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THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS PAINE

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY MONCURE DANIEL CONWAY

VOLUME II.

1779 - 1792

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THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS PAINE

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XIII.

RIGHTS OF MAN.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

WHEN Thomas Paine sailed from America for France, in April, 1787, he was perhaps as happy a man as any in the world. His most intimate friend, Jefferson, was Minister at Paris, and his friend Lafayette was the idol of France. His fame had preceded him, and he at once became, in Paris, the centre of the same circle of savants and philosophers that had surrounded Franklin. His main reason for proceeding at once to Paris was that he might submit to the Academy of Sciences his invention of an iron bridge, and with its favorable verdict he came to England, in September. He at once went to his aged mother at Thetford, leaving with a publisher (Ridgway), his "Prospects on the Rubicon." He next made arrangements to patent his bridge, and to construct at Rotherham the large model of it exhibited on Paddington Green, London. He was welcomed in England by leading statesmen, such as Lansdowne and Fox, and above all by Edmund Burke, who for some time had him as a guest at Beaconsfield, and drove him about in various parts of the country. He had not the slightest revolutionary purpose, either as regarded England or France. Towards Louis XVI. he felt only gratitude for the services he had rendered America, and towards George III. he felt no animosity whatever. His four months' sojourn in Paris had convinced him that there was approaching a reform of that country after the American model, except that the Crown would be preserved, a compromise he approved, provided the throne should not be hereditary. Events in France travelled more swiftly than he had anticipated, and Paine was summoned by Lafayette, Condorcet, and others, as an adviser in the formation of a new constitution.

Such was the situation immediately preceding the political and literary duel between Paine and Burke, which in the event turned out a tremendous war between Royalism and Republicanism in Europe. Paine was, both in France and in England, the inspirer of moderate counsels. Samuel Rogers relates that in early life he dined at a friend's house in London with Thomas Paine, when one of the toasts given was the "memory of Joshua,"-in allusion to the Hebrew leader's conquest of the kings of Canaan, and execution of them. Paine observed that he would not treat kings like Joshua. "I'm of the Scotch parson's opinion," he said, "when he prayed against Louis XIV.-`Lord, shake him over the mouth of hell, but don't let him drop!'" Paine then gave as his toast, "The Republic of the World,"-which Samuel Rogers, aged twenty-nine, noted as a sublime idea. This was Paine's faith and hope, and with it he confronted the revolutionary storms which presently burst over France and England.

Until Burke's arraignment of France in his parliamentary speech (February 9, 1790), Paine had no doubt whatever that he would sympathize with the movement in France, and wrote to him from that country as if conveying glad tidings. Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France" appeared November 1, 1790, and Paine at once set himself to answer it. He was then staying at the Angel Inn, Islington. The inn has been twice rebuilt since that time, and from its contents there is preserved only a small image, which perhaps was meant to represent "Liberty,"-possibly brought from Paris by Paine as an ornament for his study. From the Angel he removed to a house in Harding Street, Fetter Lane. Rickman says Part First of "Rights of Man" was finished at Versailles, but probably this has reference to the preface only, as I cannot find Paine in France that year until April 8. The book had been printed by Johnson, in time for the opening of Parliament, in February; but this publisher became frightened after a few copies were out (there is one in the British Museum), and the work was transferred to J. S. Jordan, 166 Fleet Street, with a preface sent from Paris (not contained in Johnson's edition, nor in the American editions). The pamphlet, though sold at the same price as Burke's, three shillings, had a vast circulation, and Paine gave the proceeds to the Constitutional Societies which sprang up under his teachings in various parts of the country.

Soon after appeared Burke's "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs." In this Burke quoted a good deal from "Rights of Man," but replied to it only with exclamation points, saying that the only answer such ideas merited was "criminal justice." Paine's Part Second followed, published February 17, 1792. In Part First Paine had mentioned a rumor that Burke was a masked pensioner (a charge that will be noticed in connection with its detailed statement in a further publication); and as Burke had been formerly arraigned in Parliament, while Paymaster, for a very questionable proceeding, this charge no doubt hurt a good deal. Although the government did not follow Burke's suggestion of a prosecution at that time, there is little doubt that it was he who induced the prosecution of Part Second. Before the trial came on, December 18, 1792, Paine was occupying his seat in the French Convention, and could only be outlawed.

Burke humorously remarked to a friend of Paine and himself, "We hunt in pairs." The severally representative character and influence of these two men in the revolutionary era, in France and England, deserve more adequate study than they have received. While Paine maintained freedom of discussion, Burke first proposed criminal prosecution for sentiments by no means libellous (such as Paine's Part First). While Paine was endeavoring to make the movement in France peaceful, Burke fomented the league of monarchs against France which maddened its people, and brought on the Reign of Terror. While Paine was endeavoring to preserve the French throne ("phantom" though he believed it), to prevent bloodshed, Burke was secretly writing to the Queen of France, entreating her not to compromise, and to "trust to the support of foreign armies" ("Histoire de France depuis 1789." Henri Martin, i., 151). While Burke thus helped to bring the King and Queen to the guillotine, Paine pleaded for their lives to the last moment. While Paine maintained the right of mankind to improve their condition, Burke held that "the awful Author of our being is the author of our place in the order of existence; and that, having disposed and marshalled us by a divine tactick, not according to our will, but according to his, he has, in and by that disposition, virtually subjected us to act the part which belongs to the place assigned us." Paine was a religious believer in eternal principles; Burke held that "political problems do not primarily concern truth or falsehood. They relate to good or evil. What in the result is likely to produce evil is politically false, that which is productive of good politically is true." Assuming thus the visionary's right to decide before the result what was "likely to produce evil," Burke vigorously sought to kindle war against the French Republic which might have developed itself peacefully, while Paine was striving for an international Congress in Europe in the interest of peace. Paine had faith in the people, and believed that, if allowed to choose representatives, they would select their best and wisest men; and that while reforming government the people would remain orderly, as they had generally remained in America during the transition from British rule to selfgovernment. Burke maintained that if the existing political order were broken up there would be no longer a people, but "a number of vague, loose individuals, and nothing more." "Alas!" he exclaims, "they little know how many a weary step is to be taken before they can form themselves into a mass, which has a true personality." For the sake of peace Paine wished the revolution to be peaceful as the advance of summer; he used every endeavor to reconcile English radicals to some modus vivendi with the existing order, as he was willing to retain Louis XVI. as head of the executive in France: Burke resisted every

tendency of English statesmanship to reform at home, or to negotiate with the French Republic, and was mainly responsible for the King's death and the war that followed between England and France in February, 1793. Burke became a royal favorite, Paine was outlawed by a prosecution originally proposed by Burke. While Paine was demanding religious liberty, Burke was opposing the removal of penal statutes from Unitarians, on the ground that but for those statutes Paine might some day set up a church in England. When Burke was retiring on a large royal pension, Paine was in prison, through the devices of Burke's confederate, the American Minister in Paris. So the two men, as Burke said, " hunted in pairs."

So far as Burke attempts to affirm any principle he is fairly quoted in Paine's work, and nowhere misrepresented. As for Paine's own ideas, the reader should remember that "Rights of Man" was the earliest complete statement of republican principles. They were pronounced to be the fundamental principles of the American Republic by Jefferson, Madison, and Jackson,--the three Presidents who above all others represented the republican idea which Paine first allied with American Independence. Those who suppose that Paine did but reproduce the principles of Rousseau and Locke will find by careful study of his well-weighed language that such is not the case. Paine's political principles were evolved out of his early Quakerism. He was potential in George Fox. The belief that every human soul was the child of God, and capable of direct inspiration from the Father of all, without mediator or priestly intervention, or sacramental instrumentality, was fatal to all privilege and rank. The universal Fatherhood implied universal Brotherhood, or human equality. But the fate of the Quakers proved the necessity of protecting the individual spirit from oppression by the majority as well as by privileged classes. For this purpose Paine insisted on surrounding the individual right with the security of the Declaration of Rights, not to be invaded by any government; and would reduce government to an association limited in its operations to the defence of those rights which the individual is unable, alone, to maintain.

From the preceding chapter it will be seen that Part Second of " Rights of Man " was begun by Paine in the spring of 1791. At the close of that year, or early in 1792, he took up his abode with his friend Thomas " Clio " Rickman, at No. 7 Upper Marylebone Street. Rickman was a radical publisher; the house remains still a book-binding establishment, and seems little changed since Paine therein revised the proofs of Part Second on a table which Rickman marked with a plate, and which is now in possession of Mr. Edward Truelove. As the plate states, Paine wrote on the same table other works which appeared in England in 1792.

In 1795 D. I. Eaton published an edition of " Rights of Man," with a preface purporting to have been written by Paine while in Luxembourg prison. It is manifestly spurious. The genuine English and French prefaces are given.

RIGHTS OF MAN

BEING AN ANSWER TO MR. BURKE'S ATTACK ON THE FRENCH

REVOLUTION

BY

THOMAS PAINE

SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO CONGRESS IN THE

AMERICAN WAR, AND

AUTHOR OF THE WORKS ENTITLED "COMMON SENSE" AND "A LETTER TO ABBÉ RAYNAL"

DEDICATION

George Washington

President Of The United States Of America

Sir,

I present you a small treatise in defence of those principles of freedom which your exemplary virtue hath so eminently contributed to establish. That the Rights of Man may become as universal as your benevolence can wish, and that you may enjoy the happiness of seeing the New World regenerate the Old, is the prayer of

Sir,

Your much obliged, and

Obedient humble Servant,

Thomas Paine

PAINE'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

From the part Mr. Burke took in the American Revolution, it was natural that I should consider him a friend to mankind; and as our acquaintance commenced on that ground, it would have been more agreeable to me to have had cause to continue in that opinion than to change it.

At the time Mr. Burke made his violent speech last winter in the English Parliament against the French Revolution and the National Assembly, I was in Paris, and had written to him but a short time before to inform him how prosperously matters were going on. Soon after this I saw his advertisement of the Pamphlet he intended to publish: As the attack was to be made in a language but little studied, and less understood in France, and as everything suffers by translation, I promised some of the friends of the Revolution in that country that whenever Mr. Burke's Pamphlet came forth, I would answer it. This appeared to me the more necessary to be done, when I saw the flagrant misrepresentations which Mr. Burke's Pamphlet contains; and that while it is an outrageous abuse on the French Revolution, and the principles of Liberty, it is an imposition on the rest of the world.

I am the more astonished and disappointed at this conduct in Mr. Burke, as (from the circumstances I am going to mention) I had formed other expectations.

I had seen enough of the miseries of war, to wish it might never more have existence in the world, and that some other mode might be found out to settle the differences that should occasionally arise in the neighbourhood of nations. This certainly might be done if Courts were disposed to set honesty about it, or if countries were enlightened enough not to be made the dupes of Courts. The people of America had been bred up in the same prejudices against France, which at that time characterised the people of England; but experience and an acquaintance with the French Nation have most effectually shown to the Americans the falsehood of those prejudices; and I do not believe that a more cordial and confidential intercourse exists between any two countries than between America and France.

When I came to France, in the spring of 1787, the Archbishop of Thoulouse was then Minister, and at that time highly esteemed. I became much acquainted with the private Secretary of that Minister, a man of an enlarged benevolent heart; and found that his sentiments and my own perfectly agreed with respect to the madness of war, and the wretched impolicy of two nations, like England and France, continually worrying each other, to no other end than that of a mutual increase of burdens and taxes. That I might be assured I had not misunderstood him, nor he me, I put the substance of our opinions into writing and sent it to him; subjoining a request, that if I should see among the people of England, any disposition to cultivate a better understanding between the two nations than had hitherto prevailed, how far I might be authorised to say that the same disposition prevailed on the part of France? He answered me by letter in the most unreserved manner, and that not for himself only, but for the Minister, with whose knowledge the letter was declared to be written.

I put this letter into the hands of Mr. Burke almost three years ago, and left it with him, where it still remains; hoping, and at the same time naturally expecting, from the opinion I had conceived of him, that he would find some opportunity of making good use of it, for the purpose of removing those errors and prejudices which two neighbouring nations, from the want of knowing each other, had entertained, to the injury of both.

When the French Revolution broke out, it certainly afforded to Mr. Burke an opportunity of doing some good, had he been disposed to it; instead of which, no sooner did he see the old prejudices wearing away, than he immediately began sowing the seeds of a new inveteracy, as if he were afraid that England and France would cease to be enemies. That there are men in all countries who get their living by war, and by keeping up the quarrels of Nations, is as shocking as it is true; but when those who are concerned in the government of a country, make it their study to sow discord and cultivate prejudices between Nations, it becomes the more unpardonable.

With respect to a paragraph in this work alluding to Mr. Burke's having a pension, the report has been some time in circulation, at least two months; and as a person is often the last to hear what concerns him the most to know, I have mentioned it, that Mr. Burke may have an opportunity of contradicting the rumour, if he thinks proper.

Thomas Paine

PAINE'S PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION

The astonishment which the French Revolution has caused throughout Europe should be considered from two different points of view: first as it affects foreign peoples, secondly as it affects their governments.

The cause of the French people is that of all Europe, or rather of the whole world; but the governments of all those countries are by no means favorable to it. It is important that we should never lose sight of this distinction. We must not confuse the peoples with their governments; especially not the English people with its government.

The government of England is no friend of the revolution of France. Of this we have sufficient proofs in the thanks given by that weak and witless person, the Elector of Hanover, sometimes called the King of England, to Mr. Burke for the insults heaped on it in his book, and in the malevolent comments of the English Minister, Pitt, in his speeches in Parliament.

In spite of the professions of sincerest friendship found in the official correspondence of the English government with that of France, its conduct gives the lie to all its declarations, and shows us clearly that it is not a court to be trusted, but an insane court, plunging in all the quarrels and intrigues of Europe, in quest of a war to satisfy its folly and countenance its extravagance.

The English nation, on the contrary, is very favorably disposed towards the French Revolution, and to the progress of liberty in the whole world; and this feeling will become more general in England as the intrigues and artifices of its government are better known, and the principles of the revolution better understood. The French should know that most English newspapers are directly in the pay of government, or, if indirectly connected with it, always under its orders; and that those papers constantly distort and attack the revolution in France in order to deceive the nation. But, as it is impossible long to prevent the prevalence of truth, the daily falsehoods of those papers no longer have the desired effect.

To be convinced that the voice of truth has been stifled in England, the world needs only to be told that the government regards and prosecutes as a libel that which it should protect.*[1] This outrage on morality is called law, and judges are found wicked enough to inflict penalties on truth.

The English government presents, just now, a curious phenomenon. Seeing that the French and English nations are getting rid of the prejudices and false notions formerly entertained against each other, and which have cost them so much money, that government seems to be placarding its need of a foe; for unless it finds one somewhere, no pretext exists for the enormous revenue and taxation now deemed necessary.

Therefore it seeks in Russia the enemy it has lost in France, and appears to say to the universe, or to say to itself. "If nobody will be so kind as to become my foe, I shall need no more fleets nor armies, and shall be forced to reduce my taxes. The American war enabled me to double the taxes; the Dutch business to add more; the Nootka humbug gave me a pretext for raising three millions sterling more; but unless I can make an enemy of Russia the harvest from wars will end. I was the first to incite Turk against Russian, and now I hope to reap a fresh crop of taxes."

If the miseries of war, and the flood of evils it spreads over a country, did not check all inclination to mirth, and turn laughter into grief, the frantic conduct of the government of England would only excite ridicule. But it is impossible to banish from one's mind the images of suffering which the contemplation of such vicious policy presents. To reason with governments, as they have existed for ages, is to argue with brutes. It is only from the nations themselves that reforms can be expected. There ought not now to exist any doubt that the peoples of France, England, and America, enlightened and enlightening each other, shall henceforth be able, not merely to give the world an example of good government, but by their united influence enforce its practice.

(Translated from the French)

RIGHTS OF MAN

Among the incivilities by which nations or individuals provoke and irritate each other, Mr. Burke's pamphlet on the French Revolution is an extraordinary instance. Neither the People of France, nor the National Assembly, were troubling themselves about the affairs of England, or the English Parliament; and that Mr. Burke should commence an unprovoked attack upon them, both in Parliament and in public, is a conduct that cannot be pardoned on the score of manners, nor justified on that of policy.

There is scarcely an epithet of abuse to be found in the English language, with which Mr. Burke has not loaded the French Nation and the National Assembly. Everything which rancour, prejudice, ignorance or knowledge could suggest, is poured forth in the copious fury of near four hundred pages. In the strain and on the plan Mr. Burke was writing, he might have written on to as many thousands. When the tongue or the pen is let loose in a frenzy of passion, it is the man, and not the subject, that becomes exhausted.

Hitherto Mr. Burke has been mistaken and disappointed in the opinions he had formed of the affairs of France; but such is the ingenuity of his hope, or the malignancy of his despair, that it furnishes him with new pretences to go on. There was a time when it was impossible to make Mr. Burke believe there would be any

Revolution in France. His opinion then was, that the French had neither spirit to undertake it nor fortitude to support it; and now that there is one, he seeks an escape by condemning it.

Not sufficiently content with abusing the National Assembly, a great part of his work is taken up with abusing Dr. Price (one of the best-hearted men that lives) and the two societies in England known by the name of the Revolution Society and the Society for Constitutional Information.

Dr. Price had preached a sermon on the 4th of November, 1789, being the anniversary of what is called in England the Revolution, which took place 1688. Mr. Burke, speaking of this sermon, says: "The political Divine proceeds dogmatically to assert, that by the principles of the Revolution, the people of England have acquired three fundamental rights:

1. To choose our own governors.
2. To cashier them for misconduct.
3. To frame a government for ourselves."

Dr. Price does not say that the right to do these things exists in this or in that person, or in this or in that description of persons, but that it exists in the whole; that it is a right resident in the nation. Mr. Burke, on the contrary, denies that such a right exists in the nation, either in whole or in part, or that it exists anywhere; and, what is still more strange and marvellous, he says: "that the people of England utterly disclaim such a right, and that they will resist the practical assertion of it with their lives and fortunes." That men should take up arms and spend their lives and fortunes, not to maintain their rights, but to maintain they have not rights, is an entirely new species of discovery, and suited to the paradoxical genius of Mr. Burke.

The method which Mr. Burke takes to prove that the people of England have no such rights, and that such rights do not now exist in the nation, either in whole or in part, or anywhere at all, is of the same marvellous and monstrous kind with what he has already said; for his arguments are that the persons, or the generation of persons, in whom they did exist, are dead, and with them the right is dead also. To prove this, he quotes a declaration made by Parliament about a hundred years ago, to William and Mary, in these words: "The Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, do, in the name of the people aforesaid" (meaning the people of England then living) "most humbly and faithfully submit themselves, their heirs and posterities, for Ever." He quotes a clause of another Act of Parliament made in the same reign, the terms of which he says, "bind us" (meaning the people of their day), "our heirs and our posterity, to them, their heirs and posterity, to the end of time."

Mr. Burke conceives his point sufficiently established by producing those clauses, which he enforces by saying that they exclude the right of the nation for ever. And not yet content with making such declarations, repeated over and over again, he farther says, "that if the people of England possessed such a right before the Revolution" (which he acknowledges to have been the case, not only in England, but throughout Europe, at an early period), "yet that the English Nation did, at the time of the Revolution, most solemnly renounce and abdicate it, for themselves, and for all their posterity, for ever."

As Mr. Burke occasionally applies the poison drawn from his horrid principles, not only to the English nation, but to the French Revolution and the National Assembly, and charges that august, illuminated and illuminating body of men with the epithet of usurpers, I shall, sans ceremonie, place another system of principles in opposition to his.

The English Parliament of 1688 did a certain thing, which, for themselves and their constituents, they had a right to do, and which it appeared right should be done. But, in addition to this right, which they possessed by delegation, they set up another right by assumption, that of binding and controlling posterity to the end of

time. The case, therefore, divides itself into two parts; the right which they possessed by delegation, and the right which they set up by assumption. The first is admitted; but with respect to the second, I reply There never did, there never will, and there never can, exist a Parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity to the "end of time," or of commanding for ever how the world shall be governed, or who shall govern it; and therefore all such clauses, acts or declarations by which the makers of them attempt to do what they have neither the right nor the power to do, nor the power to execute, are in themselves null and void. Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself in all cases as the age and generations which preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow. The Parliament or the people of 1688, or of any other period, had no more right to dispose of the people of the present day, or to bind or to control them in any shape whatever, than the parliament or the people of the present day have to dispose of, bind or control those who are to live a hundred or a thousand years hence. Every generation is, and must be, competent to all the purposes which its occasions require. It is the living, and not the dead, that are to be accommodated. When man ceases to be, his power and his wants cease with him; and having no longer any participation in the concerns of this world, he has no longer any authority in directing who shall be its governors, or how its government shall be organised, or how administered.

I am not contending for nor against any form of government, nor for nor against any party, here or elsewhere. That which a whole nation chooses to do it has a right to do. Mr. Burke says, No. Where, then, does the right exist? I am contending for the rights of the living, and against their being willed away and controlled and contracted for by the manuscript assumed authority of the dead, and Mr. Burke is contending for the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living. There was a time when kings disposed of their crowns by will upon their death-beds, and consigned the people, like beasts of the field, to whatever successor they appointed. This is now so exploded as scarcely to be remembered, and so monstrous as hardly to be believed. But the Parliamentary clauses upon which Mr. Burke builds his political church are of the same nature.

The laws of every country must be analogous to some common principle. In England no parent or master, nor all the authority of Parliament, omnipotent as it has called itself, can bind or control the personal freedom even of an individual beyond the age of twenty-one years. On what ground of right, then, could the Parliament of 1688, or any other Parliament, bind all posterity for ever?

Those who have quitted the world, and those who have not yet arrived at it, are as remote from each other as the utmost stretch of mortal imagination can conceive. What possible obligation, then, can exist between them- what rule or principle can be laid down that of two nonentities, the one out of existence and the other not in, and who never can meet in this world, the one should control the other to the end of time?

In England it is said that money cannot be taken out of the pockets of the people without their consent. But who authorised, or who could authorise, the Parliament of 1688 to control and take away the freedom of posterity (who were not in existence to give or to withhold their consent) and limit and confine their right of acting in certain cases for ever?

A greater absurdity cannot present itself to the understanding of man than what Mr. Burke offers to his readers. He tells them, and he tells the world to come, that a certain body of men who existed a hundred years ago made a law, and that there does not exist in the nation, nor ever will, nor ever can, a power to alter it. Under how many subtleties or absurdities has the divine right to govern been imposed on the credulity of mankind? Mr. Burke has discovered a new one, and he has shortened his journey to Rome by appealing to the power of this infallible Parliament of former days, and he produces what it has done as of divine authority, for that power must certainly be more than human which no human power to the end of time can alter.

But Mr. Burke has done some service- not to his cause, but to his country- by bringing those clauses into public view. They serve to demonstrate how necessary it is at all times to watch against the attempted

encroachment of power, and to prevent its running to excess. It is somewhat extraordinary that the offence for which James II. was expelled, that of setting up power by assumption, should be re-acted, under another shape and form, by the Parliament that expelled him. It shows that the Rights of Man were but imperfectly understood at the Revolution, for certain it is that the right which that Parliament set up by assumption (for by the delegation it had not, and could not have it, because none could give it) over the persons and freedom of posterity for ever was of the same tyrannical unfounded kind which James attempted to set up over the Parliament and the nation, and for which he was expelled. The only difference is (for in principle they differ not) that the one was an usurper over living, and the other over the unborn; and as the one has no better authority to stand upon than the other, both of them must be equally null and void, and of no effect.

From what, or from whence, does Mr. Burke prove the right of any human power to bind posterity for ever? He has produced his clauses, but he must produce also his proofs that such a right existed, and show how it existed. If it ever existed it must now exist, for whatever appertains to the nature of man cannot be annihilated by man. It is the nature of man to die, and he will continue to die as long as he continues to be born. But Mr. Burke has set up a sort of political Adam, in whom all posterity are bound for ever. He must, therefore, prove that his Adam possessed such a power, or such a right.

The weaker any cord is, the less will it bear to be stretched, and the worse is the policy to stretch it, unless it is intended to break it. Had anyone proposed the overthrow of Mr. Burke's positions, he would have proceeded as Mr. Burke has done. He would have magnified the authorities, on purpose to have called the right of them into question; and the instant the question of right was started, the authorities must have been given up.

It requires but a very small glance of thought to perceive that although laws made in one generation often continue in force through succeeding generations, yet they continue to derive their force from the consent of the living. A law not repealed continues in force, not because it cannot be repealed, but because it is not repealed; and the non-repealing passes for consent.

But Mr. Burke's clauses have not even this qualification in their favour. They become null, by attempting to become immortal. The nature of them precludes consent. They destroy the right which they might have, by grounding it on a right which they cannot have. Immortal power is not a human right, and therefore cannot be a right of Parliament. The Parliament of 1688 might as well have passed an act to have authorised themselves to live for ever, as to make their authority live for ever. All, therefore, that can be said of those clauses is that they are a formality of words, of as much import as if those who used them had addressed a congratulation to themselves, and in the oriental style of antiquity had said: O Parliament, live for ever!

The circumstances of the world are continually changing, and the opinions of men change also; and as government is for the living, and not for the dead, it is the living only that has any right in it. That which may be thought right and found convenient in one age may be thought wrong and found inconvenient in another. In such cases, who is to decide, the living or the dead?

As almost one hundred pages of Mr. Burke's book are employed upon these clauses, it will consequently follow that if the clauses themselves, so far as they set up an assumed usurped dominion over posterity for ever, are unauthoritative, and in their nature null and void; that all his voluminous inferences, and declamation drawn therefrom, or founded thereon, are null and void also; and on this ground I rest the matter.

We now come more particularly to the affairs of France. Mr. Burke's book has the appearance of being written as instruction to the French nation; but if I may permit myself the use of an extravagant metaphor, suited to the extravagance of the case, it is darkness attempting to illuminate light.

While I am writing this there are accidentally before me some proposals for a declaration of rights by the Marquis de la Fayette (I ask his pardon for using his former address, and do it only for distinction's sake) to the National Assembly, on the 11th of July, 1789, three days before the taking of the Bastille, and I cannot but