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POLITICAL MISCELLANY.

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The man who can, and will oblige the public with such rare and valuable productions as the following, is a public benefactor. And were it not known that to benefit the community is the writer's only wish, the Editor would certainly have very just reason, on his own account, to exclaim—

Que tibi, que tali reddam pro munere dona!

COMMUNICATION.

THOUGHTS and REFLECTIONS, ON THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.

When we read in ancient history the narrative of the great revolutions of states and empires, we naturally enough say, the people who lived in those times were very wretched; not only because they actually suffered the greatest evils, but because they passed the greatest part of their lives in the dread of them, so that they endured them twice.

Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether there is not, on this account, more apparent than real cause for our sympathy. It is far from certain, that the most surprising events in history excited so much emotions in the mass of the people, whose fortune they irreversibly decided, as they now raise in susceptible readers. We enter on the study of history with a reverence for antiquity; we expect instruction; we open a book with minds docile to the impression of the writer's art, and in the best ancient works that art is consummate. It is probably no less to the purpose of commanding our attention and our hearts, that we pursue the narrative from beginning to end, before their emotions have cooled; indeed, most frequently, with a sense of their progressive intensity. Here too, we see the connection of cause and effect. Time has torn off from things the laborious veils, with which party had contrived, at first, to hide them. Accordingly, facts appear in their nakedness and simplicity. We overhear wisdom herself giving warning and teaching lessons by example. The long departed nations, whom the conqueror's sword has cut off, still speak to tell us how long they struggled, & why they fell. The extinguished commonwealths, from the ashes of that unquenchable fire that their own divisions had kindled, now teach them that they themselves would seldom hear, and faction no longer mingles its clamors with their warnings.

We too, of this age, have seen enough of political revolutions; certainly more than happened in any sixteen years of the Roman history. The monarchy of France sunk before our eyes, like the plain of Sodom. In its place appeared the Dead Sea of a military democracy, black, bitter, giving life to nothing, and killing with its exhalations. Every republic in Europe, without exception, has fruited the contagion and is dead. All the monarchies nominally arbitrary, and yet really checked by laws, by privileged orders in the state, by ancient and revered customs, and still more by manners, all, all are gone except Russia; and the continent is subject to an ostentatious despotism, more like that of Severus than Augustus, and indeed more like that of Parthia than of Rome. Bonaparte seems more ambitious to pass for a Lilla or a Jenghis Khan than an Antoninus or a Trajan.

All this we have seen, with much vacant wonder, some curiosity and little instruction. We are oppressed with the mass, the multitude and the confusion of events. We mistake much, we forget more. Faction has been busy to distort the facts; to pervert the inferences, and above all, to hide the terrible results, which are now hastening their consummation.

For though we have hitherto looked upon Europe as if only speculative questions were depending, as if the fall of states might affect our commerce, but could never concern our safety, yet the discerning few already feel, and events will flash terror to the blind, so that all men will be convinced, that probably our republic will have, like the fallen

states of Europe, to renounce its independence, or to sustain a toilsome, long and bloody contest to assert it. The inevitable certainty of this alternative depends on a single event. If from despair or weakness, Great Britain should withdraw from the contest, or should fall in it, we fall, or stand by our strength and valor. It has pleased God, in the government of the political world to ordain, that the distinguished blessing of independence shall not be indulged to nations, who habitually prefer gain to glory; and who are of a spirit to suffer less apprehension from servitude than taxes. He seems to have left it to the bane, to be the artificers of their own fetters. Without pretending to penetrate the mysteries of his inscrutable counsels, we may presume to say; that though wars and conquests are great evils in the world, yet from those evils have grown many of the blessings and almost all the virtues of the civilized life.

Why then should we repine, because having chosen independence we cannot escape its consequences. Our vanity may say, we are a world by ourselves and have nothing to do with Europe. Our abject cowardice may try to partake Mr. Jefferson's consolations, in hope that the conqueror will accept of tribute instead of dominion. The battle of Austerlitz removed every obstacle on the land; Mr. Fox's peace, should he make one, would remove all impediment by sea, to the universal empire of Bonaparte, by sea and land. With Europe, including England, at his feet, we must have him for an enemy or a master.

It is so hard, indeed it is so near impossible to make a nation believe a thing, no matter how strong the evidence, against its inclination, that we shall have this choice to make, till we have lost the choice. Ambition is said to be the infirmity of noble minds.—But the low ambition that has placed our demagogues rulers, is utterly incapable of any generous effort. It is even far from certain, that they could not be reconciled to be prefects under Bonaparte, and it is perfectly certain that they would sooner take a commission under him, than risk a shot from his troops. With an administration that could not endure to look upon danger, we may expect our people will be told there is none; and it will approach unseen and without the least preparation to resist it, till resistance is too late. We should then sink as twenty other states have done, into emancipation. We should then be called allies, perhaps for three years, then advised to appoint a grand pensionary, who in due time would give place to king Jerome, in order that like the Dutch, we might enjoy monarchy, "the most perfect of all forms of government," and that our independence might be eternally assured against the agitations to which our tumultuous liberty is incurably subject. To those who choose to cast this representation a chimera, let this plain question be put. What hinders its being realized, in a year, if the British navy were destroyed? A nation that cherishes delusion, because it wants nerves to contemplate the tremendous approach of its dangers, might lose its liberty and still sleep soundly in chains.

Few persons will deny that the subjugation of Great Britain by France would expose the United States to the exactions, if not to the arbitrary dominion of the conqueror. But they will not believe that there is any reason to fear that Great Britain will be obliged to yield to Bonaparte; or that we Americans would yield to him, though the English should.

At this distance we see much of the display of the British power, and very little of their difficulties. Their wealth appears to us inexhaustible, their people are used to taxes and the government seems, by a singular paradox, to possess the energies of both liberty and despotism. We cannot therefore conceive that the British treasury can want means.

When we look at France and the dependencies, we see myriads of soldiers, few manufacturers, and not one merchant ship. We also know that a real poverty has surprisingly lessened her consumption of colonial produce, so that when the Americans are suffered to car-

ry it in their ships, there is so little vent for it in the French ports. As the French have ceased to be ship owners, manufacturers, seamen, and even consumers of colonial luxuries, we are ready to ask how is it even possible, that the progress of the war should give to France a naval superiority. The French might conquer the whole sea coast of the continent of Europe, yet if by conquest they banish its ships, seamen and trade, they would not advance a step towards the empire of the sea.

We may be right in the premises. We may safely say that the British empire in point of wealth exceeds Sidon and Tyre, Athens, Syracuse, Carthage and Rhodes. Probably her resources are more ample than all those famous ancient states, put together; and there is no immediate prospect that her naval supremacy will be lost, for want of pecuniary means. Hence we infer, that she may securely deride the power of France, however it may be augmented. We take it for granted, that her subjects have sense to see their danger, if the national efforts should be in the least relaxed, and patriotism enough to submit to the unparalleled toils, privations and sacrifices that those efforts indispensably require.

An invasion is far from impossible, and against a veteran French army, volunteers are no defence. Great Britain, no doubt, will train a large body of militia, to reinforce the army. But the men to fight and beat the invading French, must be regular soldiers. It would be folly, it would be madness for a nation to commit the fate of its liberties and independence to the event of a battle, between its militia and a veteran enemy. We may choose to say, and in our clubs and at our elections, we may try to believe, that a disciplined force is both useful and dangerous; but the presence of an hostile army would instantly dissipate that delusion. It is already dissipated in England, and they know that if they would beat the enemy's army, they must have one of their own. Military as France is, the English must have a numerous army. How numerous we pretend not to say; but we should suppose they ought to be able to assemble at least two hundred thousand well disciplined soldiers, to expel the French, if they should land in Great Britain or Ireland. At present, we do not believe they could muster a fourth part of that number of real soldiers.—Labour is not cheap in England. A rich commercial and manufacturing country cannot, without difficulty, raise troops. The price of an Englishman is as dear again as a Frenchman, and six times as dear as a Russian. In this view, it may be said, nations are disarmed by their prosperity.

The expense of the navy, and of such an army as is absolutely requisite to support British independence, must be enormous. The present expenditures of that nation are not less than Seventy Millions of pounds sterling, annually, and if it was peace with France to-morrow, their fixed rate of expence could not fall short of that amount, if their establishment was such as safety requires.

Inasmuch as Russia has become insignificant to the rest of Europe, and seems to be unwilling to make new efforts on such a scale and with such perseverance as would be necessary to regain her former consideration and influence, we really behold but two powers remaining, Great Britain and France. The one possessed of the empire of the ocean and the other of the land. If Great Britain falls, there will be but one power, and that power will be our master.

We think sometimes of peace because we think always of gain, but we seldom contemplate, and never maturely weigh, the political consequences of peace to our country, because we love gain with too ardent and exclusive a passion, to permit our thoughts to be long withdrawn by any other subject, however momentous, from its pursuit. As a nation, we are chargeable with the most astonishing apathy with respect to the infallible and tremendous effects that would immediately ensue, from the triumph of France. The men of 1776 would be uneasy in their graves, if they could know the bitterness of our national disgrace, and the abject insensibility of

spirit, with which we merit and endure it. Insults and aggressions from Spain, tribute to France, scarcely disguised by the imposture of a name, a prohibition to trade with St. Domingo, and a requisition to make laws to help France to make war upon Dessalines, would seem to those patriots not merely a blemish, but a surrender of that independence for which they bled. These outrages, however indignantly the brave and patriotic may endure them, will seem trivial.—They will pass for affronts that only can try our spirits; but if Bonaparte prevails, the policy of his domination will be to torture and extinguish it.

To a people once free, it will appear of all conditions of disgrace the lowest, to submit to the power of a conqueror. But even in the lowest deep there is a lower deep. We shall suffer the utmost aggravation of this condition, both in point of shame and wretchedness, for our conqueror would exercise his dominion by the faction of our traitors. Such is our distance from the metropolis of the great empire of which we should make a part, that our master must of necessity array a French party in the United States, and commit the force and treasures of our country to their hands, no doubt with the aid of a competent body of French troops. Such is the tenure by which all the European states subject to France enjoy the honour of her alliance. They are bound by a treaty of alliance to arm and maintain their masters. The country would thus be shipped of all power; and if the yoke should tire or crush the necks of the people, resistance could be made only by insurrection.

If any person should ask whether Americans could be found base enough to accept of places under French domination, we answer, they would quarrel for employment. Besides, we have foreigners enough among us, whose patriotism is a transferable stock to fill all offices. Has Holland or Italy or Switzerland disappointed the policy of France of each a host of traitors. Power will be offered them, power over their fellow-citizens and equals. When we see the ardour with which the Jacobins pursue that object, can we believe that they will, then first begin to have scruples when sovereignty is offered for a bribe.

There is not the least room for doubt, that France would be able, without abolishing our elections, absolutely to control them. American Frenchmen would seem to manage an independent government, more passively subject to the will of Bonaparte than the Seine. Our subjugation therefore would be riveted, before it was generally apprehended. Suppose the British fleet conveyed to the ports of France, or timidly laid up in peace, in the docks of Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Woolwich, would it be thought a safe time for the United States to enter the lists against the power of the great master of Europe? Would any body patiently listen to the proposal of going to war with France? What follows? The offer of an alliance in which every advantage in trade is promised.—We accept it.—Every advantage over our government could no longer be withholden. We should be exhorted, and exhorting would mean threats, and when necessary, compulsion, to delegate power only to the approved friends of our great friend. France would thus cheaply acquire the dominion of the United States, without our people so much as knowing when they first got it, or how it could be shaken off. They would certainly have it, and it is more than a thousand to one, without firing a musket to get it. There would for a few years, be more ostentation than ever in giving our country the appellation of Independent, and the diplomatic skill of France would, from time to time, permit its creatures exercising the prefecture of America, to play the comedy of independence, to remonstrate against French aggressions and to frame new treaties for the contribution of fresh millions of tribute. A power over our government would be felt to be a power over our money; we should be squeezed till rapacity could extract nothing more from our poverty.

If we are incredulous on this misrepre-