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[WHOLE No. 139.]

THE TABLET.—No. CXXXVIII.
(Omitted in our last.)

"It is easier to know mankind in general than any one man in particular."

MY neighbor SCIOMNIS is thought by his acquaintance to have a very philosophic way of thinking. I can never hear him converse without admiring his talents, and being enlightened by his information. It is remarked of him that he has made human nature the chief object of his study. Nor do I conceive, it is paying him too high a compliment to say, that he can analyze all the springs and properties of the soul with as much skill and propriety, as the ablest artist can define the machinery of a watch. Yet my good neighbor has always been unfortunate in his most intimate connections, and has suffered innumerable vexations from the insincerity and fickleness of his friends. Perhaps no man has been more frequently deceived in his opinions of individuals, or smarted more severely by listening to the impulses of credulity.

I have had the curiosity to search out the cause, why a person so apparently sagacious, is often the dupe of those, who are, in all respects, inferior to himself. It is difficult to assign a reason, why a man who discovers so much discernment, when speaking of mankind in the aggregate, should in all his personal concerns never rightly estimate a single character. A person of the most slender abilities may easily palm himself upon SCIOMNIS for a man of solid understanding; and the most barefaced knaves have gulled him out of his money, by such tricks and evasions, as scarce required ordinary precaution to guard against. In short, my learned friend is wise for every body but himself. He can tell his acquaintance, with almost a prophetic spirit, how to estimate characters and measures; and teach them with a peculiar degree of certainty, how to escape the vices and follies that are floating in society. But he himself can steer clear of none of them. His secrets are often brought to light through the weakness of some of his associates; and his hopes are as often blasted through the knavery of others.

I find the mystery in this whole affair to be nothing more than this, that my neighbor has strong passions as well as a strong understanding. His feelings are so irritable and vigorous that his reason can never assume its full sway in directing concerns of a personal nature. The impulses of some passion beguile him insensibly, and foil that discernment which is conspicuous on occasions where he is totally disinterested. His maxims and reflections bear the marks of a comprehensive genius; while his life discovers a repetition of imprudent acts, which have flowed from a heart susceptible to the slightest touch. If he happens to be flattered he forgets at once that flattery is an artifice used by designing men, and in the ardor of his vanity, commits himself without reserve to the insinuations of the flatterer. This looks very extraordinary, as he frequently in the moments of reflection, expatiates to his friends on the danger of putting confidence in men of smooth insinuating manners. But why do I descend to particulars in designating the character of SCIOMNIS. It is sufficient to say, that although his knowledge of human nature is very acute and extensive, yet he is so much the slave of whatever passion is uppermost, that he is betrayed into a thousand indiscretions, and exposed to innumerable disappointments. He understands mankind in the aggregate; while the application of his knowledge to particular cases is erroneous and unfortunate.

DISCOURSES ON DAVILA.—No. XVII.
(CONTINUED.)

Ses mains, autour du trône, avec confusion,
Semaient la jalousie, et la division.

AT present we return to the narration of Davila. The Prince de Condé's quality of Prince of the blood, and the want of plausible pretences, did not permit the Guises, so easily to dismiss him from court. They found, however, a favorable occasion to send him off, for a time, till the new Ministry should be well established, by nominating him Plenipotentiary, to the King of Spain, to ratify the peace and alliance contracted a little before the death of Henry II. He quitted the court upon this embassy, and left the field open for the perfection of projects,

which were as yet only in sketches. The Queen mother and the Guises proceeded in the same manner with all whom they feared: Strongly determined to consummate their designs, they judged that they could not succeed, but by arranging all the strong places, as well as the troops, the finances, and all the resources of the state, under their own disposition: so that the most important affairs should pass through no hands but their own, and those of their creatures. Nevertheless, to show that they consulted their interest less than the public good and their own glory, they did not elevate to dignities, people without merit, and drawn from the dust, for fear they should be thought to make creatures for themselves at any rate: but they conferred favors only on persons, who added acknowledged merit to conspicuous birth, and above all, estimable in the eyes of the people for integrity. This conduct had a double advantage, the first, that the people commonly applauded their choice, and their opponents had no pretence to condemn it: the second, that confiding in persons of honor and fidelity, they were not exposed to be deceived, nor to suspect their attachment, as it often happens to those who commit the execution of their designs to people of base extraction, or dishonored by their manners. In this view, they restored to office, Francis Olivier, formerly chancellor of the kingdom, a personage of known integrity and inflexible firmness, in the exercise of his employment. The vigor with which he avowed and supported his sentiments, had caused his dismissal from court, from the beginning of the reign of Henry II. and the instigations of the Constable had not a little contributed to his disgrace. They recalled also to council, and near the person of the King, the Cardinal de Tournon, who, in the time of Francis II. grand-father of the reigning Prince, had the principal conduct of affairs. By these measures they flattered the multitude, and fulfilled the expectations of the public, without neglecting their own interests.

The probity of the Cardinal and of the Chancellor, had rendered them dear to the people, who knew how often they had declared themselves against the multiplication of imposts, with which they were oppressed. Moreover, disgraced by the intrigues of the Constable, and recalled with honor by the Guises, they must, both from resentment and gratitude, support with their counsels, and all their influence, the projects of aggrandizement, formed by the latter. Many others had been gained by similar artifices: but the same management was not used with the house of Bourbon, nor with the family of the Constable. On the contrary, the Princes of Lorraine, drawn away by the desire of annihilating the credit of their ancient rival, and of abasing the royal family, seized with ardor, every occasion of diminishing the authority and increasing the losses of their enemies.

(To be continued.)

From the AMERICAN MERCURY.

Published at HARTFORD, by Mr. E. BARCOCK.

FEW writings of the present day deserve more attention than a publication in the Gazette of the United States, entitled, "Discourses on Davila." The writer I know not, but whoever he is, he is deeply versed in a knowledge of the human heart and the science of governing. Fully acquainted with the history of nations, he has developed the springs of movement in political machines. Unlike some noisy demagogues, who pretend that jealousy is essential to freedom, and that the half formed opinions and local prejudices of every constituent in the woods, must be consulted by representatives in all their proceedings, the writer maintains that men are all under the influence of certain principles, which will war with each other & produce discord, unless they are counteracted by a proper balance of powers in government and by a vigorous executive. Some men love to bawl about freedom, even in the streets and on the house top; but they are usually the most fond of power who make the greatest outcry about tyranny. Fame, interest, ambition, these are the springs that must be touched by government; and however we may declaim against titles, titles of office have an excellent effect upon governors, and governed. The best informed men on earth, as a people, are governed more by imagination than by reason.

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS
ON THE LATE
REVOLUTION IN FRANCE,
AND THE CONDUCT OF
THE DISSENTERS IN ENGLAND;
IN A LETTER TO
THE REV. DR. PRIESTLEY.

By J. COURTENAY, ESQ. M. P.

QUO, QUO SCELESTI RUITIS?—HOR.

London, printed 1790.

SIR,

I AM not in the least surpris'd that some of the most enlighten'd men of the present age, equally distinguished by genius, science, and taste, are seriously alarmed by the dangerous and rapid progress of democracy in France. We had indeed little to fear, whilst they enjoyed that serene and tranquil state of government, uniformly resulting from the unlimited power of a monarch, and the feudal privileges of a numerous, polished, and gallant noblesse. Whilst the various orders of a pious, rich, and splendid hierarchy anxiously watched over the temporal and eternal concerns of a docile obsequious laity, preaching up the catholic apostolic doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance—internal peace, subordination, and submission, were the characteristics of that gay, volatile, and ingenious people. But now, *adversus referens*, they no longer acknowledge "The right divine of kings to govern wrong;" and instead of bending their necks to the vice-gerent of heaven, presumptuously look into the sacred ark, question the conduct of the Lord's anointed, and on abstract metaphysical principles (unhappily reduced into practice) assert the unalienable right of man to freedom: The fatal consequences are obvious; as it is a political truth, confirmed by the experience of ages, that the tranquility and happiness of a well regulated community can only be maintained by implicit obedience and unconditional submission. The visions of chimerical speculation must disappear before the light of history, and truth and reason again resume their empire over the human mind. I say then, if the Athenians had quietly and judiciously submitted to the dominion of the thirty tyrants, Critias, and his council of aristocrats would not have been compelled to stain their hands in the blood of their fellow citizens. Socrates might have saved himself and his country, if he had exerted his abilities, like Dr. H. by supporting the civil and ecclesiastical establishment of Athens, instead of proudly and obstinately displaying that factious and heretodox spirit which has always distinguished you. If Brutus, and his band of Roman conspirators, had saluted Julius Cæsar, king, despotism and felicity would have been diffused over the world, and an English prelate* would not have disgraced himself, and his holy function, by pronouncing an eulogium on assassination, and recommending the dangerous and daring tenets of a heathenish ballad to our ingenious youth, in the insidious and captivating language of classical eloquence.—But let me, in the words of Lord Bacon, bring this topic home to men's business and bosoms. If Mr. Hampden had meekly acquiesced in Charles's claim to ship-money, the nation would have been preserved from the horrors of a civil war; "taxation, no tyranny," would have become our political creed; America might still have flourished under our auspices; the uncontaminated loyalty of Toryism would have been our own; we should not have incurred the wrath of Heaven for shedding the royal martyr's blood; we should not have been punished for that flagitious act by the revolution! Nor have had a Prince of the House of Brunswick to suffer for our sins: We might still have enjoyed a Popish liturgy, a Calvinistical Creed, and an Arminian clergy, with all the superadded blessings of an arbitrary monarchy.

The populous and flourishing kingdom of Dahomey on the gold coast of Africa, is another striking example of the invaluable benefits of absolute power. The king is there a king indeed, being the absolute master of the lives and fortunes of his subjects! "They are," we are told, "a happy people, and have a great contempt for the subjects of the neighboring republics." A similar sentiment is thus beautifully expressed by a Tory poet:

"Still to ourselves in every place confin'd,
"Our own felicity we make or find;
"The lifted ax, the agonizing wheel,
"Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel,
"To men expos'd to power, tho' often known,
"Leave reason, faith, and conscience all our own."

THE TRAVELLER.

I flatter myself, that I have already proved to your satisfaction by examples taken both from ancient and modern history, and from recent facts—elucidated by moral reasoning, that the vicious and oppressive conduct of our rulers can only be effectually checked and counteracted by patience, humility, and long suffering; and that all our political evils solely originate from tumult, insurrection and rebellion. Let us learn a lesson of wisdom from the untutored savages of Dahomey; they preserve their lives and property from royal rapacity and violence, by a cheerful resignation of both to the nod of their sovereign. A reverend divine [Dean Swift.] earnestly recommends the same system of quietism to the fair sex, as an effectual preservative against any possible violation of their chastity. (To be continued.)

* Dr. Lowth.—"Num venendum erat ne quis tyrannidem Pistratarum Athenis instaurare auderet, ubi in omnibus conviviis, et æque ab infima plebe in compitis, quotidie cantantur illud Callistrati nescio cuius, sed ingeniosi certe poetæ, et valde boni civis?"

"Quod si post idus illas martias Tyrannotonis quispiam tale aliquod carmen plebi tradidisset, inque Suburram, et fori circulos, et in ora vulgi intulisset, ac lum profecto fuisset de partibus deque dominatione Cesarum: plus mercede voluisset unum Harmodii quam Ciceronis Phillippicæ omnes." Prælectiones Hebraicæ, p. 15.
This celebrated song has been thus translated by Mr. Cumberland

I.
He is not dead, our best below'd
Harmodius is not lost,
But with Troy's conquerors remov'd
To some more happy coast.

II.
Bind then the myrtle's mystic boughs,
And wave your swords around,
For so they struck the tyrant low,
And so their swords were bound.

III.
Perpetual objects of our love
The patriot pair shall be,
Who in Minerva's sacred grove
Struck, and set Athens free.