

Empire - Nobility & Titles

A fair and candid address to the nobility and baronets of the United Kingdom ; accompanied with illustrations and proofs of the advantage of hereditary rank and title in a free country

William Playfair

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THE NOBILITY of this empire are, by the nature of their creation and the descent in which their titles run, different from those of all other countries, and that difference is highly in favour of BRITISH NOBILITY.

From the earliest ages, genealogy has occupied much of the attention of mankind ; and whether we consult sacred or profane history, we shall find the extraction of the individual always considered as making an important object in his history.

When a man first enters into life, he has, indeed, no other history than the name of his father, or of the family to which he belongs. This is the only answer which can be given to that perpetual question of, “ Who is that ?” No sooner do we see a stranger than we wish to know from whom descended. The very important inquiry, of what he does ? is in general a secondary question.

Although the actions of a man himself are the truest proofs of his merit, yet it is impossible for the mind not to connect these with the opinion we have of his extraction ; and whoever pays due attention to the natural sentiments of mankind, (while he keeps clear of the absurd prejudice which gives honour and respect to extraction alone,) will acknowledge, that the actions of men are not the only ground of respectability or estimation in the world. It is true, that a respect for ancestors seems to be founded in what (in the present times) is called prejudice and respect for actions, on what is termed reason, but this is not altogether true.

It is to be considered, that the motive of a man’s actions not being always known, and even the real merit of an act being frequently uncertain, it is, in a vast variety of cases, impossible to form a very decided conclusion. On the other hand, though it is absurd to honour and esteem a man merely because he is descended from great and good men, yet, even in doing so, reason mingles with prejudice ; for, personal merit or blame cannot, in almost any case, be measured so accurately as not to require all the assistance which circumstances will afford in forming an opinion on this subject ; it becomes therefore necessary to take into account all the collateral circumstances ; of which extraction is one. [1]

In forming a judgment of great, or of very decided actions, the former conduct of the actor will produce but little effect ; because men are capable of reformation, or of becoming depraved : but in judging of ordinary actions, the general character of the actor has much weight. In like manner, the race from which a man springs, is a sort of guide to the judgement with respect to the man himself ; until a man has begun to act, or until we know some of his actions or his manner of acting ; the race he is descended from is the only circumstance that can guide our judgement. This, indeed, is by no means a sure criterion ; but as a man’s past conduct is not a perfectly certain pledge for his future actions, it becomes unfair altogether to reject the one, and in an unlimited manner to adopt the other mode of judging.

Lineal descent seems, from the history, both of men and of inferior animals, to be an imperfect species of identity ; the same qualities are often found to descend from father to son ; and, therefore, may with some reason be expected, to do so ; and as even where the

identity is personal and undeniable, [2] he mind is capable of total change, it seems fair to consider this as a species of identity, though of an inferior degree ; provided we can find, that the qualities or propensities of the man do often, as personal likeness, go by descent.

Without affirming that general opinion is always right, its support is a strong presumption in favour of any sentiment or doctrine. In speaking of general opinion, we do not mean *general* in one town or country, or only a temporary opinion, though ever so widely extended : but an opinion, of the truth of which all ranks and ages, the ignorant man, and the well-informed, are equally persuaded ; [3] such an opinion is, for the most part, well founded.

It is, and has been common to all people in all ages, to speak of a brave race of men ; an honourable ; or a generous race. Thousands of instances may be drawn from history to prove that there is nothing absurd in such expressions. [4] Even whole nations have deserved and maintained a particular character. [5] It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose, until we find it otherwise, that the individual partakes of the qualities of the line from which he is sprung. [6]

To say, that some degree of prejudice is not mixed with this position in favour of a person who is well descended, would be extravagant, but it is quite sufficient, if shewn that there is some foundation for it in nature, and in reason.

In maintaining that respect and honour are due to ancestry, we do not by any means wish to insinuate that such claims are equal to those of personal merit, and indeed it is precisely *because we do not think so*, that we have set on foot the present enquiry into the origin of honours and of wealth, thereby connecting genealogy with biography ; for we do consider that there is a wide distinction between honour and rank, and that a splendid title may, in some cases, be rather a disgrace than otherwise : but in all cases, we maintain that genealogy and biography ought to be connected together, in order to separate the solid from the shining, the intrinsic from the apparent.

In the course of the following enquiry, we shall find, that though honours have in general been acquired by estimable actions, there are a few glaring exceptions. We shall also find that, though once obtained, honours have often been well supported, yet that they have occasionally been very much disgraced and degraded, by the actions of those who bore them. This will naturally lead more firmly to the conclusion, that nominal rank and real honour may be, and frequently are separated.

As a rich man becomes almost equally important to society as if, besides his riches, he were, in possession of a title, and as a degree of respect paid to him is not very much inferior, we shall inquire into the origin of wealth, and the nature of that conduct, by which it is naturally acquired, as well as into that cast of character, and course of conduct, which do most naturally, and have most commonly, led to wealth and honours.

At the same time that the historical inquirer is under an indispensable obligation to search diligently for, and strictly adhere to the truth, it is yet permitted to him, nay, it is proper, wherever the motives for any action appear to be uncertain, to incline to that detail, or that explanation, which is most favourable to the family of which he treats : and this, on the fair ground, that vanity is a more powerful incentive to virtue than shame ; the former is attended with an agreeable feeling, but the latter, with a very painful sensation. Desirous to gratify, as well as serve mankind, we will, without any sacrifice of truth, take what is familiarly termed the good-natured side of the question.

It would be a curious inquiry to trace the importance in which genealogy has been held in all ages, and in all nations ; as it would tend to ascertain, how much more men are governed

in their actions by opinion than by realities. The province of opinion seems to be to guide men, when they are not under the immediate influence of necessity : but opinion yields its empire, the moment that circumstances are such as to create what appears to the mind to be necessity. [7]

Inequality of rank owes its first rise to seniority ; of this we have many beautiful descriptions in the Old Testament. The father of the family was the king, and his eldest son succeeded to his power, unless where the family separated, or where superior ingenuity or strength gave that power to another. It is, therefore, a fundamental error to imagine that equality is natural. Nothing in the world is so unnatural, and nothing more impracticable, than either to establish or preserve equality : though it be clear that a boundary must be set to power, and that this boundary ought to be regulated by justice, and by circumstances. [8]

The eastern nations, which have escaped many of those convulsions and changes, which war and conquest have brought on Europe and Africa, retain still much of that primæval distinction of rank, which seems to have owed its origin to the function which the father of the family assigned to his different children ; for that distinction seems to have been occasioned by opinion, or unequal degrees of affection, not by force ; and to have had very little connexion either with state policy, or personal interest or advantage. Superstition came in aid of what arose from paternal [9] injustice ; and, accordingly, we find that in the east, one set of men is exalted above, and the other depressed below humanity.

In the western world, where revolutions, and the fiercer passions have ruled, men have sometimes been guided by justice, and when they were not so, by interest. Hence it is, that, though the distinction of master and slave existed for a long period, in Europe ; yet it was a distinction founded upon a sort of social contract, though indeed a very unfair one. There was a species of reciprocal advantage, even between the master and the slave : but there is none between the different Casts in India ; besides this, to be a slave was humiliating, but not accounted disgraceful : as distinction of ranks is then natural to man, it is ever to be considered as unavoidable. Hereditary title is, however, by no means very ancient, and though it may be politically wise, it is by no means necessary, it may therefore be considered as an artificial, though far from useless, division of society.

In the splendid days of Greece and Rome, many families were noble : but titles were personal, and attached only to offices. It is to the feudal system that we owe hereditary title. [10]

Things always exist before their names. Thus it is that rank and honour existed long before titles, which were only a species of alphabet, or hieroglyphical signs, by which rank is ascertained and represented. The lineal descendants of Scipio Africanus would have enjoyed the first titles in Rome, if there had been any in that great city ; as it was, they enjoyed all that rank which opinion gives, and which a title only indicates.

There cannot be a doubt, that the invention of titles is an improvement in the social system ; particularly when accompanied with the restrictions and regulations generally attended to in England, where the eldest of the family alone has been considered as noble, and enjoys the privileges attached to nobility, because it prevents that increase of nobless which takes place, where titles extend to the whole family ; the evil consequences of which, to society, are very considerable.

As men live by industry, the great number ought not to be fettered with any imaginary rank that tends to interrupt those pursuits which are necessary to their existence and the main-

tenance of their families ; and, again, as honours and titles are intended as rewards from the public to individuals, they should not become too common, or be possessed by poor or needy men, for though poverty is not in itself any reproach, and is, in some instances, very honourable, yet it does not, in any case, accord well with rank and title.

In France there were about seventeen thousand noble families, because nobility was attached to all the males of the line ; but, as wealth is not divisible in the same manner, many of the nobles were extremely poor, and not capable of maintaining their rank ; so that, in many cases, it became ridiculous, and in a still greater number, very inconvenient. If it had not been, that the younger sons were many of them provided for in the church, which prevented them from marriage, it is impossible to say to what a ruinous extent nobility might have been communicated in that country.

In England, the direct line in which the title is to go, is always pointed out in the patent by which the title is granted, which prevents the increase of noble families, and extinguishes the nobility in a great number of instances, as the line pointed out ceases to exist.

Whether that equality of condition which has of late been so loudly contended for, would be more agreeable to the order of nature, or more conducive to the happiness and prosperity of mankind, was for some time doubtful, but it is no longer so now, since the French have made an experiment which has proved, that equality, in respect either to rank or fortune, is impracticable.

A state of perfect equality could subsist only amongst men possessing equal talents and equal virtues ; but there are not men in any country of such a description.

Equality of condition must be founded on equality of moral and physical means ; but as nature has endowed men very differently in those respects, it follows that equality of condition cannot possibly be maintained, and is contrary to the nature and rights of things.

Were all mankind perfectly virtuous, an artificial distinction of ranks would be unnecessary : but in that case civil government itself would likewise be unnecessary, because men would have attained all that perfection which it is intended, by the regulations of society, only imperfectly to obtain ; but even then there would not be equality with respect to wealth, which is the consequence of talents and exertion.

In studying the consequences that arise to men from the different situations which they are by birth destined to fill, it will at once occur to the most unthinking, that whilst honours and affluence rescue a man from the temptation to meanness or criminality, they likewise deprive him of those motives for exertion that are felt by people in an inferior situation. With equal abilities and equal inclination, the exertions of men are different when left free, and when acted upon by necessity ; and it is for this reason clear, that the greatest actions must be performed by men who have either been born to encounter difficulty, or have by indiscretion created difficulties to overcome.

History is full of instances of the former. The latter are more rare, but still they are to be found in sufficient numbers to confirm the opinion, that great exertions are never made but when called forth by great occasion.

As the charts with which this work is accompanied shew the line of succession with a distinctness hitherto unexampled in this branch of study, so it will lead the mind to reflections

that have not heretofore occurred, and, in order that these reflections may be the more easily formed, we shall make some observations.

In proportion as the rank was high, in former times, the nobility were liable to be involved in political disturbances ; so that of the rank of duke we have only two created before the last of the civil wars, and of marquises we have only one ; whereas of barons we have nineteen, seven of whom maintained themselves during all the disturbances between the houses of York and Lancaster.

When we consider this, we cannot help searching for the cause ; nor in looking for it can we fail to find it, or remain any longer astonished that the highest nobility are not the most ancient ; neither can we wonder that many private gentlemen can trace their families in a respectable line longer than many of the nobility, for the former are by their situation skreened from the violence of those revolutions that overturn the latter. [11]

Add to these, the failure of issue in the direct line, or in that pointed out by the patent of creation ; and, we shall not be surprised that there are not greater numbers of the ancient nobility now existing.

It has been considered as necessary to give a short account of heraldry, and the devices employed by it, together with the manner in which they are arranged ; and that is attempted in a way different from what has yet been done, and such as, it is expected, will be found to be easily understood and recollected ; for the greatest difficulty in studying heraldry, is recollecting names when there is no association of ideas to preserve the connexion between the things represented, and the signs or emblems used to represent them.

The contrivance of altering the appellation of a colour from the name of a metal, when speaking of a commoner's arms, to that of a gem when speaking of a nobleman, and to that of one of the heavenly bodies when speaking of a sovereign, produces great confusion.

This confusion we have endeavoured to remove in some degree, by explaining the thing in as simple a way as possible ; and we hope in this, as in the rest, our labours will be found satisfactory and useful to those who have had the goodness to patronise and protect the work, which we trust will be found to be a fair and proper attempt to prove the advantage of nobility, and silence the clamours of those who cry out against it ; clamours founded on ignorance or vanity ; of a very injurious tendency, and hitherto passed over with too much indifference.

Without having the smallest intention or wish to find fault with, or condemn the books of peerage that have hitherto been published, we must be permitted to say, that throughout the whole there runs a confusion and intricacy that baffle the efforts of the most attentive, and elude the memory that is the strongest and most retentive.

Nothing renders it so difficult to retain facts as a loose arrangement. What may properly be termed the *family history* of a man ; that is to say, whom he married, and who were his children, brothers, sisters, &c. has so little connexion with his transactions as a man whose history merits attention, that it seems best to keep them entirely separate. If they are not kept so, the order of time must be broke through, or both the narratives intermixed in a very confused manner.

It is for this reason that we first give the title, then the times of creation, and, lastly, the pedigree ; in all which we are confined to common routine, and can neither add with advantage to, or diminish without injury, from what is to be found in the ordinary books of peerage.

Separate from that, we give such actions, anecdotes, and facts, as mark the characters of those persons whose pedigrees we have already given with care and correctness, adding such reflections as naturally and properly arise, for this is the great use of all historical research, whether applied to the affairs of nations or of individuals.

It has been a practice approved and esteemed, and very generally adopted, ever since the days of Æsop, to invent tales from which moral reflections might arise : how inexcusable then must it be to let the opportunity pass away of grounding proper lessons on real occurrences.

We wish this thing to be understood in its true light, and not considered as arising from any desire to moralize and reason, merely from a propensity to do so ; but we beg our readers, and in particular the nobility themselves, to consider that our purpose is to shew the utility of hereditary nobility, as having a happy influence on the peace and security of man-kind.

Whilst we are writing, one of the strongest examples in illustration of this, that history furnishes, has occurred, to the astonishment of all Europe.

By an ephemeral and newly created nobility, the despotic ruler of France has contrived to invade, in a most unjustifiable, treacherous, and cruel manner, the liberties of Spain, and the old hereditary nobility of that once great country have been found its surest support. Let those who will talk of the energy and abilities of new men risen to a height in a time of trouble and desolation, we only see in them the scourges of mankind ; but we find in the *moderation*, the attachment to *principle*, the *love of honour*, the idea of dignity, connected with, and naturally arising from, illustrious ancestry, that safeguard, that peace-preserver, on which the people can best depend in time of trouble and difficulty.

In France it has become the fashion to ridicule birth and ancestry, and men are proud of having risen from the lowest situation. We have seen a prince of the blood reject the name of Bourbon, and take the ludicrous title of Equality. We have seen him deny his royal father, and claim the honour of being descended from a menial servant's criminal intercourse with an adulterous and degraded Mother. But though by a sort of sophism of a nature fit to captivate the majority, it might appear that the man who raises himself deserves the most honour, let us consider whether encouraging that belief is most for the general advantage ; for that is the purpose—that is the great end.

Endeavouring to set that in its true light, we find that whilst France respected hereditary nobility she was tolerably free and tolerably happy, probably as much so as the nature of things admits, taking into account the levity and impetuosity of the people. We find, also, that since she has enjoyed the advantage of those new and energetic chiefs who have risen from nothing, she has become at once an object of pity, a spectacle of horror, and the scourge of mankind. We find still farther, that those very upstarts, those men of yesterday, are the active and un pitying instruments of evil. Is it possible to say more against upstarts, or more in favour of an ancient and hereditary nobility ?

There is a degree of moderation and equanimity to be found in persons who are born to rank and affluence, that is not to be found amongst men who in England are termed upstarts and in France *les parvenues* ; and though that moderation may sometimes be considered as, apathy or indifference, yet it is of great importance that there should be one class of men in the country who have a share in the legislation, and who are so far removed from the ordinary embarrassments of life as to look on with coolness, when others are too much heated and actuated by personal interests.

The nobility of this country are to be considered in a double light ; first, as individuals ; and next, as constituting one of the branches of the legislature.

In the first point of view we have already spoken of them ; we shall now consider them as a constitutional body, and in that light we shall see that they are not only, by the circumstances in which they are placed, calculated to render the government and constitution more perfect than it otherwise would be, but that the elective representative commons house, without such a controul, would be dangerous.

From the history of our own country, we find that the fire and impetuosity of the commons have been resisted, repeatedly with advantage, by the house of peers, and that at all times it has been kept in check ; and though it maybe that in many common affairs the house of lords acts rather in a passive manner, yet in cases of importance it has done great service.

The house of lords, in money bills, has a controlling power only, and in most others acts rather as a regulator than as the original moving principle ; and if on every occasion it were to display a mistrust of the house of commons, by canvassing ordinary questions with great eagerness, it would lead in time to a jealousy that would disturb and impede public business, and be attended with no practical utility whatever. By reserving itself for important occasions, the upper house becomes that check, and balance so necessary for the preservation of good government.

Both during the civil wars, and in times of tranquillity, the house of peers has been of great service, by the wisdom, the moderation, and dignity of its proceedings ; and if there is any fault to be found in its composition, it is owing to the great preponderance of law lords where legal questions occur.

This imperfection in the house of peers is, however, rather to be considered as an argument in favour of the order of nobility than otherwise, for the evil does not arise from any of the members as peers, but as lawyers, who have a much greater sway than, according to their numbers, they ought to have ; [12] for the very essence of every deliberative body is that opinions should be unbiassed. It is an imperfection attached to the nature of things, that opinions are not upon an equality like votes. A judge has but one vote ; but, on a law question, his bare opinion will carry perhaps fifty without examination.

To return from this short digression (from the immediate object of this work), the history of France in the present, and of our own country in former times, prove that a house of peers is essential to the perfection of a mixed, and even of a purely monarchical, government.

The unfortunate revolution of France would probably never have taken place as it did, had not a mistaken minister absorbed the influence of the nobility or peers, at the meeting of the states-general in that of the commons or tiers-etat. [13]

The consequences of this measure were fatal and immediate, and though it is beyond human power to know what would have happened if this had not been done, yet the overthrow of the government as it did take place can be traced to that cause ; indeed it was foreseen what would be the consequence. The minister who advised the measure can only be esteemed an honest man, on the supposition that he was ignorant of the consequences. We may all remember the violence of an assembly composed of men without any controul or check. Perhaps, between the action of mind and matter, a more fair and true comparison

cannot be made, than in likening the assembly, when that check was taken away, to a time-piece, that runs down when deprived of the balance-wheel. The rapidity of the movement is fifty times that of a regular and right motion, and it goes on till the strength fails ; and thus it was with the states-general.

From the first moment that the nobility, (decoyed over by Orleans and a number more of the revolutionary chiefs), sunk themselves in a general assembly, every thing went rapidly to ruin. The assembly, that at first commanded every thing, soon run itself down like the time-piece, and became the tool of the factious, and the abject servant of the clubs, who gave it over, bound, into the hands of Robespierre and his successors of the directory, from whom it fell to the present emperor. Still it is an assembly without any sort of energy in itself, but serving as an instrument by which oppression and despotic power exert themselves with a greater degree of conveniency and advantage.

The Roman patricians were hereditary nobility, though without titles ; and whilst their preponderance in the state was maintained, the people preserved their liberties ; but liberty did not long out-live the controlling power of the nobles. [14]

It would be very easy to prove, if this were a proper place for entering upon that subject, that the house of peers is the preserver of British liberty, which could not long exist without it ; and accordingly it was of no importance during the civil wars or the arbitrary government of Cromwell, and it did not rise to have its full weight till the happy revolution that placed King William on the throne.

The multiplication of books, as well as the materials that accumulate to form historical report, or assist philosophical or political inquiry, render it desirable in all cases to be as short as is consistent with accuracy, and to convey what is intended to be conveyed with the least possible labour and trouble, and the greatest attainable perspicuity ; we shall not, therefore, enlarge on the subject, as we think quite enough has been said to prove the advantages, in a political view, of hereditary nobility, their respectability as to origin, and the impossibility of equality.

There is but one more observation of any importance that occurs on the subject, although a volume might easily be written upon it (and to good purpose), which is, that titles and hereditary rank are peculiarly advantageous in a mercantile country, in so far as they go a considerable length towards counteracting that respect for wealth, which in the absence of hereditary rank by establishment, would, take place, and which tends to degrade a nation. [15]

But it is in vain to have distinction, rank, and titles, if they are not supported by public opinion. Mr. Hume observes, with truth, “ That government, is founded only on opinion, and that this opinion is of two kinds ; opinion of interest, and opinion of right. When a people are persuaded that it is their interest to support the government under which they live, that government must be very stable ; but among the worthless and unthinking part of the community this persuasion has seldom place. All men however have a notion of rights, of a right to, property, and a right to power ; and when the majority of a nation considers a certain order of men as having a right to that eminence in which they are placed, this opinion, call it prejudice or what we will, contributes much to the peace and happiness of civil society. There are many, however, who think otherwise, and imagine that ‘ the society in which the greatest equality prevails must always be secure.’ These men conceive it to be the business of a good government to distribute, as equally as possible, those blessings which bounteous nature offers to all.

It may readily be allowed that this reasoning is conclusive ; but the great question returns, ‘ How far can equality prevail in a society which is secure ? and what is possible to be done in the equal distribution of the blessings of nature ? Till these questions be answered, we gain nothing by declaiming on the rights and equality of men : and the answers which have sometimes been given to them suppose a degree of perfection in human nature, which, if it were real, would make all civil institutions useless. If opinion is essentially necessary to the maintenance of any human institution, it is most so for the support of nobility ; for without esteem and consideration, what are rank and title ? As to the few privileges attached to the peerage, they are more than counterbalanced by the disadvantages, incapacities, and inconveniences attendant on it ; so that take away the support of opinion, and what is now an honour would be a burden to bear.

The express intention of this work, as has already been said, is to set public opinion right ; in doing which, we think we shall render a service. to mankind at large, and most particularly to our own country.

Baronets are hereditary nobility, without the privileges of peers ; for though we conceive the number of peers in this country to be great, it was proved hereafter exceedingly small, and is confined and limited by the circumstance of the great political inconvenience of having a great number of members in the house.

The creation of baronets arose naturally from the circumstance that political expediency set bounds to the number of peers ; but no natural limit being set to the number of persons who might deserve distinction from the sovereign, baronets were created in 1610, who are, to all intents and purposes, nobility, enjoying rank, but without privilege ; it is for that reason, that this work is extended to the baronetage of the United Kingdom.

NOTE A. ORIGIN OF HEREDITARY NOBILITY

The celebrated civilian, Francis Hotomon, who was one of the most learned men of his age, gives us the cause of making hereditary the order of nobility in France. In this work, entitled *Franco Gallia*, which is now very scarce, written in the year 1574, he says,

“ We must not omit making mention of the cunning device made use of by Hugh Capet, for establishing himself in his new-dominion [of King of France, anno 987]. For, whereas all the magistracies and honours of the kingdom, such as dukedoms, earldoms, &c. had been hitherto, from ancient times, conferred upon select and deserving persons in the general conventions of the people, and were held only during good behaviour, whereof (as the lawyers express it) they were but beneficiaries. Hugh Capet, in order to secure to himself the affections of the great men, was the first that made those honours perpetual which were formerly but temporary : and ordained, that such as obtained them should have an hereditary right in them, and might leave them to their children.—Of this, see Franciscus Conanus, the civilian, *Comment ii. chap. ix.*’

It is singular, that this fact has escaped the notice of most of the French historians,

NOTE B.

The late Lord Chesterfield is not the only instance of a peer who, with the vanity of a coxcomb and the levity of a schoolboy, has attempted to throw ridicule on the order of nobility by mentioning the house of lords with disrespect.

Lord Chesterfield was so much of a fashionable man, that what he said had generally more weight than worth.

He often attempted to display his wit by pretending a contempt for the peerage to which he belonged, and to which it was his great pride to belong, in order to be considered a man of genius ; but we shall shew, that though many peers have excelled his lordship in genius, but few surpassed him in vanity, and fewer still have been at so much pains to degrade nobility in public opinion.

That lord lived at the time when it had become fashionable for peers to laugh at nobility, and clergymen to ridicule religion, and when also some crowned heads joined the philosophers in preparing the road for the overthrow of their descendants, by degrading the established orders of society in the eyes of the multitude. As the result has been so fatal to all parties, it is to be hoped that for the future men who are exalted, will at least not take pains to degrade themselves, for it was by such things the French brought ruin on their country.

Amongst others of the French nobility who aspired at the character of men of wit and genius, and of philosophers, and who gloried in the name of simple citizen, was the Marquis de Vilette, who had espoused, maltreated, and neglected, the famous Belle et Bonne, the adopted daughter of Voltaire. This unworthy and contemptible nobleman, just as the revolution was beginning was passing an act before a notary, who had stiled him in the preamble as the High and Powerful Marquis de Vilette. The marquis read the preamble, and turning to the notary with an affected serious air, told him that he thought he would not allow falsehoods to be written in his office, that he was neither high nor powerful, but that he must stile him the Little and Feeble Charles.

Is it to be wondered, when nobles act so, that the inferiors should refuse to grant them respect, but rather unite to abolish an order which appears, even to those who belong to it to be contemptible.

[1] Mr. Pope, who is considered as having put the ideas of others into admirable versification, seems to be entirely in favour of actions, when he says,

“ Honour and shame from no condition rise.
Act well your part, there all the honour lies :
Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow.
The rest is all but leather or prunella.”

This, indeed, is a very decided sort of language ; but what are we to say, when in the following essay we find the same poet express himself thus ?

“ Not always actions shew the man : we find
Who does a kindness is not therefore kind :” &c.

And when farther on, the same poet who in the foregoing essay spoke so decidedly of actions, concludes with saying;

“ Judge we by nature ? habit can, efface,
Interest o’ercome, or policy take place.
By actions ? those uncertainty divides.
By passions : these dissimulation hides.
Opinions ? they still take a wider range.
Find, if you can, in what you cannot change.
Manners with fortunes, humours turn with climes,
Tenet with books, and principles with times.

What a tissue of contradictions !

- [2] The man who at the age of twenty-five was vigorous and virtuous, may at forty be depraved and debilitated ; indeed it often happens so ; nay, very great changes take place in a much shorter interval of time, therefore personal identity scarcely exists, except in the memory, for both the mind and matter are changed.
- [3] There is indeed a difference between the degree of credit given by the well-informed man and the ignorant. What the former believes, is generally mixed with some degree of doubt, or attended with some species of diffidence (in himself at least) ; whereas the ignorant man indulges no sort of doubt, but grants a full, general, and unmixed belief to his opinion, unaccompanied by any sort of diffidence in his own judgment.
- [4] It is undoubtedly a mistake to attribute to soil, climate, or, government, the disposition of the people. Under the same government we find people of very different characters and conduct. The people of Cheshire are very different from those of Yorkshire. The people of Normandy are remarkable for shrewdness, and those of Champagne for silliness ; so that it is not the government. Again, is it local situation ? Compare the ancient Romans with the base populace that now incumber Italy, or the antient Greeks with the slaves who now disgrace the former habitation of arts and elegance.
- [5] It does not seem to be the same with the qualities of the head, for we do not hear of a succession of painters, poets, or mathematicians. This has given some reason to think that the qualities of the heart go by the male line, and those of the head by the female, which latter being subject to perpetual interruption, there is nothing hereditary in abilities. Where it has sometimes happened, that the same male and female line have intermarried for a long series of generations, the race has generally been degraded in intellects. Of this there are several examples in some parts of this country, which, however, it would be invidious to point out.
- [6] Perhaps the fair and honourable pride of emulating the virtues of ancestors, is one of the greatest recommendations of a man who is well descended. This acts strongly on youth, and therefore tends to make a man begin the world well, which is a great point ; and on this account it is to be wished, that the old prejudices (if they are prejudices) in favour of men of family, should not be done away, to make room for modern philosophy.
- [7] We say, what appears to be necessity : because it is very seldom that there is no alternative left : and so long as there is, the necessity is not absolute.
- [8] Nimrod seems to have been the first man who overturned the Patriarchal government, and established that of conquest ; which he attained by personal merit, uniting in himself all those qualities of body and mind which fit a man to lead, govern, and instruct others : and what, at first sight, surprises us is that the superiority established by conquest, is of a milder species than that which is established by family preferences ; but this seems to arise from the same cause that makes civil war more cruel than those between two different nations.
- [9] The imperfections of humanity counteract and moderate each other in a wonderful degree. Avarice counteracts cruelty in the case of slaves. As to paternal authority, we have strange instance of what that is, even in the patriarch Abraham, who sent off his beloved con-

cubine, and her young son, into the desert, with a bottle of water, in order to please his old wife Sarah. Can we wonder at the degradation of some of the Eastern *casts*, after such an invidious distinction amongst children, made by so exemplary a man as Abraham.

[10] Though the nobility of Rome had three names, this was not an heredity title, but a customary distinction.

[11] The Earl of Arundel (by night Duke of Norfolk) said to Robert Lord Spencer in 1621, in the House of Lords, ‘ When those things happened, my lord, your ancestors were keeping sheep ;’ ‘ and yours,’ replied Spencer, ‘ were hatching treason.’ This indicates, in a very plain, and natural manner, the situation of great men. No family was ever more free from hatching treason than that of Howard, yet the first duke had been attainted, even after death, for the very actions by which he acquired his rank, and his successors suffered repeatedly without a cause. The author of this work was particularly intimate with the Baron de Batz (a French gentleman who wrote a work of great merit relative to French families) who said that few noble families could be traced farther back than the tenth century.

[12] On a bill connected with any reform in the courts of justice, or in the regulation of legal affairs, two or three judges sway the whole house, and generally carry the question. This is a great evil, though, perhaps, it might be difficult to find a safe remedy : it were to be wished that peers who are not of the law would exert their own understanding on such occasions, and not conceive that law lords only are competent. Law lords no doubt understand the subject best ; but when a reform of abuses is the object, they do not feel perhaps so impartially as other lords.

A body of nobility is peculiarly necessary in our mixed and compound constitution, in order to support the rights both of the crown and of the people, by forming a barrier to withstand the encroachments of either. It creates and preserves that gradual scale of dignity, which proceeds from the peasant to the prince ; rising like a pyramid from a broad foundation, and diminishing to a point as it rises. It is the ascending and contracting proportion that adds stability to any government ; for when the departure is sudden from one extreme to another, we may pronounce the durability to be precarious. The nobility are as pillars, reared from among the people, more immediately to support the throne, of which the people are the basis ; and, if the pillars fall, the whole becomes a ruin. Accordingly when, in the last century, the commons had determined to extirpate monarchy, they also voted the house of lords to be useless and dangerous. And since titles of nobility are thus expedient in the state, it is also expedient that their owners should form an Independent and separate branch of the legislature. If they were confounded with the mass of the people, and like them had only a vote in electing representatives, their privileges would soon be borne down and overwhelmed by the popular torrent, which would effectually level all distinctions. It is therefore highly necessary that the body of nobles should have distinct assembly, distinct deliberations, and distinct rights.

[13] Formerly the numbers of clergy, nobles, and tiers-etat, were equal at the states-general, and each assembly voted by itself, and could maintain its rights ; but Necker, that republican miniater, contrived a new arrangement, by giving the tiers-etat a double representation, or as many members as the other two orders ; that is, six hundred of the former, and three hundred of each of the latter.

Necker, one of the vainest of men, seeking popularity, and at the same time a great lover of innovation, undoubtedly saw, that if each order voted by itself, the balance would still be kept up, whether the numbers were thirty or three thousand ; but he also saw, that there was an incongruity in diminishing the number and preserving the importance, and

therefore the question of voting (par tête et non par ordre) individually, and not according to their order, was a natural consequence. To facilitate this, the tiers-etat were assembled in a large and elegant hall, sufficient to allow a great number of spectators, so that great interest was inspired by their discussions ; while the clergy and nobles were put into small apartments, where the auditors were but few, for want of space. The Duke of Orleans, and a few more factious nobles, proposed uniting all in one assembly ; public enthusiasm applauded the idea, and in a moment the French nobility were no longer a class apart. In less than a year nobility was abolished by law, and in little more than three years royalty fallowed ! ! Liberty and peace were fled, and Robespierre and his monsters hovered over the fields of France, which were stained with blood, and whitened with the bones of their victims. That miserable country has been obliged to seek a miserable repose under a very rigorous and usurped authority, which finds it necessary to re-establish religion, and divide society once more into different ranks and orders ; thereby declaring the utility of those establishments which the first revolutionists were so eager to abolish, and which other nations ought to be so careful to preserve.

[14] The senate continued to meet till the last days even of the decline of the empire, but it was but a mere shadow. The first shock to the liberties of Rome, was when factious men, whether patricians or not, under the favours of the people, became consuls and generals, and obtained all places of authority and power. The French did, with rapidity, what the Romans did by slow degrees : but the same thing took place in both countries.

It is an opinion not uncommon, and at least plausible, that the nobility of a well regulated state is the best security against monarchical despotism on the one hand ; and the confusion of democratic insolence, on the other. Self-interest is the most powerful principle in the human breast ; and it is obviously the interest of nobility to preserve that balance of power in society upon which the very existence of their order depends. Corrupted as the present ago confessedly is, a very recent instance could be given, in which the British house of peers rescued at once the sovereign and the people from the threatened tyranny of a factious junte.

[15] The Dutch republic consisted of merchants. It was short lived, and, though respected, was always in some degree despised for a sort of groveling, mercenary character. The Venetian republic consisted of nobility amalgamated with mercantile men. It existed longer than any other government in Europe ever did, and even when it lost its power, preserved a degree of splendid dignity that rendered it respectable. It did not fall like Holland.—Venice fell clean.

A fair and candid address to the nobility and baronets of the United Kingdom ; accompanied with illustrations and proofs of the advantage of hereditary rank and title in a free country (1809)

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