

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

F R I D A Y, JUNE 25, 1779.

From the PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE: NUMBER I.

It is remarked, and I believe justly, that the press, of late, has been considerably deserted by the best writers, and few observations have been communicated to the public upon subjects of a general and extensive nature. It may be owing to the same cause which saluted the historian, tells us operated with the like effect in the Roman commonwealth.

Commerce, or the labour and fidelity of industry, has engaged the attention of the men of best experience, and the information of the people has been left to those, who have had less integrity or understanding to inform them.

I mention this as my apology for venturing to take up the pen, and to commit my thoughts to paper. When the rarest masters have laid down the pencil, it may be allowable for young essayists to extend the canvass and express a figure.

The treaty of commerce and alliance on the part of these States with France, is the subject upon which I would propose to offer some considerations to the public. This subject has not been handled professedly by any writer, and indeed little has been said in any manner that has had relation to it.

I am induced to undertake a service of this nature, at the present time, by believing that it will be useful to the people. Great-Britain, in her late advance to a negotiation, was willing to concede to these States almost every point, save that of independence. It is probable, that in a short time she will be willing to concede even this point, on condition that we rescind the treaty of commerce and alliance on the part of these States with France. This treaty, to use a less elevated language, greatly sticks in her stomach. She feels it as the whale feels the harpoon which the fisherman has darted into her. She has laboured, groined and complained of it in such strains, that we may easily perceive it is a mortal stab to her hope of subjugating this continent. It will be her first wish to pluck this barbed iron from her body, and the will exert all her remaining power, life and action, to accomplish it.

The independence of these States is an idea which the cannot easily admit. Nevertheless it will become familiar to her, and I am persuaded that the time is not far distant, when she will express herself willing to admit it, on condition that we relinquish our invidious, and, as she will say, unnatural alliance with the court of France. It is possible that, with the next reinforcement to her troops that shall arrive upon our coast, we may hear of new commissioners to stipulate conditions, and to make an offer of this nature.

The whigs amongst the common people, who are undoubtedly the most honest people of America, will resent the idea, if hastily and barely proposed to them. But is it not greatly in the power of suit speech and argument to recommend and dress a matter to the public? And are there not men upon this continent, who are willing and are able to give an offer of this nature lost speech and argument?

There are men, who, from the first moment that we meditated a resistance to the claim of Britain, have disapproved of that resistance. It was their language, that America was quite unequal to the task of carrying on a war, and that Britain, from her fleets and armies, and resources, was invincible. Therefore, as we could not easily assert our freedom, we ought to rest contented and be slaves. It has given these men the most acute pain to see the least advantage in our favour, and to be acquainted with the least circumstance that could support the hope of a prosperous issue to the contest. The idea of success on our part involved in it a strong reflection on their judgment; who had often told us, and, with a kind of diabolical pretence to inspiration, almost professed that finally we should be overcome by Britain. It was their full opinion, and their strong assertion, that France, from whom we seemed to hope for aid, would never dare to give it. She was made to tremble at the frown of Britain, and, whatever she might seem to promise, would never have the confidence to appear in our behalf.

The generosity of France in taking us by the hand, and entering into a treaty of commerce and alliance with us, was greatly unexpected, and at the same time greatly irritating to these men. Their resentment has been almost carried off from these States, to that power which has been a late and immediate cause of disappointment to their wishes. Against this power it will be the object of their industry, by every calumny, surmise and art, to excite our apprehensions. By every feeling of their nature, they are hostile to the alliance, and by tooth, and foot, and nail, and the asperity of language, will endeavour the destruction of it.

These of whom I speak are open and avowed Tories. But there are others of a more ambiguous and disputed nature, called moderate men, who, though they may not be opposed to the cause for which America has drawn the sword, yet have high ideas of the power of Britain, and entertain a predilection for her. Should she propose to guarantee our independence, every thing, in their opinion, will be gained for which we have contended. They will be disposed to insinuate a thousand tender and persuasive things in favour of her friendship. This nation of Great-Britain was once a generous and brave nation; and though the king and ministry have discovered, in this affair, considerable obduracy, yet the people, if they could be properly instructed, are

still attached to virtue. The circumstances of our quarrel have been necessary, in the course of things, to institute a new dominion; and resulted more from common passions, than from any great malignity in them to injure us, who were once their children, and may be still their brothers. The revival of our old acquaintance with this people will be safe and pleasant. It will be safe, because their navy possesses the dominion of the sea, and will be able to protect us. It will be pleasant, because they are a people of the same manners and the same language.

Shall it be urged to these, that a breach of faith with France is made the condition of a guarantee of independence to the States? It will be said in answer, that fidelity belongs to individuals only, and has never found a place with nations, who are guided by the maxims of advantage, and do not scruple to rescind the past to day, which they had made yesterday, if it shall be more the policy and interest of the moment. It suited France to take us by the hand in this debate, and if it suited her, shall we continue to beseech her amity, when it has become our wisest measure to relinquish the connection.

This reasoning will be plausible, and, like the speeches of Gaius, apt to steal upon the mind of every young Telemachus; nay, apt to steal upon the minds of those of riper judgment, in whom the seeds of old affection may yet revive for Britain. The recollection of a native ground, or fields and towns which they have visited, and the acquaintances which they have formed with those from England, will operate upon the minds of many, and make them tender to the thoughts of reconciliation.

The Tories and the moderate men I call the auxiliaries of Britain to leave us from the side of France. There is yet another species of assistance which she may employ in this affair: I do not mean the argumentum vi et armis, or, in other words, the ultima ratio regum, which she has already tried, but the argumentum aurore, or the logic of a sum of money, which Machiavel and other politicians have judged to be all prevailing. When the hope of conquest by her arms has failed her, it will be natural to think of other means by which she may effectuate her purpose.

It may be said the virtue of America is made of sterner stuff than to bend to any power of gold. I acknowledge, it is evinced by former instances that there is virtue in America. But is the virtue of one or two, or an hundred men, the virtue of the whole community? Or is it certain, that because the liberality of Britain has been baffled hitherto, we shall in future time be proof to such proposals? She may another time have better fortune in her choice of individuals, upon whom to make experiment of applications of this nature. The time may yet become more favourable, though not with those already tried, yet with others, who, though they have not equal influence, yet may be bought at less expence, and will do her, if not a greatly eminent, at least a sedulous and persevering service. Time changes manners.

I would not take an oath that there is half that virtue in the towns and trading cities of these States there was at the beginning of the contest. The unequal and perpetual drifting of the currency has thrown a fortune in the hands of this one and the other in so sudden and extraordinary a manner, that, like the drawing of half a million in a lottery, it makes a noise amongst us, and the emulation of every man is up by some means or other to be alike successful. He has made his fortune, I must make my fortune, are phraseologies so common, that the ear is struck with them in every conversation. The idea catches like the electric fluid, and every man must scheme, cheat, be bribed, or speculate, in order to enrich himself. In this state and temper of the country, a gratuity will find its way with more readiness than formerly, when rectitude of morals and plainness and simplicity of living were more in countenance among us than they seem to be at present.

Circumstances may yet become more favourable to the acceptance of gratuities from Britain. When she shall propose to guarantee our independence, there will be another ground whereon to tread by those who shall engage to leave her. I be work will not so gloriously offend the public interest. We have already seen that many things may plausibly, though wickedly, be said in its behalf; and hence it may not be altogether certain that the man who undertakes the task shall forfeit the esteem and good opinion of the people. If so, there will be less security for the uprights of the servants of the public; for it is the dread of popular odium that keeps the one half of mankind politically honest. Take this away, and you remove one powerful guardian of their virtue. In a case, therefore, where there is less danger of losing popularity, there will be less unwillingness to bend to the proposals of a small nation.

It is, moreover, to be taken into view, that the service to be rendered will not appear to many so heinously iniquitous as what before must have been executed. It will be thought a lesser villainy to violate the faith of an alliance, than to stab the independence of a nation, and betray the very citadel, which it possesses. If so, there may be those who will undertake to do the one, though not to do the other. No man is at once bold and determined in the devious path of political dishonesty. He may consent to do a smaller wickedness, who for a while would shudder at the perpetration of a greater. There is a dependence between the two, and the reward. If the reward is small, the service will be thought atrocious. If the reward is great, the service, though unjustifiable, will gradually diminish and appear innocent. In the prospect of a high reputation, great inquiry is listened to a point, but a small one disappears altogether.

I advance it not as certain, what I know is but contingent, that the reinforcement every day expected on the coast will be accompanied with an embassy of new commissioners, to offer to these States an acknowledgment of them as independent, on condition that we will withdraw ourselves from our alliance with the court of France. But if our exertions prosper for a little while longer, it is an offer which she will undoubtedly be brought to make, and which brought to make it, there is all the reason in the world to believe she will assist the negotiation with a quantity of coin.

It has been her declaration at several of the courts of Europe, of whose attention in our favour it was her interest to deprive us, that she means not to relinquish the idea of the possession of America, but will undoubtedly accomplish it by force or by sedition. The idea of success by force will gradually deter her, and in proportion will the idea of a conquest by sedition rise upon her mind. Baffled in every enterprise by sea and land, she will remit a little the operations of her arms, and carry on a secret and unnoticed campaign by gold. I would sparingly suggest the least idea unfavourable to the virtue of my countrymen, but there are those who apprehend that a campaign of this nature is not now to institute. More, say they, of the precious metals has been insinuated to the bosom of this country than people are aware of. The mystery of iniquity is already working, and that which shall be by and by revealed. For my own part I do not know how it may be, but would hope that it is rather the over-cautious fear of prudent persons, than any sound judgment founded on the strongest and most suspicious circumstances. Nevertheless it cannot be amiss to guard against what certainly is possible, and which, should it exist in embryo, may yet come forth to give us trouble. Those who are philosophers enough to know what materials human nature is composed of, will entertain a jealousy of what the best men may do in cases of untried resistance.

For these reasons, and because I am persuaded that it would be fatal to the happiness of this country to listen to the siren voice of Britain, seducing us from that faith pledged to our great ally, I have proposed to offer some things to brace the public mind against it, and at the same time to shew that we are safe and happy in our alliance with the court of France; and that it is our interest and our honour to support it.

In these States, where every man may rise to public stations, and is, or ought to be, acquainted with the public measures, it cannot be accounted arrogance to call himself a politician, and as it is in every place allowable that a man be conscious of upright intentions, and profess integrity, it cannot be presumption, or the boast of vanity, to say that he is honest. For these reasons, and because I am particularly fond of that maxim known amongst the common people, honesty is the best policy, I shall from thence derive my signature, and in the course of these papers call myself

THE HONEST POLITICIAN.

The speech of Lord George Gordon in the British House of Commons.

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM sorry to rise so soon after the meeting of parliament, in opposition to the measures proposed by administration; and I am more especially concerned that it should be a complimentary address to our present sovereign, moved by the honourable member on the other side of the house, one of his majesty's lords of trade [Hon. Charles Grey], and seconded by that very respectable highland chieftain, the thane of Cawdor [Mr. Campbell]. But, Sir, many compliments cannot in reason be expected from the friends of liberty on this side of the house, to that king under whose government the court of Great-Britain has been rendered contemptible in the eyes of France, and the friendship, commerce, and alliance, of America, cut off, perhaps for ever, from his subjects.

The distresses of the people at home, and the neglect of their possessions abroad, are becoming every day more apparent and intolerable, which render it impossible for me, as one of their representatives, either to compliment his majesty, or approve of his conduct in such circumstances. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, to compliment his majesty in his present situation, would tend much more, in my opinion, to illustrate the servility of this house of commons, than to exemplify to the world any blessings of his government.

Would his commons congratulate him on his drawn battle at sea? Would they congratulate him on his retreat by land? Will they compliment him on the third year of the independence of the United States? Will they thank him for the honours and emoluments he has heaped upon his favourites during the course of the summer; particularly on the noble lord with the thick riband [Brighton, Lord North], the ostensible minister at the dismemberment of the empire? Will gentlemen rejoice and be glad, as this fresh proof his majesty has given us in his speech of his gracious intention to carry on the war in America? Will they declare their readiness to impose more taxes on their constituents? And will they answer to his majesty, for the people paying them without a revolt at home?

I mention the possibility of a revolt at home, because our constituents have borne much already, they have been patient and of long suffering; they have felt a gradual imposition of taxes, till they have become insupportable; previously they have seen the revenues of the kingdom lavished in pensions to the most execrable characters; they have seen their trade with America cut off; and they have had a successful example of their fellow-subjects revolting from the oppressive government of England, to the protection of a wise and virtuous congress.

Prudentissimus quisque negotiosus maxime eras.