

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1781.

For the MARYLAND GAZETTE.

THE greatest effects have often flowed from the most trivial causes; the fate of empires has been determined by the pride, folly, or ambition of a prince, or his favourite minister, or mistress. A few virtuous, sensible men, may save a nation; and three fools, in power, may do more mischief to a state, than the united wisdom of all the wise men can repair. Since the present revolution, many political questions must have occurred, on which the wisest of our politicians might honestly differ in opinion. It has been the constant practice of our open enemies, and our internal secret foes, to raise distrust and suspicion of those entrusted with the conduct of our affairs. No mode could so effectually answer their purposes, and work our destruction, as to destroy the confidence of the people in the abilities, or integrity, of those who originated the opposition, and advised decisive measures, against our enemies, and their adherents amongst us. A diversity of sentiment causes opposition and debate, which too frequently creates warmth, and too often personal altercation, which begets coldness, and ends in animosity and hatred. It is the weakness and pride of human nature which refuses to allow a difference in sentiment; and the heart too prone to pride, envy, or malice, imputes the actions of men to interested or unworthy motives. America, by the arts of her enemies, and the practices of the Tories, and the credulity, or ill-directed zeal, or passions of the Whigs, is now reduced to this dangerous situation. Confidence in our rulers, and faith among individuals is destroyed. There is no government in which parties do not sometimes arise, and party as naturally creates faction, as summer produces heat, or winter cold. Since the formation of our government, great contrariety of opinion, disputes and divisions, have happened between our two branches of legislature, and the members of the two houses. To these animosities, in great measure, is owing our present very distressing and helpless situation. Except the difference on what terms the tender-law should be suspended, or repealed, the true source of all the discord was this, what conduct the legislature ought to adopt as to our British enemies, and our refugees, and Tories, and their property. The house of delegates urged a bill to discriminate our enemies, and penalties on the absentees, and a confiscation of their property. The senate and their advocates, aided by all the disaffected, nonjurors and Tories, were for moderate measures. The Whigs were too deeply engaged in making money (or accumulating paper) and other pursuits, to pay any attention to the questions in dispute. The Tories, at first, privately by their friends, and at last openly, opposed the measures originated by the house of delegates; and publicly traduced the members, who advised them. The Tories always acted in perfect union, and by system; the Whigs divided on every question, credulously swallowed the slanderous suggestions of the Tories, and joined in their abuse of those, who were struggling to obtain the adoption of vigorous and decisive measures against our avowed foes, and secret and more dangerous enemies. This conduct was uniformly pursued on all the great questions agitated in our public councils: the general non-exportation; the subscription to purchase arms and ammunition; the erection of our

new government; the declaration of independence; the test-act; the confederacy; and the confiscation of British property. The conduct of the principal characters in the several counties; the votes of our senators; delegates of congress; and house of delegates; and the conduct of the members of the council; are entirely forgot. Men who opposed the above important questions, have been since entrusted by the people, and the legislature, to execute the measures they condemned. Nothing could exhibit this subject in so striking a view as a list of the persons elected by the people, and appointed by the general assembly, and our executive, to office, since the formation of our government, and an enquiry into the real political character and conduct of the persons. The catalogue would nauseate the stomach of every Whig, and record the folly of the people, and the misconduct of our representatives. By our form of government, the senate are authorized to fill up any vacancy in their body, during the five years which they are elected. Six vacancies have happened; five of the original fifteen senators resigned, and one died; and in consequence thereof, eleven elections have been made, and most probably the greater part of the gentlemen elected would not have been the choice of the public. The senate seem to me to have been very unfortunate in their nomination; if they elected a Whig, they did not consider that some abilities were necessary to execute the trust. Very seldom above nine senators attend their duty; and on all questions respecting the confederacy, and confiscation of British property, only eight or nine were present. Above half of that number are the persons elected by the senate, and the greater part of them possess very few of the qualifications requisite for so elevated and important a station. The want of understanding may be as injurious to the public, as the want of probity. Among the many instances I could adduce to prove, that determinations of the senate, injurious to the state, and repugnant to the plainest principles of justice, were carried by a majority of the weakest of the body, of violent and ungovernable passions, I will only mention three instances, which occurred last session. First, the exception of debts in the confiscation of British property; second, the exception of imported merchandise out of the indemnification allowed to other property; and third, the indemnification for unrigged vessels already taken or destroyed, and unrigged vessels thereafter taken or destroyed, within twenty days after their being launched. So far as the debts to British subjects were made liable to pay their debts to our people, it could not be considered as a confiscation, but a proper and just application of the debtors property to satisfy his creditor. A debt is the property of the creditor; and it will be difficult for the senators, who voted to except debts, to shew any difference between confiscating debts, and any other kind of property. Our enemies had set the example, recited in the law passed, by refusing to pay the money belonging to this state, in the Bank of England. The exception of debts is not warranted by the law of nature and nations, and it is expected the advocates for this act in favour of our enemies will justify their conduct. The exception of imported merchandise is contrary to justice and policy, and could proceed only from little, illiberal prejudices, or the want of understanding; reason cannot discriminate between

manufactures, or other effects, belonging to farmers, and imported goods belonging to merchants. Conscious that this conduct cannot be justified or excused, the authors will remain silent, and rather submit to any strictures, than venture a trial before the bar of an impartial public. The indemnification proposed in the case of unrigged vessels was violently opposed, as improper and unjust. There was but one instance of an unrigged vessel, destroyed at Vienna, which would have been provided for by the bill. The attachment, zeal, and exertions of the owner, in our cause, had marked him out to our enemies, as an object of their revenge. His attempt to support the public faith and credit, as strongly marked him out, as an exception to any favour or justice, from the public. The senate did not object to indemnity vessels destroyed on the stocks, and therefore their objection to indemnify in the above case was pointed and partial. On this subject also the senators will not attempt to justify their conduct; though they have not the excuse offered in their message, want of time to go into a chain of reasoning to support their conduct. The senate proposed to refer the consideration of the three questions in dispute between the two houses, to the next session; which would have been accepted by the house of delegates; but such was the violence of the two senators, whose character and conduct was stated in my last paper, after discovering that vessels destroyed on the stocks, would be indemnified, that they informed a member of the house of delegates, that the bill to confiscate British property should receive a negative, unless every clause of indemnification to sufferers, was struck out of the bill. This the house of delegates acceded to, rather than lose so important a law. In five months a new senate will be elected, and an opportunity afforded to discard men, who have violated our public faith, and fomented quarrels and divisions, and who, if they possess good hearts, have not understanding to distinguish right from wrong, or what will promote, or destroy the peace and prosperity of this country.

CENSOR.

LONDON, February 10.

WE have accounts from Amsterdam, that they are very busy in fitting out privateers, and that several will soon be ready to sail. The late failure of our arms at St. Vincent's is a most unlucky incident at present. It will be considered by all the world as an unequivocal proof of the strength of our enemies, and of our own weakness; a circumstance in the present crisis, when we are engaging on a new and more extensive field of war, of the most unfortunate nature, as it cannot fail to add courage to our adversaries, while it must dispirit our friends. It is true, the latter dispatches have brought accounts of no loss either in men or shipping; but the necessity of re-embarking the few troops that had been landed, has the air of a defeat, and will have similar effects on the minds of mankind both at home and abroad. It will shew that we can have but little prospect of succeeding against any of the other French islands, when St. Vincent's, one of the least considerable, is so well defended; and it will likewise shew, what is still worse, that our commanders have no intelligence of the enemy's force, till they learn it from disappointment.

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