

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

T H U R S D A Y, N O V E M B E R 2, 1797.

Letter from Mr. Pickering, secretary of state, to the chevalier de Yrujo, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of his catholic majesty to the United States of America.

(Continued from our last.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

Philadelphia, August 8th, 1797.

IN this, as well as on another occasion, you have thought fit to upbraid me with shewing to the British minister a degree of candour and confidence which you insinuate he does not deserve, and which, you seem to think, I have withheld from you. Yet, Sir, all the declarations made to me by that minister, verbally and in writing, touching the points in controversy between you and me, have been verified. As I have already said, you declared to me that you had just reasons for suspecting that an expedition was preparing on the lakes by the English, in order to attack Upper Louisiana. The British minister, in the first instance, assured me that he had no knowledge of it—and his subsequent inquiries enabled him further to assure me, that no such expedition had been or was intended by the British government. And I have in another place offered other reasons which confirm the truth of these assurances. Yet you tell me that the assurance given me by the British minister, *but without any signature*, did not inspire the servants of his Catholic majesty with the same *blind confidence* which it produced in me. I shall take no other notice of this remark, than to put you right in point of fact. The note of the British minister containing the assurance to which you refer, is *not* "without a signature." This (like other official notes from that minister) has his signature—*his name written with his own hand*—at the head of it.

You declared to me "that you knew to a certainty that the English had made propositions to general Clarke, of Georgia, in order to avail themselves of his influence in that state, together with some other persons, for making a diversion, or serious attack against Florida." The British minister informed me, that although he knew nothing of general Clarke or his expedition from Georgia, a proposition had been made to him (the British minister) for an expedition against the Floridas; but that he told the projector that he had no power to authorize it; and besides, that there were among other objections to the plan, two of great weight—one that the Indians were to be employed—the other, that it would violate the neutral rights of the United States. The British minister has since shewn me an original letter from lord Grenville, dated the 8th of last April, in which he informs the minister, that if there were no other objections to the plan, the two mentioned by him, viz. that it could not be executed without employing the Indians—and without violating the rights of the United States, would be sufficient to induce the British government to reject it. This proves, Sir, that Mr. Liston's declarations on this point were not "vague and unauthentic," as you pronounce them, but in strict conformity with truth.

As to general Clarke of Georgia, the British minister declared he had never heard of him; and the extract of the letter from Mr. Jackson, the district attorney of Georgia, respecting general Clarke and any expedition forming there, in behalf of the English against the Floridas, will incline every candid inquirer at least to doubt, whether such a project has ever been proposed to him. We shall afterwards see that Mr. Blount's plot does not appear to have any connexion with an expedition under general Clarke.

Thus you see, Sir, that I have not *blindly* placed a confidence in the British minister: for aught that has yet appeared, he was entitled to the credit he has received.

I return to your letter. You mention your communications to the Baron de Carondelet respecting the intended expedition from Canada: from that moment, you say, imperious necessity, and the great principle of self-defence, made his Catholic majesty's officers turn their thoughts to objects of a more urgent nature than running the boundary line. And here you introduce "Mr. Blount's letter, and the late detected conspiracy, as evincing how far their conduct in this respect was necessary." It is wonderful, Sir, that you should attempt to make it be believed that Mr. Blount's letter and the late detected conspiracy, had any connexion with the expedition which you suggested was preparing on the lakes of Canada against Upper Louisiana. All that is yet discovered of Mr. Blount's project or conspiracy, proves that it was to have been formed in one of the states south of the river Ohio; and that it was defined against the Floridas, and perhaps Lower Louisiana. I therefore feel myself, for this and other reasons before exhibited, still warranted in considering the suspected Canada expedition among the *pretexts* for delaying to evacuate the posts, and to run the boundary line; and consequently that your charge, that I have

in this instance "palpably attempted to make groundless and unfair impressions on the public mind," is alike unfounded and unbecoming your public character to suggest.

In your next paragraph you thus address me—"Nor do your ill-founded insinuations stop here: sentiments and expressions still more violent, flow from that same hasty pen." This passage is in perfect correspondence with the general strain of your letter. Whether your charge is correctly made, is now to be examined.

I am ready to confess that my report thus stigmatized was, from the pressure of business, written in haste: but a revision of it satisfies me, nevertheless, that it is not inaccurate in its statements.

You quote the passage in my report which has called forth this reproach; it is in these words: "That there is but too much reason to believe Mr. Ellicott's suspicions well founded, that an undue influence has been exercised over the Indians by the officers of his Catholic majesty, to prepare them for a rupture with the United States." And then you say that I mention the source of these "dreadful conjectures" to be, a private letter from Mr. Sargent, secretary of the North Western Territory. Here you are extremely incorrect; as usual when you undertake to recite my conclusions, and the facts and circumstances upon which they are formed. It is from "a view of the whole correspondence" referred to in my reports of the 10th of June and 3d of July—On the intelligence received by the secretary of war—and the private letter from colonel Sargent, that I drew the conclusion you have quoted.

Mr. Ellicott formed his suspicions on the spot, from what was passing before him; and he is not a careless or undiscerning observer.

General Wilkinson says—"Letters from all quarters announce the discontents and menacing aspect of the savages; two white men have been recently murdered on the Ohio below the Cumberland; and the savages beyond the Mississippi, and those who pass Massac, make no hesitation to avow their purpose for war." And then he refers to a letter from colonel Hamtramck, who commands the United States' troops at Detroit, in which the colonel says—"I am pretty sure that both the French and Spaniards have emissaries among the Indians. I have it from *indubitable authority*, that a large *band* [by which is meant a speech] from the Spaniards is now travelling through the different nations;" meaning the nations within the territories of the United States.

Colonel Sargent, writes, it is true, a *private letter*; but it is to a public officer; and his situation as secretary and governor for the time, of the North Western Territory, would render it his duty to be vigilant for its safety; and his character vouches for the accuracy of his information; and you do not question the truth of any part of his statement.

After mentioning that the Spaniards were reinforcing their upper posts on the Mississippi, that upwards of three hundred men had arrived at St. Louis, and were erecting formidable works, he adds, "It likewise appears, through various channels, that they are inviting a great number of Indians of the territory (meaning of the United States, north-west of the Ohio) to cross the Mississippi: And for this express purpose, Mr. Loramie, an officer in the pay of the crown, made a tour through all this country last fall, since which time several Indians have been sent on the same errand, and generally furnished with plenty of cash to defray their expences.—A large party of Delawares passed their down White River about the 6th of May, on their way to the Spanish side, bearing the national flag of Spain, sent them from St. Louis."

Lieutenant Pope, in his letter of May 9th, to the secretary of war, says, "There have been several attempts made to draw on the Indians upon my troops: I have fully ascertained this fact, and demanded of the governor to have a principal actor immediately brought to punishment, or sent out of the country. He has been sent for, and is now on board one of the galleys, which is now about descending the river."—And, Sir, if you inquire, you will find that this "principal actor" (Rapelje by name) was one of governor Gayoso's agents.

These, Sir, are the grounds on which I expressed the opinion, that there was but too much reason to believe Mr. Ellicott's suspicions well founded, that the officers of Spain had exercised an undue influence over the Indians, to prepare them for a rupture with the United States.

This detail, Sir, strikingly shows how little you have understood, and how entirely you have misrepresented my reasoning on this subject. I leave you to reconcile your reflections on the British minister and this nation for their inhumanity in employing the Indians in the American war, with your justification of the Spanish officers at this time, in securing the aid of the Indians in your war with the British. The Spaniards (you say) have fortified St. Louis and availed themselves of every means and preference which the country afforded; meaning by the ingenuous expression

every means of defence which the country afforded, the employing of the Indians.

You are pleased next to charge me, in your customary style, with "falling into the most glaring inconsistency," because I remark that although "it may be difficult to say whether this plan of exciting the Indians to direct hostilities against the United States, has been contemplated and promoted by any of our own citizens; yet it is certain that one or more of those citizens have proposed and taken measures to detach the southern Indians from the interests of the United States; and to destroy the influence of the public agents over those nations, and thus to defeat the great objects of their appointment; the chief of which is to preserve peace."

Having quoted this passage from my report, you ask "How is it possible to reconcile such evident contradictions? On the one hand the Spanish officers are those who excite the southern Indians against the United States, and on the other you quickly follow presuming, with sufficient foundation in my opinion, that it may be some citizens of the United States." Allow me, Sir, to ask in my turn, how it was possible for you not to see that here there is no contradiction? Is it not very possible that the Spanish officers might be courting the Chickasaws, who live above the Natchez, with large presents, and be preparing the Choctaws, who dwell along the Natchez district, and the Delawares, Shawanese, Miamis, and other tribes dwelling in the territory north west of the Ohio, for war against the United States; while Mr. Blount and his agents were detaching the southern tribes of Cherokees and Creeks from the interests of the United States, and eventually to aid the British in an enterprise against the Floridas? The Cherokees and Creeks, you might have seen, were the only Indian nations mentioned in governor Blount's letter. And is not very possible, if these two nations should thus be led to war against the Spanish possessions, that they might not be excited to direct hostilities against the United States? And, therefore, that although Mr. Blount might contemplate the former, he might abstain from the latter? And is not then my cautious manner of speaking of this latter, perfectly correct?

I am happy to arrive at your last observation. And I wish it was not, like the rest, exceptionable and incorrect. These are your words—"Respecting the last article of your report, I have only to observe, that although you have constantly assured me that government had not the least information respecting the subject of my representations, and although the letter of Mr. Jackson, of Georgia, appears to coincide with your ideas, nevertheless time has shewn that I have complied with my duty by not reposing on such assurances. The plot is discovered, and nobody any longer doubts the expedition was to have taken place."

The expression that "you complied with your duty in not reposing on such assurances," may mean that you thought the assurances *deceitful*, and, therefore, not meriting belief. Perhaps you did not intend this. Perhaps you meant no more than that the government had been "remiss" in its duty in not pursuing with eagerness the trains of your various suspicions. But I must shew you that here (as in all other instances) your criminations are void of foundation, in either point of view.

The last article of the report respects general Clarke of Georgia, to whom you said "you knew of a certainty that the English had made propositions in order to avail themselves of his influence in that state, with some other persons, for making a diversion or serious attack against Florida;" and you add that "you do not doubt that in consequence of your information, the executive government will take the proper steps that Georgia also should not infringe the laws of neutrality." Here you confine your requests to Georgia, that she might not infringe the laws of neutrality; and my letter to Charles Jackson, Esquire, the district attorney of that state, shews that the government took prompt measures to defeat the project of general Clarke and his associates, if such a project existed. I suppose none did exist: You acknowledge that the letter from Mr. Jackson coincides with my ideas. Your "certain knowledge" of an intended expedition in favour of the English from Georgia against Florida, under general Clarke, you have never supported by a shadow of evidence. If you possessed any evidence of the fact, it would be easy to produce it. What you call your "certain knowledge" could rest only on information, or the testimony of others, which might be as false or as vague and inconclusive, as the information about the Canada expedition which I hope I have proved, to your conviction, never to have existed, even in idea. Yet you declared to me that you had "just reasons" for suspecting that an expedition was preparing on the lakes: and hence how can I avoid concluding, that your "certain knowledge" in one case, and your "just reasons" in the other, were with the same foundation and authority?—I have concluded in this manner your