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The TABLET.—No. 153.

(GENERAL SUBJECT CONTINUED AND CONCLUDED)

"The people of this country are employed in such a way as forms a character most compatible with the enjoyment of civil liberty."

THAT a person should think favorably of himself and his situation, conduces very much to his acting with propriety and spirit. The same remark may be applied to his political, no less than to his personal transactions. It is of importance that a man, in order to be a steady patriot, and a valuable citizen, should view the government under which he lives, with as much confidence and respect as it deserves. If his sentiments be strongly tinged with prejudices and suspicions, for which there is no real foundation, all his efforts to preserve the government will be cold or penitent; and he can never derive pleasure by anticipating the prosperity of his country, so long as he does not believe it is in a fair way to prosper. To have opinions well established, and feelings well disposed with regard to public affairs, one should not listen too much to the insinuations of men who are prone to predict evil, and impose censure, whenever they make public measures the theme of their conversation. There is a happiness as well as a utility in having our opinions and feelings so justly accommodated to the state of things, that we may cherish no silly or needless anxieties about future contingencies. With this idea in view, I have employed the six preceding essays in a series of remarks upon the causes that operate to secure the freedom, and promote the prosperity of our happy country. It has been my intention to illustrate, that these desirable objects rested on such a basis, as could not be destroyed or shaken by casualties similar to those, which had overthrow the ancient republics. As the remarks and reasonings have not been reduced to any regular system, but have been communicated in a desultory manner, there is a propriety in my bringing them into a summary view, before I close the subject.

First of all, however, it is incumbent on me to remark, that when I am speaking of the government of this country, I have no specific reference either to the national or State authorities. I view them altogether as forming one complete government. The duty as well as the best interests of the citizens are concerned, in having each legislature confine its attention to the object, for which they are now severally instituted.

But to proceed.—It has been a leading idea in the discussion of the present subject; that, as the character and circumstances of the people of the United States do not resemble those of any other nation, either ancient or modern, we cannot fairly make their case a precedent for our own. The occupations of men have such a powerful influence upon their moral character, that we have only to know how the people of any country are employed, to ascertain the probability, whether they will be most inclined to a sober and virtuous, or to a vicious and disorderly conduct. We must always look to the character of individuals, as an essential point to be regarded in estimating the chances that may affect the welfare of the community. It cannot, indeed, too often be repeated, that the state of society, more than the form of government, should be contemplated, in all our hopes and fears, with respect to that propitious combination of law and liberty which qualifies the excesses of both. And, as the inhabitants of the United States have those employments and consequently those characteristics which form a good state of society, may we not safely infer, that we may escape those disasters, to which the ancient republics were exposed, only because they had those employments and consequently those characteristics which form a bad state of society?

Other remarks also have been made, to explain away the fears some people may entertain, lest our increasing wealth and luxury should prove destructive to our morals and freedom. The dissolute manners of ancient times, though presented to our imagination under their worst aspect, should not inspire us with terror, or check our pursuits of avarice and industry. We gain our property, as a people, by slow and imperceptible degrees, and form such habits in the course of the acquisition, as will guard us against a desire for those absurd and barbarous recrea-

tions, and that capricious extravagance, into which those nations unavoidably plunged, who amassed wealth with rapidity and rapine. The ancient, warlike republics gained extensive conquests, and possessed immense stores of riches, before they had learned to estimate their value, or control their application. It could not but be expected therefore, that degeneracy and ruin would be their fate. That kind of luxury which attends the gradual prosperity of an industrious people operates as a forcible spring to industry, and creates that elasticity in society, which gives motion to the most useful, and virtuous operations. Refinement does not necessarily imply vice, nor destroy liberty. Upon the whole, as we do not acquire property in such modes as the ancients did; and as their wealth became pernicious only by the modes in which it was acquired, our apprehensions may be at rest on this point.

But I have further suggested, that probably few individuals in this country, can ever accumulate enormous riches. The reason assigned for this conjecture is, that the business of this country is distributed among so many hands, that immense gains will not fall to the share of any great portion of adventurers.

The task of legislation must lose much of its irksomeness when it is employed upon citizens who are so occupied, that they may be safely left to their own discretion in the management of their own affairs. There is nothing to be feared on the part of the government, from the prosperity of individuals, thus situated. The people of this country can discern too well what promotes the public interest, and are too willing to embrace wise measures, to rest long satisfied with frivolous, defective institutions, or to shew a temper of resistance to those that are judicious, liberal and efficient. The slight sketches that have been offered in this and some preceding essays, upon the character and situation of this country, may lead the speculative mind into a train of reflections, and draw from him new and important light upon a subject which cannot be too much contemplated.

FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Extract of a letter to a Member of Congress, dated January 14, 1791.

ONE of the effects of our present government is the forming connections and improving social intercourse among those who were before strangers to each other. Had it not been for our political union, I might never have had any other relation to you, than what came by the way of Adam; but now I have the honor to call Mr. — my representative, and truly so, because the man of my choice. Viewing me in this relation, you will not deem it impertinent if I drop a few words on a subject which has much exercised my thoughts; though perhaps what I may say cannot suggest to you one new idea.

I perceive that the Quakers are again coming forward with their petitions and memorials. They profess to be a peaceful, gentle, inoffensive kind of people, enemies to all strife and contention; but whoever is acquainted with their true history, or has been intimately conversant among them for 20 years, of which 7 were years of war and revolution in government, must know that they have no better claims to the character which they assume, than any other equal number of mankind, taken at large; their peculiarities often render them troublesome to government, and they have more complaints to make about their sufferings than any other denomination of people. The reason of this cannot perhaps be given in better words than those of an honest Chief Justice of the Delaware counties, and a gentleman of their own religious persuasion: "To admit the usefulness of civil government to mankind, and yet to advance the position that all manner of force and self defence is unlawful, is a system full of inconsistency and big with absurdity and nonsense."

A specimen of this inconsistency I think we have in a memorial to Congress just now published, by the yearly meeting at Philadelphia. In one part they tell you, that they are "more solicitous to promote the dominion of the prince

of peace than to escape sufferings, because strife and contention are forbidden." In another, that they are "conscientiously bound to refuse payment of every sum required in lieu of personal service however laudable the purpose to which the money is applied." Now if they are bound to refuse payment, is not this the same as to say that they are bound in conscience to escape sufferings, and to live in continual strife and contention with government?

That they should be indulged in their notion which they say they conscientiously hold, of the unlawfulness of war, and consequently exempted from personal service, is a dictate both of morality and of policy; but that they should be excused from a compensation for personal service is not warranted by either; not by morality because it takes away from them the power of giving the only substantial proof of the sincerity of their religious scruples; nor by policy, because it gives them an advantage over all other religious denominations, none of which are known in the constitution. Should they obtain the exemption which they are seeking, the natural consequence will be an increase of their party, for every cowardly or disaffected citizen, every one who from any principle whatever has an aversion to serving in the militia, and contributing to the support of government, may plead, "I am a Quaker," and if you admit of a certificate from their monthly meetings as an evidence of the validity of his plea, you will put it into their power to diminish your forces and your resources at their pleasure. Besides, will not this amount to a legal establishment *quo ad hoc* of the Quaker form of religion, when no other form is even acknowledged by law to exist in the United States?"

PROVIDENCE, January 20.

Extract of a letter from Philadelphia.

The militia system is before the House of Representatives—they have been employed upon it sometime. A New-England legislature would have probably finished it in less time than has already been taken up—but let it be considered; the people of New England have been accustomed to militia regulations from the earliest settlement of the country—this has not been the case in so extensive a degree in the Southern States. No object of legislation is of greater importance, or attended with greater difficulties.—The ideas of the people in the Northern and Southern parts of the union differ on many matters.—but they are every day more and more assimilating in their manners, in their dispositions, and are continually strengthening in their attachment to the common good of our country.—Our Northern friends must not therefore be too impatient, or think that we are spending our time and their money fruitlessly.—Let them consider what great things have been done—what a prosperous situation our country is in—how our credit is rising at home and abroad, and let them hope for still better things when the new government has its full operation in the execution of those great national Arrangements which cannot at once be established, but which Congress are industriously employed in promoting.—The Senate are now employed in framing a bill for the establishment of a National Bank.—It is probable that it will in general be conformed to the plan recommended by the Secretary of the Treasury, who has been very assiduous in this business, and who most deservedly has the confidence and esteem of the nation.—His indefatigableness in building up the national government is unparalleled in our country. From the time that he signed the constitution in 1787 to this day he has not ceased on all occasions to labour incessantly in its support. The two volumes of the federalist written by him, and the plan of Finance and national arrangements which he has proposed, shew him to possess a great and comprehensive mind, capable of foreseeing consequences.

The establishment of a national mint, and coinage seems to be wished for by the legislature and the nation at large, and I cannot but hope that we shall, before many months are elapsed, have an American coinage, of gold, silver and copper. A plan is now preparing for that purpose, and is in considerable forwardness."

MASSACHUSETTS SEMI-ANNUAL LOTTERY.

The Managers of the STATE LOTTERY assure the public, that the first Class of the Semi-annual Lottery will positively commence drawing on the day appointed, viz. the 17th of March next. As the Managers have in their several Monthly Lotteries commenced drawing at the hour assigned, so they are determined to be equally as punctual in this.

* See the address of SAMUEL CHEW, Chief Justice of Delaware, to a grand jury, in the year 1741, reprinted in AITKEN'S Pennsylvania Magazine, for August, 1775, page 346, wherein the arguments of ROBERT BARCLAY against war, are examined and refuted.