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[WHOLE No. 120.]

THE TABLET.—No. CXX.

"It is not improbable that if all parts of the world were equally enlightened by science, all nations would embrace articles of faith, nearly similar to each other."

(Continuation of the arguments in support of the position, that the universal diffusion of literature will precede and prepare the way for the universal prevalence of religion.)

THE mankind, in their native state of ignorance, have always some impressions of duty, yet so incapable are they of reasoning, or thinking beyond the reach of their senses, that the founders of religious systems have ever represented the Supreme Being through the medium of images, as the only method by which they could gain credit with the short-sighted multitude. If Mahomet be considered as an exception, and his religion as an improvement upon rank idolatry, this will assist the argument; since it is well known the Arabians had made great improvements in several branches of literature, and of course were fitted to embrace a religion more rational than Paganism.—With respect to Africa it is to be observed, that christianity was never received in that quarter of the earth, except by the nations bordering upon the Mediterranean, which by their intercourse with the Greeks and Romans, had made some progress towards civilization.

The Greeks and Romans, it is true, previous to the publication of christianity, were like the rest of the world, wrapt up in the absurdities of Paganism, and doubtless the bulk of them reposed implicit confidence in the mysteries of the *Delphic Oracle*. But in justice to the wiser part of those nations, we must allow, that they entertained as rational ideas of a Deity, and of human obligations, as the modern christians, in proportion to their improvements in literature. And we may venture to assert, that, so far as we are able to judge from their writings, the morality of SOCRATES and PLATO bears the same proportion to that of our best christian divines, as the physical knowledge of HYPOCRATES does to that of BOERHAVE; the mathematical investigations of ARCHIMEDES to those of SIR ISSAC NEWTON; or the politics of SOLON and LYCURGUS to those of FETTER THE GREAT, and of MONTESQUIEU. Therefore setting aside all regard to revelation, and supposing morality to be a part of religion, this remark proves, beyond dispute, that the progress of religion, will naturally be proportioned to improvements in literature.

I proceed to consider more particularly the propagation of christianity, which will furnish a decisive argument in our favor, if we can prove what appears to be true, that literature has, in every instance, preceded the reception and establishment of that religion; and that wherever it has been embraced, its general purity has ever been proportioned to the national state of literature.

It is a remark of all ecclesiastical historians, and of all the advocates of christianity, as a most incontestible proof of its divine origin, that it was published at a time, and in a part of the world, where mankind had made the greatest proficiency in human knowledge—where they were most capable of comprehending the sublimity of its doctrines and precepts; and of detecting the fraud and exposing its absurdities. I would extend this remark still further, and observe that this improvement of the human mind was a circumstance most favorable to the propagation of religion—and that to this natural cause only can we ascribe its rapid and extensive diffusion, in opposition to the malice and power of its enemies. Had the Greeks and Romans been as ignorant as the *Hottentots* of Caffraria, or as servile as the *Gentooes* of Indostan, NERO, TRAJAN and DOMITIAN would have crushed christianity in its infancy, with the same ease, that TAMERLANE could suppress it in Asia. (To be continued.)

DISCOURSES ON DAVILA.

No. VIII.

CONCLUDED.

This mournful truth is every where confess'd,
Slow rises Worth by Poverty depress'd.

AS no appetite in human nature is more universal than that for honor, and real merit is confined to a very few, the numbers who thirst for respect, are out of all proportion to those who seek it only by merit. The great majority trouble themselves little about merit, but apply themselves to seek for honor by means which they see will more easily and certainly obtain it; by displaying their taste and address, their wealth and

magnificence; their ancient parchments, pictures, and statues, and the virtues of their ancestors; and if these fail, as they seldom have done, they have recourse to artifices, dissimulation, hypocrisy, flattery, imposture, empiricism, quackery and bribery. What chance has humble, modest, obscure and poor merit, in such a scramble? Nations, perceiving that the still small voice of merit was drowned in the insolent roar of such impostures: and that they were constantly the dupes of impudence and knavery, in national elections, without a possibility of a remedy, have sought for something more permanent than the popular voice to designate honor. Many nations have attempted to annex it to land, presuming that a good estate would at least furnish the means of a good education; and have resolved that those who should possess certain territories, should have certain legislative, executive and judicial powers, over the people. Other nations have endeavored to connect honor with offices; and the names and ideas at least of certain moral virtues and intellectual qualities have been by law annexed to certain offices, as veneration, grace, excellence, honor, serenity, majesty.—Other nations have attempted to annex honor to families, without any regard to lands or offices. The Romans allowed none, but those who had possessed curule offices, to have statues or portraits. He, who had images or pictures of his ancestors, was called noble. He who had no statue or picture but his own, was called a new man. Those who had none at all, were ignoble. Other nations have united all those institutions: connected lands, offices and families—made them all descend together, and honor, public attention, consideration and congratulation along with them. This has been the policy of Europe: and it is to this institution which she owes her superiority, in war and peace, in legislation and commerce, in agriculture, navigation, arts sciences and manufactures, to Asia and Africa. These families distinguished by property, honors and privileges, by defending themselves have been obliged to defend the people against the encroachments of despotism. They have been a civil and political militia, constantly watching the designs of the standing armies, and courts; and by defending their own rights, liberties, properties and privileges, they have been obliged, in some degree, to defend those of the people. But there were several essential defects in this policy: one was that the people took no rational measures to defend themselves, either against these great families or the courts. They had no adequate representation of themselves in the sovereignty. Another was that it never was determined where the sovereignty resided—generally it was claimed by Kings; but not admitted by the nobles. Sometimes every Baron pretended to be sovereign in his own territory; at other times the sovereignty was claimed by an assembly of the nobles, under the name of States or Cortes. Sometimes the United authority of the King and the States was called the sovereignty. The common people had no adequate and independent share in the legislature, and found themselves harrassed to discover who was the sovereign, and whom they ought to obey, as much as they ever had been or could be to determine who had the most merit. A thousand years of Baron's wars, causing universal darkness, ignorance and barbarity, ended at last in simple monarchy, not by express stipulation, but by tacit acquiescence, in almost all Europe; the people preferring a certain sovereignty in a single person, to endless disputes, about merit and sovereignty, which never did and never will produce any thing but aristocratical anarchy; and the nobles contenting themselves with a security of their property and privileges, by a government of fixed laws, registered and interpreted by a judicial power, which they called sovereign tribunals, though the legislation and execution were in a single person. In this system to controul the nobles, the church joined the Kings and common people.

The progress of reason, letters and science, has weakened the church and strengthened the common people; who, if they are honestly and prudently conducted by those who have their confidence, will most infallibly obtain a share in every legislature. But if the common people are advised to aim at collecting the whole sovereignty in single national assemblies, as they are by the Duke de la ROCHEFOUCAULT and the Marquis of CORDERCET; or at the abolition of the Regal executive authority; or at a division of the executive power, as they are by a posthumous publica-

tion of the Abby de MABLY, they will fail of their desired liberty as certainly as emulation and rivalry are founded in human nature and inseparable from civil affairs. It is not to flatter the passions of the people to be sure, nor is it the way to obtain a present enthusiastic popularity to tell them that in a single assembly, they will act as arbitrarily and tyrannically as any despot, but it is a sacred truth, and as demonstrable as any proposition whatever, that a sovereignty in a single assembly must necessarily, and will certainly be exercised by a majority as tyrannically as any sovereignty was ever exercised by Kings or Nobles. And if a ballance of passions and interest is not scientifically concerted, the present struggle in Europe will be little beneficial to mankind, and produce nothing but another thousand years of feudal fanaticism under new and strange names.

Extract from a speculation signed Candidus in the Farmer's Journal of May 27.

WHY is so much attention paid to trifling memorials? They are not matters of general concern. And why should we support men at Congress to trifle away their time upon them? The answer to questions of this kind is obvious. Justice is uniform. It is the same when administered to an individual, a state, or a nation. If all contribute to the establishment and support of government in order that their persons and properties may be protected: Have not all a demand on government for that protection? The reciprocal rights and duties of the people, and the supreme power of a nation constitute substantial justice. There is a mutual dependence between the supreme power and the people. And since the whole government is composed of individuals, does it appear inconsistent that individuals should be heard in the public councils? Much depends on public opinion in matters relating to government. Some deference therefore should be paid to it. In order to gain the confidence of the people they must be fully convinced that their memorials and petitions will be duly attended to when they are not directly repugnant to the interest and welfare of the community. And better would it be for government, to expend 100 dollars in an attempt to do justice to a man, or body of men, than for them to defraud either of them of 10 dollars by a direct refusal of justice.

CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

THURSDAY, MAY 13.

On the proposition to increase the duty of tonnage on foreign bottoms.

MR. MADISON said that he was friendly to the proposition, as its object was an extension of the American navigation, but had very great doubts whether it would answer the design of gentlemen so far as it was pointed against that nation, whose shipping most interfered with the American shipping; we cannot at present enter into a full competition with the British nation in this business.—He entered into a general consideration of the influence this enhanced duty would have on the navigation of the European nations—and doubted much the policy of laying this duty on the shipping of France. By some recent transactions it appears that our commercial advantages with some of the powers of Europe will be greatly increased; the trade of France will probably be of three times the benefit to the United States with that of any other commercial country whatever. He gave a detail of the encouragement which France gave to the oyl business, and in this encouragement he intimated that sentiments of friendship were mingled with those of interest and policy—the exportation of tobacco to that kingdom is an object of very great importance; rice is another article, which begins to be received under great advantages there; flour and grain will always in 4 or 5 years find a great demand in that country; this is at present the case, and from the state of the harvests from time to time the same will frequently happen; the preference they give to ships and vessels built in the United States should be taken into consideration—this is a very important branch of business—salt provision will become another article of export—the advantages of which will be felt by the most interior and remote parts of this country. The French West-India Islands admit our vessels; it is true the access is contracted, but experience will continue to point out their true policy; still the mode of carrying on commerce with those islands is very advantageous to us, as it is carried on in our own bottoms.—He much doubted the eligibility of the measure as it might conduce to influence the nations of Europe to make a common cause of the restrictions laid indiscriminately on the maritime powers of Europe.

The great object of this speech was a discrimination between British and other foreign shipping of nations not in alliance, and that of those which are—and pursuing the idea further he observed, that a consuming country has the advantage over a manufacturing country; we can do better without Great-Britain than they can do without us; articles of luxury may be retrenched with advantage. He attended to the objection from the Southern States who are so deeply connected with the British; said it was to be lamented that measures calculated to promote the general good should militate with any particular interest—a maritime force in case of war is the only hope of the Southern States—not that he was in favor of a navy—but the eligibility of an increase of those resources which might be converted into such a marine force as would be absolutely necessary on such an emergency, must be obvious to every one.—In case of war the Southern States would be the first object of attack.

The Southern States may build ships and in this business enjoy some advantages over all the rest. There are cases in which it is better to do nothing than not to do a great deal—he intimated