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FROM THE (BOSTON) COLUMBIAN CENTINEL.

MR. RUSSELL,

"THERE are in all European countries," says Mr. PAINE, a large class of people of that description, which in England are called the mob. It was by the people of this description that the Bastille in Paris was destroyed. In London there is no Bastille to demolish; but there is a government to overturn; and there is a king and parliament who must either be put to flight or compelled to call a convention for the purpose of forming a constitution. "In the commencement of a revolution those men are rather the followers of the camp than of the standard of liberty, and have yet to be instructed how to reverence it." As these men were made instrumental to the accomplishment of the revolution in France, Mr. PAINE appears to intimate that they may be employed for a similar purpose in England—I am as little disposed as Mr. PAINE can be, to reproach either the whole nation to which they belong, or that unhappy class of human beings themselves for the devastation which they commit. They cannot be considered as free agents, and therefore are neither the subjects of praise or blame; but the friend of humanity will be extremely cautious how he ventures to put in action a tremendous power, which is competent only to the purposes of destruction, and totally incapable either to create or to preserve. This class of men of whom it is the happiness of Americans, scarcely to be able to form an idea, can be brought to act in concert upon no other principles than those of a frantick enthusiasm and ungovernable fury; their profound ignorance and deplorable credulity, make them proper tools for any man who can inflame their passions, or alarm their superstition; and as they have nothing to lose by the total dissolution of civil society, their rage may be easily directed against any victim which may be pointed out to them. They are altogether incapable of forming a rational judgment either upon the principles or the motives of their own conduct; and whether the object for which they are made to contend, be good or bad, the brutal arm of power is all the assistance they can afford for its accomplishment. To set in motion this inert mass, the eccentric vivacity of a madman, is infinitely better calculated than the sober coolness of phlegmatic reason. They need only be provoked and irritated, and they never can in any other manner be called into action. In the year 1790, they assembled at London, to the number of 60,000, under the direction of Lord George Gordon, and carrying fire and slaughter before them, were upon the point of giving the whole city of London to one undistinguished devastation and destruction: And this, because the parliament had mitigated the severity of a sanguinary and tyrannical law of persecution, against the Roman Catholics. Should these people be taught, that they have a right to do every thing, and that the titles of kings and nobles, and the wealth of bishops are all usurpations and robberies committed upon them, I believe it would not be difficult to rouse their passions, and to prepare them for every work of ruin and destruction. But, Sir, when they are once put in motion, they soon get beyond all restraint and controul. The rights of man, to life, liberty and property, oppose but a feeble barrier to them; and the beautiful face of nature and the elegant refinements of art, the hoary head of wisdom, and the enchanting smile of beauty, are all equally liable to become obnoxious to them; and as all their power consists in destruction, whatever meets with their displeasure must be devoted to ruin. Could any thing but an imperious, over-ruling necessity justify any man or body of men, for using a weapon like this to operate a revolution in government? Such indeed was the situation of the French national assembly, when they directed the electric fluid of this popular frenzy, against the ancient fabric of their monarchy. They justly thought that no price could purchase too dearly the fall of arbitrary power in an individual, but perhaps even they were not aware of all the consequences which might follow from committing the existence of the kingdom, to the custody of a lawless and desperate rabble.

But do the people of England labour under such intolerable oppression, as would authorize any of their patriots to employ an arm like this for their relief? Suppose sixty thousand men

should again assemble round Westminster-hall, and with clubs and firebrands for their sole arguments, should compel the parliament to call a convention to make a constitution, what would be the probable consequences? Is it clear that so large a majority in the people of England, have lost all their attachment to their constitution, as to insure an acquiescence in the measure throughout the kingdom? Is it certain that one quarter part of the people would obey an act extorted by such violence as that? Would not all the friends of the present government rally round the standard of the constitution, and would not their duty compel them to defend it with their lives and fortunes? If it should soon appear that they were decidedly the strongest party, would not the insurrection be extinguished in the blood of its leaders? If the parties should prove to be nearly equal, would not the nation be involved in all the horrors of a long and bloody civil war?—In whatever point of view, the effects of this scheme are contemplated, they present nothing but prospects at which every friend of mankind must shudder, nor can I possibly believe that Mr. PAINE, who is certainly a benevolent man, would deliberately recommend this method, though in his ardent zeal for the honor of the French nation, and the propagation of their doctrines, he has incautiously suggested it.

But he recommends revolutions by accommodation; which applied to England, must mean that a convention be called by a free and deliberate act of parliament, to alter the constitution; but this plan appears to be equally dangerous with the other, and more impracticable: while by a singular fatality an act of this kind would be the completest evidence of its own inutility, it would be equally dangerous, because by a formal act of competent authority it would expose the kingdom to all the evils of anarchy and of war, which in the other case would result from a popular convulsion. It would be less practicable, because it is contrary to nature, that any body of men should venture to perform the most transcendent act of power of which human beings are capable, for the single purpose of divesting themselves of all power whatever. It would prove its own inutility, because no man will presume that they ought to take such a measure, unless the wishes of a clear and decided majority of the people are favorable to an alteration of the government. If they are disposed to act in conformity with the desires of the people, the very same power which would authorize them to dissolve the government, would likewise justify them in making any alterations which should meet with the wishes of the nation, and would render a recurrence to them "in their original character" perfectly unnecessary.

Whatever Mr. PAINE's opinion may be with respect to the existence of an English constitution, it is certain that every member of the British parliament, who gives his vote in the making of a new law, or the alteration of an old one, must suppose that he acts by virtue of a constitutional right, vested in him; but the same right which authorizes him to give his suffrage in the most trifling object of legislation, has vested in the parliament of which he is a member, the whole power of the British nation, and he cannot possibly deny their right without utterly destroying his own. The right of the individual depends altogether upon the right of the corporation, and his right to vote for the regulation of a turnpike or the toll of a bridge, is the same with their's to make every necessary and convenient alteration in the constitution of the kingdom itself. While they are thus convinced of their right to exercise these great powers, would it not be the summit of extravagance, and folly in them, nay, would it not be the most flagrant breach of the trust reposed in them, of which they could possibly be guilty, to abdicate an authority lawfully committed to them, to declare themselves altogether incompetent to a wise and prudent use of a constitutional power, and to commit the peace, the welfare, the very existence of the nation, to the uncertain and hazardous event of a revolution?

If, however, we can suppose that the parliament should finally accede to the idea, that they are mere tyrants without the shadow of a right to the authority which they have hitherto exercised, the only act which they could agree to, would be a vote to dissolve themselves, and leave the vessel of the State without either a pilot or a

rudder. For the very act of calling a convention would be an usurpation, and from the importance of its consequences, an usurpation of the most daring nature: It would be assuming the right to dissolve the ties of society; and at the same instant acknowledging that this assumed right was without any sort of foundation. In short, this plan of calling a convention to alter the constitution, by act of parliament, appears to me in whatever light it is considered, to involve an absurdity.

But, as there is unquestionably somewhere in England, a combination of the right and of the power to alter the constitution of the country, and as that constitution is indubitably liable to be improved, we may be permitted to enquire, whether a blind imitation of the French national assembly would probably promote the happiness of the people; the only object for which all governments were instituted, or which can authorize their alteration. PUBLICOLA.

FROM THE CONNECTICUT COURANT.

THE present revolution in France has been slightly hinted at and predicted by Voltaire and others; but by none does it appear to be so clearly predicted and ascertained, as by Monsieur le Mercier, in his Tableau de Paris, or Picture of Paris.

The following passage, translated from that interesting picture of Parisian manners, will clearly evince that the present revolution was inevitable; that it was not the effect of popular caprice, or blind zeal of enthusiasts—but the necessary consequence of the rapid advancement of science in that kingdom, and a just knowledge of the rights of human nature.

"For these thirty years alone, a great and important revolution, in our ideas, has been effected. The public opinion, this day, in Europe, has a preponderating influence, which nothing can resist: Thus while we admire the progress of science, and the change which must flow from it, we are permitted to hope, that it will produce to the world the greatest good, and that tyrants of every kind will tremble before that universal cry, which now resounds and continues to fill and rouse all Europe.

"It is by means of letters and of writers, that just ideas have, for these thirty years, with rapidity, pervaded all the provinces of France, and that the offices of government have been filled with excellent magistrates. All the enlightened citizens, at this day, are actuated by the same sentiments. New ideas circulate freely; every thing that relates to instruction, is adopted with boldness. The spirit of observation is fine, which spreads in every part, promises us the same advantages that some of our happy neighbours now enjoy. Writers have diffused real treasures, in giving us the most just, the most delightful ideas, and inspiring us with those gentle, those indulgent virtues, which form and embellish society.

"Preachers of morality appear not to be ignorant of man, and to enflame his passions, instead of rendering them calm and moderate. The bias, which letters have, for these some years past, thus produced, will at length become useful to humanity; and those, who are incredulous of their salutary influence, are either blind or hypocritical.

"The influence of writers is such, at this day, that they can announce their hopes, and no longer disguise that lawful authority, which they have over the human mind. Standing firm on the basis of public good, and the real knowledge of human nature, they will direct national ideas. The wills of individuals are already in their hands. Morality is now become the principal study of noble minds; literary glory seems hereafter to be destined to him, who shall, with the most firm voice, support the interest of nations.

"Writers, sensible of their august employments, will be jealous of answering the importance of their trust; and we already behold, truth, with boldness extending herself on every side. It is presumed, that this general tendency will produce a happy revolution."

The Philanthropist and the Philosopher are highly gratified in reflecting, that this revolution has in fact taken place, and upon such principles as must ensure its success; and may safely conclude, from this pleasing prospect, that similar revolutions, in favor of the rights of humanity, and founded on similar principles, will soon pervade not only Europe but the world.