



MISCELLANY.

"Omnes ungue bosculos, carpanus atque delibemus."

FROM KNICKERBOCKER'S HISTORY OF NEW YORK.

Philosophical reflections on the folly of being happy in time of prosperity.—How William the Testy by his great learning had well nigh ruined the province thro' a Cabalistic word; also, how he enriched it by a multitude of good-for-nothing laws, &c. with divers other matters which will be found out upon perusal.

While William the Testy was busily engaged in repelling his bitter enemies the Yankees, on one side, we find him suddenly molested in another quarter, and by other assailants. A vagrant colony of Swedes, under the conduct of Peter Minnewits, and professing allegiance to that redoubtable virago, Christiana queen of Sweden, had settled themselves and erected a fort on south (or Deleware) river—within the boundaries, claimed by the government of the New-Netherlands. History is mute as to the particulars of their first landing, and their real pretensions to the soil, and this is the more to be lamented; as this same colony of Swedes will hereafter be found most materially to affect, not only the interests of the Netherlanders, but of the world at large!

In whatever manner therefore, this vagabond colony of Swedes first took possession of the country, it is certain that in 1638, they established a fort, and Minnewits, according to the off hand usage of his cotemporaries, declared himself governor of the adjacent country, under the name of the province of New-Sewden. No sooner did this reach the ears of the choleric Wilhelmus, than, like a true spirited chieftan, he immediately broke into a violent rage, and calling together his council, belaboured the Swedes most lustily in the longest speech that had ever been heard in the colony since the memorable dispute of Ten breeches and Tough breeches. Having thus given vent to the first ebullitions of his indignation, he had resort to his favourite measure of proclamation, and dispatched one, piping hot, in the first year of his reign, informing Peter Minnewits that the whole territory, bordering on the south river, had, time out of mind, been in possession of the Dutch colonists, having been "beset with forts, & sealed with their blood."

The latter sanguinary sentence, would convey an idea of direful war and bloodshed; were we not relieved by the information that it merely related to a fray, in which some half a dozen Dutchmen had been killed by the Indians, in their benevolent attempts to establish a colony and promote civilization.—By this it will be seen that William Kieft, though a very small man, delighted in big expressions, and was much given to a praise-worthy figure in rhetoric, generally cultivated by your little great men, called hyperbole.—A figure which has been found of infinite service among many of his class, and which has helped to swell the grandeur of many a mighty self-important, but windy chief magistrate. Nor can I resist in this place, from observing how much my beloved country is indebted to this same figure of hyperbole, for supporting certain of her greatest characters—statesmen, orators, civilians and divines; who by dint of big words, inflated periods, and windy doctrines, are kept afloat on the surface of society, as ignorant swimmers are buoyed up by blown bladders.

The proclamation against Minnewits concluded by ordering the self-dubbed governor, and his gang of Swedish adventurers, immediately to leave the country under penalty of the high displeasure, and inevitable vengeance of the puissant government of Nieuw Nederlandts. This "strong measure," however, does not seem to have had a whit more effect than its predecessors, which had been thundered against the Yankees—the Swedes resolutely held on to the territory they had taken possession of—whereupon matters for the present remained in statu quo.

There is a certain description of active legislators, who by shrewd management, contrive always to have a hundred irons on the anvil, every one of which must be immediately attended to; who consequently are ever full of temporary shifts and expedients, patching up the public welfare and cobbling the national affairs, so as to make nine holes where they mend one—stopping chinks and flaws with whatever comes first to hand, like the Yankees I have mentioned stuffing old clothes in broken windows. Of this class of statesmen was William the Testy—and had he only been blessed with powers equal to his zeal, or his zeal been disciplined with a little discretion, there is but very little doubt but he would have made the greatest governor of his size on record—the renowned governor of the island of Barataria alone excepted.

The great defect of Wilhelmus Kieft's policy was, that though no man could be more ready to stand forth in an hour of emergency, yet he was so intent upon guarding the national pocket, that he suffered the enemy to break its head—in other words, whatever precaution for public safety he adopted, he was so intent upon rendering it cheap, that he invariably

rendered it ineffectual. All this was a remote consequence of his profound education at the Hague—where having acquired a smattering of knowledge, he was ever after a great conner of indexes, continually dipping into books, without ever studying to the bottom of any subject; so that he had the scum of all kinds of authors fermenting in his pericranium. In some of these title page researches he unluckily stumbled over a grand political cabalistic word, which, with his customary facility he immediately incorporated into his great scheme of government, to the irretrievable injury and delusion of the honest province of Nieuw Nederlandts, and the eternal misleading, of all experimental rulers.

The word which had so wonderfully arrested the attention of William the Testy and which in German characters, had a particularly black and ominous aspect, on being fairly translated into the English is no other than *economy*—a talismanic term, which by constant use and frequent mention, has ceased to be formidable in our eyes, but which has as terrible potency as any in the arcana of necromancy.

When pronounced in a national assembly it has an immediate effect in closing the hearts, beclouding the intellects, drawing the purse strings and buttoning the breeches pockets of all philosophic legislators. Nor are its effects on the eye less wonderful. It produces a contraction of the retina, an obscurity of the crystalline lens, a viscosity of the vitreous and an inspiration of the aqueous humours, an induration of the tunica sclerotica, and a convexity of the cornea; inasmuch that the organ of vision loses its strength and perspicuity, and the unfortunate patient becomes *myopes* or in plain English, pur-blind; perceiving only the amount of immediate expense without being able to look further, and regard it in connexion with the ultimate object to be effected.—"So that," to quote the words of the eloquent Burke, "a briar at his nose is of greater magnitude than an oak at five hundred yards distance." Such are its instantaneous operations, and the results are still more astonishing.—By its magic influence seventy-fours, shrink into frigates—frigates into sloops, and sloops into gun-boats. As the defenceless fleet of Eneas, at the command of the protecting Venus, changed into sea nymphs, and protected itself by diving; so the mighty navy of America, by the cabalistic word *economy*, dwindles into small craft, and shelters itself in a mill-pond!

This all potent word, which served as his touchstone in politics, at once explains the whole system of proclamations, protests, empty threats, windmills trumpeters, and paper war, carried on by Wilhelmus the Testy—and we may trace its operations in an armament which he fitted out in 1642 in a moment of great wrath; consisting of two sloops and thirty men, under the command of Mynheer Jan Jansen Alpendam, as admiral of the fleet, and commander in chief of the forces. This formidable expedition, which can only be paralleled by some of the daring cruizes of our infant navy, about the bay and up the sound; was intended to drive the Marylanders from the Schuykill, of which they had recently taken possession—and which was claimed as part of the province of New Nederlandts—for it appears that at this time our infant colony was in that enviable state, so much coveted by ambitious nations, that is to say, the government had a vast extent of territory; part of which it enjoyed, and the greater part of which it had continually to quarrel about.

Admiral Jan Jansen Alpendam was a man of great mettle and prowess; and no way dismayed at the character of the enemy; who were represented as a gigantic gunpowder race of men, who lived on hoe cakes and bacon, drank mint juleps and brandy toddy, and were exceedingly expert at boxing, biting, gouging, tar and feathering, and a variety of other athletic accomplishments, which they had borrowed from their cousins german and prototypes the Virginians, to whom they have ever borne considerable resemblance—notwithstanding all these alarming representations, the admiral entered the Schuykill most undauntedly with his fleet, and arrived without disaster or opposition at the place of destination.

Here he attacked the enemy in a vigorous speech in low dutch, which the wary Kieft had previously put in his pocket; wherein he courteously commenced by calling them a pack of lazy, louting, dram drinking, cock fighting, horse racing, slave driving, tavern haunting, sabbath breaking, mulatto breeding upstarts—and concluded by ordering them to evacuate the country immediately—to which they most laconically replied in plain English (as was very natural for Swedes) "they'd see him d—d first."

Now this was a reply for which neither Jan Jansen Alpendam, nor Wilhelmus Kieft had made any calculation—and finding himself totally unprepared to answer so terrible a rebuff with suitable hostility he concluded, like a most worthy admiral of a modern English expedition, that his wisest course was to return home and report progress. He accordingly sailed back to New-Amsterdam, where he was received with great honours, and considered as a pattern for all commanders; having achieved a most hazardous enterprise, at a trifling expense of treasure, and without losing a single man to the state!—He was unanimously called the deliverer of his country; (an appellation liberally bestowed on all great

men) his two sloops having done their duty, were laid up (or dry docked) in a cove now called the Albany Basin, where they quietly rotted in the mud; and to immortalize his name, they erected by subscription, a magnificent shingle monument on the top of Platen barrack Hill, which lasted three whole years; when it fell to pieces, and was burnt for fire-wood.

Among the many wrecks and fragments of exalted wisdom, which have floated down the stream of time, from venerable antiquity, and have been carefully picked up by those humble, but industrious wights, who ply along the shores of literature, we find the following sage ordinance of Charondas, the locrian legislator.—Anxious to preserve the ancient laws of the state from the additions and improvements of profound "country members," or officious candidates for popularity, he ordained, that whoever proposed a new law, should do it with a halter about his neck; so that in case his proposition was rejected, he was strung up—and there the matter ended.

This salutary institution had such an effect, that for more than two hundred years there was only one trifling alteration in the criminal code—and the whole race of lawyers starved to death for want of employment. The consequence of this was, that the locrians being unprotected by an over whelming load of excellent laws, and undefended by a standing army of pettifoggers & sheriff's officers, lived very lovingly together, and were such a happy people, that we scarce hear any thing of them throughout the whole Grecian history—for it is well known that none but your unlucky, quarrelsome, rantipole nations make any noise in the world.

Well would it have been for William the Testy, had he happily, in the course of his "universal acquirements," stumbled upon this precaution of the good Charondas. On the contrary, he conceived that the true policy of a legislator was to multiply laws, and thus secure the property, the persons and the morals of the people, by surrounding them in a manner with men traps and spring guns, and besetting even the sweet sequestered walks of private life, with quick-set hedges, so that a man could scarcely turn, without the risk of encountering some of these pestiferous protectors. Thus was he continually coining petty laws, for every petty offence that occurred, until in time they became too numerous to be remembered, and remained like those of certain modern legislators, in a manner dead letters—revived occasionally for the purpose of individual oppression, or to entrap ignorant offenders.

Petty courts consequently began to appear, where the law was administered with nearly as much wisdom and impartiality as in those august tribunals the aldermen's and justice shops of the present day. The plaintiff was generally favoured, as being a customer and bringing business to the shop; the offences of the rich were discreetly winked at—for fear of hurting the feelings of their friends;—but it could never be laid to the charge of the vigilant burgomasters, that they suffered vice to skulk unpunished, under the disgraceful rags of poverty.

About this time may we date the first introduction of capital punishments—a goodly gallops being erected on the water-side, about where Whitehall stairs are at present, a little to the east of the battery. Hard by also was erected another gibbet of a very strange, uncouth and unmatched description, but on which the ingenious William Kieft valued himself not a little, being a punishment entirely of his own invention.

It was for loftiness of altitude not a whit inferior to that of Haman, so renowned in bible history; but the marvel of the contrivance was, that the culprit instead of being suspended by the neck, according to veneral custom, was hoisted by the waistband, and was kept for an hour together, dangling and sprawling between heaven and earth—to the infinite entertainment and doubtless great edification of the multitude of respectable citizens, who usually attend upon exhibitions of the kind.

It is incredible how the little governor chuckled at beholding caitiff vagrants and sturdy beggars thus swinging by the breech, and cutting antic gambols in the air. He had a thousand pleasantries, and mirthful conceits to utter upon the occasions. He called them his dandle-ions—his wild fowl—his high flyers—his spread eagles—his goshawks—his scare crows and finally his *gallops birds*, which ingenious appellation, though originally confined to worthies who had taken the air in this strange manner, has since grown to be a cant name given to all candidates for legal elevation. This punishment moreover, if we may credit the assertion of certain grave etymologists, gave the first hint for a kind of harnessing, or strapping, by which our forefathers braced up their multifarious breeches, and which has of late years been revived and continues to be worn at the present day. It still bears the name of the object to which it owes its origin; being generally termed a pair of *gallops-es*—though I am informed it is sometimes vulgarly denominated *suspenders*.

It is an irreparable loss to posterity, that of the innumerable laws enacted by William the Testy, which doubtless formed a code that might have vied with those of Solon, Lycurgus or Sancho Panza, but few have been handed down to the present day, among which the most important is one framed in an unlucky moment, to prohibit the universal practice of

smoking. This he proved by mathematical demonstration, to be not merely a heavy tax upon the public pocket, but an incredible consumer of time, a hideous encouragement of idleness, and of course a deadly bane to the morals of the people. Ill fated Kieft!—had he lived in this most enlightened and liberal age, and attempted to subvert the inestimable liberty of the press, he could not have struck more closely, upon the sensibilities of the million.

The populace were in as violent a turmoil as the constitutional gravity of their deportment would permit—a mob of factious citizens had even the hardihood to assemble around the little governor's house, where setting them resolutely down, like a besieged army before a fortress, they one and all fell to smoking with a determined perseverance, that plainly evinced it was their intention, to funk him to terms with villainous Cow-pen muddling.—Already was the stately mansion of the governor enveloped in murky clouds, and the puissant little man almost strangled in his hob when bethinking himself, that there was no instance on record, of any great man of antiquity perishing in so ignoble a manner (the case of Pliny the elder being the only one that bore any resemblance)—he was fain to come to terms, & compromise with the mob, on condition that they should spare his life, by immediately extinguishing their tobacco pipes.

The result of the armistice was, that though he continued to permit the custom, of smoking, yet did he abolish the fair long pipes which prevailed in the days of Wouter Van Twiller, denoting ease, tranquillity and sobriety of deportment, and in place thereof introduced little captious short pipes, two inches in length; which he observed could be stuck in one corner of the mouth, or twisted in the hand, and would not be in the way of business. But mark, oh reader! the deplorable consequences. The smoke of these villainous little pipes—continually ascending in a cloud about the nose, penetrated into & befogged the cerebellum, dried up all the kindly moisture of the brain, and rendered the people as vapourish and testy as their renowned little governor—nay, what is more, from a goodly burley race of folk, they became, like our honest dutch farmers, who smoke short pipes, a lantern-jawed, smook-dried, leathern-skinned race of men.

Indeed it has been remarked by the observant writer of the Stuyvesant manuscript, that under the administration of Wilhelmus Kieft the disposition of the inhabitants of New Amsterdam experienced an essential change, so that they became very meddlesome and factious. The constant exacerbations of temper into which the little governor was thrown, by the maraudings on his frontiers, and his unfortunate propensity to experiment and innovation, occasioned him to keep his council in a continual worry—and the council being to the people at large, what yeast or leaven is to a batch, they threw the whole community into a ferment—and the people at large being to the city, what the mind is to the body, the unhappy commotions they underwent operated most disastrously, upon New Amsterdam.

On the 13th the Senate made choice of the Hon. Harrison G. Otis, as President. Mr. Otis had 14 votes and Mr. Dana 18. Nathaniel Collin, Esq. was re-elected clerk.

The votes for Governor and Lt. Governor of Massachusetts have been counted, and it appears that Mr. Gerry's majority over Mr. Gore as governor, is 2462. Mr. Gray is elected lt. governor by a somewhat larger majority over Mr. Cobb. The senate now consists of 20 Republicans and 20 Federalists.

Virginia Bank Notes.—A very clumsy attempt nevertheless in 1 or 2 instances practised successfully, has, we are told, lately been made to change five dollars Va. Bank Notes into 50 by the addition of a 0 and by tearing off the opposite corners of the notes, after the letters FI which designate the amount. This fraud is said to have originated with a scoundrel in Bedford county, who on the discovery of his base tricks, absented himself—Such are the devices—such the numerous checks; and such the elegance of design, and execution, of the Virginia Bank Notes, and for which the direction is entitled to great praise, that no attempt in this quarter has been until this, made either to counterfeit or alter them.—As the inexperienced only, will be liable to imposture, strict examination on their part, will in future be necessary, on receiving bank paper.—Lynchburg Star

Remarkable interference of Providence. During the gust on Sunday the 29th ult. a slight circumstance of providential mercy took place at Halifax township, adjoining maj. Wm. Moore's. Mr. Francis Hunt, his wife and five children, were seated in his house, between the stove and fire place. The lightning, struck the house. The electric fluid descended through the stove pipe, the shock of which immediately prostrated the whole family. They remained in that situation for some time; but have all recovered, except one of the girls, who is yet unable to walk, being considerably scorched. What renders this circumstance remarkable is that two cats lying under the stove, (and a hen that was in the room) within a short distance of the family, were instantaneously killed. In this circumstance is most strikingly depicted the merciful interference of Divine Providence. How many of our fellow creatures annually fall a sacrifice to this devouring element? And yet how many are miraculously rescued from its dangerous effects.—and afterwards recommence their mad and senseless shrewder mobs of America, who dislike having two minds upon a subject, both determine and act upon it drunk; by which means a world of cold and tedious speculation is dispensed with—and as it is universally allowed that when a man is drunk he sees double, it follows most conclusively that he sees twice as well as his sober neighbours.