

“—In the mean time this ought not to be entirely a blind obedience; no engagement can oblige or even authorise a man to violate the laws of nature. All authors, who have any regard to conscience or modesty, agree that a person ought not to obey such commands as are evidently contrary to the laws of God. Those governors of places who bravely refused to execute the barbarous orders of Charles IX. † have been universally praised, and the court did not dare to punish them, at least openly. ‘Sire,’ said the brave Orte, governor of Bayonne, in his letter, ‘I have communicated your majesty’s commands to your faithful inhabitants and warriors in the garrison; and I have found there only good citizens and brave soldiers, not one hangman; therefore, both they and I humbly intreat your majesty to be pleased to employ our arms and lives in things that are possible, however hazardous they may be, and we will exert ourselves to the last drop of our blood.’ The count de Tende, Charney, and others, replied to those who brought them the orders of the court, that they had too great a respect for the king, to believe that such barbarous orders came from him.

“It is more difficult to determine in what cases a subject may not only refuse to obey, but even resist a sovereign, and by force repel force. When a sovereign does injury to any one, he acts without any real authority; but we ought not from thence to conclude hastily, that the subject may resist him. The nature of sovereignty and the *welfare of the state*, will not permit citizens to oppose a prince whenever his commands appear to them unjust or prejudicial. This would be to fall again into the state of nature, and to render government impossible. A subject ought to suffer with patience from the prince acts of injustice, that are doubtful and supportable. First, because whoever has submitted to the decision of a judge, is no longer capable of deciding his own pretensions: Those instances of injustice that are supportable ought to be passed over from a regard to the peace and safety of the state, and on account of the great advantages obtained by living in society. It is presumed that every citizen has tacitly en-

gaged to observe this moderation, because without it, society could not subsist. But when the injuries are manifest and atrocious; when a prince, without any apparent reason, is resolved to deprive us of life, or of those things, the loss of which would render life bitter, who can dispute our right to resist him? Self-preservation is not only a law of nature, but an obligation imposed by nature, and no man can entirely and absolutely give it up to another. And though he might give it up, can he be considered as having done it by his political engagements, when he entered into society only to establish his own safety upon a more solid basis? The welfare of society does not require such a sacrifice; and as Barbeyrac well observes in his notes on Grotius, ‘If the public interest requires, that those who obey, should particularly suffer something; it is not less for the public interest that those who command, should be afraid of carrying their patience to the utmost extremity.’ The prince who violates all laws, who observes no measures, and who would in his transports of fury take away the life of an innocent person, strips himself of his royalty; and is no more than an unjust and outrageous mortal, against whom his people are allowed to defend themselves. But he who, after having lost all the sentiments of a sovereign, divests himself even of the appearances and exterior conduct of a monarch, degrades himself; he no longer retains the sacred person of a sovereign, and cannot retain the prerogatives attached to his sublime character. However, if this prince is not a monster, if he is furious only from a just passion, and is supportable only to the rest of the nation; the respect we ought to pay to the tranquility of the state is such, and the respect of sovereign majesty so powerful, that we are strictly obliged to seek every other means of preservation, rather than to put his person in danger. Every one knows the example set by David: he fled, he kept himself concealed from Saul’s fury; and more than once saved the life of his persecutor. When the reason of Charles VI. of France was suddenly disordered by a fatal accident, he in his fury killed several of those who surrounded him: none of them thought of securing his own life at the expence

† Which were for the extinction of the Protestants, who were by the king of France’s order slain, to the amount of forty thousand, all in one night; on the feast of St. Bartholomew, in the year 1572, in different parts of the kingdom. This horrid and bloody affair is commonly called the Massacre of Paris.