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THE TABLET.—No. LXIX.

“Experience is of greater use, in procuring good laws, than genius.”

AS no human affairs require more knowledge than the art of governing, it is not to be wondered at, that so few able legislators have existed in any age or country. The most useful attainments in the science of government must be founded on fact and observation. This constitutes the difficulty of the task. No man, who does not possess good talents, can gain wisdom by experience; and many men, whose talents are eminent, feel a pride of genius, that makes them disdain to watch experiments. It therefore happens that those people, who have not the sagacity to make just observations for themselves, are slaves to imitation, and are perpetually liable to err in their application of borrowed rules and precedents: While those, on the other hand, who depend on the light of genius to direct their operations, are seduced into wild, impracticable measures. Thus it appears that there are two sources of illusion and mistake, into which most men plunge, who enter a career of political life.

One of them consists, in originating schemes, or conceiving theories, not warranted by experience; and the other, in being swayed by too complying a temper of imitation. No man should implicitly imitate another in his conduct; because, every man is often actuated by motives, which others do not feel; and attended by circumstances, which others do not observe. Nor should any man be totally inattentive to the conduct of others; because there are many common points, in which all men should think and act alike; and in which, the experience of one man may be profitable to all other men. To determine in what cases imitation is proper, requires a discernment which few men possess. Experience is the only safe criterion by which to try opinions or actions. Abstract reasoning may be useful, but it often produces conclusions which experiment will not authorize. Though it must be confessed, that every person should be governed by some fixed principles, and act in a great degree under the controul of some system; yet those principles, and this system, must be the effect of experience, rather than theory or imitation. Men of a bold, aspiring genius, form their systems too soon and too rashly; and servile imitators never form any systems at all. But a person, who has capacity enough to derive profit from his experience, will in good season form his rules of conduct; and he can also determine when circumstances require an alteration.

From these slight sketches, it is evident that the formation of a good government is a slow, progressive work. Theoretic men may build systems of their own; men fond of imitation may look abroad for instruction, and perhaps neither can, in the first instance, hit the true points of legislative wisdom. The wisest laws and regulations are generally owing to an experiment resulting from the operation of those ordinances, that were originally framed with faults and defects. The people of the United States have gone through the first stages of their difficulties. They have committed many errors, which have proved a valuable source of experience. But we should not yet suppose ourselves perfect in the art of government. Many important objects of legislation are yet untried and unexplored. In some of these, we may readily adopt proper expedients; but we must depend on a course of experience to carry us forward to perfection. In this view of the subject, it will occur to every reflecting mind, that candor and patience should be cultivated among our citizens; and that our rulers should contemplate, that they stand on new and critical ground. Their most illustrious talents; their most persevering industry; their most acute and attentive observation will not be more than competent to the task they have to accomplish. If in this arduous situation, they have to contend with any great degree of clamor and impatience among their constituents, they will find an additional difficulty in surmounting the obstacles, that inevitably attend legislating over so vast and various a people.

A gentleman having favored us with a Charleston Paper of Nov. 12, it is with great pleasure that we present our readers with the following excellent, patriotic, and truly federal Address:

The Hon. Judge GRIMKE'S CHARGE to the GRAND JURY, October Sessions, 1789.

GENTLEMEN,
THE grand inquest of this district has been of late years so unaccustomed to receive any charge from the magistrate presiding in this court, that were I to pratermit the ceremony or duty of addressing you, it could not be considered as an innovation introduced in the present term.

The chief reason which renders a charge to a grand jury necessary or requisite is, that they may be more fully instructed in the duties of their office, and be familiarized with the method of proceeding to execute those duties; that they may not only be enabled conscientiously, as well as legally, to form a just opinion of the nature of the crimes with which offenders shall be charged, but also of the legality of evidence which may be produced before them: In fine that they may have every opportunity of doing justice to their country and fellow citizens, by having explained to them how they may bring the guilty to condign punishment, and discharge the innocent from the apprehensions of a public trial. Hence the result of such information would be, a legal verdict. But as the practice of these principles and this process are so frequently submitted to a jury of this district, this part of the duty of the judges in the court of general sessions becomes in some degree less urgent and necessary, than in the more distant tribunals; the common and reciprocal intercourse of mankind with each other, furnishes them with more ample and frequent means of obtaining information; teaches them to weigh with caution and candor subjects submitted to their discussion, and leads them involuntarily through apparent intricacies and subtle refinements, to decisions formed on the basis of truth, justice and impartiality. Such is the situation of the inhabitants of this district;—and surely it is an advantage which they will ever continue jealous of maintaining, whilst the flame of liberty burns with unremitting purity, and with its lately acquired vigor and brilliancy. For as

knowledge is the distinguishing criterion between man and the subservient brute creation, so is freedom the genuine characteristic of that part of mankind, who from their superior intelligence and more active and daring spirit have not feared the resentment of tyrants, but risking their wealth and their lives have intrepidly encountered a thousand difficulties to obtain the object of their admiration. In this partial view of mankind, the mind is pleased with its reflections, and the heart animated by its sensations. But when we consider but for a moment, how few nations are possessed of this idol, how do our feelings changing, recoil upon us, and how do our sympathy and joy alternately excite commiseration and grateful sentiments. For what earthly transport can exceed the state of an independent freeman—what sublunary misery equal to the wretched existence of the slave.

But let us hope that as we have been recompensed by the almighty decrees of Heaven in rescuing us from our tyrants, that the example of our success will lead other nations to imitate so glorious an enterprise, to assert their just rights as men, and to unfetter themselves from the bondage with which they have been so long oppressed. Nevertheless in the height of our zeal for the rights of mankind, and amidst our sincerest wishes for the general consummation of their welfare and happiness, we must not forget the tribute so justly due for our deliverance, or neglect the improvement of our own affairs. WHENEVER THE HAND OF OMNIPOTENCE SHALL DEIGN TO POINT OUT A WASHINGTON AMONG THEIR NATIONS, THE DIVINITY WILL NOT PROVE UNFAVORABLE TO THEIR PRAYERS OR TO HIS EXERTIONS.

Let our hearts then, in the first place, never cease to direct our thanksgivings to the throne of that Grace which has illustrated our nation by such unexampled beneficence; and let the grateful acknowledgments of our just remembrance of past services perpetuate the unblemished honors of our chosen hero. The confidence of the people of America, instead of the jealousy and distrust incident to the various European forms of government; and truth instead of that flattery, shall weave a wreath of heartfelt satisfaction for him; and gratitude instead of the boasted loyalty of the subjects of princes, and their blind submission to the will of a superior, shall erect in the hearts of the citizens of the United States, the most honorable monument that ever graced the memory of man. This eulogium of our great and good commander, has been long impelled upon our minds; and time but serves to increase our admiration of his excellent qualities, and to supply us with additional motives of gratitude for his disinterested and patriotic conduct.

Our next care, gentlemen of the grand jury, will be to watch the motions of our internal enemies, to anticipate their various intrigues, and to disappoint those secret combinations, into which they may have entered. It may perhaps, be matter of curious enquiry, though of unsatisfactory inference, to consider the motives of many of the objectors to the new constitution; but this would lead me into a discussion too prolix for the present moment. I will content myself, therefore, with barely enumerating a few of these causes.

Some men feared the losing of that influence, they had assumed and established to themselves, under the weak and divided governments of the several States; some again apprehended that they would be deprived of the benefits and emoluments of certain lucrative offices, which they held under the respective legislatures of their country; the appointments of which were to be resigned into the hands of the President of the Union: A wish, perhaps, to involve this country in some destructive revolution, might influence others; for to men of no property, or to those who are so embarrassed in their circumstances, as to hope for no relief from their own labor, or the arts of peace, or who are tormented with a discontented factious heart, rebellion and confusion would yield a rich harvest: For the honor of the human race, I hope, there are but few, if any such among us; but such have been found in other nations, and we must not flatter ourselves that mankind are more perfect in our time, than they have been heretofore:—An obstinate supercilious self-sufficiency, (the result of the want of proper information and candid enquiry) and a capricious ostentatious vanity of not thinking like other people, will have its weight and influence with weak minds.—Popularity also has increased its votaries, and afforded men one more opportunity of declaiming on the danger in which the liberty of the citizen is likely to be involved, and of exhibiting their attachment to this ideal idolatry:—Nor has jealousy, which rankles in the hearts of others, had less effect in

diffusing this poison; for it is observable throughout the whole of the United States, a majority of the leaders of the opposition of our newly adopted government, are not natives of our soil; hence this pernicious quality of the mind displays itself more widely in America; for doubtless there are many among us, who being mere adventurers, and meaning to return to their native country, cannot brook that a rival nation should be possessed of advantages superior to their own: but, gentlemen, there is another sort of jealousy that agitates the soul of others; I speak of that mean invidious quality, which, sensible of its own demerits and want of worth, endeavors to establish itself a character by calumniating the conduct of others, and by finding fault with what it was not consulted to frame: we must also expect to find emissaries amongst us, who will seek to obtain a temporary favor of the people, and who by courting and adulating—their weaknesses, will ensure to themselves frequent opportunities of sowing discontent and sedition among our inhabitants. There is, gentlemen, one rank of persons unfriendly to the present views of America, who deserve our real esteem tho' we are adversaries in opinion. I mean those well intentioned ingenious citizens, who are actuated by the purest motives—the real love of their country, and its freedom. Just escaped from the galling manacles of one tyrant, they are, perhaps, too overweeningly zealous in their opposition. But the best of men will differ with the chafest intentions. Let us therefore do justice to their passionate ardor in the cause of liberty—and discriminate the licentious intemperance of a party, from the jealous integrity of a true republican. For if men have never been able to agree upon the great and solemn truths revealed to us in the Christian dispensation, what flattering hope can we foster in our bosoms, that we should be all reconciled in one political problem. Vain hope! Whilst men are possessed of different views of interest—on ambitious aggrandizement, are actuated by other principles, than those of honor or philanthropy—and are encumbered with the frailness of humanity, it would be foreign to, and inconsistent with our natures, to expect a concurrence of sentiment. But as the noblest religion ever professed in this world by mankind, has thriven, and established itself under the intolerant spirit of its opponents, let us hope that the work (which future ages, I doubt not, will honor as the master-piece of political wisdom) shall thrive also under the auspices and moderation of its present champions, and the perfection of its enemies. The learned and ingenious author of the Federalist, gentlemen, justly observes:—“That a dangerous ambition oftener lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people, than under the forbidding appearance of enthusiasm for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism, than the latter—and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career, by paying an obsequious court to the people—commencing demagogues, and ending tyrants.”—Since, therefore, there are so many evil and mischievous principles meditating against us, and but one which is truly honorable, how much ought we to be upon our guard to disappoint or resist a secret adversary. It is said, that a settled train of correspondence was very early established in this business, and that it still continues to flow uninterruptibly from its impure source. When such means are adopted, where shall we find wisdom enough to detect, and prudence sufficient to defend us from its evil machinations. Let us, however exert ourselves, trusting that Providence never will abandon those, whom it has been pleased to divert from the crooked paths of speculation, private dishonor, and national infamy, into the high road leading to dignity, virtue, and honor; and that this will be the consequence of our having happily adopted the Constitution, and of our continuing to persevere (I hope successfully) to maintain it unfulfilled and unimpaired, against the struggle of our opponents, I could easily demonstrate to you. This will probably be the subject of another charge, and at a future day. For the present I will quit this topic, which is so truly dear and interesting to us all—I mean the welfare of our country—and apologizing for having withdrawn so much of your time from the particular official duties of the station you now appear in, I will proceed briefly to lay before you some of the more general principles which must guide your present decisions.

[Having pointed out as usual the common duties of the grand jury, he proceeded as follows.]

At the same time that you are empowered to examine witnesses against the prisoner, and none