

## LETTER.

## The RIGHT GOVERNMENT of a COMMONWEALTH EXAMINED.

DEAR SIR,

THE English nation, for their improvements in the theory of government, has, at least, more merit with the human race than any other among the moderns. The late most beautiful and liberal speculations of many writers, in various parts of Europe, are manifestly derived from English sources. Americans too ought for ever to acknowledge their obligations to English writers, or rather have as good a right to induce a pride in the recollection of them as the inhabitants of the three kingdoms. The original plantation of our country was occasioned, her continual growth has been promoted, and her present liberties have been established by these generous theories.—

There have been three periods in the history of England, in which the principles of government have been anxiously studied, and very valuable productions published, which at this day, if they are not wholly forgotten in their native country, are perhaps more frequently read abroad than at home.—The first of these periods was that of the Reformation, as early as the writings of Machiavel himself, who is called the great restorer of the true politics. “*The Shorte Treatise of Politicke Power, and of the true Obedience which Subjects owe to Kyngs and other civil Governors, with an Exhortation to all true natural Englischemen, compyed by John Ponnet, D. D.*” was printed in 1556, and contains all the essential principles of liberty, which were afterwards dilated on by Sidney and Locke.

This writer is clearly for a mixed government, in three equiponderant branches, as appears by these words, p. 7. “In some countreyes they were content to be governed, and have the laws executed, by one king or judge; in some places by many of the best sorte; in some places by people of the lowest sorte; and in some places also by the king, nobilitie, and the people all together. And these diverse kyndes of states, or policies, had their distincte names; as where one ruled, a monarchie; where many of the best, aristocracie; and where the multitude, democratice; and where all together, that is a king, the nobilitie, and commonis, a mixte state; and which men by long continuall have judged to be the best sort of all: for where that mixte state was exercised, there did the commonwealthe longest continue.”—

The second period was the Interregnum, and indeed the whole interval between 1640 and 1660. In the course of those twenty years, not only Ponnet and others were reprinted, but Harrington, Milton, the Vindicia contra Tyrannos, and a multitude of others, came upon the stage.—The third period was the Revolution in 1688, which produced Sidney, Locke, Hoadley, Trenchard Gordon, Plato Redivivus, who is also clear for three equipollent branches in the mixture, and others without number. The discourses of Sidney were indeed written before, but the same causes produced his writings and the Revolution. Americans should make collections of all these speculations, to be preferred as the most precious relics of antiquity, both for curiositie and use.

There is one indispensable rule to be observed in the perusal of all of them; and that is, to consider the period in which they were written, the circumstances of the times, and the personal character as well as the political situation of the writer. Such a precaution as this deserves particular attention in examining a work, printed first in the Mercurius Politicus, a periodical paper published in defence of the commonwealth, and reprinted in 1656, by Marchamont Nedham, under the title of “*The Excellency of a free State, or the right Constitution of a Commonwealth.*” The nation had not only a numerous nobility and clergy at that time disgusted, and a vast body of the other gentlemen, as well as of the common people, desirous of the restoration of the exiled royal family; but many writers explicitly espoused the cause of simple monarchy and absolute power: among whom was Hobbes, a man, however unhappy in his temper, or detestable for his principles, equal in genius and learning to any of his contemporaries. Others were employed in ridiculing the doctrine, that laws, and not men, should govern. It was contended, that to say “that laws do or can govern, is to amuse ourselves with a form of speech, as when we say time, or age, or death, does such a thing. That the government is not in the law, but in the person whose will gives a being to that law. That the affection of monarchy consists in governing by a nobility, weighty enough to keep the people under, yet not tall enough, in any particular person, to measure with the Prince, and by a moderate army, kept up under the notion of guards and garrisons, which may be sufficient to strangle all seditions in the cradle; by counsels, not such as are co-ordinate with the Prince, but purely of advice and dispatch, with power only to persuade, not limit the prince's will.” In such a situation, writers on the side of liberty thought themselves obliged to

consider what was then practicable, not abstractedly what was the best: they felt the necessity of leaving the monarchical and aristocratical orders out of their schemes of government, because all the friends of those orders were their enemies, and of addressing themselves wholly to the democratical party, because they alone were their friends; at least there appears no other hypothesis on which to account for the crude conceptions of Milton and Nedham. The latter, in his preface, discovers his apprehensions and feelings too clearly to be mistaken, in these words: “I believe none will be offended with this following discourse, but those that are enemies to public welfare: let such be offended still; it is not for their sakes that I publish this ensuing treatise; but for your sakes that have been noble patriots, fellow soldiers and sufferers for the liberties and freedoms of your country.” As Mr. Turgot's idea of a commonwealth, in which all authority is to be collected into one centre, and that centre the nation, is supposed to be precisely the project of Marchamont Nedham, and probably derived from his book, and as “*The Excellency of a free State*” is a valuable morsel of antiquity, well known in America, where it has many partisans, it may be worth while to examine it, especially as it contains every semblance of argument which can possibly be urged in favour of the system, as it is not only the popular idea of a republic both in France and England, but is generally intended by the words *republic, commonwealth and popular state*, when used by English writers, even those of the most sense, taste, and learning.

(To be continued.)

\* See the political pamphlets of that day, written on the side of monarchy.

## NATIONAL MONITOR.—No. V.

“Temporary expedients do but prolong the publick distress.”

*THE imperfection of human nature is such, that its inherent resources are insufficient to retrieve the misfortunes of Life:—The public distresses brought upon America by the late war, have been considered as evils necessarily resulting from the derangement of our Governments, our habits and pursuits—and that time and experience will, in the natural course of events restore us again to tranquility and happiness.—It may be presumed, that this sentiment has had too much influence upon the public mind; for we have been supinely waiting for natural or some other causes, extraneous from our own exertions, to do that for us, which we should have done for ourselves.—The woes of private life are obliterated by the lenient hand of Time; but the evils of a Community, like a flood which deluges a country, must have the speedy united exertions of a People, to form some medium by which they may be carried off.*

*Time, which affords a sovereign Cure for private adds to the weight of public Calamities; for while the disease exists, like a contagion, it spreads from one part of the community to the other, with increasing and aggravated force, till it becomes so universal, and acquires such strength, that a new creation is as practicable, as bringing back a debauched, licentious, unprincipled people to the paths of virtue, order and government.*

*It has often been observed, that the hand of Heaven was as conspicuous, in disposing the People of America to adopt the New System of Government, as it was in supporting and carrying us through the late war.—This illumination of mind plainly indicates, that those principles which had been early imbibed by our ancestors—which had been transmitted from sire to son, and which led us to Empire and Independence, though injured and weakened, had not entirely lost their force—they have broken out in a blaze of lustre highly honorable to our character, leading the States in Union to adopt the only solid expedient commensurate to their exigencies, the New Constitution—the righteous administration of this free Government will prove a catholicon for the diseases of the nation. G.*

## ABORIGINES OF AMERICA.

THE characteristic features of the Indians of America, are, a very small forehead covered with hair from the extremities to the middle of the eyebrows. They have little black eyes, a thin nose, small and bending towards the upper lip. The countenance broad; the features coarse; the ears large and far from the face; their hair very black, lank and coarse. Their limbs small, but well turned; the body tall, strait, of a copper color, and well proportioned; strong and active, but not fitted for much labor. Their faces smooth and free from beard, owing to a custom among them of pulling it out by the roots. Their countenances, at first view, appear mild and innocent, but upon a critical inspection, they discover something wild, distrustful and sullen. They are dexterous with their bows and arrows; fond of adorning themselves with strings of beads and shells about their necks, and plates in their ears and noses. In summer they go almost naked; but in winter they cover themselves with the skins of beasts taken in hunting, which is their principal employment. They many times torture their prisoners in the most shocking and cruel manner; generally scalp them, and sometimes broil and eat them.

Morse's Geography.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

## EAST-INDIA INTELLIGENCE.

“NEW-YORK, MAY, 23, 1789.

The ship *Chesapeake*, from Bengal; JOHN O'DONNEL, Esq. owner and commander, arrived in Amoy, has brought a valuable cargo consisting of almost every production and manufacture of Asia. He has had a very quick passage, being only four months, including five or six days stay at the islands of St. Helena and Ascension, from Bengal. By Mr. O'Donnell's arrival, we are favored with the following intelligence:

The *Chesapeake* was the first American vessel allowed to hoist the colors of the United States in the celebrated river *Ganges*, and to trade there. When Lord Cornwallis the Governor-General, then at a great distance up the country, was applied to by letter from Calcutta, to know in what manner the Americans were to be received, his answer was—On the same footing with the other nations. This answer being probably conformable to his instructions from Great-Britain, evince the friendly disposition of that nation in that quarter, for the American ships pay no more at any of the English settlements of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, which Mr. O'Donnell visited, than other foreigners. It is to be noticed also, that the supreme council of Bengal, have taken off a heavy duty, called governmental customs, which included exports as well as imports: This duty all other nations, except the English, were liable to. This on Madeira Wine was so high as 18 rupees the cask—and one rupee, or 2/- sterl. on all Wines in bottles.

All sorts of European Goods—Wines, Spirits, &c. were selling at the different European settlements in India, considerably under prime cost, in consequence of the markets being overstocked. The best Madeira wine would not net twenty pounds sterl. the pipe.

Capt. Kerby, in the *Betsey* from Philadelphia, arrived safe at Bengal, but in a very leaky condition; her cargo of Wine, &c. was unloading.

Capt. Randall, in the *Jay*, was safe arrived at Batavia, from Madras. It was supposed she would winter there, and proceed early next season to China.

Capt. Metcalfe, in the brig *Eleanor*, belonging to New-York, lying in the river Tigris, was boarded we understand by a number of Chinese banditti; but by the spirited conduct of the crew, who brought a gun, loaded with grape, to bear on them, they were repulsed with the loss of some of their gang. The Capt. was up at Canton.

All was profound peace between the country and European powers in India, when Mr. O'Donnell sailed. The hitherto refractory and ambitious Tippo, son of the famous Hyder Ally, and the English, appear heartily sick of war, and are now fully employed in restoring lost credit, and their almost ruined finances, by systems of reform and economy.

The French at Pondicherry were preparing a strong armament to accompany the dethroned Prince of Cochin China, who lately visited France, and to assist him in the recovery of his legal and hereditary kingdom.

We understand, it is very unsafe for American vessels to go on the coast of Malabar, for fear of the Mahrattas fleets, who without distinction capture the ships of all nations with whom they have no treaty.

## ONE SPIRIT ANIMATES THE WHOLE.

A late Boston paper contains the following paragraph. The conduct of the President of the United States, says a correspondent, places in so interesting a point of view his truly illustrious character as must endear him more than ever to his grateful and admiring countrymen—his disinterested refusal of all pecuniary emoluments—his mild, conciliating language—his strongly implied opinion in favour of such alterations as shall improve, and not injure the constitution—his truly republican address to the Senate and House of Representatives—all prove him, beyond controversy, the same amiable, honest, and GREAT MAN, the same real and unaffected friend to the PEOPLE, he always has been. In being elevated to the first place in the Union, he does not forget that he is still a citizen: And the manly style, and truly democratic simplicity with which his first official communication is introduced, make us think that we heard the great Fabius addressing the people of Rome, after having saved his country.

“PHILADELPHIA, MAY, 15.

The Speech of THE PRESIDENT, upon his accession to the government of the United States, deserves to be engraved in letters of gold. Antiquity has handed down to us nothing equal to it. The combination of just and sublime principles, which appear in every part of it, discovers the Christian, the Patriot, and the Legislator, in the highest degrees. Let vice and infidelity now hide their heads. They can never, hereafter, be considered as fashionable parts of a political character in the United States. Our illustrious PRESIDENT, has taught us, from his present elevated station, that to reverence the DEITY, and to practise the duties of Morality, are the highest policy, as well as wisdom of a nation.

To render the present arduous station of our President easy to him, it is the duty of every citizen, to promote peace and order in our country. To be the enemy of the Federal Government now, is to be the enemy of the great and good General WASHINGTON.

Arrived at Baltimore, for the purpose of establishing the printing of cotton and linen cloths and paper hangings, Mell's COTAY, CHARDON and ORINARD. It is uncertain in what place these gentlemen will fix themselves, but, wherever it shall be, their success is most earnestly to be wished, and amounts to a certainty. They have been regularly bred and employed in that business in the city of Nantz, in France, where the art of calico and paper hanging printing is improved beyond any part of Europe. The importation of printed linens and cottons into the United States is estimated at sixty-five thousand pounds annually, besides which there are very large quantities of paper hangings made.

## PRICE OF STOCKS.

BOSTON.	
Loan-Office Certificates,	4/-.
Pierce's Final Settlements,	4/-.
Indents,	3/-.
Lt. post Orders,	15/-.
Specie Orders,	10/-.

Subscriptions for the “COURIER DE BOSTON,” a new weekly paper, published at Boston in the French Language, are received at No. 9, Maiden Lane. [The utility of a paper in this almost universal language need not be hinted to those, who wish to acquire the French tongue.]

Complete sets from the beginning, of the GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES, may at any time be obtained by those, who chuse to subscribe for that publication, at the Editor's Office, No. 9, Maiden-Lane.

## THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSEHOLD.

WHEREAS, all Servants and others, employed to procure provisions, or supplies, for the Household of THE PRESIDENT of the UNITED STATES, will be furnished with monies for those purposes. Notice is therefore given, that no accounts, for the payment of which the Public might be considered as responsible, are to be opened with any of them.

SAMUEL FRAUNCES, Steward of the Household.

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