

M. Barton

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## Literature.

No. III.

WHEN I introduced in the first of these numbers, examples of the effect of education or habit from mechanical professions, and from common life, it was only to appeal to universal experience, for a proof of the great changes which these causes are able to produce. By considering such examples, every one can understand the nature and progress of these changes, better than by any verbal illustration, where experience is wanted, or where it is not attended to.

The reader may remember a remark, that we are not so apt to notice, or adequately to appraise the alteration wrought upon the mind, as that of which we are sensible in the management of our limbs.— This is chiefly true, however, when we confine our attention to ourselves only. For when we consult the characters and actions of others, who, with the advantages of liberal education, have grown up from youth to manhood, and from ignorance to improvement, the stature of their minds is as visibly changed as that of their persons. We pretend not to deny that their variety of thought, their capacity of reasoning, and the co-operating energy of their powers, are manifestly superior to what they would have been without such long and habitual exercise, and point them out to be of a different order from those who have never enjoyed any such opportunities.

Men of this description are no less essential to the conduct of business in a civilized state, than those who till the ground, build our houses, or who prepare for our use the common instruments of labor. It is by them that our estates are secured, our property claimed or defended, that stability is given to the morals of society, and respect ensured to the rights of the nation. On the whole, it would be plainly contrary to the established laws of nature, for one who has been employed for many years in growing acquainted with the inventions, the reasonings, and the sentiments of learned and ingenious men of every age, and in exercising his own thoughts upon them, to continue devoid of knowledge, and equally inept in the use of his faculties, as if he had been only occupied in forming or following a plow, in building a house, or in driving a shuttle.

I speak not now of the difference which will after appear, according to the activity of intellect, the strength of judgment and of memory, and the justness of proportion in the faculties which nature has bestowed. She has not been equally bountiful to all.— It is no more the case, than that she has made all men perfectly alike, or equally robust and well proportioned. Yet as the body is capable of a surprising variety in its application, and of being confirmed by habitual exercise, so also the mind, which at first was weak, and endowed with only the principles of cultivation, can be made at length to unfold itself so as to astonish those who witnessed its first essays. Nature does not all that is necessary, nor need a more convincing argument be brought in favor of education, than that the persevering student, after a few years, shall outgrow and eclipse the more luxuriant natural genius, if the latter, in the pride of its strength, shall disdain a recourse to any auxiliaries. The slow, but never ceasing advances of the tortoise, will forever outstrip the unsteady fleetness of the hare, which lies down too long to sleep by the way. But who will deny, that where virtuous industry is united with correct and active genius, a transcendent greatness will be the sure result?

But though it must be allowed that education infuses energy into the mind, and by supplying it with food, which perfectly agrees with its nature, causes it to grow up to a full and manly stature; yet, extraordinary as it may seem, it is disputed how far it is expedient thus to increase the powers of the human mind. Those who have been long engaged in the researches of science, and in diversifying their thoughts on every subject, are generally favorable to the interests of learning. The greater the number they see in pursuit of it, and the more free its access, the livelier is their pleasure. To this remark, however, there have been exceptions; but these have sprung from such qualities or defects as can never recommend them to our confidence or esteem. In former times, many men who claimed to stand highest in the classes of literature, proudly conceived it a profanation and a

public injury, to admit all promiscuously, or even very considerable numbers, into what they called the sacred mysteries of science and philosophy. By some, even in the present age, complaints have been uttered, that by the pretensions of those who matter in it, and the consequence they assume to themselves, society is more impaired than improved, and if ignorance were more common than it is, men would be less troublesome to one another, and more happy in themselves. Indeed there are too many instances for the peace and

comfort of the world, of those who, in the high opinion they entertain of their own abilities and acquirements, are forever intermeddling with what in no way concerns them; and who would do much better than at present, both for the public and themselves, if they would resign their impertinent pretensions to shine before others, and be satisfied to pass like men of no more than common sense. But I presume that men of this description, are even more apt to shew themselves from amidst great ignorance, than from among those who are refined and strengthened by the liberal sciences. And when a forward restlessness is united with want of knowledge and imbecility of reason, I would ask if a character can easily be conceived more truly contemptible. But should such a man, by seizing every opportunity, and by pushing himself into notice among the uninformed, make them at length believe, that he is necessary to their interests, and fitted for their confidence. Can there be any so dangerous to society? The reason why we are apt to complain that a general diffusion of knowledge is pernicious to the peace and stability of human affairs, is because we fix our eyes too much upon those few men, who call our attention by their boldness in demanding respect for their abilities & merits. We do not sufficiently reflect at the same time, that when the community is generally enlightened, the claims of such men are rightly understood; and if they are undeserving of regard, they are also destitute of influence. From them, injury is to be feared, only when improvement and information are confined to a few. For as the business of the world must be carried on, if the number of those be small, who have had opportunities to be fitted for it, men will be reduced to the necessity of employing the bad, as well as those who are truly wise and capable of usefulness. Nothing can be more ill advised in any people, than to suffer a monopoly of knowledge in the hands of a small number. If they find that a few of the most wealthy, only can bear the expence of education abroad, it certainly becomes them to invent and provide, if possible, some less oppressive means for increasing the number of literary characters among them. No expence can be too great for them to incur as a nation, for the sake of putting education in the power of a greater number. After all that can be done, it can not be had for nothing, nor can it be given universally to every citizen. But to one quarter or one third of our people, it may be rendered not only possible, but very easy. And no one can hesitate a moment to think, that where he has it in his power to chuse one man out of four, who has an improved understanding, and a virtuous education, his chance is much better than when he is confined to one in twenty, or rather to one in five hundred. What is the necessary consequence of leaving education within the reach of only a very small number of our youth. It will resemble the monopoly of the necessities of life, in the hands of a few wealthy, avaricious, and designing men. As in the latter case, these will be enriched and aggrandized at the expence of the state; so also in the former, not only the property of the citizens is employed in building up those who are already wealthier, than others, but our rights and liberties will be forever exposed to the arts and the easy combination of a few, whose abilities to corrupt and deceive, have been procured by their uncommon education at a distance from home, and whose education has been attainable by that small number only, that can boast of as large possessions as themselves.

Whenever there are many employed in the same business, whose success is to depend on their superior diligence, on greater perfection in their art, and on the distinguished virtue of their character, who does not know the earnestness which each one feels, to acquit himself acceptably to the public, so that he may preserve himself free from the stains of dishonesty, immorality, or indolence.

But when there is a scarcity of men to do the public business of the state, who possess luminous thought, and hability of manner requisite for the most able discharge of public offices, these few feel no necessity for preferring with their fellow citizens that fairness of character, morality of conduct, and respect for religion; without which they could never hope for general esteem and confidence, were the province of literature more abundantly replenished with skillful and worthy characters. Permit me further to observe, that here we may plainly discover a very great source of that profligacy of manners which marks so many of our professional men. They are too independent of public opinion, to feel any inducement from it, to restrain a disposition to licentiousness, to repel temptations to false principles and degrading practices, or to pay a proper deference to the sincerity and innocence of public or private virtue. Were we to erect and encourage an institution of learning, at which even outward respect for the excellent systems of religion and morality which prevail among our people, might be inculcated, and where the truth of these systems might be rationally demonstrated from nature, from fact, and by a development of the eternal foundations on which they stand, we should, in the lapse of a single generation, behold the manners of society reformed, and their sentiments purified from that offensive grossness, which at present even finds asylum, and is received with smiles in the public opinion. By such means we should be raising up for the state a band of citizens, large enough to make the people independent in the selection of their public agents. They could then punish the vices of a wicked character, by refusing to honor him, and by denying him that support, which in a short time he might feel very necessary. By having in our power such a discretionary use of public employments, not only the vicious may be discountenanced, but the moral, the useful, and the virtuous may be rewarded and encouraged. As it is, neither of these can be done, for we must put our business into the hands of those who offer themselves, however unqualified their abilities, or abandoned their lives. This we do, while they are so far from thinking it a favor, that they would feign make us believe, they are bringing us under great obligations. How dreadful is such a situation to a people on whose own virtue, and on the modesty and integrity of whose public character depends a lasting possession of their happiness, their respect, and their precious freedom.

But when there is a scarcity of men to do the public business of the state, who possess luminous thought, and hability of manner requisite for the most able discharge of public offices, these few feel no necessity for preferring with their fellow citizens that fairness of character, morality of conduct, and respect for religion; without which they could never hope for general esteem and confidence, were the province of literature more abundantly replenished with skillful and worthy characters. Permit me further to observe, that here we may plainly discover a very great source of that profligacy of manners which marks so many of our professional men. They are too independent of public opinion, to feel any inducement from it, to restrain a disposition to licentiousness, to repel temptations to false principles and degrading practices, or to pay a proper deference to the sincerity and innocence of public or private virtue. Were we to erect and encourage an institution of learning, at which even outward respect for the excellent systems of religion and morality which prevail among our people, might be inculcated, and where the truth of these systems might be rationally demonstrated from nature, from fact, and by a development of the eternal foundations on which they stand, we should, in the lapse of a single generation, behold the manners of society reformed, and their sentiments purified from that offensive grossness, which at present even finds asylum, and is received with smiles in the public opinion. By such means we should be raising up for the state a band of citizens, large enough to make the people independent in the selection of their public agents. They could then punish the vices of a wicked character, by refusing to honor him, and by denying him that support, which in a short time he might feel very necessary. By having in our power such a discretionary use of public employments, not only the vicious may be discountenanced, but the moral, the useful, and the virtuous may be rewarded and encouraged. As it is, neither of these can be done, for we must put our business into the hands of those who offer themselves, however unqualified their abilities, or abandoned their lives. This we do, while they are so far from thinking it a favor, that they would feign make us believe, they are bringing us under great obligations. How dreadful is such a situation to a people on whose own virtue, and on the modesty and integrity of whose public character depends a lasting possession of their happiness, their respect, and their precious freedom.

## Congress of the U. States.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Wednesday, January 21.

### DEBATE ON THE SEDITION LAW.

House in committee, Mr. Morris in the chair.

The resolution reported by the committee was, that it would be expedient to renew the law in addition to the act for the punishment of certain crimes against the United States.

Mr. Platt, chairman of the committee, explained the reasons of the committee in a resolution for its continuation. The only arguments that could be adduced to that report, because the only ones heretofore presented, were as to the constitutionality and as to the expediency of the measure. That it was constitutional, he contended could be well and plainly proved, without entering into the question upon the grounds and proofs exhibited at the period of the original passage of the bill, from the decision in its favour, after a lengthy examination in both houses of congress and its adoption into a law. Added to this was the solemn decision and concurrence of the judiciary, and the repeated decisions of the courts and juries. After these deliberate decisions in favour of it, to doubt the constitutionality of this law, would be absurd. To those who took every occasion to shew their opposition to the government, and were accustomed to vilify the conduct of its warmest adherents, indeed this law must become hated, but those who considered a good government a blessing, and worthy the protection of a free people, must approve of the provisions of this law, as the most valuable of institutions in its support.

As to the expediency of the measure, the committee thought it was a wholesome and ameliorating interpreter of the common law,

established to assist the government upon the most fair and equitable principles. On the one hand, the right of the government in support of itself, is established; on the other, that right of protection is so established, as not to injure, in the least, the honest and well intending individual; but to afford him a means of exculpating himself, although engaged in scrutinizing the measures of the administration of that government; for unless it can be made to appear evidently to a court and jury that the thing written was done with a false and malicious intention, the precaution was useless. He saw nothing in this law, notwithstanding all which had been said about it, which an honest man ought to fear. No government in the world demanded the public confidence more than ours when well administered; and should such a government be brought into popular disrepute with impunity, through the false and malicious writings of those who peaceably enjoy its refuge? He trusted not.

The house had been told on a former occasion, that the sun of federalism was about to set: he confessed that he viewed with horror the awful night that would follow. But notwithstanding that, whilst he possessed a seat in that house, he tho't himself bound to legislate in favor of measures to support the government which the people had honored by their choice. This reserve of things should never drive him from measures which it became his duty upon the most solemn conviction to adopt, since no injury could result but to those whose wilful and habitual slander opposed it by falsehood. For his part he was not afraid of the new order of things: he had nothing to fear from the existence of this law.

To those who believed the rules of common law of force, and in effect in the U. States, this law must be truly gratifying. By the common law two practices were established, which this act most effectually removed by its ameliorating provisions.— First, he observed, the common law rejected the evidence of truth in cases of libels.— The second thing he mentioned was, that the court had an unlimited authority to ascertain and judge of the penalty. By this law the truth must be given in evidence, and the penalty is ascertained. He trusted that, whilst the liberty of speech and of the press (a privilege to be prized above all others) were made secure, the house would see the propriety of preventing the unlimited and abandoned abuse of this blessing, so injurious to the preservation of social order; an abuse which was to be judged of in its extent by an impartial jury—a privilege by which are secured to every individual, and to the government equal rights. Upon these principles he must ever contend for the propriety of a measure at once secure to the government and to the well designing citizen.

Mr. Davis was opposed to the law from a view of the injurious use that had been made of it. He desired any gentleman to produce such a scene of abuse under a power committed to the hands of a government as had displayed itself in this country under the law in question. Even Great Britain itself, where the government had been so lavish of its prosecutions, could not produce instances where a man had been called to his trial, and although he pleaded himself to be unprepared for his defence, through a deficiency of witnesses which he stated it to be in his power to obtain, upon time being allowed, the trial was ordered to proceed, and the person convicted and judgment passed upon him. Of conduct like this, instances had occurred in America! How then could the gentleman pretend to call this the solemn decision of courts and juries. If he denominated that a solemn trial, he could think it no disgrace to differ from him: he thought himself bound by the rules of propriety so to do: it certainly was not a solemn trial.

The gentlemen said those who opposed the government, and thought its administration bad, would naturally oppose the law. A plain deduction, Mr. Davis tho't, was, that those who thought and knew the government to be bad, would lay their hands on the mouths and pens of the people, and not suffer it to be sifted, lest the people should discover it to be evil: if therefore the gentleman thought the administration bad, it was no wonder, he should attempt to prevent its exposure to popular contempt. On the contrary, those who thought the government a blessing to the people, ought to promote its investigation, that a true estimation might be made of its