

Fisher Ames 1758 1808

The Dangers of American Liberty

Boston, 1805

Graduate of Harvard University and a lawyer by training and occupation, Ames was elected to represent a district bordering on Boston in the first Congress chosen under the United States Constitution. After serving four terms in the House of Representatives he terminated his legislative service because of ill health. He was noted as a lucid writer and a speaker of unusual persuasive power. A bitter opponent of Thomas Jefferson and his supporters, Ames wrote this essay a decade after retirement from public life but despite urging by friends refused to publish it, thinking it not sober and moderate enough to represent his approach to politics and life. Superficially the essay can be read as a jeremiad against the leveling ideas emanating from France and supposedly supported by the Jeffersonians, but a careful reading shows Ames to be a Federalist with their standard concern for faction, instability, and majority tyranny, who at the same time has a theoretical stance interpenetrated with the traditional values of many Anti-Federalists (Whigs) whom he opposed. It seems appropriate to end this book with an essay by a man who could address himself to problems uppermost in the minds of Americans at any time during the half-century we have identified as the founding era and who unobtrusively synthesizes much of American political theory into a continuing critique of bigness, impersonality, corruption, venality, and the loss of community and public virtue. The stance is reasoned, the rhetoric impassioned, and the result peculiarly American.

THE DANGERS OF AMERICAN LIBERTY

Sic tibi persuade, me dies et noctes nihil aliud agere, nihil curare, nisi ut mei cives salvi liberique sint. *Ep. Famil.* 1. 24.

Be assured, therefore, that neither day nor night have I any cares, any labors, but for the safety and freedom of my fellow citizens.

I am not positive that it is of any immediate use to our country that its true friends should better understand one another; nor am I apprehensive that the crudities which my ever hasty pen confides to my friends will essentially mislead their opinion in respect either to myself or to public affairs. At a time when men eminently wise cherish almost any hopes, however vain, because they choose to be blind to their fears, it would be neither extraordinary nor disreputable for me to mistake the degree of maturity to which our political vices have arrived, nor to err in computing how near or how far off we stand from the term of their fatal consummation.

I fear that the future fortunes of our country no longer depend on counsel. We have persevered in our errors too long to change our propensities by now enlightening our convictions. The political sphere, like the globe we tread upon, never stands still, but with a silent swiftness accomplishes the revolutions which, we are too ready to believe, are effected by our wisdom, or might have been controlled by our efforts. There is a kind of fatality in the affairs of republics, that eludes the foresight of the wise as much as it frustrates the toils and sacrifices of the patriot and the

hero. Events proceed, not as they were expected or intended, but as they are impelled by the irresistible laws of our political existence. Things inevitable happen, and we are astonished, as if they were miracles, and the course of nature had been overpowered or suspended to produce them. Hence it is, that, till lately, more than half our countrymen believed our public tranquillity was firmly established, and that our liberty did not merely rest upon dry land, but was wedged, or rather rooted high above the flood in the rocks of granite, as immovably as the pillars that prop the universe. They, or at least the discerning of them, are at length no less disappointed than terrified to perceive that we have all the time floated, with a fearless and unregarded course, down the stream of events, till we are now visibly drawn within the revolutionary suction of Niagara, and everything that is liberty will be dashed to pieces in the descent.

We have been accustomed to consider the pretension of Englishmen to be free as a proof how completely they were broken to subjection, or hardened in imposture. We have insisted, that they had no constitution, because they never made one; and that their boasted government, which is just what time and accident have made it, was palsied with age, and blue with the plague-sores of corruption. We have believed that it derived its stability, not from reason, but from prejudice; that it is supported, not because it is favorable to liberty, but as it is dear to national pride; that it is revered, not for its excellence, but because ignorance is naturally the idolater of antiquity; that it is not sound and healthful, but derives a morbid energy from disease, and an unaccountable aliment from the canker that corrodes its vitals.

But we maintained that the federal Constitution, with all the bloom of youth and splendor of innocence, was gifted with immortality. For if time should impair its force, or faction tarnish its charms, the people, ever vigilant to discern its wants, ever powerful to provide for them, would miraculously restore it to the field, like some wounded hero of the epic, to take a signal vengeance on its enemies, or like Antaeus, invigorated by touching his mother earth, to rise the stronger for a fall.

There is of course a large portion of our citizens who will not believe, even on the evidence of facts, that any public evils exist, or are impending. They deride the apprehensions of those who foresee that licentiousness will prove, as it ever has proved, fatal to liberty. They consider her as a nymph, who need not be coy to keep herself pure, but that on the contrary, her chastity will grow robust by frequent scuffles with her seducers. They say, while a faction is a minority it will remain harmless by being outvoted; and if it should become a majority, all its acts, however profligate or violent, are then legitimate. For with the democrats the people is a sovereign who can do [no] wrong, even when he respects and spares no existing right, and whose voice, however obtained or however counterfeited, bears all the sanctity and all the force of a living divinity.

Where, then, it will be asked, in a tone both of menace and of triumph, can the people's dangers lie, unless it be with the persecuted federalists. They are the partisans of monarchy, who propagate their principles in order, as soon as they have increased their sect, to introduce a king; for by this only avenue they foretell his approach. Is it possible the people should ever be their own enemies? If all government were dissolved to-day, would they not reestablish it tomorrow, with no other prejudice to the public liberty than some superfluous fears of its friends, some

abortive projects of its enemies? Nay, would not liberty rise resplendent with the light of fresh experience, and coated in the sevenfold mail of constitutional amendments?

These opinions are fiercely maintained, not only as if there were evidence to prove them, but as if it were a merit to believe them, by men who tell you that in the most desperate extremity of faction or usurpation we have an unfailing resource in the good sense of the nation. They assure us there is at least as much wisdom in the people as in these ingenious tenets of their creed.

For any purpose, therefore, of popular use or general impression, it seems almost fruitless to discuss the question, whether our public liberty can subsist, and what is to be the condition of that awful futurity to which we are hastening. The clamors of party are so loud, and the resistance of national vanity is so stubborn, it will be impossible to convince any but the very wise, (and in every state they are the very few,) that our democratic liberty is utterly untenable; that we are devoted to the successive struggles of factions, who will rule by turns, the worst of whom will rule last, and triumph by the sword: But for the wise this unwelcome task is, perhaps, superfluous: they, possibly, are already convinced.

All such men are, or ought to be, agreed that simple governments are despotisms; and of all despotisms a democracy, though the least durable, is the most violent. It is also true, that all the existing governments we are acquainted with are more or less mixed, or balanced and checked, however imperfectly, by the ingredients and principles that belong to the other simple sorts. It is nevertheless a fact, that there is scarcely any civil constitution in the world, that, according to American ideas, is so mixed and combined as to be favorable to the liberty of the subject—none, absolutely none, that an American patriot would be willing to adopt for, much less to impose on, his country. Without pretending to define that liberty, which writers at length agree is incapable of any precise and comprehensive definition, all the European governments, except the British, admit a most formidable portion of arbitrary power; whereas in America no plan of government, without a large and preponderating commixture of democracy, can for a moment possess our confidence and attachment.

It is unquestionable that the concern of the people in the affairs of such a government tends to elevate the character, and enlarge the comprehension, as well as the enjoyments of the citizens; and supposing the government wisely constituted, and the laws steadily and firmly carried into execution, these effects, in which every lover of mankind must exult, will not be attended with a corresponding depravation of the public manners and morals. I have never yet met with an American of any party who seemed willing to exclude the people from their temperate and well-regulated share of concern in the government. Indeed it is notorious, that there was scarcely an advocate for the federal Constitution who was not anxious, from the first, to hazard the experiment of an unprecedented, and almost unqualified proportion of democracy, both in constructing and administering the government, and who did not rely with confidence, if not blind presumption, on its success. This is certain, the body of the federalists were always, and yet are, essentially democratic in their political notions. The truth is, the American nation, with ideas and prejudices wholly democratic, undertook to frame, and expected tranquilly and with energy and success to administer, a republican government.

It is and ever has been my belief, that the federal Constitution was as good, or very nearly as good, as our country could bear; that the attempt to introduce a mixed monarchy was never thought of, and would have failed if it had been made; and could have proved only an inveterate curse to the nation if it had been adopted cheerfully, and even unanimously, by the people. Our materials for a government were all democratic, and whatever the hazard of their combination may be, our Solons and Lycurguses in the convention had no alternative, nothing to consider, but how to combine them, so as to insure the longest duration to the Constitution, and the most favorable chance for the public liberty in the event of those changes, which the frailty of the structure of our government, the operation of time and accident, and the maturity and development of the national character were well understood to portend. We should have succeeded worse if we had trusted to our metaphysics more. Experience must be our physician, though his medicines may kill.

The danger obviously was, that a species of government in which the people choose all the rulers, and then, by themselves or ambitious demagogues pretending to be the people, claim and exercise an effective control over what is called the government, would be found on trial no better than a turbulent, licentious democracy. The danger was that their best interests would be neglected, their dearest rights violated, their sober reason silenced, and the worst passions of the worst men not only freed from legal restraint, but invested with public power. The known propensity of a democracy is to licentiousness, which the ambitious call, and the ignorant believe to be, liberty.

The great object, then, of political wisdom in framing our Constitution, was to guard against licentiousness, that inbred malady of democracies, that deforms their infancy with gray hairs and decrepitude.

The federalists relied much on the efficiency of an independent judiciary, as a check on the hasty turbulence of the popular passions. They supposed the senate, proceeding from the states, and chosen for six years, would form a sort of balance to the democracy, and realize the hope that a federal republic of states might subsist. They counted much on the information of the citizens; that they would give their unremitting attention to public affairs; that either dissensions would not arise in our happy country, or if they should, that the citizens would remain calm, and would walk, like the three Jews in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, unharmed amidst the fires of party.

It is needless to ask how rational such hopes were, or how far experience has verified them.

The progress of party has given to Virginia a preponderance that perhaps was not foreseen. Certainly, since the late amendment in the article for the choice of president and vice-president, there is no existing provision of any efficacy to counteract it.

The project of arranging states in a federal union has long been deemed, by able writers and statesmen, more promising than the scheme of a single republic. The experiment, it has been supposed, has not yet been fairly tried; and much has been expected from the example of America.

If states were neither able nor inclined to obstruct the federal union, much indeed might be hoped from such a confederation. But Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York are of an extent sufficient to form potent monarchies, and of course are too powerful, as well as too proud, to be subjects of the federal laws. Accordingly, one of the first schemes of amendment, and the most early executed, was to exempt them in form from the obligations of justice. States are not liable to be sued. Either the federal head or the powerful members must govern. Now, as it is a thing ascertained by experience that the great states are not willing, and cannot be compelled to obey the union, it is manifest that their ambition is most singularly invited to aspire to the usurpation or control of the powers of the confederacy. A confederacy of many states, all of them small in extent and population, not only might not obstruct, but happily facilitate the federal authority. But the late presidential amendment demonstrates the overwhelming preponderance of several great states, combining together to engross the control of federal affairs.

There never has existed a federal union in which the leading states were not ambitious to rule, and did not endeavour to rule by fomenting factions in the small states, and thus engross the management of the federal concerns. Hence it was, that Sparta, at the head of the Peloponnesus, filled all Greece with terror and dissension. In every city she had an aristocratical party to kill or to banish the popular faction that was devoted to her rival, Athens; so that each city was inhabited by two hostile nations, whom no laws of war could control, no leagues or treaties bind. Sometimes Athens, sometimes Sparta took the ascendant, and influenced the decrees of the famous Amphyctionic council, the boasted federal head of the Grecian republics. But at all times that head was wholly destitute of authority, except when violent and sanguinary measures were dictated to it by some preponderant member. The small states were immediately reduced to an absolute nullity, and were subject to the most odious of all oppressions, the domination of one state over another state.

The Grecian states, forming the Amphyctionic league, composed the most illustrious federal republic that ever existed. Its dissolution and ruin were brought about by the operation of the principles and passions that are inherent in all such associations. The Thebans, one of the leading states, uniting with the Thessalians, both animated by jealousy and resentment against the Phocians, procured a decree of the council of the Amphyctions, where their joint influence predominated, as that of Virginia now does in congress, condemning the Phocians to a heavy fine for some pretended sacrilege they had committed on the lands consecrated to the temple of Delphi. Finding the Phocians, as they expected and wished, not inclined to submit, by a second decree they devoted their lands to the god of that temple, and called upon all Greece to arm in their sacred cause, for so they affected to call it. A contest thus began which was doubly sanguinary, because it combined the characters of a religious and civil war, and raged for more than ten years. In the progress of it, the famous Philip of Macedon found means to introduce himself as a party; and the nature of his measures, as well as their final success, is an everlasting warning to all federal republics. He appears, from the first moment of his reign, to have planned the subjugation of Greece; and in two-and-twenty years he accomplished his purpose.

After having made his escape from the city of Thebes, where he had been a hostage, he had to recover his hereditary kingdom, weakened by successive defeats, and distracted with factions from foreign invaders, and from two dangerous competitors of his throne. As soon as he became powerful, his restless ambition sought every opportunity to intermeddle in the affairs of Greece,

in respect to which Macedonia was considered an alien, and the sacred war soon furnished it. Invited by the Thessalians to assist them against the Phocians, he pretended an extraordinary zeal for religion, as well as respect for the decree of the Amphyctions. Like more modern demagogues, he made use of his popularity first to prepare the way for his arms. He had no great difficulty in subduing them; and obtained for his reward another Amphyctionic decree, by which the vote of Phocis was forever transferred to Philip and his descendants. Philip soon after took possession of the pass of Thermopylae, and within eight years turned his arms against those very Thebans whom he had before assisted. They had no refuge in the federal union which they had helped to enfeeble. They were utterly defeated; Thebes, the pride of Greece, was razed to the ground; the citizens were sold into slavery; and the national liberties were extinguished forever.

Here let Americans read their own history. Here let even Virginia learn how perilous and how frail will be the consummation of her schemes. Powerful states, that combine to domineer over the weak, will be inevitably divided by their success and ravaged with civil war, often baffled, always agitated by intrigue, shaken with alarms, and finally involved in one common slavery and ruin, of which they are no less conspicuously the artificers than the victims.

If, in the nature of things, there could be any experience which would be extensively instructive, but our own, all history lies open for our warning,—open like a churchyard, all whose lessons are solemn, and chiselled for eternity in the hard stone,—lessons that whisper, O! that they could thunder to republics, “Your passions and vices forbid you to be free.”

But experience, though she teaches wisdom, teaches it too late. The most signal events pass away unprofitably for the generation in which they occur, till at length, a people, deaf to the things that belong to its peace, is destroyed or enslaved, because it will not be instructed.

From these reflections, the political observer will infer that the American republic is impelled by the force of state ambition and of democratic licentiousness; and he will inquire, which of the two is our strongest propensity. Is the sovereign power to be contracted to a state centre? Is Virginia to be our Rome? And are we to be her Latin or Italian allies, like them to be emulous of the honor of our chains on the terms of imposing them on Louisiana, Mexico, or Santa Fe? Or are we to run the giddy circle of popular licentiousness, beginning in delusion, quickened by vice, and ending in wretchedness?

But though these two seem to be contrary impulses, it will appear, nevertheless, on examination, that they really lead to but one result.

The great state of Virginia has fomented a licentious spirit among all her neighbors. Her citizens imagine that they are democrats, and their abstract theories are in fact democratic; but their state policy is that of a genuine aristocracy or oligarchy. Whatever their notions or their state practice may be, their policy, as it respects the other states, is to throw all power into the hands of democratic zealots or jacobin knaves; for some of these may be deluded and others bought to promote her designs. And, even independently of a direct Virginia influence, every state faction will find its account in courting the alliance and promoting the views of this great leader. Those who labor to gain a factious power in a state, and those who aspire to get a paramount jurisdiction over it, will not be slow to discern that they have a common cause to pursue.

In the intermediate progress of our affairs, the ambition of Virginia may be gratified. So long as popular licentiousness is operating with no lingering industry to effect our yet unfinished ruin, she may flourish the whip of dominion in her hands; but as soon as it is accomplished she will be the associate of our shame, and bleed under its lashes. For democratic license leads not to a monarchy regulated by laws, but to the ferocious despotism of a chieftain, who owes his elevation to arms and violence, and leans on his sword as the only prop of his dominion. Such a conqueror, jealous and fond of nothing but his power, will care no more for Virginia, though he may rise by Virginia, than Bonaparte does for Corsica. Virginia will then find, that, like ancient Thebes, she has worked for Philip, and forged her own fetters.

There are few, even among the democrats, who will doubt, though to a man they will deny, that the ambition of that state is inordinate, and unless seasonably counteracted, will be fatal; yet they will persevere in striving for power in their states, before they think it necessary, or can find it convenient to attend to her encroachments.

But there are not many, perhaps not five hundred, even among the federalists, who yet allow themselves to view the progress of licentiousness as so speedy, so sure, and so fatal, as the deplorable experience of our country shows that it is, and the evidence of history and the constitution of human nature demonstrate that it must be.

The truth is, such an opinion, admitted with all the terrible light of its proof, no less shocks our fears than our vanity, no less disturbs our quiet than our prejudices. We are summoned by the tocsin to every perilous and painful duty. Our days are made heavy with the pressure of anxiety, and our nights restless with visions of horror. We listen to the clank of chains, and overhear the whispers of assassins. We mark the barbarous dissonance of mingled rage and triumph in the yell of an infatuated mob; we see the dismal glare of their burning and scent the loathsome steam of human victims offered in sacrifice.

These reflections may account for the often lamented blindness, as well as apathy of our well-disposed citizens. Who would choose to study the tremendous records of the fates, or to remain long in the dungeon of the furies? Who that is penetrating enough to foresee our scarcely hidden destiny, is hardy enough to endure its anxious contemplation?

It may not long be more safe to disturb than it is easy to enlighten the democratic faith in regard to our political propensities, since it will neither regard what is obvious, nor yield to the impression of events, even after they have happened. The thoughtless and ignorant care for nothing but the name of liberty, which is as much the end as the instrument of party, and equally fills up the measure of their comprehension and desires. According to the conception of such men, the public liberty can never perish; it will enjoy immortality, like the dead in the memory of the living. We have heard the French prattle about its rights, and seen them swagger in the fancied possession of its distinctions long after they were crushed by the weight of their chains. The Romans were not only amused, but really made vain by the boast of their liberty, while they sweated and trembled under the despotism of the emperors, the most odious monsters that ever infested the earth. It is remarkable that Cicero, with all his dignity and good sense, found it a popular seasoning of his harangue, six years after Julius Caesar had established a monarchy, and only six months before Octavius totally subverted the commonwealth, to say, "It is not possible

for the people of Rome to be slaves, whom the gods have destined to the command of all nations. Other nations may endure slavery, but the proper end and business of the Roman people is liberty.”

This very opinion in regard to the destinies of our country is neither less extensively diffused, nor less solidly established. Such men will persist in thinking our liberty cannot be in danger till it is irretrievably lost. It is even the boast of multitudes that our system of government is a pure democracy.

What is there left that can check its excesses or retard the velocity of its fall? Not the control of the several states, for they already whirl in the vortex of faction; and of consequence, not the senate, which is appointed by the states. Surely not the judiciary, for we cannot expect the office of the priesthood from the victim at the altar. Are we to be sheltered by the force of ancient manners? Will this be sufficient to control the two evil spirits of license and innovation? Where is any vestige of those manners left, but in New England? And even in New England their authority is contested and their purity debased. Are our civil and religious institutions to stand so firmly as to sustain themselves and so much of the fabric of the public order as is propped by their support? On the contrary, do we not find the ruling faction in avowed hostility to our religious institutions? In effect, though not in form, their protection is abandoned by our laws and confided to the steadiness of sentiment and fashion; and if they are still powerful auxiliaries of lawful authority, it is owing to the tenaciousness with which even a degenerate people maintain their habits, and to a yet remaining, though impaired veneration for the maxims of our ancestors. We are changing, and if democracy triumphs in New England, it is to be apprehended that in a few years we shall be as prone to disclaim our great progenitors, as they, if they should return again to the earth, with grief and shame to disown their degenerate descendants.

Is the turbulence of our democracy to be restrained by preferring to the magistracy only the grave and upright, the men who profess the best moral and religious principles, and whose lives bear testimony in favor of their profession, whose virtues inspire confidence, whose services, gratitude, and whose talents command admiration? Such magistrates would add dignity to the best government, and disarm the malignity of the worst. But the bare moving of this question will be understood as a sarcasm by men of both parties. The powers of impudence itself are scarcely adequate to say that our magistrates are such men. The atrocities of a distinguished tyrant might provoke satire to string his bow, and with the arrow of Philoctetes to inflict the immedicable wound. We have no Juvenal; and if we had, he would scorn to dissect the vice that wants firmness for the knife, to elevate that he might hit his object, and to dignify low profligacy to be the vehicle of a loathsome immortality.

It never has happened in the world, and it never will, that a democracy has been kept out of the control of the fiercest and most turbulent spirits in the society; they will breathe into it all their own fury, and make it subservient to the worst designs of the worst men.

Although it does not appear that the science of good government has made any advances since the invention of printing, it is nevertheless the opinion of many that this art has risen, like another sun in the sky, to shed new light and joy on the political world. The press, however, has left the understanding of the mass of men just where it found it; but by supplying an endless

stimulus to their imagination and passions, it has rendered their temper and habits infinitely worse. It has inspired ignorance with presumption, so that those who cannot be governed by reason are no longer to be awed by authority. The many, who before the art of printing never mistook in a case of oppression, because they complained from their actual sense of it, have become susceptible of every transient enthusiasm, and of more than womanish fickleness of caprice. Public affairs are transacted now on a stage where all the interest and passions grow out of fiction, or are inspired by the art, and often controlled at the pleasure of the actors. The press is a new, and certainly a powerful, agent in human affairs. It will change, but it is difficult to conceive how, by rendering men indocile and presumptuous, it *can* change societies for the better. They are pervaded by its heat, and kept forever restless by its activity. While it has impaired the force that every just government can employ in self-defence, it has imparted to its enemies the secret of that wildfire that blazes with the most consuming fierceness on attempting to quench it.

Shall we then be told that the press will constitute an adequate check to the progress of every species of tyranny? Is it to be denied that the press has been the base and venal instrument of the very men whom it ought to gibbet to universal abhorrence? While they were climbing to power it aided their ascent; and now they have reached it, does it not conceal or justify their abominations? Or, while it is confessed that the majority of citizens form their ideas of men and measures almost solely from the light that reaches them through the magic-lantern of the press, do our comforters still depend on the all-restoring, all-preserving power of general information? And are they not destitute of all this, or rather of any better information themselves, if they can urge this vapid nonsense in the midst of a yet spreading political delusion, in the midst of the “palpable obscure” that settles on the land, from believing what is false, and misconstruing what is true? Can they believe all this, when they consider how much truth is impeded by party on its way to the public understanding, and even after having reached it, how much it still falls short of its proper mark, while it leaves the envious, jealous, vindictive will unconquered?

Our mistake, and in which we choose to persevere because our vanity shrinks from the detection, is, that in political affairs, by only determining what men ought to think, we are sure how they will act; and when we know the facts, and are assiduous to collect and present the evidence, we dupe ourselves with the expectation that, as there is but one result which wise men can believe, there is but one course of conduct deduced from it, which honest men can approve or pursue. We forget that in framing the judgment every passion is both an advocate and a witness. We lay out of our account, how much essential information there is that never reaches the multitude, and of the mutilated portion that does, how much is unwelcome to party prejudice; and therefore, that they may still maintain their opinions, they withhold their attention. We seem to suppose, while millions raise so loud a cry about their sovereign power, and really concentrate both their faith and their affections in party, that the bulk of mankind will regard no counsels but such as are suggested by their conscience. Let us dare to speak out; is there any single despot who avowedly holds himself so superior to its dictates?

But our manners are too mild, they tell us, for a democracy—then democracy will change those manners. Our morals are too pure—then it will corrupt them.

What, then is the necessary conclusion, from the view we have taken of the insufficiency or extinction of all conceivable checks? It is such as ought to strike terror, but will scarcely raise public curiosity.

Is it not possible, then, it will be asked, to write and argue down opinions that are so mischievous and only plausible, and men who are even more profligate than exalted? Can we not persuade our citizens to be republican again, so as to rebuild the splendid ruins of the state on the Washington foundation? Thus it is, that we resolve to perpetuate our own delusions, and to cherish our still frustrated and confuted hopes. Let only ink enough be shed, and let democracy rage, there will be no blood. Though the evil is fixed in our nature, all we think will be safe, because we fancy we can see a remedy floating in our opinions.

It is undoubtedly a salutary labor to diffuse among the citizens of a free state, as far as the thing is possible, a just knowledge of their public affairs. But the difficulty of this task is augmented exactly in proportion to the freedom of the state; for the more free the citizens, the bolder and more profligate will be their demagogues, the more numerous and eccentric the popular errors, and the more vehement and pertinacious the passions that defend them.

Yet, as if there were neither vice nor passion in the world, one of the loudest of our boasts, one of the dearest of all the tenets of our creed is, that we are a sovereign people, self-governed—it would be nearer truth to say, self-conceited. For in what sense is it true that any people, however free, are self-governed? If they have in fact no government but such as comports with their ever-varying and often inordinate desires, then it is anarchy; if it counteracts those desires it is compulsory. The individual who is left to act according to his own humor is not governed at all; and if any considerable number, and especially any combination of individuals, find or can place themselves in this situation, then the society is no longer free. For liberty obviously consists in the salutary restraint, and not in the uncontrolled indulgence of such humors. Now of all desires, none will so much need restraint, or so impatiently endure it, as those of the ambitious, who will form factions, first to elude, then to rival, and finally to usurp the powers of the state; and of the sons of vice, who are the enemies of law, because no just law can be their friend. The first want to govern the state; and the others, that the state should not govern them. A sense of common interest will soon incline these two original factions of every free state to coalesce into one.

So far as men are swayed by authority, or impelled or excited by their fears and affections, they naturally search for some persons as the sources and objects of these effects and emotions. It is pretty enough to say, the republic commands, and the love of the republic dictates obedience to the heart of every citizen. This is system, but is it nature? The republic is a creature of fiction; it is everybody in the fancy, but nobody in the heart. Love, to be any thing, must be select and exclusive. We may as well talk of loving geometry as the commonwealth. Accordingly, there are many who seldom try to reason, and are the most misled when they do. Such men are, of necessity, governed by their prejudices. They neither comprehend nor like any thing of a republic but their party and their leaders. These last are persons capable of meriting, at least of knowing and rewarding their zeal and exertions. Hence it is, that the republicanism of a great mass of people is often nothing more than a blind trust in certain favorites, and a no less blind and still more furious hatred of their enemies. Thus, a free society, by the very nature of liberty, is often

ranged into rival factions, who mutually practise and suffer delusion by the abuse of the best names, but who really contend for nothing but the preeminence of their leaders.

In a democracy, the elevation of an equal convinces many, if not all, that the height to which he is raised is not inaccessible. Ambition wakes from its long sleep in every soul, and wakes, like one of Milton's fallen angels, to turn its tortures into weapons against the public order. The multitude behold their favorite with eyes of love and wonder; and with the more of both, as he is a new favorite, and owes his greatness wholly to their favor. Who among the little does not swell into greatness, when he thus reflects that he has assisted to make great men? And who of the popular favorites loses a minute to flatter this vanity in every brain, till it turns it?

The late equals of the new-made chief behold his rise with very different emotions. They view him near, and have long been accustomed to look behind the disguises of his hypocrisy. They know his vices and his foibles, and that the foundations of his fame are as false and hollow as his professions. Nevertheless, it may be their interest or their necessity to serve him for a time. But the instant they can supplant him, they will spare neither intrigues nor violence to effect it. Thus, a democratic system in its very nature teems with faction and revolution. Yet, though it continually tends to shift its head, its character is immutable. Its constancy is in change.

The theory of a democracy supposes that the will of the people ought to prevail, and that, as the majority possess not only the better right, but the superior force, of course it will prevail. A greater force, they argue, will inevitably overcome a less. When a constitution provides, with an imposing solemnity of detail, for the collection of the opinions of a majority of the citizens, every sanguine reader not only becomes assured that the will of the people must prevail, but he goes further, and refuses to examine the reasons, and to excuse the incivism and presumption of those who can doubt of this inevitable result. Yet common sense and our own recent experience have shown, that a combination of a very small minority can effectually defeat the authority of the national will. The votes of a majority may sometimes, though not invariably, show what ought to be done; but to awe or subdue the force of a thousand men, the government must call out the superior force of two thousand men. It is therefore established the very instant it is brought to the test, that the mere will of a majority is inefficient and without authority. And as to employing a superior force to procure obedience, which a democratic government has an undoubted right to do, and so indeed has every other, it is obvious that the admitted necessity of this resort completely overthrows all the boasted advantages of the democratic system. For if obedience cannot be procured by reason, it must be obtained by compulsion; and this is exactly what every other government will do in a like case.

Still, however, the friends of the democratic theory will maintain that this dire resort to force will be exceedingly rare, because the public reason will be more clearly expressed and more respectfully understood than under any other form of government. The citizens will be, of course, self-governed, as it will be their choice as well as duty to obey the laws.

It has been already remarked, that the refusal of a very small minority to obey will render force necessary. It has been also noted, that as every mass of people will inevitably desire a favorite, and fix their trust and affections upon one, it clearly follows that there will be of course a faction opposed to the public will as expressed in the laws. Now, if a faction is once admitted to exist in

a state, the disposition and the means to obstruct the laws, or, in other words, the will of the majority, must be perceived to exist also. If then it be true, that a democratic government is of all the most liable to faction, which no man of sense will deny, it is manifest that it is, from its very nature, obliged more than any other government to resort to force to overcome or awe the power of faction. This latter will continually employ its own power, that acts always against the physical force of the nation, which can be brought to act only in extreme cases, and then, like every extreme remedy, aggravates the evil. For, let it be noted, a regular government, by overcoming an unsuccessful insurrection, becomes stronger; but elective rulers can scarcely ever employ the physical force of a democracy without turning the moral force, or the power of opinion, against the government. So that faction is not unfrequently made to triumph from its own defeats, and to avenge, in the disgrace and blood of magistrates, the crime of their fidelity to the laws.

As the boastful pretensions of the democratic system cannot be too minutely exposed, another consideration must be given to the subject.

That government certainly deserves no honest man's love or support, which, from the very laws of its being, carries terror and danger to the virtuous, and arms the vicious with authority and power. The essence, and in the opinion of many thousands not yet cured of their delusions, the excellence of democracy is, that it invests every citizen with an equal proportion of power. A state consisting of a million of citizens has a million sovereigns, each of whom detests all other sovereignty but his own. This very boast implies as much of the spirit of turbulence and insubordination as the utmost energy of any known regular government, even the most rigid, could keep in restraint. It also implies a state of agitation that is justly terrible to all who love their ease, and of instability that quenches the last hope of those who would transmit their liberty to posterity. Waiving any further pursuit of these reflections, let it be resumed, that if every man of the million has his ratable share of power in the community, then, instead of restraining the vicious, they also are armed with power, for they take their part; as they are citizens, this cannot be refused them. Now, as they have an interest in preventing the execution of the laws, which, in fact, is the apparent common interest of their whole class, their union will happen of course. The very first moment that they do unite, which it is ten thousand to one will happen before the form of the democracy is agreed upon, and while its plausible constitution is framing, that moment they form a faction, and the pretended efficacy of the democratic system, which is to operate by the power of opinion and persuasion, comes to an end. For an *imperium in imperio* exists; there is a state within the state, a combination interested and active in hindering the will of the majority from being obeyed.

But the vicious, we shall be told, are very few in such an honest nation as the American. How many of our states did, in fact, pass laws to obstruct the lawful operation of the treaty of peace in 1783? and were the virtuous men of those states the framers and advocates of those laws? What shall we denominate the oligarchy that sways the authority of Virginia? Who is ignorant that the ruling power have an interest to oppose justice to creditors? Surely, after these facts are remembered, no man will say, the faction of the vicious is a chimera of the writer's brain; nor, admitting it to be real, will he deny that it has proved itself potent.

It is not however the faction of debtors only that is to be expected to arise under a democracy. Every bad passion that dreads restraint from the laws will seek impunity and indulgence in faction. The associates will not come together in cold blood. They will not, like their federal adversaries, yawn over the contemplation of their cause, and shrink from the claim of its necessary perils and sacrifices. They will do all that can possibly be done, and they will attempt more. They will begin early, persevere long, ask no respite for themselves, and are sure to triumph if their enemies take any. Suppose at first their numbers to be exceedingly few, their efforts will for that reason be so much the greater. They will call themselves the people; they will in their name arraign every act of government as wicked and weak; they will oblige the rulers to stand forever on the defensive, as culprits at the bar of an offended public. With a venal press at command, concealing their number and their infamy, is it to be doubted that the ignorant will soon or late unite with the vicious? Their union is inevitable; and, when united, those allies are powerful enough to strike terror into the hearts of the firmest rulers. It is in vain, it is indeed childish to say, that an enlightened people will understand their own affairs, and thus the acts of a faction will be baffled. No people on earth are or can be so enlightened as to the details of political affairs. To study politics, so as to know correctly the force of the reasons for a large part of the public measures, would stop the labor of the plough and the hammer; and how are these million of students to have access to the means of information?

When it is thus apparent that the vicious will have as many opportunities as inducements to inflame and deceive, it results, from the nature of democracy, that the ignorant will join, and the ambitious will lead their combination. Who, then, will deny that the vicious are armed with power, and the virtuous exposed to persecution and peril?

If a sense of their danger compel these latter, at length, to unite also in self-defence, it will be late, probably too late, without means to animate and cement their union, and with no hope beyond that of protracting, for a short time, the certain catastrophe of their destruction, which in fact no democracy has ever yet failed to accomplish.

If then all this is to happen, not from accident, not as the shallow or base demagogues pretend, from the management of monarchists or aristocrats, but from the principles of democracy itself, as we have attempted to demonstrate, ought we not to consider democracy as the worst of all governments, or if there be a worse, as the certain forerunner of that? What other form of civil rule among men so irresistibly tends to free vice from restraint, and to subject virtue to persecution?

The common supposition is, and it is ever assumed as the basis of argument, that in a democracy the laws have only to command individuals, who yield a willing and conscientious obedience; and who would be destitute of the force to resist, if they should lack the disposition to submit. But this supposition, which so constantly triumphs in the newspapers, utterly fails in the trial in our republic, which we do not denominate a democracy. To collect the tax on Virginia coaches we have had to exert all the judicial power of the nation; and after that had prevailed, popularity was found a greater treasure than money, and the carriage tax was repealed. The tax on whiskey was enforced by an army, and no sooner had its receipts begun to reimburse the charges of government, and in some measure to equalize the northern and southern burdens, but the law is annulled.

With the example of two rebellions against our revenue laws, it cannot be denied that our republic claims the submission, not merely of weak individuals, but of powerful combinations, of those whom distance, numbers, and enthusiasm embolden to deride its authority and defy its arms. A faction is a sort of empire within the empire, which acts by its own magistrates and laws, and prosecutes interests not only unlike, but destructive to those of the nation. The federalists are accused of attempting to impart too much energy to the administration, and of stripping, with too much severity, all such combinations of their assumed importance. Hence it is ridiculously absurd to denominate the federalists, the admirers and disciples of Washington, a faction.

But we shall be told, in defiance both of fact and good sense, that factions will not exist, or will be impotent if they do; for the majority have a right to govern, and certainly will govern by their representatives. Let their right be admitted, but they certainly will not govern in either of two cases, both fairly supposable, and likely, nay sure, to happen in succession: that a section of country, a combination, party, or faction, call it what you will, shall prove daring and potent enough to obstruct the laws and to exempt itself from their operation; or, growing bolder with impunity and success, finally by art, deceit, and perseverance, to force its chiefs into power, and thus, instead of submitting to the government, to bring the government into submission to a faction. Then the forms and the names of a republic will be used, and used more ostentatiously than ever; but its principles will be abused, and its ramparts and defences laid flat to the ground.

There are many, who, believing that a penful of ink can impart a deathless energy to a constitution, and having seen with pride and joy two or three skins of parchment added, like new walls about a fortress, to our own, will be filled with astonishment, and say, is not our legislature divided? our executive single? our judiciary independent? Have we not amendments and bills of rights, excelling all compositions in prose? Where then can our danger lie? Our government, so we read, is constructed in such a manner as to defend itself and the people. We have the greatest political security, for we have adopted the soundest principles.

To most grown children, therefore, the existence of faction will seem chimerical. Yet did any free state ever exist without the most painful and protracted conflicts with this foe? or expire any otherwise than by his triumph? The spring is not more genial to the grain and fruits, than to insects and vermin. The same sun that decks the fields with flowers, thaws out the serpent in the fen, and concocts his poison. Surely we are not the people to contest this position. Our present liberty was born into the world under the knife of this assassin, and now limps a cripple from his violence.

As soon as such a faction is known to subsist in force, we shall be told, the people may, and because they may they surely will, rally to discomfit and punish the conspirators. If the whole people in a body are to do this as often as it may be necessary, then it seems our political plan is to carry on our government by successive, or rather incessant revolutions. When the people deliberate and act in person, laying aside the plain truth, that it is impossible they should, all delegated authority is at an end; the representatives would be nothing in the presence of their assembled constituents. Thus falls or stops the machine of a regular government. Thus a faction, hostile to the government, would ensure their success by the very remedy that is supposed effectual to disappoint their designs.

Men of a just way of thinking will be ready to renounce the opinions we have been considering, and to admit that liberty is lost where faction domineers; that some security must be provided against its attacks; and that no elective government can be secure or orderly, unless it be invested by the Constitution itself with the means of self-defence. It is enough for the people to approve the lawful use of them. And this, for a free government, must be the easiest thing in the world.

Now the contrary of this last opinion is the truth. By a free government this difficulty is nearly or quite insuperable; for the audaciousness and profligacy of faction is ever in proportion to the liberty of the political constitution. In a tyranny individuals are nothing. Conscious of their nothingness, the spirit of liberty is torpid or extinct. But in a free state there is, necessarily, a great mass of power left in the hands of the citizens, with the spirit to use and the desire to augment it. Hence will proceed an infinity of clubs and associations, for purposes often laudable or harmless, but not unfrequently factious. It is obvious, that the combination of some hundreds or thousands for political ends will produce a great aggregate stock or mass of power. As by combining they greatly augment their power, for that very reason they will combine; and as magistrates would seldom like to devolve their authority upon volunteers who might offer to play the magistrate in their stead, there is almost nothing left for a band of combined citizens to do, but to discredit and obstruct the government and laws. The possession of power by the magistrate is not so sure to produce respect as to kindle envy; and to the envious it is a gratification to humble those who are exalted. But the ambitious find the public discontent a passport to office—then they must breed or inflame discontent. We have the example before our eyes.

Is it not evident, then, that a free government must exert a great deal more power to obtain obedience from an extensive combination or faction than would be necessary to extort it from a much larger number of uncombined individuals? If the regular government has that degree of power which, let it be noted, the jealousy of a free people often inclines them to withhold; and if it should exercise its power with promptness and spirit, a supposition not a little improbable, for such governments frequently have more strength than firmness, then the faction may be, for that time, repressed and kept from doing mischief. It will, however, instantly change its pretexts and its means, and renew the contest with more art and caution, and with the advantage of all the discontents which every considerable popular agitation is sure to multiply and to embitter. This immortal enemy, whom it is possible to bind, though only for a time, and in flaxen chains, but not to kill; who may be baffled, but cannot be disarmed; who is never weakened by defeat, nor discouraged by disappointment, again tries and wears out the strength of the government and the temper of the people. It is a game which the factious will never be weary of playing, because they play for an empire, yet on their own part hazard nothing. If they fail, they lose only their ticket, and say, draw your lottery again; if they win, as in the end they must and will, if the Constitution has not provided within, or unless the people will bring, which they will not long, from without, some energy to hinder their success, it will be complete; for conquering parties never content themselves with half the fruits of victory. Their power once obtained can be and will be confirmed by nothing but the terror or weakness of the real people. Justice will shrink from the bench, and tremble at her own bar.

As property is the object of the great mass of every faction, the rules that keep it sacred will be annulled, or so far shaken, as to bring enough of it within the grasp of the dominant party to reward their partisans with booty. But the chieftains, thirsting only for dominion, will search for

the means of extending or establishing it. They will, of course, innovate, till the vestiges of private right, and of restraints on public authority, are effaced; until the real people are stripped of all privilege and influence, and become even more abject and spiritless than weak. The many may be deluded, but the success of a faction is ever the victory of a few; and the power of the few can be supported by nothing but force. This catastrophe is fatal.

The people, it will be thought, will see their error and return. But there is no return to liberty. What the fire of faction does not destroy, it will debase. Those who have once tasted of the cup of sovereignty will be unfitted to be subjects; and those who have not, will scarcely form a wish, beyond the unmolested ignominy of slaves.

But will those who scorn to live at all unless they can live free, will these noble spirits abandon the public cause? Will they not break their chains on the heads of their oppressors? Suppose they attempt it, then we have a civil war; and when political diseases require the sword, the remedy will kill. Tyrants may be dethroned, and usurpers expelled and punished; but the sword, once drawn, cannot be sheathed. Whoever holds it, must rule by it; and that rule, though victory should give it to the best men and the honestest cause, cannot be liberty. Though painted as a goddess, she is mortal, and her spirit, once severed by the sword, can be evoked no more from the shades.

Is this catastrophe too distant to be viewed, or too improbable to be dreaded? I should not think it so formidably near as I do, if in the short interval of impending fate, in which alone it can be of any use to be active, the heart of every honest man in the nation, or even in New England, was penetrated with the anxiety that oppresses my own. Then the subversion of the public liberty would at least be delayed, if it could not be prevented. Her maladies might be palliated, if not cured. She might long drag on the life of an invalid, instead of soon suffering the death of a martyr.

The soft, timid sons of luxury, love liberty as well as it is possible they should, to love pleasure better. They desire to sleep in security, and to enjoy protection, without being molested to give it. While all, who are not devoted to pleasure, are eager in the pursuit of wealth, how will it be possible to rouse such a spirit of liberty as can alone secure, or prolong its possession? For if, in the extraordinary perils of the republic, the citizens will not kindle with a more than ordinary, with a heroic flame, its cause will be abandoned without effort, and lost beyond redemption. But if the faithful votaries of liberty, uncertain what counsels to follow, should, for the present, withhold their exertions, will they not at least bestow their attention? Will they not fix it, with an unusual intensity of thought, upon the scene; and will they not fortify their nerves to contemplate a prospect that is shaded with horror, and already flashes with tempest?

If the positions laid down as theory could be denied, the brief history of the federal administration would establish them. It was first confided to the truest and purest patriot that ever lived. It succeeded a period, dismal and dark, and like the morning sun, lighted up a sudden splendor that was gratuitous, for it consumed nothing, but its genial rays cherished the powers of vegetation, while they displayed its exuberance. There was no example, scarcely a pretence of oppression; yet faction, basking in those rays, and sucking venom from the ground, even then

cried out, "O sun, I tell thee, how I hate thy beams." Faction was organized sooner than the government.

If the most urgent public reasons could ever silence or satisfy the spirit of faction, the adoption of the new Constitution would have been prompt and unanimous. The government of a great nation had barely revenue enough to buy stationery for its clerks, or to pay the salary of the door-keeper. Public faith and public force were equally out of the question, for as it respected either authority or resources, the corporation of a college, or the missionary society were greater potentates than congress. Our federal government had not merely fallen into imbecility, and of course into contempt, but the oligarchical factions in the large states had actually made great advances in the usurpation of its powers. The king of New York levied imposts on Jersey and Connecticut; and the nobles of Virginia bore with impatience their tributary dependence on Baltimore and Philadelphia. Our discontents were fermenting into civil war; and that would have multiplied and exasperated our discontents.

Impending public evils, so obvious and so near, happily roused all the patriotism of the country; but they roused its ambition too. The great state chieftains found the sovereign power unoccupied, and like the lieutenants of Alexander, each employed intrigue, and would soon have employed force, to erect his province into a separate monarchy or aristocracy. Popular republican names would indeed have been used, but in the struggles of ambition they would have been used only to cloak usurpation and tyranny. How late, and with what sourness and reluctance, did New York and Virginia renounce the hopes of aggrandizement which their antifederal leaders had so passionately cherished! The opposition to the adoption of the federal Constitution was not a controversy about principles; it was a struggle for power. In the great states, the ruling party, with that sagacity which too often accompanies inordinate ambition, instantly discerned, that if the new government should go into operation with all the energy that its letter and spirit would authorize, they must cease to rule—still worse, they must submit to be ruled, nay, worst of all, they must be ruled by their equals, a condition of real wretchedness and supposed disgrace, which our impatient tyrants anticipated with instinctive and unspeakable horror.

To prevent this dreaded result of the new Constitution, which, by securing a real legal equality to all the citizens, would bring them down to an equality, their earliest care was to bind the ties of their factious union more closely together; and by combining their influence and exerting the utmost malignity of their art, to render the new government odious and suspected by the people. Thus, conceived in jealousy and born in weakness and dissension, they hoped to see it sink, like its predecessor, the confederation, into contempt. Hence it was, that in every great state a faction arose with the fiercest hostility to the federal Constitution, and active in devising and pursuing every scheme, however unwarrantable or audacious, that would obstruct the establishment of any power in the state superior to its own.

It is undeniably true, therefore, that faction was organized sooner than the new government. We are not to charge this event to the accidental rivalships or disgusts of leading men, but to the operation of the invariable principles that preside over human actions and political affairs. Power had slipped out of the feeble hands of the old congress; and the world's power, like its wealth, can never lie one moment without a possessor. The states had instantly succeeded to the vacant sovereignty; and the leading men in the great states, for the small ones were inactive from a

sense of their insignificance, engrossed their authority. Where the executive authority was single, the governor, as for instance in New York, felt his brow encircled with a diadem; but in those states where the governor is a mere cipher, the men who influenced the assembly governed the state, and there an oligarchy established itself. When has it been seen in the world, that the possession of sovereign power was regarded with indifference, or resigned without effort? If all that is ambition in the heart of man had slept in America, till the era of the new Constitution, the events of that period would not merely have awakened it into life, but have quickened it into all the agitations of frenzy.

Then commenced an active struggle for power. Faction resolved that the new government should not exist at all, or if that could not be prevented, that it should exist without energy. Accordingly, the presses of that time teemed with calumny and invective. Before the new government had done any thing, there was nothing oppressive or tyrannical which it was not accused of meditating; and when it began its operations, there was nothing wise or fit that it was not charged with neglecting; nothing right or beneficial that it did, but from an insidious design to delude and betray the people. The cry of usurpation and oppression was louder then, when all was prosperous and beneficent, than it has been since, when the judiciary is violently abolished, the judges dragged to the culprit's bar, the Constitution changed to prevent a change of rulers, and the path plainly marked out and already half travelled over, for the ambition of those rulers to reign in contempt of the people's votes, and on the ruins of their liberty.

He is certainly a political novice or a hypocrite, who will pretend that the antifederal opposition to the government is to be ascribed to the concern of the people for their liberties, rather than to the profligate ambition of their demagogues, eager for power, and suddenly alarmed by the imminent danger of losing it; demagogues, who leading lives like Clodius, and with the maxims of Cato in their mouths, cherishing principles like Catiline, have acted steadily on a plan of usurpation like Cæsar. Their labor for twelve years was to inflame and deceive; and their recompense, for the last four, has been to degrade and betray.

Any person who considers the instability of all authority, that is not only derived from the multitude, but wanes or increases with the ever changing phases of their levity and caprice, will pronounce that the federal government was from the first, and from its very nature and organization, fated to sink under the rivalry of its state competitors for dominion. Virginia has never been more federal than it was, when, from considerations of policy, and perhaps in the hope of future success from its intrigues, it adopted the new Constitution; for it has never desisted from obstructing its measures, and urging every scheme that would reduce it back again to the imbecility of the old confederation. To the dismay of every true patriot, these arts have at length fatally succeeded; and our system of government now differs very little from what it would have been, if the impost proposed by the old congress had been granted, and the new federal Constitution had never been adopted by the States. In that case, the states being left to their natural inequality, the small states would have been, as they now are, nothing; and Virginia, potent in herself, more potent by her influence and intrigues, and uncontrolled by a superior federal head, would of course have been every thing. Baltimore, like Antium, and Philadelphia, like Capua, would have bowed their proud necks to a new Roman yoke. If any of her more powerful neighbors had resisted her dominion, she would have spread her factions into their bosoms, and like the Marsi and the Samnites, they would at last, though perhaps somewhat the

later for their valor, have graced the pomp of her triumphs, and afterwards assisted to maintain the terror of her arms.

So far as state opposition was concerned, it does not appear that it has been overcome in any of the great states, by the mild and successful operation of the federal government. But if states had not been its rivals, yet the matchless industry and close combination of the factious individuals who guided the antifederal presses would, in the end, though perhaps not so soon as it has been accomplished by the help of Virginia, have disarmed and prostrated the federal government. We have the experience of France before our eyes to prove that, with such a city as Paris, it is utterly impossible to support a free republican system. A profligate press has more authority than morals; and a faction will possess more energy than magistrates or laws.

On evidence thus lamentably clear, I found my opinion, that the federalists can never again become the dominant party; in other words, the public reason and virtue cannot be again, as in our first twelve years, and never will be again the governing power, till our government has passed through its revolutionary changes. Every faction that may happen to rule will pursue but two objects, its vengeance on the fallen party, and the security of its own power against any new one that may rise to contest it. As to the glory that wise rulers partake, when they obtain it for their nation, no person of understanding will suppose that the gaudy, ephemeral insects, that bask and flutter no longer than while the sun of popularity shines without a cloud, will either possess the means or feel the passion for it. What have the Condorcets and Rolands of to-day to hope or to enjoy from the personal reputation or public happiness of to-morrow? Their objects are all selfish, all temporary. Mr. Jefferson's letters to Mazzei or Paine, his connection with Callender, or his mean condescensions to France and Spain, will add nothing to the weight of his disgrace with the party that shall supplant him. To be their enemy will be disgrace enough, and so far a refuge for his fame, as it will stop all curiosity and inquiry into particulars. Every party that has fallen in France has been overwhelmed with infamy, but without proofs or discrimination. If time and truth have furnished any materials for the vindication of the ex-rulers, there has nevertheless been no instance of the return of the public to pity, or of the injured to power. The revolution has no retrograde steps. Its course is onward from the patriots and statesmen to the hypocrites and cowards, and onward still through successive committees of ruffians, till some one ruffian happens to be a hero. Then chance no longer has a power over events, for this last inevitably becomes an emperor.

The restoration of the federalists to their merited influence in the government supposes two things, the slumber or extinction of faction, and the efficacy of public morals. It supposes an interval of calm, when reason will dare to speak, and prejudice itself will incline to hear. Then, it is still hoped by many, *Nova progenies cælo demittitur alto*, the genuine public voice would call wisdom into power; and the love of country, which is the morality of politics, would guard and maintain its authority.

Are not these the visions that delight a poet's fancy, but will never revisit the statesman's eyes? When will faction sleep? Not till its labors of vengeance and ambition are over. Faction, we know, is the twin brother of our liberty, and born first; and as we are told in the fable of Castor and Pollux, the only one of the two that is immortal. As long as there is a faction in full force, and possessed of the government, too, the public will and the public reason must have power to

compel, as well as to convince, or they will convince without reforming. Bad men, who rise by intrigue, may be dispossessed by worse men, who rise over their heads by deeper intrigue; but what has the public reason to do but to deplore its silence or to polish its chains? This last we find is now the case in France. All the talent of that country is employed to illustrate the virtues and exploits of that chief who has made a nation happy by putting an end to the agitations of what they called their liberty, and who naturally enough insist that they enjoy more glory than any other people, because they are more terrible to all.

The public reason, therefore, is so little in a condition to reestablish the federal cause, that it will not long maintain its own. Do we not see our giddy multitude celebrate with joy the triumphs of a party over some essential articles of our Constitution, and recently over one integral and independent branch of our government? When our Roland falls, our Danton will be greeted with as loud a peal and as splendid a triumph. If federalism could by a miracle resume the reins of power, unless political virtue and pure morals should return also, those reins would soon drop or be snatched from its hands.

By political virtue is meant that love of country diffused through the society, and ardent in each individual, that would dispose, or rather impel every one to do or suffer much for his country, and permit no one to do any thing against it. The Romans sustained the hardships and dangers of military service, which fell not, as amongst modern nations, on the dregs of society, but, till the time of Marius, exclusively on the flower of the middle and noble classes. They sustained them, nevertheless, both with constancy and alacrity, because the excellence of life, every Roman thought, was glory, and the excellence of each man's glory lay in its redounding to the splendor and extent of the empire of Rome.

Is there any resemblance in all this to the habits and passions that predominate in America? Are not our people wholly engrossed by the pursuit of wealth and pleasure? Though grouped together into a society, the propensities of the individual still prevail; and if the nation discovers the rudiments of any character, they are yet to be developed. In forming it, have we not ground to fear that the sour, dissocial, malignant spirit of our politics will continue to find more to dread and hate in party, than to love and reverence in our country? What foundation can there be for that political virtue to rest upon, while the virtue of the society is proscribed, and its vice lays an exclusive claim to emolument and honor? And as long as faction governs, it must look to all that is vice in the state for its force, and to all that is virtue for its plunder. It is not merely the choice of faction, though no doubt base agents are to be preferred for base purposes, but it is its necessity also to keep men of true worth depressed by keeping the turbulent and worthless contented.

How then can love of country take root and grow in a soil, from which every valuable plant has thus been plucked up and thrown away as a weed? How can we forbear to identify the government with the country? and how is it possible that we should at the same time lavish all the ardor of our affection, and yet withhold every emotion either of confidence or esteem? It is said, that in republics majorities invariably oppress minorities. Can there be any real patriotism in a state which is thus filled with those who exercise and those who suffer tyranny? But how much less reason has any man to love that country, in which the voice of the majority is

counterfeited, or the vicious, ignorant, and needy, are the instruments, and the wise and worthy are the victims of oppression?

When we talk of patriotism as the theme of declamation, it is not very material that we should know with any precision what we mean. It is a subject on which hypocrisy will seem to ignorance to be eloquent, because all of it will be received and well received as flattery. If, however, we search for a principle or sentiment general and powerful enough to produce national effects, capable of making a people act with constancy, or suffer with fortitude, is there any thing in our situation that could have produced, or that can cherish it? The straggling settlements of the southern part of the union, which now is the governing part, have been formed by emigrants from almost every nation of Europe. Safe in their solitudes, alike from the annoyance of enemies and of government, it is infinitely more probable that they will sink into barbarism than rise to the dignity of national sentiment and character. Patriotism, to be a powerful or steady principle of action, must be deeply imbued by education, and strongly impressed both by the policy of the government and the course of events. To love our country with ardor, we must often have some fears for its safety; our affection will be exalted in its distress; and our self-esteem will glow on the contemplation of its glory. It is only by such diversified and incessant exercise that the sentiment can become strong in the individual, or be diffused over the nation.

But how can that nation have any such affinities, any sense of patriotism, whose capacious wilderness receives and separates from each other the successive troops of emigrants from all other nations, men who remain ignorant, or learn only from the newspapers that they are countrymen, who think it their right to be exempted from all tax, restraint, or control, and of course that they have nothing to do with or for their country, but to make rulers for it, who, after they are made, are to have nothing to do with their makers; a country, too, which they are sure will not be invaded, and cannot be enslaved? Are not the wandering Tartars or Indian hunters at least as susceptible of patriotism as these stragglers in our western forests, and infinitely fonder of glory? It is difficult to conceive of a country, which, from the manner of its settlement, or the manifest tendencies of its politics, is more destitute or more incapable of being inspired with political virtue.

What foundation remains, then, for the hopes of those who expect to see the federalists again invested with power?

Shall we be told, that if the nation is not animated with public spirit, the individuals are at least fitted to be good citizens by the purity of their morals? But what are morals without restraints? and how will merely voluntary restraints be maintained? How long will sovereigns, as the people are made to fancy they are, insist more upon checks than prerogatives? Ask Mr. . . . and Judge Chase.

Besides, in political reasoning it is generally overlooked, that if the existence of morals should encourage a people to prefer a democratic system, the operation of that system is sure to destroy their morals. Power in such a society cannot long have any regular control; and, without control, it is itself a vice. Is there in human affairs an occasion of profligacy more shameless or more contagious than a general election? Every spring gives birth and gives wings to this epidemic mischief. Then begins a sort of tillage, that turns up to the sun and air the most noxious weeds in

the kindest soil; or, to speak still more seriously, it is a mortal pestilence, that begins with rottenness in the marrow. A democratic society will soon find its morals the encumbrance of its race, the surly companion of its licentious joys. It will encourage its demagogues to impeach and persecute the magistracy, till it is no longer disquieted. In a word, there will not be morals without justice; and though justice might possibly support a democracy, yet a democracy cannot possibly support justice.

Rome was never weary of making laws for that end, and failed. France has had nearly as many laws as soldiers, yet never had justice or liberty for one day. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the ruling faction has often desired to perpetuate its authority by establishing justice. The difficulties however lie in the nature of the thing; for in democratic states there are ever more volunteers to destroy than to build; and nothing that is restraint can be erected without being odious, nor maintained if it is. Justice herself must be built on a loose foundation, and every villain's hand is of course busy to pluck out the underpinning. Instead of being the awful power that is to control the popular passions, she descends from the height of her temple, and becomes the cruel and vindictive instrument of them.

Federalism was therefore manifestly founded on a mistake, on the supposed existence of sufficient political virtue, and on the permanency and authority of the public morals.

The party now in power committed no such mistake. They acted on the knowledge of what men actually are, not what they ought to be. Instead of enlightening the popular understanding, their business was to bewilder it. They knew that the vicious, on whom society makes war, would join them in their attack upon government. They inflamed the ignorant; they flattered the vain; they offered novelty to the restless; and promised plunder to the base. The envious were assured that the great should fall; and the ambitious that *they* should become great. The federal power, propped by nothing but opinion, fell, not because it deserved its fall, but because its principles of action were more exalted and pure than the people could support.

It is now undeniable that the federal administration was blameless. It has stood the scrutiny of time, and passed unharmed through the ordeal of its enemies. With all the evidence of its conduct in their possession, and with servile majorities at their command, it has not been in their power, much as they desired it, to fix any reproach on their predecessors.

It is the opinion of a few, but a very groundless opinion, that the cause of order will be reëstablished by the splitting of the reigning jacobins; or, if that should not take place soon, the union will be divided, and the northern confederacy compelled to provide for its own liberty. Why, it is said, should we expect that the union of the bad will be perfect, when that of the Washington party, though liberty and property were at stake, has been broken? And why should it be supposed that the Northern States, who possess so prodigious a preponderance of white population, of industry, commerce, and civilization over the Southern, will remain subject to Virginia? Popular delusion cannot last, and as soon as the opposition of the federalists ceases to be feared, the conquerors will divide into new factions, and either the federalists will be called again into power, or the union will be severed into two empires.

By some attention to the nature of a democracy, both these conjectures, at least so far as they support any hopes of the public liberty, will be discredited.

There is no society without jacobins; no free society without a formidable host of them; and no democracy whose powers they will not usurp, nor whose liberties, if it be not absurd to suppose a democracy can have any, they will not destroy. A nation must be exceedingly well educated, in which the ignorant and the credulous are few. Athens, with all its wonderful taste and literature, poured them into her popular assemblies by thousands. It is by no means certain that a nation, composed wholly of scholars and philosophers, would contain less presumption, political ignorance, levity, and extravagance than another state, peopled by tradesmen, farmers, and men of business, without a metaphysician or speculatist among them. The opulent in Holland were the friends of those French who subdued their country, and enslaved them. It was the well dressed, the learned, or at least the conceited mob of France that did infinitely more than the mere rabble of Paris to overturn the throne of the Bourbons. The multitude were made giddy with projects of innovation, before they were armed with pikes to enforce them.

As there is nothing really excellent in our governments, that is not novel in point of institution, and which faction has not represented as old in abuse, the natural vanity, presumption, and restlessness of the human heart have, from the first, afforded the strength of a host to the jacobins of our country. The ambitious desperadoes are the natural leaders of this host.

Now, though such leaders may have many occasions of jealousy and discord with one another, especially in the division of power and booty, is it not absurd to suppose, that any set of them will endeavor to restore both to the right owners? Do we expect a self-denying ordinance from the sons of violence and rapine? Are not those remarkably inconsistent with themselves, who say, our republican system is a government of justice and order, that was freely adopted in peace, subsists by morals, and whose office it is to ask counsel of the wise and to give protection to the good, yet who console themselves in the storms of the state with the fond hope that order will spring out of confusion, because innovators will grow weary of change, and the ambitious will contend about their spoil. Then we are to have a new system exactly like the old one, from the fortuitous concourse of atoms, from the crash and jumble of all that is precious or sacred in the state. It is said, the popular hopes and fears are the gales that impel the political vessel. Can any disappointment of such hopes be greater than their folly?

It is true, the men now in power may not be united together by patriotism, or by any principle of faith or integrity. It is also true, that they have not, and cannot easily have, a military force to awe the people into submission. But on the other hand, they have no need of an army; there is no army to oppose them. They are held together by the ties, and made irresistible by the influence of party. With the advantage of acting as the government, who can oppose them? Not the federalists, who neither have any force, nor any object to employ it for, if they had. Not any subdivision of their own faction, because the opposers, if they prevail, will become the government, so much the less liable to be opposed for their recent victory; and if the new sect should fail, they will be nothing. The conquerors will take care that an unsuccessful resistance shall strengthen their domination.

Thus it seems, in every event of the division of the ruling party, the friends of true liberty have nothing to hope. Tyrants may thus be often changed, but the tyranny will remain.

A democracy cannot last. Its nature ordains, that its next change shall be into a military despotism, of all known governments, perhaps, the most prone to shift its head, and the slowest to mend its vices. The reason is, that the tyranny of what is called the people, and that by the sword, both operate alike to debase and corrupt, till there are neither men left with the spirit to desire liberty, nor morals with the power to sustain justice. Like the burning pestilence that destroys the human body, nothing can subsist by its dissolution but vermin.

A military government may make a nation great, but it cannot make them free. There will be frequent and bloody struggles to decide who shall hold the sword; but the conqueror will destroy his competitors and prevent any permanent division of the empire. Experience proves, that in all such governments there is a continual tendency to unity.

Some kind of balance between the two branches of the Roman government had been maintained for several ages, till at length every popular demagogue, from the two Gracchi to Caesar, tried to gain favor, and by favor to gain power by flattering the multitude with new pretensions to power in the state. The assemblies of the people disposed of every thing; and intrigue and corruption, and often force disposed of the votes of those assemblies. It appears, that Catulus, Cato, Cicero, and the wisest of the Roman patriots, and perhaps wiser never lived, kept on like the infatuated federalists, hoping to the last, that the people would see their error and return to the safe old path. They labored incessantly to reestablish the commonwealth; but the deep corruption of those times, not more corrupt than our own, rendered that impossible. Many of the friends of liberty were slain in the civil wars; some, like Lucullus, had retired to their farms; and most of the others, if not banished by the people, were without commands in the army, and of course without power in the state. Catiline came near being chosen consul, and Piso and Gabinius, scarcely less corrupt, were chosen. A people so degenerate could not maintain liberty; and do we find bad morals or dangerous designs any obstruction to the election of any favorite of the reigning party? It is remarkable, that when by a most singular concurrence of circumstances, after the death of Caesar, an opportunity was given to the Romans to reestablish the republic, there was no effective disposition among the people to concur in that design. It seemed as if the republican party, consisting of the same class of men as the Washington federalists, had expired with the dictator. The truth is, when parties rise and resort to violence, the moment of calm, if one should happen to succeed, leaves little to wisdom and nothing to choice. The orations of Cicero proved feeble against the arms of Mark Antony. Is not all this apparent in the United States? Are not the federalists as destitute of hopes as of power? What is there left for them to do? When a faction has seized the republic, and established itself in power, can the true federal republicans any longer subsist? After having seen the republic expire, will it be asked, why they are not immortal?

But the reason why such governments are not severed by the ambition of contending chiefs, deserves further consideration.

As soon as the Romans had subdued the kingdoms of Perseus, Antiochus, and Mithridates, it was necessary to keep on foot great armies. As the command of these was bestowed by the people,

the arts of popularity were studied by all those who pretended to be the friends of the people, and who really aspired to be their masters. The greatest favorites became the most powerful generals; and as at first there was nothing which the Roman assemblies were unwilling to give, it appeared very soon that they had nothing left to withhold. The armies disposed of all power in the state, and of the state itself; and the generals of course assumed the control of the armies.

It is a very natural subject of surprise, that when the Roman empire was rent by civil war, as it was perhaps twenty times from the age of Marius and Sylla to that of Constantine, some competitor for the imperial purple did not maintain himself with his veteran troops in his province; and found a new dynasty on the banks of the Euphrates or the Danube, the Ebro or the Rhine. This surprise is augmented by considering the distractions and weakness of an elective government, as the Roman was; the wealth, extent, and power of the rebellious provinces, equal to several modern first rate kingdoms; their distance from Italy; and the resource that the despair, and shame, and rage of so many conquered nations would supply on an inviting occasion to throw off their chains and rise once more to independence; yet the Roman power constantly prevailed, and the empire remained one and indivisible. Sertorius was as good a general as Pompey; and it seems strange that he did not become Emperor of Spain. Why were not new empires founded in Armenia, Syria, Asia Minor, in Gaul or Britain? Why, we ask, unless because the very nature of a military democracy, such as the Roman was, did not permit it? Every civil war terminated in the reunion of the provinces, that a rebellion had for a time severed from the empire. Britain, Spain, and Gaul, now so potent, patiently continued to wear their chains, till they dropped off by the total decay of the Western empire.

The first conquests of the Romans were made by the superiority of their discipline. The provinces were permitted to enjoy their municipal laws, but all political and military power was exercised by persons sent from Rome. So that the spirit of the subject nations was broken or rendered impotent, and every contest in the provinces was conducted, not by the provincials, but by Roman generals and veteran troops. These were all animated with the feelings of the Roman democracy. Now a democracy, a party, and an army bear a close resemblance to each other; they are all creatures of emotion and impulse. However discordant all the parts of a democracy may be, they all seek a centre, and that centre is the single arbitrary power of a chief. In this we see how exactly a democracy is like an army: they are equally governments by downright force.

A multitude can be moved only by their passions; and these, when their gratification is obstructed, instantly impel them to arms. *Furor arma ministrat*. The club is first used, and then, as more effectual, the sword. The disciplined is found by the leaders to be more manageable than the mobbish force. The rabble at Paris that conquered the Bastille were soon formed into national guards. But from the first to the last, the nature, and character, and instruments of power remain the same. A ripe democracy will not long want sharp tools and able leaders; in fact, though not in name, it is an army. It is true, an army is not constituted as a deliberative body, and very seldom pretends to deliberate; but whenever it does, it is a democracy in regiments and brigades, somewhat the more orderly as well as more merciful for its discipline. It always will deliberate when it is suffered to feel its own power, and is indiscreetly provoked to exert it. At those times, is there much reason to believe it will act with less good sense, or with a more determined contempt for the national interest and opinion, than a giddy multitude managed by worthless leaders? Now though an army is not indulged with a vote, it cannot be stripped of its feelings,

feelings that may be managed, but cannot be resisted. When the legions of Syria or Gaul pretended to make an emperor, it was as little in the power as it was in the disposition of Severus to content himself with Italy, and to leave those fine provinces to Niger and Albinus. The military town-meeting must be satisfied; and nothing could satisfy it but the overthrow of a rival army. If Pompey, before the battle of Pharsalia, had joined his lieutenants in Spain, with the design of abandoning Italy, and erecting Spain into a separate republic or monarchy, every Roman citizen would have despised, and every Roman soldier would have abandoned him. After that fatal battle, Cato and Scipio never once thought of keeping Africa as an independent government; nor did Brutus and Cassius suppose that Greece and Macedonia, which they held with an army, afforded them more than the means of contesting with Octavius and Antony the dominion of Rome. No hatred is fiercer than such as springs up among those who are closely allied and nearly resemble each other. Every common soldier would be easily made to feel the personal insult and the intolerable wrong of another army's rejecting his emperor and setting up one of their own—not only so, but he knew it was both a threat and a defiance. The shock of the two armies was therefore inevitable. It was a sort of duel, and could no more stop short of destruction than the combat of Hector and Achilles. We greatly mistake the workings of human nature when we suppose the soldiers in such civil wars were mere machines. Hope and fear, love and hatred, on the contrary, exalt their feelings to enthusiasm. When Ortho's troops had received a check from those of Vitellius, he resolved to kill himself. His soldiers, with tears, besought him to live, and swore they would perish, if necessary, in his cause. But he persisted in his purpose, and killed himself; and many of his soldiers, overpowered by their grief, followed his example. Those whom false philosophy makes blind will suppose that national wars will justify, and therefore will excite, all a soldier's ardor; but that the strife between two ambitious generals will be regarded by all men with proper indifference. National disputes are not understood, and their consequences not foreseen, by the multitude; but a quarrel that concerns the life, and fame, and authority of a military favorite takes hold of the heart, and stirs up all the passions.

A democracy is so like an army that no one will be at a loss in applying these observations. The great spring of action with the people in a democracy is their fondness for one set of men, the men who flatter and deceive, and their outrageous aversion to another, most probably those who prefer their true interest to their favor.

A mob is no sooner gathered together than it instinctively feels the want of a leader, a want that is soon supplied. They may not obey him as long, but they obey him as implicitly, and will as readily fight and burn, or rob and murder, in his cause, as the soldiers will for their general.

As the Roman provinces were held in subjection by Roman troops, so every American State is watched with jealousy, and ruled with despotic rigor by the partisans of the faction that may happen to be in power. The successive struggles to which our licentiousness may devote the country, will never be of state against state, but of rival factions diffused over our whole territory. Of course, the strongest army, or that which is best commanded, will prevail, and we shall remain subject to one indivisible bad government.

This conclusion may seem surprising to many; but the event of the Roman republic will vindicate it on the evidence of history. After faction, in the time of Marius, utterly obliterated every republican principle that was worth any thing, Rome remained a military despotism for

almost six hundred years; and, as the reëstablishment of republican liberty in our country after it is once lost is a thing not to be expected, what can succeed its loss but a government by the sword? It would be certainly easier to prevent than to retrieve its fall.

The jacobins are indeed ignorant or wicked enough to say, a mixed monarchy, on the model of the British, will succeed the failure of our republican system. Mr. Jefferson in his famous letter to Mazzei has shown the strange condition both of his head and heart, by charging this design upon Washington and his adherents. It is but candid to admit, that there are many weak-minded democrats who really think a mixed monarchy the next stage of our politics. As well might they promise, that when their factious fire has burned the plain dwelling-house of our liberty, her temple will rise in royal magnificence, and with all the proportions of Grecian architecture, from the ashes. It is impossible sufficiently to elucidate, yet one could never be tired of elucidating the matchless absurdity of this opinion. An unmixed monarchy, indeed there is almost no doubt, awaits us; but it will not be called a monarchy. Caesar lost his life by attempting to take the name of *king*. A president, whose election cannot be hindered, may be well content to wear that title, which inspires no jealousy, yet disclaims no prerogative that party can usurp to confer. Old forms may be continued till some inconvenience is felt from them; and then the same faction that has made them forms can make them less, and substitute some new organic decree in their stead.

But a mixed monarchy would not only offend fixed opinions and habits, but provoke a most desperate resistance. The people, long after losing the substance of republican liberty, maintain a reverence for the name; and would fight with enthusiasm for the tyrant who has left them the name, and taken from them every thing else. Who, then, are to set it up? and how are they to do it? Is it by an army? Where are their soldiers? Where are their resources and means to arm and maintain them? Can it be established by free popular consent? Absurd. A people once trained to republican principles will feel the degradation of submitting to a king. It is far from certain that their opposition would be soothed, by restricting the powers of such a king to the one half of what are enjoyed by Mr. Jefferson. That would make a difference, but the many would not discern it. The aversion of a republican nation to kingship is sincere and warm, even to fanaticism; yet it has never been found to exact of a favorite demagogue, who aspired to reign, any other condescension than an ostentatious scrupulousness of regard to names, to appearances, and forms. Augustus, whose despotism was not greater than his cunning, professed to be the obsequious minister of his slaves in the senate; and Roman pride not only exacted, but enjoyed to the last, the pompous hypocrisy of the phrase, the majesty of the Roman *commonwealth*.

To suppose, therefore, a monarchy established by vote of the people, by the free consent of a majority, is contrary to the nature of man and the uniform testimony of his experience. To suppose it introduced by the disciples of Washington, who are with real or affected scorn described by their adversaries as a fallen party, a despicable handful of malecontents, is no less absurd than inconsistent. The federalists cannot command the consent of a majority, and they have no consular or imperial army to extort it. Every thing of that sort is on the side of their foes, and of course an unsurmountable obstacle to their pretended enterprise.

It will weigh nothing in the argument with some persons, but with men of sense it will be conclusive, that the mass of the federalists are the owners of the commercial and moneyed wealth of the nation. Is it conceivable that such men will plot a revolution in favor of monarchy,

a revolution that would make them beggars as well as traitors if it should miscarry; and if it should succeed ever so well, would require a century to take root and acquire stability enough to ensure justice and protect property? In these convulsions of the state, property is shaken, and in almost every radical change of government actually shifts hands. Such a project would seem audacious to the conception of needy adventurers who risk nothing but their lives; but to reproach the federalists of New England, the most independent farmers, opulent merchants, and thriving mechanics, as well as pious clergy, with such a conspiracy, requires a degree of impudence that nothing can transcend. As well might they suspect the merchants of a plot to choke up the entrance of our harbors by sinking hulks, or that the directors of the several banks had confederated to blow up the money vaults with gunpowder. The Catos and the Ciceros are accused of conspiring to subvert the commonwealth—and who are the accusers? The Cloddi, the Antonies, and the Catilines.

Let us imagine, however, that by some miracle a mixed monarchy is established, or rather put into operation; and surely no man will suppose an unmixed monarchy can possibly be desired or contemplated by the federalists. The charge against them is, that they like the British monarchy too well. For the sake of argument, then, be it the British monarchy. To-morrow's sun shall rise and gild it with hope and joy, and the dew of to-morrow's evening shall moisten its ashes. Like the golden calf it would be ground to powder before noon. Certainly, the men who prate about an American monarchy copied from the British, are destitute of all sincerity or judgment. What could make such a monarchy? Not parchment. We are beginning to be cured of the insane belief that an engrossing clerk can make a constitution. Mere words, though on parchment, though sworn to, are wind, and worse than wind, because they are perjury. What could give effect to such a monarchy? It might have a right to command, but what could give it power? Not an army, for that would make it a military tyranny, of all governments the most odious, because the most durable. The British monarchy does not govern by an army, nor would their army suffer itself to be employed to destroy the national liberties. It is officered by the younger sons of noble and wealthy parents, and by many distinguished commanders who are in avowed opposition to the ministry. In fact, democratic opinions take root and flourish scarcely less in armies than in great cities, and infinitely more than they are found to do, or than it is possible they should, in the cabals of any ruling party in the world.

Great Britain, by being an island, is secured from foreign conquest; and by having a powerful enemy within sight of her shore is kept in sufficient dread of it to be inspired with patriotism. That virtue, with all the fervor and elevation that a society which mixes so much of the commercial with the martial spirit can display, has other kindred virtues in its train; and these have had an influence informing the habits and principles of action, not only of the English military and nobles, but of the mass of the nation. There is much, therefore, there is every thing in that island to blend self-love with love of country. It is impossible that an Englishman should have fears for the government, without trembling for his own safety. How different are these sentiments from the immovable apathy of those citizens, who think a constitution no better than any other piece of paper, nor so good as a blank on which a more perfect one could be written!

Is our monarchy to be supported by the national habits of subordination and implicit obedience? Surely when they hold out this expectation, the jacobins do not mean to answer for themselves.

Or do we really think it would still be a monarchy, though we should set up, and put down at pleasure, a town-meeting king?

By removing or changing the relation of any one of the pillars that support the British government, its identity and excellence would be lost, a revolution would ensue. When the house of commons voted the house of peers useless, a tyranny of the committees of that body sprang up. The English nation have had the good sense, or more correctly, the good fortune, to alter nothing, till time and circumstances enforced the alteration, and then to abstain from speculative innovations. The evil spirit of metaphysics has not been conjured up to demolish, in order to lay out a new foundation by the line, and to build upon plan. The present happiness of that nation rests upon old foundations, so much the more solid, because the meddling ignorance of professed builders has not been allowed to new lay them. We may be permitted to call it a *matter of fact* government. No correct politician will presume to engage, that the same form of government would succeed equally well, or even succeed at all, anywhere else, or even in England under any other circumstances. Who will dare to say that their monarchy would stand, if this generation had raised it? Who indeed will believe, if it did stand, that the weakness produced by the novelty of its institution would not justify, and even from a regard to self-preservation, compel, an almost total departure from its essential principles?

Now is there one of those essential principles, that it is even possible for the American people to adopt for their monarchy? Are old habits to be changed by a vote, and new ones to be established without experience? Can we have a monarchy without a peerage? or shall our governors supply that defect by giving commissions to a sufficient number of nobles of the quorum? Where is the American hierarchy? Where, above all, is the system of English law and justice, which would support liberty in Turkey, if Turkey could achieve the impossibility of supporting such justice?

It is not recollected that any monarchy in the world was ever introduced by consent; nor will anyone believe, on reflection, that it could be maintained by any nation, if nothing but consent upheld it. It is a rare thing for a people to choose their government; it is beyond all credibility, that they will enjoy the still rarer opportunity of changing it by choice.

The notion, therefore, of an American mixed monarchy is supremely ridiculous. It is highly probable our country will be eventually subject to a monarchy, but it is demonstrable that it cannot be such as the British; and whatever it may be, that the votes of the citizens will not be taken to introduce it.

It cannot be expected that the tendency towards a change of government, however obvious, will be discerned by the multitude of our citizens. While demagogues enjoy their favor, their passions will have no rest, and their judgment and understanding no exercise. Otherwise it might be of use to remind them, that more essential breaches have been made in our constitution within four years than in the British in the last hundred and forty. In that enslaved country every executive attempt at usurpation has been spiritedly and perseveringly resisted, and substantial improvements have been made in the constitutional provisions for liberty. Witness the habeas corpus, the independence of the judges, and the perfection, if any thing human is perfect, of their administration of justice, the result of the famous Middlesex election, and that on the right of

issuing general search warrants. Let every citizen who is able to think, and who can bear the pain of thinking, make the contrast at his leisure.

They are certainly blind who do not see that we are descending from a supposed orderly and stable republican government into a licentious democracy, with a progress that baffles all means to resist, and scarcely leaves leisure to deplore its celerity. The institutions and the hopes that Washington raised are nearly prostrate; and his name and memory would perish, if the rage of his enemies had any power over history. But they have not—history will give scope to her vengeance, and posterity will not be defrauded.

But if our experience had not clearly given warning of our approaching catastrophe, the very nature of democracy would inevitably produce it.

A government by the passions of the multitude, or, no less correctly, according to the vices and ambition of their leaders, is a democracy. We have heard so long of the indefeasible sovereignty of the people, and have admitted so many specious theories of the rights of man, which are contradicted by his nature and experience, that few will dread at all, and fewer still will dread as they ought, the evils of an American democracy. They will not believe them near, or they will think them tolerable or temporary. Fatal delusion!

When it is said, there may be a tyranny of the *many* as well as of the *few*, every democrat will yield at least a cold and speculative assent; but he will at all times act, as if it were a thing incomprehensible, that there should be any evil to be apprehended in the uncontrolled power of the people. He will say arbitrary power may make a tyrant, but how can it make its possessor a slave?

In the first place, let it be remarked, the power of individuals is a very different thing from their liberty. When I vote for the man I prefer, he may happen not to be chosen; or he may disappoint my expectations if he is; or he may be outvoted by others in the public body to which he is elected. I may then hold and exercise all the power that a citizen can have or enjoy, and yet such laws may be made and such abuses allowed as shall deprive me of all liberty. I may be tried by a jury, and that jury may be culled and picked out from my political enemies by a federal marshal. Of course, my life and liberty may depend on the good pleasure of the man who appoints that marshal. I may be assessed arbitrarily for my faculty, or upon conjectural estimation of my property, so that all I have shall be at the control of the government, whenever its displeasure shall exact the sacrifice. I may be told that I am a federalist, and as such bound to submit, in all cases whatsoever, to the will of the majority, as the ruling faction ever pretend to be. My submission may be tested by my resisting or obeying commands that will involve me in disgrace, or drive me to despair. I may become a fugitive, because the ruling party have made me afraid to stay at home; or, perhaps, while I remain at home, they may, nevertheless, think fit to inscribe my name on the list of emigrants and proscribed persons.

All this was done in France, and many of the admirers of French examples are impatient to imitate them. All this time the people may be told, they are the freest in the world; but what ought my opinion to be? What would the threatened clergy, the aristocracy of wealthy merchants, as they have been called already, and thirty thousand more in Massachusetts, who

vote for Governor Strong, and whose case might be no better than mine, what would they think of their condition? Would they call it liberty? Surely, here is oppression sufficient in extent and degree to make the government that inflicts it both odious and terrible; yet this and a thousand times more than this was practised in France, and will be repeated as often as it shall please God in his wrath to deliver a people to the dominion of their licentious passions.

The people, as a body, cannot deliberate. Nevertheless, they will feel an irresistible impulse to act, and their resolutions will be dictated to them by their demagogues. The consciousness, or the opinion, that they possess the supreme power, will inspire inordinate passions; and the violent men, who are the most forward to gratify those passions, will be their favorites. What is called the government of the people is in fact too often the arbitrary power of such men. Here, then, we have the faithful portrait of democracy. What avails the boasted power of individual citizens? or of what value is the will of the majority, if that will is dictated by a committee of demagogues, and law and right are in fact at the mercy of a victorious faction? To make a nation free, the crafty must be kept in awe, and the violent in restraint. The weak and the simple find their liberty arise not from their own individual sovereignty, but from the power of law and justice over all. It is only by the due restraint of others, that I am free.

Popular sovereignty is scarcely less beneficent than awful, when it resides in their courts of justice; there its office, like a sort of human providence, is to warn, enlighten, and protect; when the people are inflamed to seize and exercise it in their assemblies, it is competent only to kill and destroy. Temperate liberty is like the dew, as it falls unseen from its own heaven; constant without excess, it finds vegetation thirsting for its refreshment, and imparts to it the vigor to take more. All nature, moistened with blessings, sparkles in the morning ray. But democracy is a water-spout that bursts from the clouds, and lays the ravaged earth bare to its rocky foundations. The labors of man lie whelmed with his hopes beneath masses of ruin, that bury not only the dead but their monuments.

It is the almost universal mistake of our countrymen, that democracy would be mild and safe in America. They charge the horrid excesses of France not so much to human nature, which will never act better, when the restraints of government, morals, and religion are thrown off, but to the characteristic cruelty and wickedness of Frenchmen.

The truth is, and let it humble our pride, the most ferocious of all animals, when his passions are roused to fury and are uncontrolled, is man; and of all governments, the worst is that which never fails to excite, but was never found to restrain those passions, that is, democracy. It is an illuminated hell, that in the midst of remorse, horror, and torture, rings with festivity; for experience shows, that one joy remains to this most malignant description of the damned, the power to make others wretched. When a man looks round and sees his neighbors mild and merciful, he cannot feel afraid of the abuse of their power over him; and surely if they oppress me, he will say, they will spare their own liberty, for that is dear to all mankind. It is so. The human heart is so constituted, that a man loves liberty as naturally as himself. Yet liberty is a rare thing in the world, though the love of it is so universal.

Before the French Revolution, it was the prevailing opinion of our countrymen, that other nations were not free, because their despotic governments were too strong for the people. Of course, we

were admonished to detest all existing governments, as so many lions in liberty's path; and to expect by their downfall the happy opportunity, that every emancipated people would embrace, to secure their own equal rights for ever. France is supposed to have had this opportunity, and to have lost it. Ought we not then to be convinced, that something more is necessary to preserve liberty than to love it? Ought we not to see that when the people have destroyed all power but their own, they are the nearest possible to a despotism, the more uncontrolled for being new, and tenfold the more cruel for its hypocrisy?

The steps by which a people must proceed to change a government, are not those to enlighten their judgment or to soothe their passions. They cannot stir without following the men before them, who breathe fury into their hearts and banish nature from them. On whatever grounds and under whatever leaders the contest may be commenced, the revolutionary work is the same, and the characters of the agents will be assimilated to it. A revolution is a mine that must explode with destructive violence. The men who were once peaceable like to carry firebrands and daggers too long. Thus armed, will they submit to salutary restraint? How will you bring them to it? Will you undertake to reason down fury? Will you satisfy revenge without blood? Will you preach banditti into habits of self-denial? If you can, and in times of violence and anarchy, why do you ask any other guard than sober reason for your life and property in times of peace and order, when men are most disposed to listen to it? Yet even at such times, you impose restraints; you call out for your defence the whole array of law, with its instruments of punishment and terror; you maintain ministers to strengthen force with opinion, and to make religion the auxiliary of morals. With all this, however, crimes are still perpetrated; society is not any too safe or quiet. Break down all these fences; make what is called law an assassin; take what it ought to protect, and divide it; extinguish, by acts of rapine and vengeance, the spark of mercy in the heart; or, if it should be found to glow there, quench it in that heart's blood; make your people scoff at their morals, and unlearn an education to virtue; displace the Christian sabbath by a profane one, for a respite once in ten days from the toils of murder, because men, who first shed blood for revenge, and proceed to spill it for plunder, and in the progress of their ferocity, for sport, want a festival—what sort of society would you have? Would not rage grow with its indulgence? The coward fury of a mob rises in proportion as there is less resistance; and their inextinguishable thirst for slaughter grows more ardent as more blood is shed to slake it. In such a state is liberty to be gained or guarded from violation? It could not be kept an hour from the daggers of those who, having seized despotic power, would claim it as their lawful prize. I have written the history of France. Can we look back upon it without terror, or forward without despair?

The nature of arbitrary power is always odious; but it cannot be long the arbitrary power of the multitude. There is, probably, no form of rule among mankind, in which the progress of the government depends so little on the particular character of those who administer it. Democracy is the creature of impulse and violence; and the intermediate stages towards the tyranny of one are so quickly passed, that the vileness and cruelty of men are displayed with surprising uniformity. There is not time for great talents to act. There is no sufficient reason to believe, that we should conduct a revolution with much more mildness than the French. If a revolution find the citizens lambs, it will soon make them carnivorous, if not cannibals. We have many thousands of the Paris and St. Domingo assassins in the United States, not as fugitives, but as patriots, who merit reward, and disdain to take any but power. In the progress of our confusion, these men will

effectually assert their claims and display their skill. There is no governing power in the state but party. The moderate and thinking part of the citizens are without power or influence; and it must be so, because all power and influence are engrossed by a factious combination of men, who can overwhelm uncombined individuals with numbers, and the wise and virtuous with clamor and fury.

It is indeed a law of politics, as well as of physics, that a body in action must overcome an equal body at rest. The attacks that have been made on the constitutional barriers proclaim, in a tone that would not be louder from a trumpet, that party will not tolerate any resistance to its will. All the supposed independent orders of the commonwealth must be its servile instruments, or its victims. We should experience the same despotism in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, but the battle is not yet won. It will be won; and they who already display the temper of their Southern and French allies, will not linger or reluct in imitating the worst extremes of their example.

What, then, is to be our condition?

Faction will inevitably triumph. Where the government is both stable and free, there may be parties. There will be differences of opinion, and the pride of opinion will be sufficient to generate contests, and to inflame them with bitterness and rancor. There will be rivalships among those whom genius, fame, or station have made great, and these will deeply agitate the state without often hazarding its safety. Such parties will excite alarm, but they may be safely left, like the elements, to exhaust their fury upon each other.

The object of their strife is to get power *under* the government; for, where that is constituted as it should be, the power *over* the government will not seem attainable, and, of course, will not be attempted.

But in democratic states there will be factions. The sovereign power being nominally in the hands of all, will be effectively within the grasp of a few; and therefore, by the very laws of our nature, a few will combine, intrigue, lie, and fight to engross it to themselves. All history bears testimony, that this attempt has never yet been disappointed.

Who will be the associates? Certainly not the virtuous, who do not wish to control the society, but quietly to enjoy its protection. The enterprising merchant, the thriving tradesman, the careful farmer, will be engrossed by the toils of their business, and will have little time or inclination for the unprofitable and disquieting pursuits of politics. It is not the industrious, sober husbandman, who will plough that barren field; it is the lazy and dissolute bankrupt, who has no other to plough. The idle, the ambitious, and the needy will band together to break the hold that law has upon them, and then to get hold of law. Faction is a Hercules, whose first labor is to strangle this lion, and then to make armor of his skin. In every democratic state, the ruling faction will have law to keep down its enemies; but it will arrogate to itself an undisputed power over law. If our ruling faction has found any impediments, we ask, which of them is now remaining? And is it not absurd to suppose, that the conquerors will be contented with half the fruits of victory?

We are to be subject, then, to a despotic faction, irritated by the resistance that has delayed, and the scorn that pursues their triumph, elate with the insolence of an arbitrary and uncontrollable domination, and who will exercise their sway, not according to the rules of integrity or national policy, but in conformity with their own exclusive interests and passions.

This is a state of things which admits of progress, but not of reformation; it is the beginning of a revolution, which must advance. Our affairs, as first observed, no longer depend on counsel. The opinion of a majority is no longer invited or permitted to control our destinies, or even to retard their consummation. The men in power may, and no doubt will give place to some other faction, who will succeed, because they are abler men, or possibly, in candor we say it, because they are worse. Intrigue will for some time answer instead of force, or the mob will supply it. But by degrees force only will be relied on by those who are *in*, and employed by those who are *out*. The *vis major* will prevail, and some bold chieftain will conquer liberty, and triumph and reign in her name.

Yet it is confessed, we have hopes that this event is not very near. We have no cities as large as London or Paris; and of course the ambitious demagogues may find the ranks of their standing army too thin to rule by them alone. It is also worth remark, that our mobs are not, like those of Europe, excitable by the cry of no bread. The dread of famine is everywhere else a power of political electricity, that glides through all the haunts of filth, and vice, and want in a city, with incredible speed, and in times of insurrection rives and scorches with a sudden force, like heaven's own thunder. Accordingly, we find the sober men of Europe more afraid of the despotism of the rabble than of the government.

But as in the United States we see less of this description of low vulgar, and as in the essential circumstance alluded to, they are so much less manageable by their demagogues, we are to expect that our affairs will be long guided by courting the mob, before they are violently changed by employing them. While the passions of the multitude can be conciliated to confer power and to overcome all impediments to its action, our rulers have a plain and easy task to perform. It costs them nothing but hypocrisy. As soon, however, as rival favorites of the people may happen to contend by the practice of the same arts, we are to look for the sanguinary strife of ambition. Brissot will fall by the hand of Danton, and he will be supplanted by Robespierre. The revolution will proceed in exactly the same way, but not with so rapid a pace, as that of France.