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[Whole No. 231.]

FROM THE (BOSTON) COLUMBIAN CENTINEL.

MR. RUSSELL,

MR. PAINE affirms that the French nation have a Constitution, and that the English have none. I have already offered a few observations upon the latter part of this assertion, but as a preliminary to some remarks, which I propose to make upon his comparison, I must premise that directly the reverse of his opinion upon this subject is the truth, and that in reality the English nation have a Constitution, and the French as yet have none. The National Assembly have indeed been constantly sitting these two years, to form a Constitution, and at the ceremony of the Federation about eleven months since, they swore themselves and their King to the observance of a Constitution, to be made. But as they are still possessed of the whole power of the nation, they may repeal any article upon which they have hitherto agreed, by virtue of the same authority, which enabled them to pass the decree, and therefore according to Mr. Paine's own ideas, the French cannot be said to have a Constitution, until the National Assembly shall please to dissolve themselves and to put their whole system into operation.

I have endeavoured to show that it is not absolutely essential to the existence of a Constitution, that it should be producible "in a visible form." The period of time when the foundations of the present English government were laid by the association of the people, in "their original character" cannot indeed be ascertained. Many of the laws which are in use to this day in Great-Britain, and from thence have been adopted by the American Republics may be traced back to the remotest period of antiquity, and the origin even of the institution of Juries, an institution so congenial to the genuine spirit of freedom, is lost in the obscurity of the fabulous ages. Many of the fundamental principles of the English Constitution, are known to have had existence long before the invention of printing, and even before the inhabitants of Britain were acquainted with the use of letters, and it would therefore be an absurdity to require that the original articles should be produced, "in a visible form." But "ex nihilo, nihil fit," the very existence of these principles proves the formation of a social compact previous to that existence, and the spirit of liberty which is their distinguishing characteristic, affords internal evidence, that they did not originate in the merciless despotism of a conqueror, but in the free and unrestrained consent of a manly and generous people. It will not be said that an original compact was never formed because it is not recorded in the page of history; as well might it be pretended that the pyramids of Egypt arose self-created from the earth, because the time of their erection, and the names of their builders, have been consigned to that oblivion, in which all human labours are destined to be overwhelmed.

William of Normandy, to whom Mr. Paine always refers the origin of the English government, was the conqueror only of Harold. He obtained the crown of England by popular election, upon the express condition that he would govern the nation according to her ancient laws and customs; he took the same oath at his coronation which had been taken by his predecessors; and by his last will, after bequeathing the province of Normandy to his eldest son Robert, he expressly acknowledged that he did not possess the kingdom of England as an inheritance, and only recommended his son William as his successor. It would be altogether unnecessary at this time to discuss the question whether the crown of England was originally hereditary or elective, but the facts which I have here stated, and which are warranted by all the most ancient and most authentic English historians, fully demonstrate that the English government did not originate in the Norman conquest. "If the succession runs in the line of the conquest, the nation runs in the line of being conquered, and it ought to rescue itself from this reproach," says Mr. Paine. "The victory obtained at Hastings not being a victory over the nation collectively, but only over the person of Harold, the only right that the conqueror could pretend to acquire thereby, was the right to possess the crown of England, not to alter the nature of the government," says Judge Blackstone, (1 Com. 199) Upon a question of

fact relative to the English constitution, Blackstone is, I believe, as good an authority as Mr. Paine, but I wish not to rest the question upon any authority whatever; I venture to affirm that any man who will coolly and impartially examine the subject, and appeal to the original sources of information, will acknowledge, that those who derive the origin of the English government from William the conqueror, can do it upon no other principle than that of supporting a system.

It is not however necessary, on the present occasion to revive a question, which has been discussed among the English with all the acrimony of faction. Mr. Paine has chosen the ground, which was not found tenable by the slavish supporters of passive obedience and the divine right of Kings. They took it originally because it was necessary to them for the support of their system, and they were driven from it by the friends and supporters of equal liberty. Mr. Paine found it necessary to support a doctrine of a very different nature; and adopting the maxim that it is lawful to learn, even from our enemies, he has freely borrowed from them the practice of accommodating the facts of history to his political purposes.

Be that however as it may, the Parliament of Great Britain from time to time have enacted certain laws which from their superior importance have been denominated constitutional; the acquiescence of the people, to whom most of those laws have been extremely satisfactory, gives them at least as good a sanction as the constitution of France has obtained. The National Assembly were not originally chosen to form a constitution; they were called together as States-General, under the authority of another constitution, such as it was. They assumed the power to dissolve the old constitution and to form another, and the acquiescence of the people has confirmed that assumption. At all events therefore their constitution stands upon no better ground than the acts of the British Parliament.

If then the Parliament of Great Britain have a right to declare what shall be the supreme law of the land, they will be able to produce a system of constitutional law, even according to Mr. Paine's wish "in a visible form." This system is contained in a number of statutes, enacted not at one time, or by one body of men, but at divers times, according to the occasional convenience of the people, and by a competent authority. These statutes contain the principles upon which the English government is founded, and are therefore proper objects of comparison with the constitution which is to be the supreme law of the land in France. The comparisons which Mr. Paine has drawn are not partially favourable to his native country. We shall enquire whether they are perfectly consistent with truth.

PUBLICOLA.

The above is No. 6—No. 7, appeared in our last.

FROM THE NEW-HAMPSHIRE CHRONICLE.

THE ECONOMIST.

Make not more haste than good speed,

IS advice worth observing. Haste often makes waste. Some lose more by their precipitancy than they gain by their industry. They are in so great a hurry about one thing, that they forget other things and accomplish nothing. They have a dozen designs in their heads at once, demanding attention, and like a numerous litter of pigs, pushing away one another. They are busy in collecting; and what they gather with their hands, they kick away with their feet.—Fervidus is one of this sort of men. No man is more busy, or does less to the purpose. A piece of ground must be ploughed to-day. To-morrow something else must be done. He hires a plough-boy, tackles his team, drives them on the full run into the field, has forgot his plough, whips the boy because he did not think of it, hastens back after it, the boy runs home; it is noon before he can bring his matters together, and he does but half a day's work. In the course of a summer he overturns several loads of hay: There is the appearance of a shower, he goads on his cattle; and instead of looking at his cart, looks at the cloud; his load is over-set, and out in the rain. He rises in a winter morning, with a determination to sled home three loads of wood. He must first get his boots

mended. He runs to the barn—throws some hay to his cattle in the stables—forgets those in the yard—never shuts the door, hastens to the shoemaker, but has left his boots at home—runs back after them—finds his cattle in the barn and his oxen at the corn-crib—drives them out with a vengeance—goes into the house in a foam—strikes the first he meets for leaving the barn door open—concludes his oxen will die—cooks a mess to prevent the fatal effects of the corn they have eaten—in his hurry kicks it over—and then prepares another. He gets no wood to-day, keeps himself in a fret and his family in a tumult. He gives his people no order how to employ themselves—they lose their time, and at night he is in a rage, because not a soul has done any work. Fervidus fully believes the doctrine of witchcraft. And his family are soberly of the opinion, that there is an evil spirit.

Lentulus is a different character. He is industrious, but moderate. You never see him idle, nor in a great hurry. He plans his business well; lays out no more than can be executed in season; takes things in their proper order, without confusion or interference. He finishes what he undertakes, proceeds with little noise, and never destroys what he has done, by an eagerness to do more than can be done. He rises early, attends the stated duties of the family deliberately, issues the orders of the day calmly, and finds them at night executed faithfully.—When one thing is done, all know what to do next; there is no confusion; and what cannot be accomplished in one day, he is content to leave for another. If, when he has hay abroad, he sees a shower arising, he will secure it if he can. But he never breaks his rakes by his hurry to anticipate the shower; nor breaks his rest if the shower anticipates him. When the day is closed, his cares are dismissed. He spends the evening in useful conversation with his family or a neighbour. Whatever happens, you will see him serene and temperate. He is thankful for success—never discomposed by cross accidents—He never blames others for his mistakes, nor chides them with passionate severity for their own. You never see him out of humour for what could not be prevented, or anxious for what is not in human power. He spends the day cheerfully, closes it devoutly, and passes the night quietly. He is successful in his business; his domesticks love his service; the blessings of the poor come upon him, and the smiles of heaven attend him. Lentulus is never molested by witchcraft.

FROM THE NEWPORT HERALD.

BISHOP NEWTON'S PROPHECIES.

MR. PRINTER,

IN reading the late Bishop of Bristol's dissertations on the prophecies, wrote in the year 1754, I met with two passages bearing some reference to what now passes in Europe:

1st. "There is a current tradition among the common people in Turkey, that their Empire shall one time or other be destroyed by the Russians." This doubtless makes them fear the Russians, and probably occasions their not making that head against them, that they would against another enemy.

The other passage needs no comment: "Rome therefore will finally be destroyed by some of the Princes, who are reformed, or shall be reformed, from Popery;—and as the Kings of France have contributed greatly to her advancement, it is not impossible, or improbable, that some time or other they may also be the principal authors of her destruction. France hath already shown some tendency towards a reformation, and therefore may appear more likely to accomplish it."

Ed. 8. V. I. p. 407: V. II. p. 336.

FRENCH CONSTITUTION.

The following sketch of the French Constitution, as given by the late celebrated Mirabeau, is well worth the attention of our readers.

THAT general system of admiration is now full and complete, which throughout the whole surface of the empire, gives interpreters to the petitions of the people, organs to the laws, functionaries to the executive power, mandatories to each department, and to each city intermediary officers to the collection of citizens.