

I am inclined to think the application of theory to matters of government, a surprizing imbecility in the human mind; for men to be ready to trust to reason in enquiries where experiment is equally at hand for their guide, has been pronounced by various great authorities to be in every other science the grossest folly—why the observation should not equally extend to the science of legislation, will not easily appear.

My personal pursuit for a long series of years has confirmed me in the habit of experimental enquiry: I have observed on so many occasions the fallacy of reasoning, even when exerted with great force of talents, that I am apt, whenever facts are not clearly discerned, to question rather than decide; to doubt much readier than to deliberate; and to value the citation of one new experimented case in point, more than an hundred brilliant declamations. Having resided a good deal in France during the progress of the Revolution, to which I was, for some time, a warm friend; having passed through every province of the kingdom; examined all her principal manufactures; gained much instruction relative to the state of her commerce, and attended minutely to the situation of her people, it was natural on my return to England to consult with attention the legislative acts of the new government, and to procure by correspondence and conversation, with persons on whom I could depend, such intelligence as was necessary to enable me to satisfy my curiosity concerning the result of the most singular Revolution recorded in the annals of mankind. I should consider myself as a bad subject of Britain, if I did not use every endeavour to render the knowledge thus acquired, of use to my countrymen; and it is solely with this view that I now throw together a few short essays, inserted originally in the Annals of Agriculture, somewhat improved in form, and with such additions as the events of the period afford.

But in attempting to give expressions inadequate to the indignation every one must feel at the horrible events now passing in France, I am sensible that I may be reproached with changing my politics, my "principles," as it has been expressed.—My principles I certainly have not changed, because if there is one principle more predominant than another in my politics, it is the *principle of change*. I have been too  
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