

MAN's advancement either in vice or in virtue is gradual; when he commences his vicious career his transgressions are of an inferior class; and in this stage of his progress, he will contemplate with horror the enormities, which, afterwards, as he becomes habituated with vice, he will commit without compunction. Just so it is with the man who brings himself to disregard the Law; he first commences his resistance to those legal regulations which the exigencies of society require to restrain men's actions, as to things which otherwise would not be contrary to the rules of natural law: this resistance commences under the idea that such regulations are an infringement on the common rights of man: but he who can thus reconcile himself to transgress positive law, will not stop here: he will soon find an excuse for transgressing those Laws which prohibit us from doing to others what we would not wish done to ourselves. No part of the legal code is so often violated as the fiscal department. The exigencies of every Government require a revenue, which many persons, who are incapable of forming a just estimate of right and wrong, evade, and, by suffering themselves to be guided by an imaginary interest, consider their contrivance to withhold their share of the public contribution as of little importance in a moral sense; but the person who can reconcile himself to an offence of this sort, will, with equal facility, justify his impositions on the fair trader, as well as the innocent customer, and by exacting duties from the consumer, which he has never paid, he deceives himself with the hope of speedily increasing his fortune by dishonest and dishonorable means. This man seldom stops in his career, until he has ruined both character and reputation; perjury, and subornation of perjury, are crimes which he cannot avoid, and it becomes a necessary consequence that, by bribery, (or, perhaps, worse means) he is obliged to corrupt the principles of all those whom he employs; he soon acquires a degree of depravity that sets the Laws of God and Man at defiance, and in time he has recourse to violence which too often closes the scene with murder, robbery, and the whole catalogue of capital felonies. No person who has been long acquainted with America can be ignorant of the evil consequences which smuggling has produced. British subjects have less excuse than any other people for crimes of this sort. Under the British Constitution, the revenue is provided by Laws, in the formation of which the people claim an almost exclusive right; he therefore who holds the privileges we enjoy as British Subjects in estimation, is bound not only to obey the Law himself, but it is his duty by every exertion in his power to compel others to observe the same rule. No reasoning, however specious, should be admitted as an excuse, whether the Law is good or bad, convenient or inconvenient, all the King's Subjects are bound to pay obedience to it; remembering always that they had a share in making it, and that whatever may be the evil consequences of its operation, they must be trifling when compared to the mischiefs that would certainly follow the open and avowed disregard of an existing Law. It is the lot of the wisest and best of us to err, and the wisdom of our Constitution, contemplating the imperfection of human understanding, has made ample provision for correcting the errors of its Legislature, by the frequent assembling of that omnipotent power, which precludes the possibility of any great or material evil resulting from an unwise or improvident Law, as the repeal of it would necessarily and speedily follow the discovery of its inconvenience. I hope it will not be considered improper in me, here to observe, that an opinion has been too prevalent in America, that the power of Government should be as little felt as possible in a new country; this has caused the maxim of not governing too much to be abused, and has produced the positive fault of governing too little. If I may be allowed, I will ask the question, whether any man can believe that the child which has never been compelled to yield to the authority of a parent during his minority, will submit to be governed by a father's will after he shall attain the age of maturity? or is it necessary I should undertake to convince a rational being of the wickedness of the opinion which has been zealously contended for by modern philosophers, that a man in his infant state, should be taught nothing but what his reason can comprehend, and should be left until he attains his maturity without the influence