

Dr J. Brown to Dr Dumasque.

Oct. 1 1765

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Copy of a Letter from Dr Brown to Dr Dumasque  
at St. Petersburg in Russia.

Rev. Sir,

The Proposal which was made me from Lambeth was very agreeable; as nothing can give me so true a Pleasure, as that of assisting in any Respect in the Improvement of the Morals of Mankind:

The Honour that is done me by your Letter, & the particular Account you have given me of the noble Intentions of Her Imperial Majesty, have animated me not a little to the Consideration of this great Subject; & have interested me much in the Success of it. I have, indeed, for some Years past, turned both my thoughts & Studies towards the general Subject of Legislation: which has at length engrossed my Attention so much, that I now regard other Arts & Sciences only as they stand related to this, which I think Supreme. But as every Nation is distinguished from all others, by some peculiar Circumstances of Climate, Manners, Policy & Religion; so, the Application of general Principles to any particular Community can only be just, so far as it is founded on the Knowledge of these peculiar Characters.

On this Account, I fear, that while I am at such a Distance, it will be impossible for me to be very particular, without incurring the Imputation, or at least running the Hazard of seeming to be chimerical & romantic; by proposing things perhaps impracticable, thro' a Want of a true Knowledge of the Country. I have allowed myself a few Days, since the Receipt of yours, to think on this Undertaking; & to look into the Books I have which relate to the vast Empire of Russia. As I am desirous of treating this Subject in its most comprehensive View, I will now give you the first general Result of my Reflections, which I regard as the Foundation of all that may follow.

1<sup>st</sup>. I consider the unlimited Sovereignty & Power of Her Imperial Majesty, as the chief Corner-Stone of this Design; without which

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its progress must be for ever obstructed by the Ignorance, Prejudices & Vices, of those whom she would reform.

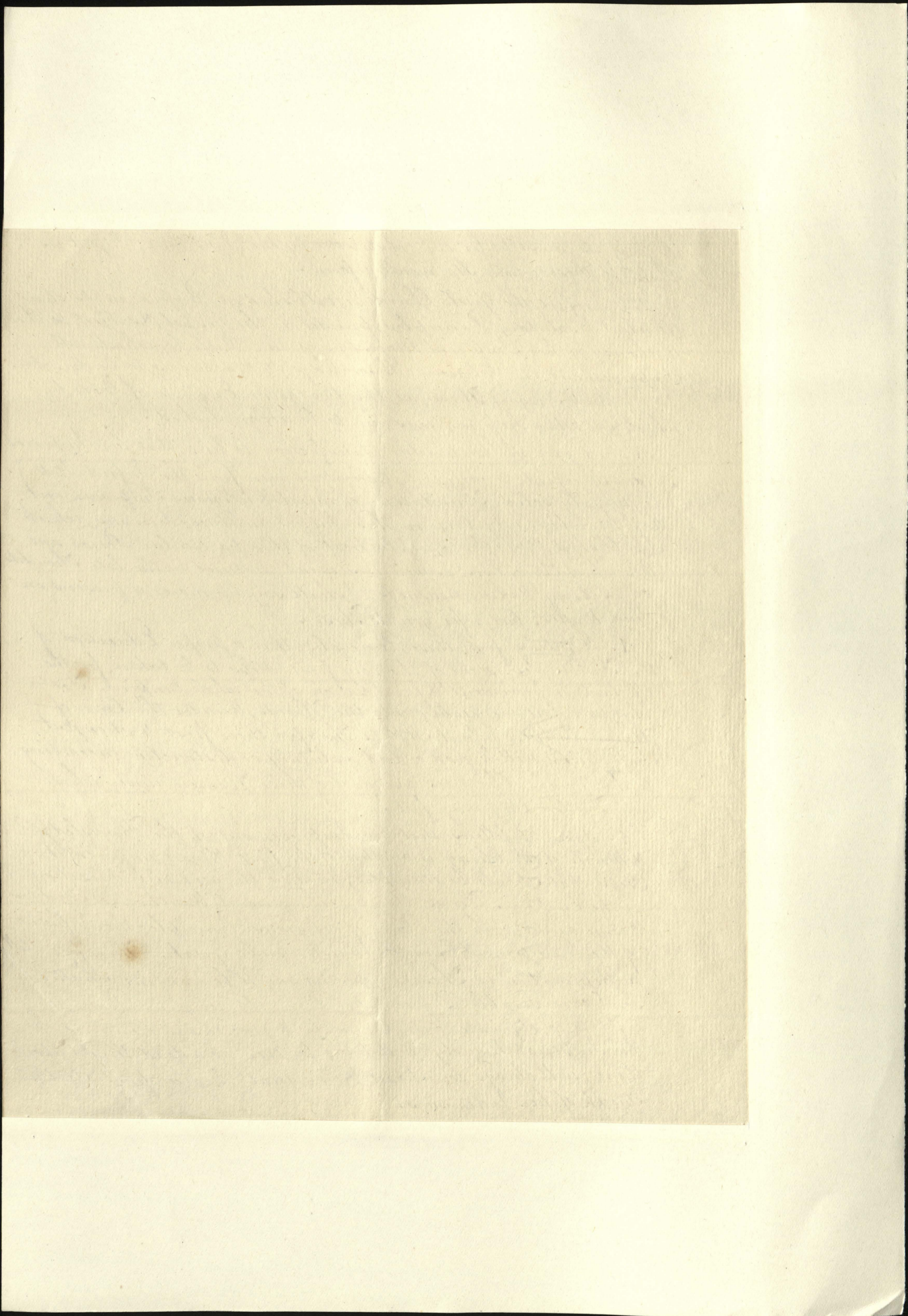
2. I regard the Greek Church, established in Russia, in it's clear essential & salutary Principles, founded on the Gospel, & subject to the Authority of her Imperial Majesty, as the Rule by which all Improvement in Religious Knowledge & Practice is to be directed.

And I regard these, as the two great Engines of Power, by which all other Reforms are to be accomplished.

3. It gave me particular Satisfaction to find, that her Imperial Majesty regards a very early Education (even from the Infant State) as the only solid Foundation of moral & religious Improvement. As I have been very large on this Subject in three Sermons, which I published, & which expressly treat of this particular Period and Branch of Education, as well as several Sections in the late Thoughts on Liberty & Licentiousness, I shall say no more at present on this Matter; but refer you to these.

4. It follows from these Principles, that a proper Education of the Female Sex is one of the very first Steps to be taken, for the effectual Improvement & Civilization of the whole Empire. For Children fall inevitably into the Hands, & under the Care of Women, in their infant State: Therefore their first & strongest Impressions will be good or bad, salutary or destructive, according to the Morals, Character & Conduct, of those Women under whose early Tuition they may fall.

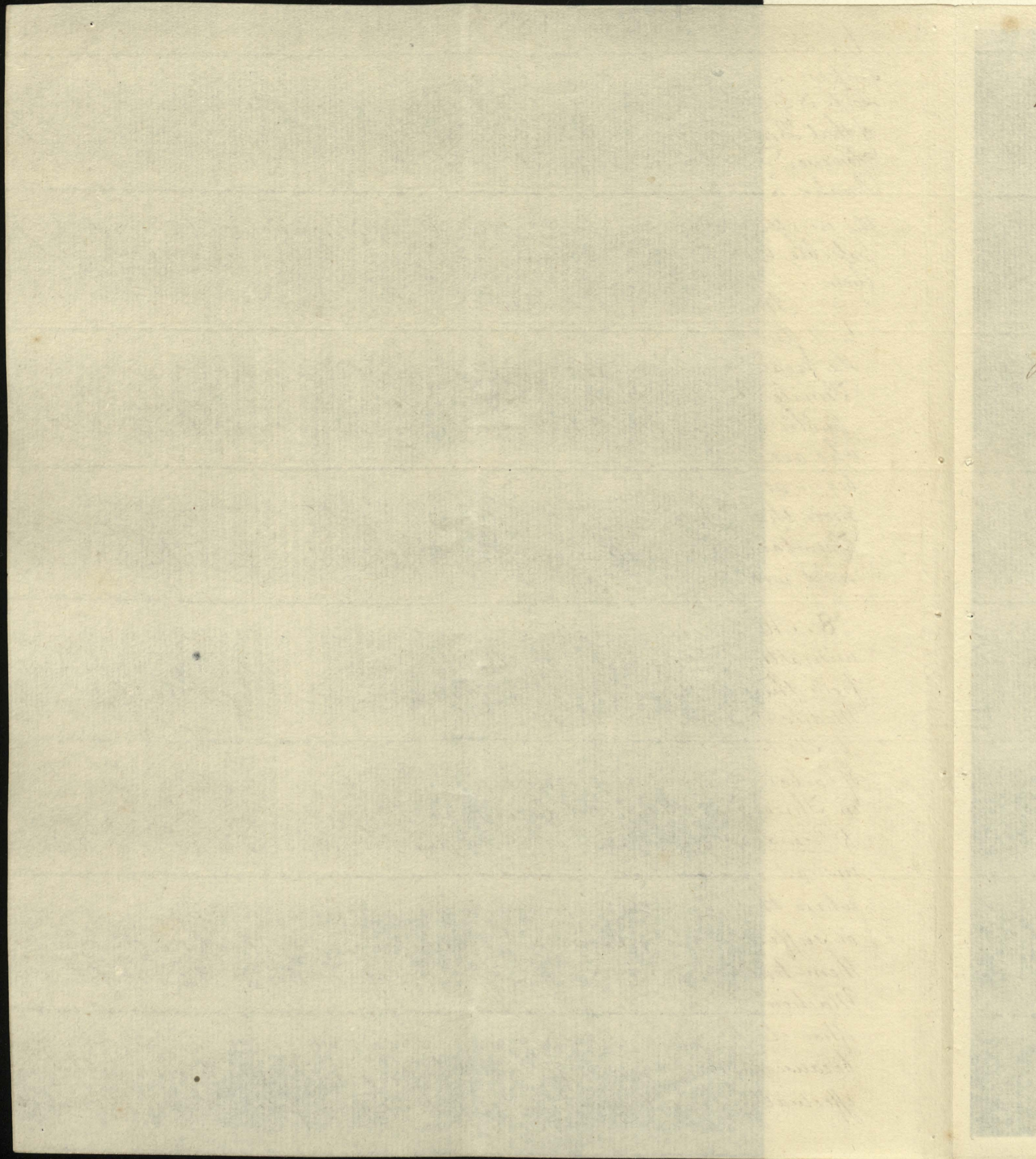
5. Again it follows, that an Improvement in the Knowledge & Morals of the Clergy is another of the first & most important Steps that should be attempted, towards the general Civilization of the Empire. For as they are the general & authorized Teachers, & come armed with the Power of religious Principle, the Influence of their Doctrine & Example must ever be great. Therefore, till a Reformation in these (supposing any to be wanting) shall in some considerable Degree take Place, the religious Power, which ought to co-operate with the noble & gracious Intentions of her Imperial Majesty, will hang for ever as a dead Weight upon them; will always counteract & in a great Degree frustrate the Success of her Endeavours.



6. Next to those who are authorized Teachers, that is, the Clergy; the Improvements in Education might seem to be best employ'd on the great Lords & Gentry of the Empire. I understand, there is some Distinction of that kind among the higher Ranks, tho' I know not in what it consists. However that be, tis certain, that the Influence & Example of the higher Ranks is universally so great, that it will in many Instances overbear the united Power of Policy & Religion; and therefore ought always, if possible, to be thrown into the same Channel & made to cooperate with them.

7. It seems to me, that the general Civilization of the whole Empire will flow most effectually from these Sources. The Imperial Power, as the great & commanding Spring of Action, directing the Conduct of the Senate, the Clergy, the Lords & Gentry, to the designed Ends of public Happiness; & to the Improvement of the Children & People who are under their immediate Influence. If the Plans of Civilization begin at a lower Point than this, they never can rise higher; no more than Water can be forced by Pipes to rise above the Level of the Fountain Head. All attempts to improve the inferior Ranks will meet with perpetual Obstructions, & in the End must prove abortive.

8. All the Plans of national Education & Policy in Europe are so miserably defective, that in my humble opinion, very little is to be learnt from them; & therefore no great attention ought to be paid to them, as Models of Legislative Wisdom. They were all occasionally begun, and (by Starts) independently of each other established, amidst the Darkness of barbarous Ages: and in consequence of this, are palpably defective in Three great & capital Circumstances; those of Utility, Connexion & Permanency. — They teach many things that tend to obstruct instead of promoting the true Wellfare of the respective Countries where they are established. They are so <sup>far</sup> from having any general or sufficient Connexion (a Circumstance which alone could render them truly efficacious, by giving a Capacity to the great political Machine to work by its own internal Power) that their several parts often clash, oppose & destroy each other. They have no permanency, because there are no sufficient Checks provided, such as might effectually prevent the Inroads of Irreligion, false Honour, Selfishness,



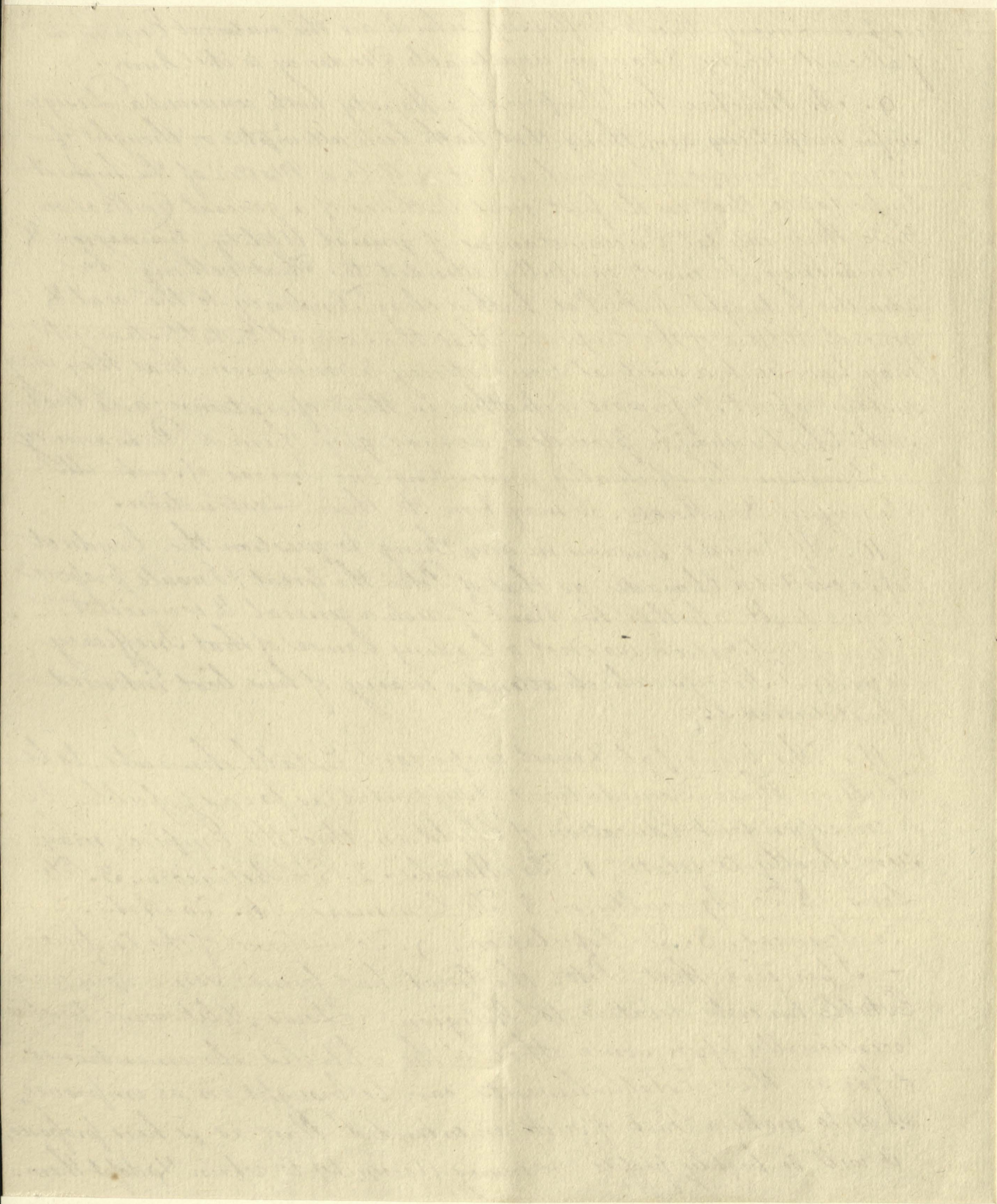
excessive Luxury, Vice & Profligacy; which are the natural Enemies of all civil Society, & have an unalterable Tendency to it's Ruin.

9. As therefore her Imperial Majesty hath conceived a Design so far surpassing any thing that hath been attempted or thought of in modern Europe; I apprehend it will be a Matter of the highest Importance, that in the first great Outlines of a general Civilization, these three capital Circumstances of general Utility, Connexion & Permanency, be most carefully attended to. That nothing be admitted or taught, but what hath a clear Tendency to the real & general Welfare of the Empire: That the several Establishments may have such a mutual Consistency & Connexion, that they may sustain, assist, & forward each other in their operations: and that such Checks may be provided, as may give them a Permanency or Duration; by effectually preventing the Inroads of such ill Principles & Morals, as may tend to their Destruction.

10. If I might presume in any thing to question the Conduct of so exalted a Character as that of Peter the Great; I would propose it as a doubt, whether the Want of such a general & connected Plan of Civilization was not a leading Cause of that Inefficacy & partial Success, which attended many of his best intended Institutions.

11. The principal & most important Establishments, to be built on these Foundations, & supported (as far as possible) by a correspondent Education of Children thro' the Empire, may seem chiefly to relate, 1. To Morals. 2. To Religion. 3. To Laws. 4. To Agriculture. 5. To Commerce. 6. To Arts. 7. To Sciences. 8. To Population. 9. To Defence of the Empire.

— I perceive, that Peter the Great had formed some very wise Establishments relative to Religion & Laws; & likewise touches occasionally upon some other of the Articles abovementioned. So far as these Establishments can be brought in, or improved, so as to make a Part of such an extended Plan as is here proposed, it will be highly proper (on many Accounts) to retain & adopt them.





For Dr. Dumanowski's reply see over

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But the Formation of a general Code which should be consistent with itself, & in all these essential Articles, & should tend to their mutual Support, & to the Utility & Permanency of the Empire through succeeding Ages, can only be the Result of a personal Inspection and Experience in the present leading Circumstances and Characters of the Russian Empire.

12. Such a Code ought not only to respect the present State of the Empire; but ought also to be so framed, as to expand & suit itself to every Degree of Improvement and Civilization which future Times might produce: Containing in itself likewise all possible Securities, which might check the Progress of Things, should they ever arrive at that Point, which if not guarded against is the sure Fore-runner of national Misery & Ruin.

Such, then, is the general Outline of the Plan which I should presume to propose for the Accomplishment of the great Designs of her Imperial Majesty. And it appears to Me, that the Russian Empire is at present in that State of Manners, Policy & Knowledge, which renders it most susceptible of such a general Improvement & Civilization, as is here pointed out. I will add, that I know of no other that is so. For most other Nations are either too much sunk in Barbarism, or too deeply tinged with prior Institutions, or want the great connecting Imperial Power, which alone can bind the whole together. But the Russian Empire hath (in Part) so far emerged from Barbarism, as to be sensible of its own Defects; & yet hath not so strongly or universally received any discordant Institutions or Impressions, which may not gradually be rooted out, or melted into the general Plan of Civilization. While the great Fountain of Power & Connexion, Her Imperial Majesty, leads the Way in this Undertaking.

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For Dr. Dumaesque's reply see over

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But if this Plan should be so far beyond what has been thought of, as to be adjudged totally impracticable, I shall with pleasure communi-<sup>cate</sup> to you any Thoughts which your last Letter or any future one may suggest, towards a less enlarged Scheme of national Education.

Believe me to be, with true Esteem

Dear Sir  
your most humble Servant

Newcastle  
Oct. 1. 1765.

(signed) J. Brown.

Dr. Dumaesque's Answer.

Sir. — I determined to translate your Letter into French, and to transmit it to Her Imperial Majesty, who might best judge of it. His Excellency, Mons<sup>r</sup>. de Panin, whose exalted Character, you doubtless, are acquainted with, & who acts in this Empire as first Minister in Foreign Affairs, delivered that Translation into Her Imperial Majesty's own Hands.

The Empress was much pleased, in general, with y<sup>r</sup>. Letter: and in consequence of it, I have been commissioned by His Ex<sup>ty</sup>. Mons<sup>r</sup>. de Panin, to inform you from Her Imperial Majesty, that as your Letter contains many things which deserve Attention, but are such as you cannot well know, at that Distance, whether they are suitable to this Country; and as she has a very favorable opinion of you, & would confer with you; therefore, it will be very agreeable to Her, if you will come over to St. Petersburg, as soon as convenient may be, to consider farther of these Matters. My private Affairs calling me back to England at this time, it has been given me in Charge (but in very general Terms) to concert Matters with you There, in Relation to your Voyage.

*[Faint, illegible handwriting on aged paper, possibly a letter or document fragment.]*