

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

T H U R S D A Y, N O V E M B E R 9, 1797.

Letter from Mr. Pickering, secretary of state, to the chevalier de Yrujo, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of his catholic majesty to the United States of America.

[CONCLUDED.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

Philadelphia, August 8th, 1797.

UT you say "the plot is discovered, and nobody any longer doubts that the expedition was to have taken place." Strange remark! Just the reverse of it should have been made. For although there is a discovery of Mr. Blount's plot, its extent is by no means ascertained; and far from nobody doubting, probably every body doubts whether the projected expedition was to have taken place. It was not to be undertaken but in conjunction with a British force—and on the proposal of the expedition to the British government it was totally rejected. Even Mr. Blount, who, if the project was adopted, *was to be at the head of it*, ventures no farther than to say he believed that the plan would be attempted, but if attempted, that it would not be till the "fall;" and consequently your zeal in March and April, for which, at the expence of decency towards the American government, you take to yourself so much credit, had then no just object. This zeal of yours is displayed in the information you gave to the baron de Carondelet, in March or April, of the expedition supposed to be preparing in Canada against Upper Louisiana: yet you would now attempt to justify this zeal by the plot of Mr. Blount; although this plot and the Canada expedition were wholly distinct and unconnected.

I shall conclude this long letter with your eleven positions, which you state with as much formality as if they were all of them important, and all of them supported by facts or just reasoning. But the details I have given demonstrate that these positions are either unfounded, or simple propositions of not the smallest consequence.

These are your positions addressed to me in your own words:

"1st. That on the 27th of February I gave you sufficient particulars respecting the intended expedition, to have attracted the attention of this government."

Answer. I have offered reasons to prove that you gave me no particulars, but only mentioned your suspicions, and that you promised to give me your representations in writing; for which, of course, it was proper for me to wait.

"2. That although to this verbal communication, I added another in writing, on the 2d of March, the president had not the least knowledge of it on the 9th of the same month; and that without doubt you must have had very powerful motives to prevent you from communicating it to him."

Answer. I have accounted for the delay in a satisfactory manner. I have shewn that I had abundant reason to conclude your suspicions to be wholly unfounded, and for attaching no sort of consequence to them. The event demonstrates that I was right; and that instead of very powerful motives, none were needed for a delay of only four or five days, or for a much longer period; and that to notice your naked suspicions at all, was not an act of necessity, but of complaisance. I might with justice complain of your delay to answer my letter of the 16th of March, on a subject of very high importance to the United States, I mean the evacuation of the posts. I will not say that you were negligent—or "remiss"—but I will say that for a whole month you omitted to give me your short and satisfactory answer. The indisposition which you assign as the cause of the delay, did not prevent you from writing on other subjects—nor long from going abroad.

"3. That it does not appear by the documents presented by the secretary of war, that government had given orders to the military commanders to cause the territory and neutrality of the United States to be respected."

Answer. I have shewn that none were necessary to be given.

"4. That you made to the English minister a communication which in my opinion you ought not; and that even if you thought it necessary, you delayed doing it for two months; that is from the 27th of February to the 28th of April, although it respected a most urgent and important object."

Answer. On the 28th of April, I informed you by letter, that I had communicated to the British minister your suspicions of an expedition preparing by the English against Upper Louisiana; and as for upwards of two months you expressed no dissatisfaction on account of this communication, I might well conclude you did not think it improper. Nay, in your letter of July 1st, which I am now answering, you refer with apparent approbation to this very communication, connected with the declaration which accompanied it to the British minister, that the president could not con-

sent to the march of any troops, either British or Spanish, through the territory of the United States: and you consider it as a "determined disposition" of the American government on this point. I have also shewn, that admitting this communication to Mr. Liston to be proper, I did not delay doing it for two months nor two weeks; although it respected at best but an imaginary project.

"5. That the baron de Carondelet could very well have received my letters, without its necessarily following that his had come to hand."

Answer. I have shewn that you did not understand my reasoning on this point; which went to prove that your answer of the 17th of April to my letter of the 16th of March, about the evacuation of the posts, was wanting in candour.

"6. That the baron did not represent Mr. Ellicott's not writing to him officially as a complaint, but as an observation, and that in fact he never has done it in those terms."

Answer. I have shewn that whether the baron's assertion should have been called a complaint or an observation was perfectly immaterial; I meant to shew it was unfounded; and this you yourself admit.

"7. That the proofs you allege to exculpate Mr. Ellicott respecting his intentions of taking the fort of Natchez by surprize are purely negative."

Answer. I offered them only as negative proofs. Yet when one complaint or assertion against Mr. Ellicott was known and acknowledged not to be true, the negative testimony of gentlemen likely to be well informed, would be deemed sufficient to bring another, and in its nature very improbable, complaint or assertion of the same person, into discredit.

"8. That it is not merely pretences, but very powerful reasons which have impeded the evacuation of the posts, and the running of the boundary line."

Answer. The point of view in which I have now exhibited the conduct of the Spanish governors relative to the evacuation of the posts and the running of the boundary line I should suppose might convince you that the causes which they have offered for the delay, are mere pretences: the American citizens, to whom you have appealed, have been convinced only by reading the printed documents, without any comments.

"9. That the insinuations with which you are willing to persuade the American people, that our arming is directed against them, are unjust as well as unfounded, as by Mr. Blount's letter it is clearly demonstrated to be a precaution for the mere purpose of defence."

Answer. The grounds of my suggestions, which you call "insinuations" are detailed in this letter, and embrace too many facts and circumstances to be abridged;—permit me to desire you to review them. I shall only repeat, that nothing is more certain than that Mr. Blount's letter has not the remotest reference to the suspected Canada expedition; which is your only pretence for reinforcing the posts in Upper Louisiana—for calling the Indians to your aid—for holding the posts at the Natchez, and Walnut Hills—and for delaying to run the boundary line.

"10. That you evidently contradict yourself, when on one hand you are pleased to attribute to us the movements of the Indians, and in the very next paragraph you shew it might proceed from American citizens, as it actually does, according to Mr. Blount's letter; and that he acted with the knowledge and intelligence of the very same British minister, in whose private notes, without signature, and perhaps not of his own hand writing, you place such implicit confidence."

Answer. I have shewn that there is not a shadow of contradiction in my observations on this subject; and your assertions to the contrary must proceed only from your not understanding them. You say that Mr. Blount acted in this manner with the knowledge and intelligence of the British minister. This is not likely to be true. It is in proof, by other evidence than the British minister's notes, that he did not and could not authorize the projected expedition against the Floridas—and particularly that one of his strong objections against it was, that it contemplated the employing of the Indians; although he thought it proper to submit the project to the consideration and decision of his government. Nobody therefore will believe that he authorized Mr. Blount, or was even privy to his measures, for preparing the Indians for war. Besides, doctor Romayne, who may be presumed to be well acquainted with Mr. Blount's plot, suggests that it is not the project offered to Mr. Liston by Chisholm. These are his words: "Mr. Blount is totally unknown to Mr. Liston, and so are all his views." And there is a passage in Mr. Blount's letter which countenances the doctor's assertion, and indicates, that although Chisholm and Blount had some communications with each other, yet that their views were not precisely the same. Mr. Blount, in his letter to Carey, says, "Where captain Chisholm is, I do not know.—I left him in Philadelphia in March, and he frequently visited the minister, and spoke upon the subject; but I believe he will go into the Creek nation by way of South Carolina or Georgia. He gave out he was going to Eng-

land; but I did not believe him." These last words afford a pretty strong proof that they were not acting wholly in concert. Probably Mr. Blount endeavoured to persuade Chisholm that he would co-operate in the prosecution of his scheme; while at the same time he might have another of his own, or in concert with doctor Romayne, and stand ready in the event of things, to make his advantage of either, which ever should offer the best prospect of success: Doctor Romayne, you see, says that Mr. Blount is totally unknown to Mr. Liston: But it is well known that Mr. Blount was your frequent guest, and intimate companion; and that he was on this intimate footing with you during the whole time that you were representing to the government, your suspicions of British expeditions. Yet after the discovery of the conspiracy was made public, you formally requested the American government to punish him for so scandalous a crime. But seeing that Mr. Blount was a citizen of the United States and not a subject of Spain, it would have been decent in you to have left him with his own government, without interposing your advice. But especially when you knew that the president had laid his letter before congress; and the two houses were deliberating on the mode of punishing him; when the investigation had proceeded so far, that a committee of the senate had reported a resolution to expel Mr. Blount from the senate; and a committee of the house had reported a resolution that he should be impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors: For you then to interfere was singularly improper; and it was such an ostentatious display of zeal, as under all the known circumstances, suggests more than one interpretation.

"11. That although in all your official communications, you have always manifested to me that the American government knew nothing which indicated any foundation for my suspicions, Mr. Blount's letter clearly proves that I was perfectly in the right."

Answer. This remark is perfectly inconsequential; for your communications exhibited your suspicions of projected expeditions only from Canada and Georgia; and I have shewn that Mr. Blount's letter has no relation to either.

I thought I had reached the end of your criminations; but in your concluding paragraph you accuse of an "unjust partiality," meaning, no doubt, towards the British minister and his nation. The details I have given in this letter, I trust will abundantly prove that this charge is as unfounded as it is indecent. Those details verify the representations of the conduct of certain Spanish officers which are given in my report of the 3d of July to the president. If the truth has excited any unpleasant sensations, those only are to blame whose injurious acts obliged me plainly to declare. Instead of this task, I should have been happy to execute the grateful office of stating to the president the good faith and amicable manner in which the officers of his Catholic majesty had executed the treaty of friendship, limits and navigation, between our two nations.

You think also that my report to the president is not calculated to strengthen the bonds of friendship which unite Spain and America.—Friendship, Sir, cannot subsist without mutual confidence; and confidence springs from sincerity. But the proceedings of the Spanish officers, which are the subject of this correspondence, have shaken the confidence of the government and of the citizens of the United States; and my report to the president only exhibits a summary of those proceedings; or rather the plain and obvious conclusions from the authentic facts and circumstances detailed in the documents, then and before presented to his view. And I dare venture to say, that every independent American has from the same premises drawn the same conclusions.

Nothing, Sir, will give truer satisfaction to the government and citizens of the United States than to see such a change in the proceedings of the Spanish officers as will restore confidence. The change would be easy, and the effect certain. Let them withdraw their troops and garrisons from the territories of the United States. Let them commence and prosecute the running of the boundary line. Let them cease to stop, control or regulate the passage of our citizens on the Mississippi, seeing these have a right to navigate it with perfect freedom.—And let them cease to send agents or emissaries among the Indians residing within the territories of the United States. When they shall do these things (and the good faith of his Catholic majesty pledged in the treaty renders their doing them an indispensable duty) then we shall forget what is past; our confidence will return; and with it that beneficial intercourse and those friendly acts by which neighbours may promote each others interests, welfare, and happiness.—And for such a state of things, whatever you may have imagined to the contrary, no one more ardently wishes, and on its arrival, no one will more sincerely rejoice, than

Your obedient servant,
TIMOTHY PICKERING.