

Gazette of the United States.

[No. LXVII.]

W E D N E S D A Y, DECEMBER 2, 1789.

[Published on Wednesday and Saturday.]

THE TABLET.—No. LXVII.

“ Triflers not e'en in trifles can excell.”

THERE is no better way to estimate the understanding of a man, than by hearing him converse on what he has discovered in his travels. Many men, who adventure abroad, never get rid of their prejudices; and whatever falls within their notice, is viewed under such an eye of prepossession, that it eludes a fair examination. A traveller of this cast may add to the number of his ideas, but he does not diminish his errors, nor really add to his stock of truth. It had been better for him, upon the whole, to have tarried at home; for he would then have spent less money, and acquired fewer habits of vexing his friends by his pertness, or deluding them by his mistakes. If he attempts to relate any incident, he generally forgets the most material circumstances, and always gives it a false coloring, or draws from it wrong inferences. We can, however, bear with the mere errors that are imposed on us by a traveller; because, as we have not the power of detecting the fallacy, we feel no disposition to complain of the deception.

But there is a description of travellers whose conversation soon becomes irksome, if not intolerable. I allude to those frivolous characters, whose minds are only occupied upon trifles; and who, wherever they go, or whatever they see, can never acquire or communicate the least degree of useful information. The habitual levity of deportment, these triflers discover, soon renders their mirth insipid, and their observations uninteresting. There is no force of talents to invigorate their remarks. If they affect to shew wit, no person perceives the edge of it; and if they relate anecdotes, it is impossible to find the pith of their story. In short, a man of this trifling turn must continue of that character, whether he travels or stays at home. He can never arrive at excellence even in those habits, which peculiarly belong to him. The truth is, the more expert any one is, in displaying frivolous accomplishments, the less excellent does he appear. We can never associate any ideas of merit with qualifications that produce no advantage, and indicate no capacity. However ostentatious a man may be, if he has not solid attainments, he is soon penetrated, and his companions determine at once, that he does not trifle for the sake of being pleasant, but because he does not know how to be serious, and can never be wise. Men of good sense and gravity sometimes relax their usual tone of demeanor, and can amuse themselves with trifles without being contemptible. It can be perceived that the part they have taken, is assumed only for the moment. But noted triflers so flagrantly deviate from dignity of manners, that no person will mistrust, they act from a character they have taken up, but from one, they cannot lay aside.

My young acquaintance GARRULUS has lately returned from his education and his travels. His friends imagine he has made great improvements; but he is much more indebted to their partiality than to his own acquirements, for the estimation in which he is viewed. It was easily supposed that so pert a boy must, if well-educated, make a smart man. He early discovered symptoms of vanity, and these were mistaken for indications of genius. Full of flattering hopes, his parents conceived the idea, that he must be sent to Europe for an education. He has completed it, and once more resides in his native country. I will not pretend to say, what he would have been, had he continued at home; but he has, by no means, lost his pertness or his vanity, by going abroad. GARRULUS well remembers the numbers of years he has consumed at schools and universities, and has not yet forgot the names of the authors he was compelled to read. It diverts children and servants to hear him recount the tricks and frolics of his academical life; and I believe this is the only amusement, his education is calculated to afford. The reader will expect to be entertained with an account of the travels of this aspiring youth. But here I find myself at a loss how to gratify such an expectation. Though I am frequently in company with him, I have yet to learn, whether he has gained one useful idea, from traveling two years through the most celebrated countries in Europe. He has often boasted to me, that he dined with six young noblemen, at an hotel in France; complained that he found bad inns in Italy; and declared that he eat salted cabbage in Germany. But he seems to dwell with peculiar delight in relating how rapidly the stages drive through England, and how complaisantly he was treated at houses of entertainment. He mentions such circumstances with an air of triumph, because he alleges that in these respects, the English are, beyond comparison, superior to his own countrymen. Nothing fills him with more rapture, than to be able to point out any particular, in which

the Americans have not arrived at equal perfection with the Europeans. It happens fortunately for us, that GARRULUS has extended his observations to nothing, of so much importance in itself, as to render it a point worth contending, in which country it holds a pre-eminence.

These trifling characters, however, find easy admission into the best circles of company, the world affords. This may seem the more extraordinary, as a person of this stamp so soon becomes tedious in private conversation, where only a social interview is intended: We can easily find a solution to this difficulty. A talkative, impertinent body may be called a *bon companion* by all men, though no man views him with any respect or friendship. There is a convenience in having such an associate. We feel free, and unembarrassed in his presence, can learn from him the news and fashions of the day, and send messages by him to any part of the town. But there is yet a greater advantage, one finds in such an acquaintance: It is well known, that in mixed companies, few people have a turn for general conversation; and unless some person is present, who has a good share of impudent prattle, there will be too much dullness and reserve. Every modest man of the party feels relieved, when any of his companions will take his share of the conversation. In this way, men of bold, assuming manners, however ignorant they may be, endear themselves, as companions, to all denominations of society. I have observed that in most clubs or parties, sensible men are fond of admitting some persons of levity, merely to make diversion for the rest of the company.

It is to be regretted that some worthy youth are beguiled into an opinion that impudence is desirable, because it meets with attention. They draw this conclusion from the notice that is taken of such characters as I have been describing.—Could it be discerned, from what motives, men of a forward, ostentatious deportment are received into company; or could it be known in what light they are generally estimated, they would no longer be regarded as objects of envy, or as patterns for imitation. Every young man should conclude with respect to himself; that, if his talents and accomplishments are not so conspicuous as to attract esteem and admiration unsolicited, he can never acquire any real influence of character by pertness and self-importance. It is true he may gain a numerous acquaintance, but he will find few friends: People will entertain him kindly; but they will place in him no confidence; they will trust him with no property. Upon the whole, his life will be neither honorable to himself, nor serviceable to society.

THE OBSERVER.—No. VII.

The fluctuating value of Paper in circulation oppressive to the poor.

EVERY public measure, which subjects needy citizens to the imposition of the rich, is repugnant to justice. Great numbers of the rich are also generous to the poor; but it is not the character of all to whom a wise Providence hath distributed wealth. One man of great opulence and a hard heart hath power to oppress a whole vicinity of needy people. Among the present means of oppression in the United States, none is greater than a circulating paper of unsteady and deceitful value; and yet there are those who with a confident face will assert, that the measures which lead to this are designed as an easement to the necessitous members of society. Those who are poor and in backward circumstances unwarily are taken by the fair pretences—they are told and believe that it is for their benefit, and bless the measures which sap the vigor of their industry. The wealthy can make their choice between several mediums in circulation, and if there be a bad kind of money, we shall always find it in the hands of those who have least policy and riches: thus the indigent lie under a double disadvantage, the quantity of their money is small, and it is of the worst kind, not being in demand to procure the necessaries of life. It is a maxim forever true that the worst kind of circulating money will in the end fall into the hands of those who are least able to bear a loss. Those States which have partially funded their debts pay the interest in paper certificates or indents, which pass into circulation for the payment of taxes—these certificates are issued as an equivalent for gold and silver coin, and in every view of the fact they are a depreciated paper money, of very different value at several times of the year and in different districts—they may be purchased in large sums through most of the States from one hundred to one hundred and fifty per cent. discount. Taxes issue by authority on the supposition that it is their real value, and it is their real value to those who can purchase at the right time of sale; it is also their value to a greater

part of the public creditors, whose distressed situation obliges them to sell on any terms, the first moment they can obtain the interest from the public. Still it is fact that one half the taxable inhabitants purchase them nearly at par with gold and silver. The poor man and those of little enterprise, but industrious, delay purchasing until they are driven by the hour of payment, and then make the best bargain they can, either with some neighbor, or public officer; prepared for the benevolent purpose of accommodating all such as could not purchase in time for themselves. In this way provision is made for the poor; and those whose circumstances are decaying; some of these make payment in hard labor, and some by promissory bonds, induced by a short credit they fall into the snare and are effectually ruined.

Take the following fact as proof of my assertion. In March, 1787, one hundred pounds specie was sent to Boston to purchase State paper, then receivable in taxes, which paper was put into the hands of a person in one of the western counties of Massachusetts, who returned the principal in November of the same year, with a net profit to the owner of the hundred pounds, of sixty pounds six shillings and one penny. It is to be remembered this agent charged very high for his service and expences, so that it is certain, those who paid the taxes, paid at least forty shillings for every twenty which the State received. These were the very people, who a little before had been scourged into obedience by a military force. For insurgency they were criminal, and government was right to check their phrenzy by the most coercive means; but to palliate their conduct which we wish to bury in oblivion let it be remembered that oppression will sometimes make wise men mad. It is but a few articles the poor planter has for sale, and these perhaps not in demand at the time necessity obliges him to sell, so that he can exchange them only for the worst kind of circulating money, and that at its highest price. The same necessity obliges him to sell at the lowest price, and between buying and selling, he makes a loss of one third. I could mention a thousand ways in which a depreciated circulating medium is oppressive to mankind, but especially to such as have small property; and nature admits not of a possibility of remedying the evil, but by wholly removing the cause. No facts can be more fully proved than those I have mentioned, but there is so strong a propensity in some people to have a cheap kind of money, that they will think the writer hath mischievous schemes in his brains, and that every thing is endangered, until the parish Priest, or town pedagogue, or the incendiary of the neighborhood, some of whom may chance to remember a phrase of school Latin, shall have sounded the alarm. With wasps and flies the Observer promises great patience, and will only drive them gently, not aiming at their life, for it is the nature of those insects to buzz round the scent of honey, though they can make none themselves; but should any of the higher class of speculators, who have grown rich on spoil, under the appearance of much honesty and concern, unwisely throw themselves in his way, he pledges himself to disclose things concerning them, which the heart of the public hath not conceived. The old man Abraham was honest, he made payment in the current money of the merchant, it is the money of the merchant which the poor ought to receive, and no other kind of circulating medium will do justice in the community. Whether this money be gold, silver or paper, it is a matter of little consequence, for a fixed value and general demand constitutes its worth. At present it is not possible for the State governments to give this value to their certificates or indents; but the United States, if the whole debt could be brought into one fund might easily effect it by a connection with the great mercantile banks within the Empire. Bank money is the money of the merchant, and the whole commercial influence of the country will preserve its value. Suppose the sums of a rich and poor man's taxes to be apportioned according to their real wealth and ability; the rich man by purchasing the depreciated medium in proper time and a small price, makes an easy payment; the poor man purchasing at almost double price, finds the demand intolerable; and if to this there be added fees for travel, and others which have no legal name, he sinks in ruin. These, ye poor and embarrassed citizens, are the blessing of a cheap paper money, for which too many of you have been advocates. [American Mercury.]

HERALDRY.

A SANGUINE Frenchman had so high an opinion of the pleasures to be enjoyed in the study of Heraldry, that he used to lament, as we are informed by MENAGE, the hard case of our forefather Adam, who could not possibly amuse himself by investigating that science, nor that of genealogy.