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## THE CONDUCT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE towards the REPUBLIC OF GENEVA. By D. CHAUVER.

THE small republic of Geneva is just swallowed up in the immense whirlpool of the French Republic. On a theatre still covered with blood, and after conquests which have changed the state of the greatest powers, this event appears too small a matter to command the attention of Europe. But though it may not be interesting from its greatness, it becomes so from other considerations. The less this republic appears important, the more the perseverance of the French Directory, in order to conquer it, must astonish us: we are often disposed to pardon political crimes, when they are committed for the attainment of a great object; but a succession of perfidious and crafty proceedings, a truss of sworn alliances and violated oaths, in order to seize upon a small city without territory; a policy so wicked, pursued with such obstinacy, to accomplish an object so trifling, certainly merits the attention of all those who wish to be fully informed as to the true character and the future designs of the French republic.

Nothing can be more striking than the contrast of the flourishing condition of Geneva under the kings of France and its state of wretchedness and oppression under the French Republic. Louis XIV. in all the pride of his despotism, was tender of the independence of this city, although she had dared to open an asylum for the French fugitives, after the revocation of the edict of Nantes: he would have feared to tarnish his glory by using his colossal power against the feeblest of his neighbors: the little republic had permission to exist, to flourish by the side of the great monarchy, to enrich itself upon the loaves of France, and receive subjects who were considered as rebels. It is well known to what a degree of prosperity this city had arrived by commerce, by learning, by liberty, by that love of country which the Genevans carried even to enthusiasm. She had gained to herself in Europe a name far superior to her extent and her resources. There was scarcely a single branch of literature and philosophy, in which she had not furnished some illustrious men.

After the birth of the French republic, Geneva one would think, ought on all accounts to enjoy still greater security. So much apparent respect for the rights of man! so many protestations in favor of the independence of the people! such a predilection for popular governments! Was not all this a lure? Had ancient liberty any cause to tremble at the voice of these enthusiasts, who in the fervor of a new zeal, spoke only of letting all nations free? Nevertheless these pretended republicans could not bear the existence of a little republic; these pretended avengers of the crimes of kings have destroyed that independence, against which kings had not aimed a blow.

Details now become necessary. To render them complete, we should be obliged to follow the French government through the labyrinth of its in-

trigues, of its perjuries; but I shall content myself with shewing, that it has never lost sight of the acquisition of Geneva, either by open conquest or a fraudulent union. If this scheme has ever for a moment been abandoned it was soon revived. Of this the following facts furnish abundant proof.

At the time of the invasion of Savoy by the French army, Geneva obtained a reinforcement of 1200 men from the Canton of Berne. This precaution, stipulated by treaties, and intended solely for purposes of defence, had been carried into effect in the preceding wars and did not give the least umbrage. But the Committee of Public Safety had their secret views; the neutrality of Geneva embarrassed them; the possession of this city appeared of importance for two reasons; to obtain an influence over Switzerland, of which this city is the key on the side of the Alps, and to secure the new conquest of Savoy. When the Committee of Public Safety saw that the Genevans were determined to preserve a neutrality, they pretended to be offended at their calling in the Swiss, as an offensive precaution; they ordered General Montelquieu to commence the siege of the city. It was deemed necessary to deprive Geneva of her liberty, to prove that it had done wrong in meditating its defence.

General Montelquieu having entered into a negotiation with the Genevans, was ashamed to participate in such flagrant injustice. They gave him convincing proofs that he was only the instrument of the vengeance of a man who was then all powerful in the party of the Gironde. He gave this information to the Committee of Public Safety; he represented to them that France ought not to begin her republican career, by the destruction of a republican ally whose conduct was irreproachable. At that period, considerations of this nature still had weight; they still felt the necessity of paying some deference to the public opinion. They permitted him to sign a treaty of peace with Geneva; but he was immediately sacrificed. Obligated to acknowledge the independence of Geneva they revenged themselves on him who had disappointed them of their prey, and added to it an act of perfidy, by refusing to ratify the treaty signed by their plenipotentiary; this too, after the Genevans had on their part fulfilled the conditions of it, and by sending back the 1200 Swiss, had rendered themselves incapable of continuing their resistance. They were obliged to dissemble their resentment; but from that time they were able to form a correct judgment as to the views of the French government.

On abandoning open force the French ministry had recourse to intrigue, in order to accomplish their object. They applied themselves industriously at Geneva, to form a party which would demand the union of the small republic to France. For this purpose but a few followers were necessary, whom they would have represented to all Europe as constituting the nation; whilst the great body of the citizens, accused of aristocracy, would have been denounced as the oppressors of liberty. Geneva was from that time preyed upon by a croud of emissaries and agitators, who continually succeeded one another. When their machinations became too public, and they were denounced to the French resident, he ordered the

unskillful instigators to withdraw; but others soon succeeded and pursued the same system with less noise.

The principal agent of France, astonished at his want of success, resolved to destroy the government, and deliver up Geneva to a state of anarchy. The disorder inseparable from a revolution, would necessarily furnish opportunities favorable to his views. While the administration was in respectable hands, he could hope for nothing but if he could throw it into the hands of a popular club, he would have a prospect of directing it. He privately inflamed, by his promises, a very small body of demagogues, who were styled *Levellers*, an insurrection takes place: the government could have repented it with ease; but they knew that every thing was directed by France; that the troops at the gates of Geneva were ready to enter; they were fearful of bringing on a quarrel; they submitted rather than risk their independence. The councils were changed; the administration was then given to the *Levellers*.

The object of this insurrection still remained unaccomplished. The *Levellers*, become matters, were as zealous for Genevan independence as the other citizens. With all possible solemnity they took an oath to preserve it. General Kellerman, who was near the city with a detachment of his army, came into it under a pretence of congratulating it on this revolution; but he in fact flattered himself that his presence would encourage the partisans of France to demand the union. With this view he visited all the popular clubs he and his officers lavished upon them the most seducing caresses; some of them affecting a double intoxication of wine and of sentiment, made open attempts; whilst the General, always reserved, kept himself prepared for every event. One of them imprudently said, that he did not ask the Genevans to unite with France, but he begged them to permit France to unite with them: *you are all soldiers of Liberty*, said he, *we want you to direct our infancy*. Kellerman was astonished. He did not find a single partizan; on the contrary every body in Geneva talked to him of country and independence; this cry was incessantly sounded in his ears. He was doubtless unwilling to participate in transactions so odious as those they expected from him; and his report completely undeceived the French government.

They appeared to abandon the scheme of forcing the union of Geneva. Amidst the torrent of events which pressed upon them, they gave out a subordinate attention to this object. But Soulavie, an agent of France, who was at Geneva in 1794, in quality of Resident, a man known only by his crimes, a priest of infamous character, the author of some obscene performances, returned the design of tripping over the independence of Geneva and of acquiring new merit by the commission of crimes which had at least the glare of ambition. By means of some perverse

*\* At one of the most popular clubs, a man animated with republican enthusiasm pressed him to drink from a cup he presented to him; it will be sacred in your eyes, said he, when you know that it is a gift of J. J. Rousseau; you will not believe that men who drink out of this cup will ever betray their country and abandon its independence.*

men, he organized a new insurrection. Under pretence of an aristocratic plot, he set on foot two clubs known by their violence and audacity: they were composed of men, who having lost every habit of industry in the idleness of the revolution, waited only for an opportunity to plunder. The insurrection takes place at midnight; the government, weakened by divisions, remains inactive; eight hundred citizens are disarmed and dragged to the prisons; others, intimidated, dare not think of defence, for fear of redoubling the fury of the clubs against those unfortunate hostages. A revolutionary tribunal begins a series of horrible judgments; confiscations accompany assassinations; and the republic is covered with blood and pollution.

In the midst of these horrors, not one voice is heard for the union with France. Soulavie, disconcerted, endeavors to provoke the commission of crimes, as if for revenge because Geneva still eludes his enterprises.

The fall of Robespierre, which happened soon after, and the change of system in France, put an end to the fury of the Jacobins at Geneva; the government resumed its usual course. Soulavie was denounced; his wicked attempts were clearly proved against him; he was recalled; he was ever put in arrest; they feigned to institute a prosecution against him; but the object he had in view gave a favorable colouring to his crime; and they did not wish to discourage those who would pursue the same line of conduct. Soulavie went unpunished.

Adet, who was sent to supply his place, at first inspired by his conduct some degree of confidence; whether he better knew how to dissemble his views, or whether circumstances were less favorable to him, he offered the republic to take breath; it was even thought that France had abandoned her schemes against Geneva. Reybaz, the Genevan minister at Paris, a wise and able man, obtained a personal consideration which removed all difficulties from the concerns of the small, with the great republic. The National Assembly gave him a solemn audience. The Genevan flag was associated with the American flag. The Directory seemed to do themselves honor by all the distinctions which they granted to the weakest power in Europe. In raising it to an equality, they would appear to elevate themselves. They wished to have it believed that the republican character consecrated that small nation in their eyes, and that power itself could never overleap the circle traced by the hand of liberty and justice.

All this pageantry was intended only to deceive. They began to form schemes against Switzerland; but the time for their execution had not yet arrived; it was necessary to lull the Helvetic governments to sleep, that they might be found defenceless at the moment of attack. The first circumstance which alarmed the Genevans as to the intentions of the Directory, was an imperious requisition addressed to the councils, to recall Reybaz, without alleging any complaint against him. What was his offence? He had learned by certain information, that Lacroix, minister for foreign affairs, did not dissemble, that Geneva, sooner or later, must belong to France. Reybaz communicated to the government of Geneva what it would have been treasonable in him to

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