It is no part of my object this evening to enter upon or to provoke a
discussion of the merits or demerits, personal, political, or scientific, of
Dr. Priestley, but I may venture to assume that his name will be generally
received as so illustrious in the world of science, and so remarkable in that
of politics, that a series of letters from him, extending over a period of
twelve years, may command a small portion of the attention of the Historic
Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, though it does not happen to embrace
that portion of his life during which he was connected with these counties
by his residence at Nantwich, and subsequently at Warrington, as one of
the tutors at its celebrated Academy. The correspondence of any man
taking as active an interest as Priestley did in the stirring events of his
time would be worth perusal, were it only for the sake of comparison with
the ideas and temper of our own day; and that these letters partake of
this description of interest may be inferred from the circumstances which
led to their preservation and deposit in the Warrington Museum and
Library, whence I have brought them for your inspection.

In a letter dated 4th October, 1791, he writes to his brother-in-law,
Mr. Wilkinson:—

"I am glad that you approve of my views with respect to France. Now I think it must be evident to every body, whether they will acknowledge it or not, that that country must rise and that this cannot well go higher. Whether any addition be made to our burdens or not they must begin to be felt heavier and heavier, and the wretched illiberal spirit of the court will make it despicable. * * * I spoke to Mr. B. Vaughan, who has placed my money in France, and he says he will write to you about yours. * * * He has already placed a considerable sum in the French funds, and many, I doubt not, will soon do the same, as was the case with the American funds, which have risen 30 per cent. since I placed what I could in them. Mr. Russell got 30 per cent. per annum by some money that he happened to have in their funds at a very critical time."

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His correspondent expresses his entire accordance with these sentiments, and remits £9000 for investment in stock, in a country which he looks upon both as favorable for manufacture and commerce, and as a place of refuge from persecution. This sum appears to have been subsequently made over to Dr. Priestley. Within less than eighteen months he writes that he considers the money invested in the French funds as lost, and from that time till the year 1798 the correspondence narrates the efforts he was making to recover from the French government a portion, however small, of the wreck of his property. At last he writes from America on the 15th of March, 1798:

"At the solicitation, I suppose, of Mr. Adit, the late Ambassador from France, the Directory have made an arret in my favor. It is sufficiently complimentary, but the benefit I shall derive from it is very little, if anything at all, while I am here. They allow me in cash 1200 livres per ann., which is about £50 sterling, till the interest of my money in their funds shall amount to as much. Their funds must be very low indeed if £10,000 do not yield fifty per ann. when we were led to expect £600."

It is to the constant allusions to this subject, and the pecuniary transactions between Dr. Priestley and his brother-in-law, arising from the difficulties in which the former was involved by his misplaced confidence in the credit of the French Republic, that the preservation, as a mere matter of business, of between sixty and seventy most interesting letters is to be attributed. After lying for half a century among the papers which had come to the hands of the firm which I represent, as Mr. Wilkinson's family solicitors, I accidentally stumbled upon one which from its signature interested me as an autograph, and finding that it was not a mere nugget, but that the whole bundle was auriferous, I arranged the correspondence in order, and procured the consent of Mr. Wilkinson's family to its deposit in its present place of preservation.

Before describing the correspondence more particularly it may be convenient to sketch very slightly the history of Dr. Priestley, down to the date at which it commences. He was born of respectable parents, of Calvinistic tenets, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in the year 1733, and his education was commenced at a school at Batley, and completed by Dr. Ashworth at Daventry. In after life his religious opinions differed materially from those of the school in which he was brought up, and at
successive periods he passed through all the changes from Calvinism to Arianism, and Socinianism, but remained through the whole progress a firm believer in the Jewish and Christian revelations, according to the testimony of his biographer Dr. Aikin, who warmly defends him from the charge of having held even more extreme opinions. At the age of 22 he took charge of a congregation at Needham Market, in Suffolk, and afterwards removed to Nantwich, where he remained until, in 1761, he became tutor in the department of Polite Literature in the Warrington Academy, and shortly afterwards married a sister of the gentleman to whom the principal portion of the letters to which I have to call your attention are addressed, Mr. Wilkinson, a celebrated Ironmaster in Staffordshire and North Wales. It is not necessary that I should detain you with any notice of the various works by which Dr. Priestley now began to make himself known, in the world of Literature and Science. Suffice it to say, that at the close of his connection with the Warrington Academy in 1768, he had obtained a more than European reputation by his researches in Chemistry, Electricity and Optics. After a short residence at Leeds he accepted an engagement with the Earl of Shelburne, which, in the nominal capacity of his Lordship's librarian, or literary and philosophical companion, afforded him an opportunity of devoting himself to his favorite pursuits, and retiring from it after some years with a liberal pension, with the aid of which, and additional subscriptions from several friends of science to enable him to carry on his experiments, he determined to devote himself to philosophy; and settled at Birmingham, for the purpose of deriving the utmost advantage from the mechanical resources of the workshop of the world. It would have been fortunate for his memory if such pursuits had engrossed the whole of his attention, though it is only justice to say that the space which he occupies in the politics of the period is less attributable to the extent to which he took part in political discussions, than to the fact of his having been the principal victim of those savage riots which disgraced the town of Birmingham, when popular violence, aroused by a public dinner on the 14th July, 1791, (at which however Dr. Priestley was not present) to celebrate the destruction of the Bastile, was directed against him on account of the favorable eye with which he was supposed to regard the French Revolution: and amidst the conflagration of places of worship and private property, his house, his library, manuscripts, and
philosophical apparatus were consigned to the flames, and (to use the language of Mrs. Barbauld),

"the name
"On which delighted science loved to dwell,
"Became the banded theme of hooting crowds."

It is shortly before this period that the correspondence commences, and the following letter dated from London the 20th August, 1791, gives an interesting picture of the state of public feeling on the subject:

"You were so obliging as to give me an invitation to any of your houses in the present unsettled state of my affairs, and having continued here nearly as long as was convenient for me, on account of receiving and answering letters, I shall be happy with your leave to spend a month or 6 weeks at Castlehead, especially as I understand that you are there yourself. I shall never forget how agreeably I passed my time there before, and what satisfaction I had in composing several of my works in your Wren's nest. There I wish to finish an Appeal that I am writing to the public on the subject of the riots in Birmingham, which I intend to publish, not immediately, but some time hence, when it will probably have a greater effect. My son William is with me, and as unsettled as myself. He was to have been 3 years with Mr. Russell, in order to his being afterwards settled in America, but as it is now probable that I shall not return to Birmingham, it will be an uncomfortable place for him. He exposed himself much in the riots in saving what he could of our things, and was so marked by the rioters as to be in much danger. Besides the great fatigue he underwent required some recruit. He therefore came hither, and is very useful to me as an amanuensis, and in that capacity, if you please, I will bring him with me to Castlehead. * * *

The Dissenters at Birmingham have been much dispirited, but they now begin to take courage in consequence of having discovered some very foul practices of their adversaries, which must expose them to infamy. The particulars Mr. Russell forbears to mention, but among other things he has in his possession a forged letter which was made use of to inflame the mob both at my house and his. The magistrates, who deserve the severest punishment, have had the thanks of a Town's meeting, and presents voted them, and Mr. Galton informs me that they have sent an Address to the King so fulsome and abject as must disgrace them for ever, while that of the Dissenters is manly and does them credit. * * * I thank God I never enjoyed better health or spirits than I have done since this affair, nor has it lost me a moment's sleep, except in consequence of being driven about four nights running, without being able to go to bed except for a few hours."

In another letter from London, on the 8th September, on the same subject, after arranging his plans for a visit to Castlehead, he writes:
In our way I have promised Mr. Wedgwood to call upon him, and may make a short stay there. I had proposed to go by Manchester, but I find by a letter just received from Joseph that my friends there are afraid to receive me. Thus the chased deer [he had written "stricken," but his spirit rebelled against the word] is avoided by all the herd. To give you some idea of the state of things at Birmingham, having a cover, I enclose a letter just received from Mr. Galton. I also enclose a Dialogue which has made some noise in Birmingham from being supposed, in the present state of men's minds, to contain much treasonable matter. It has been represented to be as bad as the Handbill; and the printer's boy has been in custody. The printer advertizes it, and says that the writer would appear when called for. At length they have found nothing treasonable in it."

Mr. Galton's letter alluded to in the above is as follows:

"I have this moment only received your favor by Mr. Wm. Priestley, and rejoice most sincerely in the idea of seeing you. If you incline to come to Birmingham, which I think much better and more honorable, pray inform me the hour you expect to arrive and where, for I will meet you at the coach and accompany you in your perambulations about the town, happy in an occasion to avow the most explicit attachment to a person whose friendship does me the greatest honor. If you leave the coach at what was once your house, I will meet you there. It shall never be said that Dr. Priestley was not received with open arms by one on whom he has conferred such obligations. The idea of fear Mrs. Galton and myself equally despise, nor do we really think there is any danger, but if the alternative were that we should lose our house or our esteem for ourselves, would not pause a moment." 

In an undated letter, written in the same month, after alluding to his "sad disaster at Birmingham," and mentioning his determination to take up his abode at Hackney, he writes:

"It is now evident, from a variety of circumstances, that Government is not displeased with the riots in Birmingham. Some of my friends, who had occasion to wait on Mr. Dundas, say he did nothing but rail at the Dissenters in general and myself in particular; and Bishop Prettyman, Mr. Pitt's tutor, has lately delivered a flaming charge against us. Also the first sermon which was preached before the King at Weymouth was against Sectaries, this being considered as the surest road to preferment. On this account I consider my stay in this country as very uncertain. Many of my friends seriously think of going to France, and the neighbourhood of Pigou in Burgundy has been pointed out as convenient for their manufactures. If this should take place, and my son William get a settlement in France, which I hope my friends there will find for him, I shall probably go too. Joseph says that many Dissenters will probably emigrate from Man-
Chester, and that if all be well he will be able to go too in a few years to great advantage. I have been advised by Mr. Vaughan to put the £500 you kindly sent me into the French funds, and the rest of my little property is in the American funds. I wish to have as little in this country as possible. I am told it is the wish of the ministry to drive me away, and in this we shall soon be agreed."

I have already quoted from a letter of the 4th October, with reference to the French funds, but the following extract is too curious to be omitted:

"I think I told you that I had the offer of a completely furnished house near Paris. To-day I have received a very flattering address from a society at Thoulouse, in the name of the town and neighbourhood, inviting me to reside in the south of France, and intimating that one of the now vacant monasteries will be destined for my use. I have however now absolutely taken a house at Hackney, and have taken measures to fit it up for my use. Whether I shall succeed Dr. Price is uncertain, as some of the more timid part of the congregation are apprehensive of a tumult if I should settle there."

On the 23rd November, 1791, he writes:

"I wish to put into your hands my Appeal to the Public, in its present state. Several of my friends in Birmingham wish to have it either suppressed or much softened, but my friends here approve of it as it now is. I wish to know how it strikes you. In my own opinion, if I write at all, it ought not to be with less spirit than I have usually shewn, and there are as bold and as offensive things in several of my former publications as in this. However, if cancelling a few leaves will satisfy my friends, I shall have no objection to do it. The publication will be in good time if it be about the meeting of Parliament. * * * I have got into the house I have taken at Clapton. * * * If it was not that I must have room for a Library and Laboratory, it is larger than I ought to have, but without room for these things, though they be expensive, I am useless, and the few years of active life that according to the course of nature I may yet enjoy, I wish to make the most of. I proposed to my congregation at Birmingham to go down and preach to them till Christmas, but they thought it unsafe, and last Sunday Mr. Coates delivered the sermon that I had composed for the opening of their new temporary place, which was a riding school. On Sunday se'nnight I began to preach at Hackney, but the fears of many of the congregation are not yet wholly vanished. I am now unpacking such of my books and papers as my friends have been able to save from the general wreck, and it is indeed affecting to see the shocking havoc that has been made of them though more things are preserved than I could have expected."

The bitterness of public opinion against him seems to have increased, rather than diminished. On the 18th February, 1793, he writes:
"You may justly think yourself happy in being out of the Mania, as you properly call it, that prevails here. I really begin to think myself not quite safe. I can give you no idea of the rancour that is now more than ever prevalent against me, as it shews itself in hand-bills, and every other way calculated to excite mischief. However, I keep myself as quiet as I can, and perhaps in time the storm may blow over. Your sister, who never was alarmed before, begins to be so now, and if my sons can get settled in France or America, will have less objection to follow them than she had some time ago."

On the 19th of March, after mentioning that his son William had arranged to emigrate to America, he adds:

"What he can do when he gets thither I cannot tell, but there was no other choice for him. No son of mine can ever settle in this country, unless things should take a turn that we have no reason to expect."

In the same letter he writes:

"Your sister is a good deal better, but much distressed about getting servants. Our cook-maid is just married, and the other is to be so soon; and so violent is the spirit of party, that it is hardly possible to get a servant, and those we have are exposed to so much abuse from the neighbours of the lower class, that it is as much as they can bear. I have proposed to her to give over housekeeping for a time."

I have dwelt at so much length on this particular portion of the correspondence, from its bearing on the personal history of Dr. Priestley, and the picture it affords us of the state of public feeling, that I must pass somewhat more rapidly over other subjects. He alludes from time to time to the settlement of his sons successively in America, and at length he writes on the 16th of May, 1793:

"When all my sons are settled in America, I do not think I shall stay long after them, especially if a scheme, that my son says is talked of, of establishing a liberal college in the back settlements of America, should be carried into execution. In this case I would go soon, and devote myself wholly to it. My own library (to which Mr. Lindsay will add his) and apparatus will make a good beginning. The colleges they have in the old towns were in a great measure, I believe, founded by Englishmen, and I do not think men of fortune can perpetuate their names more effectually or usefully than by such foundation in such a country as America. The college here is likely to fail for want of sufficient support, and the money contributed to it has been laid out so improvidently, that few persons will be disposed to give it any assistance."

The plan alluded to in the last letter was temporarily abandoned, but in
an undated letter, apparently written about September, 1793, after alluding to a suggestion of a friend to make a purchase in America, he writes:—

"I have not, however, complied with his request, because if I had, and nothing could be got from France, I should have nothing to subsist on when I got to America. I have desired him to lay out £2000, which I mean for the use of William and Harry. I give up something more than £300 per annum in leaving this country, and what employment I shall be able to get there is uncertain. It will probably be in some of their colleges, for I cannot expect to get anything as a preacher, at least for some time, and on account of my age it could not continue long. As a lecturer I may hold out longer. To abandon an advantageous and agreeable situation for such an uncertainty, so late in life, is sometimes rather painful, but it is absolutely necessary, and I trust in that good Providence which has attended me hitherto, and on my own exertions. If what you have generously given me in the French funds yield anything near its value, I shall be quite easy. To make this more secure, I have been with the American ambassador, to acquaint him that I am going to settle in America, as a citizen of the United States. This he is to transmit to France, which it is thought will secure my property there. He thinks there will be no American war, unless the combined Powers succeed against France. There are, however, he says, some in the Cabinet here who wish to provoke the Americans to hostility, thinking it better to have them open enemies, than as they believe them to be, secret ones. The piracies of the Algerines, he says, were certainly produced by the English consul at Algiers. As all my friends advise me to go as soon as I can, I have taken my passage in a vessel that is just arrived from New York, and purposes to sail again the middle of next month, but it will probably not be till the end of it, or the beginning of the month following."

On the 9th of January, 1794, he writes:—

"The person who brought me Mr. Drewley's letter, said there was an address to me, signed by the principal gentlemen of New York, encouraging me to settle with them, and, as he thought, requesting me to undertake some department of their college. I have not yet received it. If I do, I shall not hesitate to accept of it, as that would make my leaving this country a little more easy and more reputable."

His last letter in England is dated on the 7th February, 1794. He says:—

"I do not pretend to leave this country, where I have lived so long and so happily, without regret; but I consider it is necessary, and I hope the same good Providence that has attended me hitherto will attend me still. I am preaching, and at the same time printing, a set of Discourses on the Evidences of Revelation, and in the preface to
them, or to a Fast sermon which I shall publish, I propose to take leave of this country."

On the 14th of June he announces his arrival in New York. The following account of his reception reminds us of what we have read of American receptions of notables nearer our own day:

"I have been received here in a manner very flattering to me, almost every person of consequence in the place having visited me, and many addresses having been presented to me, which, with my answers, are printed in their newspapers, and circulated through the Continent. This is rather troublesome to me, but could not be avoided."

From Philadelphia he writes:

"We have now been here a week, and I can give you a better account of our probable destination than I could do before. I have been received with the most flattering attention by all persons of note, as I was at New York, which, though troublesome, promises well with respect to my settlement in the country. I am much pressed to take a house and reside in this city, but the expense of living here is so high, that I could not well do it, without giving lectures, or binding myself to some employment, which would interfere with my philosophical and other pursuits, whereas, if I reside in Northumberland, the country town the nearest to our proposed settlement, the expense will be much less, and I shall have more leisure. Besides, your sister, as well as myself, dislikes living in such a city as this. We want no more society than we shall have among ourselves at Northumberland, and I can reside a month or two every year in this city during the sitting of Congress, which will in all respects answer as good purpose as living constantly here. The greatest objection relates to the difficulty and expense of getting all my packages from this place to Northumberland, but the expense will be compensated by the difference of expense in one year's living. Besides that, provisions are as dear in this place as in London; house-rent and firing are much higher. Such a house as I have generally lived in in England would be here at least £150 sterling per annum, and firing would be about half as much, but then the taxes are inconsiderable. At Northumberland as good a house will not exceed £30 per annum; firing will cost nothing but the cutting of the wood, and provisions about one half. It is to be feared, however, that the high prices of everything will gradually extend to the country. The rise of prices, or depreciation of money, has been cent per cent in little more than two years, owing, it is supposed, chiefly to the introduction of paper money. This circumstance has had an extraordinary effect in quickening the industry of the country, making it highly advantageous to the man who has everything to sell, but hard upon the man who must buy."

The accounts he gives from time to time of his situation and prospects
in America would lead me too much into detail; but the following extract from a letter dated 24th July, 1795, may serve as a specimen:

"I think I told you that my son Harry was farming for himself. For activity, industry, and good judgment (as judges say) he has few equals, though he has many difficulties to struggle with, his land being all to clear. He lives in what is called a log-house, which has only one room, and a garret containing hay and straw above him. He is about, however, to build a stone house, with two rooms, but no second story. William is returned from Boston, where he had the ague all the winter. He, though tender and delicate, is to take part of Harry's land, and they will build near together. Notwithstanding their educations, the minds of all my sons, I am happy to perceive, are not above their condition. William is to marry a young woman, daughter of a reputable farmer, and one who has been used to the management of a farm some years, for she is about 23, and is the eldest daughter of a pretty large family. He consequently expects no fortune, and yet he is not at all discouraged. As he has lost much time, and suffered much in France and elsewhere, I think it right, and his brothers think so too, that he should have something more than they, and I propose to give him £300 more than his thousand, though I cannot do it immediately, the house I am building, some purchases with a view to it, and the settlement of Harry (though I have not as yet given him more than £500) having taken all that I can at present spare. But with moderate industry, any man may do well enough here. We hope to get our college established the next year, and if it yield me any income, I shall be better able to help my sons. Your sister is rather too fully employed in fitting up our temporary house and providing everything for the other. In all this I take no concern, but I am now as busy in my own way, writing and experimenting, as in any period of my life. I shall soon add two more volumes to my Church History, and I am about to send to the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia an account of some experiments I have lately made in pursuance of those I began at Hackney. Considering the distance I am at from the sea, I am better situated for experiments than you would imagine. We have ingenious workmen of almost every kind in this place, so that I hardly want anything but a glass house. Living so far from a seaport, I have found great difficulty in sending what I have printed here to England. One, however, by accident, has got thither, and Mr. Lindsay has reprinted it. It is my Answer to Mr. Paine, of which he had my directions to give you a copy. I hope you have received it. I am now printing Observations on the Increase of Infidelity, and hope to have better success in sending it."

Another from Philadelphia on the 22nd of April, 1796:

"I was engaged to spend about two months in this city, in order to deliver a course of sermons on the Evidences of Revelation, and, if possible, to establish an Unitarian congregation here. I have delivered
one of the discourses to a very numerous and respectable audience, especially of the members of Congress, and everything promises well. I am determined to decline all pecuniary advantage from the scheme, and as I am a guest of Mr. Russell, who has a house here, my expenses are not great; otherwise I could not support it. I have been at the President's, who invited me to call without ceremony. We drank tea with him as in any private family. Everything here is the reverse of what it is with you. I do not think there is an example in all history of any country being in so rapid a state of improvement as this is in at the present time. But in proportion as it is advantageous to the laborer, it is heavy on the man who must live on the labor of others. Living here is I think not less than twice as expensive as in any part of England, and the wants of Europe raise the price of our produce, and consequently, of everything else. All our late accounts from England are very alarming, so that I cannot help wishing that all my friends were here, where at least there is peace, and no apprehension of any disturbance."

From Northumberland he writes on 28th July, 1796:—

"What I wish for you is all that I hope for myself, a quiet and comfortable old age, which I find coming upon me, on which account I decline everything which requires more exertion than I know I am capable of. A college is now building in this place, and I am chosen president; but I shall only accept of it till another can be provided, and that on condition that I have no concern with the discipline of the students, and my lectures will be given gratis, as they were at Hackney. If I can barely subsist, I shall be content with it rather than take an employment, with the difficulties of which I am not now able to contend. By this time I hope you have received a copy of some Dis­courses, which I delivered at Philadelphia in the course of the last winter. I have also printed the Philosophical Tracts, which I hope will soon reach you. By these you will find that I have not been idle. Indeed, I hope to do as much here as I ever did in England in the same time, though destitute of many advantages which I had there, especially when my house is built, and my laboratory fitted up; but in this I find much difficulty and delay that I did not expect, besides that the expense will be twice as much as I calculated for, not so much owing to calculating wrong, as to the astonishing advance of the price of everything, especially of labor. The like was, I believe, never known in any age or country. But it is owing, in a great measure at least, to the unexampled flourishing state of the country, which is indeed in a most rapid state of improvement, both in this place and everywhere else."

In a letter from Northumberland, on the 17th December, 1795, he mentions the illness of his wife, and the death of his son Henry. After relating the particulars of the latter event, he writes:—
"He was indefatigable in the attention he gave to his farm, and had just built a little stone house, which was nearly ready to be occupied. * * * Considering how delicate his constitution was, and that his education was for a learned profession, it was something extraordinary that he should so cheerfully submit to all the drudgery of a common farmer. It was the wonder of everybody. Had he been brought up an American farmer, he could not have been more industrious. Indeed, the Americans are not remarkably industrious. They can do very well without hard labor, and, therefore, will not in general submit to it. The English emigrants, it is observed, work much harder than they. This being the first stroke of the kind, it affects me more than I can express, though I hope I do not complain of the dispensations of Providence, which, I doubt not, are always right and wise, but my chief consolation is the expectation of meeting him again in a better state. * * * Your sister has had several very alarming spittings of blood, and has now a very violent cough, occasioned by sitting up three nights with Harry. Her trials have been in several respects very great. For three months, a great part of which time she was confined to her room or her bed, she had no maid-servant, and now we only hire a black slave by the week. The country is in too prosperous a state for servitude, and it is observed that the difficulty of getting servants increases continually. All that can be had are young boys or girls."

Nine months afterwards Mrs. Priestley died, and the event is thus related in a letter, of the 19th September, 1796:

"I sit down to inform you of the melancholy event of the death of my wife, who is to be buried this day. She was ill about a fortnight, and died about 11 at night on Saturday. Her illness was a fever, which very much affected her head, so that she had very little sense of anything for the greater part of the time, and though she seemed to suffer much at some times, she went off without any symptom of being in pain. I need not tell you what we all feel on the occasion. The death of Harry affected her much, and it has hardly ever been out of my mind, though it is now near nine months since he died, but this is a much heavier stroke. It has been a happy union to me for more than 34 years, in which I have had no care about anything, so that, without any anxiety, I have been able to give all my time to my own pursuits. I always said I was only a lodger in her house. She had taken much pleasure in planning our new house, and now that it is advancing apace, and promises to be everything that she wished it to be, she goes to occupy another. I shall, however, finish the house, as it is fitted for my use, as well as that of a family, and Joseph will live with me in it, for I am not able to manage a house myself."

On the same subject he writes on the 25th of January, 1797:

"More than 4 months are now elapsed since that afflicting event,
and I do not think I shall ever completely recover the state of mind that I had before. I feel quite unhinged and incapable of the exertions I used to make. Having been always very domestic, reading and writing with my wife sitting near me, and often reading to her, I miss her everywhere; and if it was not for the great assiduity of my son Joseph, who is everything that I could wish him to be, and that of his wife, to make my desolate situation as comfortable as they can, I feel that I could not stay here. I should certainly return at all events to England: however, as things are, I intend to spend what remains of life in this country, only wishing, if there should be a peace, to make you one visit before I die.”

In a letter from Northumberland, dated 30th November, 1797, after writing on his pecuniary affairs, he says:

“With all my difficulties I have much to be thankful for. Hitherto few persons have had more enjoyment of life and their pursuits than I have had, and, without solicitude, my wants have been supplied by the friends of science and rational religion, to which I shall always devote myself. Though my philosophical friends have in general dropped their subscriptions to my experiments, which are much more expensive here than they were in England, my religious friends have not forgotten me. From Mr. Rayner I have received every year £50, and from the Duke of Grafton £40. These benefactions, however, I cannot depend upon, and should have declined accepting, if I could have had remittances from France. * * * Winter is set in with great severity, but my health is better than it was. I shall not go to Philadelphia this season, nor ever again to make any stay. Having done what I could there the two last winters, I shall avoid that great expense, and make the most of my leisure here, and I have work enough before me, both in Philosophy and Theology. Party spirit runs very high in this country. Though I take no part whatever in Politics, I am more grossly calumniated, as a supposed Friend of France, in the newspaper that has the greatest currency of any in this country, than I was in England. I do not think, however, that it will be in the power of our rulers to drag this country into a war with France; and if we have peace, things cannot go much amiss with us.”

From this time, and indeed for some time previously, the principal topic of the letters is the state of the Funds invested in France. In the letter of 15th March, 1798, already quoted from, he writes:

“Mr. Delacroix, the late minister of Foreign affairs, tells the consul here that if I would go and reside in France I should recover more than I have lost. If I could depend upon this I should think it right to go, though (at a great expense) I am now very comfortably settled here. * * * As I am acquainted with M. Taleyrand Perigord (late Bishop of Autun) the successor of Mr. Delacroix, I have written
to him, saying that if I had a proper assurance of the promise above mentioned, I should go, but whether my letter will reach him is very uncertain, and, at the most, I shall not be able to go till the next year. Mr. Russell, who has much property in France, is disposed to go too, and we shall (I think) go together, but not before a peace is made, and that most desirable event we hope cannot now be very distant. The affairs of England seem to be drawing to a crisis, and I cannot help being concerned for the event. I wish all my friends had such a quiet asylum as we have here. This country however is not without its difficulties. We are almost in a state of war with France, and what will be done is yet uncertain. I believe they will arm their ships for defence, and this I fear will lead to an open rupture. Either this measure or an embargo must be adopted, and the merchants seem to prefer the former. The hatred to France has risen to an astonishing pitch since I have been here, and as a supposed Friend of France, I am exposed to as much abuse as I was in England, though I have nothing to do with their politics.”

On the 14th June, 1800, he writes:

“'The expence of printing a work, calculated I hope to promote the cause of rational Christianity, which I have most at heart, has been considerable, and the bookseller who had promised to take it upon himself, has declined it. A copy of this work will be sent to you, as also of a Philosophical Tract, by which you will see that I am not idle; and while I am successful in my pursuits, (and I was never more so than I have been of late) I am persuaded that the liberal friends of science would not wish me to desist, though the expence attending them is necessarily considerable; but thinking that I have now no occasion for any assistance, those who contributed to the expense of my laboratory in England have withdrawn their subscriptions. I hope, therefore, you will consider what you do for me as given to promote useful science and useful knowledge in general, to which, without any view to emolument, I have always devoted my time, and I wish to do so as long as I shall be capable of doing anything, which cannot now be long: and this I doubt not will be as powerful a motive with you as any relationship whatever. My gratitude will appear in the only manner in which I shall be capable of shewing it.”

On the 17th July, 1800:

“My expenses have never been personal, but chiefly in the promotion of science and truth in general, to which I have devoted my time and whatever powers God has given me, and, therefore, I hope that the friends of science and of truth will afford me the assistance they have hitherto done. I am now as busy, and I hope as successful, as ever. My situation is in many respects favourable, especially with respect to leisure and quiet. As to the abuse to which I am exposed here, as formerly in England, I rather rejoice in it than am concerned
at it. It is what every man who does any good in the world must expect, and is much more than balanced by the approbation of persons of similar sentiments and views; and of such cordial friends I have never been destitute. We shall rejoice together in a world in which the wicked will cease from troubling. To that state I now look forward more than to anything here, as I cannot be very distant from it, though, I thank God, my health is very good, and I may yet do something more before I leave this scene."

His growing unpopularity in America, of which indications appear in several of the preceding letters, at length assumed a form which compelled him to defend himself; and on the 1st December, 1800, he writes:—

"Having been strangely calumniated in this country, and represented as a factious and dangerous person, become desperate by poverty, in consequence of speculating in lands, and being moreover told in confidence that Mr. Pickering, then Secretary of State, watched and threatened me, I thought it best to give a full account of all that I had done, and even thought, with respect to the administration. This I did in a series of Letters to the inhabitants of Northumberland and its neighbourhood, and the publication, though censured by many, has had a good effect. * * * It was with much reluctance that I wrote them, and I hope I shall have no further occasion to do anything in the same way. My theological and philosophical studies find me sufficient employment, and of a more useful and pleasing kind."

He does not appear to have overrated the success of his appeal, for on the 30th April, 1801, he writes:—

"That you may form some idea of the state of politics in this country, and see how favourable a turn things have taken with respect to myself, I send you a copy of a letter I have lately received from Mr Jefferson, and my Letter to the inhabitants of Northumberland will shew you what my situation was in the administration of Mr. Adams, or rather of those who for some time governed him."

The President's letter is too long for quotation; a single paragraph may suffice:—

"It is with heartfelt satisfaction that in the first moments of my public action I can hail you with welcome to our land, tender to you the homage of its respect and esteem, cover you under the protection of those laws which were made for the wise and good like you, and disclaim the legitimacy of that libel on legislation which under the form of a law was for some time placed among them. As the storm is now subsiding and the horizon becoming serene, it is pleasant to consider the phenomenon with attention. We can no longer say 'there is nothing new under the sun,' for this whole chapter in the history of man is new—the great extent of our republic is new—its
sparse habitation is new—the mighty wave of public opinion which has rolled over it is new—but the most pleasing novelty is its so quickly subsiding over such an extent of surface to its true level again."

There is another interesting letter from Jefferson, in answer to the offer of a dedication, which he accepts with the modest observation that the handing to the world the testimony of his desire to do what was right, under the authority of the name of Priestley, was securing his credit with posterity. The following extract from the letter will be of more general interest. He says:—

"One passage in the paper you enclosed me must be corrected. It is the following:—'And all say that it was yourself more than any other individual that planned and established it' i.e. the constitution. I was in Europe when the constitution was planned and established. On receiving it I wrote strongly to Mr. Madison, urging the want of provision for the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, trial by jury, habeas corpus, the substitution of militia for a standing army, and an express reservation to the States of all rights not specifically granted to the Union. He accordingly moved in the first session of congress for these amendments, which were agreed to and ratified by the States as they now stand. This is all the hand I had in what related to the constitution. Our predecessors made it doubtful how far even these were of any value, for the very law which endangered your personal safety, as well as that which restrained the freedom of the press, were gross violations of them. However, it is still certain that the written constitutions may be violated in moments of passion or delusion, yet they furnish a text to which those who are watchful may again rally and recall the people. They fix too for the people principles for their political creed."

The letter to which a copy of the above was annexed, dated the 31st July, 1802, is the last in the correspondence, though the death of Dr. Priestley did not take place until February, 1804.

In selecting my extracts I have had regard almost exclusively to the passages bearing upon his personal history, in which respect I cannot help thinking that these letters may furnish useful materials to some future biographer of Priestley. If I had been guided by other motives, I could perhaps have selected passages of more general interest, in which he discusses public events and the political and social condition of the people among whom he was residing. I have with more reluctance omitted passages indicative of the character of the writer, and especially several which exhibit a peculiar independence in the
UNIQUE VASE, from CANOSA,
IN THE COLLECTION OF J. MAYER, F.S.A.
language in which he asks or acknowledges a favor. On his theological and philosophical works I cannot say the correspondence throws much additional light. He constantly mentions the works from time to time published or in progress, but it seems as if he did so rather from feeling bound to give an account of his labors than as having much community of ideas with his correspondent. I have probably however said enough to describe the nature of the contents of the letters, and hope that in indicating some new materials for biography, not wholly unimportant, I have not occupied too much of your time and attention, for the bestowal of which I beg to offer you my thanks.

DESCRIPTION OF A UNIQUE VASE IN MR. MAYER'S MUSEUM.

By F. R. Paul Bööcke, Esq.

(Read 1st February, 1855.)

In reference to the vase found at Canosa, I beg to offer the following remarks.

This vase was formerly in the possession of the Prince of Syracuse, from whose collection it was purchased and brought to England. It is of a globular form, with the head of Medusa on the front and at the back, that on the front being surmounted by a bas-relief with two cupids, which is placed against the neck of the vase. In front, a little below the neck, are two half figures of Centaurs, one on each side of the opening, and attached to the body of the vase, the top is surmounted by three figures, intended to represent a scene from a tragedy by Sophocles, who was born near Athens B.C. 495. The following is a brief description of them.

The figure to the left with the Phrygian cap on, (as on the coins of Ithaca), is Ulysses, king of Ithaca and Dulichium; that to the right wearing a helmet, is Diomedes, son of Tydeus, and king of Eolia, who Justinian says was the founder of Brundisium and Arpi. The centre figure is that of Dolon, son of Eumedes, a Trojan. The historical portion of the scene is during the Trojan war, and is as follows:—Dolon was sent by