

Mr. Printer,

By inserting the enclosed Dialogue which happened between one of my neighbors in one of the lower counties in this State, and an excise officer, you will oblige an old customer.

October 4, 1794.

IT IS ENOUGH TO MAKE A QUAKER SWEAR!

The above sentence was uttered by a country distiller, very early on Monday morning, in the height of the distilling season, in Virginia. After a great rain, (he having with much ado refilled the Sabbath,) all his fuel wet, he being driven up without half sleep to get his still to work, that he might not be ruined by the tax, and oblige as far as might be, complaining customers;—he not being able to make his fire burn, all overwhelmed in smoke and stench, the weather being warm, and he warmer, when one of his neighbors, an excise officer, being early in the exercise of his business also, rode up of a sudden with his tattered shirt, &c.—brought on the following dialogue:

Good morning neighbor!

The distiller, rising up and looking about, it being dark, wiping his eyes, said, good morning to you sir.

Excise officer. You seem to be angry this morning—Do Quakers ever swear?

Distiller. I do not know that I ever heard one swear; but this hellish excise law, and other things that I know of in the general government, is enough to make the best man in the world swear, and worse too, if possible.

Excise officer. Without doubt you are out of your senses this morning; it is the law you so much exclaim against this year as it is like to do; as to the other things you know of in the general government, I do not know what you mean.

Distiller. Pox take the price for me! What good will it do me when I am dead? But I know it is not the duty of our spirits, that raises the price hereof.

Excise officer. What then?

Distiller. Why the duties on foreign spirits, and the articles they are composed of; or else we might drink our brandy at our old price, and have our own time for distilling it, without endangering our health, &c.

Excise officer. You are very much mistaken; for you ought to thank your stars, that it ever entered into the head of Congress, to pass such a law.

Distiller. Thank the Devil!

Excise officer. You seem to be warm through this morning; I should have thought you would have cooled from Saturday-midnight, by this time.

Distiller. I do not know what should cool me, except I were like my curried bill, void of life; for it seems as if the devil was in her this morning, the wood, the fire, or all of them together; for it appears as though I shall never get her to running: But to tell you the truth sir, I am never cool, when I think of this iniquitous law, even the coldest day in winter.

Excise officer. You do not seem to be in a proper frame for conversation, or else I think I could easily convince you of your mistake.

Distiller. I have been angry it is true, and am now troubled at my heart, that the general government, whom I had such confidence in, should so soon after the adoption thereof, treat their constituents like a set of slaves; but if you can convince me of my mistake, I will attend with all the ears I have, and give your arguments all the weight I think they deserve.

Excise officer. You know there must be money raised to pay our debts, and defray public expences.

Distiller. I do so. And am heartily willing to bear my part of that expence.

Ex. Off.—Well then. What can be more equal than the duty on spirits; for those who consume to pay the tax?

Distiller. I confess it appears so at the first view; and has, and does fool thousands; and at the first had the same effect upon me; but I have seen better sense; for I must assure you, that when a man gives up liberty for money, he makes a bad bargain!

Ex. Off.—I know not what sort of eyes you must have, or how you calculate to draw such an idea in this case.

Distiller.—I think it is very easily seen, (I mean the imposition of this law,) by all those who have the use of their common senses; not to say any thing of their rational faculties.

Ex. Off.—Now do tell me wherein?

Distiller.—Why to be short. Every

man's skill is not a-like expeditions of the same capacity, every man has not the same advantage of working his skill to the same profit; and besides, men of slender force who have no one to depend on but a few weakly children with himself to carry on the business (at the best hand) at this sickly season of the year; it must be presumed, will lose abundance of time, which it seems he must account for; if he enters by the month; and if he enters by the gallon it is worse. Wretched alternative!

Ex. Off.—But you are running away with the argument; are not men of other descriptions liable to the same inconveniences?

Distiller.—No. For men of property, always have means at hand; or at least easily within their reach to effect their purposes; so that this law you speak so much in favour of, is I say, an iniquitous law.

Ex. Off.—It seems you are very hard to please; what could Congress do, to please every body? You have already given up, that money must be raised for public purposes, what better method could be taken?

Distiller.—A method not to oppress, not endanger the health, nor lives of the citizens, nor create a useless number of officers to prey upon the revenue.

Ex. Off.—I am at a loss to know what method you can have in your head, that would answer better than the honorable Congress, has thought proper to adopt.

Distiller.—Why if the revenue requires it, put a moderate tax on the stills themselves annually, whether we work them or not; according to their capacities, as they do on riding carriages, &c. (Tho' I must confess, it is a doubt, with me, whether either are strictly constitutional;) and then there would not be half the use there is, for needles a set of beings as you are, riding about in splendor, lording it over honest and industrious labourers, committing in the execution of your office horrid blunders; (which has not been uncommon, even within the narrow circle of my acquaintance,) to the great prejudice of a number of citizens.

Ex. Off.—I think you talk with more confidence than good sense; for I do not know who should be so capable to determine in this case, as our well chosen representatives in that respectable body.

Distiller.—If you are not careful I fancy you will get warm presently!—But say what you may about self-confidence, or nonsense, it is from a very painful use of my senses, that I have learned what I have said, and I do most candidly assure you, that I depend more on those monitors, than all their visionary theories in politics, and inconsistent syllogisms which either ancient or modern philosophers, politicians, or logicians, have drawn, and I again repeat it, and must say, that the excise law, as it now stands has not a feature of republicanism in it; but is iniquitous, oppressive, and a law, dangerous to the health and lives of citizens, and needlessly expensive; and fool as you think I am, I can demonstrate it, if you had patience to hear me.

Ex. Off.—pray let us hear how?

Distiller.—It is iniquitous;—because it does not bear equally on the citizens in the Union; as might easily be shown, in sundry instances. It is oppressive, because it deprives free men of the free use of their liberty and property; and it is a question with me, whether a greater stretch of power has ever been exercised in the most despotic governments—for I ask, might not Congress, with as much propriety, make a law to number and mark our ploughs, carts, waggons or even our horses &c. and that when we wanted to use our ploughs &c. we must apply to a certain officer by law appointed for that purpose, namely: To grant us licence to use our ploughs &c. certifying when we should begin to use them, how long we might use them; and that if we wanted more time to finish our crops, or accomplish our journey &c. as the case might be, supposing it should be only a day or two, we wanted, or a small remnant of a month we must stop our ploughs, leave our carts &c. from home; or else take out a new licence for a whole month; or be subjected to a heavy fine. It is dangerous to the health, and lives of the citizens, because it punishes, and unnecessarily drives them night and day in a sickly season of the year, to avoid being ruined by a heavy and oppressive duty. Upon the whole, if liberty breathes through any part of this law, I have lost my ideas of republicanism.

Ex. Off.—But there is one comfort, viz. you are only one of a discontented few, who say a word against it.

Distiller.—That may show the meekness, and patience of Americans in general, and their desire of supporting a government honorable to them; knowing that the eyes of all the world are upon them, if their governors would let them be only half free (I mean) enjoy liberty in a tolerable degree: but let me tell you, that from what little I know; though that is but little, that Americans have some courage yet, and that very few like the excise law, as it now stands; except it be those who

are inclined with aristocratism, and I fear if a rupture should turn up, the consequences would be very serious.

Ex. Off.—Then I suppose, you think that Congress, is composed of a set of aristocratical tyrants!

Distiller.—I have not said so; but if I may be permitted to speak freely, I think from their proceedings in this matter, and some other things that I have discovered in their management; that they mean to try what we can bear: and it is my opinion as an individual, that it is the best way to let them know, or at least, keep them in mind, that they are our servants, and not our masters.

Ex. Off. Be careful lest you speak treason.

Ex. Off.—I am not afraid of that in this case, for I have seen, and noticed the constitution, on this particular.

Ex. Off.—But it appears you are too warm and noisy.

Distiller.—Well I may: for I do not know but you are come to take me in, by some of the enjoining clauses of this law, (and it is evident there are many,) perhaps you are come to see, whether I have marked my house with capitals, DISTILLER OF SPIRITS, or whether I have not left out a letter, or been guilty of some little matter you can get hold of to bring me to punishment; these things, and such like, are enough to warm a man and, make him noisy too.

Ex. Off.—I see there is nothing to be done at present: I must pursue my business, but I shall see you before long and shall wish to know what you mean by the "other things you know of in the general government."—Good day to you.

Distiller.—The like to you Sir.

### Foreign Intelligence.

#### AMSTERDAM, August 18.

We continue to be kept here in the completest ignorance respecting the operations of the armies on the frontiers of these provinces. This day the post arrived from Maastricht; it appears that the last courier fell in with a party of French patrols, by which means we were deprived all last week of the letters from the Meuse. When the last accounts came away every thing in Maastricht was in statu quo. The gazettes mention that an action took place near the Meuse on Monday last in which the French were repulsed with loss; but of this event we have no particulars. The enemy, it is said are assembling a considerable force between Antwerp and Hoogstraeten, which should seem to indicate an approaching attack on Brabant.

It is said that the Spaniards have recently obtained some important advantages, and have forced the enemy to raise the siege of Bellegarde.

Six hundred men of the Dutch dragoon and Swiss guards arrived here on Saturday last from the Hague to reinforce this garrison; the cause of their sudden arrival is unknown.

#### HELVOETSLEUYS, August 19.

Yesterday two thousand British troops from England passed by this place to join the Duke of York's army. Two thousand more we understand are gone to Amsterdam, where 6 hundred Dutch troops arrived a few days ago.

Of the four hundred Dutch soldiers in garrison in this town only ninety are fit for duty; the remaining are ill of a fever which rages with great violence in this part of Holland.

#### LEYDEN, August 24.

From the Meuse there is no other intelligence but that on the 7th and 8th, the French seemed to be making dispositions for an attack, which however did not take place, and that in the mean while skirmishes were very frequent along the whole line of defence. General Kray, being reinforced by a division of Uhlans, and by a free corps of Michalourtz, has now on the left of the Meuse before Maelricht sixty three squadrons of light imperial cavalry under his orders. The Austrian army from Luxembourg to Ruremonde, is divided into six corps, the principal of which is encamped on three liacs near Tourou la Comte, covering an extent of ground of about four miles. This corps is computed at 35,000 men, and the whole 90,000. The pontoons were ready at Tourou. At Keer, on the right wing of the centre were expected the Minsters, Counts Mettermich, Mercy, M. de Waldeuis, &c. The Arch Duke Charles was gone from Aix la Chapelle, to Bonne, to pass some days. According to the report of some deserters, Quesnoy had surrendered to the French, who were now occupied with besieging Valenciennes and Conde. A great part of the French soldiers had returned to their habitations to get in the harvest, but they were expected to return by the 10th September, for a general review to be made near Tirlmont.

#### FALMOUTH, Aug. 29.

Sir Edward Pellew, in the Arcturion frigate and five others of Sir J. B. Warren's squadron arrived here this morning after a cruise upon the French coasts near Brest, and have brought in two home-ward bound West Indian men, retaken from a squadron of French frigates very near Brest harbour. They engaged the French, and even under their batteries destroyed a French frigate of 44 guns and two sloops of war. The bat-

teries from the shore kept an incessant fire on them—notwithstanding which our brave tars, after the ships were run on shore, landed and would have burnt the sloops, but finding about forty Frenchmen sick or wounded, they desisted.

Out of the frigate they took about one hundred prisoners, which are just landed, and are now marching to Kegillie prison. What is very remarkable, notwithstanding the fire from four batteries, (two of which they silenced) as well as the fire from the frigates and sloops, not one man was either killed or wounded.

The report by the Arcturion (one of whose officers I conversed with this evening, is that those French frigates twelve in all, but divided into four squadrons have taken twenty one sail of loaded merchant vessels from Martinico and the other captured Islands, nineteen of which are safe arrived in France.

#### DUBLIN, September 3.

It seems surprising that the dispatches of Lord Dorchester to ministry, should differ so widely from the reports of the American newspapers, relative to the misunderstanding subsisting between the United States and our government. That the intentions of both powers are mutually pacific, may certainly be depended upon; but the American people manifesting so strongly as they do a hostile disposition towards Great Britain, will render it extremely difficult for their Ambassador, Mr. Jay, to obtain such terms from our ministry as will appease their fury. And to this no doubt, is owing the extraordinary length of the negotiation.

#### PORTSMOUTH, August 31.

At a quarter before six on Friday evening last, L'Impetueuse, one of the large line of battle ships, lately captured by Earl Howe's fleet, and which lay but a small distance from the dock-yard, was perceived to be on fire, and flames bursting out with great rapidity, and forming a pillar of fire, that had the most awful appearance. Signals being immediately made, all the boats from the ships in harbor were manned, and forming themselves into two divisions, the boats lashed together, they contrived, at imminent hazard, to grapple the Impetueuse fore and aft, with strong chains, in order that when her anchor cables were burnt, she should be kept from moving, so as to endanger the Northumberland, which was near her, and prevent the conflagration from spreading, as might be the case if she was adrift. With these grapples the boats could also force her whenever the fire would be least dangerous, and they accomplished their purpose by keeping her in a proper station, until she burned down to the water's edge. There were some Spaniards on board, one of whom was preserved, after being much scorched by the fire. The others, it is said, fell a sacrifice to the flames, which were got under about nine, but not totally extinguished till 12 o'clock.

#### LONDON, August 29.

The articles put in requisition by the French in Brabant are as follow: the whole of the harvest: a part of the horses, oxen, sheep, &c. the sugar, soap, brandy, cheese, linen, leather, iron, lead, pot-ashes, &c. The assignats are there on par.

The Peggy, Capt. Lant, which is just arrived in the river from the city of Washington, has brought letters, which mention that the building of that capital is carrying on with inconceivable ardor; that the President's house was nearly completed; and that the capitol, in which the Congress were to meet, was just covering in.

Bricklayers, carpenters, and blacksmiths, were so much wanted, that the most enormous wages were given, while provisions in that city were about half the price they are in London.

As one proof of the sincerity of the Emperor, the command of the army is, it seems, to be taken from the prince of Saxe Cobourg, between whom and his Royal Highness the Duke of York, it is whispered, a difference lately took place. Whether that was actually the case we cannot assert on positive information of our own; but we can state with confidence there was hardly ever any agreement between them, or indeed among any of the Generals of the allies. During the late campaign, it was no unusual thing for the Germans to strike tents and quit the ground, without so much as giving to the British the slightest intimation of their designs.—Nay, in one or two instances, they absolutely destroyed the bridges behind them as if it had been their intention to prevent our troops from retreating. This honest manoeuvre (so in war every thing is fair, excepting the tricks of the enemy) was practiced when they quitted the neighbourhood of Tournay, with the view, it was thought, to compel the British to remain there to garrison the place; or at least to prevent them from carrying off their stores, which consequently were deposited in the Austrian magazines.

Generals Clairfait and Paulieu are to have the principal command in the new operations, but under the nominal direction of the Archduke Charles.

Accounts were yesterday received from Leghorn, of the surrender of Calvi, on the 1st inst.

#### Extract of a letter from Moun's Bay, August 24.

"On Friday last the 22d inst, a French cutter privateer was seen off the Land's-end to capture five English brigs and two Dutch vessels between the Long Ships and Wouff Rocks, about six miles from shore. She saw the Eurydice frigate standing in the bay.—The Swiftsure had scarcely rounded the Wouff Rocks ten minutes with a convoy to Cork. The cutter came down like a dart rowing 24 sweeps."

Count d'Artois continues at Rotterdam, under the name of Count Ponthieu. He goes abroad but seldom, and then always at night.

Last night died Mrs. Hardy, wife of Mr. T. Hardy, shoemaker, now confined in the tower under a charge of High Treason. Mrs. Hardy, a few moments only before she expired solemnly declared, that the separation from her husband & the uncertainty in which she was, respecting the time of his trial, was the occasion of her death.

The Belmont merchant ship, taken on her passage from London to the West Indies, had on board twelve or fifteen French emigrants, on their way to take possession of their colonial property.

#### FRENCH FLEET IN OSTEND.

On Monday afternoon, August the 4th, the whole force of French frigates, which have been so long assembling at Dunkirk, Boulogne, and Calais, sailed from the former place at two o'clock, and arrived at Ostend, under convoy of the following ships, which came into the harbor, and moored alongside the Salt Quays.

The whole amounted to 172 in number, including a few which entered next morning at nine o'clock.

La Robuste, a frigate mounting 36 guns, all 36 pounders. This ship was formerly a line of battle ship, and has been lately cut down, and carries the Commodore's flag, who is a Dutchman, and emigrated from Holland at the commencement of the French Revolution in 1782.

L'Imperible, a small frigate of 28 guns, commanded by Terreville.

La Videtta, a sloop of war of 16 guns, commanded by Citizen La Fontaine.

L'Inabordable, a brig of war commanded by De Chere, L'Azon Fleurs.

Two stout cutters—names unknown.

Three privateers, brig rigged.

One lugger privateer.

Seven gun-boats, brig rigged and schooner rigged; mounting each 3 guns brass twenty pounders.

Four Dutch galiots on a new peculiar construction, mounting from six to eight guns each, generally 9 or 12 pounders. These vessels are supported by props between decks, to prevent the weight of the metal from forcing in the deck, and have bulwarks or barricades made of faggots, and covered with tarpaulins to form ports for the guns; the tackles of which are fastened to stays and back stays from the cross-trees to the chains, and others running from the cat-head to the main shrouds.

The vessels are like logs on the water, and have a singular appearance.

Three armed bye-boats, viz La Flèche de Calais, La Succès, and the packet taken from before Ostend last year belonging to Capt Osborne.

These boats have on board 26 men each, and go always out in the evening, and return in the morning.

The officers and men are totally ignorant of the place of their destination, though they suppose it is some part of Holland—Flushing most probably.

Last Thursday night at 12 o'clock, the Tower was put into a perfect state of defence; the guns upon the wharf and round the battlements, were all loaded with grape shot. The tower was in the greatest confusion, and the prisoners in the greatest alarm; all this in consequence of a lying report, that several Kidnapping parties had taken refuge there, and that the mob were determined to attack it. It is impossible to describe the bustle and ferment this occasioned; the military were all turned out, and every person ordered to his post, as if a siege was really expected but all was quiet. Yesterday morning Mr. Pitt, Mr. Dundas, & Lord Loughborough, visited the tower and were there for a considerable time;—what their business was we have not learnt.

The number of British, Hanoverian, and Hessian troops at this time on the