

Gazette of the United States.

A NATIONAL PAPER, PUBLISHED WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS BY JOHN FENNO, No. 69, HIGH-STREET, PHILADELPHIA.

[No. 43, of Vol. IV.]

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1792.

[Whole No. 365.]

FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE REPUBLICAN.—No. V.

THE friends of good order maintain that nothing but actual oppression will shake a government. Believing that power in the hands of the people themselves, exercised by their responsible servants, will never furnish just occasion for its own subversion, they consider our political condition as safely founded on a rock. They laugh at the malice of those whom they see employed to undermine it. They suffer them to chatter lies among the people, without taking the pains to expose them, relying that the burdens imposed by Congress are light, and the advantages produced by the new constitution are great and increasing, no great harm will be done. The force of things, they say, will overpower and confound the profligate arts, and puny rage of the enemies of the people. Accordingly, we see that the best friends of the new constitution have become throughout the United States imprudently inattentive to the safe methods which its adversaries are industriously using to bring it into abhorrence. They have slept too long, if the principle on which they rest their hopes of national security be found in its application to our circumstances in the least questionable.

It may be true that in every other country the feeling of oppression only can rouse the multitude to resistance. If rulers will keep within any tolerable bounds, tranquillity may be maintained even under a very bad system. No man on reflection will say, that the same remark is applicable to the American nation. Less governed by their feelings, and more capable of reasoning, they are as much inflamed by the prospect of evils as any other people have been, by actually suffering them. It is not necessary to make them feel oppression, it is enough to make them fear the designs of their government, to excite them to level the best cemented structure with the dust.

It is in vain to say that a reasoning people are not easily seduced by destructive errors. The reasoning faculty is not applicable in its best state, not even when exercised on subjects the most susceptible of proof. We see how grossly an individual often mistakes his interests and duties, when he summons all his faculties and applies all his industry to the investigation of them. A nation is infinitely more exposed to error and delusion. The want of unity of views, the want of proofs, and the want of leisure to examine and weigh them, even if they could be come at, render the first conception of political truth exceedingly crude. Experience indeed comes and puts its seal upon opinions and events—but it is a kind of after-thought—it throws the fears of those wounds which popular frenzy has made deep, and its venom has caused to gangrene. The chance however that a thinking nation will not run mad, is infinitely favorable to liberty and order. It is a political duty which we owe the government, as well as a moral duty which we owe to man, to multiply and improve the means of education. Our reflections, after being led into this train, as well as our recollection of the causes of the late war, will convince us that actual oppression need not be suffered to dispose our people to subvert the government supposed to mediate it. If we regard facts merely, probably of all known systems of colonial government, that of Britain was the mildest and the most truly maternal. But if we attend to principles, none was ever more formidable. The claim of a right to bind us in all cases whatsoever, was of all theories of despotism the most indirect and the most unlimited. We ought to be proud of the good sense of our people which did not wait for the exercise of this claim to be convinced of its nature. But we should be persuaded by the fact, that less than intolerable oppression will overthrow a government.

To this reasoning founded on the moral superiority of Americans over the greater part of the world, we may add the diversity of our habits.

To nations who have grown gray under bad systems, the very vices of their governments seem revered. That life is second nature, is a proverb. We may almost say it is more powerful than nature, for it controuls it. Centuries have passed since the theories of European governments were framed. Some oppressive change of administration seems necessary to change the obedient habits of nations. Is the case of America similar? If we have fixed habits, they are the habits of change. We have scarcely grown cold in any of our institutions. Our governments smell even yet of the hands that made them, of the yeast of that faction which leavened the mass.

On these topics much might be said. But without dilating on them, much will be thought.

The intention of these remarks is to convince the friends of the constitution that they repose in a state of false security. They rely on a principle which is only partially true in our country. It is time for them to rouse and to oppose the wicked arts of the enemies of the constitution with that manly and watchful spirit, which, for the happiness and honor of our country, procured its adoption. Men are employed to steal this blessing from the people. Rumours that can neither be proved nor refuted, are spread on all sides.

Calumny on men and measures lies hid, like an assassin, in bye places. Resistance to the laws is openly threatened in the back parts of Pennsylvania, and in one Gazette that spirit is most impudently applauded. The middle order of society, the men who have some property and families to protect, are the trustees and keepers of the constitution—the liberties of our nation. To them it belongs to come forward to the post of duty which they occupied when the constitution was in

its passage. The government leans on them for protection, and in turn their security and that of their children and property rests on the preservation of the government. If they neglect to support authority when they see it as at present actually undermined and intently braved, they may have cause to lament their supineness when it will be too late. If good men were as attentive to support a free constitution as bad men are to subvert it, we might indulge the hope of transmitting it as a precious inheritance to our latest posterity. As men's passions, when inflamed, easily overpower their soundest opinions, it is necessary to balance one emotion by another, to oppose the zeal of good men for order and government to the restless activity of incendiaries. Let the former contemplate the excellence of the constitution. The people of France are risking all for one of its worth—and while our patriots see in that image of our country all that can incite their affections, let them resolve to watch for it, and if necessary, to defend it. For the time is coming when the evil spirit of politics will be unchained, and men will have to chuse whether they will prefer order, the law and the constitution, or anarchy, confusion and civil discord.

ON THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

An Oration, delivered by Mr. Joseph Reed, of this City, at the late anniversary Commencement held at Princeton, New-Jersey.

AT the close of a century the mind is naturally led to the contemplation of any great event which marked its commencement. Nations have chosen, at such periods, to distinguish with peculiar grandeur, the commemoration of those events from whence they date their birth, their happiness, or their glory. Such were the secular games at Rome, celebrated but once in an hundred years, which exhausted the resources of art, and to which all the citizens were invited by the voice of a herald, summoning them to a fight they had never seen before, and should never see again. But what is the foundation of a city; the establishment of an empire, or the ceasing of a plague, compared with the discovery of a world? Yet this have been often celebrated, while the year seventeen hundred and 92, a year which completes the third century since the discovery of America, passes almost unnoticed—a discovery which stands foremost among the works of genius; which once filled the world with astonishment, and must forever command the admiration of the philosophic mind. Yet the spirit of Columbus, while from his empirical height he surveys the rising greatness of this new world, sees no statues erected, no inscriptions made, no honors decreed to celebrate this great event. Illustrious shade! my feeble voice at least shall announce thy praise; and this enlightened audience, kindling at thy name, will inscribe upon their hearts the honors due to thine exalted worth!

True genius is a ray of divinity, which beams only on the tall and elevated mind. A capacity for bold and original discovery resembles the power of creation; and its possessor raised above the rest of mankind, approximates to the Deity. Such was the celebrated Columbus. Accustomed from his youth to adventurous voyages he often cast an inquisitive eye on the immense ocean to the west, which, for ages, had been deemed the impassible boundary of the habitable world. Ignorance and superstition spread all their errors over the unknown abyss, and inevitable destruction seemed to await the wretch who should venture to explore it. But Columbus, elevating himself above the errors and prejudices of his age, and collecting the scattered rays of knowledge which faintly illuminated the close of the 15th century, descried the existence of unknown lands beyond the Atlantic; and boldly predicted the possibility of reaching them. Acquainted from our earliest years with the improvements in geography and navigation, it is difficult, at first sight, to comprehend all the greatness of this bold and original idea. To realize its magnitude, let us mark how it was received by philosophers and kings, when Columbus, eager to ascertain its truth, solicited the patronage of different courts. In Genoa, his native city, he was treated with all the contempt with which wealthy ignorance regards the suggestions of unpatronized genius. In the more enlightened court of Portugal his proposals were pronounced to be chimerical and absurd. In Spain we find him encountering the prejudices of false science, and wasting five long years in fruitless attempts to enlighten the scholars and ecclesiastical counsellors who adorned the court of Ferdinand and Isabella. But the idea was too vast for these philosophers to comprehend; and it seemed to require a genius like that of Columbus himself, to adopt a scheme so bold and uncommon. Mortified and disappointed, he retired from court; and that age was in danger of losing a discovery at once honorable and advantageous. But to the honor of female discernment be it told, that while every male monarch regarded Columbus as an idle adventurer, the generous Isabella dared to patronize and support him. Inspired with a noble enthusiasm in his cause, while her narrow minded husband withheld his aid, she offered to pledge her jewels to equip him for the voyage. Woman, modest, unassuming woman, shares half the glory of this great discovery—while

man, proud, scientific man, stands abashed in the presence of her superior discernment.

If there be an object truly sublime in nature, it is Columbus on his voyage to America! To use the language of antiquity, it is a sight which the Gods themselves might behold with pleasure. On this very day, the 26th of September, 1492, he had advanced above 700 leagues westward of the Canary Islands. There we behold him in the midst of the pathless ocean, with three small and ill-constructed vessels, steadily exploring his way where never mortal had adventured before. Amidst dangers new and unexpected, amidst appearances of nature to a mariner the most alarming, and surrounded by the terrors and superstition of his followers, we behold him displaying the most unshaken fortitude: now soothing their fears, now repressing their mutiny, and by patience and superior address establishing that ascendancy over their minds which genius alone can acquire. But in a voyage so long the resources of Columbus were at length exhausted. His officers themselves were in despair; and this wonderful man was perhaps the only one whose hopes remained firm and unshaken. Unable to repress any longer the terrors of his crew, he is obliged to promise that if land does not appear in three days, he will change his course and return to Europe. What an interesting period! a period which is to decide upon his fortune and his fame forever—which is to stamp immortality upon his name, or give him back to the scoffs and ridicule of the world! Methinks I see him in this solemn crisis standing upon the fore-castle of the Santa Maria. It is midnight—but not an eye is closed—not a sound is heard, save that of the winds and of the waves—every look is anxiously cast to the west, but despondence and distrust are painted on the faces of his crew; while confidence and hope still animate that of Columbus. Hab! What light is that which he descries in motion and points out to those who are near him? What shout is that which bursts from the crew of the foremost ship? "This land! This land! The predictions of Columbus are accomplished; a new world is found, and the morning light unfolds to their eager eyes the verdant fields of Guanahani. Oh! what a moment for Columbus! I see the rapture which glows on his cheek—the tear of joy which glistens in his eye. I see him affectionately railing up his followers, who prostrate themselves at his feet, overwhelmed with astonishment, and imploring his forgiveness. I see him gazing on the simple natives, who crowd to the shore, and wonder at the winged monsters which swim on the surface of the deep. I see him anticipate the astonishment of Europe—the triumph of his return—the splendor of his reception—the applause of his cotemporaries, and the admiration of ages to come. This moment—this single moment, overpays him for all his toil and distress, for eight years of mortification and contempt, and gives him those sublime transports which it is the prerogative of genius to enjoy.

(To be concluded in our next.)

FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES.

STRICTURES ON AMERICANUS.

MR. FENNO, your Gazette of 20th inst. AMERICANUS in your Gazette of 20th inst. thinks he has found some errors, which he has signified in my statement of Oct. 10. He sets out with calling on me to point out the clause of the act which gives the excise officer an authority to enter on the domains of individuals and search them, &c. I answer—

1. That I argued from the nature of the subject, not from any statute relating to it, and of course he has no right to call on me for a statute which I have no where referred to or said anything about, but—

2d, Notwithstanding this I am willing to comply with his call, and refer him to act of Congress of March 3, 1791, Sect. 32—the words and meaning of which are very express in case of concealments "in any place whatever"—The officers of inspection and others are authorized "to enter into all and every such place or places," &c. and all the provisions (which are to be found in the section just quoted and in sundry other clauses of our laws) against the abuse of this odious insulting power of the excise officer, all these provisions I say clearly prove and support the actual existence of that power, while at the same time they alleviate but very little the appetites of its execution.

If I must meet an excise officer at my door with his plenary powers to enter and search every part of my house, I conceive that the warrant in his pocket or the constable at his heels, would afford very little lenient composure to my harrowed feelings; indeed I would rather the excise officer would come alone than with his constable; if I must receive insult, I would rather take it from one than from more, from few than from many.

I know very well that such high powers, in cases of high necessity must exist in every government, but I strongly object to their being made common or being ever introduced without such high necessity as alone can make them admissible.

He next complains of my objection to the

excise, grounded on the great expense of collecting it. The immense number of officers and implements which must be provided and scattered over every part of the Union must unavoidably create a very enormous expense, the actual amount of which, must in its nature be a matter of conjectural calculation, till a statement of facts can be made.—Some people in their calculations, or guesses, if you please, have estimated the annual expense of collection of the excise at 45,000 dollars, and the gross amount of the tax at 400,000 dollars, which makes the expense of collection 12 1/2 per cent. on the nett proceeds of it, and I believe this calculation very moderate, because Congress in their act of May 10, 1791, limited the whole allowance for this service, so that it shall not exceed 70,000 dollars for the time being, i. e. till a future law shall be made to alter it. In the same act it is stated that the allowances to officers together with the incidental expenses of collecting the duties shall not exceed 7 1/2 per cent. of the total product of the duties which is something more than 8 per cent. on the nett proceeds; but I conceive this is not designed to include all the expenses of the excise, if this was the case, it would not amount to half the sum which is provided and appropriated by Congress to that service—but when a statement of facts can be made, I shall be very well satisfied to find this expense of collection reduced lower than is expected, for I never yet feared an approaching calamity but I was very glad to find when it came, that it proved not quite so bad as I apprehended.

But what has all this to do with "misrepresentation," which Americanus charges on me? I heard a calculation was made of 12 per cent. for collecting the excise, I told it as I heard it, I made no misrepresentation of it, and I am not accountable for the truth of it, nor have I any more right to be called on to verify that, than a thousand other calculations on public measures, which are made every day, through all the States; and tis happy that our people are disposed to examine and calculate, for were it not so, our government would soon lose its principal checks and we should have but a feeble barrier left against a very speedy tyranny.

3. Americanus goes on to another charge of misrepresentation, viz. my assertion that the public faith was pledged in the most solemn manner to the original public creditors—and pray was not this the plain fact? or have I misrepresented in the least? Ent he says: there was a subsequent plighting of the public faith to the assignees or holders of the certificates, which must not be violated.

1. Tis, was payment ever made to the original creditors, according to the plighted faith of the public to them? You must say, No! they never received anything but depreciated paper, worth say one tenth of the sum due to them.

2. I ask, were the original creditors ever party to the certificates? You must answer, No! the certificates were not those of when the contract was made by the first authority of the nation, with the public creditors—the certificates were fabricated and imposed on them long after, and without their free consent. When a certificate was offered to them, it was that, or nothing. Such an imposition in any individual, would be deemed by every body impudent injustice, as well as shameful meanness—and can you call the same thing in a nation, an empire, public justice and national honor? Or can you think such a forced trick can be deemed either payment to those creditors, or a discharge of the nation, from their promise, or faith solemnly plighted?

But as to this second promise or faith plighted to the speculators or bearers of certificates, which Americanus talks about, if such a thing ever really existed, (which I deny) it must follow that as far as the demands of the speculators extend, there must have been two promises or faiths plighted for the same debt, and the same money, which he thinks can't both be paid, and I think so too, and of course one of them is to be preferred, and the other sacrificed.

This naturally leads us to consider the original merits, earnings, and valuable considerations, on which the two promises were at first grounded; and to prefer that which appears to have the best original foundation, and to reject the other, the original basis of which (to say no worse) was but a delusive vision.

To apply all this to the present case:—

1. The promise or public faith plighted to the original creditors, was grounded on their most acknowledged merits and earnings, granted for supplies and services rendered by them to our country in extreme distress—to whose virtue and efforts we are indebted for all the money we now enjoy, yea, for the very walls of the house in which we have sat deliberating whether we would pay them or not.

2. The promise made to the speculators (if any was made) was grounded on no original merits, earnings or valuable consideration paid or rendered to any body, or so much as held up or pretended by them. They first wriggled themselves into the obsolete purview of a public act, and by the most shameless sophistry which ever insulted the understanding of a nation, let up a claim to wages which they never earned, to hire, when they had not labored, and to rewards without any pretensions to the virtues and merits to which they were due.