

# STATE GAZETTE OF NORTH-CAROLINA.

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Letter to Mr. Pinckney, Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to the French Republic.

(Continued.)

**A**GAIN—“it is sufficient for the justification of his Majesty, that the colonies, which form a nation considerable as well for the number of their inhabitants as for the extent of their dominion, have established their Independence, not only by a solemn declaration, but also in fact; and that they have supported it against the efforts of their Mother country. Such was, in effect, the position of the United States when the King began to negotiate with them. His Majesty had full liberty of considering them as independent, or as the subjects of Britain. He chose the first part, because his SAFETY, the INTEREST OF HIS PEOPLE, invariable policy, and above all the secret projects of the court of London, imperiously laid him under the necessity.” The secret projects here referred to were those of reconciliation on terms which might satisfy the United States and procure a reunion and coalition for the purpose of attacking France. To avoid the risk of this proposed attack, to avoid greater danger in preventing the possibility of uniting the great portions of the British Empire against France, and thus essentially to diminish the power of France to consider the United States independent.

Having stated these things, they “ask if there is a sovereign who in the same situation with his Majesty, would not have imitated the example.”

Again—“He (the King of France) had no right to consider as Independent the colonies, who presented themselves to him with a character, especially after their ancient and demonstrated, by efforts as continual as possible, the impossibility of bringing them to obedience.”

To complete the justification of his Majesty nothing remains but to examine, whether the reasons of State, could have determined his Majesty to connect himself with the Americans. To treat this question with the clearness of which it is susceptible, the political interest of France must be viewed under two different relations; the first respects the other powers of Europe; the second respects Great Britain.

In treating with the Americans, after they became independent, the King exercised the right inherent in his sovereignty, WITH NO OTHER VIEW than to put an end to the predatory power, which long had abjured in every quarter of the globe.” The observations we suggest that by this conduct the King has continually watched over the interest of all the powers of Europe, “by contributing to maintain a power which has always carried to the abuse of her resources.”

The court of London having charged the King of France with ambition, and the project of diminishing the power of England, by his negotiations with the Americans, the observations declare that “Nothing more will be discovered in them [his engagements with the United States] on the most accurate scrutiny, than a diminution of this power, administered which England has herself provoked, by a conduct the most unjust and most irregular, and which the tranquillity and happiness of Europe have for a long time required.”

The most vigilant and consummate prudence could not devise adequate precautions against the enterprises of such a power; to which the only means of being secured from it, was to seize the opportunity of diminishing it.”

“It may then be truly said, that on examination of the conduct of the King—it was not only just and lawful but even necessary as well for the individual interest of France, as for that of all Europe.”

I will trouble you with but one more extract from the justificatory observations of the court of France.

“To deceive the other nations with regard to the real motives which have directed the conduct of the King, the British Ministry maintain, that he entered into treaty with the Americans, not because he feared the secret views of Great Britain, but because he foresaw that the Americans defeated, discouraged, without support, and without resources, were about to return to their Mother country; and that there was not a moment to be lost in reanimating and confirming them in their opposition. It was without doubt, for the sake of this assertion, that the British Ministry have thought beneath the dignity of their sovereign to search for the period at which France formed connections with the United States; it might with greater truth be said that this research did not coincide with their plan of defence. The King is willing to spare the British Ministry a task so disagreeable and embarrassing, by observing for them, that the conversations which led to the treaties of the 6th of February, 1773, were considerably posterior to the capitulation of General Burgoyne. Now it is notorious that this event elevated the courage and the hopes of the Americans, as much as it dejected the British nation, and principally the court of London. If then the King has listened to the propositions of Congress, after this period, so disastrous to the British, it has not been, and could not have been for any other reason, but because he thought with the United States, that their Independence was thenceforward irrevocable.”

In these extracts from the observations of the court of France, we see an open avowal of her motives for entering into treaties with the United States during our revolution, but do such motives afford any strong claims to our gratitude? She rejoiced at the prospect of a final separation of the thirteen colonies from Great Britain: She saw them erected by their solemn declaration into independent States;—but during near three years of our contest she continued waiting for some fortunate event that should ensure stability and ultimate success to our enterprise. This event took place in the capture of a whole British army. “Then the King listened to the propositions of Congress, because he thought with the United States that their Independence was irrevocable.” He then treated with the Americans “With no other view than to put an end to the predominant power which England exercised in every quarter of the globe. A diminution of this power (says the King) the tranquillity and happiness of Europe have for a long time required: The only means of being secured from it, was to seize the opportunity of diminishing it; and he did seize it.” He could “HIS SAFETY, the INTEREST OF HIS PEOPLE, invariable policy, and above all the secret projects of the court of London imperiously laid him under the necessity.”

After these repeated declarations on the part of France that her only view in contracting engagements with the United States was to diminish the British power, and thereby promote the safety and interest of her own people and the tranquillity of Europe—very unexpected indeed are the modern claims of boundless and perpetual gratitude? Nevertheless animated as we always have been with sincere desires to maintain those useful and friendly connections with France which had their foundation in our revolution, we should have remained silent on these claims, had not the frequency and manner in which they have been urged compelled their discussion. We are not now disposed to question the importance of the aid we actually derived from France in the war of our revolu-

\* Obs. p. 92.  
† Obs. p. 95-96.

tion: nor to retract the grateful acknowledgements that all America has from that time offered to that nation: we were in the habit of expressing our gratitude to her for the benefits which we received, although they resulted from her exertions to advance her own interest and secure her own safety. But if those benefits had been rendered from pure benevolence, from disinterested good will to us and we had been remiss in acknowledging them, is it the part of generosity, of magnanimity, constantly to upbraid the receivers of their favours with ingratitude? Do not such reproaches cancel the obligation? But if for favours apparently generous substantial returns are demanded, the supposed liberal act degenerates, and becomes a mercenary bargain.

If such only are the motives for our gratitude towards France at the commencement of her political and commercial connections with us in the midst of our war with Great Britain, what more can we discover at the conclusion of that war? Let us examine.

In 1781, with the assistance of a French army by land and a powerful fleet by sea, a second British army was captured.

This event made even the British government despair of bringing the United States again under subjection. The Ministry was charged, and the parliament passed an act to authorize the King to make peace. In the summer of 1782, an agent on the part of Great Britain repaired to Paris to negotiate with the commissioners of the United States. For some time Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay were alone at Paris. The commission to Mr. Oswald (the British negotiator) authorized him to treat and conclude a peace or truce with any commissioner or commissioners named or to be named by the colonies or plantations of New Hampshire, &c. (naming the thirteen) or with any persons whatsoever. Mr. Jay was not satisfied with his communication to Mr. Oswald: the independence of the thirteen states was no where intimated. Agreeably to their instructions from Congress to take advice of the court of France, the commissioners communicated Mr. Oswald's commission to the prime Minister, the count de Vergennes. The count expressed his opinion that the commission was sufficient; that it was such an one as we might have expected it would be: “That an acknowledgement of our Independence, instead of proceeding, must in the natural course of things be the effect of the treaty.” This opinion the court continued from time to time to repeat. In short, “It was evident the count did not wish to see our Independence acknowledged by Britain until they had made all their uses of us.” Mr. Jay still continued unmoved. He conferred with Mr. Oswald, and “urged in the strongest terms, the great impropriety, and of consequence the utter impossibility of our ever treating with Great Britain on any other than an equal footing, and told him plainly that he (Mr. Jay) would have no concern in any negotiation in which we were not considered as an independent people.”

It was on this occasion that Mr. Oswald communicated to Mr. Jay this article of his instructions:—“In case you find the American commissioners are not at liberty to treat on any terms short of Independence, you are to declare to them, that you have our authority, to make that cession: our ardent wish for peace disposing us to purchase it at the price of acceding to the complete Independence of the thirteen colonies.”

The British Ministry approved of this communication; but still was for treating with us as colonies, and making an acknowledgment of our Independence only an article of the treaty. Mr. Jay's discernment discovered the source of the backwardness at this time in the British court to admit our Independence previous to the negotiating of the treaty; and mentioned it with his reasons to Mr. Oswald; who far from contradicting Mr. Jay's inference, told him a fact which confirmed his opinion, that it originated in the court of France, and was communicated to that of London by the British commissioner then in Paris, to treat of

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