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Cambridge, April 27, 1850, H. A. Woodham à François Guizot

Auteurs : Woodham, H. A. (?-?)

Les folios

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Informations Bibliographiques (Bibliographie Guizot)

Titre	Auteur	Date	Lien
Voyage de S. A. I. Napoléon, ses discours à Lyon, à Bordeaux et à Paris... Vive l'Empire et vive l'Empereur, chant lyrique et final, et l'Unitéide des peuples, recueil de poèmes et chants populaires,... par M. Gagne,...	Paulin Gagne	1852	Lien externe
Discours sur l'histoire de la révolution d'Angleterre : pourquoi la révolution d'Angleterre a-t-elle réussi ? / par M. Guizot	François (1787-1874) Auteur du texte Guizot	1850	Lien externe
Histoire parlementaire de France : recueil complet des discours prononcés dans les Chambres de 1819 à 1848. [Volume 1] / par M. Guizot	François (1787-1874) Auteur du texte Guizot	1863-1864	Lien externe

Notice créée par [Richard Walter](#) Notice créée le 19/02/2025 Dernière modification le 02/04/2025

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Jesus College, Cambridge.
April 27. 1850.

My dear Sir,

It was only the other day that I learnt the address to which I might direct my acknowledgments of your courtesy in sending me a copy of your valuable Discours sur l'Histoire de la Revolution d'Angleterre; which I have perused with the double satisfaction of improving my own knowledge & confirming in great part my own views of that portion of our national history by an authority so high & impartial as your own.

There can indeed be no doubt of the correctness of the estimate which traces the stability of our "Constitutional Monarchy" to the reasonableness & moderation of the principles of policy advocated by its formulators, aided, it must be confessed, by the political & social conditions of the times in which the Revolution occurred.

As the chief of these conditions it might perhaps be suggested that the only opposition which the new Government actually encountered, proceeded, if I may use the expression, from above, & not from below; - from those who desired less, rather

rather than from those who desired more; in other words, from
a spirit essentially liable to decay, & not from one which might
gather strength from the progress of ideas or time. We had, or
stating our opponents & ours so called "Republicans", it is true, &
had both these parties survived, the cause would have been grandly
advanced. But, in point of fact, the latter party is speedily vanished
from the face of society, that I think you will bear me out in
saying that Republicanism had scarcely any representatives left
in England at the accession of our House of Hanover - that is to
say, at the practical commencement of our Constitutional
Monarchy, as founded by the people - no small advantage for
a new Government!

And why had Republicanism ceased to exist, in contradiction,
apparently, to that vitality which it has exhibited in more
recent times?

Was it not because, in effect, the republicanism of 1650 had
little in common with that of 1850 beyond the name?

I have sometimes thought that an instructive historical essay

might be written upon the political development of Republicanism,
from its first European phase in the Government of Venice - long
considered as the true specimen of that form of polity, through its
more recent & contagious manifestation in the States of Holland, up to
the proportions & character, which, after the teaching of Rousseau &
from philosophers, & the examples of our American war, it finally
assumed under the hands of Robespierre & his colleagues. Perhaps
it was not till after the middle of the 18th century that it became a
doctrine calculated to impress or modify the political conception
of a whole people? For what did the term previously import?
Little more than a form of Government excluding the hereditary
supremacy of a single person - an oligarchy rather than what
we now understand by a republic, - recognized only as an
inferior form of State polity in diplomatic transactions, but
considered as harmless in itself, & so well suited to certain
constitutions that Henry Quatre & Voltaire actually included
the establishment of four republics in their famous scheme

for the pacific & perpetual settlement of Europe. Had not during
the military & religious anarchy of my country certain indications
of the true spirit were perceptible, I might be curious to compare
these with the events at the settlement of the Dutch Republic,
& with the discussions as to the relative excellencies of a republic or
a monarchy which took place at the recovery of Portuguese
independence in 1640. But, practically, the English people
received of a republic only as a form of Government (prohibiting
two estates out of three without conferring on them the smallest
increase of political or social freedom, but rather seriously
diminishing what they enjoyed before. And what was there
in a Dutch magistracy or a Venetian dogship to attract or
impress the people of England?

"Republicanism" therefore became extinct, & those survivors
left like "legitimists" opposition to the constitutional monarchy -
opposition resting only on dynastic & personal traditions, &
necessarily terminable, either through the forgetfulness of

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A new generation, or the misconduct or extinction of the
soiled family, or the natural growth of political ideas.
In fact the Jacobite sentiment could never have survived
so long or made such efforts but for the peculiar aid it
derived from the Scottish kingdom - the old patrimony of
the Stuarts.

If however, it were asked, why no Jacobite insurrection
ever did succeed, or why no single one of those "accidents"
which are as incidental to revolutions as to war, ever
fell in favour of the Stuarts I think the reply would be
very difficult. No doubt the English people, under any
dynasty, would have clung to those principles of Govt. which
you have so lucidly distinguished as actuating our
Combatants, but, if once the settlement of the throne had
been upset by a successful revolution, the charm of

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Liberty would have been broken & our work, too,
would have been spoiled. Neither was the indifference
of the English people apparently much less than that of those
which has been so often censured. You will remember
that in 1745 - sixty years after the presumed settlement - one
of the ministers of the day wrote, "England is for the
first corner, & our fate depends upon whether the Dutch
for King George, or the French for King James, are landed
first." I believe, indeed, that much of this indifference
arose from a disbelief of any real danger to the monarchy.
Yet still, on the whole, I think few persons will deny
that France was to all appearance better settled in
the 10th year of King Louis Philippe, than England in
the 10th year of King William.

Does not the main difference between the two cases
consist in the difference between the political theories
against which the strokes of Hammer & Deane had
respectively to contend?

If our rebellion of 1745 had been in the old republican
interest would its spirit have been extinct in 1760?

Or, on the other hand, (if so anomalous a catastrophe as
your revolution of February can be made the subject of
any political reflections) could a legitimate opposition
ever have thus prevailed against a constitutional
monarchy?

I have taken the freedom of suggesting these
conditions as contributive to the success of the English
Revolution as contrasted & distinguished from the French.

But, I cannot of course for a moment question

the Unlental correctness of the great supposition
into which you have favored my countrymen.

I ought to apologize for intruding so much upon
your time, but the interests of History combine with
my own recollections of your courtesy to encourage
me, & with great respect, I remain

My dear Sir

Your very faithful servant

H. A. Woodham