

air, no fire, no water, because these natural sources of general felicity may accidentally become instruments of partial calamity.

He who peruses with attention the works of those foreigners, who for the last seventy or eighty years have written against revealed or natural religion, and compares them with the writings of our English deists towards the end of the last, and the beginning or middle of the present century, will perceive that the former have borrowed all their arguments and objections from the latter; he will perceive also, that they are far inferior to them in learning and acuteness, but that they surpass them in ridicule, in audacity, in blasphemy, in misrepresentation, in all the miserable arts by which men are wont to defend a bad cause: they surpass them too in their mischievous endeavors to disseminate their principles among those who, from their education, are least qualified to refute their sophistry.

Justly may we call their reasoning sophistry, since it was not able to convince even themselves. One of the most eminent of them (Voltaire,) who had been a theist, a materialist, a disbeliever of a future state all his days, asked with evident anxiety a few years before his death, Is there a God such as men speak of? Is there a soul such as people imagine? Is there any thing to hope for after death? He seems to have been consistent in nothing, but in his hatred of that gospel which would have enlightened the obscurity in which he was involved, and at once dissipated all his doubts. As to his notions of government, he appears to have been as unsettled in them as in his religious sentiments; for though he had been one of the most zealous apostles of liberty and equality, though he had attacked monarchical governments in all his writings with great bitterness, yet he at last confessed to one of the greatest princes then in Europe, "that he did not love the government of the lowest orders—that he did not wish the re-establishment of Athenian democracy."