

the French one and to secure their own station in the new state of things. But the task was not so easy to perform as they thought. The ferment already begun was by them too far encouraged and produced the same effect which is seen in every effervescence. The dregs in dissolution are in disorderly motion. They ascend and descend in succession. Some rising too high are thrown out, others remain within bounds and keep floating in the liquors, whilst others fall again and resume their proper station at the bottom. And thus we have a true image of the French revolution.

In a work like this a strict adherence to chronological regularity cannot be expected nor required. I write from reminiscence only, notes taken by me at the time I am speaking of have been lost in a shipwreck which will be related in its proper place. Besides it is my own life which I have promised and not the history of my times, and I have announced that it was the frame in which I intended to introduce my own opinions and the reflections that events such as present themselves to my memory may suggest. After, therefore, having brought upon the stage some of the most conspicuous characters of the times and circumstances here under review, let it be permitted me to revert for a moment to myself, and to ask what were then my individual and political opinions?

I was then arrived to that age that substitutes rational and manly pursuits to the exclusive allurements of pleasure. I had been absent from France for more than ten years, more than one I had spent at different times in England, about two in Holland and the rest in Prussia. I have already said that my youthful days were rather dedicated to pleasure and to the avocations of my situations than to the study of man and of his motives of actions. I sincerely loved man, in which woman too is included and not for a small share. In my two first residences in London which were in the greatest heat of the American war\* I was intimately acquainted with the respectable family of the three Brothers Sharp, with Dr. John Jebb and with the celebrated Thos. Holcroft. Too young then to have adopted fixed political principles it is natural to believe that the persons with whom I then associated

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\* In the latter end of 1779 and in 1781.