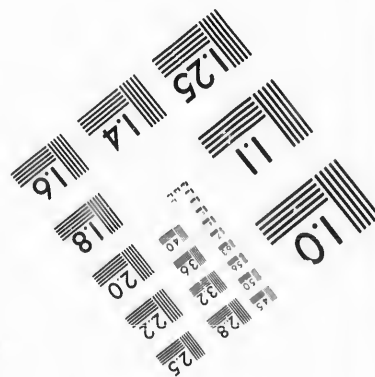
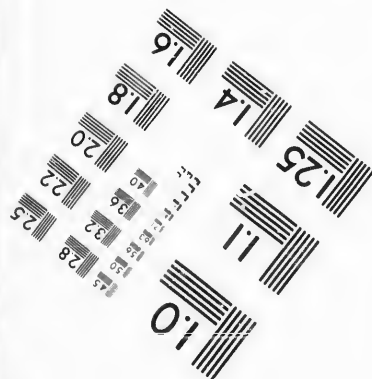
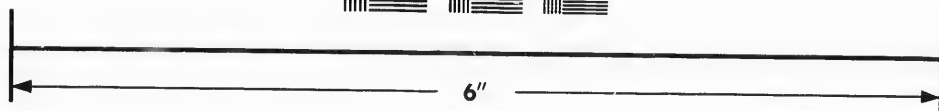
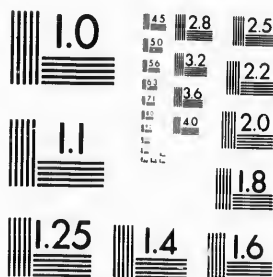


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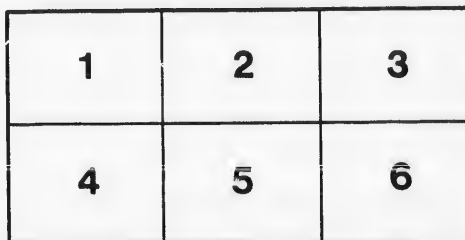
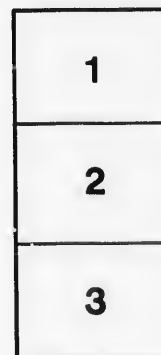
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THE
PERILS OF THE TIME,
AND THE
PURPOSES FOR WHICH THEY ARE APPOINTED.

A
SERMON,
PREACHED
On the last Sabbath of the Year 1794,
AND
PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.

By ANDREW BROWN, D.D.
MINISTER OF THE PROTESTANT DISSIDENTING CONGREGATION OF
HALIFAX.

HALIFAX:
PRINTED BY HOWE AND M'KINSTRY, CORNER OF GEORGE AND
BARRINGTON STREETS, OPPOSITE THE PARADE.
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TO THE HONOURABLE

THOMAS ANDREW STRANGE,

*Chief-Justice of His Majesty's Province, and President of
His Majesty's Council of Nova-Scotia, &c. &c. &c.*

SIR,

IN delivering the following Sermon to the press, at the desire of a loyal and generous Congregation, I embrace, with heart-felt pleasure, the public opportunity afforded me of expressing my affection for your person and character.

MOTIVES of esteem and sentiments of gratitude, have prompted me to inscribe with your name, a discourse, the object of which is to expose the evils of anarchy, and to concur with divine providence in maintaining the great cause of religion, government and order. But had not these personal considerations determined my choice, the unanimous voice of an approving people would most certainly have directed me to offer that tribute to the present Chief-Justice of Nova-Scotia, whose ability in expounding our laws can only be equalled by his impartiality and firmness in applying them ; whose administration has repressed the spirit of litigation, shortened the duration of suits, and made a happy Province feel, in the most sensible manner, the benign influence of the British Constitution, and the glorious security of English law.

IN an age that peculiarly needs the weight and authority of religious example, Christianity is pleased to rank you,

with the Hales and Talbots of former times, among the Select Band of her enlightened Friends. Amidst the scoffings of infidelity, the acquisition of such a disciple is a consolation and a triumph. Your professional habits give a pledge to the public that you have embraced the Gospel on mature examination of its evidence, and a rational conviction of its truth; while the incorruptibility of your heart assures us that no secondary considerations mingle with your piety, or affect your observance of religious duty.

With the purest regard,

I have the honor to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

ANDREW BROWN,

HALIFAX, Jan. 1, 1795.

HALIFAX, December 31, 1794.

REVEREND SIR,

WE, the Elders and Committee of the Protestant Dissenting Church, sensible of the duty incumbent on all men to notice the dealings of Divine Providence towards them, more especially in those seasons when great commotions prevail in the world, to trace their causes with becoming submission to the Divine Will, as far as may be consistent with that humility which ought to distinguish the Christian from the mere philosophic enquirer; and to improve such direful events as have so lately disturbed the peace and repose of Christendom to the furtherance and support of piety and virtue: Having heard with great satisfaction your Sermon on the last Lord's Day—wherein the occurrences of these later days, with the consequences actually flowing from them, and those which may be yet apprehended, were stated and improved to the support of Christian Morality; and conceiving that the publication of that Discourse might prove useful: Do, therefore, in behalf of ourselves and the Congregation at large, request the favor of your consent to it's being published, and, in order thereto, hope you will indulge us with a Copy for the Press.

We are,

Reverend Sir,

Your faithful Friends

and obedient humble Servants,

BENJAMIN SALTER
THOMAS AUSTEN
WILLIAM ANNAND
ALEX. BREMNER
WILLIAM DUFFUS
GEORGE GRASSIE
THOMAS FILLIS

COMMITTEE.

JOHN BROWN
BENJAMIN BRIDGE
ADAM FIFE
PETER M'NAB

ELDERS.

Reverend Dr. ANDREW BROWN.

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S E R M O N.

II TIM. iii. 1.

THIS KNOW ALSO, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS
TIMES SHALL COME.

IN the ordinary course of things time steals away un-
heeded. The occurrence of the hour engages atten-
tion, the laws of nature operate in silence, and seasons
revolve without reminding us that the year is on the wing.

Yet there are stated periods and particular days which
call us to consider the unceasing progress of time, the rapi-
dity of its departure, and the events it has brought to matu-
rity. In the successions of duration whatever term is set
apart to an appropriate purpose, and returns at a given sea-
son, becomes remarkable and interesting. It rouses us from
our usual state of indifference, and is productive of serious
thought. Such is the conclusion of one year, and the
commencement of another. For as in common life we
cannot take a last leave of an old acquaintance without a
mixture of melancholy and regret, however carelessly we
may have met and parted in the daily intercourse of society;
so however inattentive we may have been to the smaller
portions of the year, we cannot bid farewell to the year
itself

itself without emotion. At the approach of its last day the mind is awakened: We reflect that so many more of our appointed months are past, and cannot be recalled; that hopes and fears, pleasures and pains, once interesting, are gone forever; that our probationary state is so much nearer its conclusion; and that we are about to enter on an untried being, concerning which our experience can give us no definite information.

Throughout the Christian world, this season of the year is particularly hallowed from the relation it bears to the birth and appearance of the Saviour of men. Hence to that spirit of social festivity, which has probably been derived from the ancient saturnalia, it has been customary, in many churches, to add pious celebrations commemorative of the happy æra of the Messiah's reign, and to encourage charitable collections, as most expressive of the rational and beneficent joy of Christian worship. In all religious communities some notice is taken of the memorable events which distinguish this annual epoch, of the reflections which the peculiar aspect of the times is fitted to produce, and of the lessons of instruction it ought to inculcate. During my ministry I have not been inattentive to the influence of times and associations on the human mind. In former sermons at this season, I have recounted the signal revelations which past years have accomplished, dwelling with devout joy on the fulness of time which witnessed the Saviour's incarnation, and listened to the song of the angels in the fields of Bethlehem. At this season I have also preached on the unceasing flux of earthly things, on the shortness and uncertainty of human life, on the importance
of

of our spiritual interest, and the solemn warning given us by the expiring year to be mindful of our end.

On this last sabbath of another year, when a dark cloud overspreads the earth I purpose to lead your thoughts to the perils to which the cause of religion, government and mankind is exposed in the present conflict of nations, parties and opinions.

The discussion of political interests and of the factions of the world, it is true, belongs not to the pulpit of the Christian minister; and you will bear me witness, that I have not often allowed public transactions to give a colouring to religious instruction. Disapproving, as I do in general, of the practice of political preaching, the news of yesterday, the passions of to-day; and the hopes and fears of to-morrow, have been industriously excluded from this sacred place. The doctrines and duties of the Gospel of peace, those eternal truths of immutable obligation, that can give birth to no diversity of sentiment, and are wholly of a practical nature, form the subjects of our meditation in the house of prayer; and by animating you to acquit yourselves as candidates for heaven, I have hoped to be able to guide you to a virtuous and manly conduct in your public and private stations on the earth.

Nevertheless, an occasional and dispassionate consideration of the affairs of the world, as ordered by God for the correction and instruction of the nations, can scarcely be represented as incompatible with the spirit of Christian worship, or the object of religious instruction. From the magnitude of the interests which they involve, the present times challenge particular notice; and when so many mischievous arts are employed to poison the popular mind, the

exposed condition of their flocks, demands from Christian ministers whatever shall be thought necessary for information or conducive to safety.

In our remote situation and comparative insignificance in a political view, we may perhaps suppose that we are in no degree concerned in the general convulsions of the earth. Secure in this idea, many of us have possibly never turned our thoughts to the nature of the present war with the anarchy of France, or to the consequences that would inevitably follow the success or failure of the national arms. Yet surely a well informed judgment is always desirable in itself, and always of use for the regulation of conduct. The lowest of us too, ought to recollect that his interest is essentially concerned in the fate of his country, and that he must take his full share of her prosperity or adversity.

Let us then contemplate the object of the war still raging with unabated violence, that we may view it with proper sentiments; that we may offer our prayers to God for its termination with an understanding heart; and learn from the events we are witnessing, the lessons that they are calculated to teach.

To give our meditations on this subject a proper extent, I shall 1st. Endeavour to explain the peril of the times.

2dly. Point out the probable reasons for which God has made the times so perilous, and the moral effects which he intends them to produce.

After which I shall direct your attention to our own existing condition in this part of the Empire, as suggesting the devoutest sentiments of gratitude to our invisible, but beneficent Preserver.

1. Let

1. Let us consider the peril of the present times. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."

Engrossed with the objects that claim our attention, magnifying present interests, and regarding those dangers which threaten our repose as of extraordinary consequence to the world, we are always liable to err in applying particular prophecies to the age in which we live. Yet in assuming it as a fact, that the present times are perilous, and *that* in the fullest sense of the text with its illustrations, I am not afraid of incurring the reproach of perverting scripture by anyone who shall attend to the reasons on which this application of it is founded.

From a variety of causes however, men seem to be less alarmed at the present portentous aspect of human affairs, than the importance of the blessings now at stake can well justify. In part, no doubt, this culpable inattention to the signs of the times, arises from the ordinary apathy of human nature, and in part from a relaxed morality, a growing hardness of heart, and from certain peculiarities in the manner of representing the subsisting struggle between the nations, which have operated on public opinion with a most unhappy influence. But the peril of the times is only so much the more formidable, in proportion as its extent and proximity are not seen by the great body of mankind. A phial of wrath has been poured upon the nations, and well might the dispensing Angel, as the drops began to fall, cry woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth!

In our own case it may truly be said, that the present conflict is the most important in its principle, and will be the most decisive in its consequences of any national quarrel

that ever demanded the unanimity and vigour of Britons, since the foundation of the monarchy. Prior to its commencement, various circumstances had occurred to enlighten mankind on the subject of Civil Government, and to carry the spirit of liberty to a greater height than it had ever before attained. At the opening of their Revolution, the attentive world watched, with anxious expectation, the deliberations of the assembled Representatives of the French people. Even their hereditary enemies looked on with pleasure and approbation, while temper and wisdom ruled their councils, and led them in the path of moderation and justice to substantial reform. But the progress of their proceedings soon excited very different sentiments. Of these, however, it is neither my desire, nor compatible with my design, to give an historical detail. Suffice it here to observe, that having taken leave of reason, justice and liberty; having murdered their King, abjured their God, and subverted all the wise institutions of policy, which necessity and experience had contrived to ensure the stability of nations, the persons exercising the executive Government of France, declared their country in a state of permanent revolution, and let loose the incalculable force of a population of twenty-six millions, not to revenge or prevent injuries; not to reclaim rights detained by injustice, or to defend possessions invaded by the lust of dominion; but to propagate their political system, to enforce the approbation of their outrageous proceedings, and to reduce other nations to the same state of violence and misrule into which they had plunged their own.

This atrocious conduct necessarily sprang from the spirit of the new principles, which are incompatible with justice,
order

order and tranquility at home, and with the existence of any regular Government on the face of the earth. Yet with a Dæmon's purpose, the anarchy of France assumed an Angel's form. Affecting to be the assertor of universal freedom, it offered fraternity to an astonished world. Emboldened by the general sentiment of popular favour, which in the beginning had operated strongly on their side, the French levellers meditated the accomplishment of their nefarious designs by cajoling the good into a deceitful tranquillity, and employing the bad as instruments to strike a universal blow. Hence the leaders of the Convention placed their first dependence on the power of sophistry; and before they declared war against the nations which disapproved their measures, they resolved to seduce the great mass of the people to their party. For this purpose a legion of apostles was levied among the clubs, to preach the varying doctrines of Paris in all the languages of Europe; while the grand masters of false reasoning were put into a state of requisition to proclaim the age of anarchy from the pews. This plan of disseminating their politics embraced the whole community of mankind. They who could read learned the favoured system from books, and they who had only ears to hear were taught it by the assiduity of very zealous missionaries. When hostilities commenced, the same insidious arts were continued. With murder in their hearts and daggers in their hands, the French anarchists protested that they had no controversy with the people whom they attacked, but only with the tyranny of their rulers. Quitting the practice of fair war, and converting every appearance to their mischievous purposes, they represented the general combination of European

pean powers, which their unqualified attack on the existence and rights of every independent nation had produced, as a conspiracy of kings and despots against liberty, a confederacy of privileges and orders against reformation, and of opulence and feudal tenures against the establishment of equality and the rights of man.

Much has been spoken and written in proof of these positions, by the secret emissaries and avowed defenders of the French Revolution. And when we consider the natural attractions of their doctrines, the splendid, but deceitful colouring, of which they are susceptible, and their wonderful conformity to the desires and wishes of the poor, the unfortunate, and unprincipled of every country, it will cease to be a matter of just surprize, that they should have gained a multitude of converts, even in the bosom of the happiest government that ever blessed a people.

Yet the malignant design with which they were obtruded on the world, ought to have guarded mankind against their pernicious influence. By the specious sophistry of their bulletins, declarations and addresses, the French demagogues hoped to inspire their own people with the ardour of enthusiasm, and to persuade them that they were going forth, as the soldiers of liberty, to fight unwilling slaves, to rid the earth of oppression, and to confer blessings on the conquered. From the pamphlets of their emissaries they expected other effects not less important. They trusted that they would be successful, in exciting insurrections, and in ranging the governors and the governed on different sides in the progress of the dispute. The splendid professions, and shameless misrepresentations of the French
anarchists,

anarchists, ought therefore to be regarded as parts of the effective force, by which they endeavour to circumscribe the operations of their enemies, and to ensure the accomplishment of their own schemes of subversion.

For when considered in a just point of view, the present war can in no respect be called a war of kings, orders, or privileges, however much it may ultimately affect their existence. It is a war of just defence against uprovoked aggression, of order against confusion, of law against licentiousness, and of the good against the bad. Witness the patrons and promoters of the new doctrines throughout the world. The worthless and abandoned of every nation are now in arms, openly countenancing, or secretly abetting the Parisian system, not from a love to the French, but from the hope of renewing, in consequence of their success, those scenes of plunder and revenge in their own country, which have been the reward of their crimes. Hence this war involves our dearest rights, and every object that can make life either safe or desirable.

The danger of fair defeat on the field of battle, is the least of the evils with which it threatens us. *Our Constitution is in peril.* The favourite saying of the leaders of the Convention, that the Republic of France must perish, or the Monarchies of Europe come to an end with the century, announces, with sufficient precision, the danger to which, in this conflict, our national establishments are exposed. Were success to attend the arms and the machinations of anarchy, the ability of the French nation to assist those who profess the same principles, and worship the same idols in other countries, would be inconceivably increased; while on their part the desire of imitating a successful example would probably

bably be excited beyond the possibility of restraint. In such a case the attempt, at least, would be made, to introduce the system of equality into other countries, and to seize the spoils it offers to the hand of rapacity. Other Egalite's and other Mirabeau's, other Brissot's and other Condorcet's, other Robespierre's and other Danton's would lead on the gang of insurgents and assassins. Health and fraternity; proscription and the guillotine, would resound from shore to shore; and in other lands; as well as in France, the months would be marked with new days of carnage and mourning.

Religion is also staked on the issue of this conflict. If by the jealousy and disunion of the Allied Powers, and the disposition too apparent in some of them to count the expence of the war with a miser's niggardliness, France were to gain her meditated ascendancy in Europe, Christianity would be disgraced for a season. Every thing venerable would be denounced by the frantic orators of the day. The temples in which our fathers worshipped would be polluted by vile processions; and plundered of every precious monument, would either be thrown open to the winds and rains of heaven, or shut up in the gloominess of night. Nature, liberty, and the rights of man would be proclaimed as the divinities of the human race; or the still stranger gods of Robespierre: and the tenth day would again claim the unhallowed worship of a prostrate world; Secularized and dishonoured, the ministers of religion would be proscribed with the most unfeeling cruelty, and exposed without a refuge to all the misery of their fate,—as no generous government would remain to receive them to its bosom, to relieve their wants, and dry their tears, as the Gallican clergy found in Britain, on the day when their country thirsted for their blood.

In such a wreck, morals, order, and every salutary institution would inevitably perish. During the reign of anarchy, when the people, *i. e.* the unprincipled and sanguinary are supreme, the bonds of society are dissolved, and all the malignity of the passions rages without controul. The milk of human kindness is curdled by fear. Personal and party interests become the sole concern of each individual; and in pursuing them the most violent measures are always preferred, as being most safe and summary. In such a state of things there is neither security nor enjoyment. Every one stands on the brink of the precipice, and trembles for his life. This irritability of mind naturally tends to the increase of crimes. Pity is banished from the breast of the public actors. All must proceed to the utmost length in the service of their party. Life ceases to be an object of regard; death is inflicted on the suspected; and in the midst of apparent gaiety, a name, a sound, the watchword of the day, becomes the signal of assassination.

Such is the nature of this war, and such are the perils with which it is attended. It strikes not only at national independence, and at the existence of government, law and religion, but at the life and happiness of every individual of the human race. Hence, in a general view, it is not the war of one country more than another, but of the whole body of mankind. It is the war of every community that has either a civil establishment, a code of law, or a system of religious faith. It is the war of every good man, of every father, every brother, and every friend. Whoever has a talent, a property, or a comfort on the earth he would call his own, has an interest in this war. Upon the result of it, the peace of the present and the hopes of the next generation greatly depend

depend. And yet, in the midst of this common peril, many nations appear to be quite unconcerned; while some, misled by false principles of policy, or a fordid regard for self interest, most preposterously cherish in their bosom, the serpent that will sting them to the heart.*

2. From

* Seeking no prophetic passages in the books I consult, I pay very little attention to random guesses respecting the future. Yet at the distance of Nova-Scotia, and in a moment of anxiety with regard to the turn which public opinion might take in Great-Britain, I read, with painful emotion, the following paragraph in a sermon of Archbishop Tillotson, on John xii. 35—"Walk while ye have the light; lest darkness come upon you." "I remember," says that accomplished Preacher, in the illustration of his text, "there is a very odd passage in Mr. Herbert's poems, which, whether it be the prudent conjecture and foresight of a wise man, or there be something more prophetic in it, I cannot tell, it is "this:"

'Religion stands on tiptoes on our land,
'Ready to pass to the American strand.
'When Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames,
'By letting 'n them both, pollute her streams,
'Then shall religion to America flee,
'They have their times of Gospel even as we.'

"The meaning of it," adds the Archbishop, "is this, that when the vices of Italy shall pass into France, and the vices of both overspread England, then the Gospel will leave those parts of the world, and pass over to America, to visit those dark regions, which have so long sat in darkness, and the shadow of death." Fol. ed. v. 3. p. 587.

Fearing for a moment, as I perused this quotation, that the revolutionary tribunal was established in my country, and the blood of the best of her sons in a state of requisition; and expecting at the same time nothing but unanimity and wisdom in the people of America, I thought it not improbable, that many of the victims of loyalty and the constitution might escape the edge of the guillotine, and bring a valuable addition of knowledge and piety to the forests of this hemisphere. But that period is past, and things appear in a different light. Union and co-operation are a pledge of safety to Britain; while the friends of peace and order are left to wish that America had as fair a prospect.

In the insatiation of the times, it was not surprising that the arts of designing men, and the false animation produced by clubs should have prevailed on a few private individuals, of perverse ambition or desperate fortune, to join in the black conspiracy against religion, government and property. But that the bulk of a nation should in any degree have favoured such a cause, is truly astonishing. And I join my regrets to those of the wise and good in the United States, that the Anglo-Americans have incurred this reproach, by ambitiously fraternizing with French anarchy, and manifesting a determined resolution to promote its interest, and share its fate. By this conduct they appear to have involved themselves unnecessarily in the perils of the time, and to have suspended in some measure their future stability on external and contingent events over which they can have little controul.

2. From this dark and troubled scene let us turn to the consideration of the probable reasons for which God has made the times so perilous, and of the moral effects which he intends them to produce.

At a period of so much action and event, it would ill become a short-sighted mortal to determine beforehand what may be the precise purposes which God is carrying forward amidst the distractions of the earth. Yet from his character and perfections, as moral Governor of the world, we have no reason ultimately to despair of the cause of religion and virtue. The present generation is threatened with a severe correction; national establishments are in danger of being overturned, and the powers of darkness may be let loose for a time: But amidst the storms of political revolution, the shipwreck of human institutions, and the violence of wicked men, the bark of Christianity rides secure. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing! The Kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision!"*

The Father of light and mercy never ordained impiety and anarchy to be perpetual among men. No provision is made for their permanence, and when they have served their purpose, they must prepare the blow for their own extermination. As in the natural world tempest and thunder, the inundation and the earthquake, purge the elements, and give serenity and salubrity to the atmosphere, so the present convulsions in the moral world will in like manner

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* Psalm ii.

purify the hearts of men, and restore health and tranquility to the nations. During their passage both are dark and destructive, but in their effects both are good and salutary.

These reflections naturally suggest the double purpose for which Divine Providence sends calamitous dispensations to the earth. In part they are penal, and in part monitory and corrective.

1. The judgments now abroad in the earth ought to be regarded as partly penal ; and they shew, where they have fallen most heavily, that abuses and wrongs, irreligion and immorality will not be tolerated for ever.

To refer calamitous events, and especially those which proceed to excision, to the displeasure of the Deity, and to represent them as at once the proof and the punishment of incorrigible guilt, has been the general practice of mankind under every religious dispensation. But in particular instances such an interpretation of the Divine judgments is as unjust as it is uncharitable. The tower of Siloam did not fall on the worst men that lived in Jerusalem ; nor were the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, sinners above all the Galileans, as the rigour of their fate might have led a superstitious observer to suppose. The truth is, that in the allotments of life the punishment of the wicked is wholly invisible. One event happens to the just and the unjust ; the application which conscience makes to personal desert, constitutes all the difference. In their distresses the good submit to the will of God, and are sustained by their integrity ; while the bad see in their calamity an invisible avenger, and sink under the weight of their punishment.

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It is therefore only the conscience of the party concerned, that can safely determine with respect to the object and design of the afflictive dispensations of Divine Providence. The world at large is incompetent to decide on the case, and to say in times of visitation what judgments are for trial, and what for punishment. In general, indeed, it may be laid down as a fundamental principle, that in the administration of Providence, we see not the correction of bad men, but of bad measures ; not the punishment of single acts of iniquity ; but of a long series of iniquitous acting.

Without doubt the terrible calamities which have lately been desolating France, and which by her instrumentality have been extended to other countries, were commissioned in part to scourge a guilty age for the gross corruptions which universally abound, and for the growing boldness of profaneness and immorality. Yet in the awful dispensations ordained by God for the cure of those disorders, the good suffer with the bad, and frequently merit and virtue themselves prove the occasions of ruin. Still the lesson is forcibly written, even in the blood of the righteous, that in the end national vices will draw down national punishments ; and that the recorded crimes of rank and office will be visited on those who succeed to them, though chargeable with no vicious excess in their own conduct. How well do these observations apply to the events of that distracted country to which they more immediately relate ? If there were abuses and oppressions in the Royal Government of France, the expiation has been a costly one, and of all the kings who ever sat on the throne of that monarchy, He who suffered for them, least deserved his fate. The voice of Europe proclaims, with firm and general accord, that the
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royal government was not abused by the will and consent of the mild but unfortunate Louis, who, struck by the axe of misguided citizens, fell lamented by all good men. By the confession of his murderers he fell, not so much for his personal offences, as for the tyranny of former kings, and the exactions of former ministers. Accordingly he fell at his post, with an approving conscience, with falling order, and a falling country.

If the nobles of France were imperious and unfeeling, the leaders of a giddy capital in all kinds of dissipation, and austere and oppressive among their dependents, they too have suffered to the full extent of their misdoings. They have been cast down from their splendid station, stripped of their possessions, and driven into exile ; and none can tell when they may be restored to their country and their dignities.

If the Gallican clergy taught that Christianity consisted in the belief of metaphysical or mystical doctrines, and in the practice of superstitions and unprofitable ceremonies, they also have made an atonement. Driven from their homes, their habitation has been rendered desolate ; and they sit down by the rivers of a foreign land, and weep when they remember Zion.

But gladly leaving this part of the subject, which I desire to touch with all tenderness, I think we may see in the universal sweep of rank, order, and establishments, in France, the obvious punishment of more ostensible faults ; namely, of the want of principle and energy, and of an incurable spirit of jealousy and disunion in the hereditary guardians of a nation.

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The band of nobles, clergy and enlightened men, engaged in one cause, with one binding interest to connect them, who ought to have stood and fought together, *the immortals of their country*,* were divided in sentiment, and destitute of leading plans of operation. Loosely cemented, they shewed their want of vigour and integrity on the first attack of the democracy. False men deserted their standard, and by thinning the ranks increased the irresolution of their order. At this crisis the councils of the monarch were guided by a feeble and injudicious hand; and to avoid all controversy with the representatives of his people, the king was most unfortunately advised to disband his nobles and clergy, by incorporating them with the third estate.

Retaining the jealous spirit of their cast, after their political existence was terminated; and actuated by a kind of judicial blindness, the privileged orders seem in succession to have viewed each other's degradation with a secret sentiment of pleasure, and without ever once advertent to the certain ruin which this absurd conduct was preparing for themselves. When the Assembly robbed the clergy of the patrimony and the honours of the church, the nobility appear to have looked on with ill concealed satisfaction; anxious only to retain and extend their own privileges, and not caring how far the other classes might be depressed in the scale of influence. But scarcely was the altar stripped of its ornaments, when hereditary distinctions were discovered to be cumbersome, unjust, and impolitic; and the people of property and wealth, without titles, rejoiced in their turn to see the proud monuments of nobility destroyed. Deprived of its main pillars, the tottering throne was next hurled from its base, and

* Alluding to the Roman legion of that name.

and the men of letters and personal accomplishments, without property, who formed expectations of rising on the wings of popularity to office and authority, congratulated each other on this memorable event. But their triumph was likewise of short duration. Having lost their guardian and dispenser, the laws lost their influence, and talents and letters shared in their degradation. The inferior classes continuing to rise, in irresistible masses, levelled all distinctions, till in the end the most worthless of the Convention, supported by all the miscreants of the nation, became the sovereigns of the state ; and of the life and property of the inhabitants.

But from the past we may venture to predict the future: "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry."* If the errors and offences of monarchy; rank and station, have been so grievously corrected, what may not the nameless atrocities of anarchy expect? The conflagration rages, but the matter which feeds the fire shall itself be reduced to ashes.

Even those dire events, which we can only deplore, may have their use. Of disunion and corruption, of the want of energy and system, in the fate of France, let all the governments of the earth see and fear the end.

It was observed in the II^d. place, that the judgments of God are to be regarded as monitory and corrective ; and without doubt those which have lately awakened the attention of mankind, will be productive in the end of a variety of good effects. Three of these I shall venture to mention, assigning the reasons which have induced me to expect them.

And

* Luke xxiii. 31.

And 1st, Whatever may be the immediate result of the ravages of anarchy in France; and of the war for revolutions in which she has involved the world, I am persuaded that the events which have already happened in the course of her affairs are fitted in their nature, and partly intended by Providence, to expose the hollow pretensions of sceptical philosophy, and to give all the modifications of deism a deadly wound.

It would be a subject of curious and instructive speculation to trace, with fidelity and discernment, the origin, progress, and successive views of the sect of free-thinkers, from their first appearance in Europe, to the execution of their favourite projects of political and religious reformation in the government of France.

In the beginning they were modest, temperate, and respectful to religion. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, whom they claimed as their founder, was a virtuous man; but many of his followers embraced his doctrines on other considerations than those of their tendency to enforce his example. For a while however, the boldest and most licentious among them were compelled to keep measures with public opinion. Fettered in their pursuit of innovation by the unanimity of mankind on religious subjects, the champions of the cause began their attack at a distance; and under the disguise of friendship. Professing an esteem for Christianity, and a desire to unite her more closely with reason, they complained of the empire of prejudice, the bondage of authority, and the improper restrictions imposed on the exercise of thought; asserting what ought never to have been disallowed, the absolute freedom of private judgment, the common interest

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which mankind have in moral speculations, and the consequent right of promulgating opinions by means of the press.

Having gained these necessary points without much opposition, the party proceeded to enlarge its views, and to meditate conquests of still greater importance. In this spirit its advocates assumed the right of doubting of every thing, and extolled above all other merit that of free-thinking ; by which was meant the practice of calling into question every separate article of revealed religion, and of embracing or rejecting it, not on the foot of its appertaining to a grand scheme of divine truth imperfectly understood, the general evidences of which were nevertheless invincible ; but on the narrower ground of its own plainness and comprehensibility, or the still more slippery foundation of their vague notions of the majesty of the divine nature, or the dignity and wisdom of the divine government.

By enflaming the pride of human reason, and affecting to subject the sublimest mysteries to its decision, the free-thinkers succeeded in persuading the superficial and presumptuous to adopt this new mode of trying the detached parts of scripture history. Having thus sapped the foundations, they concluded that the superstructure might be attacked with safety, and immediately began a furious war against all the received systems of Christian doctrine. Under the insidious pretence of extirpating ancient prejudices, the work of the nursery and the school, or of artful and imposing priests, they indulged themselves in the most virulent abuse of the Christian institute ; and laboured to turn the very character and virtues of its Author into contempt, whose immaculate purity and divine benevolence had till
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then been the subject of unwilling eulogium, even among those who had rejected his mission with expressions of dislike.

At this period all the departments of literature were invaded by the partizans of infidelity ; and productions of science and books of amusement, the studies of the grave and the pastimes of the gay, were artfully converted into vehicles of their principles. The pomp of eloquence, the poignancy of wit, and the obscurity of metaphysic, were impressed into this service ; and no mode of seduction that could captivate the weak, or surprize the unwary was left untried. Meanwhile, the friends of Christianity were not inactive. Engaged in a glorious cause, they made an honourable defence. The principles and evidence of divine revelation were placed in a conspicuous light ; the ostentatious reasonings of its enemies were refuted ; and their malignant and disingenuous arts exposed in all their odiousness. But in spite of the most strenuous efforts, the poison spread more widely than the antidote. The impotent attack was circulated with avidity, while the immortal defence was consigned to the dust of the library. Vanity and affectation co-operated with licentiousness in recommending the cause, and multiplying the converts of infidelity. Embracing the sceptical system, which offered a commodious apology for the disorders of their conduct, with gratitude proportioned to their obligations, the higher ranks of society deserted the ordinances of the gospel, and gradually laid aside the profession of religion. To the faith of proselytes, the frothy and the petulant were ambitious of adding the merit of apostles ; while the more prudent unbelievers enjoyed their new liberty in silence, and still

affected to respect the pious usages of their country. Abandoned by the rich and fashionable, the church continued for a season to be a refuge to the poor and afflicted. But in time the lower orders learned to despise, in their heart, those religious observances which they saw their more enlightened superiors treat with unreserved contempt. Copying their example with perverse ingenuity, they joined in the ridicule poured upon their clergy, and regarded every scandalous story which reflected on the church or the sacred office, as an invaluable piece of history which could not be too carefully recorded, or too extensively known.

Glorying in the general and deep impression which their labours had made on the public mind, the high-priests of the party could not longer conceal their exultation. Keeping no measures with that religion over which they had gained such distinguished advantage, they assumed the tone and authority of masters ; they proclaimed their victories ; and boasted of the number, unanimity and influence of the illuminated, and of the grand moral reformation they were destined to accomplish.

The awe of public opinion being once withdrawn, the adversaries of religion avowed their sentiments and projects with less reserve. Amidst the indifference and depravity of a degenerate age, Christianity was publicly renounced by many in the upper ranks of life, and a speculative deism, in no respect distinguishable from actual atheism, was substituted in its room.

Having in a great measure lost their use, religious establishments were exposed to all the rancorous malignity of the sceptical philosophers. Their opulence attracted cupidity,

dity, and their defenceless state provoked insult. Churchmen were now represented as a burdensome and unnecessary race, a tax on industry, and a bar to improvement. No longer protected by the sanctity of their function, or the veneration of their people, they were secretly devoted to destruction, and a favourable opportunity was sought for executing in the utmost extent the deadly decree which had gone forth against them.

In France where these disorders had proceeded to the greatest length, a series of very singular events brought into action the wisdom and policy of the self-created guides of the world; and during the last five years they have given mankind a memorable specimen of the blessed and glorious times they promised to introduce.

The sceptical reformers of the French nation entered on their office with declaring every mode of faith and worship equally free. Indifferent about all religious institutions themselves, they left the faithful for a time to the direction of conscience, and the worship of the God of their fathers. But this indulgence was not long continued. Sensible that the adherents to the ancient doctrines were the most determined enemies to the new system, they proscribed Christianity, and ensnared its ministers by pestilent oaths. It is not competent for me to relate what followed, but from the general tenour of the affairs of France since its rulers abjured religion, the least instructed of mankind, I should conceive, may be enabled to institute a comparison between the effects of genuine Christianity, and of that sublime Philosophy which was to regenerate the human race. To this test the enlightened Christian will resort with unaffected confidence.

dence. Almost eighteen centuries have now been blessed in the faith and hope of the gospel. Soon after its propagation it enlarged the bounds of human knowledge, dispersed the clouds of superstition, and gave men consistent notions of the Deity, and of that religious service which he requires from his reasonable creatures. It likewise improved the system of morals, by extending the obligations of beneficence, restraining the vindictive passions, and inculcating a pure doctrine of self government. Adding eternity to time, it explained, with the most exact precision, the connection which subsists between this life and the next, and taught the virtuous and penitent to expect beyond the grave, in regions of uncreated light, a perpetual progress in wisdom and happiness.

But no sooner had the sceptical philosophers usurped the powers of legislation than these elevating hopes were shipwrecked, and dark and barbarous ages restored. Amidst the incessant praises of reason and philosophy, the arts of civil life were neglected, and strife and anarchy prevailed. The worst passions of the worst persons rioted without controul. Piety was driven into exile. The prisons were crowded with victims; new modes of trial and execution were invented; and under the direful agency of a murderous tribunal blood flowed in a continual stream.

Nor were these only temporary evils occasioned by the tumult and violence of a revolution. They are inseparable from the nature of the new principles, and would mark their rule to the world's end. Illiberal, interested, unfeeling; considering this life as the whole of existence, and death as an everlasting sleep, the sceptical system proposes only one

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class of objects to the avidity of its votaries. It proposes safety and self-aggrandisement as the end of life ; and destitute of all reliance on the Governor of nature, and holding man accountable for no part of his conduct, it not only justifies but approves the pursuit of them by all means, even the most atrocious. Hence, instead of restraining, philosophy has let loose the ferocity of the selfish and vindictive passions, and for the goodness of God and the spirit of heaven, to which Christianity taught the faithful to aspire, it has substituted the rage of hell and the malignity of demons.

The consequences resulting from the new order of things being once completely unfolded, bewildered men will see the necessity of consulting their safety by reverting to their ancient guides. The gospel, which moderates the passions of the rich, and supports the virtue of the poor, will again command attentive consideration ; and this is all it asks for an effectual reception among men. The more it is examined the greater clearness and force will its evidence acquire ; and to all the arguments in its favour which past ages have furnished, will be added those alarming ones derived from the bloody history of the French revolution.

Reverencing that pure and peaceable religion to which they have been indebted for their safety, the nations which have maintained its authority will be more firmly attached than ever to its doctrines and institutions. Christianity will thus be restored to new credit and influence. The vain babblings of philosophy will be consigned to everlasting perdition. Men will reject with detestation all the modifications of deism, and be solicitous to establish in their country, in their houses, and in their hearts, the genuine doctrines of the Cross of Christ.

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In the gospel reign an age of darkness has always been followed by more resplendent light. Christianity derives fresh lustre from a temporary obscuration, as the sun emerges with renewed brightness from the gloom of an eclipse.

2dly. I am also persuaded that the transactions which have lately engaged the observation of a reflecting age, are calculated to produce a lasting conviction of the indispensable necessity of public and private virtue, as well as of a public and private profession of Christianity; to the prosperity of states, and the peace of society.

In those countries where the ordinances of the gospel are still frequented, long have public instructors taught, though with too little efficacy, that without the practice of virtue the individual can have no solid comfort in life, and no gleam of hope at the hour of death. Often too have the scriptures repeated in the audience of kings and legislators, that righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people. In the calamitous events of the present time, God appears to have been enforcing the same truths, in a new and more impressive manner. Facts have lately demonstrated that where conscience and the world to come have lost their authority, not only enjoyment but existence is in danger. In a corrupt society there is no protection for property, character, or life. Destitute of morals, the more accomplished any people may be, the more outrageous do their excesses become. Their sciences and arts extend their ability of doing mischief, while their manners only add to their power of seduction. Among faithless men the most solemn obligations lose their force. No tie can bind the unprincipled; and in such a state of things even oaths are
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engines of deception. In the French revolution these truths have been most awfully illustrated. The insecurity of all combinations not founded on virtue and fortified by principle, has been clearly seen in every change of measures and of men. Interest has proved a fallacious bond ; for in tumultuous times as popularity shifts from faction to faction, the interest of to-day is always liable to prove the cause of to-morrow's downfall. Confederacies formed on the basis of party and plunder have also betrayed their perilous nature ; for on the fall of a party each of the members is impatient to purchase his own safety by impeaching the rest, and furnishing all the secret information in his possession to accelerate their ruin. Faith and honour, truth and justice, gratitude and humanity, depend entirely on the moral sense, which being blunted or corrupted, they lose their hold on the heart, and become empty and insidious names.

It is indeed not matter of supposition merely, that the present disorganizing rulers of France themselves, began to be convinced of the reality and importance of these fundamental principles ; and that, standing with fearful triumph on the recent graves of their unpitied victims, it is among their most anxious endeavours of the day, to provide for their own security, by the re-establishment, if possible, of law and order among a disbanded and raging people. Striking condemnation of the system they have been propagating ! Precarious hope to be realized in their favour, whose crimes have tended to extinguish its object throughout the civilized world !

3dly. I am likewise inclined to hope, that the crimes and horrors which have followed the subversion of government in France, and the uncontrolled licentiousness of a savage democracy, will evince the absurdity of impracticable schemes of political reformation, and dispose the common

people to be satisfied with those measures in which it has pleased the founder of nations to combine personal freedom with public security.

The ability of man to execute falls far short of his capacity to conceive. The least instructed in society may possess ideas of perfection, which the most liberal minds shall labour in vain to realize. While our active power is restrained by the frailty of our nature, the resistance of other men, and the established order of things, our imagination is left unfettered to embellish our being, to heighten our conceptions of moral excellence, and to afford us a solace in trouble. Hence though we may innocently indulge ourselves in forming theories of imaginary happiness, we cannot safely propose these theories as the guides of conduct. In the summer's heat, or the winter's cold we may transport ourselves, in fancy, to a delicious region, where the happy native breathes an invigorating atmosphere, without being oppressed by any of the elements. But at the end of the reverie we must be content to submit to the necessity of our situation, and to act as the inhabitants of a variable climate. For did we proceed on the supposition, that to will a perpetual spring were sufficient to effect it, we should find ourselves woefully mistaken. Without regarding our volition, the sun and the seasons would pursue their ancient course, and bring the usual extremes of intemperature, the more difficult to bear, as we had made no provision to encounter them.

The case is exactly the same with respect to our political condition; whatever state empirics may say to the contrary. While we dream of the privileges and joys of higher worlds, if we are wise we will submit to the laws of mortality. In every stage of our being we are the subjects of discipline, more or less severe according to the strength and influence of our reason or our passions. The child is doom-

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ed to restraints which are not imposed on the man; and the bad are cut off by penal statutes which do not in the smallest degree affect the good. But even in the best condition, we must live in a state of coercion. While men retain their nature, there must be checks on liberty, sanctions to enforce the observance of law, and punishments to correct the violation. Perfect freedom is compatible only with perfect reason and perfect goodness, and not to be coveted in a mixed and disordered community, exposed to the arts of the flagitious, and the ebbs and flows of tumultuary passion.

Upon the same principles, notwithstanding all the improvements that may be introduced into human affairs, there must be inequalities and distinctions in society: Distinctions and inequalities which might no doubt be remedied, if by the decree of the Almighty they were not productive of ultimate and necessary good which cannot be obtained without them. To meditate the establishment of equality then, that splendid delusion of the present age, the vision of the weak, and the pretext of the wicked, is in fact to meditate war against God, and the primary laws of creation. Regularity and beauty, harmony and the universal whole, result from the existence of inequality. In heaven itself there are thrones and dominions, principalities and powers. In the firmament there is one light of the sun, and another of the moon, and the stars differ from each other in station and brightness. The same beautiful analogy is observed in all the productions of the earth. Carry the leveling system to the forest, what havoc would you be compelled to make among the fairest of the trees? In society inequality is just as natural as in the forest, but productive of much more salutary effects. Without inequality what would become of the necessary distinctions of parent and child, master and scholar, the employer and the employed!

Even on the most moderate system, an absolute equality of persons and property cannot be effected without murder and devastation, and, from the unalterable course of things, the day on which it was introduced would see it subverted.

While the affairs of France expose the absurdity and madness of visionary plans of political regeneration, they may also give a solemn and useful warning to rulers and the people, to beware of rash experiments in government ; to guard against the progress of delusion in a community ; and to resist the fanaticism of projectors and the frenzy of insurrection, as they would resist the grand scourges of the human race, plague, pestilence, and famine. Happy ! if they shall teach the subjects of Britain in every quarter of the globe, the inestimable value of their constitution, which unites so many perfections with so few defects, and prevents so much evil at the expence of so little good. Happy ! also if they shall inspire them with unanimity and vigour to maintain it as their birth-right and best inheritance, and to seek no improvement or melioration of their political condition, save under the firm protection of its laws, and in the temperate use of those just expedients which have been devised in the wisdom of its provisions.

Such my brethren, in my humble opinion, are some of the purposes of correction and instruction for which the late disastrous revolutions have been ordained by God : And I am strongly inclined to believe that until these lessons be effectually inculcated, there will not be an end to the troubles of the earth. Should therefore the admonitions already given prove insufficient to subdue a licentious and intractable generation, justly may we fear that more grievous admonitions will be added to the number, until awakened by the divine judgments, and chastened by their own disorders, the residue of the nations shall listen to the voice of Providence ; and learn submission to its appointments. But

But leaving the future to the merciful disposal of that beneficent Being who does not willingly afflict the children of men, let us contemplate with gratitude his most unmerited goodness to our nation. How different is our political situation from our public demerits? Notwithstanding the luxury and dissipation of our people, we have hitherto been preserved from the peculiar misery of the times. Foreign war, though a proof of divine displeasure, and a severe correction to a sinful people, is not to be compared with the ravage and desolation inseparable from a revolution, or the still more horrid enormities of a permanent anarchy. When the brave man bleeds on the bed of honour, compassion sheds her tear, and the scar is glorious. When the good man falls in the cause of his country, a grieving nation blesses him in death, and bids the column rise to perpetuate his memory. But when kings and queens, when the noble, the wise, and the good, are led to execution amidst furies, and faces covered with crape, when the earth drinks up their blood, and no murmur of disapprobation ascends to heaven, humanity shudders, and we hate the nature that is capable of such depravity.

In our public exigencies we have also the pleasure of reflecting, that in this conflict our country sustains a distinguished part. Our armies go forth under the banners of government, law and religion, not in pursuit of victory and conquest, but of peace and safety for a distracted world. We ought even to remark, but not without the most unfeigned thankfulness to the supreme disposer of events, that the perils of the time seem to have made a salutary impression on the minds of our countrymen. The value of our constitution appears to be better understood; the importance of religion and morals is more generally acknowledged, and a spirit of unanimity gives vigour to the government.

But above all, my brethren, how singularly have we been protected and preserved in this part of the empire, amidst the alarming dispensations of Divine Providence? The specialty of our case can hardly have escaped the notice of

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the most inattentive observer. While every year changed the prospect or the peril of the times, it produced some event so seasonable in its occurrence, and so salutary in its consequences, that it deserved to be regarded as designed on purpose to prolong our tranquility—a consideration which will apologize, I trust, for a more minute recollection of domestic affairs than would on any other occasion be suitable to this place.

And here I flatter myself we have not yet forgotten that when a malignant epidemic desolated the capital of a neighbouring nation, and reduced the opulent city to the gloomy abode of terror and death, the health of our people was continued without interruption. Nay as if to place us beyond the reach of danger, a superabundant harvest in one of our sister provinces * furnished us with an ample supply of provisions. For the first time during many years our merchants were delivered from the necessity of having recourse to the American market, and the country escaped all risk of infection.

When towards the close of the same year the apprehension of invasion, with which we had been threatened for several months, became more alarming, destitute as we were in a great measure of British force, our resources did not fail us. The citizens were firm and courageous, and upon the first requisition of assistance the country sent to our defence a bold and hardy yeomanry, neither strangers to arms, nor to that valour and intrepidity which render them formidable to an enemy. Meanwhile, without our interposition the designs of our adversaries were frustrated by their own dissensions. God on high maintained our peace, and proved our protector.

In the course of the present year when our supplies were exhausted, and the source from which we procured them had failed, by the vigilance and success of the squadron appointed for our protection, we were again provided with plenty of wheat, and at a cheaper rate than the husbandman could afford to sell it on the field where it was raised. At home the province has been blessed

* Canada.

with an abundant harvest, and hitherto even the merciless winter has appeared to respect the defenceless condition of our poor, by passing away with unusual mildness.

To crown the singular felicity of our colonial state, while sophistry and sedition have been busily, and but too successfully at work, in other parts of the empire, we have lived to this day in all concord and loyalty. No factions have divided our people, or distracted our government. Clubs and cabals are unknown in our settlements. No one has dared to accuse another of disaffection. There has not been an information, far less an imprisonment, in consequence of seditious practices in any part of the country. Peace and unity have shed their happiest influences over the province, and our King and our Constitution continue to be the objects of our dearest regard.

In such a fortunate, may it not be said in such an enviable condition, are we not bound by all the ties of gratitude and duty to love and praise the Lord, and to walk uprightly in his commandments? No people were ever more highly favoured, or blessed with a better opportunity of becoming wise, and good and happy. Let not the kindness of Providence plead with us in vain. Enjoying safety in the midst of danger, let us observe the dispensations of judgment to other lands, and apply the instructions which they deliver to our own improvement. In a particular manner let us beware of the prevailing vices which have produced the perils of the time—infidelity, licentiousness, and a spirit of innovation.

And oh my friends, let not the parting admonition of the expiring year be lost upon you! It calls you to the exercise of repentance, and to an immediate and effectual reformation of your conduct. It speaks with earnest voice on the importance of these duties, and you will not hear it speak in this place again. The envious moments fly while we are talking of their speed; arrest them in their progress, and apply them to the business of your salvation. For though time be short, remember that procrastination is endless. Purposes of amendment indeed which indefinitely embrace

an hereafter, embrace in fact a non entity. As the hereafter is not fixed, it cannot possibly arrive, though life were to be prolonged to its utmost term ; and hence all good resolutions, not immediately carried into effect, are only the illusions of self-deceit. They quiet the mind for the present, and yield the fallacious hope of final security ; but they daily grow weaker, and in the progress of life the reasons for neglecting them become stronger, while new reasons are continually added to the old. In proof of these observations, let me ask yourselves what are now become of the wishes, the resolutions, and the vows of past years ? Are they not lost and forgotten with the events and impressions which produced them ? Permit me also to inquire what reformation the passing year has effected. Have the licentious and profligate of the year ninety-three, become regular and virtuous in the year ninety-four ? Has the miser ceased to worship his hoard ; has the liar made his peace with truth, or have the dishonest become observant of justice ? Have the careless grown considerate ; the foolish wise, and those who had no sense of religion attentive to its duties ? Alas ! my brethren such changes never happen by chance, and are not to be expected without design and exertion. Cease then to be unreasonable. Seek not from accident what intention only can procure. Dismiss procrastination. Improve what remains of the departing year to make your calling sure ; that the next may find you walking safely in the paths of pleasantness and peace.

Glory be to thee O God in the highest, and on earth may the perils of the time fulfil thy designs of mercy to the race of men ! May their warning voice reclaim a guilty world, and prepare the way for the further propagation of the Christian religion ! May every year as it revolves offer some new tribute of praise to thy Divine Majesty, and hasten the happy consummation of all things, when the kingdom shall be delivered up to thee, and when thou shalt reign one with thy son and thy saints in glory and blessedness for ever. AMEN.

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