

The fortunes of a people are in the hands of their rulers. They have authority to determine what sums shall be taken from them for the service of the public; and when the taxes are levied, they have the final and absolute disposal of them. This is a power capable of great abuse. They may drain their subjects of almost all their property, under pretext of discharging public debts, or of promoting the public good. And it is very difficult for the people to discover what use is actually made of the large sums, which they contribute for the professed purpose of supporting the safety and credit of the nation. In many countries, rulers riot on the fortunes of their subjects, who are but so many slaves to minister to their luxury and prodigality. But good rulers will be really, as well as professedly, economical of the property of the people. They will exact no more from them, than their own safety, credit, and prosperity really require. Instead of diminishing, they will aim to increase the wealth of the nation.

There is still another great benefit, which a people will receive from good rulers. They will guard their lives, as well as fortunes. They have the tremendous power of making war and peace. They can call thousands and thousands into the field of battle, where multitudes may fall together under the most dreadful forms of death. How many millions of the human race have been sacrificed to the ambition and avarice of tyrannical rulers! What rivers of blood have unwise and unrighteous despots spilt! Some princes train up their subjects for war, and hire them out to be the common butchers of mankind. But good rulers will never wage unjust, nor unnecessary wars, nor cruelly sport with the lives of their fellow-men, which they esteem as precious as their own.