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For the GAZETTE of the UNITED STATES.

THOUGHTS ON THE
STATE OF AMERICAN INDIANS.

(Continued from No. 99, of this Gazette.)

No. VII.

THE civilization of the Indians is a subject so very important, and yet so little investigated, that in the first attempt to bring it before the public, little more than an enumeration of expedients can reasonably be expected. Let the following observations therefore be considered as intended to excite the public investigation of the subject, rather than as a regular and digested plan proper to be carried into effect.

The experience of past ages, and of nations in similar circumstances, may serve to guide our researches in this new and interesting inquiry.

In the history of the progress of nations from barbarism to civility, we find that the worship of the Deity—the institution of marriage, and the establishment of private property—have entered into the foundation on which the superstructure of civil society has been erected. These are necessary to give form and permanency to its establishment. Each of these is of itself insufficient—it is their union and joint influence, with the effects that naturally result from them, that give society its perfect form. The investigation of each of these principles which compose the foundation of civil society, merits attention in the development of this subject. Some remarks upon the first of them, will be the substance of the present essay.

The idea of a Supreme Being, is either originally instilled upon the human mind, or is among the first impressions which it receives from the exercise of its own powers. All men at times feel their dependence upon a Superior, and seek occasionally, by external homage, to deprecate his anger and secure his favour. It is perhaps impossible to efface this impression from the human heart—it is the link which connects material with immaterial existence. It is uncertain how far civil government would be practicable without the aid of these sentiments. In its best form, it is far from being a perfect work. The limited extent of its laws—the imperfection of its sanctions—the inequalities and distinctions which it creates—with the temptations to fraud, injustice and cruelty, are calculated to excite envy and inquietude in the minds of the least fortunate members of the community; who, without the co-operation of religious principles, would be continually endeavoring to throw off all legal restraint, and to dissolve the bands of the society, in order to riot on the spoils of the public, or to re-establish it on a foundation more agreeable to their wishes and interests.

The belief of a Supreme Being—infinite in power, wisdom, purity, justice and goodness—of a future state—of retribution—of an universal judgment, and of an eternal award—penetrates the heart, arrests the conscience, and restrains the impetuosity of the passions. It leads to obedience and submission, by annexing the idea of duty to the sacrifices of personal interest, to the present order of things, and by the prospect of a period when an equitable distribution shall be made by the Sovereign of the Universe.

And by enforcing the rights of imperfect obligation—by inculcating the exercise of the social virtues—by restraining secret crimes—by corroborating the authority of the laws, and by giving additional energy to their sanctions—it is admirably calculated to remedy the inconveniences, and supply the defects of civil government. These principles are simple and uniform, adapted to every capacity, and suited to every stage of society and age of the world.

In rude and ignorant times, men not having compass of mind enough to trace these impressions to their source, or to deduce all things from one simple cause, followed the impulse of their imaginations and their passions. In this state of men's minds, every deviation from the ordinary course of things alarms their fears, and they have recourse to superior and invisible powers to relieve them from the evils which they dread. They ascribe to a distinct cause every uncommon event—and by these means, multiply their Gods without number. They clothe them with the passions and weaknesses of mortals, and pay them an homage that corresponds to their origin and their attributes. Men of superior sagacity have availed themselves of this weakness—augmented the reputation of the current superstitions, formed them into system, and made them the basis of their laws and policy. The introduction of laws and government in most nations, of whose origin we have any distinct tradition, was effected in this manner.

The holy religion that we possess, is indeed in every lineament different from the systems of superstition which the ignorance and credulity of mankind have invented. The one lets before us a standard of perfect excellence, which we are commanded at our peril to imi-

tate—the other clothes the objects of its worship with the frailties of men. The one in effect leads to purity and virtue—the other, to depravity and folly. What use may be made of true religion in civilizing the Indians, I will not pretend to determine—But that it may be of some service, I think evident. If superstition and false religion were found necessary to the establishment of civil society and civil laws—surely true religion is equally necessary, and will be equally effectual. Such is the attachment of the Indians to their manners and customs—such the strength and violence of their passions, and such the nature and number of their vices, that no change can be introduced among them in these respects but by interesting the strongest passions of the human mind. No sentiments so easily reach the heart, and none so powerfully impress the mind, as those which relate to religion. The doctrines, the precepts, and the institutions of religion, are all calculated to enlighten, to humanize and to interest the human mind—to soften the manners, and to extend and strengthen the social affections.

No principle will be so efficacious in changing the habits of the savages, as religion—This is evident not only from the nature of things—the constitution of the human mind, and the power of superstition in past ages—but from the experience we have actually had of the effects of it on the temper and manners of the Indians.

The success of Mr. David Brainerd among the Indians in New-Jersey, has been laid before the public. By the indefatigable exertions and well directed zeal of that pious and judicious missionary, a considerable number of the savages were prevailed on to forsake their wandering way of life—to form themselves into a society, and to attend to agriculture. He established a school among them, and the youth made great proficiency even during his residence among them.*

In the history of the Five Nations, we are informed that by the exertions of two succeeding missionaries, they were reformed in a great measure from the vice of drunkenness—from the practice of divorcing each other on frivolous pretences—from the exercise of cruelty to their prisoners, and in some measure from their propensity to war. From such favorable beginnings, what might not be expected from a vigorous prosecution of similar measures.

From these experiments we may infer, the religion, pure, simple, and unadulterated by superstitious ceremonies, or any false mixture, would be a powerful instrument in effecting the civilization of our American Indians—and a well digested plan for this purpose deserves the patronage of the benevolent.

NOTE.

In addition to these influences, I might mention the success of the Jesuits in Paraguay, in South-America: They brought the Indians to live in towns, to cultivate the earth, to exercise the arts, to submit to civil subordination, and even to aspire to liberal improvements.

* Life of Brainerd, p. 177—304.

† Colden's History of the Five Nations.

FROM THE FEDERAL GAZETTE,
OF SATURDAY LAST.

Yesterday afternoon, the citizens of Philadelphia, agreeably to a notification for that purpose, attended a meeting in the State-house garden. An address congratulating Mr. Genet on his arrival was read, and unanimously adopted. It was immediately presented to the Minister, at the City-tavern, and is as follows:

To Edmund Charles GENET, Minister Plenipotentiary from the Republic of France, to the United States.—THE ADDRESS of the Citizens of Philadelphia.

S I R,

The Citizens of Philadelphia are anxious to convey their congratulations upon your arrival, in terms the most cordial and acceptable. We have, with pleasure, on former occasions, acknowledged our obligations, and declared our attachment to the people of France; but, at this moment, we are peculiarly gratified, by recognizing, in the Minister of our first and best Ally, the representative of a Free Republic.

Impressed with the value of our political independence; recollecting, with an honest pride, the Glory and Success, which, in the pursuit of that object, crowned the virtue and fortitude of America; and estimating the present reputation and prosperity of the union, as blessings resulting from the Revolution; we cannot without gratitude, consider, how great a portion of our triumph and our happiness, was derived from the zealous and disinterested aid of your countrymen; nor can we without dissimulation, suppress our joy, that the nation, which so generously contributed to rescue the liberties of America, has, at length, with unparalleled magnanimity, effaced her own.

From such feelings, sir, we have been naturally led to contemplate the struggles of France with a paternal eye; sympathizing in all her calamities; and exulting in all her

successes: but there is another interest, the interest of Freedom and Equality, which adds to the force of our affections; and renders the cause of France important to every republic, and dear to all the human race.

Be assured, therefore, that justly regarding the cultivation of republican principles, as the best security for the permanency of our own popular governments, we rest our favorite hopes, at this momentous crisis, on the conduct of France; and, earnestly giving to the national exertions our wishes and our prayers, we cannot resist the pleasing hope, that although America, is not a party in the existing war, she may still be able, in a state of peace, to demonstrate the sincerity of her friendship, by affording very useful assistance to the citizens of her sister republic.

The well-earned character of a republican and a patriot, has ensured for you the warmest sentiments of personal respect and esteem: and, while the law of nations, and the rights of treaty, give dignity and energy to your official station; the endeavors of the citizens will not, we trust, be ineffectual, in rendering your residence in Philadelphia, agreeable to you, and honorable to ourselves.

Signed by order of the meeting,
CHARLES BIDDLE, Chairman.

Philadelphia, 17th May, 1793.

Attest.

ROBERT HENRY DUNKIN, Sec'y.

THE ANSWER.

Citizen GENET, Minister Plenipotentiary from the Republic of France, to the Citizens of Philadelphia.

C I T I Z E N S,

IF gratitude be not acknowledged a virtue among the despots, it is evidently such among freemen. Of this truth I have received abundant proofs on my journey from Charleston to Philadelphia. In every place the general voice of the people convinced me in a most sensible manner of their real sentiments and sincere and friendly dispositions towards the nation which I have the honor to represent, and for the advancement of that common cause which she alone supports with so much courage.

Citizens, your address has completed my satisfaction, and I assure you that the day your Brethren in France shall receive it will be a day of gladness to them. This I anticipate, that from the effect it has had upon myself, it will have the same upon them, from those wise and liberal sentiments, those just and excellent ideas which characterize it.

In my private capacity of a citizen, I am highly flattered with the favorable opinion you have formed of me; and I promise to make every exertion in my power to render myself worthy of that good opinion, and to justify the confidence my country has reposed in me. My conduct while among you shall be to the height of our national political principles—An unbounded openness shall be the constant rule of my intercourse with those wise and virtuous men into whose hands you have entrusted the management of your public affairs. I will expose candidly to them the great objects on which it will be our business to deliberate; and the common interest of both nations will, I have no doubt be the compass of our direction; for without such a guide, what would become of both nations, exposed as we mutually are to their sentiment, the hatred and the treachery of all the tyrants of the earth, who, you may rest assured, are at this moment armed not only against France, but against liberty itself.

(Signed)

GENET.

Foreign Intelligence.

FRANCE.

NATIONAL CONVENTION.

MARCH 24.

Dumourier on the 12th inst. wrote a letter dated Louvain, which it was not thought prudent at the time to read. It is as follows:

C I T I Z E N P R E S I D E N T,

THE safety of the people is the supreme law; I have just abandoned conquest almost certain, by quitting the victorious part of the army ready to enter into the heart of Holland, to fly to the support of that portion which has experienced a check, owing to physical and moral causes, that I mean to develop with that frankness which is more than ever necessary, and which would always have tended to the welfare of the Republic, if all her agents had made use of it in the accounts they gave, and if it had been listened to with more complacency than deceitful flattery.

You know, citizen representatives, in what a dangerous state of disor-

ganization the Belgic army had been placed, by a minister and officers who dragged France to the brink of ruin. This minister and those officers have been changed; but far from punishing them, Pache and Hassenfratz have passed to the important station of heads to the Paris police, and from that moment the capital has seen renewed in the street Lombard, scenes of blood and massacre.

I presented to you, in the month of December, in four memorials, the grievances that ought to be redressed. I informed you of the only means which could put a stop to the evil, and give to our armies their vigor, and to our cause all the justice which ought to characterize it. These memorials have been thrown aside; you are not acquainted with them; order them to be presented to you, you will there find predicted what has since happened; you will also in them find the remedy to the other dangers which surround us, and menace our infant republic. The armies of Belgia united in the countries of Aix la Chapelle and Liege, have there suffered every species of want, without murmuring, but continually weakened by sickness and constant skirmishes with the enemy, and by the desertion of many of the officers and soldiers to the amount of half their original strength.

It is only since General Buernonville is at the head of the ministry, that the wants of the army and recruiting begins to be thought of. But he has been in so short a time, that we feel that disorganizing spirit of which we have been the victims. This was our situation, when on the first of February you thought it due to the honor of the nation to declare war against England and Holland. From this moment I buried the remembrance of all my grievances;—I no longer thought of resigning, which you will find mentioned in the memorials above alluded to; all my thoughts were given to the safety of my country. I endeavored to be beforehand with our enemies, and this reduced army forgot all its sufferings to attack Holland. While, with new troops, just from France, I was taking Breda, Klundert, Gertruydenberg, and was preparing to extend my conquests, the Belgic army, under Generals remarkable for courage and civism, undertook the siege of Maestricht.

Every thing was wanting for this expedition, the new administration was not yet on foot.—The ancient was bad in every view. Money was plenty, but the new forms established at the national treasury prevented the use of that money. I cannot yet detail the immediate causes of the check our armies have experienced, as I am just arrived; not only they have abandoned every hope of taking Maestricht, but they have fallen back in confusion and with loss. The magazines of every kind which were begun to be collected at Liege, have fallen into the hands of the enemy, as well as part of the field artillery and that belonging to the battalions: This retreat has drawn on us new enemies, and here I will develop the cause of our misfortunes.

There has ever existed, in human events, a reward for virtue and a punishment for vice. Private individuals may escape the effects of this providence, which may be called what you please, because they are imperceptible points: but read history, and you will find that a people never escape it.

As long as our cause was that of justice we vanquished the enemy: