the proper remedy can never be discovered. It would be base and unmanly in the investigator, to intend to give offence to any man, or any body of men.

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But, far from harbouring any such intention, it is not less his duty, not to be deterred by the fear of offence. In the progress of the investigation he will be obliged alternately to deliver truths unpalatable to every set of men. He will be sorry to hurt the self-applause or the prejudices of any ; but, if he give pain to individuals, he is encouraged in this ungracious part of his task, by a hope of contributing his mite to the welfare of all. He will console himself, whatever may be the event, with having intended that welfare.

A farther preliminary remark is necessary in this place to obviate the danger of misconstruction. The duties of the statesman, and the duties of the minister of criminal justice, have often been confounded. The statesman has conceived himself to be bound by the rigid maxims of a court of judicature, and the lawyer has expatiated in the conjectural style, and among the moral probabilities, to which the statesman is bound to give attention. This confusion has in both instances been attended with fatal consequences. No two classes of duties can be more distinct.

In the observations to be here delivered, the reasonings must be of a political, and not
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of a judicial kind. Where the life of a man is at stake, or where coercive penalties of any sort are to be inflicted, the maxims of evidence cannot be too rigid; we ought not to pronounce a man guilty, when it is possible to find him innocent. Historical disquisition, on the other hand, yields no deference to such a distinction. Guilt or innocence are matters of indifference at her bar, she brings together all the evidence, she weighs the opposite probabilities, and she pronounces a verdict upon the slightest turning of the balance. She pronounces a man guilty, when it is in many ways possible that he may be innocent.

Political disquisition partakes in many respects of the nature of historical. The concern of the politician, strictly speaking, is with precaution, and not with punishment. He is not therefore bound to the rigour of judicial maxims. I may not proceed against the life of a man without the most irresistible evidence. But in calculating respecting the probable future, in endeavouring to mould that future in the way most conducive to general welfare, in anticipating disorder, and keeping out the influx of calamity, it is allowable, nay it is necessary, to proceed upon much slighter grounds. I must content myself,

self, like a philosopher, with analysing the human mind, and ascertaining the consequences it is most reasonable to expect. I could do nothing with respect to future events, if I adopted a different mode of proceeding. Trusting to the reasonableness of these remarks, we will now proceed to examine the irregularities intended to be corrected by Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's bills.

The first of the two points to which we alluded above, is the institution of the London Corresponding Society. Respecting the nature of extensive political societies we have received a memorable instruction, which no lover of the happiness of mankind will easily persuade himself to forget, in the institution of the Jacobin Society in Paris. It is too notorious to admit of being reasonably questioned, that the London Corresponding Society has in several respects formed itself upon the model of the societies which have produced such memorable effects in France. They have adopted the language of these societies. They have copied their actions. They may, without the imputation of uncharitable construction, be suspected of a leaning to

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to republican principles. But, what is most material, they have endeavoured, like the society of Jacobins, to form lesser affiliated societies in all parts of the island; and they have professed to send missionaries to instruct them. The very name indeed of London Corresponding Society presents to us this idea.

Let us consider what idea we ought to form of this extraordinary institution. It is extremely numerous in the metropolis, split and divided into a variety of sections. It boasts, that it weekly gains an accession of numbers. Its recruits are chiefly levied from the poorer classes of the community. It has abundance of impetuous and ardent activity, and very little of the ballast, the unwieldy dulness, of property.

Political enquirers might have been induced to pay less attention to this extraordinary machine, than its magnitude deserves. But it has forced itself upon public notice, by the immense multitudes it has collected together in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, at what have been stiled its general meetings. The speeches delivered at these meetings, and the resolutions adopted, have not always been

of the most temperate kind. The collecting of immense multitudes of men into one assembly, particularly when there have been no persons of eminence, distinction, and importance in the country, that have mixed with them, and been ready to temper their efforts, is always sufficiently alarming. We had a specimen of what might be the sequel of such collecting, in the riots introduced by Lord George Gordon and the Protestant Association in the year 1780.

Let us put together the different circumstances already enumerated. Let us consider the largeness of this society, their numerous meetings, their incessant activity, their poverty, the abundance of their zeal, and their numerous affiliations whether in act, in expectation, or in desire. It may be precipitate to pronounce what are the ideas of its leading members, and how far they understand the magnitude of the machine they profess to govern. But it is easy to see what such a machine is able to effect.

From this delineation of the London Corresponding Society, it follows, that the government of this country would be unpardonable, if it did not yield a very careful and un-
interrupted

interrupted attention to their operations. In this decision, it is wholly unnecessary to mix any consideration of the intention of the individuals concerned. Their intentions, for any thing that is of moment in this argument, may be of a purity that is more than human. To rail against men's intentions, is to take an undue advantage of popular prejudices. There is no man so pure, but that something of selfish mixes with his actions. There is probably no man so base, as not to have some regard for morality, and justice, and the general welfare of mankind. But the statesman reasons about men, as the manufacturer reasons about his tools and the different parts of his machines. He censures the unwieldy, the blunt, the jagged, the flawed, and the corrosive, without an atom of bitterness or resentment against any one of these. He merely finds them not fit for his purpose. He fears the ill effects they may produce in the working of the machine. To speak only of that part of the parallel that relates to men, the real statesman will love, will compassionate, will sympathise with those individuals, whose conduct he concludes upon the best evidence, to be hostile to the general welfare. He regrets
their

their errors, he desires their reformation and improvement. It is unnecessary to his purpose that he should impute to them any ill design. He knows that the conduct of men with the best dispositions, has often been productive of horrible mischief. Such was probably the sublime and disinterested enthusiast that stabbed Henry the Great, and such the authors of the Gunpowder Treason.

A. Johnson
 These are then the conclusions that, it should seem, we ought to form respecting the London Corresponding Society. The second article that seems to constitute the present ground of alarm, are the Political Lectures that have been delivered for near two years at Beaufort Buildings, in the Strand; to which perhaps we may add some of the discussions that have taken place in certain crowded assemblies, called Debating Societies. To conceive the judgment we ought to form respecting these Political Lectures, we have only to recollect what has been already observed, respecting the profoundness of political science as it relates to the case of great nations, and the delicate fabric of human society.

Whether or no political lectures, upon the fundamental principles of politics, to be delivered

livered to a mixed and crowded audience, be entitled to the approbation of an enlightened statesman, it is somewhat difficult to pronounce. It is not, for the most part, in crowded audiences, that truth is successfully investigated, and the principles of science luminously conceived. But it is not difficult to pronounce whether the political lectures that are likely to be delivered by an impatient and headlong reformer, are entitled to approbation.

“ We must reform,” say the advocates of these lectures. True, we must reform. There is scarcely a man in Great Britain so stupid, so bigoted, or so selfish, but that, if the question were brought fairly before him, he would give his suffrage to the system of reform. But reform is a delicate and an awful task. No sacrilegious hand must be put forth to this sacred work. It must be carried on by slow, almost insensible steps, and by just degrees. The public mind must first be enlightened; the public sentiment must next become unequivocal; there must be a grand and magnificent harmony, expanding itself through the whole community. There must be a consent of wills, that no minister and no monopolist

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would

would be frantic enough to withstand. This is the genuine image of reform ; this is the lovely and angelic figure that needs only to be shewn, in order to be universally adored. Oh, Reform ! Genial and benignant power ! how often has thy name been polluted by profane and unhallowed lips ! How often has thy standard been unfurled by demagogues, and by assassins been drenched and disfigured with human gore !

Proceeding then upon this conception of the subject, it is easy to perceive, that the enlightened advocates of reform will proceed with wary and cautious steps ; that they will endeavour to inform the understandings of others, to invigorate their benevolence, and to appease the tumult of their passions. Their labour ought to be incessant ; their progress ought to be constant ; the effects ought to be sublime, but not terrible. Let us contrast this with the ordinary and prevailing ideas of political lecturers.

It may happen, that a political lecturer shall commence his career with uncommon purity of intentions. I believe this has been the case with the political lecturer in Beaufort Buildings. But there are two things necessary

cessary beside this favourable preliminary. The lecturer ought to have a mind calmed, and, if I may be allowed the expression, consecrated by the mild spirit of philosophy. He ought to come forth with no undisciplined passions, in the first instance; and he ought to have a temper unyielding to the corrupt influence of a noisy and admiring audience. It almost universally happens to public speakers, that, though they may begin with the intention of communicating to their auditors the tone of their own minds, they finish with the reality of bartering this tone for the tone of the auditors. Do the audience clap their hands, or employ other demonstrations of applause? There is scarcely a Stoic upon the face of the earth so rigid, but he feels his own heart titillated and delighted with these sensible tokens of complacence. He observes what passages they are in his discourse that produce the loudest tumults of applause; he aims at the frequent recurrence of such passages; he feels discontented, if for any length of time he is merely listened to in silence. Add to this, he well knows that the most furious applauders are the most assiduous frequenters. It would be inconsistent with his purpose, if

he delivered such discourses as tended to drive away his hearers, or if he did not deliver such as tended to bring them in still augmenting multitudes.

To what end does this intellectual progress in the mind of the lecturer ultimately lead? Quiet disquisition and mere speculative enquiry will not answer his purpose. Strict disquisition, especially to persons not much in the habits of regular thinking, is difficult to understand: it requires too active and laborious an attention. Add to this, that it does not suit the tone of collected multitudes. Sober inquiry may pass well enough with a man in his closet, or in the domestic tranquillity of his own fire-side: but it will not suffice in theatres and halls of assembly. Here men require a due mixture of spices and seasoning. All oratorical seasoning is an appeal to the passions. The most obvious seasoning of this sort is personality. The lecturer infallibly learns in a short time, to quit the thorny paths of science, and to inveigh against the individuals that exercise the functions of government. Their vices are painted in caricature; their actions are disfigured, and uniformly traced to the blackest motives; a horrible

groupe

groupe is exhibited ; all the indignant emotions of the human mind are excited. The audience do not hasten from the lecture-room, and hurry the minister to the lamp-post ; their passions are only in training for destruction. The cauldron of civil contention simmers, but is not yet worked up into the inquietude of a tempest.

It would be ludicrous, if it did not excite a more painful sensation, to listen to the saving clauses that are, from time to time, introduced into the discourse, to persuade men to unbounded and universal benevolence. It is lord George Gordon preaching peace to the rioters in Westminster-Hall. “ Commit no violence,” said his lordship, “ but be sure you do not separate, till you have effected your purpose.” It is Iago adjuring Othello not to dishonour himself by giving harbour to a thought of jealousy.

Good God ! is this the preparation that befits us, in a time of crisis, and amidst the most irresistible necessity for a reform ? I can do justice to the individual ; I can see talents in him that might be ripened for the most valuable purposes : but I deplore the seeing them thus arrested in their growth, and thus employed,

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We have now taken a view of the principal features of that situation which has furnished the occasion for introducing lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's bills. The commentary upon the situation is easy. The London Corresponding Society is a formidable machine ; the system of political lecturing is a hot-bed, perhaps too well adapted to ripen men for purposes, more or less similar to those of the Jacobin Society of Paris. Both branches of the situation are well deserving the attention of the members of the government of Great Britain.

If, then, they be deserving of attention, it is here that we are bound to recollect the sort of attention which a wise statesman, in these cases, ought to employ. He is no true statesman ; he is a formidable and atrocious enemy of human kind, who, while exercising the functions of government, suffers himself to be made angry. Ministers of Great Britain, attend ! You ought to do so. You would be delinquents, if you did otherwise. But let your attention be calm ; let your remedies be mild.

The great problem of political science, is not to know how to lay an iron hand upon
popular

popular irregularities. If that were the case, Draco was the most successful student that ever existed ; unless his merits were perhaps eclipsed by the profounder policy of Tiberius and Caligula. The great problem of political science, as we have already said, is to know how to anticipate the injurious consequences of irregularity by the mildest and least perceptible antidote ; to preserve liberty in all its vigour, while we effectually discountenance licentiousness. This fundamental axiom will hardly be disputed with us. By this axiom therefore we proceed to try Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's bills.

If ever a delicate and skilful hand were necessary in managing the public concerns, it was peculiarly necessary upon the present occasion. Lord Grenville's bill relates to the most important of all human affairs, the liberty of the press. Mr. Pitt's bill touches upon one of the grand characteristics of English liberty, the fundamental provision of the bill of rights, the right of the subject to consult respecting grievances, and to demand redress

One word more, before we proceed. No two human understandings are alike. No
two

two human understandings perhaps would prescribe exactly the same conduct, under circumstances that are in any degree complicated. Let us not then, censure lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt for trifles. They had an arduous task to perform, let us grant them a liberal allowance. They may have suggested a plan, a little better or a little worse than would have occurred to the student in his closet: we will not differ with them for that. If they have discharged their task upon the whole with success; if they have offered only a promising remedy for the evil, and preserved uninjured the great palladiums of all that is interesting to man, they ought not to incur our censure; they ought to receive a generous applause.

The title of Lord Grenville's bill is, *An Act for the safety and preservation of his majesty's person and government, against treasonable and seditious practices and attempts.* Its professed object is to provide additional securities, for the safety of the royal person, and against such proceedings and language, as may lead to popular tumult and insurrection. It consists of two parts, one enacting new treasons, or definitions of treason, and the

other providing against seditious practices under the denomination of misdemeanours.

The liberty of the preſs! If any thing human be to be approached with awe, it is this. If other men deſerve cenſure for trifling with public ſecurity, what cenſure do not miniſters deſerve, if they have ſo trifled? If leſſer offences, if a train of perſonal ſcurrilities, ought not in ſome caſes to be paſſed over without notice, what denomination ſhall we give to his offence, who offends againſt the liberty of the preſs, and who, while he offends, poſſeſſes the functions of government, can ſtrike as ſoon as threaten?

If in reality any provisions be neceſſary againſt ſeditious writings, Heavens! with what caution, with what almoſt morbid ſenſibility ought ſuch provisions to be conſtructed? I would ſay to the author of ſuch a bill, “ Conſider well what it is that you are doing. You enter upon the moſt ſacred of all human functions. Do not, while you pretend to be a friend to the public welfare, ſtab the frame of the public welfare to the very heart!”

The manner in which the provisions of lord Grenville’s bill are worded, may be ſatisfactorily illuſtrated. For that purpoſe, I

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will suppose these very pages to be construed by the king's minister to have a tendency "to incite or stir up the people to hatred or dislike" [What a word is this dislike! What malignant genius introduced it into the bill? What a sweeping term, that may mean any thing or every thing that the prosecutor shall be pleased to understand by it!]-—"to incite or stir up the people to hatred or dislike of the person of his majesty, his heirs or successors, or the established government and constitution [where is the philologist that will give me a secure definition of these two words?] of this realm." Well, in that case, I am to be "liable to such punishment as may by law be inflicted in cases of high misdemeanours;" and "for the second offence, I am to be transported for seven years." The only security I have against the infliction of these penalties, the moment a prosecution is commenced against me, consists in the hope, that the judge may be unbiassed and impartial; that the arguments of my counsel may be found in the experiment to be irresistible; or that my jury in whole or in part may be persons of a firm, independent, and intrepid temper. In the mean time the prosecution

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commenced against me is a crown prosecution ; it is attended in the course of it with the popular clamour against republicans and levellers ; and people are to be reminded every day in the treasury prints, that, upon the conviction of such persons as I am, depends the security of property, and all that is valuable in social existence.

Who does not see, that, if I write a pamphlet or book in which any political question is treated or incidentally mentioned, I may suffer the penalties of this act? Who does not see, that, if the king's minister do not like my pamphlet, or do not like my face, if he have an old grudge against me for any past proceeding, if I have not proved a fortunate candidate for his general good-will, or if, by any distortion of understanding, or excessiveness of alarm, he be led to see in my pamphlet things it does not contain, I may suffer the penalties of this act? My after hopes are in the judge, that he shall have no inclination to gratify his majesty's minister ; in my counsel, that he shall be able to convince men who may be predetermined against conviction ; or in the jury, that they shall be undecided by hopes or fears, from government, or any of the intemperate and indis-

criminate friends of government ; or that the honest part of them shall be more enlightened, more determined, and better able to endure hunger and fatigue, than those who are disposed to consult only the voice of interest? This is the lottery, from which I am to draw my ticket. This is the game, at which I am to play for the liberties of an Englishman. The words of the bill are expressly calculated to afford the widest field for sophistry, and the most convenient recipe for quieting the awakened conscience of a delinquent jury or judge.

Surely, lord Grenville, you might have found milder penalties, that would have been equal to cure the mischief in question, if in reality any new law and any penalties were necessary for that purpose! But the case is too plain. Ministers have indeed studied in the school of Draco. Did they seek to discover by how mild or by how small an interference the evil might be adequately prevented? No, no: he must be weaker than an idiot that can yield to such an imposition. On the contrary, ministers gladly seized the opportunity to provide a remedy ten times larger than the evil in question ; to provide a remedy that would suit all their purposes ; that would suit all the purposes

purposes of private revenge or sanguinary alarm : a remedy so large, as should render them secure that they would never need to come to parliament again, however much any future evil might differ from the evil now to be provided against.

The spirit of this bill is evidently to put an engine into the hands of ministers, calculated for their use in every imaginable emergency. There is no case to which this bill may not be stretched ; there is no offence, present, or future, definite or indefinite, real or fictitious, that it may not be made to include.

A striking illustration of this is afforded us in one of the clauses, which is well calculated by its construction to explain and develop the intention of the whole. Lord Grenville stated in the house of lords, “ that all the clauses, except the two principal clauses, the object of which is to define the new treasons created by this bill, and the crime of sedition, are calculated for the benefit of such persons as may be supposed to have offended against it.” The first of these clauses enacts, “ that no person shall be prosecuted by virtue of this act, unless it be by order of the king, his heirs or successors, under his or their sign manual, or by or-
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der of the privy council." What is the spirit of this clause? To a superficial observer, or to him who shall be disposed to give implicit credit to the assertion of a secretary of state, the clause may indeed seem favourable to the subject: it tends to limit and supersede vexatious prosecutions. But, if we consider it more profoundly, it will not be found to authorise so gentle a construction. The clause in fact amounts to no less than an explicit acknowledgment of the iniquity of the bill. Other acts of parliament are directed against real offences: other acts of parliaments profess to describe and define the objects they have in view. They may therefore be trusted to the ordinary course of justice, every man is free to execute and enforce them. But this bill is a sacred instrument. No ordinary hand may touch it. As it is equally adapted for every purpose that the wantonness of power, or the wantonness of malice can desire; it is therefore not to be confided to the discretion of an ordinary subject. Private men are to know nothing of it, except as they may happen to suffer under its penalties. It is the consecrated engine of tyranny; it is the open and avowed enactment of an arbitrary power.

Another

Another use has been suggested for this extraordinary clause. There is a numerous body of men, who have lately been supposed inseparable from the maintenance of the present constitution of things in this country ; a body better known in France before its late revolution : I mean the army of spies and informers. These men, if the execution of the law had been trusted to vulgar hands, might have been exposed to vexatious suits under some of its provisions. Government, by taking the whole into its own management, and preventing ordinary individuals from touching this consecrated palladium of the new order of English politics, have guarded against this evil. Seditious and turbulent reformers may be punished under this act ; but men, whatever they be, that are sheltered by administration, cannot be vexed.

A farther circumstance may deserve to be mentioned, as calculated to illustrate the generalities of lord Grenville's bill. This will be rendered particularly conspicuous by a reference to the speech of bishop Horsley, in the committee upon this bill in the house of lords, Wednesday, November 11th. This speech is memorable for more reasons than

one. In it, his lordship delivered a very concise maxim, which upon second thoughts he was pleased to endeavour to qualify and explain, though he refused to retract. The maxim was, that he “ did not know what the
 “ mass of the people in any country had to do
 “ with the laws, but to obey them.” But it is not for the sake of this passage, that the mention of bishop Horsley’s speech is introduced in this place. The following expression, which appears to have fallen from him, is particularly worthy of animadversion:
 “ Common speculative and philosophical dis-
 “ quissions might be still written and pub-
 “ lished, though he always thought they did
 “ more harm than good; for the bill was
 “ merely directed against those idle and sedi-
 “ tious public meetings for the discussion of
 “ the laws, where the people were not com-
 “ petent to decide upon them.”

No topic can be more important, than that which is started by the reverend prelate in these remarks. It is a question that well may
 “ give us pause.” The distinction of his lordship is well and judiciously taken. It is no doubt one thing to discuss political questions in mixed and fortuitous assemblies; it is

one thing to enquire into the ill consequences that may result from such tumultuary and passionate discussions; it is one thing to enquire into the restraints that may reasonably be put upon assemblies and proceedings of this sort; and it is a thing somewhat different, to enquire whether we shall contribute, to the extent of our power, once for all, to extinguish the future prospects and hope of mankind; to put a violent termination upon the boundless progress of science, of that science in particular which is most immediately and profoundly interesting to the whole human race. It would be a project indeed of gigantic dimensions, that, in this advanced period of human improvement, should command us to banish all the professors and cultivators of science, or to assassinate them. Lord Grenville, in that case, would no doubt stand forward to the latest posterity as one of the most distinguished names, one of the most daring and hardy adventurers, in the records of history. Omar, the conqueror of Alexandria, would be but a fool to him. Omar did not execute the wantonness of his tyranny upon the persons of men of letters; he only destroyed their works. Robespierre

is accused of having harboured a mortal animosity against men of letters : but this is probably a calumny, and we should scorn to calumniate even Robespierre. But assuming the fact, lord Grenville would appear, but for the explanation of bishop Horsley, to have far outstepped the tyrant of France. Robespierre merely made use of existing maxims, and applied them to the gratification of his passions. He persecuted men of letters in an indirect manner. But lord Grenville, upon this supposition, would have introduced a bill in which they were clearly described, and have said, “ It is only necessary
 “ for you to have cultivated the most im-
 “ portant of all sciences, to make you liable
 “ to the penalties of my bill.” Much gratitude is due to bishop Horsley, for having, in the passage above cited, so clearly marked out the distinction between the idle and inflammatory preachers of sedition, and the great apostles and champions of human intellect, and explained to us to whom the law did and did not apply.

Here let us pause a little. Is bishop Horsley's commentary in reality a just one ? Who is this celebrated prelate ? Let us suppose

pose

pose him, for the sake of argument, to be the greatest man in existence : are his doctrines to be received as upon a level with the laws of the land, with enactments of king, lords, and commons, in parliament assembled ? What the bishop says is good, sound reason and justice. True : but what then ? I look through the act of parliament, and I cannot find it there. Like Shylock, “ I cannot find it in “ the instrument : It is not so nominated in “ the bond !”

Bishop Horsley is an excellent moralist and politician. No doubt of it : but what of that ? Can he grant me a *noli prosequi* ? Can I bring his speech into court, and offer it as a writ “ to shew why judgment should not pass “ upon me ?”

Lord Grenville, and the authors of the bill mean exactly what bishop Horsley has expressed. We will grant that ; we will not stay to debate about trifles. But this assumption only exhibits in a more atrocious light the iniquity of the bill.

Was the omission of every provision for this purpose an affair of accident ? We may hence learn what value they set upon the liberties of

Englishmen, and the most important interests of mankind.

Was it design? Did they intend to have all the literature of England, original or translated, and all its votaries at their mercy?

But the matter lies deeper than we have yet seen. It is worth our while to enquire what would be the penalty awarded to the author of Hume's *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth*, or Rousseau's *Treatise of the Social Compact*, if they were living, and if these works were published during the operation of Lord Grenville's bill.

Hume and Rousseau appear in these treatises to have been republicans. Republicanism is a doctrine mischievous and false. Be it so. But there can be no enquiry and no science, if I am to be told at the commencement of my studies, in what inference they must all terminate. Labouring under this restraint, I cannot examine; labouring under this restraint, I cannot, strictly speaking, even attempt to examine. No matter how decisive are the arguments in favour of monarchical government; if men enter freely upon the discussion, there will be some, from singularity of temper, or peculiarity of prejudices

dices

dices which they are unable to correct, who will determine in favour of republicanism. The idea of combining uniformity of opinion in the sequel, with liberty of enquiry in the commencement, is the most impossible and frantic notion that ever entered into the mind of man.

What men imagine they see in the way of argument, they can scarcely refrain from speaking, and they ought to be permitted to publish. All republican writers (Hume is an eminent example) do not appeal to our passions; all appeals to our passions do not menace us with the introduction of universal anarchy. Considering how triumphant the arguments in favour of monarchy are affirmed to be, we surely ought not to be terrified with every philosophical debate. It is a well known maxim of literature, that no principle upon any controversial subject, can be so securely established, as when its adversaries are permitted to attack it, and it is found superior to every objection. A sober and considerate observer will have strange thoughts that suggest themselves to him, respecting the most venerable and generally received maxims, if he find that every person who ventures to
 enter

enter upon an impartial examination of them, is threatened with the pillory.

A few words are due to those persons who, imbued with the scepticism incident to inquisitive habits, may be in doubt whether the monarchical or republican opinion will ultimately appear to be the most sound, or which of them will ultimately prove victorious. A doctrine opposite to the maxims of the existing government may be dangerous in the hands of agitators, but it cannot produce very fatal consequences in the hands of philosophers. If it undermine the received system, it will undermine it gradually and insensibly; it will merely fall in with that gradual principle of decay and renovation, which is perpetually at work in every part of the universe.

Having here endeavoured to define the tendency of what bishop Horsley calls “common
“ speculative and philosophical disquisitions,” let us see whether they fall within the provisions of this bill, and what is the punishment adjudged against them. Under the seditious branch of the bill, we find these words:
“ If any person or persons shall maliciously
“ and advisedly, by writing, printing, preach-
“ ing,

“ ing, or other speaking, exprefs, publifh,
 “ utter, or declare, any words, fentences, or
 “ other thing or things, to excite or ftir up
 “ the people to hatred or diflike of the per-
 “ fon of his majesty, his heirs or fucceffors,
 “ or the eftablifhed government and confi-
 “ tution of this realm, then he or they fhall
 “ be liable to fuch punifhment as may by law
 “ be inflicted in cafes of high mifdemeanours.”

This clause needs no comment. Whatever were the intentions of the authors of the bill, into which perhaps it would be profane for us to enquire, nothing is more certain than that the clause may eafily be wrefted to include
 “ common speculative and philofophical dif-
 “ quifitions.”

Well then, the author of every specula- tive and philofophical difquifition, is at the mercy of the minifter for his firft offence— [let it be recollected, that by offence is here underftood every enquiry, however temperate; every argument, however folid and acute; every inftitution to mankind; however falu- tary and beneficial, for all thefe may, at the mercy of the minifter for the time being, be brought within the provifions of this act!— he is liable, I fay, for his firft proceeding of
 this

this sort, to fine, imprisonment, and pillory; and for the second to be transported to Botany Bay.

This is something; this might satisfy the most inordinate appetite for arbitrary power. Philosophy and science, in all their most eminent branches, though venerable as the pillars of the world, are by this act sent to school to lord Grenville. He is to teach them good manners; he is to brandish over them the rod of correction; he is to subject them to the rigours of such discipline as to his judgment shall seem meet.

Philosophy and science, we might imagine, are in this clause amply provided for. But there is no end to the paternal attention of his majesty's ministers. Let us pass from the inferior branch of lord Grenville's bill to the principal, *viz.* that which relates to the crime of high treason. Here it is provided, that

“ if any person or persons shall compass, ima-
 “ gine, invent, devise, or intend, death or de-
 “ struction, or any bodily harm, tending to
 “ death or destruction, maim or wounding,
 “ imprisonment or restraint of the person of
 “ our sovereign lord the king, his heirs
 “ and successors, or to deprive or depose him

“ or them from the style, honour, or kingly
 “ name of the imperial crown of this realm,
 “ then such person or persons shall be ad-
 “ judged guilty of high treason.”

This clause is sufficiently complicated in its structure. It is necessary to read it more than once, before we can completely understand it, or perceive to what substantives the government of the different verbs and participles it contains, are to be construed to extend. But we will pass over this circumstance. Unhappily lord Grenville's bill, if it pass into a law, will not be singular in this respect. We too often see the lives and liberties of men suspended upon hair-breadth constructions, upon distinctions of grammar, and subtle, philological discussions respecting the meaning of words. This is a spectacle to which we have been too long accustomed, for it to be capable of exciting in us any degree of wonder.

The immediate purpose for which we quoted this clause, was to enquire whether or no, in sober certainty, “ common speculative
 “ and philosophical disquisitions,” fell within the letter of this definition of high treason. Hume's Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth,

contains principles that are either true or false. We will suppose this wonderful genius, the great ornament of English literature, who gave new delicacy to human language, new profoundness to historical composition, and new lustre to the events of the British annals; this genius, who dived into the depths of intellectual science, who discovered new treasures where the greatest men of every age had searched before, and who, whether his conclusions shall ultimately be admitted as true or rejected as false, has certainly given that additional acuteness to philosophical reasoning by which mankind will be benefited as long as literature shall endure—we will suppose, I say, this wonderful genius to be arraigned as the author of the composition just mentioned.

What shall be his behaviour at the bar? Shall he descend to the pitiful artifice of disowning this able production, and trust that government will not be able to bring it home to him in the way of legal proof? Shall he allege, “the principles of my performance
 “are false, they will be easily refuted, and
 “will never produce any perceptible effect?” Or shall he affirm at once, “the performance
 “is

“ is mine, and its principles are true ?” In that case, the attorney-general retorts upon him, “ they are calculated to produce an effect ; they tend “ to incite and stir up the “ people to hatred or *dislike* of the person of “ his majesty, *his heirs or successors*, or the “ established *government and constitution* of “ this realm :” nothing more plain. They tend sooner or later to the dissemination of republican principles.” Hume then upon this charge is to be fined, imprisoned, and set in the pillory ; and, if he afterwards authorize the republication of his essay, he is to be transported to Botany Bay.

Stop a moment. This was not the purpose for which the question was here introduced. The business was to enquire, under lord Grenville’s bill, whether or no he were guilty of high treason. Hume, for publishing his *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth*, guilty of high treason ! conducted to the place of execution, and there hanged, drawn, and quartered !

Nothing is more indisputable, than that he might, with equal propriety, be prosecuted under the first, as under the second branch of lord Grenville’s bill. There is no need of a laboured proof to shew, that, in publish-

ing his Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth, he had some intention. His intention was to reconcile men by degrees to republican principles, or at least to wean them from the prevailing prepossessions against these principles. He is guilty therefore under the clause of “ compassing, imagining, devising, inventing, or intending, to deprive or depose our sovereign lord the king, or his heirs and successors, from the style, honour, or kingly name of the imperial crown of this realm.”

But there is a more extraordinary circumstance behind. The authors of the bill, as if fearful that some lenient, or over-merciful judge might imagine that the publication of such a book as Hume's Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth, was not high treason, have proceeded more precisely to limit and define the meaning of the clause, which they do in the following words: “ And [if such person or persons] such compassings and imaginations, inventions, desires or intentions, or any of them shall express, utter, or declare, by any *printing, writing, preaching, or malicious and advised speaking*, then every such person or persons shall be adjudged guilty of high treason.” Thus “ common speculative and
“ philoso-

“philosophical disquisitions” are expressly declared to come within the description of high treason; and, what is more curious, nothing but printing, writing, preaching, or speaking, is high treason within the construction of this act.

I am perfectly aware that lord Grenville and the other authors of this bill, will start with astonishment at the explanation I have given. They are innocent; they never had it in contemplation to involve philosophical writers, who should scientifically discuss the nature of the human mind, or the operations of man in a state of society, in the pains of high treason. I have no doubt of it. But what follows from this? Observe, Englishmen, “what manner of men” are your legislators! Observe “what manner of men” are selected for the king’s ministers, and whose peculiar office it is to make laws, upon which the tenure of human life is suspended! “They know not what they do.” Is this a sufficient apology? When they have made laws, no men so much astonished as they, if a sober enquirer comes and tells them the meaning of them. They “breath out threatenings and slaughter,” they “throw about firebrands,”
and

and risk at every moment a conflagration of the edifice of our liberties; and they “say, “Are we not in sport?” Such is the government under which we live. They shut up a magazine, containing an extract of every human evil, in the smallest compass, and then present it to us as an advantage. If at some future time Pandora’s box be unclosed, then, and not till then, they will know, that what they passed for an odoriferous perfume, is in reality the most deadly poison.

One observation more upon lord Grenville’s bill, and it shall then, for the present, be dismissed. Under both branches of the bill, “speaking,” “expressing, publishing, uttering, or declaring any words, sentences, or other thing or things,” make a part of the description of the offence hereby created. In the first clause indeed it is understood that ministers, in their extreme benignity, intended to withdraw speaking from the enumerations of the bill; and I am no longer to be liable, for saying in the course of a casual conversation by my own fire-side, that, “in the abstract, “I like a republican government better “than monarchy,” to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. I am only, first, to be pilloried, and afterwards

afterwards transported to Botany Bay. “The tender mercies of the wicked” are instructive. Nor is it less essential to the rightly understanding these bills, that we should consider them as they originally stood, than as they may be subsequently altered.

It is not easy to pronounce whether this clause, I mean the clause subjecting a man, for all manner of speaking, to imprisonment and transportation, is to be considered as more or less atrocious than the clauses restraining the liberty of the press. In one respect it is worse. It extends to every man, and no man can pretend successfully to guard himself against its sanctions. But in other respects it is less iniquitous. It is impossible to be carried into general execution. It does not reach so high, or wound so effectually. Common conversation indeed may, at first sight, appear to be more emphatically the general interest and concern of mankind. But perhaps, upon farther consideration, we shall retract that opinion. It is not upon common conversation, but upon science and the art of writing, that all that is dignified, all that is ennobling, all that is exquisite and admirable in human nature, depends. Brutes have a
sort

sort of common conversation; and, if we had nothing higher to depend upon for our welfare but common conversation, we should speedily degenerate into a species of brutes.

Having thus endeavoured to guard against the laying too much stress upon this prohibitory clause, against speaking; or rather having endeavoured to shew, that it is not the worst of the *oversights* of lord Grenville's bill, let us attend a little distinctly to its operation. It might most properly be termed, a clause for creating a national militia of spies and informers. Henceforward it will be idle to suppose, that any man (especially any man who is unacceptable to his majesty's ministers) is safe. He may be unalterably determined against every species of conspiracy or political consultation. He may throw away his ink and his pens, and determine never to commit another word to paper. He may resolve never, upon any account, to sell, give, or lend any book, paper or writing. These are no trifling precautions; these are precautions that ought, in all reason, to indemnify a man against the penal provisions of a political act of parliament. He may go farther than this; he may determine never more to open his

mouth

mouth upon any political topic, direct or indirect. He may confine himself to directions to his servants, and counting the clock. Nay, if that shall not be thought refining too idly, he may enter into a vow not to utter any articulate sound; yet he is not safe. If he speak, his words may be distorted; and, if he be silent, he may be proved, by legal evidence, to have damned the king, and may be sent to Botany Bay.

Against this last supposition perhaps it may be alleged, “ that the defect of lord Grenville’s bill, is a defect that it possesses in common with every penal Act of Parliament. Any innocent man may be proved by legal evidence, to be guilty of any crime, and may be punished accordingly.” But no: lord Grenville’s bill is not upon a level with every penal Act of Parliament. It is not easy to prove any man guilty of any crime; and exculpatory circumstances, of various kinds, and of the most satisfactory nature, may be collected, to refute a calumniatory accusation. But speaking is a crime that requires no ingenuity to invent, and no contrivance to support; and it is a crime [Good God! speaking in any

H manner

manner, a crime !] the most difficult of all others to be disproved.

It will perhaps be thought too trite, if we were to dwell, in this place, upon the ill consequences to result from instituting a national militia of spies and informers. What kind of a man is a spy ? He is a man that insinuates himself into your confidence in order to betray you. He pretends to be uncommonly vehement and intemperate, that he may excite you to be the same. He watches your unguarded moments, he plies you with wine, that he may excite you to speak without restraint. He undertakes to remember words, and he has an invincible bias upon his mind, inducing him to construe them in a particular way, and insensibly to change them for words more definite and injurious. His very income depends upon the frequency of his tales, and he is paid in proportion as the tales that he brings, whether true or false, tend to the destruction of the persons to whom they relate.

Miserable beyond compare must be the state of that country, where such men as this are to be found in every town, in every street, in every village, and in every house. “ Evil
“ communications

“communications corrupt good manners.” It is impossible that I should continually associate with knaves, without losing something of the un sullied lustre of my virtue. Two virtues are most important in civil society; frankness, that I should practise no duplicity, that I should play no part under a mask; and mutual trust and confidence. Now, what confidence can there be, when men are surrounded with spies and informers? When, from the frequency of the phenomenon, I am unable certainly to tell, whether my friend or my brother be not a man, whose trade is accusation, and who will one day cause me to be transported or hanged? In a country where the existence of spies and informers is frequent; the whole nation must, of necessity, be made up of two classes of hypocrites: hypocrites, who hold out a false appearance, the better to ensnare; and hypocrites, who hold out a false appearance, that they may not be ensnared.

So much; for the present, for lord Grenville's bill.

We will now proceed to the consideration of Mr. Pitt's bill. Lord Grenville's bill is probably the most atrocious, because writing

and the publication of science, are probably, of all imaginable things, the most essential to the welfare of mankind.

Mr. Pitt's bill however is of no trivial importance. It is, as we have already said, a direct attack upon the most essential provision of the Bill of Rights, the provision, that authorizes the inhabitants of Great Britain, to consult respecting their grievances, and to demand redress.

This is, in many respects, like most of the fundamental topics of government as they relate to a great nation, a subject of extreme delicacy. For men to assemble in considerable numbers, particularly with a view to the reformation of abuses, is perilous, and may lead to violence. To prohibit them from assembling, may lead to the same thing in a worse form. The longer discontents are pent up and concealed, the more furiously they may be expected to break out at last. The Bill of Rights has solved this ænigma in political science, so far as relates to the people of Great Britain, and has authorized the people to meet, of course expecting from government a vigilant attention to their subsequent proceedings.

The

The first strong measure that was taken, restraining, within narrower limits than those of the Bill of Rights, the right of the inhabitants of this country to assemble, was the act of 1 George the First, cap. v. commonly called the Riot Act. That act has been thought by some of the best judges and statesmen who have existed since that period, to be the capital blemish of the English statute book. It was the fifth public act of the first year of George the First; and the period at which it was made, is to be considered as perfectly unique. The king landed from Hanover on the 18th of September; and his predecessor, queen Anne, died on the first of August preceding. At the moment of her death it was a matter of complete uncertainty, whether the son of king James the Second, or the elector of Hanover, would be her successor. Men's minds were divided between the two claimants; and it is commonly supposed that the majority of the nation was in favour of the representative of the house of Stuart. At this period the Riot Act was passed, when king George was not yet warm in his throne, when it was uncertain how long he would remain the acknowledged sovereign of Great Britain, and when a rebellion

rebellion was already fermenting in the kingdom, which broke out a few months after. The express and avowed purpose of this law was to counteract the alarming spirit of disaffection; but it unfortunately happened that the proper clause for declaring the act to be temporary was omitted, and it followed in this, as in other memorable instances, that an act, made to provide against a transitory emergency, has been, in a blind and indirect way, placed in perpetuity upon the statute books. Mr. Pitt's bill however goes infinitely farther than the Riot Act. I shall only insist upon a few leading particulars and not go into the same detail respecting it, that I have done respecting lord Grenville's bill.

The most striking provision of Mr. Pitt's bill, relates to the necessity under which every person is placed, of directly summoning a magistrate to attend the meeting which he has called together; and to the powers to be exercised by that magistrate, when present. The magistrate is empowered to silence any speaker in any part of his speech, and to disperse the meeting in any step of its proceedings. He is to employ his own judgment and discretion, as to whether that part of the
speech

speech, or step of the proceedings, is in any way dangerous or unauthorized, and every person, who is purposely, or casually present at the meeting, is required, under heavy penalties, to yield him implicit and instant obedience, and repair to his own home at the word of command.

It is improbable that a greater insult was ever put upon any thing appearing in human form, than is contained in these enactments. Was ever an authority created more despotic, more disgraceful, and that it was less practicable to endure? Better, much better, and infinitely more manly, would it have been, totally to have prohibited all meetings out of the ordinary course, than thus impudently to have exhibited the mockery of permitting them. What sort of materials must that man be made of, who will resort to any meeting under such restrictions? It is impossible to conceive that any person upon reflection will, after the passing of this bill, resort to any meeting of a political nature, unless it be one of those portentous meetings, of which we have sometimes heard, where men come together with the resolution to "succeed or die."

Who will answer for himself that, in the act

of speaking, he shall consent to cease, at the moment the auctioneering magistrate shall give the signal with his hammer? Who will answer for himself that, though not speaking, his thoughts shall be under such severe discipline, as to leave him in readiness to depart the instant he is bid to do so? Who will answer for himself that the folly, the misconception or the malice of this insolent magistrate [even magistrates have been known to be insolent] shall not excite in him the smallest indignation? No state of a human being can be devised more slavish, than where he is told, that he must not expostulate; he must not answer; the master claps a padlock upon his lips and he must be silent; he must not have an opinion of his own. Even supposing a man to be imbued in the highest degree with the principles of passive obedience, if the whole assembly be not so drilled as to obey the word of command, he may be hemmed in, in spite of his efforts, and committed for trial, or shot by the military.

Let us pass from the enactment of the bill in this respect, to the penalty by which it is to be enforced. Three days' imprisonment would be too great a punishment in this case, and would be altogether intolerable to a man of a lofty

lofty and independent spirit. What then must be the feelings of any man imbued with the principles of morality or humanity, when he finds that the penalty, as stated by Mr. Pitt in opening the nature of the bill, is that of felony without benefit of clergy? What sort of hearts are these men endued with? What sort of understandings? They scatter about punishments upon every occasion, and the punishment of the slightest offence is death. They know no principles of comparison, they are dead to every feeling of the heart, they pronounce with total indifference the punishment of death upon multitudes yet unborn; In the spirit of king Richard in the play, “I will not dine, until his head be brought me!”

Well may these men be the enemies of science, well may they declare every philosopher who investigates the nature of man or society subject to the pains of high treason; well may they emulate the irruptions of the Goths and Vandals, who spread barbarism and intellectual darkness over the whole face of the earth! They know no touch of civilization; they were never humanized by science or art; they come forth in all the pride of ignorance; laugh at the scruples of human kindness, and tram-

ple upon all the barriers by which civil society can alone be preserved.

Having commented upon the principal branch of Mr. Pitt's bill, it seems as unnecessary as it would be odious, to follow him through all its detail. I will not attend him through all his splittings and distinctions, of sixpences to be paid at the door, or tickets to be delivered or shewn ; of the number of persons that may be present in any one house without a licence ; or the clauses and riders by which he will perhaps hereafter endeavour to save card-clubs and ladies' routes from the general devastation. It would, no doubt, be instructive to pursue him through all these labyrinths ; it would detect his sterility, and uncover his nakedness. But this office will be performed by skilful hands ; and it is necessary to the purpose of these pages, that the argument they contain should be compressed and striking.

We have now gone through, as far as seems to be necessary upon the present occasion, the direct consideration of the two bills. There is however one historical consideration, to which it is material to turn our attention, before we proceed to sum up the different parts of
the

the argument. Lord Grenville, in opening the nature of his bill in the house of lords, observed, that it was founded in the precedents of other times, and therefore could not be regarded as an innovation. The precedents to which he referred, were from the reign of queen Elizabeth and of king Charles the Second. In this statement he was, no doubt, for the most part well founded. The bill he introduced is, in several important respects, a transcript of a temporary act of 13 Elizabeth, and 13 Charles the Second.

In referring us to these precedents, lord Grenville is to be regarded as the vehicle of an important instruction. When the measures of the present day are borrowed from former times, it is one of our indispensable duties, to look to those times, and consider the spirit in which the measures originated.

One of the first considerations that suggests itself respecting the precedents of lord Grenville is, that they are drawn from times anterior to the revolution. They are not therefore superior to all suspicion. It was once the mode to talk of “the English constitution as settled by the glorious revolution.” Whether it be the purpose of lord Grenville and

Mr. Pitt to cure us of this antiquated prejudice, time will effectually shew. I remember to have heard lord chief baron Macdonald, then attorney-general, upon the trial of Thomas Paine, observe, “ that our glorious and incomparable constitution existed from the earliest accounts of time, and was recognized by Julius Cæsar.” But other men, better informed, or more modest than lord chief baron Macdonald, will probably acknowledge, that England, like the other countries of Europe, was, at a period greatly subsequent to Julius Cæsar, subject to the feudal tyranny; that all these countries about the same time endeavoured to shake off the yoke; that the struggles of some were more successful than of others; and that it was not till after frequent vicissitudes of anarchy and oppression, that England acquired her “ constitution as settled at the glorious revolution.”

Let us consider the spirit of the times of queen Elizabeth and king Charles the Second. The liberty of the commons of England began to assume some faint appearance of a definite form, about the time of king Edward the First.

The progress, though small, was nevertheless progress,

progress, nearly down to the close of the fifteenth century. The improvements indeed were slight, they were attended with strong contradictions and symptoms of despotism, such as will for ever be incident to a barbarous age ; but still they accumulated. The bloody contentions however of the houses of Lancaster and York, seemed to have destroyed the most valuable principles and institutions of a regular society. Henry the Seventh was despotic ; Henry the Eighth was still more so. The very name of liberty seemed to be forgotten ; and the only contests that are of importance in our history, were upon the subject of religion, and were produced by the reformation. With the puritans commenced the revival of ideas of liberty. They opposed the despotism of the established church ; civil liberty “ lay immediately in their path, and “ they found it.” The first regular opposition in parliament under the house of Tudor, appeared in the reign of queen Elizabeth. It will be a matter both of curiosity and importance, to recur to Hume’s account of the session of parliament in which that bill was drawn, which lord Grenville has attempted to revive upon the present occasion.

“ A

“ A new parliament, after five years in-
 “ terval, was assembled at Westminster. We
 “ shall be somewhat particular in relating the
 “ transactions of this session, because they
 “ shew, as well the extent of the royal
 “ power during that age, as the character of
 “ Elizabeth, and the genius of her govern-
 “ ment. It will be curious also to observe,
 “ the faint dawn of the spirit of liberty among
 “ the English, the jealousy with which that
 “ spirit was repressed by the sovereign, the
 “ imperious conduct which was maintained
 “ in opposition to it, and the ease with which
 “ it was subdued by this arbitrary princess.”
 Vol, V. ch. xl. page 173.

“ A motion made by Robert Bell, a pu-
 “ ritan, against an exclusive patent granted
 “ to a company of merchants in Bristol, gave
 “ occasion to several remarkable incidents.—
 “ Sir Humphrey Gilbert, the gallant and re-
 “ nowned sea-adventurer, endeavoured to
 “ prove the motion made by Bell to be a
 “ vain device, and perilous to be treated of;
 “ since it tended to the derogation of the pre-
 “ rogative imperial, which whoever should
 “ attempt, so much as in fancy, could not, he
 “ said, be otherwise accounted than an open
 “ enemy.

“ enemy. For what difference is there be-
 “ tween saying that the queen is not to use
 “ the privilege of the crown, and saying that
 “ she is not queen? And though experience
 “ has shewn so much clemency in her ma-
 “ jesty, as might, perhaps, make subjects
 “ forget their duty, it is not good to sport or
 “ venture too much with princes. He re-
 “ minded them of the fable of the hare, who,
 “ upon the proclamation that all horned beasts
 “ should depart the court, immediately fled, lest
 “ his ears should be construed to be horns;
 “ and by this apologue he seems to insinuate,
 “ that even those who heard or permitted
 “ such dangerous speeches, would not them-
 “ selves be entirely free from danger. He
 “ desired them to beware, lest, if they meddled
 “ farther with these matters, the queen
 “ might look to her own power; and finding
 “ herself able to suppress their challenged li-
 “ berty, and to erect an arbitrary authority,
 “ might imitate the example of Lewis the
 “ Eleventh of France, who, as he termed it,
 “ delivered the crown from wardship.

“ Though this speech gave some disgust, no-
 “ body at the time replied any thing; but that
 “ sir Humphrey mistook the meaning of the
 “ house,

“ house, and of the member who made the
 “ motion : They never had any other purpose,
 “ than to represent their grievances, in due and
 “ seemly form, unto her majesty. But in a
 “ subsequent debate, Peter Wentworth, a man
 “ of a superior free spirit, called that speech an
 “ insult on the house ; noted sir Humphrey’s
 “ disposition to flatter and fawn on the prince ;
 “ compared him to the cameleon, which can
 “ change itself into all colours, except white ;
 “ and recommended to the house a due care
 “ of liberty of speech, and of the privileges of
 “ parliament. It appears, on the whole, that
 “ the motion against the exclusive patent had
 “ no effect. Bell, the member who first intro-
 “ duced it, was sent for by the council, and
 “ was severely reprimanded for his temerity.
 “ He returned to the house with such an
 “ amazed countenance, that all the members,
 “ well informed of the reason, were struck
 “ with terror, and during some time no one
 “ durst rise to speak of any matter of import-
 “ ance, for fear of giving offence to the queen
 “ and the council. Even after the fears of the
 “ commons were somewhat abated, the mem-
 “ bers spoke with extreme precaution ; and by
 “ employing most of their discourse in pre-
 “ ambles and apologies, they shewed their
 “ conscious

“ conscious terror of the rod which hung
 “ over them.—It is remarkable, that the
 “ patent, which the queen defended with
 “ such imperious violence, was contrived for
 “ the profit of four courtiers, and was atten-
 “ ded with the utter ruin of seven or eight
 “ thousand of her industrious subjects.

“ Thus every thing which passed the two
 “ houses was extremely respectful and sub-
 “ missive ; yet did the queen think it incum-
 “ bent on her, at the conclusion of the ses-
 “ sion, to check, and that with great seve-
 “ rity, those feeble efforts of liberty, which
 “ had appeared in the motions and speeches
 “ of some members. The lord keeper told
 “ the commons, in her majesty’s name, that,
 “ though the majority of the lower house
 “ had shewn themselves in their proceedings
 “ discreet and dutiful, yet a few of them had
 “ discovered a contrary character, and had
 “ justly merited the reproach of audacious,
 “ arrogant, and presumptuous : Contrary to
 “ their duty as subjects and parliament men,
 “ nay, contrary to the express injunctions
 “ given them from the throne at the begin-
 “ ning of the session, injunctions which it
 “ might well become them better to have at-
 “ tended to, they had presumed to call in
 K “ question

“ question her majesty’s grants and preroga-
 “ tives. But her majesty warns them, that
 “ since they thus wilfully forget themselves,
 “ they are otherwise to be admonished :
 “ Some other species of correction must be
 “ found for them ; since neither the com-
 “ mands of her majesty, nor the example of
 “ their wiser brethren, can reclaim their
 “ audacious, arrogant, and presumptuous folly,
 “ by which they are thus led to meddle with
 “ what nowise belongs to them, and what lies
 “ beyond the compass of their understand-
 “ ing.” P. 178, 179, 180, 181.

“ [Her arbitrary] maxims of government
 “ were not kept secret by Elizabeth, or
 “ smoothed over by any fair appearances or
 “ plausible pretences. They were openly
 “ avowed in her speeches and messages to
 “ parliament ; and were accompanied with
 “ all the haughtiness, nay sometimes bit-
 “ terness, of expression, which the meanest
 “ servant could look for from his offend-
 “ ed master. Yet notwithstanding this
 “ conduct, Elizabeth continued to be the
 “ most popular sovereign that ever swayed
 “ the sceptre of England ; because the max-
 “ ims of her reign were conformable to the
 “ principles

“ principles of the times, and to the opinion
 “ generally entertained with regard to the
 “ constitution. The continued encroach-
 “ ments of popular assemblies in Elizabeth’s
 “ successors have so changed our ideas on these
 “ matters, that the passages above-mention-
 “ ed appear to us extremely curious, and even
 “ at first surprizing ; but they were so little
 “ remarked during the time, that neither
 “ Camden, though a contemporary writer,
 “ nor any other historian, has taken any notice
 “ of them. So absolute indeed was the au-
 “ thority of the crown, that the precious
 “ spark of liberty had been kindled, and was
 “ preserved, by the puritans alone ; and it was
 “ to this sect, whose principles appear so fri-
 “ volous, and habits so ridiculous, that the
 “ English owe the whole freedom of their
 “ constitution.” P. 182, 183.

These passages are full of materials for salu-
 tary reflection. The speeches themselves are
 extracted by Hume, from Sir Simon d’Ewes’s
 History of the Proceedings of Parliament.
 They discover to us, in an irresistible manner,
 the principles by which his majesty’s ministers
 desire to have the government of this country

conducted, and the sources to which they resort for constitutional authority.

The act of queen Elizabeth was revived in about two years after the restoration of king Charles the Second. The events which had preceded, were, what Clarendon calls, the Great Rebellion, the beheading of king Charles the First, the usurpation of Cromwel, and the anarchy which followed upon his decease. Men were tired with the unsuccessful experiments that had been made of the principles of republicanism, and, when the king's restoration was once determined, the tide of loyalty became uncontrollable. Such was the impatience of all ranks of people, that the negotiations respecting the terms upon which he should be restored, were abruptly terminated, and the people threw themselves, without treaty or condition, into the arms of the sovereign.

Thus it has been seen, in the first place, that the precedents of lord Grenville, as being drawn from a period anterior to the revolution, do not belong to the English constitution, and that he might, with as much real propriety, have drawn them from the transactions, equally remote, of France or Spain.

Secondly,

Secondly, it has appeared, that, in addition to the precedents' possessing no intrinsic authority, they are drawn from periods by no means compatible with the principles of liberty. But the objection has not yet been put in its strongest light.

The most important object of lord Grenville's bill, is to impose certain restraints upon the liberty of the press. To what period does he recur for instruction upon that subject? What authorities does he consult? The reign of queen Elizabeth; the year 1571. Is this the consummation of ignorance, or are we to regard it in the light of unblushing sophistry? I will suppose that the reign of queen Elizabeth, had been as much distinguished by maxims of liberty, as it was by the maxims of arbitrary power. Lord Grenville's argument will gain nothing by that supposition.

In the year 1571, literature was not yet emancipated from its cradle: the liberty of the press had not yet been heard of. This important doctrine, so invaluable to times of knowledge and illumination, had not yet been invented. Men might have loved all other kinds of liberty, but this they could not love, for they could not understand. The press,
that

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that great engine for raising men to the dignity of gods, for expanding and impregnating the human understanding, for annihilating, by the most gentle and salubrious methods, all the arts of oppression, was a machine thrust into an obscure corner, and which, for its unpolished plainness and want of exterior attraction, was almost regarded with contempt. Men knew scarcely more of the real powers of the press, and its genuine uses, than the savage would suspect of the uses of the alphabet, if you threw the four and twenty letters into his lap.

And now, in the close of the eighteenth century, lord Grenville would bring us back to the standard of 1571. Does he think we are to be thus led? Does he believe that he will be permitted to treat men arrived at years of maturity, in the manner they were treated while children? Is the *imprimatur* of government to be a necessary preliminary to every publication? Are we to have an *Index Expurgatorius*, teaching us what books we may read, and what books must on no account be opened? Is government to appoint certain persons to draw up for us catechisms and primers, Whole Duties of Man, and elemen-

tary treatises of every science? And are we, by these publications from authority, to model our creed and fashion our understandings?

Little indeed do these ministers apprehend of the nature of human intellect! Little indeed have they followed its growth, to the vigorous sublimity of its present stature! They are strangers come from afar, and cannot understand the language of the country. They are like the seven sleepers, that we read of in the Roman history, who, after having slumbered for three hundred years, knew not that a month had elapsed, and expected to see their old contemporaries, their wives still beautiful, and their children still in arms. But they will be taught the magnitude of their error. This giant, the understanding, will rouse himself in his might, and will break their fetters, “as a thread of tow is broken, when it toucheth the fire.”

We have now taken a view of the provisions and spirit of the proposed bills, and nothing remains for us, but to sum up the arguments on either side, and attend to the result. We have stated the emergency of the case upon which ministers acted, with as much candour and accuracy as we could exert,

ert, and certainly with a desire, very opposite to that of suppressing or disguising any of its circumstances. This would, in our apprehension, have been unpardonable. We agree with ministers in the principle of their bills, if the admission of certain facts, and of the necessity of some vigilance, perhaps of some exertion, can be called the principle of the bills.

We are now to compare the disease and the remedy together, to ascertain in what degree they are proportioned to each other, or how far it can be expected that that, which is offered us as a remedy, will prove a remedy.

The first of these questions may be dismissed in a few words. The evil is to be considered as an embryo evil. The operations of the London Corresponding Society, and its adherents, if not opposed, must have terminated in one or two ways. Either they would have burst out prematurely, and then it would have been a mere common tumult or sedition ; it would have been easily quelled ; its authors would have been its victims ; and they would have left, as a legacy to their countrymen, an infallible pretext for new severity and assumption on the part of government.

ment. Or the tendency of their operations would have been more formidable ; and, by continually gaining strength, they would at last have been able to overturn the constitution. But, to accomplish that purpose, it would have been necessary, that they should have been peculiarly tranquil and orderly in their appearance ; that they should have watched their opportunity with unalterable patience ; and that they should have suffered years to elapse before they broke out into act.

It may well be doubted, whether an evil thus distant, though unquestionably entitled to the attention of ministers, required the introduction of any new act of parliament to encounter it. It may well be believed, that the laws already in existence, sagaciously administered, would have been abundantly sufficient for the purpose. I think this would have been the case, even if we had torn the Riot Act from our statute book, and introduced some more humane and wholesome regulation in its place.

The nature of the proper remedy was generally delineated in the first pages of this enquiry. But it may not be useless, to reca-

pitulate and expand what was there delivered. The circumstance, as we then observed, principally to be regretted was, that the proceedings of the London Corresponding Society and its partizans, were of such a nature, that, in endeavouring to check them, the statesman would be perpetually in danger of intrenching upon the freehold of our liberties. In this case it would be incumbent upon him, to tread with wary steps, and to handle every thing that related to the transaction with a tender hand, and a religious fear. Before he set out upon his expedition, he would swear upon the altar of his country, that, in dealing with her internal foe, he would not infringe upon her liberties.

It is no easy matter to lay down the precise conduct he would pursue. It would be idly to detract from the usefulness of these pages, to offer any undigested opinion upon that subject. Undoubtedly he would sit down, with the maturest deliberation, with the most unalterable constancy, with the most perfect coolness of temper, and with the purest kindness towards all the parties concerned, to meditate upon this critical question. He would certainly prefer means of conciliation to means
of

of force. Means of conciliation will always offer themselves in abundance, to the man of strong understanding, and of ardent benevolence.

Such then is the nature of the preliminary circumstances, and such the general nature of the remedy to be applied. It will not be necessary to enter into a long recapitulation of the measures proposed by lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt, in order to shew how far they correspond with the conditions of the remedy. It is not probable that their warmest advocates will pretend, that they have proceeded with a very cautious step; that they have shewn any uncommon solicitude for the preservation of our liberties, through all their minutest particles, and their widest and tenderest ramifications. Their warmest advocates will not pretend, that they have not advanced to this business with a sort of youthful alacrity; and that they have not rather seized a pretext, than been pressed into the service by an occasion. They have no sympathy with the friends of liberty. They consult not the coolness of philosophy, but the madness of passion. When the time calls upon them to reason, they begin to rail. Their profession is that of invective;

tive ; and invective has been their principal medium for working on the minds of their countrymen, for the last three years. They act with the unsteadiness and vehemence of passion ; and, if they produce a salutary effect, it will be by the same kind of accident, as the painter, who produced upon his canvas the appearance he wished, by throwing his brush at it from the impulse of impatience and despair.

Such are the ministers to whom the affairs of a great country are confided ; and such is the shallow policy, misnamed exquisite and profound, by which the interests of mankind have been managed, in too many instances, in all ages of the world.

There is a curious fact relative to this subject, which deserves to be stated, and upon which the reader will make his own reflections. From the beginning of the present reign, there have been two parties constantly concerned in the government of this country ; certain individuals in habits of personal intimacy with the king ; and his ostensible advisers. Between these two parties it has been necessary that there should be a constant spirit of compromise ; the king's ministers would

not

not consent to be the nominal conductors of affairs, without having an occasional voice in the measures they undertook to recommend and to vindicate. This compromise has been a matter of increasing difficulty and delicacy, during that part of the king's reign which is now elapsing. In earlier periods, it was thought proper for him to maintain a certain sort of indifference for his ministers, and, if a present set were not found sufficiently complying, to have recourse to others. During the administration of Mr. Pitt, he has scarcely at any time had the choice of such an alternative. Of consequence, the commerce has been carried on upon more equitable terms. As the minister has often zealously exerted himself to persuade^{ed} parliament into the adoption of measures which he personally disapproved, so the king has been obliged repeatedly to make a similar concession. Thus two men, one of whom at least is supposed to entertain a mortal antipathy to the other, have found^d the secret of going on very amicably together. In the instance to which this pamphlet relates, it has it seems been the king's turn to concede. His most intimate and confidential advisers have been hostile to the present

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sent measure. They have conceived that it tended to create danger, where it professed to communicate security. Thus ministers have, with a consistency and candour sufficiently memorable, brought in a bill, the entire and exclusive purpose of which is to secure themselves in their places, under the title of *An Act for the safety and preservation of his majesty's person and government, against treasonable and seditious practices and attempts*. Mr. Pitt stands upon so high ground in the cabinet upon the present occasion, that it was not thought safe, on the part of the king's friends, to refuse their acquiescence to the bills. Lord Thurlow alone has displayed a sort of ambiguous opposition, just sufficient to shew, that he did not consider the present measures as by any means entitled to his approbation.

An idea will inevitably suggest itself in this place to one class of readers. They will confess, “ that they are not very solicitous, as to
 “ whether the bills of lord Grenville and
 “ Mr. Pitt be somewhat stronger than the
 “ occasion demanded. They are not abso-
 “ lutely determined against all ideas of li-
 “ berty; but they conceive that, in the pre-
 “ sent

“ sent times at least, liberty must be viewed
 “ as a subordinate consideration. A grand
 “ issue is now depending, between the
 “ strengthening the powers of government,
 “ and extending what is called, our liberties ;
 “ and they prefer without hesitation an estab-
 “ lished despotism to the apprehensions of
 “ anarchy. The only question about which
 “ they are solicitous, is, Will these bills,
 “ granting that they are superfluously strong,
 “ answer their ostensible purpose, keep out
 “ innovation, and perpetuate the domestic
 “ peace of Great Britain ?”

This is a question to which we cannot turn without some degree of pain ; but it is necessary that it should be examined. The following reasons induce us to think, that the bills will not answer their ostensible purpose.

The human species, as has already been observed, is arrived, in a certain sense, at years of maturity. It can no longer be treated with the rigours of infantine discipline, nor can it be moulded into every form that its governors shall please to prescribe. The materials have already assumed a decided character, and government has nothing left but to make the best of these materials. Cardinal Wolsey said

said in the reign of king Henry the Eighth, speaking of the papal superstition, “ If we do
 “ not destroy the press, the press will destroy
 “ us.” It will be doubted by a careful rea-
 soner, whether cardinal Wolfey spoke in time,
 and whether the daring project at which he
 hinted could, even then, have been execute .
 But it cannot now be executed. The press is
 “ a stone against which whosoever stumbles,
 “ shall be broken ; but whosoever shall pull it
 “ upon his own head, shall be crushed in
 “ pieces.”

No infatuation can be more extraordinary
 than that which at present prevails among
 the alarmed adversaries of reform. Reform
 must come. It is a resistless tide ; and, if we
 endeavour to keep it out too long, it will
 overwhelm us. You are friends to the peace
 and tranquillity of human society. So is
 every reasonable and conscientious man that
 lives. But, take heed lest your mistaken
 friendship should produce the effects of hatred.
 In order to maintain the peace and tran-
 quillity of society, it is necessary to temporize.
 We must both accommodate ourselves to the
 empire of old prejudices, and to the strong
 and decisive influx of new opinions. We
 must

wrestler, upon the stage. They have been loudest in increasing the broil; they have urged on the animosity of the combatants; and they have called for blood. Neither the present times nor posterity will forget the trials for high treason last year at the Old Bailey; a measure which, for precipitation, folly, and an unscrupulous and sanguinary spirit, has never been exceeded. This was one of the early measures, by which government conspicuously forced the moderate and the neutral, to take their station in the ranks of the enemy.

But the present bills will have still more strongly, and, if they pass into a law, much more permanently, the same effect. What is it that we are called upon to part with, and what to admit, that we may enter into a treaty, offensive and defensive, with the present ministers? We must part with the Bill of Rights, with the liberty of the press, and the liberty of speech. We must place ourselves in the situation, which is described in the preamble of the Act, 1 Henry IV, when, “no man could know how he ought to behave himself, to do, speak or say, for doubt of the pains of treason.”

Treason." We must admit a national militia of spies and informers. This is a price that scarcely any man will be content to pay. If it be paid for want of reflection at first, men will full surely awake ; they will loudly reclaim their birth right ; and the indignation they will conceive at having been thus overreached, will probably produce a convulsion. The present bills force men into the extremest state of hostility ; they leave no opening for treaty ; they offer no compromise ; they inculcate an obstinate and impracticable temper upon both parties. At a time when conciliation is most necessary, they most deeply inspire into us sentiments of animosity.

The nature of Mr. Pitt's bill deserves particularly to be recollected in this place. It abrogates the fundamental provision of the Bill of Rights. When the Bill of Rights authorized men to consult respecting grievances, and to demand redress, it is not probable that its authors were unaware of the danger attendant upon crowded assemblies of the people. But they reasoned upon the nature of the case, and they thought the legal permission of these assemblies, under

certain conditions, the least evil. They knew that, when the people thought themselves aggrieved, they must be redressed. They knew that discontent was one of the most undesirable states of the public mind. They knew that discontent, when shut up, grew stronger and more menacing; and they conceived that it was true political wisdom to provide it a channel by which to express itself. Mr. Pitt is determined that there shall be no discontent. At least he is determined, that discontent shall not declare itself, and that no clamours shall be heard. He shuts up every avenue, of open consulting, of political publications, and of private conversation. Ministers will be found perhaps, to be sufficiently ignorant at present of the state of the public mind. It is one of the great problems of political government to be adequately acquainted with it. The most fatal effects have always followed from this ignorance. The American war was begun, from a persuasion that the majority of the people were loyalists: and the present war would probably never have been undertaken, if the English government had not believed, that the great mass
of

of the inhabitants of France were concealed adherents of the dethroned sovereign. The present bills are calculated to swell this species of ignorance to its greatest dimensions. Mr. Pitt is determined that we shall not hear the tempest, till it burst upon us in a hurricane, and level every thing with the dust.

Having, in this instance, assigned reasons why those persons, who are under no apprehensions from the extension of authority, ought yet to disapprove of the present bills, we will conclude, in conformity to the moderate and conciliating spirit with respect to the two opposite political systems, that we hope has pervaded these sheets, with offering a few considerations to persuade those persons who are enthusiastic advocates for the extension of liberty, that they ought not to conceive too vehement an animosity, and to be possessed with too profound a despair, if these bills should ultimately pass into law. The enthusiastic advocates for liberty are too apt to exclaim upon every new encroachment, “ This is the last degree of hostility ;
 “ every thing depends upon our present success ;
 “ if we miscarry now, the triumph of despotism
 “ is final, and there is no longer any hope that
 “ remains

“remains to us.” The precisely opposite of this is the true inference in the present instance. These bills are *an unwilling homage, that the too eager advocates of authority pay to the rising genius of freedom.* Why will you always shut your eyes upon the real nature of your situation? Why will you believe, while every thing is auspicious, that every thing is desperate? If you cannot see how deeply more liberal principles of freedom have struck their root into the soil of Britain, how widely they have diffused themselves, and how fast they are ripening for the purposes of reform, you have here the testimony of your enemies to convince you. You are mistaken: the present effort of intemperate alarm, is not the act of of presumptuous confidence; it is dictated by a sentiment of dejection and despair. Be tranquil. Indulge in the most flattering prospects. Be firm, be active, be temperate. If alarmists are resolved no longer to keep any terms with you, you then, in all just consideration, succeed to the double office, of the advocates of reform, and the moderators of contending and unruly animosities.

THE END.