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MARYLAND GAZETTE

F R I D A Y, JUNE 16, 1780.

To the PEOPLE of MARYLAND.

CONSIDER the freedom of the press as one of the greatest bulwarks of the liberties of a people; and, happily for this state, it is secured by an article in the declaration of rights. I must confess, this freedom is apt to degenerate into an extreme; the most respectable characters are sometimes traduced; the solemn deliberations of public bodies are exhibited in unflattering lights, and the basest of motives imputed to the worthiest of men. These are inconveniences, which every enlightened mind will easily submit to, when he reflects, what a powerful check this liberty exerts on the public and private conduct of every individual, who respects at all the opinions of the world. I have had the honour to experience the little malice of writers; but am so far from wishing to destroy, or abridge this invaluable right of free citizens, that I would as soon renounce the trial by jury.

The grand business of the present session of assembly is to comply with the several requisitions of congress. If we are really concerned for the common cause, if we are alarmed by the state of our finances, if we are fully impressed with an idea of the necessity of opposing the enemy in the field, there needs no argument to induce honest men, and true whigs, to make the most vigorous exertions, for raising the supplies of money and men. That mode, which is easiest, and most consistent with our interests, safety, and liberty, must be adopted.

It is with amazement, that I see intelligent men so readily accede to the sale, pernicious, and odious of borrowing. The man, who would borrow upon interest, to defray his necessary expenses, than call upon those, who hold a money on trust, would be reckoned a madman, unless he were influenced by friendship to trustees, and convinced, that it would greatly distress them to furnish an immediate supply. Would not the legislature be guilty of equal absurdity, by preferring loans to taxes? I am satisfied enough to believe, that, if the resolutions of congress are every where acceded to, the bills credit will speedily appreciate. supposing to be the case, it is insufficiently clear, that taxation would be less burthenome now than interest.

I am apprised of the mighty expectations which are built upon the plan for confiscation, and am convinced of the expediency, the policy, and the equity of the measure; but it remains a doubt, whether the two branches of the legislature will ever coincide, upon this subject: but they should, does any one imagine, that the public property will be a fund sufficient to discharge our debts, and to supersede the necessity of taxes? Taxation, therefore, must, at some time, take place: by loans we anticipate and evade them; and the striking example of Great-Britain alone might instruct us to avoid evil.

I have argued, upon a supposition, that the necessary sums might be raised by loans. I am persuaded they could not. He that makes a practice of borrowing, and constantly fails to form his contract, will at length find, that nobody will trust him. To tell his creditor, that he is not able to pay him; that he has no money in the hands of a friend, but does not care all upon him at present, and that he is under the necessity of soliciting the favour of a further loan, would only disgust or irritate; and I leave to my readers to apply the remark.

It is a melancholy truth, that, in some neighbouring states, the representatives of the people, elected for a short term, are afraid to discharge their constituents, who are seldom pleased with the imposition of burthens. They will propose any scheme that is not attended with an immediate inconvenience, although, in the opinion of thinking men, it may be productive of the most frightful, distant, consequences. Of the times which every man should lay down for conduct through life, this ought to be one; never to continue in a station, where he continues a necessity for sacrificing his own judgment, and the interests of his country, to gratify the few, imperious, spirits, or an ignorant, judging multitude.

If our quota of men cannot be completed by voluntary enlistments, a draught is the only resource. A thousand considerations should determine us, by all honest means, to avoid the measure; the bare holding forth the idea impedes recruiting; as the man who is inclined to enter the service, may delay it, with the certain prospect of a much larger reward, when the draught comes on, and the timid, the disaffected, and the infirm, must procure substitutes at any rate.

I cannot think it equitable, to force into the service those, who may unfortunately fall within any description of a vagabond. It is repugnant to the principles of a republic, which "is instituted solely for the good of the whole," and should confer equal liberty on all. If bounties, rewards, privileges, are dealt out with a liberal hand, there is no reason to fear, that we shall be obliged to resort to a draught. Nothing but an injudicious parsimony will impel us to so disgusting, degrading, a measure.

A draught may be called fair and honest, because every one stands an equal chance; but a man not actuated by the spirit of gaming, would prefer paying a tenth part of the price of a substitute to the standing an equal chance with nine others, for paying the whole. Where a certain proportion has been required, I have been told that a company, to avoid a draught, has agreed to a contribution. This was to all intents a tax, and a very unequal one; for those above the age of fifty were exempt by law, and each man did not contribute, according to his property. To complete the absurdity, it was merely to spare taxes, that the legislature had recourse to a draught.

Notwithstanding "the near approach of harvest," and the importance of the two main objects, which solicit their attention, the legislature is under indispensable obligations to bestow some little consideration on the civil list. I would not insinuate, that the officers of government have been solely influenced by the love of their country, and that this pure principle induced them to sacrifice their time, their fortunes, and their families; my observation informs me, there are few such exalted spirits to be met with, in these degenerate days; nor do I conceive, the public would deserve their services, if it required them on such unreasonable terms. The truth is, they have from time to time been seduced by the fond expectation of future adequate provision. It is the sentiment of a celebrated poet, that "hope springs eternal in the human breast," but frequent disappointments teach mankind to change their objects. I would therefore have gentlemen reflect seriously, whether government is necessary, whether it can be executed without officers, and whether they can expect, any longer, to be served on the same ruinous terms. If government is necessary for our safety and happiness, if those to whom its powers are delegated, must be supported at the expense of the whole, the only question that remains is, what compensation will procure the services of gentlemen qualified to fill important stations?

The state of Maryland is a genuine republic. It is not requisite, that the same splendor and magnificence should be exhibited by its magistrates, as in a monarchy, where that very splendor and magnificence, in part, constitute the basis of their authority. It is not agreeable to freemen, that the influence of wealth should conspire with the authority of office to raise any man above the perfect equality, which they all enjoy as citizens; this consideration may perhaps inspire the legislature with extreme caution in the article of salaries; they remember the pride, the insolence, the domineering of officers under the old government; they are determined to guard against the evil, and, in my opinion, there is great danger, if they persist in their mode of preventing it, that it will draw upon them a much greater. That men, whose abilities qualify them to accumulate wealth by other pursuits, will desert them, and that worthless characters will hereafter preside in every department.

I hope, therefore, who fill the highest stations, and devote their time and abilities to the public, must be supported in a liberal manner. Some of them came in under the faith of the constitution.

A decency in appearance, a degree of hospitality, is necessary to procure them respect, without which their authority cannot be maintained, especially in times, when the successful arts of speculation furnish so many persons with the means of luxury.

It would be absurd to estimate the value of a service, by the time it employs, particularly if the office is incompatible with any other means of livelihood. We deal not thus in the common affairs of life. The labourer, who performs a work, that requires nothing more than bodily strength, must toil all day for a trifling reward; but the painter, who displays the wonders of an art, that few men, with the closest application, have capacities for attaining, receives an hundred fold. Employments, which require nothing more than the ordinary abilities of a clerk, must not be considered of equal importance with those, on the right execution of which so greatly depend our property, our lives, and our liberties; and which demand experience, knowledge, judgment, firmness, integrity. It is needless to remark, with what ease we can point out men to discharge the former; and how few men are blessed with the rare qualities and attainments, requisite for discharging the latter.

In short, in the establishment of salaries, these points must be ascertained; What are the necessary qualifications? What is the importance of the office? What is a compensation? And how much will enable each man to support his family according to his respective rank and dignity?

A REPUBLICAN. June 14, 1780.

PHILADELPHIA, June 7.

ON the 22d of last month, left Sandy Hook, under convoy of the Thames frigate, several transports, with three Hessian regiments on board; bound for Quebec.

Since our last arrival here twenty-odd sail of vessels from different ports in the West-Indies, with rum, sugar, salt, coffee and dry goods.

Captain Truxton took and brought in with him the brig Clyde, captain Fletcher, with 130 hogheads of rum on board; she was bound from Tortola for New-York.

Captain Gardener has retaken the schooner Willing Maid, which was captured in Cheapeake, by refugee Thompson.

Captain Ogleby, in the schooner Betsy, informs, that in lat. 23, he spoke the schooner True Blue, Captain Stephenon, all well; and in lat. 29, long. 69, he saw a fleet of 40 sail, under convoy of four men of war, which he supposes was a Jamaica fleet of merchantmen bound to England.

Extract of a letter from a port in Spain, dated March 10.

"The admirals Lockhart and Digby, met the Spanish admiral Langara the 17th day of January with eight ships of the line. The English admirals had twenty-two. They took four of the Spanish ships and one was blown up. The Spaniards made a surprising resistance and escaped with three, and one from St. Sebastian to Cadix in a shattered condition.

"The English got provisions, &c. into Gibraltar, and retired immediately for fear of Gaiton's Squadron. It is said the French squadron is out to meet them on their return. The siege of Gibraltar is continued with more spirit than ever, and there is now forty ships of the line almost ready for sea in Cadix."

Extract of a letter from an eminent house, dated at St. Pierre, Martinico, April 23, 1780.

"We have reason to believe that an action has happened in these seas, between the French fleet, under the command of Monf. de Guichen, and that of the English, under the command of admiral Rodney, though no certain accounts have yet come to hand.

"The French Squadron weighed anchor, and came out of Fort Royal bay the 13th inst. consisting of twenty-two ships of the line and five frigates, having between five and six thousand troops on board; under the command of his excellency, the marquis de Bouille, in order to make a descent upon one of the English islands, but it is not certain which. This day week (the 16th inst.) the English fleet made their appear-