

NEW-YORK, SEPTEMBER 9, 1789.

LETTER from a gentleman in a neighbouring town to his friend in this city.

DEAR SIR,

THE news-papers you sent me containing two letters, wrote by some members of the House of Representatives to their constituents in Pennsylvania, upon the subject of compensations, and in justification of the same, as agreed to by the House, have come safe to hand. I have read these letters with attention and surprize; and it is difficult for me to suppress my wonder, that gentlemen can adopt such exceeding weak and inconsistent arguments in justification of a measure which they declare themselves to be convinced of the propriety of. There is scarce any one thing that gives one a more unfavorable opinion of public measures, and leads more to a doubt of their utility, than to find weak and flimsy arguments offered in support thereof by their warmest advocates. But these letter-writers do not stop here; for their arguments and reasoning, weak as they appear to be, are yet founded upon misrepresentation, and a reference to facts which have no real existence. What can be more distant from truth than to say, as one of them does, that six dollars a day is less than was given under the articles of confederation by the States, except New-Jersey? The fact is, New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and some others, for years, gave their delegates no more than five dollars a day; and this sum under circumstances very disadvantageous to the receiver. He says further "that Massachusetts gave her delegates a guinea a day and paid all their expences of board &c. besides." This is totally false. In no period, if I have been rightly informed, did the Commonwealth of Massachusetts allow her delegates, under the old confederation, a guinea a day, and pay their expences besides; but on the contrary, for two or three years, that Commonwealth paid their delegates, only 4 1/2 dollars a day, out of which they paid their expences. Surely this writer must have been ignorant of the facts, or he was disposed to lead his correspondents, and through them as a medium of communication, his constituents, into an error. Gentlemen who mean to reason, and draw conclusions from facts, ought to be careful that their facts are true: But in the present case, it seems not to have been advantageous to the letter-writer's object, which was to justify to his constituents, the compensations allowed themselves and under officers, to suffer the truth of fact to be known; for had he done this, they would have drawn conclusions, and justly too, the reverse of what he wished to put into their mouths. Massachusetts never gave more than six dollars a day; and but a very few years, when money was scarce half so valuable as at this time, did they come up to that sum.—The same is fact with many other States.

He is equally mistaken when he advances that had a medium been struck from the guides left by the States, the wages of the members would have been nearer seven than six dollars: For if an accurate enquiry be made, I doubt not but it will appear, that a majority of the States, for half the time under the confederation or more, have given a sum under six dollars, taking into consideration the value of money during that and the present periods; and in general have verged rather towards a sum under than over six dollars. But these letter-writers drive on with one misrepresentation upon the back of another, as though they were determined to confound the understandings of their constituents with falsehoods, or run themselves out of all credit upon this subject; and I am suspicious that the latter would be the case were the whole truth to be known. In the rage of justifying their conduct to their constituents, one of them hesitates not to declare, "that the sums granted by the States to their delegates were paid during the whole year; whereas, the sum voted for us (that is the present Members of Congress) will be paid only two or three months in a year." Is the author of this assertion an honest man? If you answer in the affirmative, I must reply, he has undertaken to write upon a subject of which he is most consummately ignorant: or so prejudiced in favour of his six dollars a day, that every thing entering his mind is immediately converted into an argument to justify the measure. I think I may say with truth, that not more than two States have uniformly allowed their delegates a salary by the year. Indeed I doubt whether any State has done this, but South-Carolina. But how does this wonderful logician know that Congress will set only two or three months in a year? Admitting, however, that in some future years two or three months a year will be sufficient for Congress to discharge the duties required of them by the citizens of the United States; and that six dollars a day will be a moderate compensation for their services and time then rendered their constituents: I say admitting this to be true, how does it justify, or even look like a reason, for allowing that sum to the Members of Congress at this time, since they will be employed more than eight months a year during the present session. This writer evidently admits, that the pay of the Members ought to be in some inverse ratio of the sum to the time they shall be employed at Congress: That is if they are employed two or three months in a year six dollars is a moderate compensation.—If a longer time a smaller sum will be just. But here he has forgot the force of his own argument, and fixed a sum, which would be reasonable when the members are engaged only two or three months in a year, for their pay now they are actually employed six months, and perhaps more in a year. But the real truth of the matter, I believe is this, those who advocate high pay, want the money.—They are sensible the sums the House has agreed upon are high, compared with the general sense of their constituents, or to the grounds on which compensation is usually founded, and they are now droveto misrepresentation and sophistry to justify their conduct.

"Our constituents," continues one of these letters, "in complaining, forget the sacrifice we make of domestic happiness, time, and even health to their service." To this I cannot help observing, I am not acquainted with any scale, by which diurnal pay or compensation can be adjusted, as an equivalent, for the sacrifice of domestic happiness; therefore, till he or some body else shall supply me with one, I am unable to say that six dollars a day is either too much or too little, on this account: I am of opinion, however, that domestic happiness is a very uncertain rule to adjust pecuniary compensations by; and were we to judge from the apparent willingness that some carry at the seat of government, it would be doubtful whether their being from home ought to operate to the increase or diminution of their compensation on the score of domestic happiness.

As to the sacrifice of health, I don't know that a gentleman risks his health in attending Congress, where they sit not more than three or four hours in a day, and frequently not more than five days in a week: That is twenty-five or thirty hours in seven days! Very tender and delicate indeed, our Members of Congress are grown all at once. If I did not apprehend the ladies would look upon it an usurpation of their department; I would propose that these extreme delicate tender gentlemen should be recalled from the laborious, fatiguing employment of walking to the Federal Hall and setting there three or four hours in a day for five days in a week, and put to knitting; or if that be too hard for them to handling the cambric needle. Not many days since I fell in company with one of the Members of Congress, whose countenance was plenary evidence that roast beef and generous wine were his favorites; and yet he complained most bitterly of ill health and want of exercise.—I asked him if he took the air every morning—for Congress not meeting till eleven, the members had abundant time to walk or ride both for health and amusement. Oh dear, replied the ruddy picture of health and strength, I cannot rise early enough in the morning for that; my health wont admit my rising before eight or nine; and then I have barely time to dress before breakfast, which brings eleven o'clock. Poor feeble son of Mars, quoth I, I pity you; sleep and delicacy will hurt you more than the duties of your office.—So we parted.

* The letters here referred to, were first published in the New-York Daily Gazette, on the 24th and 31st of August.

Can these letter writers be serious when they offer such reasons as are contained in their letters, to their constituents to justify their conduct to them in advocating grants of money which they esteem profuse? If these arguments satisfy their constituents, I am grieved for their want of information, and confess to you that I have mistaken their character. Many circumstances have led me to believe the great body of the people in Pennsylvania to be a well informed, judicious people; whence I conclude they will resent, with just indignation, the attempt these letter writers have made to misrepresent facts, and impose error, instead of truth, upon their understandings.

I would here close my letter, for I fear it is already too long, but there is one argument made use of in these letters, which I wish to remark upon; also because it is a favorite topic with those who advocate high compensations: Indeed it has so often been employed, as appears by the news-papers and the debates of Congress, that it actually slips out on all occasions: it seems to be used like the quack's nostrum, as a remedy for all diseases. The argument is couched in the following sentence: "If that policy should govern which you speak of in your letter, you can never expect men of small fortune to accept seats in Congress, and many such possess eminent talents for public life. On the contrary your government will be administered only by a few aristocratic nabobs, who can afford to live without wages upon the income of large estates." I really wish this letter had pointed out, or laid down some other clue than he has, by which these rich men, or nabobs might be found, who, he says, will be willing to serve in Congress without wages. I declare to you, Sir, I have found none of this description in the course of my acquaintance; and I have good evidence to believe there are none in America. For many years I have been attentive to the conduct of man—I have watched the rich, or as he expresses the same character, the nabobs; and the poor, or men of small fortunes; and the uniform tenor of conduct exhibited to the world by these two descriptions of men has convinced me that the position contained in the quotation is not true: Because I find that men of small fortunes, among whom, tis confessed there are gentlemen of eminent abilities for public service, are generally satisfied with less sums, by way of compensation for services rendered the public, than those nabobs, into whose hands he is fearful the administration of government will fall. Therefore, to avoid what this letter so much fears, and what all friends to their country must deprecate as the greatest calamity that can befall the people, that is the administration of our federal government by nabobs, the salaries and compensations for public services must be moderate. If the just sum could be known, it would be better for the public that the salaries and compensations should fall short than exceed that sum. Pray look round you, my friend, and see who they are that raise this cry against moderate compensations. Are they the men of small fortunes? No. They are either the aristocratic nabobs themselves; or such as wish to become nabobs, and will plunder the public rather than not gain their point.

It is an uncontrovertable truth, that he who possesses much wants more in proportion to what he has already obtained. So that to satisfy these rich men or nabobs, by increasing their pay, is equally absurd, as it would be to attempt to conquer death by filling the grave with the carcasses of dead men. The expences of rich men and nabobs are great, consequently it is such only who cry out against small compensations in favor of great ones. These cannot reside at the seat of government without expending large sums of money: They, from habits of luxury and dissipation, must keep up that department of the gentleman which peculiarly requires six or seven dollars to discharge their daily expenditures. But nabobs will never subject themselves to such an expensive situation, provided they must draw upon their own fortunes, instead of compensations from the public, for what they expend.

On the other hand, men of small fortunes, from which class of citizens we must look for men of eminent talents as well as integrity and patriotism, have been educated in a mode of life that naturally creates habits of frugality, economy, attention to business, and useful information. The expences of these are small; their views are regulated more by the rules of private convenience and public necessity, than the vain parade of a court, or the trifling, tho' expensive round of etiquette. The expences of these two classes of men are essentially different, being regulated on different principles: Those of the former are subject to the whim and caprice of folly and fashion—the latter to economy and prudence. Hence, if you contemplate the nature of man, with the views and passions of those two classes, that is, the nabobs and men of small fortunes, you will not hesitate to say, these letter-writers are mistaken in their reasonings and conclusions, as well as the facts they would found their arguments upon.

When this subject is duly examined, it appears to me, that America has nothing to fear from Congress fixing the salaries and compensations small and moderate. This measure will always secure the attention of men of small fortunes, whom it is an object of importance to bring into the administration. While high salaries and profuse compensation will hold out allurements to spendthrifts and nabobs, from whose sentiments and manners America has every evil to apprehend.

One principle more is held up in these letters, most pernicious to a republican government, which I shall barely mention and bid you adieu. It is that salaries and compensations should be so high as very few persons dare present themselves as candidates. However the citizens of Pennsylvania may swallow down such sentiments, because they come from their representatives; I hope and trust, they will be reprobated by every true republican whose heart beats for his country's good.—Good God! Are the Legislators of America advised to affix such compensations as a reward for public services, that none but the rich and the nabobs dare aspire to!—when these sentiments are adopted and practised upon in America—then certainly we may join these despotick letter writers, and say, "farewell to the liberties of our country."

EUROPEAN ACCOUNTS, BY LATE ARRIVALS.

CONSTANTINOPLE, APRIL 7.

The second division of the fleet has left the arsenal, composed of four ships of the line, from 50 to 60 guns, and six frigates; they are waiting for sailors from the Black-Sea, where orders have been sent to enlist them. All the maritime forces are, according to the orders of the late Sultan, to join at Bujukdere, and be ready to sail by the 22d inst. but the departure of the grand fleet depends upon the return of the first division, and the designs of Selim III, which are not yet known.

APRIL 25. Among the troops that are filing off from Constantinople, five companies of Janissaries, of 1000 men each, quarrelling among themselves, on their arrival at Pontepiccoli, a dreadful massacre took place, inasmuch, that of the 5000 very few arrived at the camp.

BERLIN, MAY 30.

We learn from Jaffy, that the defeat of Ibrahim Rassa, by the Russian general Dorfeld, has had such an effect upon the Turks, that they have absolutely abandoned the strong fortresses of Brahilow and the Russians are marching to take possession of it. Galacz is strongly garrisoned by the Russians, who have found a rich booty in that place, the capture of which cuts off all communication between Wallachia and Silistria, with Ruschuk and other places on the Danube.

LONDON, MAY 12.

A question of pretty general concern was decided on Saturday in the Court of King's Bench, viz. "Whether a person, at an auction, had a right to retract a bidding, previous to the lot being knocked down?" It was contended that he had not, upon the grounds that the conditions expressly stated that the last bidder should be the buyer, and that a person's first bidding, and being at liberty to retract, might prove injurious to property, by conveying an idea to the company that some defect had been discovered: but this was over-ruled by the court, who observed, that to make a contract binding the consent of both parties was necessary; whereas in this case, the bidding was a mere offer on one side, which was not accepted by the other until the hammer was actually down; and therefore the party had certainly a right to retract while that was suspended.

JUNE 20.

Extract of a letter from Paris, June 1.

"M. De la Fayette continues to act a steady faithful part in favor of the rights of mankind. The Comte de Mirabeau, by a series of prostitute, unprincipled conduct, has lost all the weight he might have had, and to which his talents and enlightened mind entitled him, on this glorious occasion.

"M. le Meunier, one of the deputies for Dauphiny, and mover of the glorious revolution, last year, in that province, is looked up to with hope and confidence by the nation.

"The disputes between the Three Estates are far from being in a train of accommodation. The Noblesse, at least at Paris, have refused that hauteur which we imagined they had been inclined to lay aside. The Clergy began to repent of the concessions which they made to the Tiers Etat, who, on their side are determined to throw down every barrier between the people and the honors of the state, and to abolish every odious distinction between the various classes of citizens.—A fracas happened last week on the Point Neuf, which was attended with the most serious consequence.—The Count de B—lle, riding furiously, and without giving notice, in a phaeton and four, over the bridge, ran down several pedestrians. One unfortunate man lost his life, and several had their limbs desperately crushed. A general cry of "Arretez, arretez le foudre," was vociferated from all sides. In a moment the carriage was stopped—the mob dragged from his seat the trembling patrician, and regardless of his cries and piteous intreaties threw him headlong from the bridge, just by the equestrian statue of King Henry the Fourth. This miserable martyr to intemperate insolence, was in an instant dashed to pieces in his fall. Not satisfied with this vengeance, the populace proceeded to demolish the carriage, which they broke into a thousand fragments.

Among other privileges now contending for by the French nation, is that of trial by jury, which if once established, will for ever secure their political and personal liberties on a basis so firm as can not be overturned, but by a power that must convulse the whole kingdom, and tear up all remains of civil liberty by the very roots.

July 2. The Romulus of America, General Washington, passed, on the 21st of April last, under the Triumphal Arch erected on Trenton bridge. He was attended by a procession, part of which consisting of females, dressed in white, preceded him, strewing roses, and singing an ode.

Sir William Howe, when he left Philadelphia, carried a Triumphal Arch to be erected, under which he walked with his brother, Lord Howe, both crowned with laurel. We never heard why?

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

Began and held at the City of New-York, on Wednesday the Fourth of March, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty-Nine.

An ACT for settling the ACCOUNTS between the UNITED STATES and INDIVIDUAL STATES.

BE it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States be, and he hereby is empowered to nominate, and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to appoint such person or persons as he may think proper, for supplying any vacancy that now is, or may hereafter take place in the Board of Commissioners, established by an ordinance of the late Congress, of the seventh of May, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven, to carry into effect the said ordinance and resolutions of Congress, for the settlement of accounts between the United States and individual States.

And be it further enacted, That the said Board of Commissioners be, and they hereby are empowered to appoint a chief clerk, and such other clerks as the duties of their office may require, and that the pay of the said chief clerk be six hundred dollars per annum, and of each other clerk four hundred dollars per annum.

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS MUELENBERG, Speaker of the House of Representatives. JOHN ADAMS, Vice-President of the United States, and President of the Senate.

APPROVED, AUGUST the 5th, 1789. GEORGE WASHINGTON, President of the United States.

Published by JOHN FENNO, No. 9, MAIDEN-LANE, near the Old-Swago-Market, NEW-YORK.—[3 dol. pr. an.]