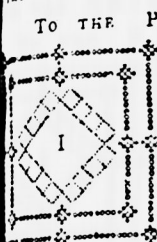


MARYLAND GAZETTE.

THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1770.

FROM THE BRISTOL GAZETTE.



TO THE P R I N T E R.

DESIGN in this Letter to lay before your Readers, some Thoughts upon Libelling; a Sort of Writing that hurts particular Persons without doing good to the Public; and a Sort of Writing much complained of amongst us at this Time, with great Ground, but not more than is pretended.

A Libel is not the less a Libel for being true. This may seem a Contradiction; but it is neither one in Law, nor in common Sense. There are some Truths that are to be told; where, for Example, the Discovery of a great Fault may do great Mischief; or where the Discovery of a great Fault can do no good, there ought to be no Discovery at all; and to make Faults known where there are none, is still worse. But this Doctrine only holds true as to private and personal Failings; and it is quite otherwise when the Faults of Men come to affect the Public. Nothing ought to be so dear to us as our Country, and nothing ought to come in Competition with its Interests. A Crime against the Public is a great Crime, though there be some greater than others. Ignorance of Fault may be pleaded in Alleviation to private Faults, but when they become public, they lose all Plea of such a Plea; we are then no longer to consider only to what Causes they are owing, but what they may produce; and here we shall readily find, that Folly has overturned States, and private Ignorance been the Parent of public Confusion. The exposing therefore of public Wickedness, as it is a Duty which every Man owes to Truth and his Country, can never be a Libel in the Nature of Things; and they who call it so, pay themselves no Compliment. He who is affronted at the reading of a Ten Commandments, would make the Decalogue a Libel if he durst; but he tempts us at the same Time to a Judgment of his Life and Morals not at all in his Advantage. Whoever calls public and necessary Truths Libels, doth but apprise us of his own Characters, and Ann as with Caution against his Designs.

Machiavel says, "Calumny is pernicious, but Accusation beneficial to a State." And he shews Instances where States have suffered, or perished, for not having neglected, the Power to accuse great Men who were Criminals, or thought to be so; and hence grew the Temptation and Custom of Slandering and Reviling, which was the only Remedy that the People had in them. So that the Evil of Calumny was only for want of Justice, and the People were more blamable than those whom they reviled, who, having forced them upon a Licentiousness of speech, did very unadvisedly chide and punish them for using it. Slander is certainly a very base and mean Thing; but surely it cannot be more pernicious to calumniate even good Men, than not to be able to accuse ill ones.

I have long thought, that the World are very much mistaken in their Idea and Distinction of Libels. It has been hitherto generally understood, that there were other Libels but those against Magistrates, and those against private Men. Now, to me, there seems to be a Third Sort of Libels, full as destructive as any of the former can possibly be; I mean Libels against the People. It was otherwise at Athens and Rome, where, though particular Men, and even great Men, were often treated with much Freedom and Severity when they deserved it; yet the People, the Body of the People, were spoken of with the utmost Regard and Reverence. The sacred Privileges of the People! The venerable Majesty of the People! The awful Authority of the People! And the unappealable Judgment of the People! Were Phrases common in their wise, great, and free Cities. Other Modes of Speech are since grown fashionable, and popular Madnets is now almost universal. But this Madnets of theirs, whenever it appears, is derived from external Causes. Oppression, they say, will make a wise Man mad; and Delusion is not less Force. But where there are neither Oppressors, nor Impostors, the Judgment of the People in the Business of Property, the Preservation of which is the principal Business of Government, does rarely err. Perhaps they are destitute of Grimace, Mystery, Flattery, Dissimulation, and Reserve, and the other Accomplishments of Courtiers; but as these are the Masks to conceal the Absence of Honesty and Integrity, the People, who possess as they do the Sub-

stance, have Reason to despise such insipid and contemptible Shadows.

Machiavel, in the Chapter where he proves that a Multitude is more wise and constant than a Prince, complains that the Credit which the People should be in, declines daily; for, says he, "Every Man has Liberty to speak what he pleases against them; but against a Prince no Man can talk without a Thousand Apprehensions and Dangers." I have indeed often wondered, that the inveighing against the Interest of the People, and calling their Liberties in Question, as has been, and is commonly done among us, by old Knaves and young Fools, has never been made an express Crime.

I must own I know not what Treason is, if sapping and betraying the Liberties of a People be not Treason, in the eternal and original Nature of things. Let it be remembered for whole Sake Government is, or could be appointed; then let it be considered, who are more to be regarded, the Governors or the Governed.

The truth is, if the People are suffered to keep their own, it is the most that they desire: But even this is a Happiness which in few Places falls to their Lot. They are frequently robbed by those whom they pay to protect them. I know it is a general Charge against the People, that they are turbulent, restless, fickle and unruly; than which there can be nothing more untrue; for they are only so where they are made so. As to their being fickle, it is so false, that, on the contrary, they have almost ever a strong Bias to received Customs, and as strong a Partiality to Names and Families that they have been used to. And as to their being turbulent, it is as false; since there is scarce an Example in an Hundred Years, of any People's giving Governors any Uneasiness, 'til their Governor had made them uneasy; nay, for the most Part, they bear many Evils without returning one, and seldom throw off their Burdens as long as they can stand under them.

But to return to the Business of Libels:

As to Libels against Government, like all others, they are always base and unlawful, and often mischievous; especially when Government are impudently charged with Actions and Designs of which they are not guilty. It is certain we ought not to enter into the private Vices or Weaknesses of Governors, any further than their private Vices enter into the Public Administrations; and when they do, it will be impossible to stop People's Mouths; they will be provoked, and show that they are so, in Spite of Arts and Threats; if they suffer Woe from the private Gratifications of their Superiors, from whom they have Right to expect Ease and Happiness; and if they be disappointed, they will be apt to deal very freely with their Characters.

In Truth, most Libels are purely personal; they fly at Men rather than Things; which Proceeding is as injudicious as it is unmanly. It is mean to be quarrelling with Faces, Names and private Pleasures; Things perfectly indifferent to the World, or Things out of a Man's own Power; and it is silly, as it shows those whom we attack, that we attack them not for what they do, but for what they are; and this is to provoke them without mending them. All this therefore is Libelling; an Offence against which the Laws of almost every Country, and particularly of our own, have furnished a Remedy in Proportion to the Consequence and Quality of the Person offended. And it is as just that Reputation should be defended by Law, as that Property should.

The Praise of well doing is the highest Reward, that worthy and disinterested Men aim at. On the other Hand, while Censure and Infamy attend Evil-Doers, it will be some Restraint, if not upon them, yet upon others, from following their Example; but if Men be suffered to do what they please without hearing of it, Liberty and Law will be lost, though their Names may remain. And whether acting wickedly with Impunity, or speaking falsely with Impunity, be likely to do most hurt to human Society and the Peace of the World, I leave all the World to judge; common Equity says, that they both ought to be punished, though not both alike.

As long as there are such Things as Printing and Writing, there will be Libels; it is an Evil arising out of much greater Good. And as to those who are for locking up the Press, because it produces Monsters, they ought to consider, that so do the Sun and the Nile; and that it is something better for the World to bear some particular Inconveniences arising from general Blessings, than to be wholly deprived of Fire and Water. I am, Sir, yours, &c. CATO.

B O S T O N, March 19.
The following is the Substance of Letters addressed by the Committee of the Town to divers Gentlemen of the First Distinction and Character in London.

S I R,
THE Town of Boston, now legally convened at Faneuil-Hall, have directed us their Committee to acquaint you of their present miserable Situation, occasioned by the Exorbitancy of the Military Power, which, in Consequence of the Intrigues of wicked and designing Men, to bring us into a State of Bondage and Ruin, in direct Repugnance to those Rights which belong to us as Men and British Subjects, have long since been stationed among us.

The Soldiers ever since the fatal Day of their Arrival, have treated us with an Insolence which discovered in them an early Prejudice against us, as being that Rebellious People which our implacable Enemies had maliciously represented us to be. They landed in the Town with all the Appearance of Hostility! They marched through the Town with all the Ensigns of Triumph! And evidently designed to subject the Inhabitants to the severe Discipline of a Garrison. They have been continuing their Enormities by abusing the People, rescuing Prisoners out of the Hands of Justice, and even firing upon the Inhabitants in the Street, when in the Face of God and the King, and when we have applied for Redress in the Courts of the Law of the Land, our Magistrates and Courts of Justice have appeared to be overawed by them, and such a Degree of mean Submission has been shewn to them, as has given the greatest Disgust even to the coolest and most judicious Persons in the Community. Such has been the general State of this Town.

On Friday the Second Instant, a Quarrel arose between some of the Soldiers of the XXIXth, and the Kopersmakers, Journeymen and Apprentices, which was carried to that Length as to become dangerous to the Lives of each Party: This contentious Disposition continued until the Monday Evening following, when a Party of Seven or Eight Soldiers, detached from the Main Guard, under the Command of Capt. Preston, and by his Orders fired upon the Inhabitants promiscuously in King-Street, without the least Warning of their Intention, and killed Three on the Spot, another has since died of his Wounds, and others are dangerously, not to say mortally, wounded; Capt. Preston and his Party are now in Jail. An Enquiry is now making in this bloody Affair; and by some of the Evidence there is reason to apprehend, that the Soldiers have been made use of by others, as Instruments in executing a seditious Plot to massacre the Inhabitants. There had been but a little Time before a Murder committed in the Street by Two Persons of infamous Character, who had been employed by the Commissioners and Custom-House Officers. In the present Instance there are Witnesses to swear, that, when the Soldiers fired, several Muskets were discharged from the House where the Commissioners Board is kept, before which the shocking Tragedy was acted; and a Boy, Servant of one Manwaring, a petty Officer in the Customs, has, upon Oath, accused his Master of firing a Gun upon the People out of a Window of the same House, a Number of Persons being at the same Time in the Room; and he confesses, that himself being threatened with Death if he refused, discharged a Gun twice by the Orders of that Company; but as it has been impossible for any Persons to collect a State of Facts hitherto, we are directed by the Town, to give you this short Intimation of the Matter for the present, and to intreat your Friendship to prevent any ill Impressions from being made upon the Minds of his Majesty's Ministers and others against the Town, by the Accounts which the Commissioners of the Customs and others our Enemies may send, until the Town shall be able to make a full Representation of it, which will be addressed to you by the next Conveyance.

This horrible Transaction has occasioned the greatest Anxiety and Distress in the Minds of the Inhabitants, who have ever since been necessitated to keep up their own Military Watch. And his Majesty's Council were so soon convinced of the imminent Danger of the Troops being any longer in the Town, that upon Application being made by the Inhabitants, they immediately and unanimously advised the Lieutenant Governor to effect their Removal: And Lieut. Col. Dalrymple, the present Commanding Officer, is now removing all the Troops to Cattle-William.

We are with strict Truth, Sir,
Your most faithful, and
Obedient Servants.
Boston, March 12, 1770.

Member of the County and Gentry of