

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

F R I D A Y, O C T O B E R 8, 1779.

From the PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE. NUMBER VII.

THE expectation of America was early turned towards France, and not without reason; for this nation, equally with us, had felt the injuries of Britain, who had been successful in many wars, owing not to a superiority of discipline, or valour in the troops of Britain—but to the alliances which she had been able to contract upon the continent of Europe, and to the resources which she drew from her colonies of North-America. An illiberal and enlightened Briton will attribute his success to superiority of discipline and valour, and will resent his neighbours, and especially the French nation, against whom his hatred is intense; as traitors and cowards: but the liberal and enlightened Hume, an historian of Britain, will form his countrymen, if they please to hear him, that, as a standing evidence of the "galantry and military prowess" of the French nation, "the defeat given to their troops under Marshal Crequi, at Conarbric, in Germany, 1631, was almost the only one by land from Rome to B enheim, during the course of above 60 years, and these too full of bloody wars against gent and martial enemies: their victories equal almost the number of years during that period."

It was not a superiority of discipline or valour, but superior advantages of naval stores, and provisions and men drawn from this continent, that gave to Britain the dominion of the sea, and made her formidable, not to France only, but to other powers of Europe. For, if the time should ever come that she could possess these states in absolute subjection, and could command their force any part of the globe, and for any purpose, these powers must have felt the pressure, and sunk, as we had done, beneath the dominion of her island. For it is reasonable to suppose, that while this continent had made one wing of her empire, she would have sought to balance it by an equal portion of the earth on the other side.

By means of these states, growing and advancing every day, Britain had become formidable, and especially to France, who had experienced her to be a haughty and rapacious nation, disdainful of peace, fierce and bloody in her wars, and cruel and unparading in the hour of victory. Americans who have seen and have felt this will fully believe it; and it only remains, in a few words, to account for it. It is owing in its origin, not so much to her food, which is chiefly wheat, and to the air of her island which is healthy, and gives a severe and saturnine temper to her constitution, as to her insular and detached situation from the continent. For knowing less of the world than her neighbours, her self esteem is greater, and she has less emerged from the barbarism of the feudal times, in which the kings of the bards, and the maxims of the laws, and the divided and hostile situation of the several chieftains warring with each other, inspired a fierce courage, and taught her temper, like the wrath of Achilles, "to claim every thing by rights." When a people educated under these impressions, and in this gradation of the social state, it will be accounted greater honour to obtain one advantage by the dint of personal and bold prowess, than a thousand by the more slow, and more humane and equitable methods of treaty and accommodation. An Englishman had rather strike two blows than submit to the drudgery of thinking once. Hence it is that the laws of nations can have little hold upon this people, and a breach of faith is with them no injustice. At least, it is a general complaint against them over all the world, that they pay not that attention to engagements and to treaties, which ought to characterize a civilized nation.

No wonder then that France, whose safety must have been the first sacrifice to the growing power of Britain, has been alarmed at the prospect, and for more than half a century has carefully observed the progress of this power, and opposed herself to her ambition. Every war, on the part of France, since the reign of Louis XIV.

has been a defensive war. Peace has been her object, and, in order to secure it, she has found it necessary to observe and check the early inroad of the power, whose aim it was to disturb it. This was perfectly consistent with the law of nations, which justifies any people in taking measures against that power, who, by her overgrown strength, or by her avarice and ambition, had become formidable to her neighbours. It is a law of nations, and it is a law of self preservation with individuals. For I am not to wait until the point which is drawn against me is sheathed in my breast, but I am to wrest it out of the hand of the assassin, and to turn it against himself.

In the reign of Louis XIV. the passion of the nation as well as of the sovereign was for war; but corrected by experience, and the writings of her wise men, who have taught her that true glory does not consist in extensive empire, but in cultivating useful arts, which render mankind happy, it has been now for many years the object of her councils to maintain tranquility, to improve her commerce, and be happy in her own dominion. Fenelon, by his very noble composition, titled the adventures of Telemachus, and writ for the express purpose of forming the mind of the Dauphin, who was afterwards Louis XV. contrived, with many others, to enlighten the understanding of the nation, and to rescue them from that false sense of honour, which, to use the words of Hume, led that "gallant and polite people" to covet fame by the lustre and renown of arms: but, as I have said before, it was equally the sad experience of the calamities of war, even to the conquerors, that has corrected their mistake, and taught them true policy, even peace with their neighbours, and happiness in their own bounds.

Cardinal Fleury, under Louis XV. was a peace-loving minister, and every minister since that period has been studious of preserving peace, and the utmost regret has been expressed by them, when, from motives of direct self-preservation, they have been under the necessity, at any time, of declaring war.

From what we have explained of the councils of the French nation, and which explanation I know myself to have derived from the most perfect knowledge of circumstances and reality, it will be easy to be seen by every one, why it was that France did not chuse to accept the offers of Great-Britain; offers greater than she could have hoped to obtain by a ten years of successful war: and those offers only to secure her neutrality in the controversy with America; and from whence we shall be led to ask what would not Britain have conceded to procure her assistance? But France well knew, that though these offers would have added to her own strength, and, at the same time, have weakened Britain, yet by accepting them she would have excited envyings and jealousies amongst her neighbours, and have laid the foundation of a thousand wars waged against her, by the powers who must have taken the alarm at her increased and accumulated empire, and have formed such confederacies, as in the end would have brought her, after many years of bloodshed, and of fore debate, to her former situation. Such confederacies were formed against her under Louis XIV. and not even the great military skill of Turenne and Condé were more than sufficient finally to protect her own borders. She is therefore wise enough to know, that whatever advantages of extended empire or increased force she might acquire by the offers and concessions of Great-Britain, yet the powers of Europe would not willingly have suffered her to retain them. This is the true solution of what must otherwise appear a paradox, that France, from the first moment of the controversy, paid not the least attention to the offers of Great-Britain, though, on the one hand, there were immediate and direct advantages, and, on the other hand, but a contingency of issues and events. It is the true key in this affair, that peace, not power, happiness, and not vain-glory, was the object of France.—While she was willing to reduce the power of Britain, and to confine it to proper bounds, she was careful that, by no weight placed in the scale of her

dominion, she might draw upon herself the jealousy of other powers, and their confederate hostility.

This was liberal and enlarged policy, which, like the maxims that guide the conduct of the aged and the wise, is the last fruit of a long experience. A young and uninstructed nation, like an uninformed individual, is apt to confine its attention to the advantages which lie immediately before it, not considering that the possession of them may involve many evils, that will finally convert them to the greatest damage that could possibly befall that state or commonwealth. Florus, an historian of great judgment and reflection, has observed, that the government of Rome might have been immortal, if she had confined herself within the two seas of Italy. It is equally to be believed that the kingdom of Macedonia might have existed long, if, under Alexander, it had not sought to extend itself into Asia: and the like may be said of Britain, that she might have been to this day a happy and a powerful nation, and free from any seeds of corruption in her constitution, if she had restrained her ambition, and confined her views to the margin of her own island.

The policy of France, in this great crisis of deliberation between the offers of Great-Britain and her attachment to America, has been admired by all the world, and is indeed worthy of the councils of a great and enlightened people. The king of England, sore with chagrin, and burning with resentment, had declared "that he would not only sacrifice his hereditary estate of Hanover, but even risk the safety of his crown of England, rather than not be able to subdue his rebellious subjects of the colonies of North-America." But what would it profit France to have received, or even now to reduce Hanover, seeing that bounded in her own limits she can be more happy.

That France aspires not to more extensive empire, or ampler advantages of commerce than she now possesses, is evident from that treaty into which she has entered with the people of America, in which treaty she has "renounced for ever the possession of Bermuda, as well as of any part of the continent of North-America, which before the treaty of Paris 1776, or in virtue of that treaty, were acknowledged to belong to the crown of Great-Britain, or to the United States, heretofore called British colonies, or which are at this time, or have lately been under the power of the king and crown of Great-Britain." It was no sacrifice of any of her wishes, that France, in the treaty into which she has entered with these states, did not debate every article, and endeavour to extort from us the guarantee of Canada, of Nova-Scotia, and the two Floridas, and some concessions of exclusive advantages of commerce confined to her shores: For she well knew that the possession of this territory, or of these advantages, would not promote what she had in view, the happiness and peace of her empire. Other powers would not have ceased to have given her cause of uneasiness, until she had returned to her former situation of a fair and equal level with themselves.

But especially it was the clear and commanding thought of France, in the treaty into which she entered with us; that she could not hope to obtain from it constant and perennial satisfaction, unless it was placed upon the broad basis of equality: If one grain of unequal weight was found on one side, it would throw it down. America for the present might submit to it, but after some time she would revolt, and seek to rise proper and erect, and unbended to the one side or to the other. France sensible of this, and wishing our amity to be perpetual, would not ask, hope or desire—nay, she would not suffer that one circumstance should be conceded in her favour, or one advantage should be taken of our then depressed situation. It may be worth while in this place to repeat that very noble language of Monsieur Gerard, Royal Syndic of Strasbourg, and secretary of his majesty's council of state, and now minister of France to these states, when, on the 16th of December, 1777, he waited on our plenipotentiaries at Paris, and informed them, by order of the king, "that after long and full consideration of our affairs and propositions in council, it was decided, and his majesty was

* Nihil unum arrogat armis. Hor.

† Burlamaqui.