


## CHÂTEAUBRIAND

RANÇOIS RENÉ AUGUSTE, VISCOUNT CHÂTEAUBRIAND, French statesman, rhetorician, and author, was born at St. Malo, Brittany, Sept. 14, 1768, and died at Paris, July 4, 1848. After an education at Dol and Rennes, and turning from the Church to which he had been destined, he entered the army; but at the outbreak of the Revolution he left the service, intending at first to proceed to India, but changed his mind and sought the New World instead. Here he first thought of engaging in that will o' the wisp, a Northwest passage, but turned aside into the then wilds of Canada and lived among the Indians—his experience during which he afterward wove into the romantic idyll of "Atala." Returning to France from his travels in America, he found his country in the throes of revolution, and his King sent to the guillotine. He therefore joined the ranks of the *émigrés* and settled for a time in obscurity in England. In 1797, appeared his "Essay on Revolutions," which he subsequently recanted having written, and in which he takes the ground of "mediator between royalist and revolutionary ideas," manifests himself as a freethinker in religion, and in philosophy "imbued with the spirit of Rousseau." A change in his religious views was, however, to follow the death of his mother and his return to France, where in 1801 "Atala" was published, for on the heels of that work appeared the author's "Genius of Christianity," on the eve of Napoleon's reestablishment of the Christian religion, for which Chateaubriand's essay would seem opportunely to have prepared the way. The success of that work was great and immediate, for it was written with great charm of style, and presented Christianity in brilliant though poetic colors. Napoleon's appreciation was extended personally to the author, whom he appointed secretary to the French embassy at Rome and later minister plenipotentiary to the republic of the Canton of Valais, a post which he resigned, however, on the execution in 1804 of the Duke d'Enghien. Subsequently, he set out on a pilgrimage through the Holy Land, the fruit of which appeared later in his "Itinerary of Travel," most picturesquely written, and in his prose epic, "The Martyrs," also a tale entitled "The Last of the Abencerrages," composed amid the ruins of the Alhambra. Returning to France, he henceforth employed himself in politics and in the writing of a *brochure*, entitled "Bonaparte and the Bourbons." This was issued in 1814, when Napoleon was almost at the end of his phenomenal career, and the Restoration of the Monarchy was about to be accomplished. So timely was the issue of the work and so earnest was his support of the Bourbons, that Louis XVIII declared the essay to have been worth to him the equivalent of 100,000 men. Its writer was gratefully given place at the council-board of the restored monarch, and became successively ambassador at Berlin, and at London, delegate to the Congress of Verona (1822), and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1822-24). He had previously been elected a

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member of the French Academy and created a Peer of France. Meanwhile, the revolution of 1830 occurred, and Chateaubriand showing his legitimist leanings, refused to take the oath to Louis Philippe, and thus lost his pension and his peerage, and retired to a rather moody and impoverished life, brightened only by the society of Béranger and Madame Récamier. To the day of his death he continued to be half-republican, half-royalist, always a man of sentiment rather than of intelligible principle. "In France," observes a writer, "he is significant as marking the transition from the old classical to the modern romantic school. He belongs to the latter by the idiosyncrasy of his genius, to the former by the comparative severity of his taste. . . . His palette, always brilliant, is never gaudy; he is not merely a painter, but an artist."

### GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

I SHALL at once set aside the personal objections, for private feelings must have no place here. I have no reply to make to mutilated pieces, printed by means unknown to me in foreign gazettes. I commenced my ministerial career with the honorable member who spoke last, during the Hundred Days, when we each had a portfolio *ad interim*, he at Paris and I at Ghent. I was then writing a romance; he was employed on history; I still adhere to romance.

I am about to examine the series of objections presented at this tribune. These are numerous and diversified; but that I may not go astray in so vast a field, I shall arrange them under different heads.

Let us first examine the question of intervention. Has one government a right to intervene in the internal affairs of another government? This great question of public right has been resolved in opposite ways; those who have connected it with natural law, as Bacon, Puffendorf, Grotius, and all the ancients, are of opinion that it is permitted to take up arms, in the name of human society, against a people who violate the principles upon which general order

is based, in the same manner as in private life we punish common disturbers of the peace. Those who look upon the question as a point of civil law maintain, on the contrary, that one government has no right to intervene in the affairs of another government. Thus, the former place the right of intervention in our duties, and the latter in our interests.

Gentlemen, I adopt the principle laid down by the civil law; I take the side of modern politicians, and I say with them, no government has a right to intervene in the internal affairs of another government. In fact, if this principle were not admitted, and especially by peoples who enjoy a free constitution, no nation could be free on its own soil; for the corruption of a minister, or the ambition of a king, would be sufficient to occasion an attack upon any state which should endeavor to improve its condition. To the various causes of war, already too numerous, you would thereby add a perpetual principle of hostility, a principle of which every man in possession of power would be the judge, because he would always have the right of saying to his neighbors: "Your institutions displease me; change them, or I shall declare war against you."

I hope my honorable opponents will acknowledge that I explain myself frankly. But in presenting myself in this tribune to maintain the justice of our intervention in the affairs of Spain, how am I to escape from the principle which I myself have enounced? You shall see, gentlemen.

When modern politicians had rejected the right of intervention, by quitting the natural, to place themselves within the civil law, they found themselves very much embarrassed. Cases occurred in which it was impossible to abstain from intervention without putting the state in danger. At the commencement of the Revolution it was said: "Let

the colonies perish rather than a principle!" and the colonies accordingly perished. Was it right to say also: "Let social order perish rather than a principle?" That they might not be wrecked against the very rule they had established, they had recourse to an exception, by means of which they returned to the natural law, and said: "No government has a right to intervene in the internal affairs of a nation, unless in such a case as may compromise the immediate safety and essential interests of that government." I shall presently quote the authority from which I borrow these words.

The exception, gentlemen, does not appear to me more questionable than the rule; no state can allow its essential interests to perish, under the penalty of perishing itself as a state. Having reached this point of the question, the whole face of it is changed—we find ourselves altogether upon different ground. I am no longer bound to contest the rule, but to prove that the case of exception has occurred for France.

Before I adduce the motives which justify your intervention in the affairs of Spain, I ought first, gentlemen, to support my statement on the authority of examples. I shall frequently have occasion in the course of my speech to speak of England, since my honorable opponents quote it every moment against us, in their extempore, as well as in their written and printed speeches. It was Great Britain alone who defended these principles at Verona, and it is she alone who now rises against the right of intervention; it is she who is ready to take up arms for the cause of a free people; it is she that reproves an impious war, hostile to the rights of man—a war which a little bigoted and servile faction wishes to undertake, to return on its conclusion to

burn the French charter, after having rent to pieces the Spanish constitution. Is not that it, gentlemen? We shall return to all these points; but first let us speak of the intervention.

I fear that my honorable opponents have made a bad choice of their authority. England, say they, has set us a great example by protecting the independence of nations. Let England, safe amid her waves, and defended by ancient institutions—let England—which has not suffered either the disasters of two invasions or the disorders of a thirty years' revolution—think that she has nothing to fear from Spain, and feel averse to intervene in her affairs, nothing certainly can be more natural; but does it follow that France enjoys the same security, and is in the same position? When, under other circumstances, the essential interests of Great Britain have been compromised, did she not for her own safety, and very justly without doubt, derogate from the principles which are now invoked in her name?

England, on going to war with France, promulgated, in the month of November, 1793, the famous declaration of Whitehall. Permit me, gentlemen, to read a passage of it for you. The document commences by recalling the calamities of the Revolution, and then adds:

“The intentions set forth of reforming the abuses of the French government, of establishing upon a solid basis personal liberty and the rights of property, of securing to a numerous people a wise legislation, an administration, and just and moderate laws—all these salutary views have unhappily disappeared; they have given place to a system destructive of all public order, maintained by proscriptions, by banishment, by confiscations without number, by arbitrary imprisonment and by massacres, the memory of which is frightful. The inhabitants of this unhappy country, so

long deceived by promises of happiness, always renewed at the epoch of every fresh crime, have been plunged into an abyss of calamities without example.

“This state of affairs cannot subsist in France, without implicating in one common danger all the neighboring powers, without giving them the right, without imposing upon them the duty of arresting the progress of an evil which only exists by the successive violation of all laws and every sense of propriety, and by the subversion of the fundamental principles which unite men, by the ties of social life. His Majesty certainly does not mean to dispute with France the right of reforming its laws; he would never wish to influence by external force the mode of government of an independent state: nor does he desire it now but in so far as this object has become essential to the peace and security of other powers. Under these circumstances he demands of France, and his demand is based upon a just title, the termination at length of a system of anarchy which is only powerful in doing wrong, incapable of fulfilling toward the French people the first duty of government, to repress the disturbances and to punish the crimes which daily multiply in the interior of the country; but, on the contrary, disposing in an arbitrary manner of their lives and property, to disturb the peace of other nations, and to make all Europe the theatre of similar crimes and like calamities. He demands of France the establishment of a stable and legitimate government, founded on the recognized principles of universal justice, and calculated to maintain with other nations the customary relations of union and of peace. The king, on his part, promises beforehand a suspension of hostilities; friendship in so far as he may be permitted by events which are not at the disposal of the human will; and safety and protection to all those who, declaring themselves for a monarchical government, shall withdraw themselves from the despotism of an anarchy which has broken all the most sacred ties of society, rent asunder all the relations of civil life, violated all rights, confounded all duties;

availing itself of the name of liberty to exercise the most cruel tyranny, to annihilate all property, to seize upon all estates, founding its power on the pretended consent of the people, and ruining whole provinces with fire and sword, for having reclaimed their laws, their religion, and their legitimate sovereign!"

Well, gentlemen, what think you of this declaration? Did you not imagine that you were listening to the very speech pronounced by the king at the opening of the present session; but that speech developed, explained, and commented upon with equal force and eloquence? England says she acts in concert with her allies, and we should be thought criminal in also having allies! England promises assistance to French royalists, and it would be taken ill if we were to protect Spanish royalists! England maintains that she has the right of intervening to save herself and Europe from the evils that are desolating France, and we are to be interdicted from defending ourselves from the Spanish contagion! England rejects the pretended consent of the French people; she imposes upon France, as the price of peace, the condition of establishing a government founded on the principles of justice, and calculated to maintain the customary relations with other states, and we are to be compelled to recognize the pretended sovereignty of the people, the legality of a constitution established by a military revolt, and we are not to have the right of demanding from Spain, for our security, institutions legalized by the freedom of Ferdinand!

We must, however, be just: when England published this famous declaration, Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. were no more. I acknowledge that Marie Josephine is, as yet, only a captive, and that nothing has yet been shed but

her tears; Ferdinand, also, is at present only a prisoner in his palace, as Louis XVI. was in his, before he went to the Temple and thence to the scaffold. I do not wish to calumniate the Spaniards, but neither do I wish to estimate them more highly than my own countrymen. Revolutionary France produced a Convention, and why should not revolutionary Spain produce one also? Shall I be told that by accelerating the movement of intervention we shall make the position of the monarch more perilous? But did England save Louis XVI. by refusing to declare herself? Is not the intervention which prevents the evil more useful than that by which it is avenged? Spain had a diplomatic agent at Paris at the period of the celebrated catastrophe, and his prayers could obtain nothing. What was this family witness doing there? He was certainly not required to authenticate a death that was known to earth and heaven. Gentlemen, the trials of Charles I. and of Louis XVI. are already too much for the world, but another judicial murder would establish, on the authority of precedents, a sort of criminal right and a body of jurisprudence for the use of subjects against their kings.