(XLIIId YEAR.) THE (No. 2142.)

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 1788.

To the CITIZENS of ANNAPOLIS.

YOU are requested by the general assembly of Maryland, to elect two persons, to represent you in the convention, which is to determine, whether this state shall accede to the proposed plan of a confederate government.

It is a pretty general idea, that a majority of the people are disposed to adopt it. But there are men in every county, exerting their whole powers, and putting every engine into motion to defeat, as they allege, the deep-concerted scheme of a few aspiring, wealthy and well born.

That the federal convention, availing themselves of the high trust and confidence of their countrymen, have, with matchless cunning, devised a system for preparing the way to their beloved aristocracy, is a topic of declamation, which is urged to the inhabitants of Annapolis, in common with their fellow-citizens of the union. There is another argument directed only to *them*; and that is, that the proposed alteration will prove peculiarly detrimental to Annapolis.

It is my purpose to examine these two objections, or rather naked assertions. The first of them I consider as an insult to the understandings of a whole people.

An aristocracy is a government, where the sovereign power resides neither in the body of the people, nor in representatives, elected by the people at stated periods. It is enjoyed by a select body, distinct from the people. They claim it from the constitution, in their own right. It is confined to a few noble families: and is transmitted like a manor from father to son.

This, in *my* conception, is the true nature of an aristocracy; but I mean not to dispute about words; and if a thing be good I care little for the name. From any form of government however which I have known called, by good writers, an aristocracy, the proposed constitution differs almost as much as light from darkness. An aristocracy has been frequently confounded with a government by representation, when, in fact, there is between them a most solid distinction. The latter is a true democracy, and the only species of democracy that can exist with convenience.

To give an idea of each, it is sufficient to advert to the British constitution. The house of lords is an aristocratic assembly, distinct from, and independent of, the people. The house of commons is a democratic assembly, as truly as if the whole body of their electors was convened, in their stead. Men are too apt to take their ideas from ancient petty republics, in which that important discovery, a genuine representation, had not been made. The truth is, the term "*aristocracy*" is become hateful; as indeed the thing itself ought ever to be held. Hence is it, that some men wish to fix the name of aristocracy on the proposed constitution.

As a confederate commonwealth, consisting of many small democratic republics, the proposed constitution is as completely the government of the people, as is possible for a government of that kind, instituted, as it is, for the common defence and general welfare of the several component states, and leaving the protection of each individual, as far as may be, to his respective state government. It is indeed more so, than any other confederate government that has ever existed.

In its legislative department, there are two distinct branches. One of them is chosen immediately by the people; and the other by the people's immediate representatives. They are both appointed for a reasonable term; and there is no shadow of a preference given to the wealthy and well-born. One of these branches possesses a great share of the executive authority, the residue of which is committed to a single man, the representative of the people, chosen once in four years, and enjoying no privilege, as an individual, more than his fellow-citizens.

If then this constitution, which cannot be changed, without the people's consent, be an aristocracy, either I am mistaken in the term, or an aristocratic form is the most eligible. And if the people of America amongst whom knowledge is diffused, real property divided, vassallage unknown, and personal influence therefore greatly circumscribed;—if the people of America shall be induced to alter this form, and surrender their liberties either to one man, or a few nobles of their own creation; then were not mankind intended to be free; all human wisdom is folly; and there is no sure principle on which may be formed the prediction of any future event.

That this constitution is, at least, calculated for the advantage of the rich, and will, of course, be oppressive to the poor, is a position, often advanced with an air of candour, benevolence and humility. An argument in its support has not been publicly attempted, that I know of, except by two honourable persons of a neighbouring state, not much *distinguished by the liberality of their conduct, or attention to the poor.* I challenge every enemy of the plan to shew, in what manner a citizen, from his riches, can derive an advantage, which he would not enjoy under any other government consulting equal liberty and equal rights.

The objection might be more plainly expressed by the following simple declaration. "By this detested "scheme, estates are rendered too secure. When a "man gets the property of another into his hands, "and thereby incurs a debt, he must discharge it "agreeably to his contract. What then shall become of those, who possess neither riches, nor "industry? Assuredly, under such severe administration it will be impracticable for them to maintain their ground."

Such is the general objection. I have too good an opinion of the Annapolitans, to imagine they will be duped, by the particular representations made to them, not as citizens of America, or even of Maryland, but as men, studious to promote the most trifling interest of their own, at the expence of a continent's welfare; as men who vainly suppose, they can flourish and be happy, whilst the rest of this great community of North-America is distrest and miserable.

The most inveterate opponent will not pretend, that the articles of confederation can establish our safety. Is he then capable of inventing a mode whereby congress shall possess efficient authority, unless each state shall surrender a portion of its sovereign rights, or at least suffer congress to impose and collect some kind of tax? Can we expect, hereafter, the states will comply with requisitions, better than they did, at the most trying stages of the war? Their legislatives, at present called on for contributions, may be considered on a footing with individuals, called on, by acts of assembly, providing no mode of coertion. Nay—less may be expected by congress, from a state legislature, than by a state legislature from the voluntary payments of its citizens. For although a strong sense of duty might impel a few to contribute, without compulsion, to the exigences of their state, we are not to imagine, the same tie will bind the majority of an assembly, consisting of individuals, who, if they compel others, must, at the same time bind themselves.

To explain, according to my own conjecture, the particular objection applied to Annapolitans, it amounts to this. "When congress shall exercise "powers, sufficient to give life and energy to their "government, our own legislature will be curtailed "of its authority. Its members, dependents and "*suitors* will therefore expend less money at the capital. Should the federal courts too "*absorb*" "the greater part of legal actions, our own general "court will neither sit so long, nor attract so great "a concourse of people."

The general assembly, it is true, will not consume so much time in *debating* on the requisitions of congress. But is it supposable, that our own internal government will not require the same attention, as before? The uncertainty of the law in general, the inefficacy of the penal law, the disproportion between crimes and punishments, the delays of justice; all these, and many others, are evils which demand their deliberation. They demand too the utmost care and circumspection, with some insight into the laws and regulations of other nations. Some of these subjects have been postponed from session to session. The legislature may now apply to this important business, with their minds less occupied by the general concerns of the union, on which, it is not likely, that they can be competent to decide.

In a popular assembly, let the subject of debate be what it may, there will be dissension and party-work, so long as the human mind shall be liable to the influence of passion, or interest; and dissension and party-work must ever protract deliberation. Many of you remember, under the proprietary government, that an inspection bill, the regulation of fees, the forty per poll, the allowance to a clerk, and a variety of other subjects, produced violent agitation, and were almost capable of throwing the province into convulsions. If, at the same time, you conversed coolly with any two sensible men of different sides, you found the real matter in dispute of very little importance. In a word, if long sessions of assembly are what you desire; or, if to the real dignity and importance of the state legislature you are warmly attached, you have nothing to apprehend, from the proposed constitution.

A moment's reflection likewise, I think, cannot fail to convince any man, that the projected change will be greatly in your favour, considered merely with respect to the numbers, which shall repair to the capital, and the time they shall attend, on account of legal proceedings.

The constitution will create and give rise to a variety of business; and whether the federal or the general court shall have jurisdiction, will make very little difference to *you*. In all human probability, the congress will make a point of instituting a tribunal at the metropolis of each state. You will, in that case, have two courts instead of one; and the federal tribunal may be of more importance than the general court; because only one court will, I apprehend, be appointed by congress for the whole state.

On these considerations, therefore, setting aside the advantages, which, as citizens of America, you will derive from the best mode of government, that human wisdom ever yet contrived, you will be benefited as sharers of the money expended by visitors and sojourners.—I will not flatter you, that this city will become the seat of congress. But should such be the event, who is there will contend, that Annapolis will not profit from the change?

I have been addressing you my fellow-citizens, in imitation of my opponents. I have spoken to you as men, who measure not on the large scale of public good; who applaud, or condemn every measure, as it may possibly affect their own interest; and who, even in their selfish attentions, prefer an immediate advantage to the greatest distant blessing. If by motives like these, you are to be influenced in the decision of the vast question before us, you are to consider barely, whether I have not refuted those positions, which you have listened to, in corners.—But, could I believe, that a majority of the freemen in Annapolis were persons of that despicable stamp, I would disdain to address them at all.

I shall, however, confine myself to the limits prescribed at my outset. To the writings of your own townsmen, and to many others, I refer you, for a full examination of other objections. Already has the general subject been discussed, far better than the bounds of a news-paper would admit, had I the inclination, the leisure, or the talents for a complete investigation.

With respect to the objects of your choice at the approaching election, it would be arrogance of an individual, in this way, to offer his advice. I shall content myself with making a few general remarks which I trust, no man in his senses will deny, however he may determine to vote. Neither prejudice nor partiality, favour nor ill will, should direct you in your suffrages. You are sensible, that the appointment will confer no advantage on the possessor. Envy, hatred and detraction, are the rewards with which too many require a conscientious and effectual discharge of duty; and these are by no means balanced by that scanty applause, which is yielded by the most honest and candid of his constituents.

But, waving all these considerations, if you are wise, you will honour with your suffrages those men, in whom you can best confide, and whom you shall deem most capable of consulting the welfare of present and future generations. The decision of this stupendous question, so interesting to this city, to the state, and to the union, involves in it likewise the fate of thousands, and hundreds of thousands, in every quarter of the habitable earth. Long have the inhabitants of Europe viewed the cause of America as the cause of human nature. When the contest with Great Britain first began, and for eight years of arduous conflict, we looked forward to its successful termination as the accomplishment of our wishes. But that glorious termination, which at length we obtained, should have been considered only as an opening of the way to our permanent prosperity. An efficient system of government, which can bind together the several states, prevent the encroachments of one upon another, protect the whole from invasion, and secure good treatment and respect to our citizens abroad;—it is this form of government alone, which has been wanted, to realize those flattering prospects, which presented themselves, even before we took rank amongst nations.

Annapolis, January 27, 1788. AN ANNAPOLITAN.

VIENNA, *October* 14.

ACCORDING to authentic letters from Petersburg, prince Potemkin will have 100,000 men under his command, 48,000 or 50,000 from mount Caucasus and the Cuban. This prince, they say, is at Elizabeth Gerod, in a position proper for