

different purposes: to men in trade it was a considerable advantage, amounting probably, in some instances, to a hundred dollars a year:—it would be better to take away the privilege entirely, and reduce the general rates of postage one half, or to allow the members, at the close of each session, to make a charge for all letters on public business, from their constituents, or to make them an allowance in gross to defray the expense of postage:—better even, if necessary, to make an addition to the compensation which the members receive for their services, if the present one be found incompetent to their honorable support.

On the other hand it was observed, that the privilege of franking was not assumed by the members, for their own private accommodation, but for the benefit of their constituents, to transmit to them every necessary information, respecting the operations of the general government, and to receive from them such information as they might have to communicate:—petitions are frequently enclosed to members; and if these were to be subject to the payment of postage, the privilege of petitioning the house, would be in a great measure destroyed: the diminution of revenue, which the post-office might in some instances suffer from the privilege of franking, ought not to be deemed a sufficient reason for abolishing that privilege; since it was allowed, that the object, contemplated in the establishment, was the general convenience, and an easy and speedy mode of disseminating public and private intelligence:—revenue was but a secondary consideration;—although the citizens, who live at the seat of government, and have daily opportunities of learning from the newspapers what public measures are going forward, may not be materially affected by the abrogation of the privilege, yet the case would be widely different, with those who live at a distance, especially when fiscal operations were on foot:—those who are informed, will make a prey of those who are ignorant; and destructive speculation will enrich the few, at the expense of the many:—in a government of opinion (which is the government of America) much greater reliance is to be placed on the confidence of the people, than upon any other circumstance:—that confidence can only be the result of the fullest information:—but if the privilege of franking were taken away, the avenues of information would be, in a great measure, closed; for the members could not undertake, at their own private expense, to transmit intelligence to every part of the Union: yet the citizens have a right to expect information not only of the acts of government, but also the principles, upon which they were grounded:—The abuses of the privilege, that have prevailed in England, do not prevail here; and its abolition would give general dissatisfaction, particularly in the more distant parts of the union, where information would be subject to a very high tax, if circulated through the post-office, at the ordinary rates of postage: of those bundles of letters received and dispatched by members of Congress, many (tho' far from being unnecessary, as had been said) would perhaps never be written, if they were not to pass free of postage; and thus that free communication of sentiment between representative and constituent, which is so essential in a government like this, would be in a great measure cut off; and the post-office would gain little or nothing by it, as those packets of newspapers, bills, reports, &c. would either be sent by private hand, or not sent at all: even here an inequality would prevail, as the people who live near the seat of government, and all along the main road, could, from the greater frequency of opportunities, receive such packets with more ease and regularity, whilst those in more remote situations, could seldom or never receive them, unless by the mail: the expense arising from the percentage to the postmaster on the free letters, is but trifling, as in such cases he receives no more for a packet of two ounces, than for a single letter: and as to the idea of allowing the members to make a charge for their letters, this would be no better than receiving with one hand, and paying away with the other: if however it were found absolutely necessary to take precautions against the abuses that were apprehended, this might be done, by limiting the number or weight of letters that should go free by any one post, without entirely preventing the interchange of sentiments between the representative and his constituents.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26.

The bill for carrying into effect a contract between the United States and the state of Pennsylvania (relative to the purchase of a tract of land bordering on Lake Erie) was read a third time and passed.

Mr. Clark presented the petition of Patrick Ferrall, chief clerk in the office for settling the accounts between the United States and individual States, praying to be placed on the same footing in respect to salary as the chief clerks in the Treasury department, which was read and laid on the table.

Several other petitions were read, and referred to the heads of departments.

In committee of the whole, on the Post-Office Bill—Mr. W. Smith in the chair.

The 23d section relates to the carriage of newspapers—it was moved to strike out the section, and substitute the following:

That all newspapers carried in the mail, and which shall be under cover open at one end, shall be charged with the payment of one cent for any distance not exceeding 100 miles, and one and a half cent for any greater distance—and that the newspapers be carried in separate bags from the letters—and it shall be the duty of the Postmaster-General and his Deputies to keep a separate account of all newspapers; and the Deputy Postmasters shall receive 50 per cent. upon the postage of them—which was agreed to. The committee then rose, and reported the bill, with sundry amendments, which were laid on the table.

The Speaker laid before the House a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, covering a report on the petition of Catharine Greene, widow of the late General Greene, pursuant to a reference of the late House of the 4th of March, 1790, which was read, and on motion ordered, that it be referred to a committee of the whole House on Thursday next, and that 100 copies of said report, and the documents accompanying the same, be printed. Adjourned.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27.

The report of the committee of the whole House on the Post-Office Bill was taken into consideration.

The several amendments agreed to by the committee, were read—the principal part of which being still further amended, were adopted by the House. The amendment to the 20th section, which respects the privilege of Franking, being read, Mr. Wadsworth renewed the motion for expunging the clause—this occasioned some debate. Mr. White proposed a substitute which contained various restrictions on the privilege—but an adjournment being called for, took place, without a decision—and the further consideration of the amendments was postponed till to-morrow.

LEGISLATURE of PENNSYLVANIA.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Pennsylvania.

GENTLEMEN,

IT gives me great satisfaction to communicate to you a copy of a letter from the President of the United States, from which you will observe, that exertions are making under the authority of the Federal Government to protect effectually the exposed part of the frontiers.

THOMAS MIFFLIN.

Philadelphia, 24th December, 1791.

United States, 23d December, 1791.

SIR,

I HAVE received your Excellency's letter of yesterday, enclosing a copy of a representation to you from the inhabitants of Pittsburg, relative to their apprehensions, in consequence of a late defeat of the troops under Major-Gen. St. Clair.

I can, with great propriety, assure your Excellency, that it is my earnest desire that all the exposed parts of the frontiers should be as effectually protected, at the general expence, as the case may require.

I shall direct the Secretary of War to confer with your Excellency upon this subject, and to inform you of such measures as have been directed, and are in a train of execution.

I am, with due consideration,
Your Excellency's most obedient servant,
GEORGE WASHINGTON.

His Excellency the Governor of Pennsylvania.

Philadelphia, December 28.

Wednesday last Richard Henry Lee, Esq. took his seat in the Senate of the United States.

Two important bills are now before the Senate of the United States—one for the encouragement of the Bank and other Cod-Fisheries—the other for the establishment of a Mint.

The project of uniting the Delaware and Schuylkill by a canal, is an undertaking worthy the enterprising spirit of the times, and will doubtless be carried into execution.

The number of passengers which have arrived in the port of Philadelphia in one year, with a view to become settlers in this country, amounts to two thousand seven hundred and forty persons.

By an address from Gov. Telfair to the Assembly of Georgia, it appears that the Treaty with the Creek Nation, made by the United States, is to be the subject of animadversion in the Legislature of that State.—It is rather curious that the same Treaty does not meet the approbation of W. A. Bowles, who is fomenting mischief among the southern Indians.

It is most probable that the Treaty, from this state of things, is just and right.

In the account of the destruction of the town of Port-au-Prince, in Hispaniola, which sad event took place the 22d ult. it is said that the Mulattoes set fire to different parts at the same time—that 32 squares, with all that they contained of produce, stores and provisions, &c. were consumed.—The cannonading lasted one hour afterward, and the musquetry continued the remainder of the day, and during the night. Many persons must consequently have perished.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the country, to his friend in this city.

“Melancholy news from the Westward—Are not such repeated strokes indications that our cause in that country is not good? I think so—I fear we are too rash in our operations that way. No doubt the Indians, disturbed on their native soil, feel all the boilings of injured innocence—and were a few of their Chiefs in audience before Congress, perhaps they might plead their cause to the confusion of many who think little of them—their rights—or of what ought to be said in their favor.

“I hope such measures will be taken, or resolutions gone into in consequence of this defeat, as shall be consistent with the great principles of justice, as well as national policy.—Have there been any measures taken by government to make peace with these unhappy people?—If so, it would tend to satisfy the minds of our fellow-citizens by making them public—if not, what has not our government to answer for?—Doubts on this head give real distress to every serious friend to their country.”

Public measures are doubtless open to public animadversion—but our remarks should always be seasonable, our censures directed by judgment, and in all misfortunes tempered with this consideration,
“That prosp'rous actions always pass for wise.”

The business of sending newspapers by the mail, may with the greatest security be put on a liberal footing. The interest of Printers is very little concerned in the matter—but that of the public is, and ought to be considered as deeply involved. If by an easy feasible plan the transportation of newspapers is facilitated, the streams of information will be wide and copious, especially for a season—but as in all other cases where individuals diffuse their property, and increase their debtors for small sums, and at a distance, inevitable loss ensues, so it is in this of Printing; and nothing but the greatest facility and certainty in transporting the papers, will give the business of an extensive circulation any degree of stability.

There is not a government on earth which is so completely in the hands of the people as that of the United States. By preserving and strengthening it, the people secure their own power. For they have no other means of acting as a people, and it is not easy to conceive of any half as effectual. The state governments reach to almost every object. The national government seems to be in the air over men's heads, and barely touches their individual concerns. The power of the latter is so limited, that it is little, and so divided with the state governments, that it is less than the letter of the constitution seems to give: It has fewer officers than any sovereign government in the world. Look round, and see how few there are who have more than a common interest to support it. It is a trust, and a precious one in the people's own hands to keep it inviolate. It is their own; therefore it deserves their confidence, and will reward their care.

IMPROMPTU.

JOE MILLER'S jests, as all the world may see,
Furnish our modern strokes of repartee;
Thence the “sweet fact”—which all belief surpasses,
Of the plump buxom maid—drench'd in Molasses!

PRICE CURRENT.—PUBLIC SECURITIES.

Table with columns for FUNDLED DEBT and UNFUNDLED DEBT, listing various securities and their prices.

At No. 263, South Front-Street, This Night JOHN MACPHERSON will Lecture on MECHANICS, and begin precisely at Eight o'Clock.

Tickets are sold by Mr. Poulson, at the Library; Mr. Pelosi, at the Merchant's Coffeehouse; and by said Macpherson, at one half a dollar each.

Next Wednesday and Friday, he Lectures on the same Branch. Dec. 28.

TO BE SOLD,

THAT beautiful and elegant situation on the banks of the Potomack, adjoining the town of Alexandria, whereon the subscriber now resides; about 25 or 30 acres will be sold with the improvements, which are a neat and commodious two story house, completely finished from the cellar to the garret, a kitchen, laundry, meat-house, dairy, two story barn, and ice house, all finished in the best manner, together with several other necessary outhouses, the yard and garden neatly paved, and a skillful gardener now employed in putting it in fine order; the land well enclosed with a post and rail fence; a well, and springs of excellent water—the prospect is equalled by few, and excelled by none in America—its contiguity to Alexandria, the Federal Town, and Georgetown, having a fine and full view of each place, must render it in a few years of great value, being directly in a line of communication from Alexandria to the other two towns. Should a purchaser offer before the 15th of February next, a cheap bargain may be had. An indisputable title, clear of all incumbrances, will be made by the subscriber. I will also sell with this place, 220 Acres of Wood Land, about 3 miles distant, which will suit well to support the above in wood and timber.

December 14, 1791. (15) BALDWIN DADE.