

THE BEST OF THE OLL #34

James Mill, “The State of the Nation” (1835)
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“They who had an interest in keeping bad things as they were, behaved in the same way then as they do now. They represented themselves as Conservatives, and those who desired removal of the bad things, Destructives. And conservative they were, but of what things?—the bad. The others were destructive, no doubt, but of those things only which it was good to destroy.”



James Mill (1773-1836)

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[June, 2013]

Editor's Introduction

James Mill (1773-1836) was an early 19th century Philosophic Radical, journalist, and editor from Scotland. He was very influenced by Jeremy Bentham's ideas about utilitarianism which he applied to the study of the British corn laws, free trade, comparative advantage, the history of India, and electoral reform. His son, John Stuart, after a rigorous home education, became one of the leading English classical liberals in the 19th century.

In this essay Mill provides one of his regular surveys of "the state of the nation" in which he sums up political developments in Britain. It was written a few years after the success of the "Reform Party" in agitating for electoral reform which greatly increased the size of the electorate with the Reform Act of 1832. Now that most of the middle class could vote it was hoped that the Members of Parliament who represented them would dramatically reform British politics, especially in the areas of aristocrat control of Parliament, the legal system, the established church, and free trade. Concerning the latter, the Anti-Corn Law League was established in 1838 under the leadership of Richard Cobden and it was able to achieve its goal of eliminating the protectionist corn laws in 1846.

Mill acknowledges "the strength of the spirit of reform" which was sweeping Britain but is also aware of the continuing strength of its opponents among conservatives and the fact that the reform party was split into "moderate" and "radical" reformers. Concerning the former, he develops a French liberal inspired theory of class which explains politics as a struggle between two contending groups, "ceux qui pillent" (those who pillage, also known as "the ruling Few") and "ceux qui sont pillés" those who are pillaged, also known as "the subject Many").

Concerning the latter, he urges the reform party to continue pushing for reforms in all areas by adopting the strategy of the radical reformers. Mill believed that liberty in Britain would not be achieved until the privileged elites had been deprived of their power and the people were allowed to rule in their place. He had in mind removing the privileges of "the priests of all three classes; those who serve at the altar of state, those who serve at the altar of law, and those who serve at the altar of religion."

"The most remarkable circumstance, in the state of our country at the present moment, is the strength of the spirit of reform. The evidence of this strength is very singular. A set of men, whose pride and vanity, whose boast and glory, it has been, throughout their lives, that they were the general enemies of reform, and who, of course, found their account in it, that is, found this profession in accord with the opinion of a sufficient section of the public to obtain emolument and honour by its means—have been compelled to profess themselves the general friends of reform: of course, because no sufficient section of the public mind remained in such a state, as to hold out either support or reward to those who professed themselves of a different sentiment."

The State of the Nation (April, 1835)¹

The use of placing before us a view of the present state of the country respects the future. We may derive from it two advantages: First, a more sure anticipation of the train of events, which time is about to bring forth; Secondly, a more distinct perception of the means which we may employ, for accelerating and improving the results of a beneficial kind,—for mitigating, or altogether preventing, the results of an opposite kind, which the mixed nature of the causes now in operation is tending to produce.

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This fact is decisive. The predominant section of the public, those with whom the preponderance of influence—intellect and property taken together—in forming public opinion, resides, are proved to be reformers. This is not denied by the new converts: they lay it as the ground of their conversion. They say, that no men, not bereft of their reason, can now hope to carry on the government of this country, in a spirit opposed to the spirit of reform;—they justify their change of policy by saying, that a clear and steady manifestation of public opinion renders that expedient in government, which otherwise would not have been expedient; and as nothing in government is good, to which the public mind is permanently opposed, anti-reform therefore is not good, in the present circumstances of this country.

We accept this apology, as a justification, so far. But, if all reform is bad, the public opinion, however strongly manifested, will not make it good. If public opinion call for changes, and all changes lead to a balance of evil, the public opinion may be too strong to be resisted; but every good man will lend his utmost endeavour to effect a change in it, and in the mean time to make the innovations to which he gives way as insignificant as possible. But, on the other hand, if public opinion is right—and that question, as regards our own country, we shall presently search to the bottom—then the men who are only reformers by compulsion, and who submit to it as a necessary evil, are very unfit to have the guidance of public affairs;—that is, to have the power put into their hands of preventing, as far as possible, every increase of the public good.

To see the force of that evidence of the spirit of reform which we are now contemplating, it is necessary to consider it in its elements.

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¹ “P. Q.”, “State of the Nation,” *The London Review*, Apr. 1835, vol. I, no. 1, pp. 1–24. In *The Political Writings of James Mill: Essays and Reviews on Politics and Society, 1815–1836*, ed. David M. Hart (Liberty Fund, 2013). <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2520>.

and their name. Instead of enemies of reform, which they boasted of as their distinction and glory, they now assure us that they are true reformers;—instead of Tories, a name synonymous with attachment to all the abuses by which the state is afflicted, and with all the infirmities of intellect by which old women are distinguished, they call themselves *Conservatives*—a name, the import of which we shall examine thoroughly by-and-by.

Counting upon a majority, in the late House of Commons, of persons imbued with the spirit of reform, this party tried an experiment upon the country, for which we thank them. The spirit manifested during the last general election is satisfactory in the highest degree: it has shown that the reforming mind is more widely diffused, and has taken a more firm hold of the most numerous class of the men who possess influence with their fellow-citizens, than otherwise we should have had ground for believing.

When we consider to what an extent the influence of all the property, held in large masses, was exerted, to procure the return of supporters to the present ministry—and when we further consider the advantages under which that influence was exerted—that, under the imperfections of the present law of election, (an important *item*, by-the-by, in the state of the country, and which must not long be permitted to remain as it is,) the power of intimidation, and the power of bribery, possessed by the owners of large property, have full scope to exert themselves, and were exerted to an extraordinary degree in the last election; and when we reflect on the result, that all this power was balanced, and more than balanced, by the combined influence of the men of small property,—we are led to the inevitable conclusion, that the middle classes, which of necessity lead the inferior, are almost wholly gained by the spirit of reform, and that to such a degree as to ensure on their part the utmost vigour of action, and to create such a tide of public opinion as will be sure to carry along with it, and that speedily, all the more enlightened and generous among those by whom the property in large masses is possessed. The ascendancy of the spirit of reform is now out of danger, and even of dispute.

The next thing, upon which we have to reflect with wonder, is the shortness of the time in which the

spirit of reform in this nation has grown to such a degree of strength. This is perhaps the circumstance of the present period on which the future historian will dwell with the greatest astonishment. How small a time is it to look back upon, since a sentiment tending to reform could not be uttered in genteel society;—when only men of the firmest nerves dared to appear as reformers;—when Sir Francis Burdett, with all his claims to indulgence, was actually expelled from aristocratic society, and all but hooted down in the House of Commons, and when aristocratical men and aristocratical women generally boasted of having cut his acquaintance;—when to be called a Benthamite was a mark of reproach, and men who courted aristocratical society affected to pass an acquaintance of that description in the street.

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When we reflect upon the smallness of the interval—from the time when not only all the honours and emoluments of the state, and all the powers of government, were appropriated and secured to the sworn enemies of reform, but even when the spirit of anti-reform was so preponderant as to create a proscription in society against every man who allowed it to appear that his mind had a leaning that way—to the time when now the spirit of reform has grown to such a height that it has the ascendancy everywhere, except in the House of Lords, and the court of the King: when the King’s ministers, though inveterate, thorough-bred enemies of reform, are obliged to profess that they will govern in the spirit of reform, and cannot govern otherwise;—and when even the ballot,

that bugbear of the Aristocracy, can be advocated in good company without opprobrium; we are entitled to conclude that the interval will not be long before that ascendancy will manifest itself in some material results.

One of the things which most deserves our attention, in reflecting on this astonishing progress of the spirit of reform, is the little encouragement under which it has grown up to this power, in this wonderfully short space of time. It is indeed to be remarked, that it has grown up almost entirely in circles where the prospect of the honours and emoluments of the state had little effect, or even the smiles and caresses of aristocratic society—all carefully reserved for people of another sort; but what one asks with some astonishment is, how did they come by the ideas? Reading is the principal source of information in those circles; and undoubtedly they must have profited by their reading. But how little reading, calculated to be useful to them, has been put in their way? The newspapers, on this subject, have hitherto been very unsteady and imperfect instructors. It is, indeed, but of yesterday that any newspaper of influence has dared firmly and plainly to advocate the principles of reform. A newspaper also is compelled rather to assume results, than explain them; and rather to enforce the topic of the day, than to insinuate a new idea into a mind which is only beginning to inquire.

The other periodical publications, which have flourished during the interval we speak of, were not even calculated to help forward the spirit of reform in the middle classes. They were addressed not to those who were beginning political reading, but to those who were hackneyed in it. They as little thought of teaching in the elementary method as the newspapers. In fact, their discussions were of the nature of newspaper discussions, and so much the worse, as they were more wordy. The principal among them also were addressed to the aristocratical classes, and either harangued perpetually against reform, or touched it as ‘cats touch mustard.’

It does appear that the spirit of reform must have grown up in the circles of the middle order, chiefly from their own reflections; from observing, with their own good sense, the turn which was habitually given to things in parliament; how regularly every proposition which tended to the good of the Many was thrown out; how regularly every abusive institution which yielded

emolument to the ruling Few was clung to and preserved. To this course of reflection we have no doubt that the exertions of Mr. Hume have rendered the most important service. The perseverance with which he showed up from day to day gross instances of the misapplication of the property of the people; the parallel perseverance with which the House of Commons protected the misapplications—in time produced a powerful conviction, that the House of Commons was not so constituted as to be an instrument for the good of the people. These were matters which men in their shops, and in their fields, even at their looms, and their anvils, could understand without much reading. And we do in our consciences believe, that Mr. Hume has done more to rouse the spirit of reform, and carry it to its present state of ascendancy, than any man living, or than any aggregate of men which we can name. Even the ill usage which he so long sustained in the House of Commons, and from all the parties which it then contained, is one of the memorable circumstances in the history of parliamentary reform, and adds to the debt of gratitude which the nation owes to this its truest and most undaunted friend.

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Having seen how rapid has been the growth of the spirit of reform, and how great the strength which

it has now acquired, we have still to answer some other questions before we can fix its relative importance as an article in the present state of the country.

First of all, what is to be said of its permanency? May we prophesy that it is a casual fever of the public mind, destined to have its period, and then to die away? or must we look upon it as a permanent affection, which not only never can be eradicated, but of which the power must go on increasing?

That this is an important question every one will immediately see; and what the answer to it must depend upon will also be seen, as soon as it is mentioned. The permanence or fugacity of the spirit of reform must depend upon its tendency to produce good or evil. There is no need of apprehending that the public will ever grow tired of making additions to its good. This is an appetite which grows by what it feeds on. Whatever the amount of previous additions, that does not in the least abate the relish of something more, or take from its value. The last addition may be of as much importance as any of those which preceded it, and worthy of as eager a pursuit. But reverse the supposition; assume that this pursuit of good will always terminate, not merely in disappointment, but calamity—then we may conclude, with certainty, that it will not be of long duration.

This, then, is the question which awaits us,—Does the pursuit of reform tend to good, or to evil?

This is a question, the very terms of which appear to supply its answer.

The pursuit of anything means a tendency towards the attainment of it. The pursuit of good, therefore, is a tendency towards the attainment of it. The talk we usually hear, in reply to this observation, is from the purpose. This pursuit, they say, is liable to be ill-directed. True; men may mistake their way; but they more frequently find it, and arrive safe at the place they intended. And another thing,—when they find out a mistake they have once committed, they are seldom in any danger of committing it another time. Great errors were committed in the first voyage round the world, which now are with certainty avoided.

We think, therefore, it is a clear case, that the pursuit of political good—which is what we mean when we name the spirit of reform—has a tendency towards the attainment of it, and that it only needs to

be well directed to ensure that end. We thence conclude, and with an assurance approaching to certainty, that the men who, instead of giving directions for avoiding the mistakes liable to be committed by the people in the pursuit of political good, (which would be the certain course of honest men fearing those mistakes,) labour to beat down and destroy that pursuit; whose constant endeavour it is to defame it; to represent it as the purpose of none but the most wicked of men, of those whose desire it is to destroy all those securities which human beings have set up to defend them from the violence and injustice of one another, and thus to effect the ruin of all that is good for mankind—are men to whom the attainment of political good is unwelcome. That can arise from one cause only—that their interest is opposed to it. In other words, the people's good is their evil; therefore, they hate the people's good, and leave nothing undone to make the pursuit of it be thought odious—the horrid mother of everything which most strongly excites the terror of mankind.

“To understand this unhappy position of a portion of our fellow-citizens, we must call to mind the division which philosophers have made of men placed in society. They are divided into two classes, *Ceux qui pillent*,—*et Ceux qui sont pillés*; and we must consider with some care what this division, the correctness of which has not been disputed, implies. The first class, *Ceux qui pillent*, are the small number. They are the ruling Few. The second class, *Ceux qui sont pillés*, are the great number. They are the subject Many.”

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The first class, *Ceux qui pillent*, are the small number. They are the ruling Few. The second class, *Ceux qui sont pillés*, are the great number. They are the subject Many.

It is obvious that, to enable the Few to carry on their appropriate work, a complicated system of devices was required, otherwise they would not succeed; the Many, who are the stronger party, would not submit to the operation. The system they have contrived is a curious compound of force and fraud:—force in sufficient quantity to put down partial risings of the people, and, by the punishments inflicted, to strike terror into the rest; fraud, to make them believe that the results of the process were all for their good.

First, the Many were frightened with the danger of invasion and ravage, by foreign enemies; that so they might believe a large military force in the hands of the Few to be necessary for their protection; while it was ready to be employed in their coercion, and to silence their complaints of anything by which they might find themselves aggrieved.

Next, the use of all the circumstances calculated to dazzle the eyes, and work upon the imaginations of men, was artfully adopted by the class of whom we speak. They dwelt in great and splendid houses; they covered themselves with robes of a peculiar kind; they made themselves be called by names, all importing respect, which other men were not permitted to use; they were constantly followed and surrounded by numbers of people, whose interest they made it to treat them with a submission and a reverence approaching adoration; even their followers, and the horses on which they rode, were adorned with trappings which were gazed upon with admiration by all those who considered them as things placed beyond their reach.

And this was not all, nor nearly so. There were not only dangers from human foes; there were invisible powers from whom good or evil might proceed to an inconceivable amount. If the opinion could be generated, that there were men who had an influence over the occurrence of this good or evil, so as to bring

on the good, or avert the evil, it is obvious that an advantage was gained of prodigious importance; an instrument was found, the power of which over the wills and actions of men was irresistible.

Ceux qui pillent have in all ages understood well the importance of this instrument to the successful prosecution of their trade. Hence the Union of Church and State; and the huge applauses with which so useful a contrivance has been attended. Hence the complicated tissue of priestly formalities, artfully contrived to impose upon the senses and imaginations of men—the peculiar garb—the peculiar names—the peculiar gait and countenance of the performers—the enormous temples devoted to their ceremonies—the enormous revenues subservient to the temporal power and pleasures of the men who pretended to stand between their fellow-creatures and the evils to which they were perpetually exposed, by the will of Him whom they called their perfectly good and wise and benevolent God.

If, besides the power which the priestly class were thus enabled to exercise over the minds of adult men, they were also permitted to engross the business of education—that is, to create such habits of mind in the rising generation, as were subservient to their purposes, and to prevent the formation of all such habits as were opposed to them—the chains they had placed on the human mind would appear to have been complete: the prostration of the understanding and the will—the perpetual object of their wishes and endeavours down to the present hour—to have been secured for ever.

The alliance of the men, who wielded the priestly power, was, in these circumstances, a matter of great importance to those who wielded the political power; and the confederacy of the two was of signal service to the general end of both—the maintenance of that old and valuable relation—the relation between Those *qui pillent*, and Those *qui sont pillés*.

There was another instrument—not, indeed, of so great, but of no mean potency. We allude to the lawyers. Men speedily discovered how much they were exposed to injury from one another, even in the state of social union, and found how greatly they were dependent on the protection which was afforded them against such injuries. They greatly valued that protection, and respected greatly the men who were its more immediate instruments. These men naturally

thought of serving themselves by the advantageous situation in which they were placed. They wished to make the dependence upon them of the other members of the community as great as possible. This was to be done mainly by rendering the mode in which they yielded that protection mysterious and obscure. Obscurity, especially in the less instructed states of the human mind, is a powerful cause of that kind of reverence which is mixed with fear. Not body knows what may be in a thing which is obscurely seen. It is almost always swelled into something of vast dimensions and pregnant with good or evil according to the frame in which the imagination of the half-observer may be at the time. More than this: when law was obscure, nobody could obtain the benefit of it but by means of the lawyers, because by them alone was it understood. This created a state of profound dependence on the part of all the rest of the community. It proved, of course, to the lawyers, a fertile source both of riches and power. The alliance of the men of law with the men of the state and the men of the altar, became thence a matter of importance to the trade of all; and the union of Law and State has not been less real, though less talked about, than the union of Church and State. It is unfortunate that it never obtained a name, and therefore is more frequently overlooked.

A threefold cord is not easily broken. The doom of mankind might now have appeared to be sealed. The shackles on the mind secured the shackles on the body; and the division of mankind into *ceux qui pillent*, et *ceux qui sont pillés*, might have been thought to be established for ever. [1]

There was, however, in the womb of time, a small event, which was destined to give a turn to the tide of human affairs. A German tradesman, not one of the high classes, not one of those *qui pillent*, but one of those *qui sont pillés*, invented a method of stamping written characters on paper, and, by that means, of multiplying the copies of a writing to any extent. At that moment the voice of Heaven went forth—*Let there be light!* and the voice was heard in Erebus—in the deepest cells, and strongest holds of the friends of darkness.

Of this light the effects were visible, first, in the affairs of the church. The grossness of the priestly frauds and delusions had been not only observed, but

remarked upon, sometimes with scorn, sometimes with indignation, by the prime spirits of the age, before the appearance of Luther—the most heroic of the sons of men, and the greatest earthly benefactor, beyond compare, of the species to which he belonged.

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When the human mind had burst the shackles imposed upon it by one class of those who desired to hold it in bondage, and refused to take the word of priests for the standard of what was good and evil for human nature, it could not forbear examining the shackles of all other kinds with which it was loaded, and the use to which they were converted. The acts of those who wielded the powers of government began to be scanned, and to be tried by the test of their conduciveness to the weal or ill of those over whom, and in whose behalf, they were exercised.

That criticism, that examining, and testing, has been going on from that day to this. It has been going on, indeed, under the greatest disadvantages, and its

progress has been slow. The advance has, notwithstanding, been unintermitted. The movement has been irresistibly, and unchangeably, forward; and latterly, as we have seen, it has been wonderfully accelerated.

The artifices by which it has been resisted have always been very similar. Such manifestations of it as could be punished were repressed by violence and cruelty. This expedient was at first extensively used. Still there were operations which could not be combated in this way. These were to be attacked by defamation.

The history of reform, from its first page to its last, is hardly anything but a repetition of the same imputations. Read the History, by Father Paul, of the Council of Trent, assembled for the express purpose of arresting the progress of the Reformation, and putting an end at once both to Luther and his doctrines. The reformation of religion was to produce exactly the same effects as the reformation of government is to produce at present. The people were altogether unfit to judge what was good for them in religion. If they were left to themselves to try, the consequences would be horrible. All sorts of monstrous doctrines would be propagated. Every man, or small number of men, would have a different creed, and society would be torn to pieces by the contentions of the different sects. Nor would this be all. From religion they would quickly pass to government. No form of government would content them, and property and government would expire together in general confusion.

There is wonderful uniformity in human nature under all the appearances of diversity. They who had an interest in keeping bad things as they were, behaved in the same way then as they do now. They represented themselves as *Conservatives*, and those who desired removal of the bad things, *Destructives*. And conservative they were, but of what things?—the bad. The others were destructive, no doubt, but of those things only which it was good to destroy; that is, the causes of suffering and degradation to the most numerous portion of the species. This explanation, however, of the meaning of the two words they carefully avoided then as now. They designed, and they effected, fraud. Religion, Government, were the two generical terms. They left it to be understood, that when they called themselves *Conservatives*, they were labouring for the

conservation of religion and government; that the men whom they called *Destructives* were labouring for the destruction of religion and government. Now it is certain that religion and government never were in any danger. Religion and government never had in the world any but friends.

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What, then, was the object of those who imputed the destruction of religion and government to those who desired the reformation of them? We cannot be mistaken in the answer. They hated the Reformation, and hoped to be able to render it odious by misrepresenting it—by affirming of it that which was not true. They did their utmost to make it be believed, that reformation and destruction were synonymous terms—that they who desired to take from government whatever made it work ill for the people, and supply to it whatever would make it work well, laboured only for its destruction—that they who desired to strip religion of all the hurtful ingredients which the interest of priests had incorporated with it, or fastened upon it, and to reap the good of it pure from evil, laboured in like manner for the destruction of religion.

The wonder is—not that these artifices, supported as they were with all the factitious power and authority

of the times, were long deplorably successful—but that even now there are men who have the audacity to make use of them. There are men—a class of them—even now, who think they have answered us, or try to make other men believe they have answered us, when we desire to make those changes in government and religion, which are necessary to prevent them from being instruments in the hands of *ceux qui pillent* and to make them instruments of good to *ceux qui sont pillés*, by calling us *Destructives*, and telling the public that we ought to be put down.

This is a species of arguing, which is never perseveringly applied in behalf of a good cause. The reason is sure. A good cause has always better means of defence. The good things which are in it can be shown. The ill things in that which is opposed to it can also be shown; and when this is done, all question is at an end.

He who, in opposition to a plan of improvement, has nothing to offer but a vague picture of distant consequences, of a horrible nature, proves only one thing, with whatever assurance, or even fury, he may vent his prophecies: that he has his reasons, whatever they may be, for hating the plan, and doing what he can to prevent the realization of it. The use of this expedient, therefore, is always to be taken as the sign of a bad cause. It is the ‘hay on the horn,’—*hunc tu, Romane, caveto*.

There were formerly two sets of people who were glib in the use of this argument; the anti-reformers, and the half-and-half reformers. The former of the two classes is now extinct; they are incorporated with the half-and-half men. But in their junction they have not relinquished the old mode of warfare.

There is a class of reformers,—namely, all those who desire any changes which the class in question do not desire, some desiring more and some less,—whom they have been calling radicals; and endeavouring by that name to class with all that is most despicable in the community, till the name at last began to acquire respect; and then they changed it to that of destructives. Under that name, it is given out, that all those who desire any greater reforms, than those which are desired by the half-and-half men, are men who desire the destruction of religion and government, or who are stupid enough not to see that what they desire is the same thing; and then follows the endeavour to hunt them down by clamour and abuse. [2]

The force of the weapon, however, is nearly spent. Those who desire to take but a crumb of reform and leave the rest are daily losing ground against those who desire to go on reforming, so long as there is anything to reform. Why should rational beings stop short in lessening the number of things which hurt them? Why should they cease adding to the number and efficiency of the things which do them good?

“Those who desire to take but a crumb of reform and leave the rest are daily losing ground against those who desire to go on reforming, so long as there is anything to reform. Why should rational beings stop short in lessening the number of things which hurt them? Why should they cease adding to the number and efficiency of the things which do them good?”

The enemies of reform,—we mean the enemies of all but the crumb,—may be assured, that the public now see far too clearly the reason of the case, to be stayed by the pretence, that seeking good they will catch evil. They ask themselves, and have gone too far ever to cease asking, ‘Why should not we be as good judges of what is beneficial, what hurtful, as the men who never yet were found to offer us any advice, except on matters which concern themselves.’ Whosoever we, the portion of the community *qui sont pillés*, seek an atom more of protection to ourselves against those *qui pillent*, they are in an uproar; the evils, which are not only threatened, but certain, are the most horrible which can be presented to the imagination. On the other hand, whatever is done to take from our protection, and add to the facilities with which the trade of those *qui pillent* is carried on, is done with the utmost coolness. Never any forebodings of danger from that source.—The public have learned to suspect such advisers. They say, and they say with a witness, —‘When we look at the body to which we belong, and

the body to which they belong, not only is the greater wisdom with us, but there is no wisdom to be found anywhere else. Look at the body *qui pillent*; how small the number among them who are good for anything; to whom any other man would confide the management of his ordinary affairs; who have an understanding comparable to that of an ordinary tradesman! [3] And even among those who stand foremost in the class, there is not one that passes mediocrity. A wit among lords is, proverbially, only a lord among wits. On the other hand, all that is great and powerful in intellect,—all that excels in any of its walks,—all the men from whose minds anything signally beneficial has proceeded in former times, or can now be expected to proceed, have been, are, and ever will be found in the class to which we belong. Why then should we not trust to our own wisdom as much as to theirs.’

Of what use is it to point to the lowest class among us, and ask if they are fit to judge what is good or bad in political or ecclesiastical institutions? We point to the majority in the class who defame us, and ask in our turn, if they are qualified to judge what is or is not good in such matters, or any other matters of the smallest importance? If we are told, that we are not to look to the less wise, but the more wise in the class in question, because the less wise are governed by the more wise, we claim the benefit of the observation for ourselves. The less wise, in our class, are and ever have been governed by the more wise; and in our body the more wise are infinitely superior in wisdom to the wisest portion of theirs. Why then should we not follow our own reason, in preference to theirs, in matters which so deeply concern us? At the same time, we are far from being unwilling to discuss with them the questions between us. We indeed reject defamation as discussion, and content ourselves with exposing it. When the public is assured, by those who wish to discredit us and our cause, that our labours tend to the destruction of government and religion, we say that we intend the preservation of both; and we ask, if government is less government when it is rendered true to its ends, than when it is to a great degree perverted from them; if religion is less religion, when it is purged of the pollutions with which the selfish interests of men have defiled it, than it is when mired and merged in these impurities? The question, then, between us is not as to our professed ends,—they are the same,—the preservation of government and religion, purged, both

of them, of their abuses. We differ about two things: what are the abuses, and what the proper remedies for them. And these we allow to be fair subjects of discussion; provided always the discussion be fair. We grant, also, that they never ought to be decided without discussion, and that continued, till it has become obvious to the majority of disinterested and competent judges, that all the reason is on the one side, and only the renitency of custom, or self-interest, on the other.

As an instance of our differences of opinion about abuses, we may point to what we consider the master abuse, the want of sufficient power in the people to choose their representatives. We say, that the means exist, even under the Reform Act, of taking away the power of choice from the people, to the extent of a majority of the whole number. Our opponents say that this is no abuse, but an advantage. They have talked loudly about the Reform Act as a *final* measure. Sir Robert Peel has lately grounded his accession to it on his belief, a declaration which gives the measure of the man, that it was an arrangement for ever;—a new ‘original compact,’ of everlasting and indefeasible obligation.

“we consider any defalcation in the power of the people to choose their representatives, as a master evil. We go upon the postulate, that the power, by which the class qui pillent succeed in carrying on their vocation, is an evil; and ought to be abated... We assume, then, that this power ought to be taken away; and we say, that we know but one way of accomplishing our object, which is, to grant to the people the entire and complete choice of their representatives.”

We can state, in narrow compass, the reasons on which we consider any defalcation in the power of the people to choose their representatives, as a master evil.

We go upon the postulate, that the power, by which the class *qui pillent* succeed in carrying on their vocation, is an evil; and ought to be abated. This postulate, indeed, has been refused, and with cries of great indignation; but we have not time at present to examine them.

We assume, then, that this power ought to be taken away; and we say, that we know but one way of accomplishing our object, which is, to grant to the people the entire and complete choice of their representatives.

This has ever been the great problem of Government. The powers of Government are of necessity placed in some hands; they who are intrusted with them have infinite temptations to abuse them, and will never cease abusing them, if they are not prevented. How are they to be prevented? The people must appoint watchmen. But *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who are to watch the watchmen?—The people themselves. There is no other resource; and without this ultimate safeguard, the ruling Few will be for ever the scourge and oppression of the subject Many.

‘All free governments must consist of a Senate and People. The People, as Harrington observes, would want wisdom without the Senate; the Senate without the People would want honesty.’—*Hume’s Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth.*

The representatives are the watchmen of the people; and two things only are wanting to make the people very perfect watchmen of the representatives; First, the perfect power of choice, which implies the power of speedy removal; Secondly, the full benefit of the press, which gives them the necessary knowledge of the behaviour of the representative. So circumstanced, the representatives will have a paramount interest in consulting the interest of the people, and in resisting every exercise of power which would trench upon it. And we reformers, till we have brought the state of the representation to this state of perfection, will not cease to have a grievance, which our best exertions will be strenuously and incessantly employed to remove.

So much as to an instance of what we deem an abuse. Now for a specimen of our remedies. The

power of taking away from the people the choice of their representatives is all derived from two sources,—the publicity of the vote—and the want of power to displace a representative whose conduct does not give satisfaction. We desire, therefore, two things—we desire secret voting, and we desire short parliaments.

We know the goodness of these remedies is disputed. As what will not be disputed by those who have an interest that the question should be determined in a different way from the right one? But by what is it disputed? Not by reason and argument, by examining and showing the impotence to good, the potency to evil, of the remedies we propose, refuting all that we can urge in their behalf;—not by this, but by the stale, hackneyed resource of a bad cause, defamation—the imputation of all the vague, general consequences, which men are accustomed to dread, the loss of morals, the loss of government, the loss of religion: consequences regularly imputed to every project of change by which the good of mankind is to be greatly promoted. However, the discussion of these remedies is on foot; and the enemies of them may rest assured that it never will cease, till the public mind is thoroughly enlightened on the subject; and then they well know what will be the result.

We should now go on, and point out the reforms which we think are wanted in the other great provinces of abuse—Law and Religion; but we have been led on so far in illustrating the spirit of reform, that we have not space for these particular subjects, and must allot to them separate articles in future numbers of our publication.

After having shown how the community, as a whole, are divided into reformers and anti-reformers—for we account all those anti-reformers who cut off a slice of reform for us, and say, ‘There, content yourselves with this, for you will get no more’—we proceed now to the next grand item in the catalogue of things which compose the state of the nation,—the mode in which public men, the men wielding any portion of the powers of government, are distinguished and classed.

Among them there are now no anti-reformers. Those who formerly professed anti-reform, now profess moderate reform; and they who formerly professed moderate reform, profess it still. The grand division, then, has come to be two-fold—that of the men who

profess *moderate* reform, and that of the men who profess *complete* reform, which their antagonists call *radical* reform: a very good name, which they who apply it in scorn are working into repute.

“Those who formerly professed anti-reform, now profess moderate reform; and they who formerly professed moderate reform, profess it still. The grand division, then, has come to be two-fold—that of the men who profess moderate reform, and that of the men who profess complete reform, which their antagonists call radical reform: a very good name, which they who apply it in scorn are working into repute.”

There is a distinction between the new Moderates, and the old: they both, indeed, cut us off slices of reform, and, like Lord Peter, with the slices of his brown loaf, damn us to the lowest pit of hell, if we are not contented with what they give us; but the old Moderates, we believe, are willing to cut us the larger slice, and for that reason we give them the preference.

At the same time we do not conceal from ourselves, that there is a stronger affinity between the two, than between any of them and the men who say that they, for their parts, consider reform to be then only at an end, when there is no removeable cause of evil which is not removed, and no attainable cause of good which is not attained.

We consider, that the House of Lords is divided between the new Moderates and the old, the new, in much the larger proportion; and that if there be anything like a complete reformer in the House, the proportion is too small to be of any weight.

The House of Commons, too, is, in far the greater part, composed of the new Moderates and the old, with a preponderance, we think, in favour of the new. Of the House of Commons, however, there is a

portion who deserve the name of *Complete* Reformers. A few years back there was no such thing. If one individual or two betrayed any symptoms of that unnatural propensity, he was a marked man; the rest lolled out the tongue of scorn against him. Now, they are not a great proportion, but a considerable body, to which time is daily making additions, and to which the future time will doubtless make them rapidly.

It is of immense importance how this little band conduct themselves. They are in a position in which the good they may render—not to their country only, but to mankind—is beyond all calculation; and little are they on a level with the high vocation to which they are called, if their minds are not fired with the contemplation of it, and filled with the sacred ambition which it is calculated to inspire.

Till a higher station in the great council of the nation is prepared for them, it is impossible for them to hope that the powers of government will be put in their hands—or, at least, that they could employ them successfully, for the furtherance of the benevolent objects they have in view. If any remarkable combination of circumstances, not without the bounds of possibility, should place the powers of government within their reach, the fate of them and their reforms would resemble precisely the fate of Turgot and Malesherbes. They would, after a few ineffectual struggles, be dismissed; and the restoration of their enemies would only put the realization of their plans of improvement farther off than before.

There is only one thing which we deprecate more than this, and that is, a partial union with either of the parties of the Moderates. The time is not quite come for that; but it is impossible to say how soon it may become the interest of either of them to seek an accession of strength, by admitting a portion of the complete reformers to the offices of state along with them.

We consider that this would be the death-blow to the influence of the complete reformers. Of course, the most soft-tempered and flexible of the party would alone be chosen for the association in question, who would not convert their friends the moderates, but be converted by them. The body of complete reformers would not only be weakened but broken up and discredited in the eyes of the nation.

If this important little phalanx understand their own position, they will take care to make clear what their purpose is with regard to place. Their business is to make it understood, beyond cavil or doubt, that they will not accept of place, and for what reason? that they are more powerful to aid the cause of reform as they are. They are sufficiently numerous, if they conduct themselves wisely, and with a single eye to their noble end, to be a great power in the public council of the nation. It will be the interest of every minister to have them for him, rather than against him; and if the only successful mode of courtship to them be the grant of reforms, they may extort a succession of reforms from hands the most averse to the boon. Their advantages at the present moment are peculiarly great. The two parties of grudging reformers, the ‘now’s-enough’ men, are nearly balanced; of course, the favour of those, who on every occasion can so easily turn the balance, is of the greater value, and the more will be willingly paid for it.

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It is clear that the vocation of the class of philosophical reformers in parliament at present divides itself into two paths of exertion. The one is, to make it, as far as their weight can go, the interest of every ministry, be it what it may, to be the author of

reforms. The second is, to be the champions of the philosophical principles of government. It is impossible to speak in exaggerated terms of the importance of this part of their high calling. There has been no example in parliament, up to this hour, of a man who has deemed himself worthy of this function, with the exception of the short period,—alas! how short,—in which the never-to-be-forgotten Ricardo lifted his head. His modest nature made him think only of that part of the subject which he had the most profoundly studied. But he had formed the idea of the function with perfect distinctness, and often said to the individual who now calls to memory, with acute sensibility, the irreparable loss which the world sustained by his untimely death, that his business in the House of Commons was to stand up for principle; to allow no renunciation of it to pass unnoticed, and no slighting talk about it to go unexposed; to watch the grounds on which measures of importance were laid, and to show on what a foundation of sand everything, not grounded on principle, was of necessity reared.

The absence of men in parliament who thought themselves worthy to stand up, as Ricardo appositely expressed it, for principle, has been so complete, that a fashion has been created against it. So far is it from being the custom in that place to measure anything by its accordance with principle, that the man is reckoned fine, who professes to hold it in derision or abhorrence. It has come to this pass, in that assembly, that the appeal to reason is discreditable,—the renunciation of it a thing to parade, and be vain of. The tone of the place,—not casual, not by fits and starts, but habitual, steady, is,—that the use of reason is to be discarded in the conduct of a nation’s affairs. We believe it would be impossible to assemble an equal number of tolerably educated men, in any other part of the civilized world, among whom it would be fashionable to set reason at defiance, and to profess to act in contempt of her dictates.

This remarkable characteristic of the legislative council in England is a declaration, clear and not to be mistaken, of the interests which are there pursued. Truly was it said by Hobbes, that ‘when reason is against a man, a man will be against reason;’ and with equal truth and certainty may we reverse the proposition, and say, ‘whenever a body of men are found to be steadily and tenaciously against reason, we may safely conclude they have interests, to the

gratification of which the exercise of reason would be fatal.’ We find the following apposite sentiment in an anonymous writer:—

‘All those who wish for arbitrary power over their fellow-creatures have an interest in preventing their acquiring habits of being governed by reason. Men who are in the habit of being governed by reason are not willing to be governed by any man in disconformity with reason. Hence the skill which has been employed in diverting men from the exercise of their reason. Forms, and ceremonies, and cant phrases, and subjection to all sorts of false belief, the weaker and more groundless the better, are equally favourable to the priests of all three classes; those who serve at the altar of state, those who serve at the altar of law, and those who serve at the altar of religion.’

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The instruments which are chiefly made use of, in parliament, to cover the renunciation of reason, and render it somewhat less palpable, are a set of hack phrases, serving each of them as a wrapper for a little parcel of sophistry. Thus we have, ‘Not speculation, but practice,’—as much as to say, act like a beast, and not one of the best of beasts, a blind horse in a mill; ‘Wisdom of ancestors,’—as if ancientness of error were better than truth, or the everlasting repetition of evil converted it into good. Of late, the word ‘Institutions’ has been industriously employed to preclude the use of reason. ‘Institutions,’ in the talk of the anti-reformers, is made synonymous with government and religion; ‘change,’ is made synonymous with destruction. By force of this new nomenclature, therefore, he who desires to reform anything goes to the destruction of government and religion; as if government were no longer government when it is rendered good,—religion were no longer religion when it is rendered pure. What these people mean is, that government is then destroyed, when they are no longer permitted to abuse its powers, for their own aggrandizement, at the expense of the rest of the community; religion is then destroyed, when they cannot make use of it as an instrument for the accomplishment of the same design. In other words, the mischievous tendency which has been given to each by the perfidious artifices of men, is, in their sense, the essence of each. The essence of government, the essence of religion, is the mischief which can be done with them. Let mischief no longer be done with them, they no longer exist.

Such is a specimen of the artillery against which the true reformers have to contend. The resources of their enemies are poor, both in quantity and quality, and soon would be exhausted. What havoc a few right-minded men might make in a few years of their masks and screens! How easily might the advocates of bad government be reduced to the miserable task of repeating exploded sophistry of the poorest kind, which then would not only not impose on anybody, but would degrade still lower even the abject creatures who could descend to the use of it.

The persevering advocacy in parliament of the principles on which good government depends, and exposure of the sophistries by which it is sought to

discredit them, would be a source of instruction to the nation, of which it is impossible to exaggerate the importance. The house, however, we are told, would not bear to be thus schooled. We know, indeed, that there is a right mode, and a wrong, of doing anything, and we do not advocate the wrong mode. With all the defects of the House of Commons, as at present constituted, there is in it a certain portion of good taste, and of good feeling. If a man speaks with simplicity and in earnest, not for the sake of self-display, but evidently for the sake of what he deems a great object, and is able to bring sense and reason to bear upon his question, without violating the respect which every man owes to the feelings of those about him, he will meet with listeners, and he will meet with respect. Why should not this be done, at once, by the little band of true reformers? They are the most instructed men in parliament, some of them, at least, by many, many degrees. And practice would in time give them dexterity in the use of their weapons, the celestial panoply of reason, in the service of mankind.

“there are spots on which the true reformer should make a particular stand. The most important of these is property. Of this the true reformer should signalize himself as the champion. The danger to it is very considerable; and arises, not from the class of poor men, as the enemies of good government so industriously teach, but from the pre-eminently rich; who in all ages have desired to consider nothing as property but that which they themselves hold, everything held by others as held chiefly for their use”

Beside this general field, there are spots on which the true reformer should make a particular stand. The

most important of these is property. Of this the true reformer should signalize himself as the champion. The danger to it is very considerable; and arises, not from the class of poor men, as the enemies of good government so industriously teach, but from the pre-eminently rich; who in all ages have desired to consider nothing as property but that which they themselves hold, everything held by others as held chiefly for their use—that is, with power in them to take to themselves, at any time, whatever portion of it they deem it convenient to take.

The security of property lies so deeply at the root of human happiness, especially of the poorer class, whose subsistence wholly depends upon the employment given to them by accumulated property, and who must perish when that is destroyed—that any infringement of the rights of property ought to be treated as the introduction of a devouring pestilence.

Upon this paramount consideration, it is consolatory to remember, that, of all the men in parliament, the little band of philosophical reformers have distinguished themselves with most zeal and effect to defend the rights of the creditors of the state, and to counteract the desire, not obscurely signified, of the pre-eminently rich, to make this class of their fellow-citizens their prey.

Upon the same principle it is of vast importance that, in the changes which reason recommends, the true reformers should be careful to protect all existing interests. When any source of expense, for example, is to be cut off, the operation ought to be prospective. Any person, whom law or custom has entitled to consider that the emoluments which he had been receiving he was to receive for his life, is, in reality, the owner of a life estate, as much entitled to protection as any species of property whatsoever.

Reasoning on this principle, we were exceedingly disconcerted, last year, when some of the true reformers were seduced into the vulgar cry against the holders of crown pensions. That the power of granting those pensions has been grossly abused, there is no doubt; and perhaps it ought to be wholly taken away. At all events, security against that, as against every other abuse, ought to be provided. But what is all this to the existing holders of pensions? They considered themselves sure of them for life, on a course of practice amounting clearly to prescription. They had, therefore,

a life estate. And the small life estate of Mrs. Arbuthnot, of which so unjust and indelicate a use was made, appeared in our eyes as sacred, as the prodigious one of the Archbishop of Canterbury; and, with respect to the holders, the lady not the least respectable character of the two.

The operation of particular taxes—for the general amount of them is a topic for many a mouth—is another object of particular attention to the philosophical reformers. Any tax which, in its operation, takes money out of the pockets of the people, to put it, not into the treasury of the state, but into the pockets of individuals, they should never cease to expose. Such a tax is spoliation, annual robbery, established by club-law; one of those institutions of ours, of which our *Conservatives* have erected themselves into the body-guards. Such is the tax on imported corn, which, so long as it exists, will so long stand an unanswerable, a trumpet-tongued, argument of the need of further parliamentary reform.

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The abolition, also, of any tax, which must be replaced by some other tax, not less burdensome to the nation, while the operation of the removal will be to put money into the pockets of individuals which it takes out of the pockets of the people, making so far a clear addition to their burdens, is another instance of robbery, which ought to be luminously exposed, and strenuously resisted. Such would be the repeal of the malt-tax, so clamorously called for by a class of men

whose predominance in parliament has ever been, and continues to be, the grand obstruction to good legislation. No man doubts that if the malt-tax is taken off, other taxes to an equal amount must be laid on. How, then, are the landlords to find their advantage? By a rise in the price of bread; a necessary consequence of an increased demand for another product of the soil. The people, therefore, to please the landlords, would have to pay some other tax or taxes to the state in lieu of the malt-tax, and an additional tax, a tax on bread, to the landlords—to the men who already levy a tax on bread, and who would never rest satisfied so long as any other men have anything they can call their own. The poor farmers! is their cant; such a piece of naked hypocrisy, as it is wonderful even they have the impudence to put forth. The cause, and the sole cause, of any undue pressure, which may be sustained by the farmers, is the extortion of too much rent. If the farmer’s rent is proportioned, as it ought to be, to the price of the produce he raises, it is equal to him if the price is high or low; or rather he has an interest in low prices, as in that case he pays less in wages, and has thereby higher profits of stock.

Beside those objects which make stated calls upon the attention of the real reformers, detached incidents which should call them up are of perpetual occurrence. We may present as a specimen what happened the other night.

In the House of Commons, Wednesday, 4th March, 1835, Mr. Wakley asked Sir Robert Peel, if the inhabitants of St. Margaret’s parish were to have the choice of their rector. Sir Robert replied by a couple of sneers; first asking, ‘If Mr. Wakley meant the choice to be by ballot?’ next observing, that ‘the inhabitants of St. Margaret’s parish would not be put to the trouble of choosing their rector, the Crown intending to save them from it.’ This is the true style of old Tory insult; and the House should mark it—the reformers, at least, should mark it; they may learn from it what will be the tone of the courteous baronet, if they allow him to settle himself in his saddle. ‘If they do this in the green tree, what will they do in the dry?’ Because a member of parliament asks a question relating to another subject, he is insulted by a disrespectful allusion to some opinion of his, which his insulter knows is distasteful to the crowd of those who hear him, and will echo the insult. The other expression, by which his Majesty’s Prime Minister chose to proclaim his

disrespect, at once to the author of the question, and the parishioners of St. Margaret's, must have been picked up in the purlieu of St. Giles's. 'Please to help me up with this burden,' says one. 'I won't give you the trouble,' says the other, with a grin, and passes on. The crown would not trouble the parishioners of St. Margaret's with the reception of a benefit! Not it, we will be bound for it. 'The crown will not give the parishioners the trouble of choosing their rector,' says Sir Robert; and with ten times the glee would he say, if he durst, 'The crown will not trouble the people of England with the choice of their representatives.' One thing, however, there is which the crown will not seek to save the parishioners of St. Margaret's from the trouble of. It will not save them from the trouble of paying this man whom they are not to choose. Such troubles as these the crown never thinks of saving such folks as parishioners from. The more of that sort of trouble they submit to, the better pleased the crown. All that is pleasant in these sort of matters, the crown, that is, the folks who act for themselves in the name of the crown—for the crown suffers by all such doings—are eager to save parishioners and such like rabble from the trouble of; all that is burdensome they liberally and generously place upon their shoulders.

Among the objects which require the attention of reformers, Education stands in one of the highest places; though it is never to be forgotten, that the operation of the political machine is that which has the greatest effect in forming the minds of men. We are not able to go into that subject here, because it is closely connected with the means adopted for the teaching of religion, which we have destined for the subject of a future article. We confess we despair wholly of seeing any beneficent plan of state education carried into effect, so long as we have a clergy on its present footing. There might be a clergy so happily circumstanced as to have an interest in good education, and then we should obtain that inestimable advantage. The clergy of the Church of England are so unhappily circumstanced, as to have a decided interest against it; and till their position is altered, a good state-education is hopeless. We look with more expectation to the combinations of individuals; which will every day be more skilful and more energetic.

We point to colonies, as an object of attention to the genuine reformers, because the importance of the subject is seldom understood. We consider the English

colonies as one grand cause of the oppression of the English people. It is not disputed, that of the distressing burdens they bear a great proportion is the work of the colonies: that a very small number of troops is required for the service of England and Scotland; that the army is rendered the most galling of our burdens, because misgovernment cannot be supported in Ireland but with the bayonet, and because every insignificant spot, called a colony, creates a pretext for a military establishment. It has been frequently said, but the evidence of it has not been sufficiently displayed and enforced, that no colony is other than hurtful to the mother country, which does not defray its own expenses. The proposition, indeed, is next to self-evident; for what does a country get by a colony, for which it is obliged to pay, and from which it receives nothing?

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Let us, however, attend a little to the pretexts, by which the interested endeavour to hide this loss and burden from our eyes. They say, we have the monopoly of their trade. And both theory, and experience, prove, that it is of no advantage. How many times more

valuable the free trade of the United States, than the forced trade was of the North American colonies? They say, also, that we have sunk capital in the colonies. Sunk it, indeed! Then let us follow the approved maxim of common life, not to throw good money after bad.

The value of capital consists in the annual return received from it. Suppose the capital of a colony to yield ten per cent. profit. If the expense of military and civil government exceeds the aggregate of that profit, the loss of the colony, and the capital along with it, would be a gain. But, again, why should we, the people of England, pay enormous sums to protect the gains of the colonists? We protect our own; why do not they the same? This doctrine needs only to be well preached, to be very operative in time, and then we shall have relief from a heavy load. There is not an outlying spot of ground subject to the crown of England, which is not a drain upon the people of England, with one only exception, India, where the East India Company has stood in the way of ministerial misrule and extravagance.

P. Q.

Notes

[1] ‘Tyranny and oppression never wanted either a plea or an advocate for whatever they did: for the majority of the lawyers, the divines, and all quæstuary professions, will be sure to run over to the stronger side, where will pass for law, and rapine for Providence.’—*L’Estrange, Fab.* 483.

[2] The nature of these resources was well understood by Chillingworth: ‘It is an argument of a despairing and lost cause to support itself with these impetuous outcries and clamours, the faint refuges of those that want better arguments; like that stoic in Lucian who cried, ω καταρατε, *oh, damned villain!* when he could say nothing else.’—*Relig. of Prot., Ep. Ded.* Again,—‘Men are engaged to act this tragical part only to fright the simple and ignorant, as we do little children, by telling them, *that bites*, which we would not have them meddle with.’—*Ibid.*

‘Sir, I am always inclined to suspect a man who endeavours rather to terrify than persuade. Exaggeration and hyperboles are seldom made use of

by him who has any real arguments to produce.’—*Dr. Johnson’s Parliamentary Debates*, vol. ii., p. 39. ‘Sir, to discourage good designs, by representations of the danger of attempting and the difficulty of executing them, has been at all times the practice of those whose interest has been threatened by them.’—*Ibid.* p. 42. In illustration of this comprehensive proposition take the following instance:—‘This was the famous act (2 Hen. c. 7) against the Lollards, upon which many of those people suffered. In the preamble they are loaded with the imputation of state crimes, as a pretence to delude the people into a concurrence with the churchmen in their persecution. They are said to be united in confederacies to destroy the king, and all other estates of the realm, both lay and spiritual,—and all manner of policy,—and finally the laws of the land.’—*Reeves’ Hist. of English Law*, vol. iii. p. 260. He further says, (*Ibid.* p. 235,) speaking of the first law which was made against the Lollards (2 Hen. IV. c. 15)—‘The meetings of heretics in their conventicles and schools are stigmatized in this act with the name of confederacies to stir up sedition and insurrection; the very pretence that had been made use of by the Romans against the primitive Christians, and which had been adopted by the Romish Church ever since to suppress all opposition or inquiry into its errors.’—We see who were the *Conservatives*, and who the *Destructives*, of those days. Our *Conservatives* are a little milder in their ways. Why? Because they are less able. Make them once more as powerful as they were in those days, and we shall soon see they have found the short and easy way with the *Destructives*. ‘The wisdom of ancestors’ would be produced, as the encouragement, and justification of the energetic methods.—There is nothing, for making people good and merciful, like taking away from them the power of being mischievous and cruel.

[3] ‘Et tamen, mi Attice, auguria quoque me incitant, quadam spe non dubia, non hæc collegii nostri ab Appio, sed illa Platonis de tyrannis, si ii provincias, si rempublicam regent, quorum nemo duas menses potuit patrimonium suum gubernare.’—*Cic. ad Att.*, lib. x. ep. 8.—The high classes in Rome were better educated, and better employed, than the high classes in England.

Further Information

SOURCE

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FURTHER READING

Other works by James Mill: <oll.libertyfund.org/person/73>.

School of Thought: The Philosophic Radicals <oll.libertyfund.org/collection/149>.

“The distinctive principle of Western social philosophy is individualism. It aims at the creation of a sphere in which the individual is free to think, to choose, and to act without being restrained by the interference of the social apparatus of coercion and oppression, the State.”
[Ludwig von Mises, “Liberty and Property” (1958)]



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