

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

F R I D A Y, JULY 9, 1779.

From the PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE. NUMBER III.



It may easily conceive what may be the next address of commissioners from Britain to the Congress of these States.—Gentlemen, we have this candour to confess that the fate of war has balanced in your favour, and it seems to be the will of heaven that you should be independent. Whether it is your real happiness time alone must discover. Be this as it may, we are now furnished with powers to acknowledge, nay to guarantee your independence. You are pleased to think yourselves out of your apprenticeship, and that with great propriety you may set up at your own hand. We have often told you, that in our opinion a thing of this kind was rather immature. Nevertheless, since it must be so, we are disposed to acquiesce. We will do as well as we can by you, and set you up in the world; only it will be necessary that you forsake all improper company, and place yourselves in the firm and natural alliance of the people of Great-Britain. Or if, from that pride of thought too natural to men who have been successful, you scorn the alliance of the power of Britain, yet for God's sake do not add yourselves to our natural enemy, who will make use of the advantages which she may draw from the connection, to effect the ruin of us both.

We take the freedom, gentlemen, to assure you that Britain, though unfortunate, yet has had your happiness in view through the whole of this debate. If it was her wish that you should continue longer in dependence on her, it was because she thought it for your interest. But now that you are arrived to mature years, she is willing that you should be men, may she will guarantee your rights as freemen, and atone for any severity she may hitherto have exercised, by shewing you in future times the most disinterested acts of kindness.

The devil trusts her, says an honest man; and for my part, if it is at all proper to introduce the devil in a serious discourse, I must confess he cannot be better coupled, than with a power who has acted in many instances so much like him. When we take a view of her conduct in past cases, it must in this case be natural to ask, is it possible that Britain in her present embassy of commissioners can be, in the least degree, sincere? I say it is not possible.

The passion of a nation is the aggregate of the passions of individuals, and has the same characters with the passions of an individual. If it can be found in history or experience, that an individual who has greatly injured his neighbour can cease to hate the individual who has been the subject of the injury, then it may be possible that a nation who has been guilty of the like injustice can act with the like forgiveness. But in history or experience there are not frequent instances of individuals who have done an injury becoming friendly to the person who has been the subject of it; for, though the individual who has been the subject of the injury may readily forgive, yet the individual who has done the injury cannot know that the forgiveness is sincere, and therefore cannot but distrust, and distrusting fear, and tearing hate, and endeavour to destroy.

Britain, to the people of America, has been guilty of the most manifest injustice, in advancing a claim of dominion which must have bound them down, limb and body, in a more ignominious servitude than that in which he is placed who labours chained at the galley oar. She has attacked us weak and defenceless, and through a tedious war, by every cruelty in arms, and by every fraud in stipulation, has fixed upon our minds the most durable impression of her baseness. She well knows that this impression has been made, and therefore it may as well be expected that the fens of Aina shall flow down in a cool stream of refreshing water, as that Britain can entertain the most distant cordial thought of friendship for America. Having a thousand times declared that the independence which we seemed to affect would not be our happiness, it is not possible that she can labour to establish it, in direct contradiction to her own prophecy and judgment. I am persuaded that no circumstance in the course of things could give her more acute pain, than to be a witness of our happiness in a state independent of her island. It would be as reasonable to suppose that the devil, in his flight by the confines of heaven, could be pleased with the innocence and gaiety of those smiling plains, as that Britain, in her voyages on these coasts, could be pleased with a prospect of those fields flourishing, which she had wasted, and those houses built again, which she had burnt down.

If she herself had built them, possessing in the mean time the inhabitants in a state of slavery, and dependent on her favour, she might then, and only then, be pleased with the circumstance.

If Britain cannot wish well to our independence, will she have it in her power to injure it, should we too credulously receive her advances, and put an implicit trust in her proposals? Without doubt she will have it in her power greatly to injure us. The moment that commissioners appear and express a willingness to grant the long debated article of independence, it will be thought by every superficial mind that the controversy is wholly at an end. Britain will be considered as a rising sun, whose early beam will be hailed: for reconciled with these states, she will have at least the interest of a friend to assist those, who by court paid shall seem to deserve her favour. Now it is a much more easy thing to pay court to a tyrant power, than to the whole body of a free and virtuous people, amongst whom nothing but distinguished merit can advance to public office. For this reason, all who have not a confidence in their own integrity and talents will seek to raise themselves by that power, who can be better served by artifice and fraud, than by integrity or distinguished talents, cramped in their operation by an ill-natured principle of virtue.

Britain will more than meet advances of this nature. She will court individuals, and even address herself to particular states; and in the interim of negotiation endeavour to allure by proposals of particular advantage. She may stipulate with one state to take from them what tobacco she shall want, or to give to another by the exclusive importation of a certain article of commerce, by this means constituting them her factors in the exclusive importation of that article. To another she may grant the exclusive privilege of trade from a certain of her West-India islands.

These conditions she may dispense with particular states, in order that she may secure their vote to co-operate with her to bring the states in general from their connection with the court of France to a connection with the court of Britain, or perhaps perhaps state of dependence on her.

There is a wide interval between a declaration on the part of Britain to acknowledge our independence, and a declaration of her willingness to acknowledge it, on this condition that we relinquish our alliance with the court of France. This interval is easy and unfillable. It boils up with quick sands. Let us not tread upon it to negotiate.

It ought to be our first question to the commissioners.—Gentlemen, are you furnished with powers to ratify your consent to the independence of the states? Yes, upon condition that you re-

linquish your unnatural alliance with the court of France. Gentlemen, the expression is an insult upon our honour, and the idea, if admitted, would be destructive of our happiness. You will excuse us from any farther conversation relative to that which appears to be the object of your embassy. Our independence, clear and disconnected with conditions, is what we chuse to hear conceded to us, and until that point, single and alone, is conceded, we can have no place for any intercourse by writing or by message whatsoever.

I am of opinion, that even when Great-Britain shall have created every act of open and avowed hostility against us, it will be wise, for some length of time, to keep her at a distance. We may rest assured that she will not easily give up the hope of adding these states to her dominion. Circumstances that do not yet appear may put an object of this nature greatly in her power. When emigrants from her kingdom, rising in the pride and prejudice of Englishmen, like monsters from the ocean, half man half shark, shall have spread themselves upon our soil, and be added to the number who already have the desial mark upon them, she may hope to form an interest, by which the balance of our councils may preponderate in her behalf. When she comes to extend her commerce, and to plant her factories on every river of America, she may hope to accomplish that by artifice, which a ten years war, and a thousand ships, had not been able to effect.

For these reasons, I would not wish to see this country renewing with too much avidity, her intercourse and correspondence with Great-Britain. When those men are dead, who have sought our lives, then, and then only, will it be safe for us to go down into Egypt.

THE HONEST POLITICIAN.

Non anni domum decem, non mille carinae.

Messieurs HALL & SELLERS.

GENTLEMEN, I SHALL now present the public with the following extract, taken from a Maryland paper, with some animadversions thereon.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Virginia to his friend in this city, dated May 19, 1779.

"I this moment received your's of the 14th, and am much concerned that we are not likely to see you here this summer, tho' I will not give up the hope. Would to God my conjectures of the designs of the enemy had proved wrong: It hurts me to think we shall endure this campaign, especially as I am convinced it might have been avoided, if we had acted wisely and honestly the last fall and winter. I do from my soul believe we should have had peace this spring, had it not been for the execrable faction."

The public may be assured, that the writer of this letter is a gentleman of character, and one who was both last fall and winter a member of the honourable congress. If the present distresses and ravages of war, and the expence of our blood and treasure, is owing to the dishonest and unwise practices and conduct of any man, or set of men, they ought to be exposed to the public, and the measures they have so fatally pursued to be reprobated and condemned. This writer appears fully convinced that not only this campaign might have been avoided, had we acted honestly and wisely last fall and winter, but that we should have had peace this spring, had it not been for the execrable faction. Whatever faction has prevented peace, is execrable almost beyond the powers of language to express; and I am extremely sorry that this gentleman has not told us in plain words what faction it is, which has prevented a peace from taking place this spring.—Is it a tory faction, a British, or American faction?—We certainly know it cannot be a French faction; since his most Christian Majesty has from the first been averle to a war with Great-Britain, and as early as the beginning of February last, by his minister, acquainted congress with his desire for peace, and urged them to come to such resolutions, as might be the basis for opening a treaty, and the putting an end to the ravages of war.

It is reported that congress are still debating what the terms shall be, and that some men strenuously insist on such, as others fear will not be agreed to, and as they apprehend may prevent any treaty at all; and such as our ally, by his treaties with us, is by no means bound to support us in demanding.—That these latter are very apprehensive of the consequences of insisting on articles, which may in the very first stage of a negotiation bar, all future progress in the treaty, and possibly not only disgust our ally, but prevent other powers from offering to mediate, or to interfere at all in the dispute. This is an important subject as has ever fell under the consideration of congress, and it is evident they consider it as such, having already spent more than four months without deciding on it, though repeatedly urged by the minister of France to come to their final resolution.

No one who is in the least acquainted with the state of public affairs, and the interest and views of the contending powers, will ever attribute our not having peace, or at least a negotiation opened for it, to a French interest or faction. This dispute in congress has divided (as the discussion of every important question naturally must) the house into two parties. Can it be supposed that either of these are designed by the phrase execrable faction? If so, it is high time that not only the journals of congress, and the ayes and noes should be published, but that the doors of the house should be thrown open, and their constituents have an opportunity of judging for themselves, who are the men who oppose themselves to the peace and happiness of these states.—I am very sensible of the impropriety and the danger, as well as of the absurdity, of debating in public on the terms to be proposed in a treaty, on what is and what is not ultimately to be insisted on, or in what manner proposals are first to be made, and how they may afterwards be explained or altered. But

when this bleeding country is told, that an execrable faction prevents peace, it is but natural to enquire where this faction is, who compose it, and what are their views. Congress alone are invested with the powers of war and peace; this faction must therefore be in that body, or be so powerful at least without doors, as to influence a majority of the votes within. From what this gentleman has positively asserted, and from general report, it cannot be doubted that overtures or proposals of peace have been made from some quarter or other; whether they originated from France or Great-Britain, or in congress itself, is immaterial: Every one will agree that peace is an object most devoutly to be wished for, if to be had on safe and honourable, as well as just and equal terms. What then can be the views of those who oppose it? I presume no one, whether in congress, or out, whether in the French, American, or British interest, is against a peace, though they may differ widely in their opinions, as to the terms on which it ought to be made. France, having no other interest or object in this war than the securing our independence and sovereignty, and the separating us for ever from Great-Britain, by which her commerce would be enlarged, and that of her rival lessened, and her increasing maritime power checked;—it is evident, that terms which will secure this must be agreeable to France.—Had Great-Britain, when first made acquainted with the treaties between these United States and France, agreed to a suspension of hostilities, and offered to treat with us as sovereign, independent states, on terms similar to those in the treaties with France, what would have been the consequence? Must it not have produced an immediate peace? France wished to avoid a war, and had no demands on Great-Britain on her own account, but what might have been adjusted without recourse to arms. On our part, we did not take up arms with the view of conquest and acquisition, either of new territories or rights. Our petitions, before hostilities were commenced, were "for peace, liberty and safety, not for any new right in our favour." If Great-Britain has actually made, or is willing to listen to overtures of peace; if our ally is solicitous to put an end to hostilities, and to stop the further effusion of human blood; if other powers, convinced of the justice of our cause, are willing and disposed to offer their mediation; is it possible there can be a party, a faction, in these states, and in their councils, who oppose themselves to peace, and wish to prolong the horrors and calamities of war?—If such a faction does exist, what are their motives and views? Do they wish to make acquisitions to these states by conquest; or do they imagine that in treaty we are in a situation to dictate the terms? Congress, in their declaration of independence, in the name of the United States of America, solemnly publish and declare that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states, and that as free and independent states they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. His Most Christian Majesty, convinced of the justice of this declaration, formed an alliance with these states, by which he engaged to guarantee to them their sovereignty and independence, as well as the territories to them belonging, and certain others, if in the course of the war they should acquire them.—The words of the treaty on this subject are as follow:

"ARTICLE 2d. The essential and direct end of the present defensive alliance is, to maintain effectually the liberty, sovereignty and independence, absolute and unlimited, of the said United States, as well in matters of government as of commerce."

"ARTICLE 11th. The two parties guarantee mutually, from the present time and for ever, against all other powers, to wit, the United States to His Most Christian Majesty, the present possessions of the crown of France in America, as well as those which it may acquire by the future treaty of peace; and His Most Christian Majesty guarantees on his part to the United States, their liberty, sovereignty and independence, absolute and unlimited, as well in matters of government as of commerce; and also their possessions, and the additions or conquests that their confederation may obtain during the war, from any of the dominions now or heretofore possessed by Great-Britain, in North America; conformable to the fifth and sixth articles above written, the whole as their possession shall be fixed and assured to the said states, at the moment of the cessation of their present war with England."

It is not my intention to make any observations on this, or any other parts of the treaties: They are evidently expressed in clear, unequivocal terms, and appear to have been dictated by plain, sincere and sound policy. There can be no doubt as to what the contracting parties, by those treaties, guaranteed to each other; but it is reported, that the debates and delays in congress, on the terms of the treaty proposed to be opened, have arisen from the desire and wishes of some men to include in it certain objects and rights, which were not in our possession, either at the time of the declaration of independence, or of the concluding the treaties of Paris: In a word, that a right of fishing on the banks of Newfoundland shall be acknowledged and guaranteed to these states, and that such an article shall be made a sine qua non of the treaty.

This fishery is undoubtedly an object of great consequence to the United States, to two or three of them more especially. But as these banks are not contiguous to the shores of any of these states; as it is a question, whether the subjects of these states had any other right to that fishery, but what they derived from their being subjects of Great-Britain; and as it cannot be pretend-