

Cap. John Rogers

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[WHOLE No. 129.]

DISCOURSES ON DAVILA.—No. XII.

Think We, like some weak Prince, th' eternal cause
Prone, for his favorites, to reverse his laws?

EMULATION, which is imitation and something more—a desire not only to equal or resemble, but to excel; is so natural a movement of the human heart, that wherever men are to be found, and in whatever manner associated or connected, we see its effects. They are not more affected by it, as individuals, than they are in communities. There are rivalries between every little society in the same city—between families and all the connections by consanguinity and affinity—between trades, faculties, and professions—between congregations, parishes and churches—between schools, colleges, and universities—between districts, villages, cities, provinces and nations.

National rivalries are more frequently the cause of wars than the ambition of ministers, or the pride of kings.—As long as there is patriotism, there will be national emulation, vanity and pride. It is national pride which commonly stimulates kings and ministers.—National fear, apprehension of danger, and the necessity of self defence, is added to such rivalries for wealth, consideration and power. The safety, independence, and existence of a nation, depends upon keeping up, an high sense of its own honor, dignity and power in the hearts of its individuals, and a lively jealousy of the growing power and aspiring ambition of a neighboring State.—This is well illustrated in the Political Geography, published in our newspapers from London, within a few weeks. “The jealousies and enmities, the alliances and friendships, or rather the combinations of different States and Princes, might almost be learned from a map, without attention to what has passed, or is now passing in the world. Next neighbors are political enemies: States, between which a common neighbor, and therefore common enemy intervenes, are good friends. In this respect Europe may be compared to a chess board, marked with the black, and with the white spots of political discord and concord.—Before the union between England and Scotland, a friendship and alliance subsisted for centuries, between the latter of these kingdoms and France, because they were both inimical to England. For a like reason, before a Prince of Bourbon, in the beginning of the present century, was raised to the Spanish throne, a good understanding subsisted for the most part, between England and Spain, and before the late alliance, there was peace and kindness, with little interruption, for the space of centuries, between England and the Emperor. An alliance has long subsisted between the French and the Turks, on account of the intervening dominion of the Austrians. The Swedes were long the friends of France, on account of the intervention of Holland and Denmark—and because Sweden the friend of France, was situated in the neighborhood of the Russian territories, a friendship and commercial intercourse was established, from the very first time that Muscovy appears on the political theatre of Europe, between England and Russia. It is superfluous to multiply instances of this kind. All past history and present observation will confirm the truth of our position—which, though very simple, is like all other simple truths, of very great importance—for, however, the accidental caprices and passions of individual Princes, or their ministers, may alter the relative dispositions and interests of nations for a time, there is a natural tendency to revert to the alteration already described. We have been led into these reflections by the treaty offensive and defensive, that has been formed between Sweden, Prussia, and the Sublime Porte—between Prussia and Holland—and the report which is very probable, that a treaty offensive and defensive is on the point of being concluded between Turkey and Poland. In this chain of alliances we find the order of the chess-board adhered to, in some instances, but passed over in others. It is observed there should be an alliance between Russia and Sweden—and also that there should be an alliance between Poland and Turkey, because Russia intervenes between Turkey and Sweden, and Hungary between Turkey and Poland—but that there should be an alliance between Poland and Prussia is owing to particular and accidental circumstances. The two former alliances may therefore be expected to be lasting—the latter to be only temporary and pre-

carious. In general the chain of alliance, that is formed or forming, among the Swedes, Prussians, Poles, Dutch, Turks, and we may say the English, is a most striking proof, of the real or supposed strength and influence of the two imperial courts of Russia and Germany.”

The writer of this paragraph might have added the alliance between England and Portugal, and that between the United States of America and France. The principle of all these examples is as natural as emulation, and as infallible as the sincerity of interest. On it, turns the whole system of human affairs. The Congress of 1776 were fully aware of it. With no small degree of vehemence, was it urged, as an argument for the declaration of Independence: With confidence and firmness was it foretold, that France could not avoid accepting the propositions that should be made to her: that the Court of Versailles could not answer it, to her own subjects, and that all Europe would pronounce her blind, lost, and undone, if she rejected so fair an opportunity of disembarassing herself, from the danger of so powerful and hostile a rival, whose naval superiority held all her foreign dominions, her maritime power, and commercial interest, at mercy.

But why all this of Emulation and Rivalry?—Because, as the whole history of the civil wars of France, given us by Davila, is no more, than a relation of rivalries, succeeding each other in a rapid series, the reflections we have made will assist us, both to understand that noble historian, and to form a right judgment of the state of affairs in France at the present moment. They will suggest also to Americans, especially to those who have been unfriendly, and may be now lukewarm to their national Constitution, some useful enquiries, such as these for examples. Whether there are not emulations, of a serious complexion among ourselves? between cities and universities? between North and South? The middle and the North? The middle and the South? between one State and another? between the governments of States and the National government? and between individual patriots and heroes in all these? What is the natural remedy against the inconveniencies and dangers of these rivalries? Whether a well-balanced Constitution—such as that of our Union purports to be, ought not to be cordially supported, till its defects, if it has any, can be corrected, by every good citizen as our only hope of peace, and our ark of safety?—But it shall be left to the contemplations of our State Physicians to discover the causes and the remedy of that “fever, whereof our power is sick.” One question only shall be respectfully insinuated: Whether equal laws, the result only of a balanced government, can ever be obtained and preserved without some signs or other of distinction and degree?

We are told that our friends, the National Assembly of France, have abolished all distinctions. But be not deceived my dear countrymen. Impossibilities cannot be performed. Have they levelled all fortunes, and equally divided all property? Have they made all men and women equally wise, elegant, and beautiful? Have they annihilated the names of Bourbon and Montmorency, Rochefoucault and Noailles, la Fayette and la Moignon, Neckar and de Calonne, Mirabeau and Bailey? Have they committed to the flames all the records, annals, and histories of the nation? All the copies of Mezerai, Daniel, de Thou, Veilly, and a thousand others? Have they burned all their pictures, and broken all their statues? Have they blotted out of all memories, the names, places of abode, and illustrious actions of all their ancestors? Have they not still Princes of the first and second order, Nobles and Knights? Have they no record nor memory who are the men, who compose the present National Assembly?—Do they wish to have that distinction forgotten? Have the French officers who served in America melted their Eagles, and torn their ribbons?

TRANSLATED
FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES.

ADDRESS of the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY to the
PEOPLE of FRANCE.

FEBRUARY 11th, 1790.

(CONTINUED.)

SUCH, people of France, is the prospect of happiness and glory which is opened before you! Some steps yet remain to be taken, and it is here where the detractors of the revolution expect to surprize you. Be on your guard against

an impetuous vivacity; oppose all violence, for every disorder may be fatal to liberty. You cherish this liberty, you are in possession of it at this moment: shew yourselves worthy of preserving it; be faithful to the spirit, to the letter of the decrees of your representatives, accepted or sanctioned by the King; distinguish carefully between the duties that are abolished beyond redemption, and the redeemable duties yet existing. That the former be no longer exacted, but that the latter be not refused. Think on the three sacred words which guarantee these decrees: The Nation, the Law, the King. The Nation is yourselves, the Law is still yourselves, it is your will: The King is the guardian of the Law. Whatever falsehoods may be propagated, rely on this union. They have formerly deceived the King, they would now wish to deceive you. The King's goodness is afflicted at it: he wishes to preserve his people from flatterers whom he has removed from his throne; he will defend the cradle of his son against them; for, in the midst of your representatives, he has declared that he will make the heir of the crown the guardian of the constitution.

Let them speak no longer to you about two parties. There is but one; we have all sworn it; it is that of liberty. Its victory is sure, attested by the conquests which daily multiply. Let obscure blasphemers circulate reproaches and calumnies against us; but, only reflect that if they praised us, France would be undone. Only take care not to revive their hopes by misconduct, by disorders, or by forgetting the laws. Observe, how they triumph at some delays in the collection of the duties. Do not prepare a cruel joy for them! Reflect that this debt—No! It is no longer a debt; it is a sacred tribute, and it is the country that now receives it for you and your children; who will no longer leave it at the mercy of depredators who would have drained the public treasury, but have it no longer in their power. They wished for calamities which the magnanimous bounty of the King has rendered impossible. People of France, second your King by a firm and immovable respect for the laws, defend his happiness, his virtues and his true glory; show him that he never had any other enemies than those who were enemies to liberty—show him that for liberty and for him, your constancy will equal your courage; that you will never be weary, and will be ever indefatigable in support of that liberty, of which he is the guardian. Your relaxation was the last hope of the enemies of the revolution; they have lost that hope: Pardon their groans; and deplore, without hating, this last weakness, this wretchedness of humanity. Let us find out, let us plead some excuses in their favor. Consider the numberless causes that might prolong, support, and almost perpetuate their illusion. What! is not some time requisite to obliterate from their memory, the phantoms of a long dream, the dreams of a long life? Who can triumph in an instant over the habits of the mind, the opinions inculcated in infancy, supported by the exterior forms of society, a long time favored by the public servitude, which was thought eternal, dear to a kind of pride which was imposed as a duty, in short, placed under the protection of personal interest, which was flattered in so many ways. To lose all at once these illusions, these hopes, these dearly cherished ideas, a part of their fortune; is it in the power of many men to be able to do it, without some regrets, without efforts, without resistance, at first natural, and which a false honor afterwards imposes. If among this class, heretofore so favored, some should be found, who cannot submit to so many losses all at once, be generous; recollect that in this very class there are men, who have dared to elevate themselves to the dignity of citizen, intrepid defenders of your rights, and in the bosom of their families, opposing to their tenderest sentiments, the noblest enthusiasm of liberty.

Lament, people of France, the blind victims of so many deplorable prejudices; but under the empire of laws, let the word vengeance be no more pronounced. Courage, perseverance, generosity, the virtues of liberty, we expect them from you in the name of this sacred liberty, the only conquest worthy of man, worthy of you, by the sacrifices you have made for it, by the virtues which are intermixed with the inconveniences inseparable from a great revolution: Do not delay, do not dishonor the fairest work, which