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Cambridge, Aug. 9 1851, H. A. Woodham à François Guizot

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

Les folios

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Jesus College, Cambridge
Aug: 9. 1851.

My dear Sir,

You will have thought me, I fear, extremely
remiss in leaving so long unacknowledged your
courtesy in sending me copies of your recent
publications; but I was visited at the commencement
of this year with so severe a domestic affliction as
to exclude me from all my ordinary pursuits
of study & correspondence. I received last Christmas
by the hands of Mr. Deane your biography of
"Frank" & last week I was also favoured with
your "Etudes Biographiques" & your "Origines
du Gouvernement Représentatif" through the
same channel. May I thank you sincerely for
the compliment, as well as for so valuable
an addition to my library. In your Esteem

Of Frank, I believe most well informed Englishmen will
very nearly concur. He seems to have been one of those
characters who owe so much more to their times than
to their laws, that the simple truth of history is never
satisfactory to the multitude. Every body imagines that
a man must be greater than Frank really was to do what
Frank really did. But his character has always been a
popular mystery. No one knows what you are aware
that we keep up in our University the old scholastic
custom, as derived from the Roman rhetoricians, of
"declaiming," as it is called. A declamation consists
of a spoken essay on the merits or demerits of some famous
character of history - one student takes one side, &
one another, & the speeches are always delivered in
the College Chapel. Now, the most favorite subject
for these declamations has always been Frank, &
indeed I am not sure whether it is not at some

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College, actually prescribed. At Trinity I think one of the
prescribed subjects is "William III", on whom there has been
a declamation written every year for more than a century.

I have been looking with great interest at your
"Biographical Studies" especially at those of the founders;
for it was upon this point, as you may remember, that I
was unable to bring my conclusions into accordance
with your own. I confess that I can hardly yet discover
in the popular retrospectives of our revolution any
form of those extraordinary principles which changed
the face of the world in years. I cannot help thinking
that the revolutions of the 17th century - in Holland
Naples, Portugal & England - did differ generically
from those of the 18th; & that the flame which
burned so much in '93 was originally kindled at
Geneva, & is without precedent or parallel of
earlier date. Liberty's Agreement (Studies p. 176)

seems to me to contain scarcely any type of the Declaration
of Maximilien Robespierre. You form Paris, perhaps,
did resemble, with some exaggeration, our Republicans;
but then they were soon swept away, & the true impress
of character was communicated to the Republic by
the Jacobins only. Rousseau, Robespierre, as I imagine,
were the sole & genuine creators of modern Republicanism.
or, to use a better expression perhaps, of true Democracy.

But your experience & capacities are so much above
yours, that, though I venture thus to express my
convictions, I search attentively for means of testing them.

I trust your rising upon Representative Government
may be serviceable both to your Country & to mine at
a season like the present. We are at the point, as it is
undisputed, of a considerable change - a change by which
the elective franchise of our Countries will be opened
to a large number of voters whose suffrage is now

25. Sanitary

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Confined to towns. This, it is anticipated, will
tend to weaken the territorial influence which
supplies so important an element to a county
constituency; & so, it is anticipated must. In fact
the tendency of our policy is undeniably to impair
the power of landowners. Still, the displacement
will not be so great as it seems, for the landed influence,
as we term it, has less strength in counties, & more
in towns than is generally presumed. It is a mistake
to suppose that democratic constituencies are found
exclusively in our towns. On the contrary, the earliest
radicals were almost always returned for counties -
Wilkes for Middlesex, & Thompson for York. The
first Disunion Government to Parliament was returned
by the County of Durham, & the West Riding of Yorkshire
always was, & still is, considered the battle field

of any new democratic reform. The other day, too, the
landlords were beaten by a tenant candidate after a
heated contest, in one of the most aristocratic
counties of England. On the other hand, there are
several boroughs still left where the influence of
great landowners is little less powerful than in those
which were disfranchised by the Reform Bill; so that
the change may not be so material as it looks. After
all on the points, the basis of policy lies in compromise,
not, that is, in the sacrifice of principle, but in the
acknowledgment that there are more principles than
one, & in an equitable consideration of them all. I
cannot refrain from saying how greatly I thank
my countrymen indebted to you for an exposition of
opinion which was contained in your letter to
Mr. Smith Dehnio, & which was published in the

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Times. I hope its mission may be imposed on our
politicians with good effect, for the great danger of the
State lies in the increasing desire of parties to absorb,
rather than to qualify, the policy of the Govt. We have a
party at this moment, young, vigorous & rising, which
exerts considerable service, & actually concurses on the Govt.
a power greatly disproportioned to its numerical strength;
yet with this it is dissatisfied, & craves for all

We are looking anxiously to France, & I trust your
own hopes may be fulfilled respecting the supremacy of
Representative institutions to resist the storm. It is
true that your Assembly appears in its favour with the
country, & often seems to commit itself by its own acts.
It is remarkable, however, how often popular assemblies,
even when best conducted, are unpopular with the people.
A very collision between one House of Commons & the law,

public feeling has invariably run against the House. It
does so now, in the case of Jewish Disabilities; it did so
in the case of the imprisoned Sheriffs, & generally speaking,
the people are always prompt to find fault with their
own representatives. Let us hope then that your
Assembly may to its duties well, & prove a real
anchor in your times of tempest. Believe me
My Dear Sir with much respect, Very faithfully yours
H. A. Woodham.