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MARYLAND GAZETTE.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1794.

For the MARYLAND GAZETTE.

Cives magistratibus pareant magistratus legibus—

HOWEVER political writers may differ in opinion respecting the origin of civil government; whether founded on the virtue of a civil compact, or the moral obligation of expediency, its importance in the support of society is too well established to admit of any exception, and its necessity too obvious to be disputed. Since its first formation, which probably might be nearly coeval with man (for in a recurrence to tradition we can find no annals or period of time in which it has not, in some form or modification, existed,) that ever man lived in a pure state of nature is very questionable. Its advantages in society require no comment to shew the necessity of its support, nor eloquence to impress the human mind with its inestimable advantages; experience, more powerful than all other arguments, fully demonstrates its efficacy, in being the great cement of order, harmony and union, between man and man. But society would be extremely imbecile, if not entirely dead, independent to laws, and laws themselves would be little better than statutes without motion or animation, if not enforced by the civil authority, and implicitly obeyed by the citizens.

The importance of civil society is never seen in so conspicuous a point of view, as when the operation of the laws is suspended, then our natural state is resumed, every man acts as he pleases, and becomes his own judge, because in a state of nature there is no superior. It is laid down as a fundamental rule in government, that all men, connected by the links of society, either verbally or tacitly, promise not only a submission to the laws of the same, but their aid and assistance in their support, the terms of admission being an implicit obedience to the laws, the consideration, its privileges and protection, therefore a violation of the laws militates, not only against that real or supposed compact, but abandons the bonâ fide consideration, namely, its advantages and protection.

The constitution and laws are the basis of public tranquillity, the firmest support of public authority, and the liberty of the citizens; but the constitution is but a vain phantom, and the best of laws are useless if not religiously executed by the civil authority, and implicitly obeyed by the citizens. Without an implicit obedience to the laws, and a due support of government, our civil compact becomes annihilated, the pledges of union revoked, the basis of independency demolished, and our unalienable rights, life, liberty and property, submitted to anarchy, disorder and confusion. In vain will one body of men compile a code of the best of laws. In vain will another interpret them—if they are not duly executed by a third; by a formation of the one, the boundaries of right and wrong are ascertained, where the rights are to be observed, and the wrongs to be avoided; by an interpretation of the other, how to observe these rights, and abstain from the commission of the wrongs; but by an execution of the third, being the perfection of the law, the injury is not only redressed, but a penalty annexed to the transgression, not so much for the satisfaction of justice, as for preventing the commission of crimes in future.

When we consider that mankind are regulated in a natural capacity by laws and government, when we consider that each member must conform to these laws, and that government, in order to keep up harmony in the whole, we must not be surprised in seeing the necessity of laws and government in bodies politic, and the expediency of implicit obedience of each member to the same, for the support of its happiness; and it is by this obedience that order, harmony and union, is diffused through each member, and constitutional strength through the whole.

All the political happiness of men must eventually flow from that source—laws founded upon justice by the legislature, equitably interpreted by the judiciary, religiously executed by the magistrates, and implicitly obeyed by the citizens. In taking into consideration the importance of civil government, and the expediency of implicit obedience to its laws, it may not seem improper to animadvert a little on the rise and fall of ancient governments, the virtues producing the former, and vices accelerating the latter, and conclude by making a few reflections on the general state of disorder which pervades our country, from the refractory conduct of a few in the resistance of the laws. However mankind might have differed respecting vice and virtue at different periods and in different countries, patriotism is one of those virtues, which, in every age and country, has been cherished as the greatest good, and has always produced genuine liberty, when regulated with due moderation; but as the soundest human constitution may, at particular times, require medicine, both for regulating the system and giving due motion to the laws by which it is governed, so may the best political one require remedial exercise, both for suppressing disorders, so ruinous to the progress of her strength and vigour, and adding stability to the constitution.

What virtues supported ancient governments against foreign and domestic attacks? What virtues secured them from the dissention of parties? From licentiousness anarchy and confusion at home? What against formidable tyrants and despicable despots abroad? What gave ancient republics health, vigour, strength and power, with a long and happy existence? What supported Greece and Rome in their happiest æras? What the states of Holland and Cantons of Switzerland? Unanimity, temperance, frugality, perseverance, public and private virtue, with due reverence to their Creator; these were the strongest pillars of their constitution, and palladium of their liberties. What vices corrupted the members, sapped the constitution and undermined the government? Luxury, prodigality, intemperance, venality and dissipation. Customs, maxims and manners, in every age, may change, but human nature is always the same; and it is a maxim laid down in the physical and political world, that the same causes will, in the same constitutions, produce the same effects; consequently, those virtues and vices which have been favourable or obnoxious to republics of old, cannot possibly fail of having some influence on modern states, however distant in analogy, and different in construction. When the Spartan soup became insipid to the Greeks, and the campus martius toilsome to the Romans, their governments became unstable. When effeminacy and enervating manners crept in amongst them, they soon undermined the strongest pillars of the constitution, sapped the foundation of their liberty, and shook the government. One vice gradually succeeded another, till ambition, like a torrent, sweeping all before it, demolished the noble and majestic fabric of the republic, and buried virtue beneath its ruins. Aspiring demagogues soon availed themselves of an opportunity to strengthen their parties by the weakness of government, and usurp the liberties of their country. Through the avenues of intrigue and dissimulation had Greece and Rome received their first shock, through the same, their last and irrecoverable fall; by the false representation of pretended patriots, whose streightest road to promotion was by embroiling the state in civil discord and intestine convulsions, they lost the confidence of the people; these made professions of their own patriotism to ingratiate themselves, they accused the magistrates of the most flagrant offences to strengthen their parties, they declaimed upon grievances and oppression, which had no existence but in their own imagination, that they might suppress the operation of the laws, destroy all genuine liberty, and raise themselves upon the downfal of their country; by these the honest minds of the multitude were poisoned, the purest intentions of government construed into vice and corruption; truth and innocence submitted to falsehood and ignorance, and virtue and modesty swallowed up in the abyss of passion and rashness. Men, actuated with boundless ambition, profligate in morals, and ruined in fortunes, are always ready for a revolution, that they may enrich themselves in the common plunder, and aggrandize themselves by the misfortunes of their fellow-citizens. The incendiaries Scilla, Marius and Cataline, had, at different times, brought ruin on their country, by declaiming against the government, and raising factions against the people. To enumerate all the shocks sustained by ancient republics from such engines of despotism, would fill a volume. The alarming and deranged state of our country, from such abominable abuses, is too well known to require any comment. The present state of fermentation which pervades the public mind, requires the serious attention of every friend to peace and order to stop the progress of an infection so highly injurious to the unthinking part of the community, the security of our rights, the love of rational liberty, the defence of our constitution and laws, and freedom of our country, appear to summon and revive that virtue and military ardour, which so recently glowed in the breast of every true republican against foreign imposition—to preserve and guard our inestimable blessings, purchased by the effusion of so much blood at the sacred shrine of liberty in the glorious cause of our country, and to suppress disorders, calculated not only to destroy them, but every vital principle of government. Experience incontestably proves the necessity of exertion in each citizen to support the laws, to discountenance dissentions, insurrections and innovations, which have been the bane of ancient republics. She proves that no government has or can possibly be so perfect as to operate alike upon each member, that none has been free from discontent and disaffection, that all private conveniences must submit to the public good; that perfection in government is morally impossible, and incompatible with human nature, consequently, under these considerations, if we live in society, we must take government as all other things, not perfect nor without fault, but with her alloys and imperfections. Was the republic of America fabricated in imitation of the republics of old, was she constructed on a similar model, had she not avoided the rocks upon which others were dashed, had she been impaired and exhausted by age, was she not guided by the experience of nearly 6000 years; in short, was she not improved by all ancient and modern governments, an American, in turning his attention to the westward, seeing our laws and government insulted, and picturing to his mind the excesses of ancient republics, by analogy, might draw the following conclusion: When I contemplate our government and laws despised, and the unthinking part of the community imposed upon with the sounds of grievance and oppression, this tragic scene affords neither novelty nor wonder, being so often exhibited upon republican theatres; when I behold liberty and equality so scandalously abused by aspiring characters, being common themes of declamation to entrap the multitude, when I behold the public mind so cajoled, I see nothing but a prelude of the excesses of ancient governments exhibited in a new dress on modern theatres. Such reflections as these, the excesses of a deluded set of people, might naturally excite in the mind, without duly considering the broad basis of our liberty, the excellency of our constitution and laws, and purity of our government; but the youth, virtue, power and perfection, of our government, when compared with others, will not admit of the comparison, and consequently destroys the hypothesis; not but these excesses are dangerous in the extreme, but can never produce the tragical scenes of antiquity, whilst virtue operates in the breast of every true republican and friend to government, to support the constitution and laws. The refractory conduct of a few individuals cannot be imputed to any defect in our government, nor to the peaceable and thinking part of our citizens, but to a few who will never be happy under any government, incapable to draw true, or willing to draw wrong, distinctions, confound genuine liberty with anarchy and licentiousness; a violation of the constitution, squandering the public money, exorbitant salaries, tyranny of magistrates, and unbounded corruption, are the common themes of declamation, not forgetting to jumble in the crowd of epithets democracy and aristocracy; this medley of words, however ill understood, afford the orator no small field for elocution.

Actions speak much louder than words, and are the best criterion to form an opinion of the human mind. When I behold aspiring men, with few or no recommendations of their own, but their professions of patriotism, and a general reprobation of government, I cannot help entertaining some doubt of their merit; when I see them cajole the multitude with the sounds of democracy and aristocracy, liberty and equality, I question the purity of their intentions, and whether their actions correspond with their professions, whether they are actuated by public virtue or private ambition, and I am induced to bring the matter to a test in making the following queries: if they are men of families, I trace them home; if they are single men, I trace their private characters; are they good citizens? are they indulgent masters? are they humane to their slaves? do they support the laws of their country? are they benevolent to the human race? do they shew a disposition of philanthropy to all mankind? these are the true characteristics of republicanism; if they are men of this character, they are entitled to the public confidence, and the ends sanctify the means—But reverse the question; are they domestic tyrants? are they cruel and barbarous to their slaves? are they violators of the laws of their country? are they despotic in private life? these are the true characteristics of tyranny; if they come under the latter denomination, they may, by profession, be democrats, or what you please, but in principle, tyrants. The human mind may be improved, the dispositions may be checked, but these passions, which in small circles characterize philanthropy or tyranny, cannot be destroyed in larger ones, because nature will be always inclined to run in her usual channel; to suppose the contrary would be supposing a natural and moral impossibility; it would not only presume a change in the disposition, but in human nature itself, which is immutable. A man distinguished for republican principles in his family and dependents, the presumption is strong, that he will exercise them when his country may require them in a larger circle, and a more extensive scale. But that a domestic tyrant, when vested with a greater authority, will become a true republican, requires something more than a change in the human mind.

[*To be continued.*]

FLUSHING, *July* 28.

THE French, for these two or three days, have been in the neighbourhood of Sluys, without coming near enough to the town to be annoyed by the garrison; but this morning, it seems, they began in earnest their labour, the effect of which was the complete routing of all the Dutch troops that were placed both here and there, with batteries at the entrance of the opposite side of the Scheld. Their retreat was