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The mischiefs arising to private persons from these vile disturbers of the commonwealth are too many to be enumerated. The great and innocent are insulted by the scum and refuse of the people. Several poor wretches, who have engaged in these commotions, have been disabled, for their lives, from doing any good to their families and dependents; nay, several of them have fallen a sacrifice to their own inexcusable folly and madness. Should the government be wearied out of its present patience and forbearance, and forced to execute all those powers with which it is invested for the preservation of the publick peace; what is to be expected by such heaps of turbulent and seditious men!

These and the like considerations, though they may have no influence on the headstrong unruly multitude, ought to sink into the minds of those who are their abettors, and who, if they escape the punishment here due to them, must very well know that these several mischiefs will be one day laid to their charge.

N^o 51. *Friday, June 15.*

Quod si in hoc erro, libenter erro; nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. Cicer.

AS there is nothing which more improves the mind of man, than the reading of ancient Authors, when it is done with judgment and discretion; so there is nothing which gives a more unlucky turn to the thoughts of a Reader, when he wants discernment, and loves and admires the characters and actions of men in a wrong place. *Alexander the Great* was so inflamed with false notions of glory, by reading the story of *Achilles* in the *Iliad*, that after having taken a town, he ordered the Governor, who had made a gallant defence, to be bound by the feet to his chariot, and afterwards dragged the brave man round the city, because *Hector* had been treated in the same barbarous manner by his admired hero.

Many *Englishmen* have proved very pernicious to their own country, by following blindly the examples of persons to be met with in *Greek* and

and *Roman* history, who acted in conformity with their own governments, after a quite different manner, than they would have acted in a constitution like that of ours. Such a method of proceeding is as unreasonable in a politician, as it would be in a husbandman to make use of *Virgil's* precepts of agriculture, in managing the soil of our country, that lies in a quite different climate, and under the influence of almost another Sun.

Our regicides in the commission of the most execrable murder used to justify themselves from the conduct of *Brutus*, not considering that *Cæsar*, from the condition of a fellow-citizen, had risen by the most indirect methods, and broken through all the laws of the community, to place himself at the head of the government, and enslave his country. On the other side, several of our *English* Readers, having observed that a passive and unlimited obedience was payed to *Roman* Emperors, who were possessed of the whole legislative, as well as executive power, have formerly endeavoured to inculcate the same kind of obedience, where there is not the same kind of authority.

Instructions therefore to be learned from histories of this nature, are only such as arise from particulars agreeable to all communities, or from such as are common to our own constitution, and to that of which we read. A tenacious adherence to the rights and liberties transmitted from a wise and virtuous ancestry, publick spirit and a love of one's country, submission to established laws, impartial administrations of justice, a strict regard to national faith, with several other duties, which are the supports and ornaments of government in general, cannot be too much admired among the States of *Greece* and *Rome*, nor too much imitated by our own community.

But there is nothing more absurd, than for men, who are conversant in these ancient Authors, to contract such a prejudice in favour of *Greeks* and *Romans*, as to fancy we are in the wrong in every circumstance whereby we deviate from their moral or political conduct. Yet nothing hath been more usual, than for men of warm heads to refine themselves up into this kind of State-pedantry: like the country school-master, who, being used for many years to admire *Jupiter*, *Mars*, *Bacchus* and *Apollo*, that appear with so much advantage in classick Authors, made an attempt to revive the worship of the heathen gods. In short, we find many worthy Gentlemen, whose brains have been as much turned by this kind of reading, as the grave Knight's of *Mancha* were by his unwearied application to books of Knight-errantry.

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To prevent such mischiefs from arising out of studies, which, when rightly conducted, may turn very much to our advantage, I shall venture to assert, that in our perusal of *Greek* or *Roman* Authors, it is impossible to find a religious or civil constitution, any way comparable to that which we enjoy in our own country. Had not our religion been infinitely preferable to that of the ancient heathens, it would never have made its way through Paganism, with that amazing progress and activity. Its victories were the victories of reason unassisted by the force of human power, and as gentle as the triumphs of light over darkness. The sudden reformation which it made among mankind, and which was so justly and frequently boasted of by the first apologists for Christianity, shews how infinitely preferable it is to any system of religion, that prevailed in the world before its appearance. This pre-eminence of Christianity to any other general religious scheme, which preceded it, appears likewise from this particular, that the most eminent and the most enlightened among the Pagan Philosophers disclaimed many of those superstitious follies, which are condemned by revealed religion, and preached up several of those doctrines which are some of the most essential parts of it.

And here I cannot but take notice of that strange motive which is made use of in the history of free-thinking, to incline us to depart from the revealed doctrines of Christianity, as adhered to by the people of *Great-Britain*, because *Socrates*, with several other eminent *Greeks*, and *Cicero*, with many other learned *Romans*, did in the like manner depart from the religious notions of their own country-men. Now this Author should have considered, that those very points, in which these wise men disagreed from the bulk of the people, are points in which they agreed with the received doctrines of our nation. Their free-thinking consisted in asserting the unity and immateriality of the Godhead, the immortality of the soul, a state of future rewards and punishments, and the necessity of virtue, exclusive of all silly and superstitious practices, to procure the happiness of a separate state. They were therefore only free-thinkers, so far forth as they approached to the doctrines of Christianity, that is, to those very doctrines which this kind of Authors would persuade us, as Free-thinkers, to doubt the truth of. Now I would appeal to any reasonable person, whether these great men should not have been proposed to our imitation, rather as they embraced these divine truths, than only upon the account of their breaking loose from the common notions of their fellow-citizens. But this would disappoint the general tendency of such writings.

I shall only add under this head, that as Christianity recovered the law of nature out of all those errors and corruptions, with which it is overgrown in the times of Paganism, our national religion has restored Christianity it self to that purity and simplicity in which it appeared, before it was gradually disguised and lost among the vanities and superstitions of the *Romish* Church.

That our civil constitution is preferable to any among the *Greeks* or *Romans*, may appear from this single consideration; that the greatest Theorists in matters of this nature, among those very people, have given the preference to such a form of government, as that which obtains in this kingdom, above any other form whatsoever. I shall mention *Aristotle*, *Polybius* and *Cicero*, that is, the greatest Philosopher, the most impartial Historian, and the most consummate Statesman of all antiquity. These famous Authors give the pre-eminence to a mixed government consisting of three branches, the regal, the noble, and the popular. It would be very easy to prove, not only the reasonableness of this position, but to shew, that there was never any constitution among the *Greeks* or *Romans*, in which these three branches were so well distinguished from each other, invested with such suitable proportions of power, and concurred together in the legislature, that is, in the most sovereign acts of government, with such a necessary consent and harmony, as are to be met with in the constitution of this kingdom. But I have observed, in a foregoing paper, how defective the *Roman* commonwealth was in this particular, when compared with our own form of government, and it will not be difficult for the Reader, upon singling out any other ancient State; to find how far it will suffer in the parallel.



Monday,