

The RIGHT CONSTITUTION of a COMMON-
WEALTH EXAMINED.

[Continued from our last.]

The next year, 371 dissensions were renewed with more acrimony than ever. Manlius, whose spirit was not accustomed to humiliation, was exasperated at his imprisonment, Cossus having not dared to proceed with the decision of Cincinnatus against Melius, and even the senate having been compelled to give way to the discontent of the people, was animated to attempt a reformation of the constitution. "How long," said he to the people, "will you be ignorant of your own strength, of which nature has not thought fit that beasts themselves should be ignorant? Count your number, and that of your adversaries; shew the war, and you will have peace: Let them see that you are prepared, and they will immediately grant what you ask; determine to be bold in undertaking, or resolve to suffer the utmost injuries. How long will you fix your eyes upon me? Must I repeat the fate of Caius and Melius? I hope the gods will avert such a misfortune from me: But those gods will not descend from heaven to defend me. You must remove the danger from me. Shall your resistance to the senate always end in submission to the yoke? That disposition is not natural to you; it is the habit of suffering them to ride you, which they have made their right and inheritance. Why are you so courageous against your enemies abroad, and so soft and timorous in defence of your liberty at home? Yet you have hitherto always obtained what you demanded. It is now time to undertake greater things. You will find less difficulty in giving the senators a master, than it has cost you to defend yourselves against them, while they have had the power and the will to lord it over you. *Dictators and consuls must be abolished, if you would have the people raise their heads.* Unite with me; prevent debtors from the rigours of those odious laws. I declare myself the patron and protector of the people; if you are for exalting your chief by any more splendid title, or illustrious dignity, you will only augment his power for your support, and to obtain your desires.—Ego me patrum profiteor plebis: vos, si, quo insigni magis imperii honoris nomine vestrum appellabitis ducem, eo utemini potentiore ad obtinenda ea quæ vultis." Liv. This is a manifest intention of introducing a balance of three branches.

In this oration are all the principles of the English constitution. The authority and power of the people to demolish one form of government and erect another, according to their own judgment or will is clearly asserted. The necessity of abolishing the dictators and consuls, and giving to one chief magistrate the power to controul the senate, and protect the people, is pointed out. The senate is not proposed to be abolished, nor the assemblies of the people, nor their tribunes; but the abolition of cruel debtors laws, and redress of the people's grievances, is to be the consequence. The arrifocracy was at that time a cruel tyranny; the people felt it; Manlius acknowledged it: Both saw the necessity of new modelling the constitution, and introducing the three branches of Romulus and Lycurgus; with better and clearer limitations; and both were desirous of attempting it.

(To be continued.)

An ESSAY on FREE TRADE and FINANCES:
Written by a citizen of Philadelphia, in 1783.

[Continued from our last.]

IV. This mode of taxation, saves the whole sum of the tax to the States, while at the same time it mends the habits and health of the people: For 'tis plain, that if the consumption of such imported goods is lessened by the tax, a less quantity will be imported, and of course a less sum of money need be sent abroad to pay the first cost of these goods; and this excess of money which is thus saved from going abroad, (from whence it would never return,) is paid by the tax into the public treasury, from whence it issues on the public service, and is directly thrown into circulation again through the States, and of course becomes a clear saving, or balance of increase of the circulating medium, and consequently of realized wealth in the country; whilst at the same time, the people are better served and accommodated by the reduced consumption, than they could have been by the excessive one.

V. It appears from what has been just now observed, that this mode of taxation naturally increases the circulating of the States, and every one knows what a spring, what vigor this gives to every kind of business in the country, whether of husbandry, mechanic arts, or trade. There is no comparison between the advantages of carrying on any sort of business, in a country where cash circulates freely, and in a country where cash is scarce. In the one case, every kind of business will flourish, and industry has every sort of encouragement and motive for exertion; in the other, all business must be sadly embarrassed, and of course make but a feeble and slow progress.

We can scarce form a conception, what a different face these two circumstances will give a country in a short time; in the one case, buildings rise, husbandry improves, arts and manufactures flourish, the country is alive, every part of it abounding with industry, profits and delight; the other can produce little more than languishment, decay, dullness and fruitless anxiety, disappointment and wretchedness.

VI. The tax I propose, will operate in a way of general equality, justice, and due proportion. A tax on general consumptions, can not fail to bring the burden in due proportion on individuals, because every one will pay in proportion to his consumption; and the presumption is, that the man who spends most, is best able to spend. If this proposition admits of exceptions, they are generally in favor of the economist, the careful penurious man, and against the prodigal, who dissipates his estate, and will operate as a strong check upon him if he is not past all considerations of interest. If this is the case with him, the sooner his estate is run through the better it is, both for himself and the public, for when this happens, he must either die or work for his living, and of course do some good in the world, or at least cease doing hurt; he will then no longer be able to set an example of idleness, extravagance and dissoluteness, and draw other gay spirits into his pernicious practices, and if his constitution shall happen to outlast his estate, he may by temperance enjoy some good degree of health, and his adversities may perhaps bring on serious reflections, sincere repentance and amendment of life, and if his fortune is desperate in this world, he may at least find strong inducements to prepare for the next; so that he is in no sense injured by the tax, but may by prudence derive great benefits from it: Besides, I am of opinion, that government ought to leave every man master of his own estate, and permit him to judge for himself how fast and in what way he will spend it; he knows well what tax he pays on every expenditure, and every part of it is subject to his own free choice, and if his career of dissipation can not be restrained, it is as well for him, and much better for the public, that he should give part of his wealth to the public treasury, than waste the whole of it in luxuries and pleasures; so that I do not see that he has in this case the least ground of complaint of injury or oppression; besides I think that there is a kind of justice in framing the public institutions in such a manner, that a man cannot spend a dollar in luxury and dissipation, which is hurtful to the public, but he must at the same time pay another dollar into the public treasury, to make thereby some compensation for the injury which the public receives from his luxury.

And as to the niggard, the penurious man, who does not spend his money in proportion to his wealth, and of course does not pay his share of tax; it is observable that even his very penury enures to the benefit of the community, for what he does not spend he saves, and thereby enriches himself, and of course adds to the wealth of the community, for the wealth of the community is always the aggregate of the wealth of every individual which composes it; this ought therefore to be a favored case, as the community eventually gains more by a shilling saved, than it could by a shilling consumed and lost, though the consumer should pay six-pence into the public treasury. In fine, the tax on this principle is carved out of the expenditures of the nation, not indeed all expenditures indiscriminately, but is so calculated as to fall heaviest on those expenditures which are the most general indexes of wealth, and are usually made by the rich who are the best able to bear them, and the few exceptions which may be supposed to take place, will generally operate in favor of virtue and economy, and against vice and dissipation; and where it falls heaviest, and becomes most burdensome, 'tis designed, and does actually tend, to correct that very vicious taste and corrupt habit, which is the true cause of the burden, and which 'tis always in the power of the sufferer to ease himself of, whenever he pleases.

Point out any other mode of taxing, if you can, that finds its way so surely to the wealth of individuals, and apportions itself thereto so equitably, that no subject can be burdened beyond his due proportion, without having a full remedy always in his own power; yea, a sure, easy and excellent remedy, because a man may always avail himself of it, without the expence and trouble of a law-suit, or being subjected to any body's decisions, opinions or caprices, but his own.

VII. This mode of taxing will make the quantity and time of the tax depend on the free choice of the man who pays it. If a man has a mind to drink a bowl of punch or bottle of wine with his friend, or buy a silk gown for his daughter, he knows very well how much tax is incorporated with the purchase, and adopts and pays it with cheerfulness and good humor; a humor very different from the irritated sensibility of a man, who sees an awful collector enter upon him with his warrant of plenary powers to deprive his goods, or arrest his person, for a tax which perhaps he abhors

either from religious scruples, or an opinion that he is rated beyond his due proportion, or because he is not at that time in condition to pay it—the good humor of the subject is of great consequence in any government. When people have their own way and choice in a matter, they will bear great burdens with little complaint; but when matters are forced on them contrary to their humor, they will make great complaints on small occasions, and the public peace is often destroyed much more by the manner of doing, than by the thing done.

(To be continued.)

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T W E N T Y - S I X
L E T T E R S,
U P O N I N T E R E S T I N G S U B J E C T S,
R E S P E C T I N G T H E R E V O L U T I O N O F A M E R I C A.
Written in Holland in the Year M,DCC,LXXX.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN ADAMS,
WHILE HE WAS SOLE MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY FROM
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
FOR NEGOCIATING A PEACE, AND A TREATY OF COMMERCE,
WITH GREAT-BRITAIN.

Never before published.

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(A NATIONAL PAPER.)

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