

For the MARYLAND JOURNAL, &c.  
NUMB. I.



**A**MIDST the infinite variety of moral and political subjects, proper for public consideration, it is truly surprising that one of the most important and affecting should be so very generally neglected.—An encroachment on the smallest civil or religious privilege, shall fan the enthusiastic flame of Liberty, till it shall extend over vast and distant regions, and violently agitate a whole continent. But the cause of humanity shall be basely violated, justice shall be wounded to the heart, and national honour, deeply, and lastingly polluted, and not a breath or murmur shall arise, to disturb the prevailing quietness, or to arouse the feelings of indignation against such general, extensive, and complicated iniquity.—To what cause are we to impute this rigid silence; this torpid indifference; this cold, inanimated conduct, of the otherwise warm and generous Americans?—Why do they remain inactive, amidst the groans of injured humanity, the still and distressing complaints of expiring justice, and the keen remembrance of polluted integrity? Why do they not rise up to assert the cause of GOD and the world, to drive the fiend INJUSTICE into remote and distant regions, and to exterminate OPPRESSION from the face of the fair fields of America.

When the United Colonies revolted from Great-Britain, they did it upon this principle, "that all men are by nature, and of right ought to be free."—After a long, successful, and glorious struggle for LIBERTY, during which they manifested the firmest attachment to the rights of mankind, can they so soon forget the principles that then governed their determinations? Can Americans, after the noble contempt they expressed for Tyrants, meanly descend to take up the SCOURGE? Blush, ye revolted colonies, for having apostatized from your own principles.

SLAVERY, in whatever point of light it is considered, is repugnant to the feelings of nature, and inconsistent with the original rights of man. It ought therefore to be stigmatized for being unnatural, and detested for being unjust. 'Tis an outrage to Providence, and an affront offered to Divine Majesty, who hath given to man his own peculiar image.—That the Americans, after considering the subject in this light; after making the most manly of all possible exertions in defence of LIBERTY; after publishing to the world the principle upon which they contended, viz. "that all men are by nature and of right ought to be free," should still remain in possession a numerous tribe of the human race, merely for their own particular use and emolument, is, of all things, the strongest inconsistency, the deepest inflection on our conduct, and the most abandoned apostacy that ever took place, since the Almighty fiat spoke into existence this habitable world.—So flagitious a violation can never escape the notice of a just CREATOR, whose VENGEANCE may be now on the wing, to disseminate and hurl the arrows of destruction.

In what light can the people of Europe consider America, and the strange inconsistency of her conduct? Will they not consider her as an abandoned and deceitful country? In the hour of calamity, she petitioned Heaven to be propitious to her cause. Her prayers were heard. Heaven pitied her distress, smiled on her virtuous exertions, and vanquished all her afflictions. The ungrateful creature forgets this timely assistance—no longer remembers her own sorrows—but basely commences OPPRESSOR in her turn.—Beware! AMERICA!—pause—and consider, the difference between the mild effluence of approving Providence, and the angry countenance of incensed Divinity!

The importation of slaves into America, ought to be a subject of the deepest regret, to every benevolent and thinking mind.—And one of the greatest defects in the federal system, is the liberty it allows on this head. Venerable in every thing else, it is injudicious here; and it is to be much deplored, that a system of so much political perfection, should be stained with any thing that does an outrage to human nature. As a door, however, is open to amendment, for the sake of distressed humanity, of injured national reputation, and the glory of doing so benevolent a thing, I hope some wise and virtuous patriot will advocate the measure, and introduce an alteration in that pernicious part of the government.—So far from encouraging the importation of SLAVES, and countenancing that vile traffic of human flesh; the members of the late Continental Convention should have seized the happy opportunity of prohibiting forever, this cruel species of reprobated villainy.—That they did not do so, will forever diminish the lustre of their other proceedings, to highly extolled, and so justly distinguished, for their intrinsic value.—Let us, for a moment, contrast the sentiments and actions of the Europeans on this subject, with those of our own countrymen.—In France, the warrest, and most animated exertions are making, in order to introduce the entire abolition of the slave trade; and in England, many of the first characters of that country, advocate the same measure, with an enthusiastic philanthropy. The prime minister himself, is at the head of that society; and nothing can equal the ardour of their endeavours, but the glorious success of the cause.—Will the Americans allow the people of England, to get the start of them in acts of humanity? Forbid it SHAME!

The practice of stealing, or bartering for, HUMAN FLESH, is pregnant with the most glaring turpitude, and the blackest barbarity of disposition.—For, can any one say, that this is doing as he would be done by? Will such a practice stand the scrutiny of this great rule of moral government? Who can, without the complicated emotions of anger and impatience, suppose himself in the predicament of a SLAVE! Who can bear the thought of his relations being torn from him by a savage enemy; carried to distant regions of the habitable globe, never more to return; and treated there, as the unhappy Africans are, in this country? Who can support the reflection of his Father—his Mother—his Sister—or his Wife,—perhaps, his Children, being barbarously snatched away by a foreign invader, without the prospect of ever beholding them again? Who can reflect upon their being afterwards publicly exposed to sale—obliged to labour with unwearied assiduity; and, because all things are not possible to be performed, by persons so unaccustomed to robust exercise, scourged with all the rage of anger and malignity, until their unhappy carcases are covered with ghastly wounds, and frightful contusions? Who can reflect on these things, when applying the call to himself, without being chilled with horror, at circumstances so extremely shocking?—Yet hideous as this concise and imperfect description is, of the sufferings of

slaves, it is nevertheless true; and so far from being exaggerated, falls infinitely short of a thousand circumstances of distress, which have been recounted by different writers on the subject, and which contribute to make their situation in this life, the most absolutely wretched, and completely miserable, that can possibly be conceived.—In many places in America, the slaves are treated with every circumstance of rigorous inhumanity, accumulated hardship, and enormous cruelty.—Yet, when we take them from Africa, we deprive them of a country which GOD hath given them for their own; as free as we are, and as capable of enjoying that blessing. Like *Pirates* we go to commit devastation on the coasts of an innocent country, and among a people that never did us wrong.

An insatiable, avaricious desire to accumulate riches, co-operating with a spirit of luxury and injustice, seems to be the leading cause of this peculiarly degrading and ignominious practice. Being once accustomed to submit without labour, we become soft and voluptuous; and rather than afterwards forego the gratification of our habitual indolence and ease, we countenance the infamous violation, and sacrifice at the shrine of CRUELTY, all the finer feelings of elevated humanity.

Considering things in this view, there surely can be nothing more justly reprehensible or disgusting, than the extravagant finery of many country people's daughters. It hath not been at all uncommon to observe as much gauze, lace and other trappings, on one of those country maidens, as hath employed two or three of her father's slaves, for twelve months afterwards, to raise tobacco to pay for. 'Tis an ungrateful reflection, that all this snappery and affected finery, can only be supported by the sweat of another person's brow; and consequently, only by baseful rapine and injustice.—If those young females could devote as much time from their amusement, as would be necessary for reflection; or, was there any person of humanity at hand who would inculcate the indecency of this kind of extravagance, I am persuaded they have hearts good enough to reject, with disdain, the momentary pleasure of making a figure, in behalf of the rational and lasting delight of contributing by their forbearance, to the happiness of so many thousand individuals.

In Maryland, where slaves are treated with as much lenity as, perhaps, they are any where, their situation is to the last degree ineligible. They live in wretched cottages, that scarcely secure them from the inclemency of the weather; sleep in the ashes or on straw; wear the coarsest clothing, and subsist on the most ordinary food that the country produces. In all things, they are subject to their masters absolute command; and, of course, have no will of their own. Thus circumstanced, they are subject to great brutality, and are often treated with it.—In particular instances, they may be better provided for in Maryland, but this suffices for a general description.—But in the Carolinas, and in the Island of Jamaica, the cruelties that have been wantonly exercised on those miserable creatures, are without a precedent in any other part of the world.—If those who have written on the subject, may be believed, it is not uncommon there to tie a slave up, and whip him to death.

On all occasions, impartiality in the distribution of justice, should be observed. The little state of Rhode-Island, hath been reproached by the other States, for refusing to enter into measures respecting a new general government; and so far it is admitted that she is culpable. But if she is worthy of blame in this respect, she is entitled to the highest admiration for the philanthropy, justice and humanity, she hath displayed, respecting the subject I am treating on. She hath passed an act prohibiting the importation of SLAVES into that state, and forbidding her citizens to engage in the iniquitous traffick. So striking a proof of her strong attachment to the rights of humanity, will rescue her name from oblivion, and bid her live in the good opinion of distant and unborn generations.

SLAVERY, unquestionably, should be abolished, particularly in this country; because it is inconsistent with the declared principles of the American Revolution. The sooner, therefore, we set about it, the better. Either we should set all our slaves at liberty, immediately, and colonize them in the western territory; or, we should immediately take measures for the gradual abolition of it, so that it may become a known, and fixed point, that ultimately, universal liberty, in these United States, shall triumph.—This is the least we can do, in order to evince our sense of the irreparable outrage we have committed, to wipe off the odium we have incurred, and to give mankind a confidence again, in the justice, liberality, and honour, of our national proceedings.

It would not be difficult to shew, were it necessary, that America would soon become a richer and more happy country, provided this step was adopted. That corrosive anguish of persevering in any thing improper, which now inhabits the enjoyment of life, would vanish as the mist of a foggy morn doth before the rising sun; and we should find as great a disparity between our present situation, and that which would succeed to it, as subsists between a cloudy winter, and a radiant spring.—Besides, our lands would not be then cut down for the support of a numerous train of useless inhabitants—useless, I mean, to themselves, and effectually so to us, by encouraging sloth and voluptuousness among our young farmers and planters, who might otherwise know how to take care of their money, as well as how to dispose it.—In all other respects, I conceive them to be as valuable as we are—as capable of worthy purposes, and to possess the same dignity that we do, in the estimation of Providence; although, the value of their work apart, for which we are dependent on them, we generally consider them as good for nothing, and, accordingly, treat them with the greatest neglect.

But, be it remembered, that THEIR CAUSE, is the CAUSE OF HEAVEN; and that the Father of them as well as of us, will not fail, at a future settlement, to adjust the account between us, with a dreadful attention to JUSTICE.  
May 10, 1788. O T H E L L O.

For the Maryland Journal, &c.  
A Writer, under the signature of *Federalism*, has given the Citizens of Maryland some observations, in the last Journal, upon the adoption of the new constitution by this state, and upon the line of conduct which he thinks they ought to pursue hereafter, lest they should lose the blessing of that instrument, and, in his opinion, all-perfect system of government.

It is not difficult to discover, that the great object he has in view, is to prepare the way against the next general

town, and to introduce into the Assembly his favourite characters.

Attempts of this nature have been successively made for several years, but have failed; I suppose the author flatters himself that the present is a more favourable occasion.

That *Federalism* is highly "gratified by the act of the convention ratifying the new plan of government without amendments," and that he has no wish amendments should ever take place, except of such a nature as to increase and enlarge the powers of the government, I can easily believe; but I have great doubts whether one or the other can be justly said of one man in ten of those who are "well informed," and have no other object in view but the happiness and welfare of their country.

This excellent plan he tells us was circulated extensively last fall, for the consideration of the people, who were not surprised into steps concerning it, but permitted coolly and maturely to examine it.—It is true, that on the first day of last December, the Assembly directed two thousand copies, a little more than a hundred for each county, of the proposed constitution, to be printed, to be distributed for the information of the citizens;—of these, some in the course of the winter, were actually distributed through the counties.—But the number was much too small to go into the hands of the people generally; few of the common class of people had an opportunity of reading them at all, and much fewer of considering them with that attention necessary, to enable them to form an estimate of the benefits, or evils, which might probably flow from the government, if adopted.

But the News-Papers laid before the people impartially the arguments urged by various authors on either side.

The Annapolis Paper every body knows has a very confined circulation, and I believe not more than one or two original publications appeared in that Paper, and those in favour of the government; and it contained no republications of the subject.—The two Baltimore Papers do not circulate on the Eastern Shore, and scarce a Paper of those Printers are seen there at any time; but the peculiar severity of the last winter precluded almost entirely all communication of sentiment or information.—Those Papers though they circulate through the different counties of the Western Shore, yet are read by, comparatively, few of the common class of the people.—Even in the city of Annapolis, so far are they from being generally seen, that it is difficult to obtain their perusal.—But had there been the freest communication of all the pieces written on both sides of the question, and had they been in the hands of every individual, it would have been of but little consequence, if we may believe the members of the late convention, who so wisely adopted the system, since with them it was a *survante maxim*, that the people at large were incompetent to decide or form a judgment on the subject; that they were, and always must be, in these things, directed by a few, who had more knowledge; and that the people at large were totally incapable of determining whether a government was perfect or imperfect, good or bad, until they felt its consequences, and gained the information by perceiving its effects.

*Federalism* thinks it "almost surprising" to find the plain common sense of our citizens inclining them to generally to the right side of so important a question.

But, perhaps, his surprise would, in some measure, cease were he to reflect that, in this state, there are about twenty-five thousand persons who were entitled to vote for the members of the convention; that the whole number who actually did vote, were but about six thousand, and that in Baltimore-Town, and seven counties, the voters were four thousand in number or thereabouts; so that the delegates of ten counties had not, on an average, two hundred votes; nor did one sixth part of the inhabitants of the state, who were entitled to vote, interfere in the election: Let him also consider, that the number of rich and wealthy men, who promise themselves peculiar advantages from this government, which they never could obtain in a government truly republican, and also the mercantile part of the community, who flatter themselves with deriving benefits from this system, at least with the means of speedily collecting their debts, exerted themselves in every county in favour of the constitution, using every argument to induce the people to consider it as the only means of relieving them from the distresses under which they suffer, and terrifying them with the prospect of anarchy and confusion if it was rejected.—To this I might add, that no opinion was made in scarce any of the counties, till a few days before the election, and that in those counties where the people had had the best means of information, the opposition succeeded.—In some other counties, many of the inhabitants, disapproving the system, would not attend the election, because no candidates offered in opposition to it, and others returned home without voting, on the same principle.

But I now proceed to that part of *Federalism's* publication which I apprehend he has most at heart, and to which the former observations are intended as an introduction.—He tells us "more must be done to establish the favourite government; and to put a finishing hand to the noble work, our house of delegates must be federal, for of the senate he has no doubt; otherwise they may defeat the plan by open refusal to perform their parts—or by artful delays—or contriving absurd and impracticable regulations in things subject to their control—from these considerations the people should elect representatives, whose interest and desire it is firmly to establish the new government;"—in other words, that the people ought not to trust any man who was opposed to its adoption by this state.

Here the author justifies the remark I have before made, that his object is the next election, and that he wishes the inhabitants of this town to withdraw their confidence from their present representatives, to repose it in others, under the pretence that, otherwise, their "favourite government—the wisest and best ever devised by human ingenuity," should be in danger.

It may, perhaps, here be worth while to examine what is the part our legislature is to act? As our form of state government and our declaration of rights cannot be altered but only in the mode directed, and the ratification of the national government most essentially changes our form of government and bill of rights, it is necessary for a law authorizing these alterations to pass the General Assembly at least three months before the next general election in October, and that another law of confirmation should pass in the first session after the next election.—And for this purpose it is universally believed that our Assembly is to meet on Mon-