

L E T T E R.

The RIGHT GOVERNMENT of a COMMON-WEALTH EXAMINED.

[Continued from our last.]

IT happens univerfally, when the people in a body, or by a fingle representative afſembly, attempt to exerciſe all the powers of government, they always create three or four idols, who make a bargain with each other firſt, to do nothing which ſhall diſpleaſe any one: Theſe hold this agreement, until one thinks himſelf able to diſembarraſs himſelf of the other two; then they quarrel, and the ſtrongeſt becomes ſingle tyrant. But why is the name of Pompey omitted, who was the third of this triumvirate? Becauſe it would have been too unpopular; it would have too eaſily confuted his argument, and have turned againſt himſelf, to have ſaid that this aſſociation was between Pompey, Cæſar, and Craſſus, againſt Cato, the ſenate, the conſtitution, and liberty, which was the fact. Can you find a people who will never be divided in opinion? who will be always unanimous? The people of Rome were divided, as all other people ever have been and will be, into a variety of parties and factions. Pompey, Craſſus, and Cæſar, at the head of different parties, were jealous of each other: Their diviſions ſtrengthened the ſenate and its friends, and furniſhed means and opportunities of defeating many of their ambitious deſigns. Cæſar perceived it, and paid his court both to Pompey and Craſſus, in order to hinder them from joining the ſenate againſt him. He ſeparately repreſented the advantage which their enemies derived from their miſunderſtandings, and the eaſe with which, if united, they might concert among themſelves all affairs of the republic, gratify every friend, and diſappoint every enemy. The other example, of Auguſtus, Lepidus, and Antony, is equally unfortunate: Both are demonſtrations that the people did think of uſurping others rights, and that they did not mind any way to preſerve their own.—The ſenate was now annihilated, many of them murdered: Auguſtus, Lepidus, and Antony, were popular demagogues, who agreed together to fleece the flock between them, until the moſt cunning of the three deſtroyed the other two, fleeced the ſheep alone, and tranſmitted the ſhears to a line of tyrants. How can this writer ſay then, that, “while the government remained untouched in the people’s hands, every particular man lived ſafe?” The direct contrary is true. Every man lived ſafe, only while the ſenate remained as a check and balance to the people; the moment that controul was deſtroyed, no man was ſafe. While the government remained untouched in the various orders, the Conſuls, Senate, and people, mutually balancing each other, it might be ſaid, with ſome truth, that no man could be undone, unleſs a true and ſatisfactory reaſon was rendered to the world for his deſtruction; but as ſoon as the ſenate was deſtroyed, and the government came untouched into the people’s hands, no man lived ſafe but the Triumvirs and their tools; any man might be, and multitudes of the beſt men were, undone, without rendering any reaſon to the world for their deſtruction, but the will, the fear, or the revenge of ſome tyrant. Theſe popular leaders, in our author’s own language, “faded and deſtroyed, deſtroyed and advanced, whom they pleaſed, with a wet finger.”

The ſecond argument to prove that the people, in their ſucceſſive ſingle aſſemblies, are the beſt keepers of their own liberties, is, “becauſe it is ever the people’s care to ſee that authority be ſo conſtituted, that it ſhall be rather a burthen than profit to thoſe that undertake it; and be qualified with ſuch ſlender advantages of profit or pleaſure, that men ſhall reap little by the enjoyment. The happy conſequence whereof is this, that none but honeſt, generous, and public ſpirits, will then deſire to be in authority, and that only for the common good. Hence it was, that in the infancy of the Roman liberty there was no canvaffing for voices; but ſingle and plain-hearted men were called, intrusted, and in a manner forced with impoſſibility to the helm of government, in regard of that great trouble and pains that followed the employment. Thus Cincinnatus was fetched out of the field from his plough, and placed, much againſt his will, in the ſublime dignity of Dictator: So the noble Camillus, and Fabius, and Curius, were, with much ado, drawn from the recreation of gardening to the trouble of governing; and the conſul year being over, they returned with much gladneſs again to their private employment.”

The firſt queſtion which would ariſe in the mind of an intelligent and attentive reader would be, whether this were burleſque, and a republic travelt? But as the principle of this ſecond reaſon is very pleaſing to a large body of narrow ſpirits in every ſociety, and as it has been adopted by ſome reſpectable authorities, without ſufficient conſideration, it may be proper to give it a ſerious investigation.

The people have, in ſome countries and ſeaſons, made their ſervices irkſome; and it is popular

with ſome to make authority a burthen. But what has been the conſequence to the people? Their ſervice has been deſerted, and they have been betrayed. Thoſe very perſons who have flattered the meannefs of the ſtingy, by offering to ſerve them gratis, and by purchaſing their ſuffrages, have carried the liberties and properties of their conſtituents to market, and ſold them for very handſome private profit to the monarchical and ariftoeratical portions of ſociety: And ſo long as the rule of making their ſervice a burthen is perſiſted in, ſo long will the people be ſerved with the ſame kind of addreſs and fidelity, by hypocritical pretences to diſinterreſted benevolence and patriotiſm, until their confidence is gained, their affections ſecured, and their enthuſiaſm excited, and by knaviſh bargains and ſales of their cauſe and intereſt afterwards. But although there is always among the people a party who are juſtly chargeable with meannefs and avarice, envy and ingratitude, and this party has ſometimes been a majority, who have literally made their ſervice burthenſome, yet this is not the general character of the people; a more univerſal fault is, too much affection, confidence, and gratitude, not to ſuch as really ſerve them, whether with or againſt their inclinations, but to thoſe who flatter their inclinations, and gain their hearts. Honeſt and generous ſpirits will diſdain to deceive the people; and if the public ſervice is wilfully rendered burthenſome, they will really be averſe to be in it: but hypocrites enough will be found, who will pretend to be alſo loath to ſerve, and feign a reluctant conſent for the public good, while they mean to plunder in every way they can conceal. There are conjunctures when it is the duty of a good citizen to hazard and ſacrifice all for his country: but, in ordinary times, it is equally the duty and intereſt of the community not to ſuffer it. Every wiſe and free people, like the Romans, will eſtabliſh the maxim, to ſuffer no generous action for the public to go unrewarded. Can our author be ſuppoſed to be ſincere, in recommending it as a principle of policy to any nation to render her ſervice in the army, navy, or in council, a burthen, an unpleaſant employment to all her citizens? Would he depend upon finding human ſpirits enough to fill public offices, who would be ſufficiently elevated in patriotiſm and general benevolence to ſacrifice their eaſe, health, time, parents, wives, children, and every comfort, convenience, and elegance of life, for the public good? Is there any religion or morality that requires this? Which permits the many to live in affluence and eaſe, while it obliges a few to live in miſery for their ſakes? The people are fond of calling public men their ſervants, and ſome are not able to conceive them to be ſervants, without making them ſlaves, and treating them as planters treat their negroes:—But, good maſters, have a care how you uſe your power; you may be tyrants as well as public officers. It ſeems, according to our author himſelf, that honeſty and generoſity of ſpirit, and the paſſion for the public good, were not motives ſtrong enough to induce his heroes to deſire to be in public life; they muſt be called, intrusted, and forced. By ſingle and plain-hearted men, he means the ſame, no doubt, with thoſe deſcribed by the other expreſſions, honeſt, generous, and public ſpirits. Cincinnatus, Camillus, Fabius, and Curius, were men as ſimple and as generous as any; and theſe all, by his own account, had a ſtrong averſion to the public ſervice. Either theſe great characters muſt be ſuppoſed to have praſticed the *Nolo Episcopari*, to have held up a fictitious averſion for what they really deſired, or we muſt allow their reluctance to have been ſincere. If counterfeit, theſe examples do not deſerve our imitation; if ſincere, they will never be followed by men enough to carry on the buſineſs of the world. The glory of theſe Roman characters cannot be obſcured, nor ought the admiration of their ſublime virtues to be diminiſhed; but ſuch examples are as rare among ſtateſmen, as Homers and Miltons among poets. A free people of common ſenſe will not depend upon finding a ſufficient number of ſuch characters at any one time, but leſs a ſucceſſion of them for any long duration, for the ſupport of their liberties. To make a law, that armies ſhould be led, ſenates counſelled, negotiations conducted, by none but ſuch characters, would be to decree that the buſineſs of the world ſhould come to a full ſtand: And it muſt have ſtood as ſtill in thoſe periods of the Roman hiſtory as at this hour; for ſuch characters were nearly as ſcarce then as they are now. The parallels of Lyfander, Pericles, Themiftoeles, and Cæſar, are much eaſier to find in hiſtory, than thoſe of Camillus, Fabius, and Curius. If the latter were with much difficulty drawn from their gardens to government, and returned with pleaſure at the end of the conſular year to their rural amuſements; the former are as ardent to continue in the public ſervice, and if the public will not legally reward them, they plunder the public to reward themſelves. The father of Themiftoeles had more averſion to public life than Cincinnatus; and, to moderate the propenſity of his ſon, who ardently aſpired to the higheſt offices of the ſtate, pointed to the old galleys rolling in the docks.—“There,” ſays he, “ſee the old ſtateſmen, worn out in the ſervice of their

country, thus always neglected when no longer of uſe!” Yet the ſon’s ardour was not abated, though he was not one of thoſe honeſt ſpirits that aimed only at the public good. Pericles too, though his fortune was ſmall, and the honeſt emoluments of his office very moderate, diſcovered no ſuch averſion to the ſervice; on the contrary, he entered into an emulation in prodigality with Cinon, who was rich, in order equally to dazzle the eyes of the multitude. To make himſelf the ſoul of the republic, and maſter of the affections of the populace, to enable them to attend the public aſſemblies and theatrical repreſentations for his purpoſes, he lavished his donations: Yet he was ſo far from being honeſt and generous, and aiming ſolely at the public good, that he availed himſelf of the riches of the ſtate to ſupply his extravagance of expence, and made it an invariable maxim to ſacrifice every thing to his own ambition. When the public finances were exhausted, to avoid accounting for the public money, he involved his country in a war with Sparta.

(To be continued.)

BOSTON, May 20, 1789. Agreeably to an order of the Hon. Secretary at War, Mr. Joſeph Callender has juſt finiſhed the Inſcription ordered by Congress to be engraved on the TWO CANNON, which conſtituted one moiety of the American Artillery, at the commencement of the late war. The inſcription is finely executed in relieve—as follows.

The HANCOCK, one—The ADAMS, the other.
SACRED TO LIBERTY.

This is one of Four Cannon,
Which conſtituted the whole train
of Field Artillery
poſſeſſed by the Britiſh Colonies of
North-America,
at the commencement of the
War,

on the 19th of April, M,DCC,LXXV.

This CANNON
and its fellow,
belonging to a number of citizens of Boston,
were uſed in many engagements
during the war.

The other two, the property of the
Government of Maſſachuſetts,
were taken by the enemy.

By order of the United States,
In Congress aſſembled.
May 19, 1788.

NATIONAL MONITOR.—No. VI.

Government is ſo far the reſult of a free choice, as the people are led to its adoption from ſentiment.”

It is a trite, though true obſervation, that “good education is the foundation of all human happineſs.” This is ſo univerſally acknowledged in private life, that the conduct of the enlightened part of mankind may be conſidered as a comment upon the conviction of its importance;—hence the common obſervation, that good education is the beſt fortune—hence the extreme ſolicitude of parents to ſtrain every nerve, that they may extend the plan of their children’s improvements in ſcience—that they may enjoy advantages which their ſires feel the want of—hence alſo the rapid progreſs that has been made in improving upon ancient modes of inſtruction—opening new avenues to knowledge, and expanding our views in thoſe walks that had been familiar to us. It appears from theſe ſpecimens, that under the auſpices of peace, freedom, and good government, there is every reaſon to ſuppoſe that the great importance of education will continually appreciate in the minds of our citizens—and that in this reſpect, “the wiſdoms will ere long be made to bloſſom like the roſe.” Already do we behold Science courting the ſons of America to the retirements of rural life; Seminaries of Learning ariſing in thoſe retreats, late the haunts of ſavage men, wild and untutored as their fellow-tenants of the woods.

This deeply impreſſed ſenſe of the importance of education, may, and doubtleſs will, operate moſt powerfully and effectually, in producing the neceſſary provision for common education—as it will come in to aid thoſe neceſſary arrangements, which muſt be made by the fathers, the magiſtrates, the ruling powers of villages, towns, and cities, to effect this important object.

But this ſentiment, it cannot be ſuppoſed, will extend its benign influence ſo far, as to ſupercede the neceſſity of Congreſſional interference in a ſubject of ſo great magnitude, as NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS for a NATIONAL EDUCATION.

This is doubtleſs a deſideratum, that the wiſe and philanthropic part of mankind will exert to ſee realized—public ſeminaries, in which national, governmental, and patriotic inſtruction ſhall form the great outlines of the ſyſtem.

From ſuch a centre, thoſe rays of knowledge, may diverge in every poſſible direction, which will be productive of the moſt ſalutary conſequences; for it requires nothing more than a feeling ſenſe of the importance of freedom and civil government, founded on a competent underſtanding of their principles and intrinsic excellencies, to engage the beſt affections of the human mind in their ſupport; but the foundation of an univerſal attachment to right principles, whether of a public or a private nature, muſt be laid in youth.

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.
MAY 4th, 1789.

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.

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