

The Gazette.

PHILADELPHIA,

MONDAY EVENING, MARCH 4.

HAVING triumphed over every obstacle that opposed me, and established myself completely in all those points, to which, in the present direction, my ambition could aspire,—it remains at last that I get the mastery over myself, and lay aside those ideas, now become romantic, under which I have felt inspired to drag a cumbersome load so hard up hill.

When lowering skies, and a rumbling earth, indicating the approach of some general convulsion, produce no other effect, than to encrease the general indifference and listlessness,—it is too late to pour forth exhortations, and useless to admonish men of their danger.

That such are the indications which our political system presents, appears too painfully clear, from the following views:—

1. The imbecility of our frame of government.
2. The general depravation of morals.
3. The influence of newspapers and death of literature.
4. The absence of national character and public spirit.

The strange interregnum which succeeded the revolution, which lasted for six years, was then so reluctantly relinquished, and continues to this hour to be so obstinately cherished in the imaginations of no contemptible number of men, was a strong evidence of innate weakness. Whatever bravery, whatever firmness and magnanimity may be allowed to have been exhibited by the people at large, and whatever attributes of profound wisdom or skill in the science of government may have shone in the breasts of a few, the long endurance of this frail and miserable state, proved our deficiency in the most important attributes of an independent nation.

But the consequences of this state of torpor, were yet more lamentable than the cause. Inadequate to the organization of a regular government, the trance into which we fell, incapacitated the country more and more from ever doing it: left a morbid mass, our inactivity tended to corruption, and every day's continuance of it added some thing to the impossibility of animating this state, into life.

Hence it resulted that when at length a form of government was framed, it was a system of shifts and expedients, a mere experiment. What it ought to have been,—what it might have been, are points on which I have not the vanity to think my opinion of the least importance; I can surely speak of it as it appears to me, without incurring any just reproach; and the more so, as the evidence stands on record of that alacrity and candour with which I devoted whatever gifts God and nature blessed me with, to maintaining it as found it.

I have always looked upon this government in the light in which it appears to have been viewed by General Washington and the Convention* who framed it—a mere substitute for a better; a decisive evidence that this idea is correct, exists in the novel, extraordinary and dangerous incorporation into the Constitution of a provision for its alteration. From such a provision, no rational being can now expect favorable consequences: Experience has damped every such hope. Whilst it has, by turns, been on every side admitted that the reins of government are too lax, and that its provisions are wholly inefficient for extraordinary emergencies, the tendency of every amendment has been, to contract its means and impair its wholesome energies. Poor indeed must be that system, which by labored provisions fences round the smaller functions of administration, which even the most common foresight is adequate to, and foolishly leaves to the hazard of contingencies all those most essential points on which its own duration and the fortune of the country depends. A system erected on false calculations, is more unstable than a house erected on a quicksand. That the Constitution was bottomed on and calculated only for peace, sufficiently appears from the absolute incapacity for war which we now find in it. That it was calculated for a higher state of virtue and refinement, than exists, or ever will exist, is plain from its inadequacy to the punishment of a traitor. Treason being thus a crime unprovided for, is impliedly countenanced, or at least considered a venial sin. Hence traitors must abound.

As thick as leaves that flew the brooks
In Val' Ombrosa.

Circumstances may be imagined, under which the common intercourse of society might be maintained without the interference of any government whatever, and circumstances will always occur, and sometimes for a while continue, to which feeble restraints and the most trivial provisions are adequate; but discontent may rise, passion be excited, insurrection fomented and anarchy ensue: are they to be opposed by the same barriers? The mound which intervenes the overflowing of a vernal rivulet, would never in wisdom be relied on, to resist autumnal torrents, or the rage of winter. The cobweb that enmeshes the fly, serves only to enflame the more boisterous comer with new rage.

Amongst the more monstrous evils of the present political system, may be ranked the jangling and chaotic confusion of federal and state governments, which I can compare to nothing more nearly than an old sow with a farrow of pigs, who have so strengthened and encreased on the nourishment she has afforded them, as to be able to insult her authority and resist her controul.

These imperia in imperia are in every respect dead weights upon the general govern-

* See their letter, which has always formed an appendix to the constitution.
* See the Amendments.

ment: the leaven of local politics which they infuse into it, contaminates the whole, and will forever exhibit it a *rudis indigestaque molla*. Each of them dissimilar to every other,* (the four New-England States excepted) they exhibit the seeds of eternal contention and confusion: a vicious governor and his vicious faction may at any time marshal their state in insurrection against a law, or effect its secession from the Union. Endless jealousies will arise, endless jealousies have arisen, of the paramount power of the federation over a member of the league, and the former will be regarded as a Leviathan, whose natural instinct leads her to swallow them.

The militating principles of the different sovereignties, the shocking circumstance of power over liberty, property and life, not being nationally vested, will present to us, the miserable co-existence of the greatest tyranny and the greatest licentiousness—their independence will convert each into a petty theatre for the display of seditious ambition, and this ambition will aspire to aggrandizement by fortifying the suspicions, jealousies and envies, which it will be so easy to create and foster, and of which such abundant seeds are already sown to its hands. Even in our best estate, this jealousy hath been prominent, and the parts of the Union, justly deemed the founts in all other respects, are not amongst those least infected with it. In short it is inoculated into every vein and fibre of the system—it has poisoned our very heart's blood, and must produce its final stagnation.

These certain seeds of endless jars, are however quite of an innoxious nature, in comparison, and while we confine our view to their more simple and present effects.

Other traits of their character and consequences will swell the indignant page of the historian, or dye the character of the country in the very dregs of injustice, oppression and murder.

It is of little consequence that ever so great licence be allowed the citizen, by the Federal Constitution, if under the State Constitution, he may be imprisoned at the arbitrary will of a base judge, or threatened, or assaulted or assassinated, with impunity. It is a poor consolation to the wretched sufferer, that he can boast of being the subject of a Constitution, which gives him liberty, while it is totally inadequate to the protection of either his person or his property. Such a state of things is insult, is mockery—it is the very analysis of cruelty and torture. Security of person and property is the fundamental principle of good government: where this state is not perfect, to hear men talk of their liberty is loathsome; there can be no such thing—it is an absurd attempt to associate ideas wholly incongruous.

Mankind may be for a time misled by shadows, in the semblance of substance; the very wisest often are so: but though the inflated bubble of folly may float for a while on the surface, they must recur to principles whereby to govern their actions. Sooner or later, every man will ask himself the good old question, *Cui bono?*

In the right of inferring a paltry piece of paper into the ballot-boxes once or twice a year, which in nine cases out of ten, I find to be a mere nullity, I behold but a despicable substitute for that security and repose, which I shall in vain look for to the exercise of my right.

Complete security of person and property having been immovably established, as much proper liberty as can be ingrafted on the establishment, may then be well enough.—But it must be an after business. Never did man proposing to make a new enclosure for his animals, first prostrate the old one to the ground. Never will man be brought willingly from licence to restraint. But this with all other principles that are not bad, are reversed, and liberty, nominal liberty, a cloud, a vapour, a breath, a vision, a phantom, a whim, exists a magnificent nothing in the stead of security and peace: At this moment indeed, it has given way to a more absurd and unmeaning substitute, *Republicanism*; but this is only ascending a half-note higher in the gamut of nonsense.

A more important result of this state of things, may be viewed in the courts of justice. There are in the United States, judges enough (and judges too, with power over life and death) to form a little army—there is a national court, a demi-national court, and that of the States, which again is branched out into innumerable subdivisions, and it has been no rare thing to see them in a scramble for the victim. To the want of an efficient national court of justice, it is to be attributed that the country is overrun with knots of petty tyrants.

Who, dressed in a little brief authority,
Play such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make 'em angels weep.

With groups of pick-pockets, bank-robbers and hen-pecked dotards, who make a jeff of their holy functions, and with more than galle indifference, sport with liberty, property and life.

Thus where a man might escape in the abstract, he is cut up in detail; and his thralldom under the state administrations, continually at loggerheads with his nominal liberty under the federal government, places him in a situation not to be endured. Could there, indeed, be united in the same corporate frame two opposite and jarring natures; could a man's love of liberty, and his tolerance of tyranny, like Calist and Pollux, live and die by turns, then, 'twere quite another case. But the age of miracles is gone; the powerful and pleasing system of mythology has departed, and no substitute for either remains at a time when they are more needed than ever. To the want of such a court is it owing that party and politics have long watched at the vestibule and at length entered the temple of justice. Federal judges, Federal juries, a Democratic judge, Democratic juries, are common terms. Justice, frightened at the unholy sounds, has fled to heaven, and faction riots even in the sanctum sanctorum.

So frail a substance, so insubstantial an essence, can exist but by sufferance: it is an

* See Smith's view of the Constitutions.

ever-vibrating pendulum—a beam, now elevated by the cowardice and ignorance of enemies, now depressed by the weakness and inconstancy of friends. Accident alone has prolonged its duration: accident may yet prolong it. But it should be remembered, that it is equally liable to be shaken down by accident, as by accident to be preferred. It was an accidental government from the outset; good governments are formed on usage and experience.

The vacuum which is discernible to a greater or lesser extent in all parts of our country, in the place of those religious and moral institutions, which in well ordered governments, so powerfully subserve the general good, cannot but shock every man who has sense to discern, and, discerning, has a heart to feel.

The moral institutions of a country have a far more important aspect on its conduct and character, than the wisest political systems, or the soundest penal codes. In no Christian country but our own; (and the term must be soon very much enlarged, to embrace us) are moral institutions wholly disregarded. Even France, that vast grave of religion, boasts at least of moral theory in her constitution.

Where ministers and priests hold that influence over society, which their select, rather than singular learning entitles them to, and where men, yet remaining in happy ignorance of many of the beastly propensities of their nature, are consequently too unilluminated to resist or despise it,—tyranny can never come; and where the sacred pale of the church is guarded by national provisions, from the inroads of infidelity, profligacy, and schism, it reciprocates that protection and comfort which it receives, and returns good fruits of happiness and joy in an hundred fold.

But when a herd of flock-jobbing priests, have intruded themselves into the temples of the Most High, and the sacred fanes of his religion are polluted by hypocrisy and avarice; when insolent pretenders wrap themselves up in sacerdotal vestments, only to aim more securely their insidious attacks upon the faith; then surely the whole order may be converted into a course, and its existence cease to be desirable.

This vacuum might, however, be supplied, by the powerful influence of the press; but here, too, all is hopeless: a more potent engine to the destruction of this government and country, does not exist. I do not advance a hastily formed opinion, when I assert that newspapers are in the abstract amongst the greatest curses that can be visited upon a country. This opinion I am ready to defend when called upon, at any fit time and place; but shall pass it by here, to dwell particularly on the peculiar character of the American Press, the tenor of its conduct, and the malign aspect upon society and government.

More than nine tenths of the scanty literature of America, is made up of newspaper reading; this powerful fact, one would imagine, should induce a severe attention to the nature of this sole medium of instruction and information,—instead of which it is left entirely at loose, in full abandonment to all its unattractive perverness and turpitude. The American newspapers are the most base, false, servile and venal publications, that ever polluted the fountains of society—their editors the most ignorant, mercenary, and vulgar automatons that ever were moved by the continually ruffling wires of sordid mercantile avarice. The instruments are worthy of the agents. The ignorance of both is so consummate, that they unwittingly travail to mutual destruction. So complete a spectacle of depravity is rare to be seen: in the most tenebrous state of literature, some few Saturnine traits have shone, and shone the brighter, for the gloom which surrounded them, "like a good deed in a naughty world." The illumination of even a few scattered stars, however rarely shining, is a vast alleviation of the evils of night, if considered only as marks to direct the way; for although thousands are led away into the endless mazes of a devious career, by the immemorable ignis fatui which surround them, yet the few that are saved by their true lights have lived to latest times to bless them.

Such is the character of the American Press; to exemplify, were superfluous; since it is seen, felt, and confessed by the soundest wisdom and coolest judgment of the country.

The conduct is worthy of the character: Already has it effected the total subversion of every principle of distributive justice. To satyrize folly, to unmask the covenanted foe of the public weal—in the manly garb of conscientious integrity, to step forth the undaunted champion of virtue, and to stab offensive vice, even in the habiliments of a vassal, is distorted into "personality" and "abuse of private character."

If the independence of America is not to pass away, the indistinguishable ephemeron of revolutionary folly, it may perhaps one day be made a question whether every ignorant impostor that comes along, is to be allowed unadvisedly to exalt himself into this awkward eminence, and utter undisturbed his reiterations of dolence, prejudice and malice; whether men, without sufficient capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, are to be allowed in usurping an high and responsible situation, to fetter the most venomous slanders and lies, unchecked by any supervision or restraint. But the disease has become chronic—it admits not of remedy from amputation—nor can even the knife or the caustic now eradicate it.

Its influence upon the moral world is as much more fatal than the most baleful boggy fens and morasses upon the natural, as the subject is more exalted. It is a solid mass of corruption, which spreads and is spreading, whither ever mischief yet remains to be done.

I speak this from observation; and, I thought it of every effect to oppose, by ordinary means, I trust I have not been lax or tame. But the wind has blown, the storm has beat, and the flood is rolling on. The howling of the wind might be lightly regarded, and the storm beat round the head with-

out dismay; but to be overwhelmed for the good of the public, and in an absurd strife, does not entitle to the merit of even that cattered attribute *firmitas*, which needs not application to such a case, to render its prostitution complete.

The innumerable sophisms and preposterous dogmas, by which through these mediums, truth, and every semblance of it, has been so formidably assailed, present to us a prospect the more alarming, when we reflect that they figure not less conspicuously amongst the causes, than the effects of those painful disorders, which have stained with superlative and indelible reproach, the name, forms and character of republican government.

Every system of law, morals and politics, every emanation of reason, every result of long and anxious experiment, every establishment of wisdom, every attribute of virtue, has, at one time or other, been the prominent object of assault to a thousand poison-breathing Hydras, Gorgons and Chimeras dire. Against even the minutest institutes of human prudence, sophisms the most base, and heresies the most damnable, have swarmed like the locusts or the lice of Egypt, or a horde of French fusculettes at a massacre: the untiring perseverance, the incalculable zeal and fury, and that demoniac industry, which backs uncounted millions by millions still uncounted, have gained them an ascendancy, which, in less enlightened ages, nor the lacerating scalpel and the boiling tadle, the nerve-rendering pincers, nor the agonizing rack, nor the Bull of Phalaris, nor the Bed of Procrustes, nor the wheel of Ixion, nor the more hellish intervention of slow-consuming fires, could, after three centuries' experiment, aspire to.

The peculiar protégés of republics, they are proudly exhibited by their depraved votaries in contrast and hostility, to every other principle, sentiment, and system.

It is this arena that has been selected, for the exhibition of their gladiatorial exercises; and here, has the result of their exhibitions decided a point so long contested of old—the superiority of the *Retiarii*, over every antagonist: it is this floor that it has been chosen, in a particular manner to crowd with forms obscene and lights unholly: it is here, these vile priests have delighted to fluniate the lewd visions of the Academics and the daring blasphemies of the Tab: it is here they have travelled to put down all decency and to exalt all indecency—to reverse all good under the foot of evil—to abolish mind, and substitute passion; to confound sense—and enthroned brazen folly.

The success of this formidable *propaganda* will have reared a hideous and shapeless image, formed of sculls, and cemented by blood, misery and tears, the head of which, more sublime than the Great Angel of Malomet, will frown dismay through endless ages and innumerable worlds.

The newspapers of America are admirably calculated to keep the country in a continued state of insurrection and revolution. And if it ever again settles into quietude, it will not be till their influence is counteracted. The ultimate tendency of their labours, in their now general direction, appears marked in characters as strong and clear as they are formidable and alarming.

I have not the vanity to recommend any preservative; but I cannot concede the propriety of requiring some qualifications and pledges from men on whom the nation depends for all the information and much of the instruction it receives. To well-regulated Colleges we naturally look, for a source whence such qualifications might in proper form be derived; but even this ground, is no better than a dreary waste, not barren, but uncultivated—in its best estate, it bears the semblance of a worn-out field, the fences decayed or broken down, and the traces of useful and laborious industry almost effaced. The science of this country consists for the most part of frigid poetical imitations, or the duller dreams of a lunatic philology, which passes current as profound, merely because it is laboriously obscure. American literature wears the gloom of the dark ages; and novels and dreams, like the mists of evening, have overshadowed sense, genius and taste.

Out of the frailties of our government, the degenerating influence of servile, and mercenary Gazettes, and the demoralizing force of the demoralizing principles that prevail, has grown an evil, politically, greater than all, inasmuch as it daily threatens the subversion of the whole system: this is, the perfect non-entity of national character.

Perhaps there is not on record a single instance of a nation maintaining its independence discernibly distinct, under such circumstances, for even the short term during which the American government has been in operation. Love of country is the fountain of national life, and the germ of every virtue; where it is not, is the soil to engender every malicious propensity, and man bound to a scene where he cannot entertain this exhilarating principle of life, is more to be commiserated, than the slave that is chained to the laboring oar, or the miserable subject of French despotism.

Where this spirit is wanting, no efficient barrier can ever be erected against the inroads of decay.

When this sentiment lives not, and lives not in unlimited energy, the humblest existence partakes of misery, and life itself is loathsome. When men can no longer dwell with pleasure and with pride on the character of their country, when they can no longer look on it as an august image to which their ever-recurring imaginations can never recur in vain, for a source of consolation in every extremity; when they cannot in the loudest tones of exultation and joy, proclaim its glories, and its spotless renown, its unfulfilled honor, its bravery, its magnanimity, its wisdom, the boast of having a country is a delusion, it is a deceptive shadow, which will continually fly pursuit.

Man, in every situation he can be placed in, will have some great point to pride himself upon, some temporal object of adoration. His country is the noblest and fittest: but where this is degraded in his eyes, and

stunk in avarice and cowardice, he turns from it in disgust, and his affections dwell on some other. What existed of this temper amongst us, rose indignant against the deadly insults of France. Its instinctive impulse was adequate to decide the point that presented itself, and on a question of honor and shame, it did not deliberate. Then blushed the dawn of morning on the fame of America—the radiance of noon was hastening on, and the young splendors of her name, promised soon, in a brilliant glory to irradiate her head: but the fair prospect, is dissipated, like a vapoury illusion, and dim clouds darken the declining sun.

What is patriotism? Is it a narrow affection for the spot where a man was born? Are the very clods where we tread entitled to this ardent preference because they are greener? No; this is not the character of the virtue, and it soars higher for its object. It is an extended self-love, mingling with all the enjoyments of life and twining itself with the minutest filaments of the heart. It is thus we obey the laws of society, because they are the laws of virtue. In their authority we see, not the array of force and terror, but the venerable image of our country's honor. Every good citizen makes that honor his own, and cherishes it not only as precious, but as sacred. He is willing to risk his life in its defence, and is conscious that he gains protection while he gives it. For what rights of a citizen will be deemed inviolable when a state renounces the principles that constitute their security? Or, if his life should not be invaded, what would its enjoyments be in a country odious in the eyes of strangers and dishonored in his own? Could he look with affection and veneration to such a country as his parent? The sense of having one would die within him, he would blush for his patriotism, if he retained any, and justly, for it would be a vice. He would be a banished man in his native land.

The conclusion which obtrudes itself upon me, of the natural effects of all these causes, I have long endeavored to suspend. The government, though feeble, might have had sufficient energy imparted to it for self-preservation, the protection of its friends and the punishment of its enemies; the tide of depravity might then have been turned, and the moral character we derived from our ancestors retrieved. A war with France, "a long, obstinate and bloody war," could alone effect this. Peace, peace; let us have peace, now the cry, and peace we are to have. It is a peace of which I will never partake. It is a potion which shall never pollute my lip. The world is rising in arms against that infernal nation—the Perihelion of her glory is set forever—and the tempest of desolation gathers round her head—She is going down in the vortex of her own folly; may the Eternal preserve America from going down along with her.

But the hope is vain: the leagues between Shaddai and Disobolus, not more surely endangered the Kingdom of Manou, than Peace with the French Republic jeopardizes the existence of America.

Thus obscured as the general prospect is, deeper glooms hang on minuter parts of it. Here a train of thought unfolds itself which has been often exhausted in vain, because it has passed as the appeal of a party interested, in a case wherein each man appeared to be willing believe himself uninterested. I shall not renew it.

I no longer behold, when I look around me, any thing of much moment to frugle for. A country overrun by turbulence and faction, a government like a reed shaken by the wind: the people split into two deadly parties, whose impending collision must as surely produce bloodshed and misery, as that of fiend and steel emits the spark. Here we have a prospect to bind the hand and heart of every true man, did not the melancholy fact exist that no prize can result from the struggle. To fight without a leader, and without an adequate object, is surely a desperate contest.

On whatsoever side I turn my eyes, I behold all full of desolation and dismay. An enemy whose determined intentions no sacrifice can appease, no humiliation can charm, approaches in the secrecy and darkness of the night, to profane the ark of our safety with his lewd rites and unhallowed orgies. The wind on which he rides, even now howls loud in our ears, "the sea darkly tumbles beneath the blast, and the roaring waves climb against our rocks." His devoted prey (as if fascinated by his power, and doomed to thalldrom), in inoffensive security and repose, forming arithmetical calculations of the cost of submission, and the cost of resistance; and while by accurate subtraction, they thus arrange the mighty point, indicating the means and the incitement that is wanted, to an enemy who waits only to secure the first, to make a division of the last; of friends flaming and unquenchable jealousy, of enemies, boundless confidence and trust; of ourselves, and our own energies, ineffable contempt, of the intruders, respect, and reverential awe—such are the portentous en-signs we display from our battlements, such the centinels we station on our watch-towers.

The sun of federalism is fast retiring behind the clouds of turbulence and treason. Those who have so long been warmed by its genial influence, waste in stupid adoration, the allotted period of its salvation. In a little while, it may be seen no more, and perhaps these accents of expostulation, in which with all the impressions of long habit and strong attachment full upon me, I now dwell with mixed emotions of complacency and regret, are the very last that will be heard.

The absurd tenet of the Moslems, seems here to reign in its greatest vigor, and men, affecting to believe that the Eternal has in his chancery recorded a favorable issue to every crisis they may be driven to, wrap themselves in mulish contentment, and cry "let us hope for the best." Hope, it is indeed, the anchor of the soul; but when men avail themselves of no other source of reliance, even that hope, wherein they rest their safety, may lead them into hopeless calamity.

With regard to the opinions on which I ground my measures, I am for myself a suf-