

But before stating specially by what arrangements these objects could be attained, I will take the liberty of quoting a scheme of Sismondi, prepared with a view to a Reform Bill in France, at once popular and aristocratic. This scheme will at least show that the conclusions to which the present discourse has arrived are not peculiar to the writer, but have been reached independently by one of the greatest political thinkers of the age.

‘Certainly, we have not the penetration to propose an electoral law, and if we allow ourselves here to make some calculations, it is only to make it understood how, by adopting the complicated system of the English, instead of the simple but deceptive system of the French, a much greater part of the nation might be associated in the elections, and still that share preserved to the national intelligence which it ought to have. We will propose, for example, to give two-fifths of the national representation to the democracy, two-fifths to the most enlightened and intelligent part of the nation, who inhabit towns, and there develop material prosperity; a fifth to that part occupied in intellectual interests. We will lower the census to the great framers of the American constitution. I quote his opinion from De Tocqueville:—

‘There are some, who would be inclined to regard the servile pliancy of the Executive to a prevailing current, either in the community or in the legislature, as its best recommendation. But such men entertain very crude notions, as well of the purposes for which government was instituted, as of the true means by which the public happiness may be promoted. The republican principle demands that the deliberative sense of the community should govern the conduct of those to whom they intrust the management of their affairs; but it does not require an unqualified complaisance to every sudden breeze of passion, or to every transient impulse which the people may receive from the arts of men who flatter their prejudices to betray their interests. It is a just observation that the people commonly *intend* the *public good*. This often applies to their very errors. But their good sense would despise the adulator who should pretend that they always *reason right* about the *means* of promoting it. They know from experience that they sometimes err; and the wonder is that they so seldom err as they do, beset, as they continually are, by the wiles of parasites and sycophants; by the snares of the ambitious, the avaricious, the desperate; by the artifices of men who possess their confidence more than they deserve it; and of those who seek to possess, rather than to deserve it. When occasions present themselves in which the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations, it is the duty of persons whom they have appointed to be the guardians of those interests, to withstand the temporary delusion, in order to give them time and opportunity for more cool and sedate reflection. Instances might be cited in which a conduct of this kind has saved the people from very fatal consequences of their own mistakes, and has procured lasting monuments of their gratitude to the men who had the courage and magnanimity enough to serve them at the peril of their displeasure.’—P. 179.