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**The Works Of the late Right Honorable Henry St. John,
Lord Viscount Bolingbroke**

In Five Volumes, complete.

Bolingbroke, Henry St. John

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XII.

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to the throne, and maintained them in it. The power of making laws was so far from being originally, and exclusively, annexed to monarchy, tho it sometimes made monarchs, that DRACO, who never was one, imposed his laws, which were said to be writ in blood because of their extreme severity, on the Athenians; that SOLON, who never would be one, repealed these laws, and established others; and that PISISTRATUS, who made himself one, far from repealing those of SOLON, governed by them. The first kings were limited monarchs. They earned the sovereignty by great and good actions, held it from their people, and were accountable to their people for the exercise of it. Such I mean as came to their crowns by consent, and in countries where common utility united families in civil society, and neither conquest nor the fear of it.

XII.

THE attempts which so many learned and ingenious men have made, with infinite labor of study, to fix points of chronology and history concerning antient nations, that of the Egyptians particularly, have seemed to me, ever since I knew what they are, extremely ridiculous. They have seemed so the more, because some general and useful truths may be collected, without any trouble, from the broken and fabulous materials they employ with so much trouble, and to so little useful purpose. The original of the Egyptians and the order of their dynasties will never be known. The most antient traditions, sacred and prophane, supposing them all authentic, would be still insufficient for this end. But they are sufficient for another. They shew us the nature of government, and the character of mankind, in those early ages. They shew us the first kings, and the primitive government of Egypt, such as I have described; and such they continued to be as

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long as their gods reigned, that is, as long as their kings pursued the true ends of their institution, and made their glory consist in the good government of their own people, not in the conquest of others*. OSIRIS and ISIS civilised their manners, and taught them to sow corn and to plant the vine. The first MERCURY taught them the use of letters, instructed them in the sciences, and in arts, in that of physic especially, both for the body and the mind, and was, besides, their first or greatest legislator. Other MERCURIES succeeded THOT. COTTA makes them five in all †. These explained the hieroglyphics of the first, improved on what he had taught in six and thirty thousand volumes or rolls, as some legends affirm, and completed that wisdom of the Egyptians wherein MOSES was instructed; for no man, except a few, will believe that the daughter of PHARAOH sent into Greece to procure preceptors for her foundling.

THE Egyptians were little known to the Greeks, from whom all our knowledge of them is derived, till the reign of PSAMMETICHUS, much more than a thousand years after the dynasties of their gods, and their golden age, as we may call it; and yet even then, the first principles of good policy and of a limited monarchy subsisted. They pierced thro various revolutions of government, and maintained themselves in reverence during an immense number of years. The same thing has happened, and by the same means, among the Chinese, whom I might have quoted for the same purpose as I quote the former; since their empire began as early, has lasted near three thousand years longer, and resembles that of Egypt in many respects; in these particularly, in a great reverence for antiquity, in a strong attachment to those primitive institutions

* Fines imperii tueri, magis quam proferre, mos erat. Intra suam cuique patriam regna finiebantur. Just. ubi supra. † Apud CICER. de Nat. Deor.

by which the order of their government has been preserved, their monarchs, how absolute soever they may appear, have been restrained in the exercise of their power.

Now these governments, like all others which men have instituted, and to which they have submitted by consent, tho they are artificial, are however instituted by virtue of the law of our nature, and are, in this sense, of divine appointment. That sovereignty, or supremacy, for such it may be called in a true sense, which was at first in fathers of families, not for their sakes, but for the sake of their offspring, and the propagation of the human species, belongs to one sovereign or supreme magistrate; to more than one, to the collective or representative body of the people; and sometimes to all these, according to the various constitutions of civil governments, which were indifferent before they were made, but cease to be so, and are obligatory on every member of the community, afterwards. There must be an absolute power in every civil society placed somewhere. As it is placed in one man, or in more, a monarchy arises, or an aristocracy, or a democracy: and, when it is divided between all these, a mixed government, which is, I presume, the best of the four. By this representation, so evidently true that no man who is in his wits can doubt of it, we may learn to despise and abhor certain venal or stupid writers in favor of monarchy. Some of these would persuade, like FILMER, that ADAM was an absolute monarch by creation; that his right has descended to kings; that all other men are slaves by birth, and never had a right to choose either forms of government or governors. Some again would persuade, like HORNIUS, whom PUFFENDORF* cites and refutes, that altho men have a right to make co-

* Lib. vii. c. 3.

venants and constitute civil governments, they have no power to confer sovereignty on princes. They may choose a king to govern them, that is, they may name a person on whom this sovereignty, this majesty, this power to govern which they cannot give, will descend, by a sort of divine emanation, from God, who can alone give them. FILMER's hypothesis will be always lame as well as absurd, till ADAM's right heirs, for all other princes are by this hypothesis no better than usurpers, can be certainly distinguished. They would be so by HARRY MARTIN's expedient, if they were born with combs on their heads, and every other man with a bunch on his back. But nothing of this kind has yet appeared among the phaenomena of nature, and till it does we must content ourselves to acknowledge such kings as we have. The hypothesis of HORNIUS does not expose us to the same uncertainty, and we may know our king by much the same rule by which the Tartarians know their god. When a king is chosen, sovereignty and majesty descend immediately upon him, and he is completely a king. When a great lama is chosen, the soul of FOE enters immediately into him, and he is completely a god. There are many more foolish and knavish hypotheses of the same kind; and the principal promoters of them, in every country, have been the clergy, whose flattery to princes had well nigh succeeded among us, so as to make the cause of tyranny, what it has been, and still continues to be made in other nations, the cause of God. But tho we believe that monarchy was the first form of civil government, and that paternal government might lead men to it; yet may we believe very consistently, and we must believe unless we resolve to believe against fact and reason both, that this, like every other form of government, is of human institution, established by the people, and for the people; and that no other majesty, since the word imposes so much, is inherent in it than that which belongs
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to the supreme power of every state, wherever that power is placed. Natural government was designed to last, and did last, till civil government became necessary. Nature instituted one, and directed human reason to the other. She meant the same in both cases, the good of the governed. Her institution and her direction could not have different ends. She intended, no doubt, that they who had been treated like children, under the influence of instinct, should be treated so likewise, under the influence of reason.

XIII.

I HAVE said thus much, in order to shew that political societies grew out of natural, and that civil governments were formed not by the concurrence of individuals, but by the associations of families. It is the more necessary to repeat and to inculcate this distinction, because, for want of making it, and by representing mankind to themselves like a number of savage individuals out of all society in their natural state, instead of considering them as members of families from their birth, and such too long to be at any time the solitary vagabonds of the other hypothesis, our best writers, even Mr. HOOKER, and much more Mr. LOCKE, have reasoned both inconsistently, and on a false foundation. Inconsistently, because they sometimes acknowledge paternal government to have preceded civil, and yet reason about the institution of civil, as if men had been then first assembled in any kind of society, or had been subject to any kind of rule; for to say that the law of nature was of itself such a rule, and that every one of these independent inhabitants of the earth did, or might exercise justice for himself and others, on those who violated this law, was language unworthy of Mr. LOCKE, and unnecessary