

portant evidence, and the insertion of general and imperfect summaries. The absence of engraved illustrations in the body of the text must be regarded as a great objection to the American abridgment, and, should a new edition be called for, we trust that it will be found practicable to supply them.

ART. VI. — *History of Europe, from the Commencement of the French Revolution in 1789, to the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1815.* By ARCHIBALD ALISON, F. R. S. E., Advocate. Paris: Baudry. 1841. 10 vols. 8vo.

MR. ALISON'S *History* has many excellent qualities, and some striking faults. It is the elaborate and highly finished work of an able and conscientious writer, who has given to it the patient toil of many years, and who may be considered as having staked his reputation upon its success. It is not a brilliant production; it does not bear the marks of genius; it is not imbued with any profound philosophy. But it is full of interest, and it embodies a great amount of information, carefully collected, and admirably digested and arranged, and presented in a way that cannot fail to absorb the attention of the reader. It is conceived on a comprehensive plan, which admits every thing that can elucidate the main subject, without violating its unity; and it is executed with a care, fidelity, and spirit, that cannot be too highly appreciated. The author endeavours to be strictly impartial, and he is generally successful in the attempt. His work contrasts very favorably, in this respect, with the *Life of Napoleon*, by Scott, which is so full of English prejudices and unfairness, that, notwithstanding the great merits of its execution, it can hardly be said to possess any historical value whatever. This remarkable book always appeared to us like a sort of high Tory romance, or a plea in favor of Castlereagh politics, illustrated by a half fabulous account of French Jacobinism and the crimes of Napoleon. Mr. Alison's work has far higher claims to consideration and trust. Yet his Tory principles are as violent, and carried as far, as

were those of Scott, and he has written this history with a purpose, but half concealed, of checking the spirit of innovation, and applying a corrective to the democratic tendencies of the age. What, then, are the grounds of our confidence in his general fidelity as a historian? They are found in the abundant evidence, which the book affords, of the honest intentions and ingenuous spirit of the writer,—in his sincere conviction that the story, if fairly and fully told, without artifice, concealment, or falsification, would answer all the purposes which he had in view. He seems to have been aware of the bias which existed in his own mind, and of the suspicion that it would throw upon his narrative, and he therefore goes honestly to work to counteract it, and to afford the reader, at every step, the means of verifying his statements and testing his conclusions.

His plan, as he remarks in the preface, “was to give on every occasion the authorities, by volume and page, from which the statement in the text was taken”; and this is done not only for every paragraph, but in many instances for every sentence. He has taken care, also, “to quote a preponderance of authority, in every instance where it was possible, from writers on the opposite side from that which an English historian, surveying the events with the feelings which attachment to a constitutional monarchy produces, may be supposed to adopt; and the reader will find every fact almost, in the internal history of the revolution, supported by two Republican and one Royalist authority; and every event in the military narrative drawn from at least two writers on the part of the French, and one on that of their opponents.”

This plan, which is fully carried out, affords satisfactory proof of the integrity and conscientious spirit of the writer. It is evident that he intended to tell the truth, without reserve, exaggeration, or undue coloring, and, if he has failed to do so, he has afforded abundant means, at every step, whereby his departures from strict veracity may be detected and exposed. And the result is what might be expected from such a plan, when ably and fairly executed; for, after a full examination, we do not hesitate to say, that this is the most complete and honest history of the French Revolution which has yet appeared either in England or France. Certainly, no work by a British pen deserves to be com-

pared with it; and we think every reader will accord it the preference, in point of fulness and impartiality, over the early narratives by the French Royalists, Bertrand de Molleville, Lacretelle, and others, and the more recent and popular works of Mignet and Thiers.

Mr. Alison has had the advantage of coming after these writers, and he has made good use of the fruits of their labor, and of the vast store of other materials, respecting the history of the French Revolution, which have been accumulating with great rapidity for half a century. The various publications on this subject would now fill a library by themselves, and most of them possess intrinsic, though partial, interest and value. Besides the great collection of "Revolutionary Memoirs," filling sixty-six volumes, which contain the authentic narratives of persons actively engaged in the great events which they describe, there is a multitude of contributions to the general history of the period, both civil and military, most of them coming from very trustworthy sources, which furnish an inexhaustible mine of information. Mr. Alison cannot be too highly praised for the diligent and effective use which he has made of these copious materials. It would be difficult to mention a single publication of any note relating to his subject, which is not quoted or referred to in the course of these volumes. French, English, and German authorities have been consulted with equal attention, and some Spanish and Italian writers have afforded collateral and subsidiary information, of which our author has availed himself to the great advantage of his work.

The time has gone by for viewing the eventful history of Europe, from the commencement of the revolution in France, to the second restoration of the Bourbons, with the rancor of political feeling and national animosity. Another generation has come upon the stage, who have had no share in the exciting events of those times, and who refuse to be blinded by the false coloring and distorted pictures, the forged narratives and unfair suppressions of the truth, with which party writers, during the heat of the contest, sought to animate the zeal of their own faction, and to disable their opponents. The truth is elicited from a comparison of opposite statements, and the publication of letters and official documents, and, when the facts are known, it is an idle attempt to resist

or evade the conclusions which may fairly be drawn from them. Whatever may be the predilections or wishes of historians and political writers, they are now forced to do justice to the characters and measures of the several leaders and parties in the great contest. Colonel Napier's recently published "*History of the War in the Peninsula*" is a striking instance of this impartiality, which writers are now compelled to manifest, on account of the subdued tone of public feeling, and the multiplication of authorities, which leave no shelter for error or prejudice. It is written by a British officer who bore an active part in the war; but its tone is calm, temperate, and discriminating, and it bestows nearly as much praise on the military abilities and administrative talent of Soult and Suchet as on the transcendent genius and energy of Wellington. What a wide difference there is, in point of temper and fairness, between this work and Southey's history of the same war, the first volume of which was published some twenty years since! Mr. Alison's work affords another happy instance of this great improvement in candor and liberality of judgment, on the part of English historians. Even his estimate of the character of Napoleon, though marked with some traces of the exasperated feelings with which the English conducted the war against him, is, in the main, candid and just.

The preparations of our historian for his task were not confined to the careful examination of every thing that has been printed in relation to his subject. He has visited the several places where the great battles between the French and their opponents were fought, and, in most cases, describes the particular scene of each contest, and the general theatre of the war, from personal observation. His style being sufficiently perspicuous, this intimate knowledge of the ground imparts much force and clearness to his descriptions, and the account of the military movements and events is at once animated and intelligible. His summary of the political events, and other internal transactions, in each kingdom involved in the contest, is drawn up with great perspicuity and completeness, and combines an amount of information respecting the finances, and the state of parties, in each country, which it would be difficult to find elsewhere in such a condensed form. Supplementary chapters are given, at intervals, on the history, general condition, and internal

resources of each nation, and the character of the people, which leave nothing to be desired in the way of subsidiary information for understanding the influence which each power exerted on the course of events in Europe. Great labor has evidently been bestowed on these digressions, so that they present a full and succinct digest of facts, collected from the most authentic sources, and presented in such a copious and lively style that they are among the most agreeable and instructive portions of the book. Mr. Alison has adopted so broad a plan, that some of these chapters — the general sketch of British India, for instance — seem to have only a remote connexion with the principal topic ; but they are so well executed that we fancy no reader will complain of their presence. This very chapter on India is admirably done, and there are others, which are but little inferior to it, on St. Domingo, Poland, Turkey, Russia, and France at different periods. The one on America is the most unfortunate in the book, as it is full of errors, some of them very serious, which we shall have occasion to expose in another part of this article.

In the general distribution of his subject, and in the arrangement of particulars so as to preserve clearness and continuity of interest, without violating chronology or interrupting the thread of events, Mr. Alison's history may sustain a comparison even with the magnificent work of Gibbon ; and his subject is hardly inferior in splendor, magnitude, and importance, to the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." He is quite a master, also, of what may be called historical perspective, by which leading events and characters are brought forward with due prominence, while the minor occurrences and personages are left in the background. We could wish that he did not remind us of Gibbon in another respect, — the most exceptionable peculiarities of his style. The imitation is here quite obvious, though it is not a happy one, and we object altogether to the choice of a model so faulty and vicious, even in its copiousness and magnificence. Mr. Alison's style is always stately, artificial, and ornate ; but it wants the richness of illustration and the epigrammatic turns which lend attraction even to the glaring faults of Gibbon. It is too uniformly balanced and modulated, with sentences "of formal cut," the different members of which are often helped out with superfluous epithets, in order to sustain

the rhythm. It is abundant, flowing, and, for the most part, perspicuous; but it is sadly deficient in ease, grace, and naturalness. It betrays labor. The writer is evidently thinking of his garb, and doing his utmost to appear at advantage; and, consequently, the reader's attention is continually diverted from the narrative to the language. Mr. Alison has not a very fertile imagination, but he is ambitious of ornament, and his favorite metaphors and comparisons, which are neither novel nor striking, are repeated till the reader loathes their presence, and are often huddled together with little regard to sense or correctness. It is remarkable that a style, which is evidently studied and elaborate, should be so frequently loose and incorrect. We need not go far in search of faults, for there is hardly a page that does not contain them. The following may be taken as a sample of their quality.

"It was not the ripple of a minute that burst upon the shore, but the long swell of the Atlantic, wafted from distant realms, and heaved on the bosom of remote antiquity." — Vol. i. p. 14.

"*The long swell of the Atlantic, heaved on the bosom of remote antiquity,*" is a figure quite worthy of Mr. Robert Montgomery, or, as he is usually called, Satan Montgomery. Another extraordinary application of metaphorical language is found in the following sentence.

"*A connected chain of words, which float unchanged through the otherwise forgotten floods of time,* may be traced from the tribes of the Caucasian range to the Cordilleras of Mexico and Peru." — Vol. x. p. 279.

"Mr. Hume has said, that fanaticism was the disgrace of the great rebellion, and that we shall look in vain among the popular leaders of England at that period for the generous sentiments which animated the patriots of antiquity; but, without disputing the absurdity of many of their tenets, and the ridiculous nature of much in their manners, it may safely be affirmed, that such *fervor* was the only effectual *bridle* which could be imposed on human depravity, when the ordinary restraints of law and order were at an end, and that, but for that fanaticism, they (?) would have been disgraced by the proscriptions of Marius, or the executions of Robespierre." — Vol. i. p. 213.

It is not easy to see what kind of *fervor* is here spoken of; and any excitement of feeling is usually regarded rather

as a *spur* than a *bridle*. We cannot perceive how the patriot leaders of England, under any circumstances, could have been disgraced by proscriptions that were made centuries before, or by executions which took place centuries after, the period of their own existence. The whole sentence is loose, awkward, and incorrect, to the last degree.

"It is such men, in every age, who have ultimately obtained the lead in public convulsions; like the vultures which, invisible in ordinary times, are attracted, by an unerring instinct, to the scene of blood, and reap the last fruits of the discord and violence of others." — *Ibid.*

We never supposed that vultures were "invisible in ordinary times," nor that they were wont to "reap the fruits" of the discord of "other" — vultures, as the writer seems to assert. The following are fair specimens of our author's habit of running down his favorite metaphors.

"Amidst the expiring embers of civilized institutions, they spread the flames of barbarian independence; on the decayed stock of urban liberty, they engrafted the vigorous shoots of pastoral freedom." — Vol. I. p. 17.

"On the ancient stock of Saxon independence, the English engrafted the shoots of modern liberty; in its stead, the French planted the unknown tree of equality. In the British Isles, the plant has become deeply rooted, and expanded widely, in its native air; time will show whether the French have not wasted their endeavours in training an exotic unsuited to the climate, and unfruitful in the soil." — Vol. I. p. 121.

These are marked instances of incorrectness and bad taste in composition, and would detract seriously from the reputation of the writer, were they not balanced by some excellent qualities of style. The narrative is generally clear and animated, and the descriptions are often vivid and picturesque. The moving story of the trial and execution of Louis is finely told; and the pictures of most of the great battles fought by Napoleon, particularly those of Eylau, Friedland, and Wagram, are drawn with great vigor, distinctness, and effect. The fearful history of France, during the Reign of Terror, which has so often tasked the descriptive powers of the most eloquent writers of our age, was never presented in a manner more forcible and impressive than that of Mr. Alison. Indeed, when he is simply carrying forward

the narrative, and relating the various events as they occurred, his style is generally clear, vigorous, and in good taste. It is only when he stops to moralize on the several occurrences, and when he is beset by the pestilent ambition of fine writing, that his language becomes tumid, labored, and incorrect. It had been well for him, if he had kept in mind the remark of an able critic, that "half of the affectation and offensive pretension we meet with in authors, arises from a paltry ambition of being eloquent and ingenious out of place."

We could wish that the reflections, with which Mr. Alison has loaded his narrative, were not open to more serious objections, — that they did not so frequently rest on preconceived opinions, on national and party prejudices, — that they were not so generally superficial and commonplace. Many lessons are taught with terrible effect by the great events of the French Revolution, and the observer is sadly deficient in sagacity and penetration, who can find in them nothing but a solemn warning against the evils of democracy. We do not object to this moral of the story, so far as it goes. Every friend of free institutions, every loud-tongued advocate of the rights of the people and of their capacity to elect their own rulers and manage their own affairs, may learn wisdom and moderation from the crimes and the punishment of the French Jacobins, and the delusion and sufferings of the French people. But the same history gives a warning quite as impressive to the favorers of aristocratic governments, and the prejudiced opponents of all reform. It shows that oppression and misrule, the obstinate retention of old customs, and the bigoted support of the privileges of the few against the rights and the wants of the many, may be equally destructive to both parties in the state, — to the ruling powers, who may be exposed ultimately to every species of injury and outrage from an exasperated populace, and to the uninstructed people, who may be taught by mournful experience what a sad and difficult task it is to govern themselves. Mr. Alison reads but half the lesson, and thereby commits as great an error as if he had never opened the book. He has not coolness and judgment enough to weigh all the facts on the record, and to draw a conclusion which shall harmonize with all, and be applicable with certainty to future cases. His mind is not sufficiently comprehensive to take in all the

aspects and bearings of his subject, nor sufficiently acute to perceive how often his story contradicts the moral that is drawn from it. He is fair and candid as a narrator, but not as a reasoner, and he very ingenuously supplies the materials for contradicting his own theories.

There are different modes of considering the great drama of the French Revolution, according to the several points of view assumed by the different historians, or the bias which is given to their reflections by their preëstablished opinions on the nature of various governments. The French republican writers have inclined, of late, to speak of the whole course of events as directed by an irresistible fatality, by which the actors in them were impelled to do a work that was often repugnant to their feelings and wishes, and which produced results that they had never contemplated. They were passive agents in the hands of a terrible Destiny, and, therefore, were not accountable either for the follies or the crimes which they committed. Fate willed that the Revolution should take place, — that it should go on and prosper, — though disorder, suffering, and criminality of every kind, were the attendants or the means of its progress. The nobles were exiled, religion was suppressed, prisoners were butchered, the King was murdered, cartloads of men and women, of all ranks and classes, were dragged daily to the guillotine, because it was necessary that these things should be, in order that a reaction should not take place in favor of tyranny, and that France should not be overrun by the armies of the stranger. No detestation is expressed of the character and motives of the agents in this fearful work, but only admiration and respect for the terrible energy and audacity which they showed, in vindicating the rights of man and saving their country. Many innocent victims fell, but their sufferings and death, and the general misery and anarchy that prevailed, ought not to be regretted, since all was necessary for the safety of the republic.

This is the theory of the Revolution, which is set forth by Thiers, Carlyle, and some other popular writers of the day, and certainly a more detestable one was never framed. It is quite a prevalent one in France, where extravagant speculations on history and politics meet with a more favorable reception than in most other countries. We have ourselves conversed with intelligent Frenchmen who openly

defended these views, saying that the Reign of Terror was indeed a terrible thing, but it was inevitable, and the only mistake committed was in putting a stop to it too soon, for many political calamities thereby occurred, which might have been averted, if a few more thousand heads had fallen. Mr. Alison is a conscientious and pious man, and he rejects this theory, as repugnant alike to all moral and humane feelings, and to common sense. Unluckily, he puts one in its place, which varies quite as widely from the truth, by going to the opposite extreme. We shall have occasion to consider his views at length ; but, meanwhile, we must say a word on a slight modification of the French estimate of the Revolution, which finds some upholders in this country.

This doctrine is, that the crimes of the Jacobin party in France, however atrocious in themselves and melancholy in their consequences, ought not to draw down general indignation on the direct authors of them, but rather on the privileged classes in France, whose contempt for popular rights and continued oppression of the lower orders finally brought upon their own heads a long delayed and righteous retribution. We do not suppose, that persons who look at the subject in this light wish to justify all the acts of Danton, Marat, and Robespierre ; but they desire to call off our attention from the infernal proceedings of these men, and to fix it on the noble object which they had in view. But we do not believe in the propriety of hiding such crimes from notice, nor in the justice of the plea which is set up in order to palliate them. The people who cannot vindicate their personal rights and national independence, except by such means as these, do not deserve to be free. It may be true, that a salutary warning to all oppressive governments is offered by the terrible severities practised by the French Revolutionists ; but these same acts have brought a reproach on the whole cause of freedom and reform, and go far to justify the arbitrary proceedings of rulers, who may stop the first outbreak of popular spirit, and allege their motive to be a just regard to the rights of humanity and the welfare of their subjects. It must be remembered, that the Revolutionary tribunal was set up, and the Jacobin party began its inhuman career, long after the real contest was decided, and the first object of the struggle was gained. The battle of freedom was fought and won in 1789. After the capture of

the Bastille, on the 14th of July in that year, the whole power was virtually taken from the hands of the King, and lodged in the National Assembly. All the privileges of the nobility and the feudal burdens were destroyed in a single night, on the motion of the nobles themselves; tithes were suppressed, and the ecclesiastical property was seized for the benefit of the state; the trial by jury was fixed by law, *lettres de cachet* were done away, the national guard was organized, the most oppressive imposts were abolished, and, to crown all, a right of suffrage, as liberal as that which now exists in Massachusetts, was determined by the constitution, and thereby the principle of universal equality was recognized, and all authority was admitted to flow from the people. The free government established with these provisions and safeguards existed for three years, till the fatal 10th of August, 1792, when the populace of Paris established the sacred right of insurrection, and anarchy and butchery began. The Jacobins then ruled France with a rod of iron for nearly two years, and a more cruel and tyrannical government never existed under the worst of the Roman emperors or the despots of the East than in their "free and indivisible republic." We see not how it is possible to find either cause or palliation for their proceedings in the circumstances which preceded, or in those which were contemporary with, the establishment of their power. It is an outrage on common sense, to affirm that they were rendered necessary either to vindicate or preserve the liberty of the country.

Besides, most of the victims during the Reign of Terror were neither the persons who opposed the Revolution, nor those whose crimes had brought it on. Many of them had had nothing to do with the course of public events; many others were among the earliest advocates and defenders of the rights of the people. By their fate, the terrible prophecy of Vergniaud was accomplished, and "the Revolution, like Saturn, devoured its own children." If some of the nobles were rightfully put to death, because the order to which they belonged once exercised odious privileges, and had been guilty of oppressive acts, surely, no similar consideration justified the execution of Bailly and Brissot, the first apostles of French liberty. If it was necessary to visit the sins of former monarchs on the head of their innocent descendant, Louis the Sixteenth, we see not what crimes were expiated

by the death of M. de Malesherbes, his aged and eloquent defender at the bar of the Convention. If it was right to execute the Queen, in order to terrify the royalists, and because she once incited the King to oppose the Revolution, we cannot perceive why Madame Roland, also, was sent to the guillotine. The truth is, the Committees of Public Safety and of General Safety, in whose hands the whole power was lodged during the period of Jacobin rule, were opposed by other factions, equally ambitious and reckless with themselves; and, knowing that their own immediate adherents were few and weak, they sought to strike down opposition, or to silence it through terror, by causing blood to flow in torrents. Meanwhile, they had the address to persuade the ignorant people, that only aristocrats and royalists were sent to the guillotine, and that their death was necessary in order to save the country. Among these aristocrats were such men as the half insane Anacharsis Clootz, and the miserable Hébert; among these royalists were Danton, who planned the massacres of September, and Westermann, who commanded the mob when they attacked the Tuileries on the 10th of August. Robespierre was never supported but by a small minority in the Convention; but the success of his system of terror was evident enough, for the majority dared not vote against him, until he was about to send them, also, to the scaffold. Then, indeed, they gained courage for a desperate effort, and the monster fell.

It may appear strange, that the people could be so far deluded as to support the miserable and cruel faction that wielded, for so long a time, the destinies of the country. But the explanation of the fact is obvious enough. The better portion of the community, the intelligent and the educated, had been driven into exile, or were shut up in prisons, or were rendered dumb through terror. The lower classes, composed of the vile populace of the most corrupt of European cities, and of the uninstructed peasantry, intoxicated by a sudden accession of power, and alarmed by exaggerated reports of foreign invasion, could not be pacified except by immediate and striking proofs of the boldness and efficiency of their government. The war raged upon the frontiers, out of their view and hearing; but they could imagine that it was ably conducted, when every unlucky general was brought home and guillotined before their own doors. They could

believe that the persons at the head of affairs were active and earnest in the cause of the people, when crowds of victims were daily sacrificed under the denomination of aristocrats and traitors. Distress and famine prevailed, for the crops were short, and the ruin of commerce and manufactures, consequent on the destruction of confidence, and the withdrawal or concealment of capital, threw vast numbers out of employment. Irritated by suffering, and unwilling to believe that the country could be reduced to so unhappy a state from natural causes, when its political condition was so much improved, they ascribed all their misfortunes to the machinations of the banished nobility, of the persecuted clergy, of the prisoners already immured in their dungeons, or of traitors within their own councils. The Convention and the Committees could not give them bread, but they could deliver up victims in abundance, as objects of popular vengeance. When the proceedings of the revolutionary tribunal were not speedy enough for the impatient ferocity of the multitude, the cry of "a conspiracy within the prisons" was raised, and the wretched inmates of these dwellings were dragged forth without a trial, and butchered at the doors. The revolutionary passions of the people were kept constantly awake by the display of new objects to be obtained by their activity and daring; the present misery which they endured was represented as the effect of the opposition offered by the royalists to the progress of innovation; and the populace were dazzled by the prospect of boundless felicity, when the liberty and equality for which they contended should be fully established.

There has been some dispute respecting the extent to which blood was shed in France, while it was under the sway of the Jacobins. Mr. Alison adopts the estimate of Prudhomme, a republican writer, whose prepossessions certainly would not lead him to exaggerate the horrors of that period. According to his account, 18,603 persons were guillotined by order of the Revolutionary Tribunal. This number is definitely ascertained. The other statements are more vaguely given, being formed in part from conjecture. Thirty-two thousand fell victims at Nantes, when the Jacobin agent, Carrier, visited that city; and, of this number, more than twenty-seven hundred were women or children, who were either shot or drowned. Thirty-one thousand perished

at Lyons, under Fouché, Couthon, and Collot d'Herbois. This estimate does not include those who were killed at the Abbaye, the Carmes, and the other prisons, on the 2d of September, or the victims of the Glacière at Avignon, or the inhabitants of the little town of Bedoin, all of whom perished. If we take into the account those who fell during the protracted and bloody struggle in La Vendée, the aggregate will be swelled to more than a million. But these last died in battle, or were killed in hot blood, during the fury and excitement of a civil war, and ought not, therefore, to be reckoned with the others, who may be considered as the proper victims of the Revolution. The whole number of these cannot fall far short of eighty thousand.

It is not a very appalling amount, say some writers ; more have fallen in two or three great battles ; more perished by violent means every year during Napoleon's career of destructive conquest. We cannot reason on the matter thus coldly, for death on the battle-field is quite a different thing from death on the scaffold. War is a great game, played by soldiers, in which life is the stake, and is cheerfully surrendered, when fortune goes against them. They are prepared for their fate, for the chances of its occurrence enter into the deliberate estimate which they form of the good and evil attached to their unhappy profession. But the victims of civil disturbances, sacrificed by popular frenzy, or by the unrighteous judgment of a civil tribunal, or the subjects of a deliberate massacre, are called upon to surrender life under circumstances most fearful to them, and most revolting to humanity. Death is embittered by the consciousness that it is undeserved, and by the want of preparation, which unguarded innocence fails to make. The heart is not steeled against the coming of the king of terrors, in a dungeon, or in a popular tumult, as it is in the presence of assembled armies, and in the excitement of a charge or an assault. A general who had braved all the dangers of war might well be unmanned at the prospect of being seized by a mob in the streets, and hung up at a lantern-post. The proper distinction between such cases is made by the very instinct of nature. The fall of a single head by an unjust sentence is felt to be a greater wrong, it shocks our moral feelings more, than the slaughter of hundreds in a military contest. We do not seek to palliate the enormities of war,

but we no more confound them in character with the horrors of a massacre in cold blood, than we do with the sufferings and deaths caused by a famine, a pestilence, or any other of the judgments of God.

From the tenor of these remarks, Mr. Alison may well infer, that we are not disposed to conceal or excuse the extravagances and crimes committed by the Revolutionary party in France. But we are still less inclined to adopt the lesson which he derives from them, and to inculcate which seems to be the leading purpose of his History. In his eyes, the French Revolution was a great experiment to test the sufficiency of popular rule, and the expediency of making any innovations in a form of government ; and his conclusion is, that the evils which marked its rise and progress, the iron despotism to which it was reduced by Napoleon, and the final conquest of France by the Allies, with the consequent wreck of all the hopes which the movement party had entertained, have for ever decided the question against the cause of the people and of reform. At least, these events, he thinks, have proved what fatal consequences must ensue from the progress of democracy ; for he seems despondingly to admit, that this progress is inevitable, and that the cause of the people must ultimately triumph, though by the ruin of all the higher interests of humanity. " Experience in every age," he observes, " has abundantly proved that the fervor of democracy is fatal to the best interests of mankind, and rapidly leads to the greatest miseries to all classes, because it subjects society to the guidance of those who are least qualified to direct it ; but yet that it is of all passions the most difficult to eradicate from the human heart, and, when once it is generally diffused, whole generations of political fanatics must be destroyed, before it can be reduced to a degree consistent with order." " The successive ambition and passions of the different bodies who rise to eminence soon occasion that frightful effusion of blood, or those wild and anarchical measures, which, by involving whole classes in destruction, necessarily lead, though by a painful process, to a restoration of the natural order of society. This it is, which, in every age, has made democratic madness terminate in military despotism ; *this is the great moral to be derived from the history of the French Revolution.*" — Vol. II. p. 226.

Mr. Alison appears to have been haunted by the spectre of democracy, till it has nearly unhinged his reason. In no other way can we explain the extravagance of his language respecting it, the frequency and earnestness with which he returns to the topic, or the contradictory assertions which he makes in his eagerness to point out all the mischiefs and dangers to which it leads. To illustrate his manner of handling this theme, we quote a few paragraphs, which might be multiplied at pleasure, for kindred passages are thickly scattered throughout the ten massive octavos of his *History*, and seem to contain, in his opinion, the whole philosophy of the subject.

“The reasonings of the learned, the declamations of the ardent, the visions of the philanthropic, have generally been rather directed against the oppression of sovereigns or nobles, than the madness of the people. This affords the most decisive demonstration that the evils flowing from the latter are much greater and more acute than those which have originated with the former; for it proves that the former have been so tolerable as to have long existed, and, therefore, have been long complained of, whereas those springing from the latter have been intolerable, and speedily led to their own abolition. The evils of democracy, when intrusted with the direction of public affairs, have in every age been found to be so excessive that they have immediately produced its overthrow; and thus the experience of individuals does not in every age present the same numerous examples of democratic, that it does of aristocratic oppression; just because the former species of government is so dreadful, that it invariably in every old community destroys itself in a single generation, while the latter often maintains its dominion for hundreds, or even thousands of years. History, indeed, is full of warnings of the terrible conflagration which democracy never fails to light up in society; and it is a secret consciousness of the damning force with which it overturns their doctrines, that makes the popular party everywhere treat its records with such contempt. But how many of the great body of the people, even in the best-informed community, make themselves masters of historical information? Not one in a hundred. Thus, in a period of political convulsion, history points in vain to the awful beacons of former ruin, to warn mankind of the near approach of shipwreck; while perfidious democracy, ever alive to the force of falsehood, or misled by the deceitfulness of sin, again for the hundredth time allures the unsuspecting multitude by the exhibition of the forbidden fruit; and popular change is eagerly

longed for by the simple masses, just because its evils are so excessive that they invariably quickly terminate the republican regime ; actual personal experience can rarely be appealed to as to the effect of a contagion which almost always consigns its victims to the grave. And thus it is that the strength of revolution consists in the very magnitude of the falsehoods on which its promises are founded, and the universally felt impossibility of bringing them, for any considerable time, to the test of actual experience." — Vol. x. pp. 510, 511.

"The reason why, in every age of the world, the triumph of democracy has immediately, or at least shortly, been followed by the destruction of all the best interests of society, and the total ruin in particular of the whole principles of freedom for which it itself contended, is clearly illustrated by experience ; and the moment it is stated, it must be seen to be one of universal application. It is not that the working classes of the community are in themselves more depraved or more corrupted than the classes who possess property and have acquired information. It is probable that all men, in every rank of life, when exposed to the influence of the same temptations, are pretty nearly the same. But there is this difference between them, and it is an essential one in its ultimate effects upon the interests of mankind that, though the dispositions of the Aristocratic or Conservative party may be just as selfish at bottom as those of the Democratic, there are several causes which permanently retain them in a comparatively fixed, safe, and beneficial course of government, and which, as they depend on general principles, may be expected to be of universal application." — Vol. x. pp. 511, 512.

"‘The rule of a mob,’ says Aristotle, ‘is the worst of tyrannies’ ; and so experience has proved it, from the caprice of the Athenian democracy, to the proscriptions of the French Revolution. The reason is permanent, and must remain unaltered while society holds together. In contests for power, a monarch has, in general, to dread only the efforts of a rival for the throne ; an aristocracy, the ascendancy of a faction in the nobility ; the populace, the vengeance of all the superior classes in the state. Hence, the safety of the first is usually secured by the destruction of a single rival, and his immediate adherents ; the jealousy of the second, extinguished by the proscription or exile of a limited number of families ; but the terrors of the last require the destruction of whole ranks in society. Measures, dictated by the alarm for individuals, become necessary when they have perished ; those levelled against the influence of classes require to be pursued till the class itself is destroyed.

"It was not a mere thirst for blood which made Marat and Robespierre declare and act upon the principle, that there could be no security for the Republic till two hundred and sixty thousand heads had fallen. Hardly any men are cruel for cruelty's sake; the leaders of the Jacobins were not more so than the reckless and ambitious of any other country would be, if exposed to the influence of similar passions. Ambition is the origin of desperate measures, because it renders men sensible only of the dictates of an insatiable passion; terror is the real source of cruelty. Men esteem the lives of others lightly, when their own are at stake. The revolutionary innovations being directed against the whole aristocratic and influential classes, their vengeance was felt to be implacable, and no security could be expected to the democratical leaders, till their whole opponents were destroyed." — Vol. II. pp. 31, 32.

"The professed object of the Decemvirs was, to establish a Republic in France, after the model of the ancients, to change the manners, the habits, the public spirit of the country. Sovereignty in the people, magistrates without pride, citizens without vice, simplicity of manners, fraternity of relations, austerity of character; such were the basis on which their institutions were to rest. There was one objection to them, that they were utterly impracticable, from the character of the great body of mankind. To accomplish this object, it was indispensable to destroy the whole superior classes of society, to cut off all those who were preëminent among their neighbours, either for fortune, rank, talent, or acquirement. This was the end accordingly proposed in the indiscriminate massacres which they put in execution. And what would have been its consequence, if completely carried into effect? To sink the whole human race to the level of the lowest classes, and destroy every thing which dignifies or adorns human nature. Such was the chimera which they followed through these oceans of blood. Politicians have no right, after such proceedings, to reproach religious enthusiasm with the reign of the saints, or the approach of the millennium." — Vol. II. p. 179.

What opinion, by way of contrast, Mr. Alison has been led to form of aristocratic and monarchical governments, will appear from the following extracts.

"It has been often observed," says Mr. Hume, "that there is a wide difference between the judgment which befalls the conduct of others and that which we ourselves pursue when placed in similar circumstances. The reason is obvious; in judging of others, we are influenced by our reason and our feelings; in act-

ing for ourselves, we are directed by our reason, our feelings, *and our desires.*' In this simple observation is to be found the key, both to the fatal corruption which democratic ascendancy never fails to produce in the state, and to the more effectual check which, in conservative ascendancy, is provided at once against its own tendency to selfish projects, and the dangerous encroachments of the other classes of society. When the holders of property are in power, and the masses are in vigilant but restrained opposition, the majority of the community, who give the tone to public thought, necessarily incline to the support of virtuous and patriotic principles, because they have no interest to do otherwise. Hence, although doubtless in such communities some abuses do prevail, and will prevail to the end of the world, from the universal tendency to corruption in mankind, when acting for themselves, and actuated by their own interests, yet, upon the whole, the administration of affairs is comparatively pure and virtuous, and the community obtains a larger share of good government than has ever yet been obtained under any other form of human institutions. Above all, in such circumstances, the public mind is preserved untainted; public spirit is general, and forms the mainspring of national action; and this invaluable temper of mind, more precious far than all laws or political institutions, not only preserves the heart of the nation entire, and forms a salutary control upon the measures of the holders of power, but, by influencing the very atmosphere which they breathe, imparts a large share of its glorious spirit to those in possession of its reins, and open to its seductions. And hence the long-continued public spirit and greatness of the British and Roman empires, and of all communities in which power has been for a long period in possession of the holders of property, and the general thought has been directed by the aristocracy of intellect.

“ But all this is totally reversed, when the popular leaders get themselves installed in power, and the democratic party are in possession of an irresistible preponderance in the state. The moment that this fatal change occurs, a total revolution takes place, not merely in the conduct of government, but in the vigilance with which they are guarded and watched by the great body of the people. The holders of power, and the dispensers of influence, find themselves surrounded by a host of hungry dependents, to whom necessity is law; and who, impelled by a secret consciousness that their political ascendancy is not destined to be of long duration, because they are disqualified to maintain it, strive only to make the best use of their time, by providing for themselves and their relations at the public ex-

pense, without the slightest regard to any consideration of the public advantage. On the other hand, the great body of the people, formerly so loud in their clamors against corruption, and their demand for a virtuous and patriotic administration of public affairs, now quietly pass by on the other side, and either openly and with shameless effrontery defend every species of abuse, because they profit by it, or preserve a studious silence, and endeavour to huddle up those nefarious, and to them beneficial excesses, under the cry of a reformation of the state in some other department, or a wider extension of the power from which their leaders derive such considerable benefit. Thus, not only is the power and influence of government immediately directed to the most corrupt and selfish purposes, but legislation itself becomes tainted with the same inherent and universal vice. In the general scramble, where every one seems on the look-out for himself, no other object is attended to but the promotion of separate interests, or class elevation; the public press seldom denounces, in general cordially supports, all such abuses, because their leaders, and the writers in its columns, are benefited by them; and, what is worst of all, public feeling becomes universally and irrevocably corrupted, because the great body of the people profit, or hope to profit, by the abuses in which the leaders of their party indulge." — Vol. x. pp. 515, 516.

"Since the creation of man, a vast majority, probably at least nine tenths, of the human race have existed under the government of single monarchs or chiefs, exercising nearly absolute power within their separate principalities. Not to mention other examples that must be familiar to every reader, the whole of Asia, embracing six hundred millions of inhabitants, or nearly two thirds of the whole human race, has, from the earliest period to the present hour, been uniformly governed by the absolute power of a single individual. Certain restraints upon the uncontrolled exercise of human power have no doubt existed in Asia as well as in other parts of the world; but they consist not in any limitation of power in the sultan or chief, but in his occasional dethronement; the remedy against the evils of oppression is, not the limitation of authority, but the murder of the despot. Great as have been the evils which in every age have flowed from the selfishness, the rapacity, and iniquities of these arbitrary governors of their species, it is yet evident that there must be some general and substantial benefits which have resulted from their rule, or it would long ago have been terminated by the common consent of mankind. Lightly as European independence may think of Asiatic despotism, philosophy will not despise a system of government under which two thirds of the

human race have subsisted from the beginning of time ; and which is so firmly rooted in universal consent that no amount of tyranny on the part of individual sovereigns, and no changes resulting from religion or conquest, have ever made them for one moment think of altering it. Whatever is found to have existed to a great extent among mankind for a very long period must necessarily have been attended with great practical advantages which have overbalanced its evils ; and the sagacious observer of such institutions, if he cannot discover their utility, will rather suspect that his powers of observation have been defective, than that mankind, for so long a period, and over so great a surface, have obstinately persisted in what was destructive to themselves. But it is evident what has occasioned this uniformity of government in the East ; the advantages of despotism are as clearly marked as its evils. They consist in the rude but effective coercion of human passion by the vigorous hand of single administration ; the substitution, it may be, of the oppression of one for what certainly would be the licentiousness of all.”—Vol. x. pp. 508, 509.

These are long extracts, but we have made them in order that the views of the historian may be fully placed before our readers, and in the hope that they will be read attentively, in connection with the following remarks. We might object to such sweeping conclusions respecting the character of men in general, and the influence of political institutions upon this character, on the ground that they rest on too narrow a basis, that they are deduced from a single experiment, which is quite insufficient to support so broad a theory. The pernicious effects of democratic power, and the general incapacity of men to govern themselves, are inferred from one trial, made in France, in 1792, under circumstances, according to Mr. Alison’s own showing, most unfavorable to success. But we prefer to insist on the more general objection, that our author’s speculations on the nature of different governments are made without any reference to the character of the people who are to be governed ; that he seems to have no idea of such a thing as fitness and adaptation in matters of politics, or that one set of institutions may work admirably in one country, while it would produce nothing but confusion, discord, and unhappiness, in another. He appears to maintain, that a democracy, or a monarchy, is a good or evil thing in itself, irrespective of the habits, condition, and general intelligence of the people among

whom it is established. To take an instance mentioned in the last of the foregoing extracts, Mr. Alison seems to think that perfect despotism is an excellent thing in central Asia. Does he believe that it might be safely introduced into the west of Europe? Is he quite sure that it would work equally well in England? He is bound to answer these questions in the affirmative, if he is entitled to argue against democratic institutions in general, on the ground that they were shamefully abused, and that they led to frightful excesses, in France, about half a century ago. No man, in the possession of his reason, would wish to establish a popular government for the serfs of Russia, the *lazzaroni* of Naples, or the licentious and degraded populace of Paris. And no man, except Mr. Alison, would suppose that the crimes of the populace last mentioned, when maddened by previous suffering, and suddenly emancipated from all external control, were fairly imputable to the cause of democracy.

Not the most earnest advocate of free institutions, we presume, would claim for them any power of modifying the whole national character, of rendering men better or wiser than they were before. This character may be more widely developed, and fully manifested, from the absence of the restraints imposed by a harsh and arbitrary government. But it will not be altered, except through the slow influence of improvements gradually introduced, of systems of education more widely diffused, and moral lessons more faithfully taught and scrupulously followed. The doctrine of the advocate of political reform, or, as Mr. Alison prefers to call it, of political innovation, is simply that, supposing men to be already wise and good enough for this particular end, freedom will make them happier. It will enable them to take care of their own interests, and, as they have the greatest stake in the matter, it is to be presumed that they will do this better than any person who is appointed, by the mere accident of birth or fortune, to do it for them. It is necessarily presupposed that they know already what these interests are, and how they will be affected by the measures of a government.

The argument which our author uses will be found, unluckily for him, to work both ways, and to be quite as destructive to the theory of the divine right of kings, as to the

defence of the rights of the people. It is, surely, quite as reasonable to charge upon the cause of monarchy all the folly and wickedness of particular kings, as to make democracy accountable for the demerits of a particular republic. Mr. Alison has made out a long and heavy indictment against the people, recounting all the offences committed by the French revolutionists. No great knowledge of history is necessary in order to make out an equally black list of the sins of monarchs, and of a privileged nobility. There is little to choose between a Tiberius, a Louis the Eleventh, a Henry the Eighth, or a Venetian oligarchy, on the one hand, and a Danton, a Marat, a Robespierre, or a Parisian populace, on the other. "The martyrdom of Louis the Sixteenth," says our author, "has thrown a sainted light over the fall of the French monarchy." The death of Hampden, and Sidney, and Warren, and Bozzaris, has placed an imperishable halo over the cause of freedom and national independence. Such historical instances may be multiplied at will, but, unless they are investigated with a cautious reference to all the attendant circumstances, as many may be adduced on the one side as on the other, and the real point at issue is left quite undecided. Our author is certainly the last person to weigh them with fairness.

The failure of the hopes of the liberal party in France is to be ascribed as much to the extravagant expectations which they entertained, as to the unwise measures by which they sought to effect their purpose. Mr. Alison has successfully exposed the folly of some of their wild theories, and seems to imagine, that, having done so, he has effectually proved the inexpediency of any political reform. But we are not disposed to burden the cause of freedom with the necessity of defending the wild speculations and strange hopes, which were held out by the philosophers of the French Revolution. These men possessed genius, learning, taste, eloquence, philanthropic intentions, in fine, almost every high quality of heart and intellect, excepting piety and common sense. They did nearly as much injury to the cause which they had most at heart, by the delusions which they fostered in their writings and speeches, as by the false measures which they adopted in action. A free government implies equality of political privileges, but it cannot create — what these men claimed as a consequence of it — equality of social condition. De-

mocracy will bake no bread for the people ; it will not remove the necessity of labor. It will not take away those original and unequal endowments which are the primitive cause of the ordinary distinctions of society, and which seem to establish the principle, as a law of God and nature, that there must be an aristocracy of talent, and a consequent unequal distribution of the goods of this life. Attack the institution of property, if you will ; but, unless you effect a new distribution of wealth every month, be sure that, before the end of the year, there will be as great a difference as ever between the fortunes of individuals. All the political changes, which the most prolific theorist can conceive, will not obviate this result, for they cannot do away with the fundamental difference in men's characters, from which it proceeds.

We may remark, in passing, that Mr. Alison is a little unfair in charging the leaders of the Revolution, even at its worst period, with a direct attack upon property. They resorted to forced requisitions, it is true, and graduated the compulsory loan on their estimate of the wealth of the individual, making it increase in a rapidly ascending ratio, according to his supposed power to bear it. But in so doing, they only adopted — carrying it a little farther, perhaps — a principle of taxation which has been put in use by every civilized government on the globe. England is practising upon it at this moment, in her property tax. But the French patriots committed nearly as great an error as that charged upon them by our author, when they encouraged the populace to expect, that the reforms which they were introducing into the government would bring about a political millennium, that social equality would be established, and equal means of happiness be placed in the hands of all, by the indirect yet speedy influence of the new constitution.

It is not true, what Mr. Alison and the *doctrinaires* of French politics, though with very different motives, have maintained, that democracy presupposes either the perfection or the perfectibility of the human race. It does not require that the whole people should be absolutely wise and absolutely virtuous, but only that the majority of them should be as intelligent, as well-informed, and as well-disposed, as are the majority of kings. This is not claiming much for them, considering the character of many who have occupied

a throne in Europe. The dream about the perfectibility of the species has visited the imaginations of philosophers and speculative men in every age, and, it must be confessed, with little profit either to themselves or others ; but we are quite sure, that this fanciful speculation is as valid for all purposes of political discussion, as are the theological considerations, through which Mr. Alison seeks to disprove the capacity of men to govern themselves. "It is not difficult to see," he observes, "what it is which in every age has led to the speedy discomfiture of every project formed for the improvement of human institutions based on democratic principles. It is the principle of HUMAN CORRUPTION."* This doctrine he explains, according to his own view of it, as follows ; "That every individual is born innocent, but with dispositions to evil, and dispositions so strong that in no instance whatever is their effect altogether avoided" ; and he goes on to assert that "an insensibility to this doctrine, or determination to resist it, is the real cause of the whole of the innumerable disasters which, in every age, have made democratic ascendancy terminate in misery, bloodshed, and ruin." We respect the motives which may induce a writer to employ an argument of this character, although we may wonder at his simplicity. Is it possible he does not see, that this principle, like every other Scriptural doctrine, introduced in such a discussion, and for such a purpose, is a two-edged sword which cuts in both directions ? In our eyes, at least, total depravity on a throne is quite as formidable as total depravity among the people. Nay, it is rather more so ; for, as selfishness is a great element of human depravity, and as, by common consent, the "greatest good of the greatest number" is the object to be attained, it would seem that the selfishness of the greatest number, if they had the power in their own hands, would be an incentive and a help for the accomplishment of this purpose ; whereas, the selfishness of kings and nobles, they being the smaller number, tends directly to defeat the happiness of the multitude. The superior acquirements of a race of monarchs, or of a privileged class, arising from their superior education, cannot obviate the effects of the evil motives and dispositions by which, according to this theory, all men are actuated. This supe-

* Vol. X. p 503. The capitals are Mr. Alison's own.

riority will only add to their capacity of doing wrong, and enable them more effectively to pursue their own interests, to the neglect or injury of those of the whole people.

Our author's reasoning is still more faulty, when, in drawing a comparison between the different kinds of government, he comes to speak of the greater cruelty of a democratic power, proceeding from the greater number of enemies whom it has to encounter or to fear. A monarch, he observes, aims to destroy only a single rival for the throne ; a nobility has nothing to dread but the existence of a faction in its own body ; while the populace fears the vengeance of all the superior classes in the state, and, therefore, endeavours to banish or extirpate them all. In the first place, this reasoning does not apply, except during the period of a revolution ; for, after the popular sway is permanently established, there are no bodies of men whose privileges or rights are disturbed by its continuance. In this country, for instance, we have no kings or nobles to dread or to persecute, since the institutions to which they belong never fairly took root in American soil. It is idle to argue from the confusion, cruelty, and bloodshed, which almost necessarily attend any great political change, against the character of the government which is formed and established by such violent means, but which exists long after the necessity of using them is done away. We do not estimate the excellence of an individual's constitution from the height to which the delirium rises, when he is in the crisis of a violent fever, but from the vigor and powers of endurance which he displays, when he is in an ordinary state of health. The character and tendency of different political institutions must be inferred from the effects produced during a long series of years, after the excitement of revolutionary passion has died out, and when the ordinary workings of the machine of state show how the interests of humanity are to be affected by it in the long run. Fortunately, some republics have lasted long enough to afford the necessary *data* for settling the question in this way, and the result may be quite unlike the conclusion adopted by Mr. Alison. A little reflection would have enabled him, from the events which he has himself consigned to history, to correct the erroneous premises upon which he has argued the question. After the fall of the Jacobins in 1794, and till the establishment of the Consular power in 1799, a purely

republican government existed in France, under the Directory ; and, though faulty enough in other respects, it is no more open to the charge of cruelty than any of the aristocratic or monarchical governments with which it contended.

But we go further in our objections to the extraordinary argument here used by the historian. We wholly deny his proposition, that a democracy is more cruel than a regal or an aristocratic government, because it has more enemies to fear. Rival candidates for the throne are not the only or the most formidable foes which disturb the security of monarchs. They have also to dread the hostility of their people, and it is not often by lenient means that they attempt to subdue the insurrectionary spirit. It is as much the interest, and it has been as much the custom, of kings to crush their disaffected subjects by severe measures, as of a revolted people to take a bloody revenge for the misery and oppression which they have suffered. Charles the First and Louis the Sixteenth perished on the scaffold, victims, it may be, of the unjust resentment of those whom they formerly governed. But we cannot think only of them, or of other murdered kings ; for a noble army of martyrs in the patriotic cause, as distinguished and far more numerous than they, also claim our sympathies. Nor is the case much better for Mr. Alison's assertion, if we compare the clemency of the nobles with that of the people. The detestable oligarchy of Venice became a byword among the nations for its cruelty. Has our author never heard of the " Bridge of Sighs," or of the " Lion's mouth " in the ducal palace, or of the hundred stories connected with them, as terrible as any relating to the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris ? The history of the Roman Patriciate is that of one long-continued struggle, not merely of opposing factions within their own body, but also of the whole order with the Plebeians, or the mass of the people, whom they oppressed ; and the fate of the Gracchi proves that the victory of the nobles was not always a bloodless one.

And this leads us to remark on another of the extraordinary applications of historical facts, which Mr. Alison makes in support of his reasoning. We refer to his allusion to the devastating conquests of other countries by the Roman legions, and to the oppression practised upon the subjugated provinces, as instances of " the evils which republican ambi-

tion brings upon mankind." We refer our readers to a passage, (Vol. X. page 510,) which we have not room to quote. We have read history differently. Most of the foreign wars undertaken by the misnamed republic seem to us to have grown out of the crimes or the fears of the nobility. Their aggressive conduct provoked hostilities, and they welcomed the war as a means of draining off into the army the overflowing population, whom they could not, at the same time, feed and keep in subjection at home. The people often refused to enlist, till they had obtained a redress of grievances from the Senate, and that body frequently saw with pleasure the progress of a foreign enemy, which relieved them from more formidable domestic foes. The enmity of other countries was provoked, and insurrections excited in the conquered provinces, by no cause so frequently as by the unjust, rapacious, and oppressive conduct of those scions of the Patriciate who were sent abroad as proconsuls and generals of the armies. Besides, the most extensive foreign conquests were made, just at the time when even the poor semblance of a republic was tottering to its fall, and by the very men who caused its overthrow. Julius Cesar carried the eagles of the legions much farther than they were ever borne by his predecessors, and by this success prepared the way for a victory over the aristocratic faction which supported his rival, and over the liberties of his country. It is true, there was a popular element in the administration, but it was so skilfully checked and balanced by the distribution of electoral power, and by the art, wealth, and influence of the nobles, that it existed less in reality than in name. Our historian is welcome to all the illustrations, which he can gather from Roman history, of the evil effects of popular power, even when the state was considered free. He may even push his researches further, and, from a comparison of the history of the Empire with the annals of the Republic, gain some new light respecting the tendencies of different forms of government. Whatever oppression and cruelty were practised by Rome under the consuls, or to whatever party in the state these unjust acts may be attributed, we fancy no one will consider them as equal, in respect of their injurious effects upon the well-being of mankind, to the manifestations of wickedness and folly by many of the Roman emperors.

But the most striking illustration of his argument, because

it is the best known and the easiest to be studied, is found in the practical operation of the republican institutions of this country. Mr. Alison's chapter on America is an elaborate and interesting one, though it is so slenderly connected — through the late war with England — with his main subject, the history of Europe during the French Revolution, that we suspect it would hardly have found a place in his work, if it had not been for its intimate bearing on the political discussion, into which he enters with so much earnestness. It is quite apparent, then, that a strong bias existed in his mind, when he first undertook a general summary of information respecting the condition, politics, and prospects, of the United States. The lesson taught by American experience of a popular government was previously determined by his feelings and prejudices, and he investigated the subject in order to discover evidence only on one side. In such a case, it was inevitable that he should make blunders, but we were not prepared to find them so numerous and glaring as seriously to impair the credibility of other portions of his work.

With his usual caution, he has given the authorities in the margin for the principal statements in the text, and therefore it is only in the incidental and unguarded allusions to facts, made in the middle of a sentence, that he falls into the gross errors in which he is wholly unsupported by the testimony of others. But Mr. Alison's experience ought to have taught him, that further precautions were required; that it was necessary, not only to accumulate, but to weigh authorities, in order that he might not go on merely repeating the blunders or the calumnies of other writers. De Tocqueville and Chevalier were tolerably safe guides, though even into their works, the theoretical and generalizing spirit peculiar to a Frenchman has led to the introduction of some unfounded or exaggerated statements. But what persuaded our author to follow with implicit credence in the track of the whole herd of English tourists, — to trust such observers as Captain Hall and Miss Martineau? Most of the unfavorable statements respecting the working of the institutions, and the character of the people, of this country, are made on the authority of these two writers; though the ardent loyalty of the one, and the speculative Jacobinism of the other, rendered them equally unsafe and treacherous

guides. We have a great respect for the abilities and the character of Miss Martineau, but, while in this country, she had neither eyes nor ears for any thing that was not connected either with her views of theoretical democracy, or the abolition of slavery, and her work, therefore, as a whole, is as prejudiced and unfair as the most libellous productions of the English press respecting the United States. Having examined her volumes at length, at the time of their publication, we need refer now to only one of her statements, which is adopted without hesitation by Mr. Alison, as a proof of what is here advanced. Alluding to the character of the clergy in this country, she speaks with some respect of those members of the profession who are the most "secular in their habits of life." But "those exclusively clerical are the worst enemies of Christianity, except the vicious." What must be thought of the temper, judgment, or discrimination, of the writer who would hazard such an assertion as this, respecting a large and most respectable body of men, not one in a hundred of whom she, probably, ever saw or heard of? And, because no one ever ventured to insult the clergy, by undertaking to refute such a ridiculous assertion, Mr. Alison gravely adopts it, and consigns it to history, as a proof of the low ebb to which religion has sunk in this country!

Of the errors for which our author alone is responsible, the following is one of the most curious, in which one would think that any schoolboy might have corrected him. "*The two States of Massachusetts and New England* continued to refuse to send their contingents to the war."* He evidently supposes that New England is a separate State; and, in order that there may be no doubt about the matter, the blunder is twice repeated, on pages 319 and 369 of the same volume, where he speaks of "the Northern States of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and *New England*." This mistake is a ludicrous one, but it is not of much importance for the narrative or the arguments of the writer. As much cannot be said for the next blunder that we notice, as it has a serious effect on his reasoning and conclusions.

"All the State judges, from the highest to the lowest, are elected by the people, and are liable to be displaced by them.

* Vol. X. p. 348.

Their tenure of office is sometimes for three, sometimes for four, sometimes for six years, *but never for life.*" — Vol. x. p. 305.

We were on the point of saying, that it was but justice to Mr. Alison to mention the fact, that he was, probably, led into this blunder by M. de Tocqueville, who, in a passage quoted by our author, is made to affirm of all the judges, — even without distinction, so that the remark applies to the national, as well as to the state judiciary, — that "they are elected by the majority, and hold their offices at their pleasure." But what was our astonishment to find, on recurring to the original, that the proper qualification of M. de Tocqueville's remark was inserted in the very sentence here cited, but omitted in Mr. Alison's translation, while the words italicized in the translation are not found in the original ! The following is the passage from the French writer, which is correctly translated by our author, (Vol. x. p. 300,) excepting the clause in small capitals, which is omitted, and the clause above quoted in italics, which is an interpolation. "*Lorsqu'un homme ou un parti souffre d'une injustice aux États Unis, à qui voulez vous qu'il s'adresse ? À l'opinion publique ? c'est elle qui forme la majorité ; au corps législatif ? il représente la majorité, et lui obéit aveuglément ; au pouvoir exécutif ? il est nommé par la majorité, et lui sert d'instrument passif ; à la force publique ? la force publique n'est autre chose que la majorité sous les armes ; au jury ? le jury, c'est la majorité revêtue du droit de prononcer des arrêts : les juges eux-mêmes, DANS CERTAINS ÉTATS, sont élus par la majorité. Quelque inique ou déraisonnable que soit la mesure qui vous frappe, il faut donc vous y soumettre.*" — Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*. Cinquième Édition. Paris. 1836. pp. 143, 144.

In the common English translation by Mr. Reeve, the sentence is thus correctly rendered ; "The jury is the majority invested with the right of hearing judicial cases ; and, IN CERTAIN STATES, even the judges are elected by the majority."* We are unwilling to accuse a writer, who shows so much apparent candor and fairness as Mr. Alison, of wilfully misstating facts, and deliberately falsifying the authority cited in support of them ; but, when we remember

* Reeve's translation of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. London. 1835. Vol. II. p. 155.

that this alleged fact, respecting the want of an independent judiciary, forms an important point in his reasoning, and is referred to, again and again, in order to prove the general insecurity of life and property in the United States, it must be admitted that his character as a historian is subject to a very serious imputation. The deception could affect only a few of his English readers, for, of course, none in this country, and not many in Great Britain, need be informed, that the independence of the judges of the national courts is secured by an express provision in the Constitution, which requires, that the offices shall be held "during good behaviour," and the compensation attached "shall not be diminished during their continuance in office." With respect to the State courts, in thirteen States, the judges hold office during good behaviour; in eight others, they are appointed for periods not less than seven years, and, in some instances, these periods are for twelve or fifteen years. In two States, only, they hold office but for one year. In but one instance, are they elected directly by the people, and they can never be removed by the direct action of the people. In thirteen States, they are appointed by the legislatures; in twelve, by the governors, with the advice of a senate, or a council. They are removable only by impeachment, or, in some instances, by an address of both branches of the legislature, for which, usually, the votes of two thirds, or three fourths, of the members of each house must concur. Let Mr. Alison compare these facts with the statement quoted from him on the preceding page, and then, perhaps, he will be able to explain his extraordinary perversion of the language of M. de Tocqueville.

We have still to notice a few misstatements by our author, which are not of so much importance, except to show the hurried and careless manner in which he prepared the chapter on America. Speaking of Washington, he observes, that "one of the last acts of that great man was to carry, by his casting vote in Congress, a commercial treaty with Great Britain."* Does Mr. Alison need to be informed, that the President has no vote in Congress, and that Washington never was a member of that body after the adoption of the Constitution in 1788? He evidently refers to the

* Vol. X. p. 315.

ratification of Jay's treaty by precisely a constitutional majority in the Senate, in 1795 ; its ratification, in spite of great opposition among the people, being due mainly to the firmness and great personal influence of Washington.

Our author seems to be very ill informed respecting the powers and duties of the President, for the following blunder, one would think, could not have been committed by any one who ever read the Constitution of the United States. Any one of the authorities, that he cites in such profusion, would have put him right upon this point. "The President carries the laws into execution, but he has no share in their formation ; he can refuse his sanction, but, by a singular anomaly, though that prevents their execution, it does not prevent them from being laws, and carried into effect, when a more pliant chief of the republic is elected."* A singular anomaly, indeed ! The supposition appears to be, that, when the Executive refuses to sanction any bill passed by Congress, the law only falls into a sort of trance, from which it is awakened when any future President favors its enactment.

In speaking of the banks in this country, Mr. Alison makes the following assertion. "The law allows any rate of interest agreed on by the parties to be taken, and it is often excessive ; one *per cent.* is a usual, three *per cent.* a month no uncommon occurrence."† The law fixes the rate of interest in every State and territory in the Union ; in not one instance is it more than 8, and, in twenty-one cases out of twenty-nine, no more than 6 *per cent.* a year is allowed, the penalty being usually a forfeiture of the whole debt.‡

To show that literature meets with little encouragement in America, our author adduces the names of Cooper, Channing, and Washington Irving, as proof that "the American soil is not wanting in genius of the most elevated and fascinating character ; *but their works are almost all published in London,—a decisive proof that European habits and ideas are necessary to their (?) due development.*"§ Let us turn this reasoning the other way. 'The names of Scott, Wordsworth, and Dickens, indeed, amply demonstrate that the

* Vol. X. p. 297.

† *Ibid.*, p. 285.

‡ See the *American Almanac* for 1842. Boston. pp. 106, 107.

§ Vol. X. p. 306.

English soil is not wanting in genius of the most elevated and fascinating character ; but their works are all published in Boston, — a decisive proof that American habits and ideas are necessary to their due development.' Does Mr. Alison perceive into what an absurdity he has fallen, or does he need to be informed farther, that the justly distinguished writers whom he has mentioned all reaped their first harvest of applause on American ground, that all their works are published here, and ten copies of them are circulated here while one is sold in London ?

We are sorry to notice these instances of carelessness, or of something worse, for they throw suspicion on other portions of the work, which were probably executed with more diligence and fidelity than this unlucky chapter on America. They show, at any rate, how dangerous it is for the historian to enter upon his task with a preconceived theory firmly established in his mind, which prevents him from seeing any thing but one class of facts, or arguments affecting but one side of the question. The democratic tendency of the age, the spirit of innovation and reform, is the spectre which our author would fain exorcise by any charm, but "it will not down at his bidding." It is evident, that he intended his work should produce an immediate effect upon public opinion on subjects not directly connected with his principal theme ; for, in the latter portion of it, especially, the allusions are very frequent to events that have occurred since the French Revolution, and to the political aspect of things at the present day. This ulterior purpose has exerted a great influence, also, as we have already remarked, on his account of the institutions, and the character of the inhabitants, of this country. It has frequently betrayed him into the error, which even M. de Tocqueville has not always avoided, of attributing to our political situation many peculiarities which ought rather to be ascribed to physical circumstances, the nature of the country, the origin of its inhabitants, the religion of the first settlers, previously acquired habits, and a hundred other causes, which, independently of democracy, have had an immense influence on the tone of American thought and feeling. He is often guilty of the blunder committed by the Hamiltons and the Trollopes, who went among the pioneers of civilization, — men whose office it is to level the forests and subdue the wilderness,

and whose lives are passed on a flat-boat or in a log cabin, — and there uttered loud complaints, because they could not find the luxuries of an English drawing-room, or the intelligence and decorum which are shown in an English fashionable assembly. We pray all foreign tourists, especially English conservatives, who may hereafter visit this country, to remember that there are other influences here at work, besides a popular government, to modify the feelings and the prospects of the people.

We have no fault to find with the summary account given by our author of the events of the last war between England and this country. The narrative is, in the main, a fair one, justice being done to both parties in the contest, and the blame for the commencement of hostilities being laid pretty equally on the English and American governments. Our business is, chiefly, with the writer's general sketch of the condition and prospects of the American people, as affected by their political institutions. With what feelings Mr. Alison approached this portion of his labors may be inferred from the following extract.

“ Here, then, is a country in which, if they ever had on earth, republican principles have enjoyed the fairest ground for trial, and the best opportunity for establishing their benefits. The land was boundless, and, in the interior, at least, of unexampled fertility. The nation began its career with all the advantages and powers, and none of the evils or burdens, of civilization. They had the inheritance of English laws, customs, and descent; of the Christian religion, of European arts, and all the stores of ancient knowledge; they had neither a territorial aristocracy, nor a sovereign on the throne, nor an hereditary nobility, nor a national debt, nor an established church, which are usually held out as the impediments to the blessings of freedom in the Old World. How, then, has the republican system worked in this, the garden of the world, and the land of promise? ” — Vol. x. p. 300.

The direct answer which is made by our author to this question is startling enough; for he says, explicitly, that “ There is no security whatever either for life or property in America.” The spoliation of the commercial classes, he thinks, has already been effected; and “ the period, when the attack on landed property, if the present system of government continues, will commence, may be predicted with cer-

tainty." Is life secure, then, he asks, when property is placed in such imminent peril? "Experience, terrible experience, proves the reverse; and demonstrates that not only is existence endangered, but law is powerless against the once excited passions or violence of the people." Such wild assertions as these are harmless, for they can deceive no one, and we might pass them over in pity to the individual whose prejudices could so far overcome his judgment as to induce him to consign them to the pages of sober history. But the alleged facts on which the charges rest, may deserve a moment's consideration. Will it be believed, then, that the only support for these sweeping conclusions is found in two or three doubtful instances, related by Miss Martineau, of the practice of "Lynch law" in the western and south-western States, about as many cases of riots in some of our cities, and the political warfare against the late Bank of the United States, which Mr. Alison chooses to consider as a revolt of the indigent classes, and as an organized attack upon property? We might as well cite the dreadful murders committed, a year or two since, by Courvoisier and Daniel Good, to prove the general insecurity of life in London. Has not England had recent experience of riots and insurrections in her manufacturing towns and districts, far more serious than any which have occurred in the United States during the present century? A bitter contest, often giving rise to popular commotions, is going on at this moment between the manufacturing and the landed interest in England, and ever and anon the cries or convulsive struggles of the starving Chartists are heard, yet no one thinks of saying, that the institution of property is seriously menaced in Great Britain. At one time, as Mr. Alison himself tells us, there was a concerted opposition to the Bank of England, very much like the present political contests about banking institutions in this country, the cry there being, "To stop the Duke, go for gold"; yet our author does not maintain that there was then an insurrection of poverty against wealth in London.

These instances, although enough to expose the extravagant absurdity of the charges made against America in particular, will not suffice to disprove all that our historian has said of the evil consequences of democratic institutions in general; for most of the events referred to have happened

since the passage of the Reform bill, when, according to Mr. Alison, the evil principle of democracy was enthroned in the British Constitution, and all the evils which have since visited England must be ascribed to its fatal influence. Go back, then, to an earlier day, to the time when the Manchester mob was trampled down under the hoofs of the dragoons, or even to the period of the "No popery" riots, in 1780. London was then the scene, for several days, of more frightful excesses, committed by a maddened populace, than have ever disgraced an American city, even during the troublous period of the Revolution, and the excitement of a civil war. The elegant mansion of the Chief Justice of England was sacked and burned, the prisons were delivered of their inmates and then committed to the flames, many of the intoxicated rioters perished in the conflagrations which their own hands had kindled, nor were the tumults quelled till a strong military force had reduced the city, as it were, to a state of siege. And the supposed leader of this mob was no vulgar and low-born demagogue, but a peer of the realm. These things took place in aristocratic England, before the crown had been shorn of its brightest beams by the encroachments of the people; and no historian in those times ventured to say, that the government was, therefore, powerless, and the persons and fortunes of the citizens were at the mercy of any band of ruffians. Yet, because a crowd of persons in Boston, some eight years since, seized an obnoxious individual, and conducted him in triumph through several streets, without offering any other violence, Mr. Alison declares, that life and property are not safe in the United States.

Of the two stories borrowed by our author from Miss Martineau, we can only say, that the one relating to an occurrence at Mobile rests on very doubtful authority; she did not witness the event; the newspapers, according to her own account, never breathed a syllable about the matter; and we never heard of it till the appearance of her book. It was an article of American news that came to us by the way of England; and we have always believed, that, in this case, as in some others, some wicked wag, knowing the lady's appetite for the marvellous, especially in tales of such a class, made a very bold experiment upon her credulity. And does Mr. Alison think, on the strength of two or three "travel-

lers' stories" of this description, to establish on the pages of history so grave a charge against the character of a whole nation? The report of a dreadful affair at St. Louis, unhappily, is too true; but even this account, as given by Miss Martineau, and quoted by Mr. Alison, has all the effect of falsehood, for it is but half told. An individual committed a most atrocious crime, which excited the liveliest indignation among the people, and an impatient and furious mob tore him from the hands of the officers of justice, and put him to a most cruel death on the spot. Humanity and reason forbid, that we should justify or palliate such an action! It was a crime as abominable as that of which it formed the penalty. But it showed no indifference to right and wrong on the part of its perpetrators; it was a wild and terrible act of revenge for outraged right, which we might praise among savages, though we execrate it in a civilized community which pretends to be governed by law. As such, it was everywhere reprobated; and, as a similar event might occur under any government, it leaves no peculiar stain on the character of our institutions, or of the whole people. Even in the streets of London, the minions of the law have often had a struggle with the excited populace, who would fain have torn the criminal from their grasp, and inflicted vengeance on him more speedy than that of the courts. About a century and a half ago, a Lord Chancellor of England was exposed to great peril in this way, and he died in a few weeks, from the injuries and fright that he had actually received. Such an act manifests a strong, but ignorant and licentious, zeal for justice, and, though we deplore its occurrence, we may even proudly say, that the degraded subjects of an Eastern despotism would not be capable of such a crime.

But it is really a pitiful business to scrutinize the two or three instances of popular violence, on which our historian founds the monstrous assertion, that "the atrocities of the French Revolution, cruel and heart-rending as they are, have been exceeded on [this] side of the Atlantic." Mr. Alison himself suggests the unanswerable plea to be offered by American writers in such cases, "that it is unjust to hold their institutions responsible for acts common to them with all mankind." A longer catalogue may be formed of riot and crime, occurring during any given period, in France or England, than in the United States. And is no allowance

to be made for the fact, that popular outbreaks in those countries are kept down by a large armed force, while, here, there is nothing to restrain the people but their own sense of right? Take away from Paris the ten thousand troops of the line; remove from London that large body of armed and disciplined men in uniform, not called *soldiers*, — oh, no! freeborn Englishmen would not tolerate the presence of soldiers in such numbers, — but “the Metropolitan Police”; and then strike the balance between the popular commotions occurring in those cities, and in unguarded Boston or New York. We would not taunt Europeans with the precautions which they find necessary, in order to preserve the peace in their large cities. But do not let them seize on every instance of a trivial disturbance here, in order to show by contrast the admirable order and security which they enjoy, under the protection of the bayonet. We all know, that a price is to be paid for liberty, and, for our own part, we are not inclined to chaffer about the sum, so that we may be relieved from the necessity of meeting a soldier or a policeman at every corner. What is called “Lynch law” is as little known in New England and the Middle States as in Great Britain; and, if some lamentable instances of it have occurred in the new settlements, let any reasonable person decide, whether they are to be ascribed to the fact, that a great tide of emigrants, from all parts of the world, is flowing in upon a region which, a few weeks ago, was a wilderness, and where as yet they have hardly had time to organize tribunals of justice, or to the pernicious effects of democratic institutions. The very fact, that this flood of immigration continues, is enough to show how baseless are the charges which we are now considering. Men do not remove their household gods from a place where they are protected by a strong and just government, to one where neither life nor property is secure. The English, Scotch, and Irish do not emigrate to Turkey, though some of her fertile plains are nearly as destitute of population as our western forests.

But we have something better than indirect testimony to the peaceful, humane, and orderly character, in general, of the people of the United States. We appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober, — from Mr. Alison reasoning against democracy, to Mr. Alison, the historian, candidly narrating facts. The following are some of the admissions that escape

him, when, for a moment, he is not haunted by the fearful apparition of popular rule.

"These principles have not been abandoned by the descendants of England, in their transatlantic possessions. When the Americans threw off the yoke of Britain, they retained its laws, its religion, its institutions; no massacres or proscriptions, no confiscations or exiles, disgraced the rise of their liberty; no oblivion of the past was made the foundation of their hopes for the future. The English Church is still the prevailing religion of the land; (?) the English decisions still regulate their courts of justice; and English institutions form the basis on which their national prosperity has been reared. Amidst the exasperation of a civil war, they have never deviated from the usages of civilized life." — Vol. I. p. 49.

"Two hundred years have elapsed since the British exiles, flying the real or imaginary persecutions of Charles the First, first approached the American shores; and their increase since that time has been unparalleled for so considerable a period, in any other age or part of the world. Carrying with them into the wilderness the powers of art and the industry of civilization; with English perseverance in their character, English order in their habits, and English fearlessness in their hearts; with the axe in their hand, the Bible in their pocket, and the encyclopædia (!) by their side; they have multiplied during that long period in exactly the same ratio, and the different States of the Union now contain above seventeen millions of souls, of whom fourteen millions are of the Anglo-Saxon race." — Vol. x. p. 280.

"This marvellous rapidity of increase has hitherto not only been unattended with any addition to human suffering, but it has taken its rise rather from the prodigious extent to which, owing to the combined bounty of nature and efforts of man, general prosperity has been diffused through all classes of the community. Among the many marvels which strike an European traveler on his first approach to the United States, one of the most extraordinary is the general well-being which pervades all classes of the community." — Vol. x. p. 286.

"Nothing is more remarkable in America than the universal activity and industry which prevail in all classes of society. That the Anglo-Saxon race in Europe is laborious, persevering, and energetic, need not be told to any one who witnesses the colossal fabric of British greatness, or the vast impression which England has made in every quarter of the globe. But, enterprising as it is in Great Britain, it is not influenced by such a restless spirit of activity, such a perpetual fever of exertion, as

appears among its descendants in the New World. The vast facilities for the acquisition of fortune, which the prodigious increase of population, and boundless extent of fertile land, afford ; the entire absence of all hereditary rank or property, which opens the career of power and distinction alike to every citizen ; the engrossing thirst for gold, which springs from its being the only source of distinction and the only durable basis of power, have combined, with the active and persevering habits which they have inherited from their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, to produce in the Americans an universal spirit of industry and enterprise, to which nothing comparable has ever been witnessed among mankind. It is the fervor of Roman conquest, turned only to war with the desert ; the fever of French democracy, yet ' guiltless of its country's blood.' " — Vol. x. p. 290.

But Mr. Alison fears that we shall soon lose the good character which he has here given us. He fears that the poor, who form the majority, will soon attack the rich, and even declares that the time for the spoliation is fixed. " As soon as the majority of electors, in any of the States, have come to be persons without any interest in the soil, and when the back settlements have become so distant, by the advance of civilization, that it is less trouble to take their neighbour's fields than to go to the Far West to seek possessions of their own," then the attack on property in land will commence, commercial wealth having already fallen a prey to the spoiler. Why not say at once, When all the people become thieves, then men's purses will be in danger. There is nothing new in these lugubrious warnings ; the Halls and the Hamiltons have dinned them into our ears a thousand times. The great mistake committed by these prophets of ill, lies in supposing that, when men have the power, they will also have the will, to rob their neighbours. They either overlook, or wholly deny the fact, that there is any thing like a sense of justice or of moral obligation in man, and appear seriously to maintain that the only reason why, in any country, the many do not seize the possessions of the few is, that they are not strong enough to commit so open a robbery. We have already avowed that we are no disciples of the doctrine of perfectibility ; but we have still less faith in the opposite gloomy theory of Hobbes, — that man is a wild beast, fit only to be chained in a cell, lest he should prey upon his fellow-brutes. Why, even if moral ties had no force, and re-

ligion were but a name, if there were no punishment to be feared in this world, and no retribution hereafter, selfishness would still teach man, that it was bad policy to plunder his brother, for his ill-gotten gains would only become the prey of the next ruffian that was stronger than he. Who does not see that, before a reckless and unprincipled majority can even begin the work of spoliation, they must be not only miserably poor, but must have lost all hope of becoming rich by any means ? And what human being was ever reduced to such destitution ? The majority do not rob now, says Mr. Alison, because the majority is still composed of those who have some wealth, and each one fears for himself the rule which he would fain apply to his neighbour. But a man will guard his hopes with as much vigilance as he shows in watching over his possessions. If a general system of plunder were instituted, a man must renounce the last expectation of ever possessing wealth. The very convicts in the penitentiary have more sense than that ; the old proverb says, that there is honesty even in that community.

But it is idle to go about controverting a theory by argument, which is already confuted by experience. The political power in this country is already in the hands of those who have the least to lose and the most to gain by an attack upon property ; and what indications are there, that they are inclined to use their strength in this way ? Mr. Alison appeals to " the violent outcry which has been raised in every part of the Union against the paper credit and the commercial aristocracy." He might as well cite the present existence of a " corn-law league " in England, as a proof that the property of the landholders there is endangered. Whenever the capital and industry of a country are divided among several great interests, it is natural that jealousy should grow up between them, and that each should endeavour to gain for itself the patronage and support of the government. Each tries to push aside, to surpass, to humble, but not to rob, the other ; for capital is vested in all, and he who attacks one form of property, does his best to destroy the institution itself. In this age, neither in the United States, nor in Europe, can the jealousy existing between the various professions drive either of them to such an act of madness. Experience teaches them better. The failure of the banks and the stoppage of credit, which Mr. Alison considers as

the effect of blows aimed at the commercial classes alone, have nowhere been felt more severely than in the agricultural States. And his fears for the landholders are quite as unnecessary as his sympathy with the merchants. His theory is, that property in land is less secure in proportion as it is farther removed from the back settlements, where land can be had for little or nothing. Yet the farmer in Massachusetts sleeps not a whit less soundly than his brother in the west of New York, although he is much farther off than the latter from the forests of Michigan, or the prairies of Illinois. Mr. Alison's reasoning depends on the false assumption, that, when men cannot buy western farms at a low price, they will steal those of their eastern neighbours.

We do not seek to conceal either the evils or the dangers that wait on a popular government. He must be a resolute advocate of it, who cannot learn prudence and caution from the moral of the terrible story, which is told in the first two volumes of the work before us. But do not let these evils be confounded with others, which are common to all forms of government, because they are inseparably connected with the imperfections of human nature. In this vague talk about a pure democracy or a pure aristocracy, we must not lose sight of the proper character of our own institutions, which is, perhaps, as far removed from the one as from the other. From many of the dangers peculiar to the former we have been secured by the wisdom and foresight of the founders of the Constitution. They devised restraints on the action of the people, and, by accepting the instrument which they framed, the people submitted to those restraints, and voluntarily tied their own hands. The frame of government under which we live is a system of checks and balances, nearly as complicated and artfully arranged as that which forms the British constitution. The independence of the judiciary, the guaranty of the perpetual obligation of contracts, the division of the legislative power into two chambers, the peculiar formation and functions of the senate, the members of which are elected by the State legislatures, and not by a direct popular vote, the qualified negative upon legislative acts accorded to the President, the long term of office granted to the executive and the senate, and many other provisions, are skilfully devised and efficient limitations of the power of the majority. Many of these pro-

visions were copied into the State constitutions, or borrowed from them, and thus a double barrier was erected between the rights of the individual and the tyrant will of the multitude. Without these checks and limitations, one might as well be an inhabitant of Turkey as of the United States ; for the essence of despotism consists in the action of a sovereign without the restraint of law, no matter whether that sovereign be one man, or a privileged class, or a majority of the people. The want of such salutary restraints as these in the constitution adopted in France, in 1791, is justly considered by Mr. Alison as the chief cause of the lamentable failure of the government which the Revolutionary party sought to establish. Miss Martineau, in the ardor of her attachment to the purest form of democracy, objects to the admission of such articles into the American constitution. " The senate is an anomaly," she observes ; " the appointment of the judges for life is another departure from the absolute republican principle." We are quite of her mind. These provisions *are* wholly at variance with the theory of a purely democratic government ; and the founders of the Constitution who proposed them, and the people who ratified them, and have quietly enjoyed the protection which they have afforded for more than half a century, have thereby declared that they would not trust an unmixed democracy, but would establish in its place *a constitutional government*. We commend our fair theorist to the attentive study of the French constitution of 1791, which had no provision for a senate, and which limited the judges' term of office to three years. The history of the three years which followed the adoption of that instrument, may give her some new views respecting the comparative wisdom of the measures adopted by the friends of liberty in France, and in the United States.

But these are uncertain guaranties, it may be said, since the Constitution may be altered, and these salutary limitations of the popular power be repealed. So they may, but not at the will of a mere majority. A concurrence of two thirds in both houses of Congress, or of the legislatures of two thirds of the several States, is necessary before an amendment to the Constitution can be formally proposed, and then it must be ratified by not less than three fourths of the States, before it becomes a part of the instrument. This provision

is so complicated that it can scarcely ever take effect, and it is now justly regarded as quite a visionary thing to propose any amendment to the Constitution. The wisdom of throwing so great impediments in the way of making any alterations has been acknowledged in a high quarter; for not many years since, the "Quarterly Review"—no mean authority in Mr. Alison's eyes—regretted the want, in the British Constitution, of "that powerful conservative principle, so wisely embodied in the original frame of the American Constitution." With the exception of a few amendments proposed when the instrument was ratified, and immediately accepted, and which ought, therefore, to be regarded almost as a portion of the original draught, and excepting also an unimportant alteration, adopted in 1804, respecting the mode of voting in the election of a president, the Constitution has remained unchanged from 1788 till the present hour. It would be difficult to mention any state in Europe, which has undergone so little change as this in its fundamental institutions, during the past half century.

The continuance of this form of government during so long a period, and with so little change, whatever may be its fate in future, is a proof that free institutions are practicable. In reply, then, to our author's question, "How has the republican system worked in this, the garden of the world, and the land of promise?"—we say, that the experiment has fully succeeded. It has worked well with a generation that has passed away; and, if it fails in another, the only proper conclusion will be, not that republican institutions are impracticable, but that the men of the present day are not equal to their fathers. In accounting for the comparatively bloodless character of the English revolutions of 1640 and 1688, contrasted with the French revolution of 1789, Mr. Alison justly lays great stress upon the fact, that the English patriots were wont to regard liberty, "not as a boon to be gained, but as a right to be vindicated; not as an invasion of the constitution, but a restoration of its pristine purity. The love of freedom came thus to be inseparably blended with the veneration for antiquity." "The passion for liberty," he continues, "was thus divested of its most dangerous consequence, by being separated from the desire for innovation." By the inestimable inheritance of a Constitution, now consecrated by the lapse of more than half a century,

the Americans of the present day are placed in an equally fortunate position, and their love of the instrument itself has come to be mingled with the reverence due to the memory of its authors. Age is thus every day strengthening its hold on the public mind. Already is it hallowed in some degree with the moral power and interest, which attach to an ancient institution. Already is it the object of that love and veneration, which are due to the expressed will and the embodied wisdom of an elder generation. Party spirit at times may attack its most important provisions ; impatience under temporary evils and abuses may lead some to delude themselves with the vain conception of a more perfect instrument ; ill-judging philanthropy and enthusiasm may aim serious blows against it, under the false impression that it injures some of those high and sacred objects, of which it is, in reality, the strongest bulwark and support. But these various assaults, exaggerated in appearance by the noisy zeal and intemperate language of those who make them, cannot upheave the broad foundation on which the instrument rests. The Constitution stands like an oak already of mature growth, and, though the tempests of faction may assail it, till the branches creak and even the solid trunk quivers in the furious gust, it remains firmly rooted in the affections of the community ; for it is at once the palladium of their liberties, and the safeguard of the people against themselves.

We had purposed to say something of the character of the remarkable man, the account of whose career necessarily occupies so large a portion of the volumes now before us. But our remarks have already exceeded the usual limits of an article, and we forbear. We have commented with perfect freedom on the mistakes which Mr. Alison has committed, and the prejudices which have so evidently warped his judgment in respect to the nature and effects of free institutions, and the condition and prospects of the people of this country. But the most objectionable portions of the work have been selected for this purpose and we should be very sorry to leave the impression on the minds of our readers, that the whole is equally tainted with error. It is, in the main, an able and elaborate performance, the history of an important period skilfully told ; and there are few persons who may not find interest and instruction in its pages.

ART. VII. — *Researches concerning the Periodical Meteors of August and November.* By SEARS C. WALKER, A. P. S. Read January 15th, 1841 [before the American Philosophical Society, at Philadelphia, and published in their Transactions]. Philadelphia. 4to. pp. 53.

THE falling star is so familiar to us that it rarely attracts more than a passing notice ; and the attempt to define, distinguish from one another, and classify, such fleeting phenomena has appeared a hopeless undertaking, and has only very recently been made with regular and systematic zeal. Crude hypotheses, atmospheric, volcanic, selenitic, and cosmical, had long been afloat in men's minds ; it had been conjectured that they might be gaseous explosions, electrical sparks, aerolites, or " world-chips." Light and flighty enough for entertaining academic discussion, they could not, however, command the careful research of earnest inquirers, until there was good reason to believe that they were not of the class of the inconstant *ignes fatui*. A multitude of speculations might be enumerated, but so weak and ill-supported that a single fact is enough to disperse them. At the very close of the last century, two college lads, Brandes and Benzenberg, students of Göttingen, instituted a series of exact observations, from which it appeared that these meteors move through the air with the average velocity of twenty miles in a second, as swiftly as the earth in its orbit. This astonishing velocity, which has been confirmed by Brandes's later observations in 1823, Quetelet's in 1824, Twining's in November of 1833, and Boguslawski's in 1836 and 1837, but which is only one tenth part of the speed according to Wartmann's determination in 1838, is altogether too great to have originated in any volcanic eruption, either lunar or terrestrial, or from any conceivable explosion, while it is much too small to be attributed to electricity. It seems, therefore, sufficient of itself to make a clear opening for the cosmical view, although it would be most presumptuous, upon this isolated fact, to build a complicated theory, and to fill space with myriads of little planets. It was also inferred from these different observations, that the velocity was not the same for all the meteors, but that it ranged from ten to two