

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

F R I D A Y, F E B R U A R Y I I, 1780.

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WING to many causes, England had been hitherto so much taken up with the affairs of Europe, that her ambition had not begun to extend itself with regard to the limits of her possessions in North America. But after the peace of Aix la Chapelle, this became her object, and she was daily making encroachments on the territories of France in this quarter. It is difficult for us, who have taken all our ideas from the representations of Britain, to be persuaded of this encroachment. Like the feudatories of a great chieftain, we have never examined the circumstances of the inroad, but explicitly admitted the justice of the claim, and have drawn our swords to defend it. It is difficult, more especially, as we ourselves were interested in the matter, and whatever extent of territory was taken away from France, was added to our settlements. Nevertheless, though I do not mean to enter minutely into the discussion of this affair, yet it will easily appear, that our former views of ambition on the part of France, arising from the disputes relative to her possessions on this continent, were very ill founded. At the conclusion of the peace of Aix la Chapelle, England had a flourishing marine, and could give us almost to the whole commercial world, from what we know of the nature of individuals, and of nations, it is more reasonable to suppose, that in this case England would be ambitious, than that France should be so, whose naval force was almost to ally destroyed, and in the year 1741, had scarce one ship of force remaining. Be it as it will, we may now speak of these things freely, as we are no longer connected with that land, and as they never can be the ground of debate between France and us.

It was no easy matter to settle clearly and precisely the boundaries of the possessions of the two crowns on this continent, the ancient treaties relative to these, being obscure or rather unintelligible. At the treaty of Aix la Chapelle was regulated, that all things should be on the footing they were, or ought to be, before the war. These indefinite words, as we have remarked in former papers, left it with either party to make their own construction of the boundaries; and hence it was, that the English, from the settlements bordering on what is called Nova Scotia, and what was then called, and still retains the name of Canada, were making daily encroachments on the French settlements; for though this was not as things were; yet it was as they ought to be, before the war.

The court of France made her first complaints to England in the month of June, 1749; and to put a stop to the daily hostilities, which might light up a new war, proposed to name commissioners, who might settle in an amicable manner, the limits of the English and French colonies. The king of Great-Britain, then George II, named commissioners to meet for that purpose, commissioners at Paris, but hostilities between the settlements on the river St. John, and other places, continuing daily in America, it answered little purpose for the king of England to order simply that his subjects of these colonies should not invade the possessions of the French inhabitants, either on the side of New Scotland, or Hudson's bay; for as no boundary was precisely fixed, and as the British colonies were more powerful than those of France, they used every means to obtain that which they had claimed, and which had not been willingly relinquished to them.

France, as she was not prepared for war, made use of every means to preserve peace. Orders were given at different times to the marquis de Jonquier, governor of Canada, "to restrain on the least encroachment on the rights of the English; to conduct himself, with regard to them, with all that attention to peace, which could be compatible with the honour of the nation, and the preservation of its possessions; to join the officers which he might detach to the posts in the neighbourhood of the English colonies, to conduct themselves on the same principles; and in one word, to avoid every thing which could give the least foundation to complaints against them."

September 21, 1750, the commissioners presented their memorials to their respective courts, concerning the limits of Nova Scotia, in which they differed widely from each other, the French making the *antient limits* to commence from the extremity of Francis bay, to cape Santa Maria, along the coast, and ending at Cape Canseau; the English contending, that under the description of the *antient limits*, were contained all the lands which extend from the river Kennebec to the mouth of the river St. Lawrence, and from the river St. Lawrence, to the north as far as the Ocean. January 11, 1751, the British commissioners sent in a memorial to prove the justice of their demands. The French commissioners replied to this, and it must be confessed, insisted what their adversaries had considered as demonstration. Indeed it was easy to prove that the reasonings of both were uncertain, and the great fault was, that supposing this, they respectively did not enter into a treaty, with a disposition mutually to concede, and so adjust the difference. What end did it serve to run back to the origin of the French and British establishments in America, to cite the authorities of navigators, historians, writings, maps, patents given by both courts, commissions to their officers, and the letters of those officers. This labour might discover great knowledge, but left no end to the controversy.

When we read in the 18th article of the treaty of Utrecht, that the king of France cedes to England, Nova Scotia heretofore called Acadia, in its whole extent, according to the *antient limits*, we must acknowledge, in good honesty, that these words determine nothing, for how could there be *antient limits* in a country which had been inhabited only by savages before the Europeans had fixed themselves in it. From the manner in which the Europeans fixed themselves in provinces, of which they knew not the extent, and where they really did possess only the lands which they cultivated, how could they have certain limits? They extended themselves by little and little; they built forts, and the countries comprehended between their territories were subject to the same jurisdiction. On one and on the other side, they had but reasonable expectations of the final possession. The government had no constant and determinate territory; the separate colonies united, the united colonies became separate, and in the midst of these continual revolutions, how could there be found certain traces of certain limits? England had, by this time, sent an army under the command of general Braddock, to attack the French on the Ohio, when the minister of France made a farther proposition, January 13, 1755, to place matters on the footing they had been, until commissioners could be appointed to settle them in some prompt and immediate manner. A negotiation in consequence of this commenced, and France consented "to evacuate all the lands situate between the western mountains and the Ohio river, so that this extent should be considered as a neutral country, until by the convention set on foot, it should be settled to whom it should belong." These propositions of the French court would very probably have produced a salutary effect, if they had been sent four years sooner; but the British court was now weary of negotiations; every disposition had been made for war, and her expectations were too high, easily to renounce them. In answer to this proposal of a treaty, the court of England sent, May 5, 1755, a number of articles, by which it was demanded, amongst other things, that France should demolish her fortifications on the borders of Canada: a boundary line of her possessions was, at the same time, pointed out, by such lines, and such degrees of latitude, as would greatly circumscribe her within her former claims.

This was in fact to reject the proposal of a treaty; nevertheless France still continued to make advances towards an accommodation, and in a memorial from her minister she wisely observed, "That if thoughts of war should continue in America, or should hostilities continue upon the sea, advantages on either side would serve only to multiply pretensions, and furnish new obstacles to an accommodation;" adding,

that sincerely to desire peace, and not to use every means to prevent war, were things incompatible.

The court of England was, no doubt, convinced of this, but answered, "That she could not consider, an armistice as a means that could favour a reconciliation. Nevertheless a negotiation was continued, because the French court, conscious of her own weak state, could not give up the hopes of peace, and England had some reasons not yet to declare war.

In a memorial which the ambassador of France presented to the court of London, May 14, 1755, it was proposed, for a basis of negotiation, "That Nova Scotia, though it comprehended but a part of the peninsula on which it was situated, yet from a love of peace, France would yield the whole peninsula to England, on condition that the French who are there settled, should enjoy, for three years, the liberty of retiring with their effects. This cession she would make, reserving only the isthmus, which she could not, without renouncing at the same time the communication, during a great part of the year, to several of her western possessions."

In answer to this, the court of London renewed her propositions of March 7, and observed, "That the conditions on which the court of Versailles consented to abandon the peninsula, were subject to many obstacles, and unfavourable objections, so as to render the possession of it useless, and that it would be as well for England not to possess it at all, as not to possess what was the principal part." The court of London remitted a farther memorial, with some questions relative to a negotiation, but in the mean time had given orders to admiral Boscawen to commence hostilities, and June 8, 1755, the Alcides and Lys, two French vessels, were captured in the seas of America.

It is needless to say in what manner the war in America kindled up a war in Europe. It was because, while France was vulnerable to Britain, on this continent, the possessions of Britain, were vulnerable to France, in Germany.

I have drawn out these particulars to some length, because I well know, that though our prejudices against the French nation came principally from the island of Great-Britain, yet they were considerably rivetted by our contests on this continent. For it is natural for all men to think their own cause just, and I have rarely met one who has been able to acknowledge the good qualities of his adversary. But as we easily admit, that many of those things which were done by us long ago were not justifiable, so with regard to our conduct to the French nation, while they were our neighbours on the continent, we now cease to approve freely: and I believe when we come to consider the matter at a future day, we shall be sensible that though France yielded to the superior fortune, and superior force of the British arms, yet she was even in the commencement of the debate the injured party, and we who were formerly the British colonies acting offensively against her, obeyed rather the impulse of the British councils, than any sound deductions of reasoning relative to the ground of the quarrel. Be this as it may, Providence has made that brave nation our best friends, and if at any time we have concurred in treating them hardly, our best reparation will be a steady adherence to this alliance, with which we are so much honoured, and, in which we are so happy.

THE HONEST POLITICIAN.

To the P U B L I C.

THE intended confiscation of British property has occasioned a difference of opinion between the two branches of our legislature. A bill for seizing and confiscating that property, originated in the house of delegates, was sent to, and returned by the senate, with a negative, accompanied by a message, explaining the reasons of their rejecting it, at the last session. The delegates answered the senate's message, a few hours before the two houses adjourned: the senate being thus precluded from replying, and the delegates having appealed to their constituents for their instructions on this point,