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NEW MATERIALS FOR THE HISTORY  
OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

*TRANSLATED FROM DOCUMENTS IN THE  
FRENCH ARCHIVES AND EDITED*

BY  
JOHN DURAND



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## PREFACE.

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TWO years ago I had occasion to examine certain documents on file in the French archives relating to the American Revolution, the French agency in which can not be exaggerated. I had not read many of them before I came to the conclusion that we were not yet as well informed about that event as we should be, a conclusion fully confirmed by a subsequent examination of the various histories of our country. France furnished a large proportion of the soldiers, arms, officers, and military supplies, nearly the whole of the navy, and most of the credit and money by which the war was successfully terminated. The risk to France was great, the cost enormous—amounting to twelve hundred and eighty million livres—and the effect on the country disastrous, increasing as it did the financial difficulties which led up to the French Revolution. In taking up the cause of the American insurgents France was obliged, in many respects, to control the war, and this necessarily made it a joint operation. Her military and diplomatic agents, consequently, provide us with a mass of documents in the shape of official letters and reports, which serve as a separate history of the Revolution, containing descriptions of men and events

from a point of view different from that with which we are most familiar. Hence the importance of the French archives in relation to it. Mr. Bancroft says (vol. x., p. 349, foot-note): "The French archives are rich in materials for every branch of history. In one they are unique. The despatches of the French envoys at Philadelphia to their government contain the most complete reports which exist of the discussions in Congress from 1778 to the adoption of the Constitution in 1789. Congress sat, it is true, with closed doors, but the French ministers knew how to obtain information on every proceeding that interested their country."

But Mr. Bancroft's use of these documents has been far from exhaustive. There will here be found much in the correspondence of Gérard de Rayneval and the Chevalier de la Luzerne, not hitherto accessible, which seems to me of the highest importance. It throws new light on two subjects of special interest, the hitherto secret debates of the Continental Congress, and the Cabal against Washington, as well as on the schemes of the politicians of the day who prevented an energetic prosecution of the war. De Rayneval was the first and de la Luzerne the second French minister sent to this country after the signing of the treaty of alliance with France. They enjoyed the privilege of being present at the sessions of the Continental Congress when it sat in committee of the whole and French interests were at stake. There are editions of the Acts of the Congress, called the "Journal," but I



have not been able thus far to learn of any other record of the Debates than that which is supplied by the official correspondence of these ministers. In any event, their letters give information of special value, and seem to me to add picturesqueness and dramatic interest to the American history of this epoch.

I have also thought it worth while to include some points not before published in English regarding Beaumarchais. To accepted facts taken from the "*Histoire de la Vie et des Temps de Beaumarchais*," by M. de Lomenie, I have added some matter entirely new from Gudin's biography just published, and some original material furnished me by M. Lintilhac, author of "*Beaumarchais et ses Œuvres*." This material sets the character of Beaumarchais in a light new to American readers and strongly appeals to their sympathies. In de Lomenie's work, of which there is an English translation, the relations of Beaumarchais with America are so involved with other subjects as to render the idea there given of his services to this country confused and inadequate.

The reader will find, in the correspondence of the French ministers, some passages relating to the character and career of Thomas Paine; also in the Appendix a remarkable letter by the author of "Common Sense," addressed to Danton, and here published in full for the first time. This letter is quoted in part by M. Taine, in his treatise on the French Revolution, and I am indebted to him for the copy.

I have also to acknowledge my indebtedness to

M. Doniol, author of the "*Histoire de la participation de la France à l'établissement des Etats-Unis d'Amérique, Correspondence diplomatiques et documents*" (an extensive work not yet completed), for special information and for the use of documents in his possession. I am also specially indebted to M. Lintilhac, for a copy of the original manuscript of the important letter by Beaumarchais translated and given on page 59 and following pages, now published for the first time; and to Mr. Henry Vignaud, First Secretary of the American Legation at Paris, for the privilege of consulting his valuable library of American history; and, again, to Mr. B. F. Stevens, of London, who is now, and has been for years, engaged in compiling a catalogue of all original documents in European archives relating to American history, a work which must prove of the greatest value to all seekers for historic truth.

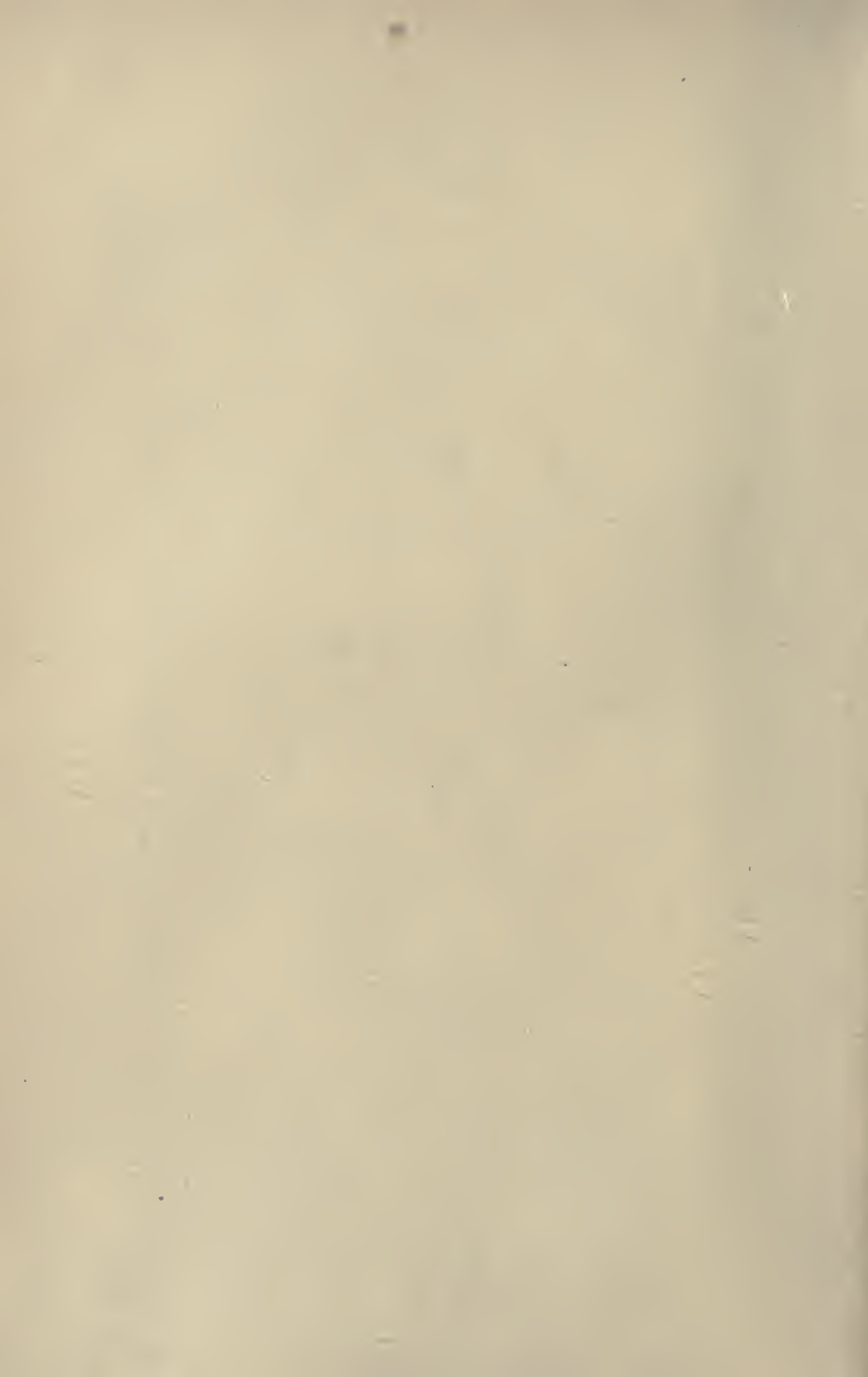
J. D.

PARIS, November 20, 1888.

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## NEW MATERIALS FOR THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

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### I.

#### BONVOULOIR.

A FRENCH gentleman named Bonvouloir, a sort of attaché to a regiment, and obliged to leave St. Domingo on account of ill health, passed through the United States during the early stages of the colonial rebellion. While in the country, he became familiar with the political sentiments of the people, and, on returning home, imparted the information he had obtained to the French authorities. Further information being required, the French minister at London sent Bonvouloir back to the colonies for that purpose, with strict instructions, prescribed by the Count de Vergennes, not to commit the government. "He must not look for any protection from us should he draw down upon himself the animadversions of the English." Bonvouloir sailed accordingly for America early in 1775, under the guise of an Antwerp merchant, and reached Philadelphia after a perilous voyage of one hundred days. Just before his arrival the Continental Congress had appointed a Committee on Secret Correspondence, with the

members of which he naturally entered into relations, but in a covert manner so as not to attract observation. His report of his conferences with this committee, dated December 28, 1775, one of the early documents concerning French intervention, is as follows :

“ PHILADELPHIA, December 28, 1775.

“ I find this country, as I expected, in an inconceivable state of agitation. The confederates are making immense preparations for next spring, and, in spite of the severe weather, are continuing the campaign. They have besieged Montreal, which has capitulated, and are now before Quebec, which I think will soon do the same. They have taken possession of some of the (English) King's vessels, loaded with supplies and war material. They are well entrenched around Boston, and are now getting up a small navy; their ardor and determination are incredible. It is true that they are led by clever men. They lack three important things, a good navy, provisions, and money; they agree with me in that. I am going to give you an account, word for word, of three special conversations I have had with Mr. Franklin and three other sound heads composing this privy council. I have

become intimate with them as a private individual, through an honest Frenchman of whom I am sure and who has largely won the confidence of the deputies. The name of this Frenchman is Daymons. I recommend him to you. He is city librarian.

“I have made no offers to them, absolutely none, *merely* promising to do everything for them that *depended on me personally*, without *committing* myself, and without *guaranteeing consequences in any fashion whatever*, and by means of my own acquaintances without imparting to these anything confidential.

“They wanted to know if France would help them, and on what conditions. I replied that I thought France *wished them well*; whether she would aid them, *that might happen*. On what basis, I *knew* nothing; but that if this should come about it would certainly be on just and equitable terms. Moreover, *if they deemed it apropos*, they might make their proposals; that I had reliable acquaintances and would undertake to *present* their claims and *nothing more*.

“They wanted to know if I thought it prudent in them to send a deputy with full powers to

France. I replied that this seemed to me precipitous, and even hazardous; that everything that took place either in London or in France got to be known in both places, and that it was slippery business in the face of the English; that if they wanted me to do anything I might *perhaps* obtain a response which would determine what course to pursue; that, in other respects, I would give no advice whatever; that I was a private individual, a traveler out of curiosity. But I should be much pleased if, by means of my *acquaintances*, I could be of any service to them; that I would not expose them, nor myself, nor *anybody*; that matters of this kind were too delicate to be spoken of indiscreetly, especially by one having no *right*, nor any *power*; that I could *guarantee* only one thing, and that was not to betray confidence.

“This secret council is composed of five members, whose names I will give you at the end of this letter; everything they do is well done, and necessarily without the sanction of Congress, which is numerous, and in which many false brethren have found their way. One was discovered a few days ago, and he has escaped pun-



ishment by flight. I have had frequent interviews with them in a private capacity. Each comes to the place indicated in the dark, by different roads. They have given me their confidence, after having stated that I would neither *promise, offer, or be responsible* for anything, and with repeated assurances that I would act as a *friendly individual*.

“The following is the result of our interviews, they themselves having charged me to report them to my *acquaintances*, as well as all that are to come, and even the state of their affairs, without asking me to whom, how, or when I should write, regarding me as a private individual enjoying their confidence.

“I. Their affairs are in a good state. . . . They calculate on opening the campaign with success. I have just learned that the savages of five nations have sent their chiefs to the general assembly (Congress) to assure it that they would remain neutral, but, nevertheless, if the occasion demanded, they would take up arms for the Americans; they are powerful, to be feared, and have been won over only by presents. Lord Dunmore, commanding in Virginia, had suc-

ceeded in forming a tolerably large party; he had issued a proclamation giving freedom to the negroes, and had already got possession of Norfolk, where he fortified himself. The Virginians, supported by a few companies of Carolina militia, have beaten him at three different times, retaken Norfolk, ruined the fortifications, and obliged Dunmore to withdraw on board of the King's vessels, ten or twelve miles distant from the town, where they are going to attack him if the ice permits. The Royalists have set out for New York to blockade it. General Lee is actually on the way there with five thousand men.

“They are satisfied they can not maintain themselves unless some nation protects them by sea; that two powers alone, France and Spain, are able to help them, but that they see the difference between one and the other. I dexterously managed to make them feel the superiority in every way of the King, my master, over Spain, and they are convinced of it; they have even determined, I think, for a long time, perhaps, to appeal to His Majesty. But it is evident to me that they want to wait until the opening of the campaign, for the reason that a

good many in the country still adhere to the King (of England) who has not yet done them sufficient harm. It would probably excite uneasiness to have a foreign nation interfere. Their object is to bring people over and make them feel the necessity of being helped, and I think that they are wise. They expect to have their towns destroyed and their houses burnt, which will ensure abhorrence of the leopards.\* They are to send *without my advice* a vessel to Nantes called the "John" or the "Saint John," captain Charles Forest, consigned to M. John Daniel Schweighauser, which will take my letter. I have myself put a man aboard who I know is safe; otherwise I should write by another channel; it is very important that not a word should escape you. The following are their demands which they beg me to present for them. The vessel is loaded with flour and other produce of the country, which they want to exchange for another sort of article.† As the imported cargo will probably exceed the exported cargo, they desire that it should be complete and

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\* Meaning the English coat of arms.

† War material.

the surplus be allowed to pass on to St. Domingo, to such persons and places as may be indicated, and that the payment for it be made in products of the country, as they have no coin. If there is any way of shipping the same species of merchandise to different places in St. Domingo, my correspondents would go for it there at their own *risk and peril*. They would like two men capable of managing fortifications. If they should come they would be sent for at Cape Francis, which is the safest way for them to reach this place, because, if anything should happen, they would run no risk, as the inhabitants of these torrid countries often come here on account of their health. Such are their present needs, they paying all expenses, and they beg me to make them known to my acquaintances. I would offer my insignificant talent as engineer, but I can not remain at rest, being obliged to stir about daily.

You will hear from me as often as possible ; I shall report strictly all that transpires. They are themselves well satisfied of the good-feeling of France toward them, and have begged me, in case I have reliable acquaintances, to inform

them of what concerns them, which I have promised to do and *nothing more*.

“If you think it best, despatch our vessel at once. Time presses. My envoy has orders, in case of pursuit, to throw his papers overboard. You can reply through him in perfect security according to the address given in my letter. Please write in my name to M. Buffon, merchant at Havre, for two trunks belonging to me which were to be addressed to him; they are of great value to me, as this country is a dear one. I am obliged to disburse money secretly, and I economize only for myself. . . . I have the honor to repeat that I have made no advances, nor given any *guarantee, absolutely* nothing. They have great confidence in me. No questions have been asked in any fashion whatever to whom, or where, I might address myself.

“Everybody here is a soldier. The troops are well clothed, well paid, and and well commanded. They have about fifty thousand men under pay and a large number of volunteers who do not want pay. You can judge whether people of this stamp will fight.

. . . . .

“I have full knowledge of all that passes, everything the most secret, and their deliberations are communicated to me; by flattering them, and showing my hand a little, I can do what I please with them. All have told me that they are contending for freedom and this they would have at any price; that they were bound by oath, and would be cut to pieces rather than yield; that they well knew they could not maintain themselves by sea, and that France alone was able to protect their commerce, without which their country would not flourish; that they were ignorant whether, in case proposals should be made, France would be content with an exclusive trade for a certain period as indemnity for the expenses she would be under on their account; that they could pay by a neutrality, even with a little help, in case of war between the two nations, and by inviolable attachment, in which they would never fail.

“I replied that this did not concern me; that they were cautious and wise, and would consider their own interests, but that when one asks one does not always lay down the law. They are more powerful than is supposed. You can not

imagine it, and it would surprise you. They are afraid of nothing—depend on that. It is rumored that two French officers have arrived in camp empowered to make proposals. I have been asked what I thought of this. I replied that I knew nothing of it, and that it seemed to me strange; France was very powerful, and, far from making offers, she did not even grant all that was asked of her.

“You shall be informed of all that occurs and have no false reports from me . . . . Nobody will become more confidential with them than myself, nor will manage them better. I shall keep you informed of their deliberations with which I am familiar; but at present they are concerned only with the ways and means of procuring munitions.”

“A long time has passed without writing to you. It is not my fault. The passage was frightful. We were at sea one hundred days, and thought we were lost a dozen times. We were reduced to two sea-biscuits a day which were worm-eaten, a small piece of corned beef with a small quantity of foul water, and nothing more, while we made forty tons of water every

twenty-four hours. Pay particular attention to the underlined passages in my letter.

. . . . .

P.S. I have just learned that the Royalists are about to evacuate Boston, where they have only one month's supplies and can receive no more. Everything is intercepted, and the inhabitants as well as the troops are reduced to a frightful extremity. Can you oblige me by sending me a case of mathematical instruments with a treatise on fortifications and on the attack and defense of places by M. Vauban? It will prove useful to me, as one cannot be found here. I am working day and night, only too happy if I succeed. I begin to speak English quite well.

“Here is the note I mentioned, the original of which, in the handwriting of these gentlemen, I keep:

“M.de B. . . . is requested by the Secret Council to consider and reply to the following propositions. It is understood that they are not binding and wholly between private parties.

“To wit,

“I. Can he inform us what the disposition of the Court of France is toward the Colonies of



North America ; whether it is favorable, and in what way we can be reliably assured of this ?

“ ‘2. Can we obtain from France two skillful faithful, well-recommended engineers, and what steps must be taken to procure them ?

“ ‘3. Can we have arms and other war supplies direct from France in exchange for the products of our country, and be allowed free entrance and exit to French harbors ?

“ ‘M. de B. . . . may rest assured that, if by his means we are favorably heard, we shall repose in him all the confidence that can be awarded to a man of distinction whose kindness toward us has not yet been recognized with sufficient gratitude.’

“ The following is my answer. If this should succeed (so they told a person from whom I know all that passes), they would regard me as one of the members of their Committee and would do nothing without my advice. They *regard me* as their liberator.

“ M. de B. . . .’s answer to the note of the Secret Council :

“ ‘I reply, gentlemen, to what you do me the honor to ask of me as positively as possible ; and will enlighten you to the full extent of the in-

formation which a private individual can possess who has nothing to do with the affairs of a ministry, but according to what I conjecture, public rumors, and what my acquaintances think.

“1. You ask what are the intentions of France with regard to the American colonies. I do not think that I say too much in telling you that she wishes you well, and that, *it is my belief*, she has entertained for you nothing but goodwill. In other respects, the best way to obtain reliable assurance of anybody's disposition is to address him directly. It is a hazardous step to take, and demands a good deal of consideration; I do not advise you one way or the other. I can not undertake it myself. The affair is too delicate.

“2. France is able to furnish you with two good engineers, and even more. You have only to ask for them. I have done this for you, gentlemen, without promising you success, although I anticipate it, having excellent correspondents.

“3. Whether you can procure arms and other munitions directly in France, in exchange for your produce? This is a matter between one merchant and another, and I see no great diffi-

culty about it in France. I will even give you the addresses of some good correspondents without assuming *any responsibility*. You undertake this at your own risk and peril, for it is probable that England will not remain quiet, and you can not expect to be defended. In any event, I do not recommend you to ship all to the same port. It might make a noise. I do not know if free entrance and exit in French ports will be allowed you. That would be openly declaring for you, and war might ensue. Perhaps they would shut their eyes, which is just what you want. I have the honor to repeat to you, gentlemen, that I am not responsible for anything. I am personally of no account; I have good acquaintances, and that is all. If I am so fortunate as to succeed I shall be more than compensated in the honor of your confidence and the pleasure of serving you.'

"I have just learned that they have taken two transport ships richly laden, but that they have lost one of their privateers. By next April they will have thirty ships of war of from twelve to forty cannon. They have abandoned the English flag and taken the rattlesnake for their arms, one of thirteen rattles along with the arm of a man

holding thirteen arrows, representing the thirteen united colonies of the continent. The Royalists have sent the American prisoners to London. General Washington, who had sent a flag to demand their exchange, to which a very rude answer was given, declared that if the prisoners were not well treated, he would retaliate on nearly three thousand which he had taken, and nearly all of them officers.

“The savages who sent their chiefs to Congress and entered into an alliance with the Americans, are as follows: the Tuscaroras, Senecas, Onondagas, Mohawks and Cayugas.

“The names of the Committee on Secret Correspondence are Messrs. Franklin, Harrison, Johnson, Dickinson and Jay.”

This despatch reached France in 1776, too late to be of much use; it simply confirmed what the government knew already. Silas Deane, in the mean time, had arrived at Paris, duly authorized to enter into negotiations with the government, which rendered the services of special emissaries unnecessary.

## II.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STATES AND SENTIMENTS OF THE PEOPLE.

THE following report, setting forth the characteristics of the various colonies in America, the sentiments of their populations, and the financial and political state of things generally, is, apparently, by a French officer belonging to one of the first detachments of the regular army sent over by the French government, about the period of the signing of the treaty of alliance. The writer remained in the country, it seems, only a year, being obliged to return to France in 1779, on account of ill health. His report, addressed to a superior officer, was written on reaching Paris, "in a filibustering style," he says, but with "the most impartial veracity."

New Hampshire is the first State he considers. This State "is scarcely of any account in the Confederacy; her assemblies echo those of Massachusetts. Far from being sufferers, the people have enriched themselves by captures. The Penobscot affair, which brought them in contact with the English, has more irritated than fright-

ened them. They have encountered but few Frenchmen, and like them better. Their gratitude to the nation has not been affected by the imprudence of individuals."

As to Massachusetts, "Boston is the head and heart. The French here are more liked than esteemed, being viewed pedler fashion, as so many shrewd bargainers, an assertion all recognize who have lived amongst them. The tone here is English. Four years of war have somewhat strained the springs of patriotism. Purely popular forms of government and of religion favor democratic virtues, but the commercial spirit and luxurious tastes (*luxé*) are gradually stifling the love of independence. Republicans here, like the Carthaginians, know to a penny the value of life and liberty. The State is divided into two parties; one calls itself Republican, and is composed of everybody who holds office, and is led by Bowdoin and Adams. One belongs to that double-faced class which styles hypocrisy moderation, while the other is sensible and intelligent, but indolent through principle and temperament. Bowdoin will probably be made Governor. . . . The opposition party, the true Republi-

can party, is led by Hanco(c)k. He is the King of the Rabble (*Roi des Halles*), or the American Beaufort. His credit with the masses is great; his policy is shrewd and even crafty. He is the more opposed to Adams because they were once friends, and to Bowdoin because he is a rival. He befriends us only because he hates them."

Rhode Island, "partly insulated, had no influence so long as the English held Newport."

Connecticut: "The brains of this State are in the head of Governor Trumbull. The burning of Fairfield and the barbarities of the English, who make war according to Levitical law, have rendered the people irreconcilable. They have no reason to complain of us. In evidence of the aid repeatedly received from France they much prefer Benefactors to Incendiaries."

New York, "ravaged since the war began, has likewise its intestine enemies. The Royalist party is large, but under the whip of the army. The Governor is a safe man, an enlightened Republican, and firm. Another safeguard is found in the dismemberment which is going on in this State; the Vermont colony, a stray swarm from the New York hive, is separating from it. This

people, half savage, pushes the independent spirit even to phrensy ; it will always keep New York straight. Their powder, arms, and clothing come from us ; they are very grateful, and have used all successfully against the English, whom they neither fear nor love."

Jersey, "almost on the borders of the city of New York, has shown heroic constancy. The militia turn out of their own accord at sight of a red-coat. The Governor, Livingston, is a Roman. A party against him has just arisen under the lead of Dickinson and Cadwalader, who, I fear, will supplant him. There are a good many Tories, but they are prosecuted as State criminals."

Pennsylvania : "This State is the province the most infested with Royalists. Quakers, Methodists, Anglicans and other sects, whose principles have a sort of affinity with monarchy, form intestine but paralytic enemies. The Quakers, at one time, were disposed to regard their interests as those of Heaven, but Fanaticism is an exotic plant which the climate repudiates. Patriotism is null in Philadelphia ; it has become almost farcical. Fortune is the idol in every



State. All who are well-off are corrupt at heart, and so athirst for peace that this would be welcome at any price. The Royalist party has met with a mortal blow. Last year, Mifflin and Wilson were foolish enough to side with the Monopolists, and the people rose against them. Governor Reed, a powerful man, as well as able and honest, protected them against popular fury, and now, out of gratitude, they feign friendship for him, and only oppose him in secret.'

Maryland "has not yet joined the Confederacy, in order to preserve its territorial rights; but its forces form a part of those of the League. The commercial men here are Royalists, but there are a good many military men. The Governor himself is one of these, slow, cool, and not very able, but safe."

Virginia "has made strenuous efforts. The hatred of England is that of brothers. Until 1779, she was divided into two parties, one that of Washington, and the other that of Lee and Gates, who wanted, they said, to unmask the idol. That cabal has fallen through, but in too noisy a way—it looks like persecution. The

sort of pity which it excites may provide them the means of recovery. An overstrained spring snaps and does harm. But if a revolution is being got up in this State, the General (Washington) has only to mount the first stump and the enemies of the government will vanish. The intestine enemies of the colony are the negroes. The whites, however, are not in such disproportionate numbers as to make emancipation, offered by the English, a cause of insurrection."

North Carolina is "feeble. . . ."

South Carolina "has neither moral nor physical energy (*ni force ni virtute*). Charleston, like all trading towns, is open to the highest bidder. The Governor, whom Provost bought up, hung himself. Were his head sent to Savannah it would serve as a warning to his successor, and Charleston would be defended. It is poorly fortified and could not stand a siege."

Next comes a general view of the political situation, and, first, of the Continental Congress. "Congress is divided. Private animosities, of infinite subdivisions, may be considered as constituting the two parties. The Eastern party, composed of the four New Eng-

land States, Pennsylvania, Jersey in part, and South Carolina, under Gates and Lee; and Virginia, Maryland, New York, North Carolina and Delaware, under Washington. The Eastern party, pretending that no one man of great personal influence should command all the forces of the government in a republic, which would thus be at his mercy, backs Gates, almost in spite of himself, and supports him as its leader; but that is a bugbear. His wife had persuaded him to mix in politics; he wrote to England, offering his mediation. But this was more for show than a well-considered step, of which the consequences had been foreseen and measures taken to maintain it. As to Congress, in spite of the watchwords France, England, Country, Liberty, with which the members cover up their mutual animosities, the secret motive of their cabals, intrigues, and everlasting bark is individual hate, or that between State and State, which the newcomers adopt through honor rather than through sentiment. In conclusion, the members of Congress are like husband and wife, always quarrelling, but always uniting when family interests are concerned.

“These illusive appearances have deceived the English and even the French. And yet nobody would dare broach the idea of peace without the intervention and adherence of France; independence is the rallying-cry of all parties.

“At the beginning of the Revolution, the East had the supremacy; in 1779 New York had supplanted it. I think that since Jay and Morris left it has resumed its post. The army consists of 13,000 or 14,000 men; that is to say, it is stronger than it has ever been, but it lacks arms and especially clothes. The Continental troops are not the ‘Rouergue’ regiment, but at the same time they are not Paris militia in the times of the Fronde. The men are gaining in discipline every day. The military profession, which demands great genius in the generals, requires only mediocre talent and superficial experience in subalterns. People of intelligence have shown this in military art. Farmers and merchants have become tolerable officers. There is one great defect in the organization of the army, the short term of enlistment. Two-thirds of the army have enlisted only for nine months; scarcely are they disciplined or instructed, when

they leave. The American recruit, however, is not exactly like a "Beauce" \* farmer; he is used to arms and knows how to load and fire. All are mercenaries, led by a few patriotic officers. The action at Stony Point has inspired them with a good deal of confidence in their own courage.

"The state of things in America is alarming, but not hopeless. It is that of an exhausted sick man who needs food rather than medicine, but administered by a father (General Washington), who understands his constitution and is the only physician for him.

"The Royalist party is numerous, but passive, despised, and only daring to work underground; it tries to excite distrust among the people on account of their alliance with papists, covertly circulating the idea that it is the insidious interposition of France which prevents peace being made, and that, being the natural enemy of the colonies, she tries to prolong this destructive war. But nobody utters this aloud; they dare whisper it only from ear to ear. They treat the interests of the country as a conspiracy.

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\* A rich farming district not far from Paris.

“The Republican party is outspoken, accusing the Royalists and even bringing them to punishment. It proves to the people that it must choose between slavery or independence; that a conquest of the country is manifestly impossible; that, if they separate from France, they are lost, and that it is their interest to cling to their generous ally like ivy to the oak. Such is the language of Congress, of public meetings, of sermons, of songs, and of the newspapers.

“Q. What has France to fear?

“A. England making an offer of independence, which alone would effect a change.

“Q. How to prevent this or avoid its consequences?

“A. By sending arms, clothes and money, or even still more efficacious means. To preserve the good-will of the people their pride must be humored.

“Let the political antipathies of individuals and the squabbles between State and State be what they may, General Washington is the Atlas of America and the god of the army. His authority is mild and paternal. He is probably the only man who could have effected a revolution,

This great man has only one defect, very creditable to him,—too much integrity for a party-leader.

“The Finances. These are in a great state of disorder and anarchy. Paper money is at a discount of 25 per cent., which is great, and more than it should be, considering the supply of money in trade. The surplus loss is due to the lack of national credit. The only resource is taxation. The people demand this. But the taxes will not suffice for defraying the expenses of the war. The surest means is a direct tax, or requisitions of produce. They would thus maintain their army. A draft would supply soldiers without recruiting. Every citizen in turn would have the privilege of defending his country.”

Another document called “*Reflexions Politiques d’un Citoyen*,” considered important enough to put on file, written in 1780, says “that the Americans are unable to provide themselves with clothes on account of their extreme dearness, all foreign importations having advanced in price from 150 to 200 per cent.” “Troops and money,” the writer says, “are indispensable.” He recommends France to enlist German sol-

diers, because the German language is better understood in America than French. He advises bribing some of the leaders in Congress by secretly granting them pensions. Arthur Lee is at this time the representative of America in Paris along with Franklin. "Lee is English at heart, undoubtedly under English pay, and he will do all he can against France. If I had not thought that imprisoning him would have had a bad effect I would long ago have recommended his being sent to the Bastille while the war lasts. . . . God forbid that I should think Mr. Adams like him, but I venture to state that Mr. Adams is a very cunning man and no friend of Dr. Franklin, so that it may be presumed that the Lees and the Adams are all so many heads under one bonnet. Dr. Franklin is an honest man, or I am much mistaken; I fear there are very few of his metal in America. The Doctor is very intimate with Mr. Hartley, member of the House of Commons, and, as the latter has often proposed that the King (of England) should make peace with the Americans, this intimacy should be watched."

Next comes an estimate of the people phys-



ically, according to the climate and the sections of country they occupy: "The Anglo-American," says the writer, "is fleshier than the Frenchman, without being taller. He is quite strong, of a robust constitution. His phlegmatic temperament renders him patient, deliberative, and consistent in all his undertakings. At the same time characters differ according to climate and temperature. Those who live north of the Delaware have more courage and energy; the rigid Presbyterian religion which prevails there strengthens this character; liberty is there carried to its maximum. The southern provinces, below Pennsylvania, accept a kind of subordination which naturally results from the great disproportion between fortunes, while the number of sects favors a sentiment of toleration. These causes, combined with the mild climate, render men less energetic and capable of enduring the fatigues of war; the Northern man, indeed, clears and cultivates his ground himself, while the Southern man has his slaves do this work."

Finally comes the disposition of the people in relation to the war: "The instigators of the

war are still at the head of the government, the party for independence being apparently the most numerous. The people in general, however, long for peace. Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, and Quakers are anxious for it on account of their dread of Presbyterian intolerance and persecution; the agriculturists of all sects desire it in order that they may quietly gather in their crops and attend to their business. It is also desired by the trading classes of every sect, and most ardently by the occupants of land remote from the coast, in the vicinity of the savages."

### III.

#### THE COUNT DE VERGENNES.

THE principal motive which led the French government to help the American colonists obtain their independence may be briefly stated as follows :

The Seven Years' War in Europe, growing out of complications in which the English took part as allies of Frederick the Great, came to an end in 1763. The advantage of this war to England was the humiliation of France. By the fatal treaty of 1763 France was obliged to cede Canada to the English, with certain possessions in the West Indies and Senegal; she lost additionally her foothold in India, and had her commerce completely broken up. Her greatest affliction, however, was the placing of the port of Dunkirk, on her own soil, in the hands of an English Commissioner, "without whose permission not a stone on any quay in the harbor could be disturbed." This was the most galling condition of the treaty. Added to this was the arbitrary right exercised by the English of overhauling not only French vessels on the high seas, but also the vessels of other nations. The mortification of this situation naturally led French statesmen to meditate putting an end to it the first opportunity. This opportunity presented itself on the revolt of the English colonies on the American

continent. A struggle requiring all the resources of England was imminent, and the chance for France to profit by it was not to be lost. Such was the principal motive which led the French to help the Americans obtain their independence, and the starting-point of incalculable obligations on their part.

Colonial irritation against England, caused by unjust and immoderate taxation, together with laws compelling the colonists to trade with England exclusively, began before 1761. It had greatly increased in 1765. The Duc de Choiseul, then prime-minister in France under Louis XV., closely watched the progress of this irritation, and foreseeing that it would end in a serious rebellion he sent De Kalb to America to report on the progress of it and do what he could to foment the rebellious spirit; at the same time he instructed his diplomatic agents in London to keep him advised of the proceedings of the English King and Parliament and of the feeling of the people generally. Nothing came of this diplomatic proceeding but an accumulation of useful information of which his successors availed themselves. On this minister losing favor with Louis XV. he was dismissed, and the matter was dropped. The Duc d'Aiguillon, his successor, remained personally indifferent to the agitation in America; but his subordinates, Garnier, secretary of the embassy in London, and Gérard de Rayneval, chief clerk in the ministry of foreign affairs in Paris, followed it up attentively. In 1774, the Count de Vergennes came into office, and with him the American rebellion, fully developed,

became an absorbing topic. It was then that this able minister and statesman initiated the policy which, combined with that of Washington at home and Franklin abroad, rendered the colonial rebellion successful.

Charles Gravier, Count de Vergennes, was born at Dijon, in France, in 1719. He was of a good but not prominent family. The seignory of the Gravier family consisted of the château and domain of Vichy, the famous French watering-place. Vergennes served a diplomatic apprenticeship up to his thirty-first year in various European courts, and was promoted in 1750 to the office of minister-plenipotentiary at Trêves; in 1755 he was made minister at Constantinople, where he served with distinction, and in 1769 he was raised to the rank of ambassador at the Ottoman court; in 1772 he was sent ambassador to Sweden, from which country he was recalled in 1774, soon after the advent of Louis XVI. to the throne of France, and made Secretary of Foreign Affairs under the prime-minister, Maurepas. During this preparatory period Vergennes won the esteem of the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XVI., as well as of the able prime-minister of Louis XV., the Duc de Choiseul. The latter said of him: "The Count de Vergennes always has something to say against whatever is proposed to him, but he never finds any difficulty in carrying out his instructions. Were we to order him to send us the Vizier's head, he would write that it was dangerous, but the head would come." It is said that Mau-

repas, who admitted him into his cabinet, did so because he expected to find a docile subordinate, one who would rest content with doing his bidding. If this were the case, he made a mistake, for Vergennes, while humoring and deferring to his chief, soon supplanted him in the mind of the King in the management of foreign affairs.

The policy of Vergennes, for the first nine years of his ministry, consisted in reducing the power of England through the American Revolution. In carrying out his plans he displayed both patience and prudence, dissembling his purpose at the outset, and treating England as unscrupulously as England had recently treated France, but with much greater caution. England, for instance, had succored the Corsicans to the detriment of France, and had attacked and annihilated both the French fleet and French commerce without previously declaring war; Vergennes, while furnishing arms and money to the American rebels in violation of treaties and international law, denied that he was doing so, and pursued this course successfully until he was ready for the conflict.

The Count de Vergennes was neither a courtier nor a selfishly ambitious man. His habits were simple and he lived unpretentiously, which led the nobles around Louis XVI. to calumniate him and charge him with affectation. He treated subordinates kindly and attended closely to business. Louis XVI. liked him because he was clear-headed and trustworthy, and, perhaps, because he was not a courtier,

being probably one of the few officials who relied on merit to obtain royal approbation rather than on rank or privilege. He was an admirable husband and parent. He liked to play with children, danced in intimate reunions, told long stories which are said to have been tedious, kept aloof from women and parades, and demeaned himself generally in a modest, dignified manner. His diplomatic correspondence shows him to have been sagacious, a sound reasoner, firm in his opinions, honorable with those who were earnest and sincere,\* and a good judge of men, especially in the choice of his coadjutors. The adroitness with which he managed the interests of the American insurgents in France, his confidence in and respect for their lead-

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\* Jefferson says of the Count de Vergennes: "He had the reputation with the diplomatic corps, of being wary and slippery in his diplomatic intercourse; and so he might be with those whom he knew to be slippery and double-faced themselves. As he saw that I had no indirect views, practiced no subtleties, meddled in no intrigues, pursued no concealed object, I found him as honorable, as frank, as easy of access to reason, as any man with whom I had ever done business."—Jefferson's Writings, vol. i., v. 52.

To complete Jefferson's estimate of the Count de Vergennes the following must be added, taken from one of his letters to James Madison: "He is a great minister in European affairs, but has very imperfect ideas of our *institutions*, and no confidence in them. His devotion to the principles of pure despotism renders him unaffectionate to our governments. . . . He is cool, reserved in political conversations, but free and familiar on other subjects, and a very attentive, agreeable person to do business with. It is impossible to have a clearer, better organized head; but age has chilled his heart."

ers at home, his management of the negotiations with the Spanish government to secure its participation in the war, the firmness with which he continued the war in spite of serious discouragements, the glorious peace of 1783 by which American independence was guaranteed and by which France recovered its prestige among European nations, place the Count de Vergennes in the first rank of illustrious statesmen.\*

Vergennes was closely studying the state of things in America long before the battle of Lexington. He first turned to account the information collected by the Duc de Choiseul, and then availed himself of passing events. The opponents of the policy of Lord North, the Earl of Chatham, Burke, Fox, and others,

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"Count Vergennes was the earliest and most decided friend America had in the French councils. The cabinet was originally divided on the subject of aiding the colonies against England, and the King was pointedly opposed to such a step. Vergennes took his position and maintained it. He brought over the King by degrees to his views. The resolution of the government was taken, and steadily pursued, till the great object was effected. The burden of the undertaking, the weight of responsibility, rested mainly on the shoulders of Count Vergennes. A failure would have ruined him. The independence of America was an aim upon the success of which his reputation, his existence as a public minister, depended. He was aware of this, and adhered to his purpose steadily to the last. Whatever may be thought of Count Vergennes's talents or character as a man, of his general policy or practice as a statesman, he must ever be regarded by those who will diligently examine the history of his ministerial career, as a true and valuable friend to the United States, and as deserving the lasting gratitude of the American people.—Sparks's *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, vol. i., p. 247.



whose speeches in Parliament and the favor they showed to sympathizers with the American cause fed the flame of rebellion, helped Vergennes greatly. Through the officials of the French legation in London and his own emissaries there, who were in relations with the commercial speculators from the colonies as well as with the political agents sent over from America to watch events in Europe, among whom Arthur Lee, after Franklin left England, was the most prominent, he gleaned important information. His most reliable agent, however, and the ablest, was Beaumarchais, one of the most singular geniuses France has produced, and at that time famous in more directions than one. Beaumarchais, at this time, was engaged in a special mission in behalf of Louis XVI. But before proceeding further, as this personage played a very important part in securing American independence, it behoves us to know something of him and how he became interested in the American cause.

#### IV.

#### BEAUMARCHAIS.

PIERRE-AUGUSTINE CARON, to which patronymic the title of de Beaumarchais was subsequently added, through the purchase of official positions which sanctioned the assumption of nobility, was born January 24, 1732. His father was a watchmaker, and he followed the same calling, becoming his father's partner when he was of age; while an apprentice he invented an escapement which greatly added to the reputation of the house. The Caron children consisted of five daughters and their illustrious brother; all were remarkable for affection coupled with intelligence and gayety, as well as for literary, poetic, and musical ability. Through his office as "watchmaker to the King," Beaumarchais came in contact with "Mesdames" the King's daughters, which gave him an opportunity to display his musical genius; being an excellent harpist and flutist it was not long before he was appointed their first musician; it is said that all the music they played was composed by him. Add to this that he was tall, handsome and agreeable, and it is easy to see how, through his demeanor, tact, and social qualities, he improved the situation and laid the foundations of his fortune. Besides this favorable position at court

Beaumarchais obtained other places which carried along with them the rank and privileges of a noble. While favored by such patronage, he entered into close relations with Paris Du Verney, an experienced financier and founder of the *École Militaire*, who, in return for a certain kindness, launched him in the world of speculation and made him wealthy.

In the year 1774, a Spanish *littérateur* named Clavijo became engaged to one of Beaumarchais's sisters, the marriage to take place as soon as Clavijo should obtain a certain post at the Spanish court. The place was secured and the banns were published, when, suddenly, Clavijo refused to keep his engagement. As the honor of his sister was involved, Beaumarchais went to Spain and, with remarkable coolness, skill and energy compelled Clavijo to sign a declaration fully exonerating his sister. He then effected a reconciliation between the parties and the marriage was arranged. Just as the ceremony was about to be solemnized Beaumarchais learned that Clavijo was plotting his arrest, under a charge of conspiracy which involved his expulsion from Madrid. Fired with indignation, he betook himself to the ministers, and even reached the King, denounced the offender, won his case, and had the disloyal suitor banished from the court.\*

During Beaumarchais's stay of a year in Madrid, he became familiar with Spanish customs, which he afterwards used in his dramatic compositions, and he en-

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\* Goethe made this incident the subject of one of his dramas.

tered into various speculations, including one in connection with the slave trade, while at the same time he frequented the highest diplomatic society. "The gayety of this child of Paris sets the whole of this stiff world in motion. Lord Rochford is captivated by him, takes him to the Prado, treats him to suppers, sings duets with him and becomes extraordinarily jovial for an English diplomat."\* Beaumarchais now returns to France, where, during the following ten years, he composes among other pieces the famous comedies of "The Barber of Seville" and "The Marriage of Figaro," passes through the remarkable "Goezman" trial on a charge of bribery, is imprisoned, and has all sorts of adventures and experiences, in which he displays uncommon address, ending with secret missions in the service of Louis XV. The last of these, that in connection with the Chevalier d'Eon, which paves the way for his employment in behalf of the Americans, deserves especial notice.

Among curious historical characters, one of the most so is the Chevalier d'Eon, "a personage who, up to forty-three years of age, passed for a man, and as such became successfully a doctor of laws, counselor in the French Parliament, literary censor, diplomatic agent, Knight of St. Louis, secretary of the French embassy, and acting minister plenipotentiary at London."† Suddenly, he turns woman. It appears that

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\* De Lomenie, "Beaumarchais et son Temps."

† De Lomenie, "Beaumarchais et son Temps."

Eon, in his youth, looked like a woman, and was sent in feminine disguise by Louis XV. on a secret mission to St. Petersburg. Accomplishing this successfully, he returned to Paris, resumed male attire, and subsequently went to London. During his Russian mission he carried on a compromising correspondence with the King which Louis XVI., when he came to the throne, deemed it for the interest of the state and for that of the royal family to get possession of. The affair reached Beaumarchais's ears, and, with the fame of his Spanish career and previous successes in the same line to back him, he offered himself for the task and was accepted. Beaumarchais proceeded to London, made the acquaintance of Eon, insinuated himself into his good graces, and accomplished the mission to the King's satisfaction. In the settlement of this affair it was stipulated that Eon should receive a pension, return to France, and attire himself in future as a woman, which he pretended to be. Beaumarchais, assured by Eon that he was a woman, nevertheless reports of him that he "drank, smoked, and swore like a German trooper." Subsequently Eon again left France for London, where he resumed the male costume and lived as a man until his death, when his sex was officially declared. Beaumarchais's cleverness in obtaining the correspondence referred to led the Count de Vergennes to make use of him in connection with American affairs. Other circumstances confirmed the minister in this choice of a London political agent. Beau-

marchais, acquainted with the famous John Wilkes, a virulent opponent of the Tory ministry, met at his house everybody in London concerned with the colonial rebellion, and he communicated to the minister all that he saw and heard. The capacity of the author of *Figaro* for entering into the feelings, ideas, tastes, pleasures, and ambitions of everybody with whom he came in contact, his skill in worming out secrets, his intimacy with Lord Rochford, a member of Lord North's cabinet whose acquaintance, as we have seen, he had made in Spain,\* his intercourse with the American emissaries like Arthur Lee, all gave him extraordinary facilities for fulfilling his commission.

"Evidently," says M. Doniol,† "the cabinet of Versailles already knew what to rely on in the situation of the Americans. It had relations with their agents which do not appear either in the despatches of ambassadors nor in the accounts which their agents furnished. . . . The government of Louis XVI. owed, indeed, to Beaumarchais's activity in London circumstantial details and interchanges of ideas which had advanced matters very much. He had for three months actively employed his tact and perspicacity in 'baiting his hooks,' laying plans, and arrang-

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\* Vergennes writes to Beaumarchais: "If our impression of Lord Rochford's character is correct it will not be difficult to make him talk more than he means to."

† "Histoire de la Participation de la France dans l'Etablissement des Etats Unis."

ing combinations. Never discouraged, and inspiring others with confidence in him through his political sagacity and the fervent patriotism which this denoted, he had singularly fortified in M. de Vergennes and M. de Maurepas their appreciation of events and the hopes which they cherished. . . . The bringing of the King to their conclusions through secret advices and make him share their impressions required great efforts.' ”

They were, indeed, very great, and it is largely owing to Beaumarchais that the resistance of the King was finally overcome, as will be seen further on.

The foregoing details of Beaumarchais's life sufficiently show the character of the man and how he became associated with American events. Before citing the official documents which expose the nature of his services to America, we must dwell for a moment on the character of Louis XVI., and on the first steps taken by the Count de Vergennes to bring that monarch over to his American policy.

## V.

### LOUIS XVI.

LOUIS XVI., an absolute monarch, on whose will American destinies depended, was educated by his grandfather, Louis XV., in ignorance, as far as possible, of the vicious life this monarch had led. Consequently he was not corrupt, but he was not an amiable man. While Dauphin, he went but little into society and wished to be considered as *Louis le Sévère*. He was as conscious of the divinity of a King as Louis XIV., but, unlike his ancestor, was unable to maintain it; with him the dignity of a monarch was wholly vested in the etiquette of a court. Without military tastes, indispensable in a sovereign who is responsible for public order as well as for the rank of his nation among other nations, Louis XVI. disliked war and all employment of force. His tastes, for the head of a great state, were indeed puerile, consisting mainly of lock-making and hunting. He was not so much narrow-minded as small-minded, being incapable of entertaining philosophic or general ideas. On one occasion, seized with an impulse for reform, he applied himself to the serious study of a certain project; on disclosing his plan to one of his ministers it proved to be simply a project for destroying rab-



bits, which had become too destructive in one of the *capitaineries*.\* He was humane and desirous of doing good ; but, alternately firm and irresolute, was unable to carry out good intentions. He was, however, moral, loyal to engagements, and generous at times when it was optional with him to be otherwise. "The King loves business, economy, order and justice, and wishes sincerely the good of his people ; but he is irascible, rude, very limited in his understanding, and religious bordering on bigotry. He has no mistress, loves his queen, and is too much governed by her. She is capricious, like her brother, and governed by him ; devoted to pleasure and expense ; and not remarkable for any other vices or virtues." † It is said that Louis XVI. disliked Americans for the reasons that they were rebels against their sovereign, a trait naturally distasteful to an absolute monarch ; although he assisted them on national grounds, it went against his conscience. Such was the man whom the Count de Vergennes had to win over to his policy and involve France in a war with England on account of the American colonies.

Accordingly, early in 1775, after having fully determined in his own mind what course to take, the Count de Vergennes submits to Louis XVI. for his approval, a memorial setting forth the reasons why operations in behalf of the Americans should be undertaken. This document is entitled "Reflections

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\* A royal domain in which game was preserved.

† Jefferson.

on the actual situation of the English colonies, and the proper course for France to pursue in relation to them." The following extracts from it show its tenor :

"The Americans have made up their minds and will persevere ; but, if they are not aided we must expect to see them succumb, for England is compelled to subdue them at any cost. The inveterate enmity of that power to us makes it our duty to lose no opportunity for weakening it. The independence of the insurgent colonies must therefore be encouraged."

After this postulate comes the following argument :

"England is the natural enemy of France, and a greedy, ambitious, unjust, and treacherous enemy ; the persistent and favorite policy of this power is, if not the destruction of France, at least its abasement and ruin. Such has long been the real motive of the wars it has waged against us ; all other considerations yield to this reason of state, and all ways are considered just, proper, and even necessary, provided the end is attained. This disposition, together with the solicitude of France for its own safety, warrants and even urges us to take advantage of every opportunity to weaken the forces and power of

England, whilst policy, on the other hand, makes it a duty. Starting from these two points, nothing remains but to examine the actual situation and disposition of the colonies and see whether these favor the end we propose. The colonists are now in open rebellion against their rulers; they mean to throw off the yoke, and they ask supplies and assistance from us."

Then follows a consideration of the objections to this policy, which involves many delicate points in relation to other countries, especially Spain, as well as to French colonial interests in case of failure. The Count de Vergennes divides these into three classes, of which, to Americans, the second class as follows is the most significant :

"According to all our accounts the insurgents are now able to resist the forces sent by England to America ; they have arms and the munitions of war, and, accordingly, do not need immediate assistance. It is to be feared, however, that these resources will soon be exhausted as well as the means for restoring them, and that the fear of this may dampen their courage and lead them to cease their efforts by offering submission before they are obliged to, through their lack of

strength. France must accordingly be governed by this necessity. She must nourish the courage and perseverance of the insurgents by extending to them the hope of effective aid when circumstances warrant it, and make them understand that our help depends on their success ; we must hold out the belief that our aid will be furnished at the latest by the end of the next campaign. In this way France need not compromise herself either with the insurgents, nor with the Court of London, while she would be ready to strike a decisive blow when the time came."

The reasons for helping the Americans are stated by the Count de Vergennes in the cool and deliberate language of the accomplished and prudent statesman. The action of the King depends on another sort of intellectual pressure. A more fervent advocate is essential, and he is at hand in Beaumarchais. The Count de Vergennes sends the following letter to the King :

"SIRE: I have the honor to send your Majesty a report by the Sieur de Beaumarchais, leaving nothing out, not even what was intended for myself alone. Had I allowed myself any curtailment it would have been the personalities.

Facts are stated which I have no means of verifying, and which it would be difficult to establish. The most important detail, it seems to me, is the picture it presents of the actual state of affairs and their probable result. England is inclined to despair. I can readily believe, as the *Sieur de Beaumarchais* insinuates, that the fall of the ministry is not remote.

“As no answer can be given to the *Sieur de Beaumarchais* until I receive your Majesty’s orders, I humbly entreat your Majesty to inform me when I may come to receive them.”

*Beaumarchais* had already despatched letter after letter from London urging action in relation to the colonies. He now entered on the task more seriously, with a view to convince the King, of whose stubborn opposition to the plans he proposes he is fully aware. He accordingly writes under date of September 21, 1775, the first of a series of letters with a view to overcome the King’s objections, which letter he addresses to him direct :

“TO THE KING :

“SIRE: Firmly convinced that the document I submit to Your Majesty, will not leave your hands, I continue, Sire, to state the truth on all points

known to me that appear to affect your service, without regard to anybody's interests.

“I stole away from England, under the pretext of going into the country, and came direct from London to Paris to confer with Messieurs de Vergennes and de Sartines on matters too important and too delicate to be entrusted to a courier.

“England, Sire, is in such a crisis, in such a state of disorder within and without, that its ruin would be near at hand were its neighbors and rivals prepared to take matters up seriously. The following is a faithful statement of the situation of the English in America. I have the details from a person who lives in Philadelphia just arrived from the colonies, and which he left in order to confer with the English minister about them, and whose narrative has produced the greatest alarm and consternation. The Americans, determined to suffer anything rather than yield, and full of that enthusiasm for liberty which has so often rendered the small Corsican nation redoubtable to the Genoese, have thirty-eight thousand effective armed men under the walls of Boston; the English army in this

town is reduced to death by starvation, or to seeking winter-quarters elsewhere, which they are going to do immediately. About forty thousand men, well armed and equally resolute, defend the rest of the country, without one tiller of the soil or workman in the factories being taken to form this body of eighty thousand troops. Every fisherman, reduced to poverty by the English, has become a soldier and vows he will avenge the ruin of his family and the liberty of his country. Everybody in maritime trade, which the English have stopped, has joined the fishermen in making war on their common persecutors; every workman in the seaports has increased this army of infuriates whose vengeance and rage animate every effort.

“I affirm, Sire, that such a nation must be invincible, especially with so vast an extent of country behind it for retreat, even should the English possess themselves of the coasts, which is far from happening. All sensible persons in England are satisfied that the colonies are lost to the mother-country, and such is my opinion.

“The open war carried on in America is still less disastrous for England than the intestine

war which must soon break out in London; party spirit has reached the highest point since the royal proclamation declaring the Americans rebels. This great mistake, this great act of folly on the part of the government, has revived the energies of all its opponents by combining them against it; they have resolved to break a lance against the court party when Parliament meets.

. . . . .

“It is thought that before the session closes seven or eight members of the Opposition will be sent to the Tower, and this is the moment awaited for sounding the tocsin. Lord Rochford, my friend for the past fifteen years, expressed himself with a sigh, in conversing with me, in these words, *‘I am very much afraid, sir, that before the end of the winter some heads will lie low, either of the King’s party or of the Opposition,’* On the other hand, Lord-mayor Wilkes, warmed up by a splendid dinner, publicly said to me: ‘The King of England has long done me the honor to hate me. I, on my side, have always done him the justice to despise him; the time has come to decide which of the two



has shown the best judgment, and on which side the wind will blow off the most heads.'

"Lord North would gladly resign to-day if he could do so with honor and safety.

"The slightest reverse of the Royalists in America, strengthening the audacity of the people and of the Opposition, may bring matters to a head in London when least expected, and should the King find himself obliged to yield, I do not believe his crown safer on his head than the heads of his ministers on their shoulders. This poor English people, with its frantic liberty, excites real compassion in every reflective mind! Never has it known the pleasure of living tranquilly under a wise and virtuous King. They despise us and regard us as slaves because we cheerfully obey; if France, however, has sometimes temporarily suffered under a weak or wicked prince, never has that licentious fury which the English term liberty given a moment of happiness and true repose to this ungovernable people. Kings and subjects are both equally unfortunate.

"To sum up—America is lost to the British in spite of their efforts. The war rages more fiercely

in London than in Boston. This crisis will end in bringing on war with the French, if the opposition succeeds, whether Chatham or Rockingham replaces Lord North. The opposition party, to increase the difficulty, are intriguing in Portugal to prevent any settlement with Spain.

“Our ministry, kept badly informed, seems stagnant and passive concerning events which thus affect us nearly. A superior, vigilant man is now indispensable in London.

. . . . .

“Such, Sire, are the motives of my secret journey to France. Whatever use Your Majesty may make of this document, I am sure that I may count on the integrity and kindness of my master, and hope that he will not turn these proofs of my zeal against me by confiding them to any one, which would increase the number of my enemies, and who will never prevail against me so long as I am sure of the secrecy and protection of Your Majesty.”

Caron de Beaumarchais, with rare perspicacity, says De Lomenie, foresees the approaching triumph of the colonies (if aided), but that France should not

enter into the conflict until the proper moment arrives. He and Vergennes are both of the opinion that, owing to the intensity of party spirit at this time in England, George III. would be in danger in case the Americans won a victory. Whereas, in fact, the defeat of the English troops in the colonies only made the King more stubborn and the war, or Tory party, more energetic, while it weakened the opposition party friendly to the Americans.

The day following the placing of the above document in Louis XVI.'s hands, the impatient Beaumarchais, eager to quit Paris for London, wrote to the Count de Vergennes as follows :

“ MONSIEUR LE COMTE :

“ Indiscreet zeal should be suppressed ; if satisfactory it should be encouraged ; but no sagacity in the world enables one to divine in a man who says nothing what he must do. I sent yesterday to the King, through M. de Sartines, a summary of the long conference you kindly favored me with the previous evening. It is an exact report on the men and the state of things in England. It ends with my proposal to you to stop all gossip about our war preparations which might hasten or retard action. The Council must have had this matter before it, and yet

this morning I have no word from you. Nothing is so fatal to business as uncertainty or loss of time.

“Must I stay here for your answer or leave without it? Have I done well or ill in fathoming minds whose dispositions toward us are becoming of such consequence? Must I let the future render confidential communications abortive, and repel, instead of welcoming, admissions that ought to influence our resolutions of to-day? Finally, am I a useful agent to my country, or merely a traveling mute? I await your answer to this to depart.

“BEAUMARCHAIS.

“PARIS, September 22, 1775.”

The desired answer to this somewhat curt letter came the following day, for Vergennes knew how to humor Beaumarchais, as he always did on every occasion except when grave state matters obliged him to treat the “Barber of Seville” with diplomatic formality. On leaving for London, Beaumarchais sends the following note to the minister:

“MONSIEUR LE COMTE:

“I leave, thoroughly informed of the King’s and your intentions. Your Excellency may rest

easy. I should be guilty of an unpardonable blunder if, in such an affair, I in any way compromised the dignity of my master or that of his minister. To do one's best in (furtherance of) a policy is nothing—the first fool that comes along may promise that; the best possible is that which should distinguish from ordinary servants one whom His Majesty and yourself, Monsieur le Comte, honor with your confidence in so delicate a matter.

“ I am, etc.,

“ BEAUMARCHAIS.”

This seems to be the proper place for another letter of this series, without any date (translated and published for the first time in the “Magazine of American History,” vol. ii., p. 666, to which the reader is referred), in which letter Beaumarchais presents to Louis XVI. his plan of the commercial house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co., subsequently carried out. The object of Beaumarchais is to convince the King that the French Government could thus aid the Americans without exciting the suspicion of the English, and advance funds for the purpose “without fear that they would ever miscarry or be lost in faithless hands.” Explanations are further given in the letter by which the King

can see how money so advanced may multiply itself ninefold, according to the ways of trade, and thus not overburden his treasury. One extract suffices to show Beaumarchais's ingenuity in treating the question :

“I have treated this affair so far, Sire, in the spirit of a great trader who wishes to make a successful speculation, and I have developed to you the unique secret by which Commerce in bulk, drawing all its benefits from without by the advantageous exchange of commodities, augments the prosperity of all States that have the good sense to protect it; much superior to the art of Finance, which, never establishing its benefits except on interior speculations against the subjects of the State, can never augment the fiscal product except at the expense of the universal existence of the subjects. Instead of the real fat given by Commerce, that destructive art (of Finance) only produces a monstrous inflation in the body, a swelling of the head of the State, occasioned by the poverty, the constraint, and general stagnation of all the other parts of that suffering body.”

The next document, showing Beaumarchais's political sagacity, his knowledge, thinking capacity, eloquence, and, to a greater extent, his boldness and fervor, was written two months later, and probably laid before the King by his minister as soon as received :

“ *Summum jus, summa injuria.*

“ Handed, under open seal, to M. de Vergennes,  
December 7, 1775.

“ Address to the King alone, very important.

“ TO THE KING :

“ SIRE : Your Majesty's disapproval of a plan is, in general, a law for its rejection by all who are interested in it.

“ There are plans, however, of such supreme importance to the welfare of your kingdom that a zealous servant may deem it right to present them more than once, for fear that they may not have been understood from the most favorable point of view.

“ The project which I do not mention here, but which Your Majesty is aware of through M. de Vergennes, is of this number, *I rely wholly on*

*the strength of my reasons to secure its adoption.* I entreat you, Sire, to weigh them with all the attention which such an important affair demands.

“ When this paper is read by you, *my duty is done. We propose and you judge, Sire.* And yours is the most important task, for we are responsible to you only for the sincerity of our zeal, while you, Sire, are *responsible to God, to yourself, and to a great people* to whom good or ill may ensue according to your decision.

“ M. de Vergennes informs me that Your Majesty does not deem it *just to adopt the proposed expedient.*

“ The objection, then, has no bearing on the immense utility of the project, nor on the danger of carrying it out, but *solely on the delicate conscientiousness of Your Majesty.*

“ A refusal due to such honorable motives would condemn one to silence and to stop short, did not the extreme importance of the proposed object lead one to examine *whether the justice of the King of France is really interested in not adopting such an expedient,*



“In general, it is certain that any idea, any project opposed to justice should be discarded by every honest man.

“*But, Sire, the policy of governments is not the moral law of their citizens.* One may do no wrong to one’s neighbor, whatever benefit one may derive therefrom, because all live under the empire of civil law, alike for all, and which provides for common security. But a kingdom is a vast isolated body, *farther removed from its neighbors by a diversity of interests, than by the sea, the citadels, and the barriers which bound it.* There is no common law between them which ensures its safety. The sole relations between kingdoms are those of natural right, that is to say those which the self-preservation, the welfare and the prosperity of each impose upon each, relations which are variously modified under the name of international law (*droit de gens*), the principle of which, even according to Montesquieu, is *to do the best for one’s self* as the first law, *with the least possible wrong to other governments* as the second law.

“The recognition of this maxim in political theory is so well established that the king who

would govern an impoverished, indigent people, *bound to regard himself as the father of his own and a stranger to every other people*, could not fairly hinder his unfortunate subjects, in default of other means of subsistence, from taking what they needed from neighboring states, and even by force of arms. For the justice and protection which a king owes to his subjects is a strict and rigorous duty; while that which he may accord to neighboring states is never other than conventional. *Hence it follows that the national policy which preserves states differs in every respect almost entirely from the civil morality which governs individuals.* If, however, a prince, allied to another prince by the ties of blood, of sympathy, of interest, of conventions; if solemn engagements dictated by mutual benefits (the only foundation for political ties) bind them together on conditions freely accepted by each, like those of the Family Pact, which unites in one political body the Italian, Spanish and French branches of the house of Bourbon, or any other treaty with any other European prince, it is understood that neither of the associates could aid in any wrong which rebels or enemies might strive

to do to its ally, without offense to its delicacy and justice, for, in relation to this ally, it lives under the restrictions of a pact the articles of which are a common law and so many established umpires of reciprocal acts, this pact being the moral law to which they have agreed to subject themselves.

“And how this has been broken by every prince! But the only reason which can justify such cases is national preservation. *Salus populi, suprema lex!*”

“But, Sire, has there ever been, and can there ever be, one tie between France and England capable of arresting Your Majesty? When it is demonstrated that the repose of your kingdom, the welfare of your subjects, the splendor of your reign solely depend on the humiliation you are able to bring on *that natural enemy, that jealous rival of your success, that people always systematically unjust to you,* and who are governed toward you solely by that wicked maxim, ‘*Should we act justly to the French and Spaniards we should have to restore too much!*’ ‘*Our duty is to keep constantly weakening them,*’ is a welcome maxim ever on the lips of that famous Pitt who has become

the idol of the English nation, after failing to get a company of dragoons because he had neither chivalry nor capacity enough to perform this insignificant service! I go further, Sire. No treaty, even, that Your Majesty could have made with the King of England, would have justly restrained you on this occasion. This King, who scarcely enjoys one-third of an authority which is divided amongst the nobles, the people and himself; his fidelity which he might suppose to be your due, would never prevent him from injuring us all he could, for he does not desire war; it is the English people which steadily demands it, and which, with this end in view, will always compel its King to yield, let his personal sense of equity toward yourself be what it may. Such is the audacious, unbridled, shameless people you will always have to deal with! It is they only I have in view in the proposed plan. It is they only, Sire, which it concerns you to *humiliate and weaken*, if you do not wish to be humiliated and weakened yourself, on every occasion. *Have the usurpations and outrages of this people ever had any limit but that of its strength?* Has it not always waged war against you without declaring

it? Did it not begin the last one, in a time of peace, by the sudden capture of five hundred of your vessels? Did it not humble you by forcing you to destroy your finest seaport, and to disarm the others by *fixing the small number of vessels it henceforth allowed you?*\* Has it not again recently subjected your merchant vessels to inspection on the northern seas? A humiliation which the Dutch would not tolerate is exclusively reserved for us! a humiliation which would have made Louis XIV. *plutot manger ses bras* than not atone for it? A humiliation, finally, which makes the heart of every true Frenchman bleed, especially on seeing that insolent rival attracting Russian vessels to these very waters on which we dare not intrude, *teaching them the road to our possessions in America in order that they may some day help our enemies to capture them.* The most solemn treaty of peace, to this usurping nation, is merely a truce demanded by exhaustion, and from which it always issues through glaring hostilities.

“Unable, Sire, to render the King of England

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\* An erroneous assertion.

responsible for infractions by his subjects of the treaties existing between this prince and yourself, to whom then are you now loyal? From whence, then, come your scruples?

“Your Majesty is no longer ignorant that the late King, forced by events to accept the almost shameful peace of 1763, swore to avenge the indignities cast upon his name and nation by this odious neighbor. The very singularity of his plan only the better discloses his indignation; up to his death he expressed his chagrin at his inability to carry it out.

“And you, Sire, whom fortune favors with a better career than that allowed to your predecessor during his long rule; you who know that without the intestine commotions which worry the English, they would already have profited by the state of weakness and disorder in which the late King transmitted the kingdom to you—that they might deprive you of the pitiful remains of your possessions in America, Africa, and India, nearly all of them in their hands—and yet Your Majesty is so delicate and conscientious as to hesitate!

“An indefatigable, zealous servant succeeds in

putting the most formidable weapon in your hand, one you can use without committing yourself and without striking a blow, so as to abase your natural enemies and render them incapable of injuring you for a long time ; yet your delicate sense of justice leads you to reject an opportunity which could not happen twice during your reign, however long we may desire it ! Ah, Sire, if you believe you owe so much to that proud English people, do you owe nothing to your own good people in France, in America, and in India ? But, if *your scruples are so delicate that you have no desire to favor even what may injure your enemies, how, Sire, can you allow your subjects to contend with other Europeans in conquering countries belonging to the poor Indians and the African savages or Caribs who have never wronged you ? How can you allow your vessels to take by force and bind in chains the suffering black men whom nature made free, and who are miserable only because you are powerful ? How can you suffer three rival powers to seize iniquitously upon and divide Poland under your very eyes ? Why have you a pact with Spain by which you bind yourself, in the name of the Holy Trinity, to fur-*

nish men, vessels, and money to this ally; to aid it in making war, even offensive, on the first requisition, without having reserved the right to examine *whether the war to which you are committed is a just one, or if you are not helping an usurper?* It is not Your Majesty, I am aware, who has brought about or permitted these things. They existed previous to your reign, they will still exist after it; such is the order of things in the political world; here, examples abound to such an extent that it is only necessary for me to remind you of a few of them, *to prove to you, Sire, that the policy which maintains nations differs almost entirely from the moral law which governs individuals.*

“Were men angels political ways might, undoubtedly, be disdained and even detested. But if men were angels there would be no need of religion to enlighten them, of laws to govern them, of magistrates to restrain them, of soldiers to subdue them; and the earth, instead of being a faithful image of hell, would be indeed a celestial abode. But all we can do is to take men as they are, and the wisest King can go no further with them than the legislator Solon, who said:



‘I do not give the Athenians the best laws, but only those which are adapted to the place, the time, and the people for whom I make them.’ \*

“Since, accordingly, the sovereign principle for all states is political, and this is indispensable for their maintenance, deign, Sire, *never to lose sight of this, that the masterpiece of sound policy is to base your tranquillity on the divisions of your enemies. In adhering to this precious moral, which renders you so superior,* for the internal administration of your kingdom, you will have worthily performed the duties of a good and a great King.

“Richelieu, *who rose from obscurity to the highest degree of power,—that man of genius to whom Royal authority in France is under so many obligations,—*Richelieu, desirous of successfully carrying out the plans which he had devised for his master’s grandeur, did not consider the justice of Louis XIII. interested in not fomenting the troubles in England which finally deprived Charles I. of his throne. He aided the usurper Cromwell with money, with succors and with all the power of French diplomacy; not that he re-

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\* The whole of this passage is underscored by Beaumarchais in the original MS.

garded this usurpation as legitimate, but because, as a great man, he perceived that to keep the English trammled at home by their own embarrassments was the only way to prevent them from causing embarrassment to his master.

“A few years before this, when Catalonia attempted to withdraw from Spanish domination, and Portugal, more fortunate, succeeded in casting off the yoke of Spain, did the Council of France entertain the slightest scruple about the secret assistance demanded of it by Barcelona and Lisbon?”

“France seemed openly to blame the Catalonians and the audacity of the Duke of Braganza, but she did not the less favor them in secret with all her power; through the supreme political reason that to aid in dismembering or weakening Spain, at that time her rival, was laboring in behalf of her own glory and prosperity. And yet Spain lacked a great deal in being as formidable for France as England has since become.

“Sire, there is a sublime law in the English criminal code, namely, that by which an accused person who turns state’s evidence, and brings his

accomplices to the gallows, saves his life whatever his crime may be. *Thus to arm iniquity against itself is the surest way to ensure its destruction.* Now, we must never forget that England is to France what English robbers are to their own citizens. When you observe, Sire, how they have driven us almost entirely from three-quarters of the globe, you will be satisfied that it is not a lack of will, but of force, that has failed them in suffering you to tranquilly enjoy the superb inheritance in Europe which your fathers have transmitted to you.

“I entreat you, Sire, in the name of your subjects, to whom you owe your best efforts ; in the name of that inward repose which Your Majesty so properly cherishes ; in the name of the glory and prosperity of a reign begun under such happy auspices ; I entreat you, Sire, not to be deceived by the *brilliant sophism of a false sensibility.* *Summum jus, summa injuria.* This deplorable excess of equity toward your enemies would be the most signal injustice toward your subjects, who would soon suffer the penalty of scruples so out of place.

“I have treated the gravest questions summa-

rily for fear of weakening my arguments by giving them greater extension, and especially through fear of wearying the attention of Your Majesty.

“ If any doubts still remain, Sire, after reading what I have presented to you, efface my signature, and have this attempt copied by another hand, in order that the feebleness of the reasoner may not diminish the force of his argument, and lay this discussion before any man instructed by experience and knowledge of worldly affairs; *and if there is one, beginning with M. de Vergennes*, who does not agree with me, I close my mouth; I cast into the fire Scaliger, Grotius, Puffendorf, Gravina, Montesquieu, every writer on public rights, and admit that *the study of my life* has been only a loss of time; since it has only ended in a powerlessness to persuade my master on a subject which seems as clear as it is important for his interests.

“ Finally, Sire, I must confess to being so confounded by Your Majesty’s refusal that, unable to find a better reason for it, I conjecture that the negotiator is an obstacle to the success of this important affair in the mind of Your Majesty.

“ Sire, my own interest is nothing, that of serv-

ing you is everything. Select any man of probity, intelligence, and discretion who can be relied upon; I will take him to England and make such efforts as I hope will attain for him the same confidence that has been awarded to myself. He shall conduct the affair to a successful issue, while I will return and fall back into the quiet obscurity from which I emerged, rejoicing in having at least begun an affair of the greatest utility a negotiator was ever honored with.

“CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.

“It is absolutely impossible to give in writing all that relates to this affair at bottom on account of the profound secrecy which it requires, although it is extremely easy for me to demonstrate the safety of undertaking, the facility of doing, the certainty of success, and *the immense harvest of glory and tranquillity* which, Sire, this small grain of seed, sowed in time, must give to your reign.

“May the guardian angel of this government incline the heart and the mind of Your Majesty. Should he award us this first success, the rest will take care of itself. I answer for it,”

The following letter, entitled "Peace or War," and the last, was sent to the Count de Vergennes under open seal, February 29, 1776 :

"TO THE KING ALONE :

"SIRE,—The famous quarrel between America and England, soon to divide the world and effect a change in the European system, imposes on each power the necessity of carefully examining to what extent this event of separation will influence things either for good or for evil.

"But the most interested of all is certainly France, whose sugar-producing islands, since the last treaty of peace, form a constant object of regret and desire on the part of England, and which will ultimately lead to a war with us unless, through a weakness which can not possibly be imagined, we should consent to sacrifice our rich possessions in the Gulf to a shameful peace, one more destructive than this war we dread.

"In a former memorial, handed to Your Majesty three months ago by M. de Vergennes, I tried to make it clear that Your Majesty's sense of justice would not suffer by taking wise precautions against enemies who are never delicate in their measures against us. Now that violence is

imminent, I am obliged to warn Your Majesty that the preservation of our possessions in America and the peace he seems so ardently to desire depend wholly on this one proposition—*the Americans must be helped*, which I proceed to demonstrate.

“The King of England, the ministers, the Parliament, the opposition, the nation, the English people—in fine, all parties that rend this government, agree that they can no longer flatter themselves with the return of the Americans to their allegiance, nor even that the strenuous efforts now made to subdue them will prove successful. Hence, Sire, those violent debates between the Cabinet and the Opposition, that flux and reflux of accepted and rejected opinions, which, not advancing matters, only serve to throw more light on the question.

“Lord North, afraid to take the helm singly at the height of such a tempest, has taken advantage of Lord Germaine’s ambition and thrown the whole burden of affairs on his shoulders. Lord Germaine, stunned by the din and overcome by the formidable arguments of the opposition party, thus addresses Lords Shelburne and

Buckingham, the party - leaders: 'Gentlemen, dare you, in the present state of things, satisfy the nation that the Americans will submit to the Navigation Act and return to their allegiance *on the sole condition, prescribed in Lord Shelburne's plan, of things being restored to what they were before the troubles of 1763?* If you dare do this, gentlemen, assume the ministry and charge yourselves with the safety of the state at your risk and peril.'

"The Opposition, disposed to take the minister at his word, and ready to accept, is deterred only by the uncertainty whether the Americans, encouraged by their success and, perhaps, emboldened by secret treaties with Spain and France, will not now refuse conditions of peace which they begged for with uplifted hands two years ago.

"On the other hand, *Sieur L.* (Lee), secret representative of the Colonies in London, completely discouraged by his useless efforts through me to obtain powder and other munitions from the French minister, now declares to me: 'For the last time I ask you whether France has absolutely decided not to help us, and thus become



the victim of England and the laughing-stock of all Europe on account of this incredible torpor? Oblige me with a positive and final answer. I am waiting for yours to give mine. *We offer to France, in return for her secret assistance, a secret treaty of commerce by which she will secure for a certain number of years after peace is declared all the advantages with which we have enriched England for the past century, with, additionally, a guarantee of her possessions according to our forces.* Don't you want this? All I ask of Lord Shelburne is time enough to send a vessel there and back to convey the English propositions to Congress, and I can now tell you beforehand what resolutions Congress will pass in regard to them. It will at once issue a proclamation, in which it will offer every nation in the world for its assistance the very conditions I now secretly propose to you, and then, to avenge itself on France and force her to make a declaration which will commit her absolutely, it will send the first English prizes she takes into your ports, so that, whichever way you turn, this war that you try to avoid and dread so much will become inevitable, for you will either allow our prizes to enter your

ports, or you will not; if you do allow them a rupture with England is certain; if you do not, Congress will make peace on the conditions proposed by the mother-country; the aggrieved Americans will join forces with England to attack your islands, and prove to you that the very precautions you took to keep your possessions were just the ones which were to deprive you of them for ever. Come, sir, go to France. Show them how matters stand. I shall retire into the country until you return, so as not to be obliged to give an answer until I receive yours. Say to your ministers that I am ready to follow you there, if necessary, to confirm these declarations. Tell them that *I learn that Congress has sent two deputies to Madrid for the same object, and moreover I can assure you that they have received a satisfactory answer.* Must the French Council enjoy the glorious prerogative of alone being blind to the fame of its King and to the interests of his Kingdom?"

Sainte-Beuve says that at this period, 1775, when the "Barber of Seville" was put on the stage, Beaumarchais was in the plenitude of his genius. It is certain that Figaro did not argue with Count Alma-

viva more ingeniously than Beaumarchais argues with the King to convince him and bring about the desired end. If he was indebted to Arthur Lee for any of the above ideas, and there is no doubt that they talked the matter over, the dramatic form in which they are presented is his own; the Continental Congress was far more indebted to its clever French advocate than to its secret agent for their successful application.

“Such, Sire,” he continues more warmly, “is our startling and frightful position. Your Majesty sincerely desires peace! The way to keep it, Sire, is summed up as follows in the present memorial. Let us admit every possible hypothesis and carefully consider the question. The following is of the utmost consequence.

“Either England will be successful in America, or the Americans will repulse the English with loss.

“Either England will decide, as the King has already done, on abandoning the colonies to themselves, and to a friendly separation, or the Opposition, in assuming the government, will answer for the submission of the colonies on condition of a return to the state of things as it existed in 1763.

“This embraces every possibility. Is there any one of them which will not immediately bring on the war you desire to avoid? Sire, in the name of God, deign to follow me in examining them.

“I. Should England triumph in America it will only be at an enormous sacrifice of men and money. Now the sole compensation which the English propose to themselves after so many losses is to seize the French islands on their return home, and thus become the exclusive traders in the precious product of sugar, which can alone repair all damages to their commerce. . . . Then, Sire, nothing would remain to you but to begin a fruitless war too late, or to sacrifice to the most humiliating of all inactive peaces the whole of your American colonies, thereby losing 280,000,000 of capital and over 30,000,000 of revenue.

“2. Should the Americans be victorious they become at once free; while the English, in despair at seeing themselves deprived of three-quarters of their possessions, will be only in greater haste to indemnify themselves through the easy acquisition of our American possessions,

and we may be sure that they will not fail to do this.

“3. Should the English conclude to abandon the colonies without striking a blow, which the King secretly desires, the loss being the same so far as their existence is concerned, and their commerce being likewise ruined, the result for us is the same as before ; except that the English, less enfeebled by a friendly separation than by a bloody and ruinous campaign, will have all the more means and facilities for capturing our islands, which they can not dispense with, if they desire to preserve their own and retain a foothold in America.

“4. Should the Opposition accept the government and conclude a treaty of reunion with the colonies, the Americans, exasperated against France, whose refusals to aid them will alone have forced them to submit to the mother country, will, from this time forth, join forces with the English and capture our islands. They will make this a condition of their alliance, and God knows with what delight a ministry composed of Lords Chatham, Shelburne, and Rockingham, whose dispositions toward us are well known,

will adopt American resentment and bring on you the most persistent and cruel war.

“What can be done, therefore, in this extremity to preserve peace and keep our islands?”

“You will, Sire, maintain the peace you desire only by preventing at any cost a peace between England and America; and again by preventing either from being completely triumphant over the other; and the only way to succeed in this is to help the Americans in such a way as to equalize their forces with those of England, and not go beyond that. And, believe me, Sire, the saving of a few millions to-day may cost France before long floods of blood and treasure. And especially, Sire, bear in mind that the forced preparations for the first campaign would cost you more than all the assistance now asked for, and that the miserable saving of two or three millions will, before two years are over, certainly be a loss to you of over three hundred millions.

“If, in answer to this, you are told that we can not help the Americans without offense to England and without bringing on us the storm which I would anticipate, I reply in my turn that we run no risk if the plan I have so often pro-

posed be followed, namely that of secretly aiding the Americans without compromising ourselves, by imposing on them, as a first condition, the exclusion of their prizes from our ports, and that they shall commit no act which tends to reveal the aid we furnish, and which they would lose on the the first indiscretion committed by Congress. And if Your Majesty can not find an abler man than myself to employ in this matter, I will undertake it and be responsible for the treaty without compromising anybody, satisfied as I am that my zeal will better make up for a deficiency of skill than the skill of another in place of my zeal.

“Your Majesty must readily perceive that success depends wholly on secrecy and celerity. One thing is of infinite importance in this connection, and that is, if possible, to secure the return of Lord Stormont to London, who, through his relations in France, is able to keep the English daily advised of all that is said and done in Your Majesty’s councils. Strange as this may seem, it is a fact. There could not be a better opportunity for the recall of M. de Guines. England insists on having an ambassador. If Your

Majesty is in no haste to appoint a successor to M. de Guines, and will merely appoint a chargé d'affaires, or a minister of recognized capacity, Lord Stormont will be at once recalled and only a minister sent in his place who would have to wait a long time before, through his connections, he could do us as much harm as Lord Stormont.\* Once the crisis is over, the most frivolous or the most ostentatious of our seigniors may be appointed ambassador to London without risk: whether this succeeds or not, the rest would be of no consequence.

“Your Majesty may judge by what I am now doing whether my zeal is as intelligent as it is ardent and trustworthy.

“Should my august master, however, be unmindful of the danger to which a faithful servant is liable through a hasty expression which may fall from his lips, and suffer it to appear that he receives these secret instructions from me, then would even all his authority scarcely guarantee

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\* This suggestion, that of a clever dramatist, proved successful. The maneuvers of English spies, it must be added in this connection, in getting hold of secrets, and especially those of American envoys, are on record, and when published will furnish a diverting chapter in American history.



me from ruin, so powerful, Sire, is cabal and intrigue in your court to impede and crush the most important enterprises. Your Majesty knows better than any one that secrecy is the soul of business, and that in politics a project known is a project lost.

“Since I began to serve you, Sire, I have made no demand upon you, and I never shall. All I ask, O my Master, is that you do not prevent me from laboring in your behalf, and my life is devoted to your service.

“CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.”

The Count de Vergennes must have thought these letters able and better adapted to his purposes than he could write himself, or he would not have handed them to the King. They had the desired effect, determining the King to accept Vergennes's policy and measures. Beaumarchais may therefore be regarded as one of the ablest diplomats in relation to the Americans and their cause.

Such were the first steps taken to help the Americans, and, it must be borne in mind, before the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence, as well as some time before Lafayette left France for the United States. We have now to accompany Beaumarchais on the “sea of troubles” on which he launched himself. As De Lomenie says, “From

this day on, Beaumarchais's rôle in the American affair changes its character. He passes from the state of observer and instigator to that of actor. He no longer merely writes memorials, but dispatches cargoes and wars with the winds, the waves, the English, and the hesitations of the French ministry; and when, through the effect of his operations, war between France and England is at last declared, he makes a brilliant figure with his navy."

## VI.

### THE SERVICES OF BEAUMARCHAIS.

THE plan for aiding the Americans secretly, or as nearly so as possible, suggested by Beaumarchais, was accepted by the Count de Vergennes and entered upon as soon as the King's scruples were overcome. The spirit and intent of it, as verified by events, is thus stated by De Lomenie. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is supposed to address Beaumarchais as follows :

“The operation must essentially assume, both in the eyes of the English and American governments, the aspect of a speculation by an individual, to which we are strangers. To appear so it must be so up to a certain point. We will secretly give you a million of francs. We shall try to get Spain to join us in this affair, and, on her side, to contribute an equal sum ; with these two millions and the co-operation of other parties who may desire to take part in your enterprise you will establish a large commercial house, and, at your risk and peril, supply America with arms, munitions, equipments, and all other objects necessary for carrying on a war. Our arsenals will deliver to you arms and munitions which you can replace or pay for. You will not demand money of the Ameri-

cans because they have none ; but you will demand of them a return in the produce of their soil, in the distribution of which throughout the kingdom we will help you, and you will on your part afford them all the facilities possible. In a word, it is essential that the operation which we secretly support at the outset, grow and develop through its own support. But, on the other hand, as we reserve the right of favoring or opposing it according to political contingencies, you will render us an account of your profits and losses, while we will decide whether we should grant you new contributions or discharge you of all obligations previously sanctioned."

M. de Lomenie continues.\* This arrangement offered advantages to Beaumarchais, for, in addition to the first basis of two millions, it was necessary to attract commercial capital and risk this in a doubtful affair which might engulf the whole of it, as well as swallow up the private fortune of the ministerial agent. Beaumarchais, indeed, once committed to so vast an enterprise (his first despatch to America amounting to more than three millions of his own funds), had to propound to himself the following questions: "What will happen if English cruisers take my vessels? What will happen, should the government, frightened by the threats of English diplomacy, not only abandon me but sacrifice me? What, finally, will happen if the Americans are conquered,

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\* What follows is scarcely more than a translation of De Lomenie's narrative, which I adopt, as I have largely verified it.

or if, after receiving my cargoes, they do not consider themselves obliged to make returns?"

These perspectives might have caused another man to hesitate, but, as it is well known that the author of the "Barber of Seville" did not fear difficulties, he threw himself into this one with his accustomed intrepidity. On the 10th of June, 1776, one month before the United States had published its Declaration of Independence, he commenced proceedings by signing that famous receipt which, kept secret under the monarchy, and given up to the United States in 1794 under the republic, occasioned a trial of fifty years, and to which we shall return :

"Received from M. Duvergier, in conformity with the orders of M. de Vergennes, dated the 5th instant, which I have handed to him the sum of one million, of which I am to render an account to the said Sieur Comte de Vergennes.

"CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.

"Good for a million of livres tournois.

"PARIS, June 10, 1776."

Two months after this, the Spanish court likewise decided to contribute another million to the operation conducted by Beaumarchais. But, to guarantee the secrecy of this agreement, the Spanish million, before reaching the hands of the author of the "Barber of Seville," made a small circuit; the Spanish ambas-

sador paid the money into the French public treasury, took a receipt from its cashier, handed this to M. de Vergennes, which the latter gave to Beaumarchais in exchange for the following receipt, copied textually from the original in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs :

“ Received from His Excellency M. le Comte de Vergennes the receipt for one million of livres tournois, given by M. Duvergier to the Spanish ambassador, with which receipt I am to receive from the said royal treasurer the sum of one million tournois, the use of which I am to account for to his said Excellency, M. le Comte de Vergennes.

“ CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.

“ VERSAILLES, August 11, 1776.”

Thus supplied with funds by the French government, solely for its own purposes, Beaumarchais was accountable to it only for their expenditure. In this transaction the responsibility of the United States was not considered by either party. The advances of the French government were simply a guarantee to Beaumarchais against loss.

Beaumarchais now established his famous house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co., with the knowledge and approbation of Vergennes, who, in the name of the

government, secretly favored its operations. He rented an immense building, filled it with clerks, and displayed the name of his pseudo firm. France and England were still at peace, and on no account would it answer to let Lord Stormont, then English ambassador at Paris, and extremely vigilant, know of the government sanction of this scheme, nor at the same time would it answer to let the American agents know of it, although for their benefit, for a disclosure of it to them would make them co-directors in its management.

The motive of the French government in helping the Americans obtain their independence is clear, namely, the humiliation of England ; it must be added that the Americans who asked French aid were fully aware of this. The foundation for joint operations with the colonists is now laid. Count de Vergennes, Louis XVI. and Beaumarchais may be regarded as the French pioneers of the undertaking. American diplomats now come on the stage, and the political situation becomes more complicated.

Beaumarchais, it must be remembered, in striving so hard to bring Louis XVI. to a decision, had at first no idea of taking the responsibility of the plan he suggested, at his own risk and peril, with only a ministerial appropriation to help him along. He merely offered to transmit to the American insurgents, through their agents, such supplies as his government might provide. This was the idea he communicated to Arthur Lee, whom he had met at the house of John

Wilkes in London, in 1775, to which, it seems, political malcontents of every kind resorted. Indeed, Beaumarchais could promise no more, because, at that time, the King's sanction to the policy of the Count de Vergennes had not been obtained. Arthur Lee was the agent of the State of Massachusetts, and the representative of the American colonies after Franklin left England. Some time after this he became one of the American commissioners along with Franklin and Silas Deane at Paris, and subsequently a member of the Continental Congress. This man's character is now well understood. Further revelations of it, however, are indispensable, as he was the principal author of the calumnies against Beaumarchais which prevented the proper adjustment of his accounts with the United States when the war was over, and he was also the calumniator of Silas Deane, whom he completely ruined. Sparks says of Arthur Lee that he obtained consideration on account of his talents and acquirements. He wrote well, and ably defended the cause of his country, but he was of a restless and violent character. Jealous, distrustful, ambitious and unscrupulous, he got into disputes and difficulties with everybody with whom he had relations. His correspondence with the Committee of Congress on Foreign Affairs, at the time he formed one of the American commissioners in France along with Deane and Franklin, is a series of injurious insinuations against his two colleagues. Franklin was little better than a robber, whilst the alliance between



France and the United States is due to him alone. Since De Lomenie examined the documents which prove all this, others have been unearthed which go to show that Lee was substantially a traitor. The moment he was told that Louis XVI. had accepted the treaty of commerce and friendship with the United States, and when he, on the part of the United States, was about to sign it along with Franklin and Deane, he wrote to Lord Shelburne and advised him that "if England wanted to prevent closer ties between France and the United States she must not delay." \*

Such was the man to whom Beaumarchais, in London in 1775, stated the efforts he was making to influence Louis XVI., and what plans he proposed with a view to help the insurgent colonies. Arthur Lee availed himself of this information, and wrote to the Secret Committee of Congress that, in consequence of *his* active proceedings with the French Ambassador at London, "the Count de Vergennes had sent him a secret agent to inform him that France could not think of going to war with England, but that she was ready to send five millions in arms and munitions of war by way of St. Domingo to the

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\* See "Histoire de la participation de la France à l'établissement des Etats-Unis d'Amérique," vol. iii. M. Doniol states in a foot-note that Lee was in the pay of the party opposed to Lord North in England, the same as Dr. Bancroft was in the pay of that party as a spy in France. There is still some doubt, however, about the truth of these charges, especially in relation to Dr. Bancroft.

United States." Not one word of this was true. Vergennes had not only not sent an agent to Arthur Lee, but Beaumarchais's frequent applications to the minister for secret aid in the shape of money and arms had been, and were still, steadily refused. It was not until months afterward (in 1776), that Vergennes, ready to commence operations secretly, advanced the money for which Beaumarchais gave the receipts already printed on pages 89, 90.

Beaumarchais, on his return to Paris, had kept up correspondence in cipher with Arthur Lee. As soon as it was understood between Vergennes and Beaumarchais that operations should be conducted under a commercial and personal flag, and that the part played by the French government should be carefully concealed from everybody, even from the Americans themselves, Beaumarchais, instructed by the minister, addressed the following cautiously worded note to Lee in London, under date of June 12, 1776 :

"The difficulties I have found in my negotiations with the Minister have *determined me to form a company* which will enable the munitions and powder to be transmitted sooner to *your friend* on condition of his returning tobacco to Cape Francis."

Of course, the *friend* meant Congress. Just at this moment Silas Deane, empowered by Congress to treat with the French government and other friends

of the cause in France, arrives. Beaumarchais, on ascertaining this, no longer communicates with Arthur Lee. The latter, says Sparks, was disappointed and enraged against Deane. But he was no less enraged against Beaumarchais. To avenge himself on both, Lee wrote to the Committee of Congress that they had agreed to deceive at once the French and American governments by changing what the French minister meant to be a gratuitous present into a commercial operation.

Meanwhile an interview takes place between Silas Deane and Beaumarchais, and the next morning, July 20, 1776, Silas Deane writes down the substance of their conversation and sends it to Beaumarchais for his approval.

“PARIS, Hotel Grand Villars, July 20, 1779.

“SIR,—Agreeably to the request you made in our interview of yesterday, I send you enclosed a copy of my commission and an extract from my instructions, which will satisfy you that I am authorized to apply to you for certain acquisitions. In order to understand this extract I must inform you that my orders are to apply to the ministers first, to obtain from them by purchase or loan such supplies as we need, and, in case the credit or influence of Congress in the present circumstances is not sufficient for obtaining them in

this way, I am to try to procure them elsewhere. I have already informed you of my request to the minister and his reply.

“ With respect to the credit we ask for the supplies and munitions which I rely on obtaining from you I trust that a long credit will not be necessary. One year’s credit is the longest my countrymen are in the habit of taking, and as Congress has secured large quantities of tobacco in Virginia and Maryland, as well as other articles which will be shipped as soon as vessels can be had, I have no doubt that ample returns in produce will reach you here in *six months*, and that the whole will be paid for *within a year*. I shall urge this on Congress in my letters. The risks of war are uncertain and our commerce may suffer; I hope, however, that, whatever happens, you will soon have large enough returns to enable you to wait. Should there be a balance in your favor after the expiration of the credit agreed upon, the usual rate of interest will be allowed you. As soon as you have translated this letter and its enclosure, I shall have the honor of calling on you.

“ I am, etc.,

“ SILAS DEANE.”

Beaumarchais replies, July 22, as follows, agreeing to the mode of payment by returns in produce, to the credits demanded, and in relation to prices :

“ As I believe that I am dealing with a people of integrity, it will be sufficient with me to keep an exact account of my entire outlay. Congress will be free to pay for the merchandise at current rates on reaching the continent, or to take it at cost price, with payment for delays and insurances, and a commission added, proportionate to the care and trouble, which can not be determined at present. I propose to serve your country as if it were my own, relying on obtaining true compensation for my services in the friendship of a generous people.”

Silas Deane, in the name of Congress, gratefully accepts the conditions, and so informs Beaumarchais July 24, 1776. All he is concerned about is the quality of the munitions sent and their immediate despatch, for which he relies on Beaumarchais.\*

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\* De Lomenie says in a footnote : “ It has been often stated that the munitions furnished by Beaumarchais were of inferior quality. This may be true, in a measure, owing to the nature of the transaction. But, in general, it is not true, as I have found among Beaumarchais’s papers proof that the shipments were carefully inspected by American agents.”

In a few weeks after completing this arrangement, Beaumarchais thus writes directly to the Committee of Congress :\*

“ PARIS, August 18, 1776.

“ GENTLEMEN :

“ The respectful esteem that I bear toward that brave people who so well defend their liberty under your conduct, has induced me to form a plan concurring in this great work, by establishing an extensive commercial house solely for the purpose of serving you in Europe, there to supply you with necessaries of every sort, to furnish you expeditiously and certainly with all articles, clothes, linens, powder, ammunition, muskets, cannon, or even gold for the payment of your troops, and in general everything that can be useful for the honorable war in which you are engaged. Your deputies, gentlemen, will find in me a sure friend, an asylum in my house, money in my coffers, and every means of facilitating their operations, whether of a public or secret nature. . . .

“ At this very time, and without waiting for

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\* Copied from “ Diplomatic Correspondence,” Sparks’s translation.

any answer from you, I have procured for you about two hundred pieces of brass cannon, four pounders; 200,000 lbs. of gunpowder; 20,000 excellent guns, some brass mortars, bombs, cannon-balls, bayonets, clothes, linens, etc., for clothing your troops, and lead for bullets. . . .

“The secrecy necessary in some part of the operation, which I have undertaken for your service, requires also, on your part, a formal resolution, that all the vessels and their demands should be constantly directed to our house alone, in order that there may be no idle chattering or time lost—two things that are the ruin of affairs. . . . Five American vessels have just arrived in the port of Bordeaux, laden with salt fish; though this merchandise coming from strangers is prohibited in our ports, yet as soon as your deputy had told me that vessels were sent to him by you, to raise money from its sale for aiding him in his purchases in Europe, I took special care to have an order obtained from the Farmers-general for landing it without any notice being taken of it. I could even, if the case had so happened, have taken these cargoes of salted fish on my own account, though it is no

way useful to me, and charged myself with its sale and disposal, to simplify the operation and lessen the embarrassments of the merchants and of your deputy. . . .

“Notwithstanding the open opposition which the King of France, his ministers, and the agent of the administration show, and must show to everything that carries the least appearance of violating treaties with foreign powers and the internal ordinances of the kingdom, I dare promise you, gentlemen, that my indefatigable zeal shall never be wanting to clear up difficulties, soften prohibitions, and, in short, facilitate the operations of a commerce which my advantage, much less than yours, has made me undertake with you. What I have just informed you of is only a general sketch, subject to all the reasons and restrictions which events may point out to us.

“One thing can never vary or diminish, and that is the avowed and ardent desire I have of serving you to the utmost of my power.”

These letters define accurately the nature and scope of Beaumarchais's transactions with Silas Deane, the



authorized agent of the American Congress. Whatever was done by either was known to Vergennes, as is apparent in the following note sent by Deane to this minister November 18, 1776 :

“ I have to desire a few minutes' audience of Your Excellency, merely as a private person, that I may have your general direction or advice at this delicate, critical and important crisis previous to any application in a more public manner. I write this in consequence of Monsieur Beaumarchais's interview with Your Excellency this morning.

“ S. DEANE.”

It was indeed a critical time. Dealings for the immediate advantage of the colonies under pressing need of supplies, closely watched by the English ambassador, and which in case of detection were to be formally discountenanced by the French government, required the best of management. The least indiscretion, the slightest diplomatic embarrassment would at once transform ministerial support into a declared condemnation of them. And this really came to pass. To what extent Beaumarchais is made the scapegoat to this diplomatic necessity will soon be seen. Meanwhile he goes ahead. Noiselessly and in small lots, he withdraws from the state arsenals the ammunition and equipments mentioned in

his letter, for 25,000 men, and, in a few months, in spite of countless obstacles, collects them together for shipment in the ports of Havre and Nantes. Silas Deane had promised American vessels to transport these supplies, but they do not arrive, and, as it is important that this material should reach the Colonies for the campaign of 1777, Beaumarchais provides the vessels himself. Silas Deane asks the privilege of enlisting artillery officers and engineers. Beaumarchais gets the ministry to wink at this operation, and he enrolls on his own account from forty to fifty officers, who are to embark at Havre under the command of an officer of engineers named Ducoudray. These officers preceded Lafayette, but, says De Lomenie, they did not all succeed alike. On the contrary, many of them gave trouble about their rank, as we see in the correspondence of Gérard de Rayneval, the first French minister to the United States, who followed them a year or more afterward. Nevertheless, Beaumarchais sends the leading French and foreign officers to the United States who most distinguished themselves after Lafayette, for instance the Marquis de la Rouerie, the Irishman Conway, Pulaski the Pole, and especially the German Steuben. The author of the "Barber of Seville" recommends the latter, an old brother in arms of Frederic the Great, to the Continental Congress in this wise :

"The art of making war successfully being the fruit of courage combined with prudence, knowl-

edge, and experience, a companion in arms of the great Frederic, who stood by his side for twenty-two years, strikes us as one of the men best fitted to second M. Washington."

Such were Beaumarchais's efforts in behalf of the Americans at a critical period. Let us follow the mishaps and mischances which befell the expedition he fitted out, but which proved successful at last, as well as the misfortunes of its energetic author, who did not come off so well.



## VII.

### THE TRIALS OF BEAUMARCHAIS.

THIS expedition made a noise. It was on too large a scale to be conducted with absolute secrecy, and besides this too many people were connected with it in various capacities. Beaumarchais left Paris incognito to supervise arrangements for its departure at Hâvre. The lieutenant of police at Paris, who reported to the government whatever transpired, wrote as follows to the Count de Vergennes, December 12, 1776 : " Dr. Franklin's arrival at Nantes has created a good deal of excitement, while M. de Beaumarchais's departure, everywhere stated to be for Hâvre, has made no less sensation." The author of Figaro himself committed a great imprudence. On reaching Hâvre he turned aside to superintend the rehearsals of the " Barber of Seville," soon to be performed in that town, and thus betrayed his incognito. English spies were on the watch. The ministry, to avoid a conflict with Lord Stormont, had arranged that the despatch of officers and munitions of war to the United States should be considered as an *envoi* to the French colonies in the West Indies ; but as the expedition was on so large a scale, and merchant-vessels were employed as transports, instead of war-vessels, and the

officers enrolled were indiscreet, the appearance of Beaumarchais at Hâvre brought this to a climax. Lord Stormont made vehement protests to the government. About this time news came of the battle of Long Island, in which Washington was defeated, and the effect of this was to dampen everybody's ardor in favor of the insurgents and arrest proceedings. Orders were suddenly sent by the ministry to Hâvre and Nantes for the officers not to embark, and for the vessels not to leave port. One vessel, the "Amphitrite," equipped by Beaumarchais, with Ducoudray on board, had set sail already, but two others were detained. Beaumarchais hastened back to Paris to get the orders countermanded. Vergennes, in a note to his secretary Gérard de Rayneval, hands this application over to the Minister of War and requests Gérard to explain the affair to the American commissioners, but not to let them "see behind the masks." Finally, the two vessels are released. Just as they are leaving port, however, the news comes that the "Amphitrite" had returned to Nantes because Ducoudray found himself uncomfortably installed on the ship. Ducoudray writes a letter to Beaumarchais full of crooked explanations and excuses. Beaumarchais, enraged, replies as follows :

"PARIS, January 22, 1777.

"As your conduct, sir, in this affair is inexplicable, I will not waste time in trying to comprehend it. All that concerns me is to guarantee

myself and my friends against occurrences of the same kind in future. As the veritable owner, therefore, of the 'Amphitrite,' I send herewith an order to Captain Fautrelle to take absolute command. You are sagacious enough to see that I have not taken so decisive a step without previously consulting powerful and judicious friends. Have the kindness, sir, to conform to it, or find another vessel to take you wherever you please, with no pretension on my part to hinder you in any respect, except in matters which relate to myself and which tend to injure me."

Beaumarchais at the same time writes to his confidential agent De Francy (then at L'Orient, but whom he afterwards sends to America to look out for his interests there), to see that his instructions with regard to Ducoudray and his vessel are carried out.

At last, all obstacles being removed, Beaumarchais's vessels depart on their important errand. They escape English cruisers and reach Portsmouth (N. H.), at the opening of the campaign of 1777. On receiving for the first time so many cargoes of cannon, powder, guns, clothing and shoes, an equipment sufficient for 25,000 men, the people, assembled on the shore, shouted and cheered vociferously. Silas Deane wrote from Paris to the Secret Committee of Congress ;

“ PARIS, November 29, 1776.

“ I should never have completed what I have but for the generous, the indefatigable and spirited exertions of Monsieur Beaumarchais, to whom the United States are on every account greatly indebted, more so than to any other person on this side of the water; he is greatly in advance for stores, clothing and the like, and therefore I am confident you will make him the earliest and most ample remittances. . . . I can not in a letter do full justice to Monsieur Beaumarchais for his great address and assiduity in our cause; I can only say he appears to have undertaken it on great and liberal principles, and has in the pursuit made it his own. His interest and influence, which are great, have been exerted to the utmost in the cause of the United States, and I hope the consequences will equal his wishes.

“ I have the honor to be, etc.,

“ SILAS DEANE.”

In a previous letter, August 15, Silas Deane reports of Beaumarchais :

“ Everything he says, writes, or does is in reality the action of the ministry, for that a man



a few months since should confine himself from his creditors and now on this occasion be able to advance half a million is so extraordinary that it ceases to be a mystery."

Beaumarchais naturally expected that Congress would not delay in sending many thanks and a good deal of Virginia and Maryland tobacco. But nothing came, not even an answer to his letters. The returns which, according to Silas Deane's positive assurances, should have arrived in six months, did not arrive at all. Silas Deane, much embarrassed, could not account for this. Neither Deane nor Beaumarchais had taken Arthur Lee into account. Lee and Franklin had just been made American Commissioners in Paris along with Silas Deane. Franklin arrived in December, 1776; Arthur Lee came from London at the end of the same month. Soon after entering on his duties he writes on his own responsibility to the Committee on Foreign Affairs in Congress that the policy of the French Court is in a kind of "trembling hesitation," owing to

"the promises made to me by the French agent in London, which I stated to you by Mr. Story and others, not having been entirely fulfilled. The changing of the mode of conveying what they promised was settled with Mr. Deane,

whom Monsieur Hortalez or Beaumarchais found here upon his return from London." \*

Again, in another confidential letter, Lee says :

"The minister has repeatedly assured us, and that in the most explicit terms, that no return was expected for these subsidies."

Again, under date of February 25, 1778 :

"The ministry, as you will see by our joint letter, have often given us to understand that we are not to pay for them, yet still M. de Beaumarchais, with the perseverance of such adventurers, persists in his demand. He alleges some promise or agreement made with Mr. Deane. I should suppose Mr. Deane would have apprised you of it if any such exists. But certainly Doctor Franklin and myself are kept so much in the dark about the existence of such agreement as to expose us to much unnecessary plague from this M. de Beaumarchais, who I can not think has any right to make the demand in question."

Sparks adds in a foot-note :

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\* Diplomatic Correspondence.

“ Mr. Lee seemed to be somewhat less certain afterward, having in the mean time conversed repeatedly with M. de Beaumarchais on the subject. Writing to Mr. Pringle, July 4, 1779, Lee says: ‘I absolutely do not know whether Beaumarchais is right or wrong, and while it is doubtful, one would not impeach his character.’ ”

Lee wrote and despatched these letters without the knowledge of his colleagues Franklin and Deane. The reader, with the foregoing documents by Vergennes and Beaumarchais in his mind, can appreciate their verity. The Committee on Foreign Affairs in Congress, with such despatches, was naturally placed between the horns of a dilemma, and probably awaited further reports. Franklin keeps silent. At this time Franklin and Deane act together independently of Lee, because Vergennes distrusted the latter, the minister suspecting Lee of transmitting information to the English. It is certain that his secretary did, as Lee afterward throws the blame of the discovery of this treachery on him, and it is very probable that some of Lee's own letters were intercepted. With such an evil genius to pervert the minds of Congressmen it is not surprising that Beaumarchais received no returns for the supplies he sent to the United States.

Another victim of Lee's mendacity was Silas Deane. Their disputes and recriminations led to the recall of each, one after the other, and to the final ruin of the

latter. Franklin, in the triangular quarrel between Lee, Beaumarchais, and Deane, stood aloof. In a letter to Mr. Lovell, one of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, dated June 1, 1779, Franklin says : \*

“ I have never meddled with the disputes between Mr. Deane and Mr. Lee, but the suspicion of having a good will toward the former has drawn upon me a great deal of ill will from his antagonist. I had always resolved to have no quarrel, and have, therefore, to make it a constant rule to answer no angry, affronting, or abusive letters, of which I have received many and long ones from Mr. Lee and Mr. Izard, who, I understand and see by the papers, have been writing liberally, or rather illiberally, against me, to prevent, as one of them says here, any impressions my writing against them might occasion to their prejudice. But I have never before mentioned them in any of my letters.”

As to Beaumarchais, Franklin had been prejudiced against him by his friend Dr. Dubourg,† and he de-

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\* Diplomatic Correspondence.

† M. Doniol says in this connection : “ Franklin had never regarded Roderigue Hortalez favorably. Doctor Dubourg undoubtedly had something to do with this, but it is equally true

clared to Deane that he will have nothing to do with transactions which took place before his arrival. Add to this, that Ducoudray, on reaching the United States, and furious against Beaumarchais on account of the reprimand already cited, published a calumnious pamphlet against him. The Committee of Congress is more and more puzzled. The letters of Beaumarchais himself do not improve the situation. Their odd mixture of patriotic and commercial ideas, both equally honest, inspire distrust in minds already prejudiced against him. "Imagine," says De Lomenie, "the effect on sober Yankees, nearly all of whom had taken part in commercial transactions before the war, receiving cargoes almost always shipped clandestinely, in the night, with invoices more or less incorrect, and the whole with no other advices than the somewhat hasty missives over the romantic signature of Rodrigue Hortalez & Co., in which Beaumarchais mingles together enthusiastic protestations, an unlimited tender of services, political advice, and demands for

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that the Americans thought everything was too dear; this was due to the risk which their business involved, and henceforth they were more and more willing to accept the idea that Beaumarchais ought to serve them for nothing, and thought themselves wronged by him on being obliged to pay him as an intermediary. The 'Barber of Seville,' besides, seeming in everybody's eye to be making great profits, found plenty of people interested in injuring him. It was important, too, for the English to obstruct his efforts, and the English embassy fed the flame. In any event Franklin, at this time, openly contested the operations of Hortalez and tried to have him set aside."

tobacco, indigo and codfish." Some of these letters are, besides, grandiloquent and flippant.\* Shrewd Yankees were naturally led to think that such a person, so ardent and fantastic, supposing that he really existed, "was playing a commercial comedy understood between him and the French authorities, and that they might safely and conscientiously avail themselves of his supplies, read his amplifications, and dispense with sending him tobacco."

Beaumarchais, nevertheless, was in a cruel position. Relying on the fulfillment of honorable engagements entered into by Silas Deane, the authorized agent of Congress, he had begun operations on an immense scale. He had loaded and chartered ships, drawn in merchants and nobles as capitalists, and given extensive orders for manufactures. During the year 1777 he had sent to Congress cargoes to the value of five million francs without having received one word in reply. Congress persisted in regarding him as a fictitious character. In vain he wrote at the end of the year :

"My money and credit are gone. Relying too greatly on returns so often promised, I have exhausted my own funds and those of my friends. Other powerful resources are exhausted which I had obtained on the express condition of soon replacing what I took."

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\* See "Les Français en Amérique," by Thomas Balch, p. 72.

Vergennes had to come to the rescue. Documents on file in the archives of the French ministry of foreign affairs show that during this year, when Vergennes was diplomatically obliged to discountenance Beaumarchais's operations, he, at the same time, advanced to him over 1,000,000 francs, which sum, added to that of the receipts before mentioned, made about 3,000,000 francs given him by the government. And yet his advances in behalf of the Americans amounted to millions more.

Beaumarchais now determined to ascertain why Congress did not fulfill the engagements Silas Deane had entered into in its name. He accordingly despatched Théveneau de Francy, an intelligent young man to whom he was much attached, and who was, as we have seen, in his employ, to the United States, with full powers and instructions. It must not be forgotten that France and England were not yet at open war; that efforts in behalf of the insurgents were at a low ebb in France on account of their reverses; and that Lord Stormont, with his spies, was extremely vigilant. Beaumarchais writes :

“ Although it is now the 20th of December, 1777, my large vessel has not yet sailed. But so is it with nearly every vessel destined for the United States. The minister is afraid that too many sailors may be carried off just at a time when most needed. The strictest orders have

been issued in almost every port, but especially in those where my ships are fitting out. The size and armament of my ship have, it seems, made Lord Stormont bestir himself, and the ministry fears that it may be suspected of favoring an operation which really is conducted without it and even in spite of it. Just as it was about to sail my artillery was seized, and the difficulty in finding more keeps me here. I am contending against obstacles of all kinds, but with all my strength, and I hope to overcome them with patience, courage, and money. The enormous losses I incur seem to affect nobody. The Minister is inflexible. Even the American deputies at Passy (where Franklin lived) have the honor of thwarting me, the best friend their country has! The 'Amphitrite' has just landed a small cargo of rice and indigo at Lorient, and they were unjust enough to claim it, declaring that it was addressed to them and not to me. They probably took my patience for weakness and my generosity for imbecility."

This cargo, the value of which is only 150,000 francs, "a mere drop in the ocean of my debts," says



Beaumarchais, is given up to him through the influence of Silas Deane. He goes on to say :

“ As to yourself, my dear friend, I suppose that you have arrived, and that the situation of things in America enables you to come to a settlement with Congress. . . . Perhaps I flatter myself, but I rely on the integrity and equity of Congress as I do on yours and my own. Its deputies here are ill at ease, and necessity often renders men indelicate, which is my explanation of their unjust treatment of me.\*. . . It is unfortunate, my friend, for the interests of this cause in France that they are intrusted to several persons; one alone would have succeeded better; as far as I am concerned I must do justice to Mr. Deane by saying that he is ashamed and chagrined by the conduct of his colleagues toward me, which is wholly due to Mr. Lee.

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\* Congress at first, says De Lomenie, did not furnish its representatives in Paris with sufficient funds. Silas Deane had been obliged to borrow money of Beaumarchais for his personal use. Franklin's expenses, as well as his outlays for the colonies, were provided for by a cargo of indigo he brought with him. The French government, about the time of Franklin's arrival, began to supply money to the Commissioners, and there was no further difficulty in this respect.

“Disagreeable as all these things are, the news from America delights me beyond measure. Brave, brave people! Their military conduct justifies my esteem and the enthusiasm manifested for them in France! Indeed, I ask returns, my friend, only to enable me to serve them anew, and to keep my engagements in such a way that I can make fresh ones in their favor. . . . Do as I do—despise petty considerations, petty maneuvers and petty resentments! I have associated you with a magnificent cause. You are the agent of a just and generous man. Remember that success is a risk, that the money due me depends on the chances of events, but that my reputation depends on myself, as yours to-day depends on your own efforts. May it prove a good one, my friend, and all will not be lost even if the rest should.”

De Francy performed his duties ably. The surrender of Burgoyne took place near the end of the year 1777, which greatly stimulated efforts in behalf of the Americans in France. De Francy, in April, 1778, had the following contract executed, showing clearly how Congress regarded its obligations to Beaumarchais past and to come,

## VIII.

### BEAUMARCHAIS'S CONTRACT WITH THE UNITED STATES AND ITS FATE.

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN :

Whereas Roderigue Hortalez & Company of Paris have shipped, or caused to be shipped, on board sundry ships or vessels considerable quantities of Cannon, Arms, Ammunition, Cloathing, and other stores, most of which have been safely landed in America and delivered to the agents of the United States for the use and service thereof, and whereas said Roderigue Hortalez & Company are willing and desirous to continue supplying those States with Cannon, Mortars, Bombs, Arms, Ammunition, Cloathing and every sort of Stores that may be wanted or required ; and also with Specie provided satisfactory assumption be made and assurance given for the payment in France of the just Cost, Charges and Freight of the Cargoes already shipped as well

as those to be hereafter shipped and of specie to be advanced—

And whereas some Cargoes of American produce have already been shipped to the Address of the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. or their assigns for sale on account of the United States of America; the net proceeds whereof are to be applied in part discharge of their claims—

Now know ye that John Baptist Lazarus Théveneau de Francy, agent of Peter Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais as representative of the house of the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co., by him specially appointed and empowered to act fully and effectually in all things on his Behalf, as appears by a certain letter of Attorney or Instrument of writing bearing date the tenth day of September Anno 1777, copy of whereof is hereunto annexed, doth for and on behalf of the said Roderigue Hortalez & Company represented by Mr. Beaumarchais as aforesaid in virtue of the powers in him vested, contract, agree and engage to and with the Hon. William Ellery, James Forbes, William Henry Drayton and William Duer, Esquires, a Committee of Commerce properly appointed and authorized by the Dele-

gates of the United States of America in Congress assembled to enter into, execute, ratify and confirm this contract for and in Behalf of the said United States as follows ;

First, That the Cost and Charges of the several Cargoes already shipped by the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. shall be fairly stated at the current prices and usual mercantile charges in France of the dates at which they were shipped.

Second, That the freight of the said Cargoes shall be charged agreeably to the contract made by and between M. Beaumarchais, Mr. Silas Deane and Mr. Montieu.

Third, That all orders for Cannon, Bombs, Mortars, Arms, Ammunition, Cloathing or other stores which may hereafter be transmitted to Mess. Roderigue Hortalez & Co. or delivered to their agent in America by the said Committee or any other persons properly authorized by Congress to transmit or deliver such lists or orders shall be exported and shipped with all possible despatch.

Fourth, That all articles to be hereafter shipped for America in virtue of this Contract shall be provided as nearly to the orders as pos-

sible and not higher than the current prices and attended with the most moderate charges, not higher than the usual mercantile charges of the place from whence they are exported.

Fifth, That good ships shall be chartered or bought on the most moderate terms for transporting the Stores to America and carrying back such cargoes as the Committee shall chuse to ship in them.

Sixth, That agents appointed under the authority of Congress shall have free liberty to inspect the quality and require the prices of all articles to be shipped for the account of the United States, with power to reject such as they judge unfit for or too high charged; they shall also be party in the charters and purchasing of ships to be employed in this service.

Seventh, That Bills on the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co. aforesaid for twenty-four millions of livres Tournois annually shall be duly honored and paid, the Bills to be drawn at double usance and at the following periods, viz. in the months of May, July, September, November, January and March for Four millions each two months.

In consideration whereof the said William Ellery, James Forbes, William Henry Drayton and William Duer, Esquires, Commercial Committee of Congress, by virtue of the power and authorities to them delegated by the Congress do, for and in behalf of the said United States, Covenant, agree and engage with the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. by their said agent as follows :

First, That remittances shall be made by exports of American produce and otherways to the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. or their agent for the express purpose of discharging the debt already justly due or thereafter to become justly due in consequence of this agreement.

Second, That all cargoes of merchandise shipped on account of the United States for France and appropriated to the discharge of the said debt shall be addressed to the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co. or their assigns for sale, subject however to the inspection and control of an agent appointed under the authority of Congress who shall have liberty to inspect the quality of such merchandise, assent to or reject the prices offered, postpone the sales, and

do everything for the interest of his constituents.

Third, That the customary interest of France not exceeding six per centum per annum shall be allowed on the debt already due or that from time to time shall be due to the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. in virtue of this agreement, computing the interest in money from the time of its being paid, and on the goods imported and exported by them from the usual periods of commercial credit on such goods.

Fourth, That any payments of Continental currency in America required by the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. or their agents and agreed to by Congress shall be computed at the current or equitable course of exchange at the date of the payment, and Interest be discounted on the amount from that date.

Fifth, That remittances to be made for the purpose of extinguishing the Debt now due, or to become due to the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. shall be made at such times and seasons as shall be most safe and convenient for the American interest, but are to continue until the entire debt,



principal and interest shall be fully and fairly discharged.

Sixth, That a commission of two and a half per centum shall be allowed to the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. on the amount of the Invoices, freight or other charges and monies paid and disbursed by them for the account of the United States.

Seventh, That the customary commission in France shall be also allowed the said Roderigue Hortalez & Co. on the amount of all payments made to them on account of the United States.

Provided always, that the seventh article of this agreement respecting the annual supply of Twenty-four millions of Livres shall not be considered as absolutely binding upon either of the parties to the Contract unless the same shall be ratified by Roderigue Hortalez & Co. and the Commissioners of the United States at Paris, for which purpose it is agreed to be submitted to them, anything herein contained to the contrary notwithstanding. But it is nevertheless to be understood that the United States may and shall have liberty to draw in the course of five or six months from the date hereof upon the said Rode-

rigue Hortalez & Co. for the sum of One hundred thousand pounds sterling, equal to two millions and three hundred thousand livres Tournois, which shall be duly paid.

In witness whereof the contracting parties have hereunto set their hands and seals this sixteenth day of April in the year of our Lord 1778.

J. B. LAZARUS THEVENEAU DE FRANCY,  
WILLIAM ELLERY.  
JAMES FORBES.  
WILLIAM HENRY DRAYTON.  
WILLIAM DUER.

Sealed, signed, and delivered in the presence of  
CHARLES THOMSON,  
Secretary of Congress.

This contract, so precise in its stipulations, does not calm the troubled waters. Shipments continue under its provisions, but payment for them is not made by Congress. The party which supports Arthur Lee in this assembly, led by his brother Richard Henry Lee and Samuel Adams, is too strong. Finally, in September, 1778, the Committee of Congress, to have the matter closed up, send a copy of the Contract to the American Commissioners in Paris for further information. Silas Deane, traduced by Arthur Lee, had been recalled and John Adams

appointed in his place. The Commissioners accordingly address the following letter to the Count de Vergennes :

“PASSY, September 10, 1778.

“SIR: By some of the last ships from America, we received from Congress certain powers and instructions which we think it necessary to lay before your Excellency, and which we have the honor to do in this letter.

“On the 13th of April last Congress resolved, ‘That the Commissioners of the United States in France be authorized to determine and settle with the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co. the compensation, if any, which should be allowed them on all merchandise and warlike stores, shipped by them for the use of the United States, previous to the 14th day of April, 1778, over and above the Commission allowed them in the 6th article of the proposed contract between the Committee of Commerce and John Baptiste Lazarus Théveneau de Francy.’

“In the letter of the Committee of Commerce to us, in which the foregoing resolution was enclosed, the Committee express themselves thus: ‘This will be accompanied by a contract

entered into between John Baptiste Lazarus de Théveneau de Francy, agent of Peter Augustine Caron de Beaumarchais, representative of the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co. and the Committee of Commerce. You will observe that their accounts are to be fairly settled, and what is justly due paid for, as, on the one hand, Congress would be unwilling to evidence a disregard for, and contemptuous refusal of, the spontaneous friendship of His Most Christian Majesty, so, on the other, they are unwilling to put into the private pockets of individuals what was graciously designed for the public benefit. You will be pleased to have their accounts liquidated, and direct, in the liquidation thereof, that particular care be taken to distinguish the property of the crown of France from the private property of Hortalez & Co., and transmit to us the accounts so stated and distinguished. This will also be accompanied by an invoice of articles to be imported from France, and resolves of Congress relative thereto. You will appoint, if you should judge proper, an agent or agents to inspect the quality of such goods as you may apply for to the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co.

before they are shipped, to prevent any impositions.

“On the 16th of May last, Congress resolved, ‘That the invoice of articles to be imported from France, together with the list of medicines approved by Congress, be signed by the Committee of Commerce, and transmitted to the Commissioners of the United States at Paris, who are authorized and directed to apply to the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co. for such of said articles as they shall have previously purchased or contracted for ; that copies of the invoice be delivered to Mons. de Francy, agent for Roderigue Hortalez & Co., together with a copy of the foregoing resolution ; and that the articles to be shipped by the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co. be not insured, but that notice be given to the Commissioners in France that they may endeavor to obtain convoy for the protection thereof.

“ We have the honor to enclose to your Excellency a copy of the contract made between the Committee and Monsieur de Francy, a copy of Monsieur Francy’s powers, and a copy of the list of articles to be furnished according to that con-

tract, that your Excellency may have before you all the papers relative to this subject.

“ We are under the necessity of applying to your Excellency upon this occasion, and of requesting your advice. With regard to what is passed, we know not who the persons are who constitute the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co.; but we have understood, and Congress has ever understood, and so have the people in America in general, that they were under obligations to His Majesty's good will for the greatest part of the merchandise and warlike stores heretofore furnished under the firm of Rodérigue Hortalez & Co. We can not discover that any written contract was ever made between Congress or any agent of theirs and the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co.; nor do we know of any living witness, or any other evidence, whose testimony can ascertain to us who the persons are that constitute the house of Roderigue Hortalez & Co., or what were the terms upon which the merchandise and munitions of war were supplied, neither as to the price, nor the time, or conditions of payment. As we said before, we apprehend that the United States hold themselves

under obligations to His Majesty for all those supplies, and we are sure it is their wish and their determination to discharge the obligation to His Majesty as soon as Providence shall put it in their power. In the mean time, we are ready to settle and liquidate the accounts according to our instructions at any time, and in any manner which His Majesty and your Excellency shall point out to us. As the contract for future supplies is to be ratified or not ratified by us, as we shall judge expedient, we must request your Excellency's advice as a favor upon this head, and whether it would be safe or prudent in us to ratify it, and in Congress to depend upon supplies from this quarter. Because, if we should depend upon this resource for supplies and be disappointed, the consequences would be fatal to our country.

“ We have the honor, etc.,

“ JOHN ADAMS,

“ ARTHUR LEE,

“ B. FRANKLIN.”

This letter shows belief in Arthur Lee's statements and disregard of the statements made by Silas Deane. Considering the important services of this able patriot

there is not probably in our history a more signal instance of the effect of political malignity. The Count de Vergennes could not reply to this letter officially, as there was no formal diplomatic recognition of the commissioners ; nor could he sanction the affairs of Roderigue Hortalez & Co., owing to the supposed secrecy with which they were conducted and the consequent ignorance by the government of such a house. Meanwhile, the treaty of amity and commerce had been signed, and Gérard de Rayneval appointed Minister to the United States, where he arrived in July of this year. He accordingly writes to Gérard de Rayneval at Philadelphia what answer he will make to the letter of the American Commissioners, and orders him to communicate the substance of it to Congress :

“ These plenipotentiaries have just made a new demand on me embracing two subjects, one concerning the endorsement of M. de Beaumarchais's accounts under the name of Roderigue Hortalez & Co., and the other a ratification of the contract which Congress, or rather the Committee of Commerce in its name, has made with the Sieur Théveneau de Francy, agent of the Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais. M. Franklin and his colleagues would like to know what articles have been supplied by the King, and those that have been supplied by M. de Beaumarchais on his own ac-



count, and they insinuate that Congress is persuaded that all, or at least a large portion, of what has been sent is on account of His Majesty. I am about to reply that the King has not furnished anything; that he has simply allowed M. de Beaumarchais to provide himself with what he wanted in the arsenals, on condition of replacing what he took; and that, for the rest, I will gladly interpose in order that they may not be pressed for the payment of the military supplies.

“As to the contract made with the *Sieur Francy* the Commissioners are empowered to ratify it or reject it, and they ask my advice what they shall do. As I do not know the house of *Roderigue Hortalez & Co.*, and can not vouch for it, it is impossible to give any opinion either on its standing or on its responsibility. Please communicate these two replies to Congress. I am confident beforehand that Congress will appreciate their correctness.”

This diplomatic letter, considering *Silas Deane's* reports to the Committee of Congress on his transactions in Paris and the necessity which still existed of the French government ignoring American operations, was properly worded. It is really a covert en-

dorsement of Beaumarchais. That it is so considered by Congress is evident from subsequent proceedings. De Rayneval obeyed his instructions, and, without any compromise of diplomatic reserve, explained Beaumarchais's operations in such a way as to satisfy Congress that they were correct. The proof of this is evident in the following letter sent to Beaumarchais near the close of the year 1778, and received by him in January, 1779 :

“ SIR : The Congress of the United States, sensible of your exertions in their favor, present you with their thanks and assure you of their regard.

They lament the inconvenience you have suffered by the great advances made in support of these States. Circumstances have prevented a compliance with their wishes ; but they will take the most effectual measures in their power to discharge the debt due you.

“ The liberal sentiments and extensive views which could alone dictate a conduct like yours are conspicuous in your actions and adorn your character. While with great talents you served your Prince, you have gained the esteem of this infant Republic and will receive the united applause of the New World.

JOHN JAY,  
“ President.”

It must not be forgotten that Congress held its sessions with closed doors and kept no record of its discussions. A record of its acts, resolutions, reports and similar documents was kept, but none of its debates, as far as I can learn. The only official glimpse we have of these is probably that furnished by Gérard de Rayneval, who was daily advised of what transpired in relation to French interests. It may be conjectured by what follows that, at the time John Jay sent the above letter to Beaumarchais, the Lee party was voted down. But it did not remain passive. Determined to create public excitement on the Beaumarchais business, it employs early in January, 1779, the powerful and popular pen of the author of "Common Sense," Tom Paine, who is not only a journalist at this time but the holder of a secretaryship under the government. Tom Paine, accordingly, reiterates in a newspaper the false assertions of Arthur Lee in regard to the supplies furnished by Beaumarchais. The following letter by Gérard de Rayneval tells the story with sufficient clearness. He writes to the Count de Vergennes January 10, 1779 :

"The disadvantages of the freedom of the press begin to be apparent here, as in all countries where it is recognised. M. Paine, secretary to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, has been led by his animosity to M. Silas Deane to publish a scandalous assertion that the assistance furnished

by M. de Beaumarchais had been promised as a gift, and that he had the written evidence of it in his possession. I was too sensible of the effect of this falsehood not to take measures to forestall it. As I had always been on good terms with M. Paine I resolved to call on him and try to have him correct his statement in such a way as not to leave any imputation against France. I had a great deal of trouble in convincing him of his error, and especially to make him promise to retract it. But, to my great surprise and dissatisfaction, nothing has been published by him calculated to remove the impression produced by his false assertion. I then thought it necessary to refer what he wrote to Congress. Congress, however, did not wait for this to show me its indignation. It no longer entertains the slightest doubt on this affair as it really is; the very day the paper appeared it took steps to rectify this claim by leaving His Majesty free to offset any portion of it by his indebtedness to the States for subsistences furnished to his forces. Moreover, Monseigneur, all assure me that Messrs. Lee and Samuel Adams prevented

M. Paine from giving me the satisfaction demanded."

The result is, Tom Paine is deprived of his secretaryship, for, a week later, Gérard de Rayneval thus continues :

"The only remedy that occurred to me to overcome this difficulty, and even profit by it, was to have an offer made to M. Paine to secure him a salary by the King, in place of that he lost. He called and thanked me for this. I stipulated that he should not make any publication on political affairs nor in relation to Congress, without first consulting me, and that he should employ his pen chiefly in inspiring the people with sentiments favorable to France and the alliance, and in such a way as to maintain hatred and distrust of the English. He seemed to accept this task with pleasure. I promised him the same salary of a thousand dollars per annum, as soon as Congress dismissed him. He has already entered on his duties by declaring in the Gazette of the 16th inst. that the matter of assistance did not concern the Court, and was not a political affair." \*

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\* See Appendix I.

Owing to the efforts of Silas Deane to defend himself, Arthur Lee was now recalled from Paris in his turn. The Lee party resumed its machinations against Beaumarchais, and this time they proved successful by preventing the settlement of his accounts. As we shall return to this party again, when we reach the correspondence of Gérard de Rayneval, we follow the course of Beaumarchais as recounted by himself and his biographer De Lomenie.

Beaumarchais continues to supply the Americans and equips a fleet. The following letter to De Francy is in relation to it :

“ PARIS, December 6, 1778.

“ I send beforehand the privateer ‘ Zephyr ’ to inform you that I am ready to despatch a fleet of twelve vessels with the ‘ Fier Rodrigue ’ at the head of them. This fleet is fully armed.

. . . . .

“ You will receive by the ‘ Fier Rodrigue ’ all my accounts with Congress fully made out, including insurance, without policies, because I am my own insurer, and there is no doubt, according to all commercial decisions in Europe, that to insure, or to take the risk of insurance, gives an incontestable right to payment. Congress will not be obliged to pay for cargoes it

does not receive, which may have been lost on the passage from Europe. I shall accompany my accounts with an exact statement of what I have received from Congress, in spite of the faithless deputation at Passy which has claimed every return cargo. . . . This constant wrong done me irritates me, and I have firmly resolved not to have anything more to do with the deputation so long as that rogue Lee belongs to it."

. . . . .

Not only did Beaumarchais send a fleet to supply munitions of war and to trade with the Americans, but he acted as cashier and banker for the volunteer French officers who had gone to America in his vessels. He continues in relation to this service :

"I have received no money for Count Pulaski other than that which he gave me himself, out of which I have just paid one hundred louis on his receipt. I will send you his account as it now stands. He was to write to me, but I have no news from him.

"I approve of what you have done for M. Lafayette, the brave young fellow! In obliging men of that stamp you serve me just as I want to be served."

Lafayette, says De Lomenie in a foot-note, was devoured by American usurers. Beaumarchais states that he found "Jerusalem at Philadelphia." Francy, who was intimate with the young general, had no hesitation in lending his patron's money to him.

"Remember me often and kindly to Baron Steuben. According to what I hear from him I congratulate myself on having sent so fine an officer to my friends the *free men*, and for having compelled him, in a certain way, to enter upon such a noble career. I am not at all uneasy about the money I lent him for an outfit. Never have I made a more satisfactory use of money, for I have placed a man of honor where he ought to be.\* I learn that he is inspector-general of all the American forces! Tell him that his fame pays the interest of his debt, and that I have no doubt of its payment in this way at usurious rates."

The letter closes with his compliments to Silas Deane, whom he endorses as a worthy Republican

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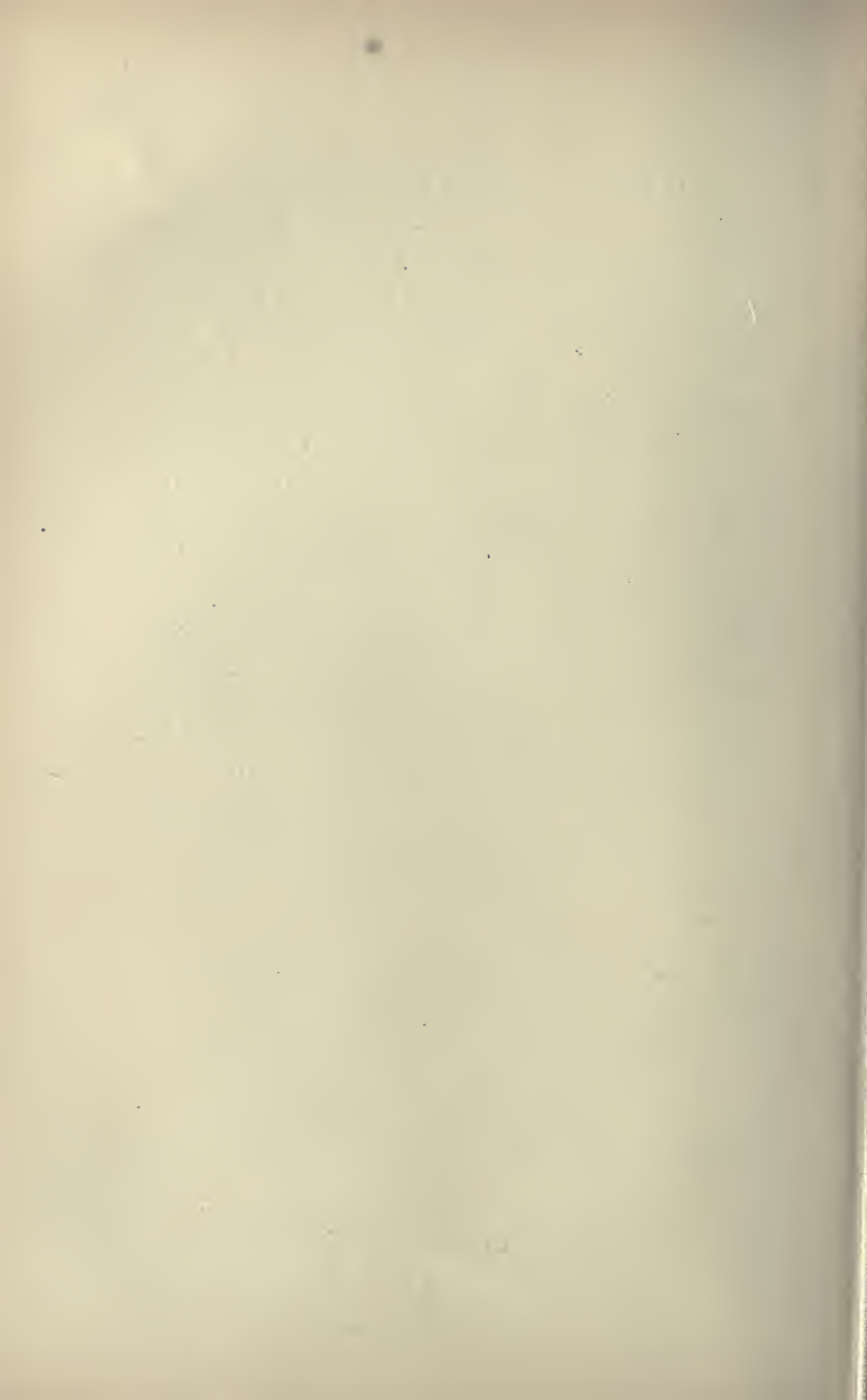
\* On the death of Beaumarchais, May 18, 1799, an inventory was taken of his assets. On the list appears the following item of Steuben's indebtedness to the estate:

"À Steuben, pour avances faites en particulier pour passer en Amérique, et à des neveux pour aller à le joindre, 5997 frs. 2 sols, 7 deniers."



who would be of far more use to his country (in Paris) than "that low intriguer Lee."

We now reach the period of the active and open participation of the French government in the American war. Henceforth, Beaumarchais is a more secondary character. The foregoing documents, with the comments added, exhibit his diplomatic and commercial capacity as well as afford glimpses of his talents in other directions. They make clear the nature of his engagements with the United States, and show why, through the misconception of his real and inestimable services, he could not obtain a settlement of his claims on our country during his lifetime. Before following him to the end, it is well to linger for a moment on the machinations of his persistent enemies, Ducoudray and Dr. Dubourg, whose unfavorable reports in the hands of Arthur Lee and his faction in Congress do him so much mischief.



## IX.

### THE ENEMIES OF BEAUMARCHAIS.

ARTHUR LEE, a sort of political Iago, is the most persistent and vindictive of the enemies of Beaumarchais, as will be seen farther on. Gérard de Rayneval, in a letter to the Count de Vergennes, dated September 27, 1779, characterizes the statements of Arthur Lee as "an absurd tissue of lies and sarcasms which can do nothing but compromise those who have the misfortune to be in correspondence with him."

Of Ducoudray there is little to add except that he was an able engineer; that he did all the harm he could to Beaumarchais, and that he was drowned in the Delaware during the war. Lafayette styles him "a clever busybody, a good officer, but vain even to craziness," while he speaks of his death as a "lucky accident."

Dr. Dubourg was a botanist whose acquaintance Franklin had made during his sojourn in England, and with whom he corresponded before he left that country. Like many other large and small capitalists of the day in France who were encouraged by the government to make such investments, Dubourg

thought that he could turn an honest penny by a venture across the seas to aid combatants in the cause of freedom, of whom he was a staunch friend. De Lomenie says: "This doctor, on whom Vergennes had bestowed some of his confidence, and who had told him of his intention to subsidize various commercial houses so that these might be of service to the Americans, was hoping that he and his associates would be selected for this purpose, when he learned that the Minister, apparently more convinced of Beaumarchais's ability than of theirs, had given him the preference." Irritated at being supplanted by the author of the "Barber of Seville," the old doctor addressed the following letter to the Count de Vergennes:

"MONSEIGNEUR:

"I saw M. de Beaumarchais this morning and conferred with him without reserve. Everybody is familiar with his wit, and nobody more than myself can do better justice to his integrity, discretion, and zeal in behalf of all that is great and good. I regard him as one of the most suitable men in the world for political negotiations, but, at the same time, perhaps one of the least suitable for mercantile transactions. He is fond of display, and it is currently stated that he

keeps young ladies. He passes for a spendthrift, and there is not a merchant or manufacturer in France who does not so regard him and who would not hesitate in having anything to do with him. He accordingly really astonishes me by telling me that you have not only charged him to aid us with his knowledge, but that you have concentrated in his person the entire management of all commercial operations, whether going or coming, all munitions of war, all goods ordinarily despatched to the American or French colonies,—in short, the direction of business in general, the fixing of prices, the making of contracts, the settlement of indebtedness, etc. I agree with him that it would be better to carry on these operations with greater secrecy, but I represented to him that, in absorbing the whole of this immense traffic, and in entirely excluding people who had risked so much for the past year in the service of Congress, it would give them a right to exclaim against monopoly. He replied that this would be no prejudice to their interests, and he employed all his eloquence to prove it the best way he could. I admit that particular motives do not suffice to offset the secrecy

necessary at this critical juncture ; but allow me to express a doubt whether there are not other means, even better ones, for guaranteeing this important secret. There are perhaps a hundred, perhaps a thousand, persons in France, with very inferior talents to those of M. de Beaumarchais, who could better carry out your views by inspiring more confidence among those with whom they would have to deal."

De Lomenie aptly remarks that this letter proves the support by the government of not only Beaumarchais's commercial enterprise, but of others like it ; it also proves the justice of Beaumarchais's claims in Congress for return cargoes in accordance with the agreement entered into with its Paris agent, Silas Deane. Vergennes communicated Dr. Dubourg's letter to Beaumarchais, who sent the following answer direct to the doctor :

" Tuesday, July 16, 1776.

" . . . I now comprehend very well why you have taken time to write to the minister about me. But, to obtain real information, was it really necessary to provide him with that which is not so ? Suppose that I do go into society and am fond of display, and keep young ladies—what

has that to do with our affairs? The young ladies whom I have kept for twenty years, sir, are your very humble servants. They were once four sisters and a niece. Three years ago, two of these kept young ladies, to my great sorrow, died. I now keep only three, two sisters and my niece, which is not very ostentatious for an individual of my standing. But what would you think if, on better acquaintance with me, you also discovered that, pushing scandal to greater lengths, I likewise keep boys, two young nephews, very good-looking, and again even the unfortunate father who brought such a scandalous voluptuary into this world? As to my fondness for display, that is worse still. Finding for the past three years that laces and embroidered coats were too mean to suit my vanity, have I not affected to gratify my pride with cuffs of plain white muslin? The finest black cloth is not too fine for me, and sometimes I have been seen pushing puppyism even to silk, when the weather happened to be too warm—but I entreat you, sir, not to impart this to M. le Comte de Vergennes, for you will ruin me in his estimation.

“ You had your reasons for writing evil to him about me, of whom you know nothing ; I have mine for not taking offense at it, although I have the honor to know you. You are, sir, an honest man with such a burning desire to do a great good that you thought yourself warranted in doing a little evil in order to succeed. This is not exactly the Scripture standard of morality ; but I have found a good many who accommodate themselves to it. The Fathers of the Church, to convert the heathen, sometimes indulged in similar risky citations, in sacred calumnies which they, among themselves, termed pious frauds. But let us stop jesting. I have no feeling in the matter, because M. de Vergennes is not a small man, and I hold myself subject to his reply. Let those of whom I ask credit in business distrust me if they please ; but let those who are animated by genuine zeal in behalf of common friends think twice before breaking with an honorable man who offers to render every service and make every useful advance to these very friends. Now, sir, do you understand me ?

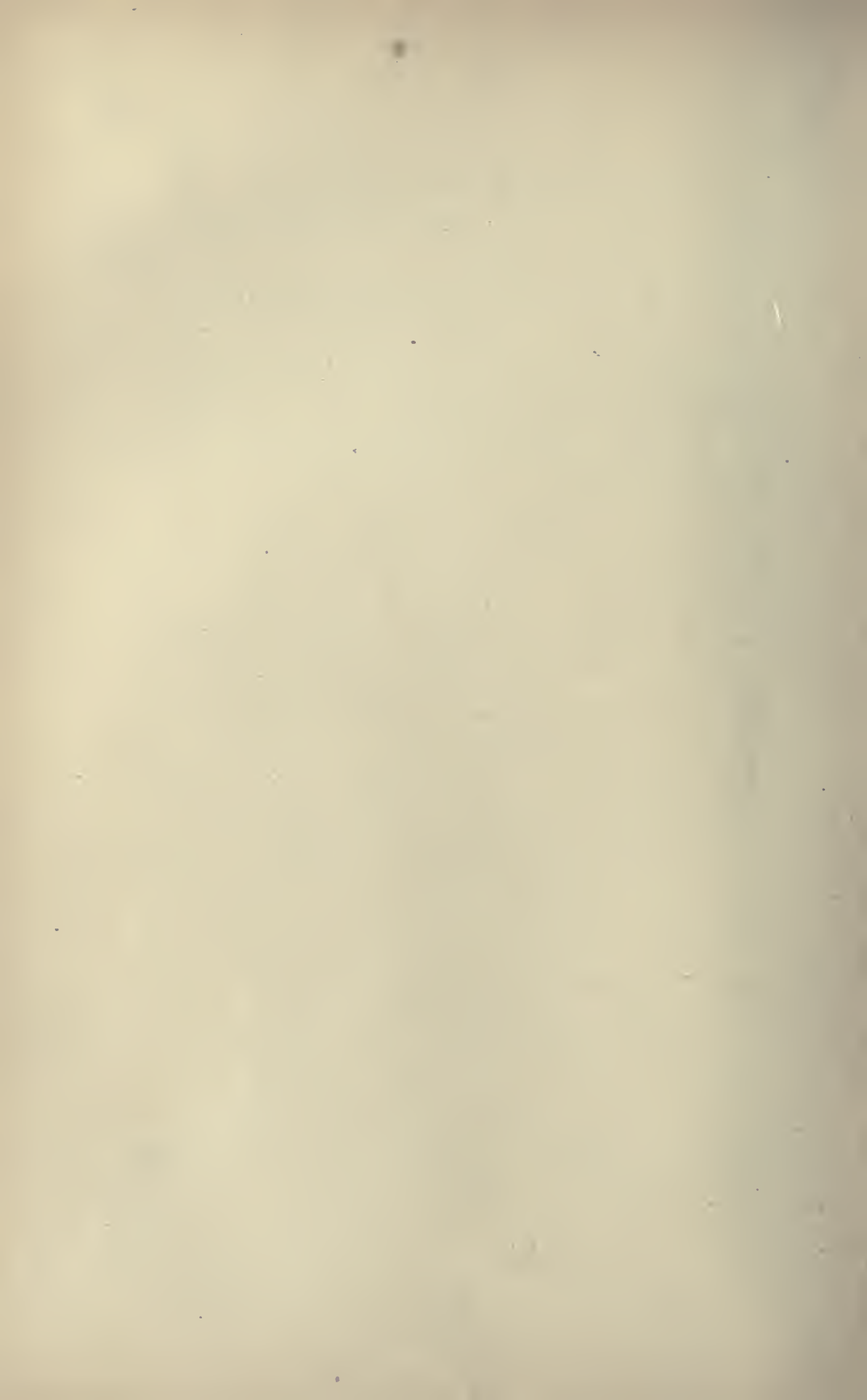
“ I have the honor to be, sir, with the highest consideration, your very humble and



very obedient servant, well known under the name of

“RODERIGUE HORTALEZ & CO.”

The good doctor always cherished rancor against Beaumarchais, and he prejudiced Franklin against him. It is not probable, however, that he showed Beaumarchais's letter to the great philosopher.



## X.

### THE SETTLEMENT OF BEAUMARCHAIS'S CLAIMS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.

IN 1781, Beaumarchais's accounts still remained unpaid. John Jay, as President of Congress in 1779, was, as we have seen, satisfied of the necessity of settling them, and had assured Beaumarchais that his claims would be honored. Silas Deane, who was qualified to adjust the balance due, had returned to France and fixed the amount at 3,600,000 francs. Thus endorsed by the accredited representative of Congress who had contracted the debt, Beaumarchais urged payment. He received no answer for two years. In 1783, a new agent of the United States, Mr. Barclay, is sent as Consul-General and is instructed to revise the accounts adjusted by Silas Deane. Beaumarchais refuses to accede to this. Barclay declares that the United States will pay nothing unless the accounts are re-examined. Beaumarchais resists for a year and then yields. The accounts are revised and reduced by Barclay. Things remain in this state until 1786, when, in the adjustment of the accounts between the French and United States governments, there is a dispute about a million francs, which the latter claims as part-payment of Beaumarchais's account, but with which the Count de

Vergennes declares that the United States government have nothing to do. This is the million receipted for by Beaumarchais June 10, 1776, for which he was alone accountable to the Count de Vergennes. In spite of this Congress came to the conclusion that Beaumarchais owed the sum to the United States and that his account should not be settled until this mystery was cleared up. It is only cleared up now in the work of De Lomenie, which shows conclusively that the United States had no right to demand it. In 1787, with patience exhausted, Beaumarchais addresses a letter to the President of Congress, from which the following is an extract :

“What do you suppose is the general opinion here of the vicious circle in which you have involved me? We will not reimburse M. de Beaumarchais until his accounts are adjusted by us, and we will not adjust his accounts, so as not to pay them! With a nation that has become a powerful sovereign, gratitude may be a simple virtue unworthy of its policy; but no government can be relieved from doing justice and of discharging its debts. I venture to hope, sir, that, impressed by the importance of this matter and the soundness of my reasoning, you will oblige me with an official reply stating what decision the honorable Congress will come to,

either to promptly adjust my accounts and settle them, like any equitable sovereign, or submit the points in dispute to arbiters in Europe with regard to insurances and commissions, as M. Barclay had the honor of proposing to you in 1785, or, finally, to let me know without further shift that American sovereigns, unmindful of past services, deny me justice. I shall then adopt such measures as seem best for my despised interests and my wounded honor, without lacking in the profound respect with which I am, sir, the very humble servant of the general Congress and yourself, Monsieur le President.

“CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.”

Congress found this letter somewhat offensive, and, to give its creditor a lesson, handed over the accounts for examination to the only man whom Beaumarchais would have excluded from that task, Arthur Lee. Lee made short work of it; he decided that not only the United States owed Beaumarchais nothing, but that he owed the United States 1,800,000 francs. After four years of opposition to this by Beaumarchais, Congress, in 1793, ordered a new investigation of the claim by Alexander Hamilton, who reversed Arthur Lee's verdict and pronounced the indebtedness of the United States to Beaumarchais to be 2,280,000 francs.

Unfortunately, the "lost million" again turned up, and the account remained unpaid. Meanwhile, the French Revolution had made Beaumarchais a refugee in Hamburg, where, without money and living in a garret, he resolved to leave to his daughter his American claim as a legacy, with a memorial of which the following is the opening passage :

"Americans, I served you with untiring zeal. I have thus far received no return for this but vexation and disappointment, and I die your creditor. On leaving this world, I have to ask you to give what you owe me to my daughter as a dowry. When I am gone she will, perhaps, have nothing, on account of other wrongs against which I can no longer contend. Through your delay in discharging my claims Providence may have intended to provide her with a resource against utter destitution. Adopt her after my death as a worthy child of the country! Her mother and my widow, equally unfortunate, will conduct her to you. Regard her as the daughter of a citizen. . . Americans, . . . be charitable to your friend, to one whose accumulated services have been recompensed in no other way! *Date obolum Belisario.*"

Other pathetic and somewhat flowery passages of this memorial, characteristic of their author and excusable in one who stands on the verge of the grave, are omitted. Congress remains deaf to the appeal of one who had been its purveyor in times of trouble. Not only is he suffered to die without a settlement of his claim, but for thirty-six years after his death, from 1799 to 1835, every successive government in France, and every French minister to the United States, tried in vain to effect this in behalf of his heirs. Among the French ministers who performed this duty was Talleyrand, who thus writes :

“ Opposition is made to M. de Beaumarchais’s heirs on account of a receipt he gave June 10, 1776, for one million francs, paid to him by order of M. de Vergennes, and it is pretended that this sum should be credited on account of the supplies which he furnished to the United States. As the payment and purpose of this million related to a measure of secret political service ordered by the King, and immediately executed, it does not seem either just or proper to confound this with mercantile operations, later in date, carried on between Congress and a private individual. . . I request you accordingly, citizen minister, to support the demands of the Beaumarchais family

and to lay stress on the considerations of national loyalty and honor to which it appeals. A French citizen who risked his entire fortune to help the Americans, and whose zeal and activity were so essentially useful during the war which gave them their liberty and their rank among nations, might unquestionably pretend to some favor; in any event he should be listened to when he asks for nothing but good faith and justice.

“TALLEYRAND.”

This view of the case by a remarkably clear-headed man may be accepted as the final verdict. The United States government persisted, notwithstanding, in refusing a settlement of the debt, in spite of favorable opinions by eminent American lawyers, and in spite of the presence at Washington of Beaumarchais's daughter, who, with her son, came in 1824 to solicit it in person.\* Only in 1835 was the matter finally disposed of in the summary settlement of French claims generally, under the administration of General Jackson. Hamilton, in 1793, admitted that the United States owed Beaumarchais at least 2,280,000 francs; in 1835 the heirs had the option of taking 800,000 francs, or nothing. They accepted this sum. All that can be added is that, considering the important evidence which time has brought to light in relation to

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\* See Appendix II.



the great services of Beaumarchais to the country, this settlement of his claim can not be regarded as either equitable or creditable.

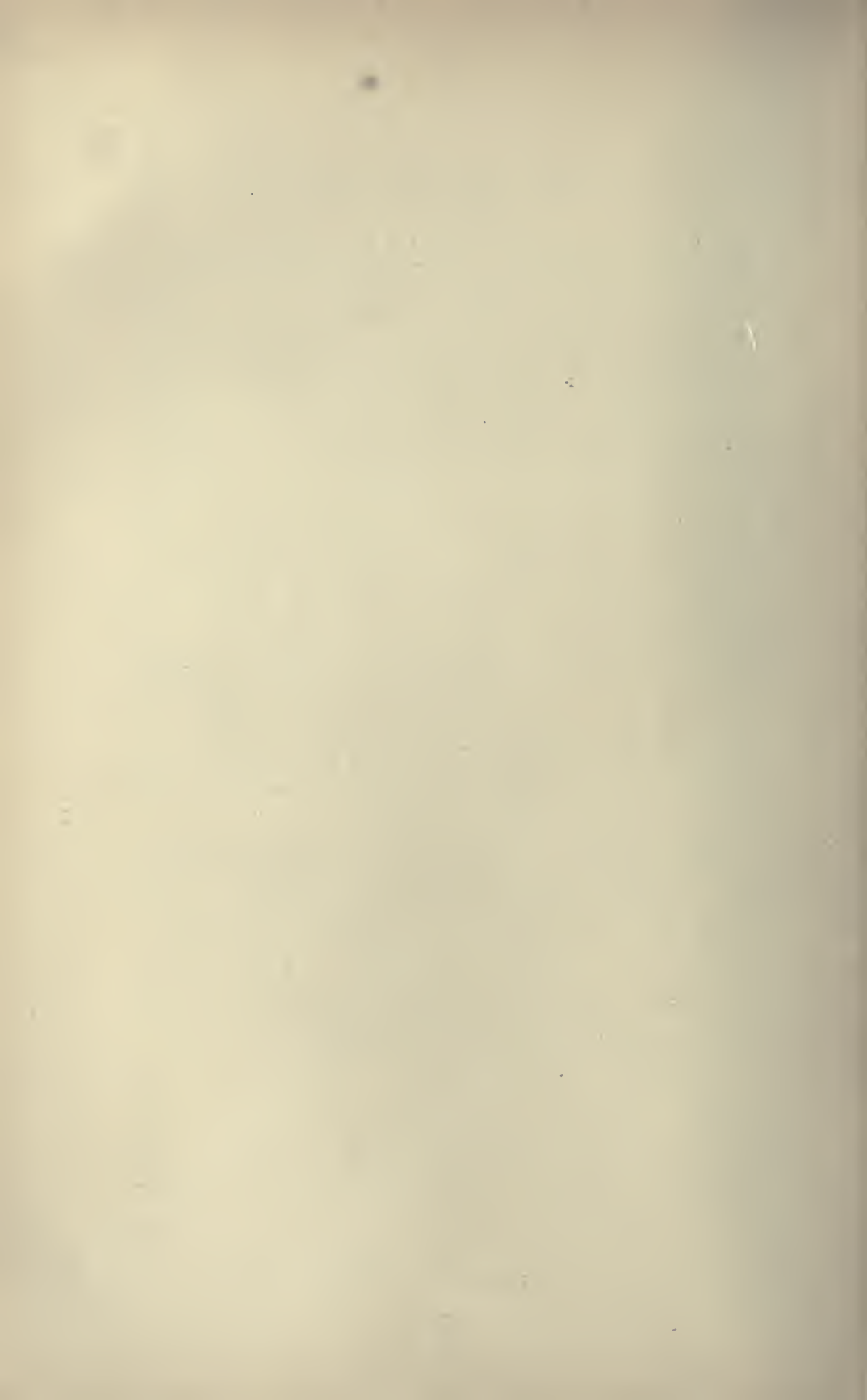
To say that Beaumarchais, in serving the United States, was influenced by an abstract love of freedom, or by philanthropic motives, would be saying too much ; but this does not prevent one from asserting that kindred sentiments prompted him to interest himself heartily in the American cause. Beaumarchais loved his country, as all Frenchmen do intensely, and when it became involved in the American war, he was at least patriotic. Had he been a mere speculator, as some have styled him, he would, on many occasions, have sacrificed the interests of his country to his personal interests. Again, he shared in the enthusiasm of his day for social reforms, as well as in the chivalrous sentiments of men like Lafayette. His expressions of sympathy for Lafayette and Steuben, also his praise of the bravery of the American soldiers, were sincere. Admitting that he was vain, as is apparent in his letters and memorials, and that he wanted to profit by his commercial ventures, other impulses prompted his remarkable energy. He was a real friend and a generous one to the men he employed ; he entered into the spirit of their action, gave them money freely ; and encouraged them with hearty praise. Calvinist merchants were not allowed certain commercial privileges at Bordeaux ; he made an eloquent appeal in their behalf with success. The transportation of goods across the country was subject to a tax ;

it was proposed to make an exception in his favor ; he refused the privilege and wrote to the minister proposing plans for modifying it in favor of the public. He advocated and succeeded in introducing improved fire-engines against powerful prejudices, furnished the engineers of the scheme with capital, and urged the government to accept the enterprise. He gave his author's theatrical copyright of the " Marriage of Figaro," over 80,000 francs, toward founding an institution for the support of poor mothers so that they might nurse their own children. Gudin, one of his biographers, states that his charities, together with loans to people who never repaid them, amounted to over 2,000,000 francs. All this shows that he was a public-spirited man.

But there is another side of his genius, that of the artist, which helps explain his conduct. To Beaumarchais, all the world is, literally, " a stage, and all the men and women merely players." He regards every one with whom he comes in contact as a personage engaged in a dramatic subject for which they are especially adapted ; he studies their characters with a view to bring about the result he deems the proper one ; they seem to him as much instruments in a play of which he is the author for the time being as if they were his own Figaro, Almaviva, Basil, or Dr. Bartolo. In the " Eon " and " Clavijo " affairs, in the " Goezman trial," in his intercourse with men like Lord Rochford, John Wilkes, and Arthur Lee, these personage are " pipes which sound

what stop he pleases." With a keen artistic perception of his own value he adapts himself readily to the sober, practical judgment of the Count de Vergennes. He equally comprehends the character of Louis XVI. and, in spite of royal sensitiveness, secures his favor and protection. In his letters to this absolute sovereign, in which he shrewdly adapts his ideas, language, and logic to the mental calibre of the King, advising him what policy to pursue ; telling him, in terms that would be considered impertinent by any other monarch, that any of his frivolous or ostentatious seigniors could represent the country at London, he shows the consummate tact of the dramatist who knows the world he moves in and the intellectual value of the people around him. "I honor the insignia of rank, but, after that, I see nothing but the man. I give no heed to his decorations, and soon make up my mind whether he has more intelligence, more knowledge, or more integrity than myself."

Beaumarchais, in short, must be judged by the qualities which made him the coadjutor of other great men and a prominent factor in the development of important events. If he can not be called a pure philanthropist, or a man as disinterested as Lafayette, he labored in our behalf prompted by the sentiment of a great artist, and as such is a benefactor to the American people.



## XI.

### CORRESPONDENCE OF GÉRARD DE RAYNEVAL—1778—1779.

THE treaty of amity and commerce between France and the federated colonies of America, which brought France to an open rupture with England in support of its allies, was signed in Paris February 6, 1778. Up to this time France had rendered them only secret assistance, and, thus far, had assumed none of the responsibilities of the war. Now, however, things were changed ; the participation of France in the struggle made its risks equally great with those of the insurgents, and obliged its government to take part in the conduct of the war. A minister plenipotentiary was accordingly sent to this country to supervise French interests under this treaty. This minister was Conrade Alexandre-Gérard de Rayneval, of an Alsatian family, and for a time anterior to this mission, chief clerk at Paris in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.\*

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\* There were two brothers "Gérard de Rayneval" in the ministerial bureau under the Count de Vergennes on the outbreak of the American Revolution. One, as above named, was sent to the United States, and the other, who survived him, remained in France and in its diplomatic service as late as 1802. The Count de

Gérard de Rayneval arrived in Philadelphia, where the Continental Congress held its sessions, in 1778; he returned to France in company with John Jay in 1779, on account of ill health. During his sojourn of a year in Philadelphia he lived within sixty paces of the State House, where the Continental Congress met, and its members daily consulted him. He had the right of attending the sessions when it sat as committee of the whole and when French relations were under discussion. As the doors of Congress were closed to the public, reporters not being then known, Gérard de Rayneval's correspondence with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Count de Vergennes, is peculiarly interesting and instructive, furnishing as it does, together with that of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, his successor, the most complete reports which exist\* of the discussions in Congress from 1778 down to the end of the Revolutionary War. Not only does he recount the doings and sayings of Congressmen in and out of doors, but his letters con-

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Vergennes, in his official relations with the brothers at home, designated the brother sent to America as "Gérard" and the other as "De Rayneval." Jefferson, in a letter to James Madison dated January 30, 1787, alluded to the latter (mistakenly calling him a brother-in-law of Gérard), and it seems to me expresses opinions of him due to extreme democratic prejudice. Gouverneur Morris says of Jefferson: "I think he does not form very just estimates of character but rather assigns too many to the humble rank of fools, whereas in life the gradations are infinite and each individual has his peculiarities of fort and feeble."—"The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris," ed. by A. C. Morris.)

\* So stated by Mr. Bancroft as cited in the preface.

tain reports on the political state of the country, entertaining glimpses of the society of the day, and particularly interesting traits of prominent men. Gérard de Rayneval died in France in 1790. To a philosophic mind he united great tact and sagacity, as well as other capacities eminently qualifying him for the delicate mission he had to fill.

The ship on which Gérard de Rayneval reached Philadelphia stopped at Chester, on the Delaware River, just below the city. Four members of Congress, with Hancock at their head, waited upon him on his arrival. In his account of his reception sent to the Count de Vergennes, July 15, he says :

“ Nothing can equal the eagerness of members of Congress and other leading men to call on me and express their sentiments in relation to the alliance and the steps taken by the King. I fear that I should be charged with exaggeration were I to state the terms which the most phlegmatic employ in their daily conversation with me. They style the King ‘ Protector of the Rights of Humanity,’ which is always the toast in his honor.”

Two members of Congress brought their sons to Chester to see the new envoy, to impress on their minds early in life the importance and effect of sending a Minister by the King at this decisive

moment ; they thought it well calculated to fix their affections and political principles.

A discussion arose in Congress concerning a proper reception of the French Minister, whether the ceremony should be an imposing one, or a plain, unostentatious introduction to the assembly. Some, mostly Northern members, preferred the latter ; others, mostly from the South, wanted more show, and these prevailed. Gérard, consulted as to court etiquette on such occasions in France, showed his tact by deferring to republican tastes, and suggested the simplest ceremony possible. He was accordingly received in a plain manner. On reporting the proceeding to the Count de Vergennes he sent with his letter a diagram of Independence Hall, designating on it where the members sat, with the position of his own chair directly in front of the President's desk in the center of the room.

Ten days after this, July 25, he gives the Minister an idea of the temper of Congress :

“ Party spirit exists in Congress as in all similar bodies. Questions seem to arise, however, only through the diversity of principles, or rather out of the different degrees of ambition of a few preponderating members. Some want constant rotation in the leading offices, especially in Congressional membership ; others, on the contrary, aim at securing a negative vote which would



render the choice of the different States subject to their will, ensure them their own places, and thereby give the government an aristocratic air. .

“Several leading men have assured me that Congress is not divided on the great objects of interest to France, nor on any subject which compromises the interests of the United States. A faction did exist in Congress before our treaty was received, all the more dangerous because treachery could not be imputed to it. It consisted of ambitious men, but of little influence. It was their aim to maintain a sort of balance of power, so that, in case of a capitulation with England, they would be ready to profit by it. A Scotch minister named Witherspoon, the only one of his cloth in Congress, was the soul of this party. He combined two qualities which seem incompatible in a high degree, great vehemence and mental suppleness. . . . Mr. Samuel Adams, who figured prominently at the outbreak of the Revolution, belonged to it; but, as everybody is satisfied that the issue of the quarrel will be honorable and substantial, there is no distrust of these men.”

“Vegetables, flour and wood are very abun-

dant, and yet prices are as high proportionately as for sugar and similar articles which can be had only with difficulty."

This anomaly is attributed by Gérard to the readiness with which all Americans calculate, meaning probably *speculate*. "This science," he says, "is pushed farther here than anywhere in Europe."

Wishing to make some public acknowledgment of the honors paid to him on his arrival, he proposed a banquet followed by a ball. But an obstacle arose which stayed proceedings and which shows the state of social intercourse at this time. He writes August 14 :

"As they wanted to draw an absolute line of separation between Whigs and Tories, especially among the ladies, they gave me to understand that they would be obliged to me if I would not furnish by my example arms to either party. I regard this as treating matters rather seriously, but they allege a law of Congress which forbids public entertainments. This law originated with the northern Presbyterians at the time when Congress fervently besought the aid of Heaven. Things have taken another turn, and quite a number of senators dance every week. Northern rigidity has become mollified in contact with

Southern sensuousness ; but there is still hesitation in repealing the law. I presume, Monseigneur, that you do not object to knowing something of the moral tone of the country."

November 24, he communicates more on this subject :

"The Philadelphia papers contain two resolutions passed by Congress. . . . The second is a renewal of the request made by certain States to interdict dances, spectacles, and races. The very day this resolution appeared a public (theatrical) performance, given by army officers and Whig citizens, was to take place. The following day the Governor of Philadelphia gave a ball, numerously attended. Congress, finding that its simple recommendation was not regarded a law, prepared a resolution on the 16th to enforce it, which rendered incapable of employment every officer who should take part in or attend any spectacle. On the other hand, Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina regard horse-racing as a national affair. It is the northern members, called the Presbyterian party, that delight in passing moral laws so as to keep their credit and

rigor in full exercise. Such contests interfere with important business. It is plain to me that the delays which have occurred since I came originate in these."

The following item has interest in connection with the civil service :

"Congress has determined to give its President a salary sufficient for the usual display attached to the office. A house is hired for him, suitably furnished; a butler to provide for his table; and he is furnished with a carriage and horses."

Whether this is owing to speculation, of which there are numerous instances, or to relieve the President of domestic cares, and give him more time to attend to public business, he does not know.

"In general," he says, alluding to Congress, "the pay of its members is not in accordance with the dignity of the post. Some States give their representatives very little, and always energetically dispute their accounts. No one member lives becomingly, and none can give a dinner except at a tavern. One result of this poor pay is, whenever a member finds that his business

suffers, he leaves, and his State has no representative. The principle of rotation in office produces a similar effect. The southern members carry out this principle, while the northern members, especially from New England, seldom change their delegates, or other officers."

Political feeling is thus depicted :

"Everybody, almost, refuses to testify (against the insolence of the Tories). The Quakers, especially, are accused of rendering all sorts of services to the English army. . . . Scarcely one quarter of the ordinary inhabitants of Philadelphia now here favor the cause (of independence). Commercial and family ties, together with an aversion to popular government, seem to account for this. The same feeling exists in New York and Boston, which is not the case in the rural districts, where the people are more 'cultivators than merchants.'"

August 12, the character of the Continental Congress again comes up :

"My purpose in this letter is to picture to you the responsibility and internal composition of Congress, as well as the way in which the

States are disposed to regard its authority and organization.

“The result of my researches goes to confirm the idea I had the honor of transmitting to you on the credit which Congress enjoys. It has succeeded in securing the entire confidence of the State governments as well as of the citizens. Whatever emanates from it is received with a sort of veneration. This happy disposition is essentially due to the constant care it takes not to decide any important question before preparing the minds of the people for it, and after having assured itself of their sentiments. This is also due to the unanimity with which important affairs are considered and to its extreme deference to the special (State) governments. The rights of State sovereignty are so carefully respected by it that the resolutions passed by some of the legislative bodies, often contrary to the measures recommended by Congress, do not affect the consideration in which it is held. An example of this is found in the important question of how the Tories shall be treated. Congress had recommended mild and legal measures. Some States, especially Virginia and the Caro-

linas, have, on the contrary, exercised the most arbitrary and rigid authority in this particular. . . . I content myself now by observing that the heads of the (State) governments, having no distrust and no suspicion of Congress aiming to extend its influence, are interested in maintaining a consideration for it by which they profit in turn. This policy is all the more beneficial because the most esteemed leaders and the best heads, which directed the Revolution at the start, have accepted the highest offices in their States, especially in the South. The really laborious and dull lives of the members of Congress, their remoteness from their own affairs, the luxurious habits and turn of mind, somewhat monarchical, of the large proprietors of the South, who have not organized their colonies on the popular principles of the North, and who are accustomed only to commanding a large number of slaves, have greatly contributed to this change (a deference to Federal authority); but the personal humor of these leaders has, so far, had no effect on the disposition of their constituents, who are still more concerned than those of the North in maintaining a rotation in congressional

functions. Since I came here three members, one from Maryland, one from Georgia, and one from South Carolina, have been summarily removed without any charge being preferred against them, and these changes have been frequent for some time past.

“ It is evident that the successive admission of so large a number of individuals into Congress prevents many able men from being there, men of such preponderating influence as when Congress was first organized. From this point of view it is not so well composed, although it contains persons of great merit. But I do not know whether, stopping at general results, its actual state is not preferable, as this contributes, in effect, to a maintenance of the confidence which the slightest jealousy or distrust would soon impair. It shapes a large body of subjects imbued with the principles peculiar to the common Constitution of the American republic, principles readily finding their way into minds disciplined by other habits and in which old prejudices are often confounded with the current axioms of the day. A very great advantage is that Congress is kept dependent on the people,



better preserves its general spirit, and is never in a condition to abuse its power. An equivocal expression escaping in debate suffices for the immediate revocation of a member; in multiplying this danger by the petty intrigues of personal jealousy, of which the best accredited are not found exempt after a too prolonged absence from their States, the ambition of private persons and of public bodies is thus apparently restrained by a powerful curb.”

Following this sagacious comment there are other remarks on questions which divide northern and southern sentiment; and the letter concludes with this statement, which will again serve our purpose further on:

“Another question which has warmly divided Congress is the rivalry between Generals Washington and Gates. The division is almost that between the southern and northern States; the former support Washington, who is a Virginian. This general, whose conduct seems to have merited the esteem of Europe, and who couples virtues with talents, has been vigorously attacked with all the arms that envy can supply. The split was getting to be dangerous. The

evacuation of Philadelphia and the battle of Monmouth decided the question, and the partisans of General Gates are reduced to silence. Fears, however, are entertained that the proud spirit of the latter may manifest itself on the junction of the two armies. Thus far, all has passed off well between the two generals."

The foregoing estimate of the Continental Congress on its good side is followed, in another letter of the same date, by an estimate of it on its weak side; the former is "*le Congrès en beau*," and the other "*les Vices du Congrès*."

"I have thus far depicted the good side of Congress, because I have taken the point of view of its attachment to independence and to the alliance, which is the most important point for us. But it is now time that you should know it as well on its feeble side, so as to appreciate it as a whole. Most of the members who sit in Congress owe their places to their zeal for the American cause, as it is commonly called. But little attention, however, has been paid to the talents that are requisite for the enormous labor which every branch of the Administration demands, and which Congress manages exclusively.

In some departments there is not a member who is familiar with their details. If one member happens to be more conspicuous than another on account of his intelligence, private jealousy and the principle of anticipating personal ascendancy throw him in the background. A competent merchant on the Committee on Commerce is transferred to that of Foreign Affairs, and again displaced because he is suspected of making money out of secret information. There are many colonels and generals in Congress, but none are employed on the war committees. The result is, Monseigneur, the Administration is extremely backward at all points wherever a fixed system and regularity in details are essential. The arrangements for the organization, recruiting, and regular service of the Continental troops remain in suspense, as well as a number of other matters. The finances, especially, suffer a great deal. . . . Congress is the universal merchant and provider. You can appreciate the effect of a lack of order in such an immensely important detail, the accompanying loss and inconvenience, especially when you consider that, by this course, it enters into competition with private mer-

chants, who can not be forced to provide the State with the goods it needs.

“I am sorry to be obliged to add, Monseigneur, that personal disinterestedness and pecuniary integrity have shed no lustre on the birth of the American republic. All its agents have derived exorbitant profits from manufactures. A selfish and calculating spirit is widespread in this land, and although I can well see that limits are put to its extension, there is no condemnation of the sentiment. Mercantile cupidity forms, perhaps, one of the distinctive traits of the American, especially of the northern people, and it will undoubtedly exercise an important influence on the future destiny of the Republic.”

The attentive observer of our legislation for the past forty years may decide for himself whether this is not prophetic language. The writer continues to comment on those evils “which have existed since the republic began, and more than once imperiled its safety.” In this connection he says :

“If the English had shown themselves, in America, one-half as energetic, confident, and courageous as they had only too often shown

themselves elsewhere, they would have found very little resistance.

“The more apparent this contrast is here, the plainer does the hand of God appear in this event; had it not been for the generous part taken by the King (Louis XVI.) at the decisive moment, there is every reason to believe that the resources of the country would not have sufficed for obtaining its independence.”

How true this observation is will be shown further on.

In December following (1778) the authorities of the State of Pennsylvania gave a grand banquet on the occasion of electing a new President of the Executive Council. Gérard de Rayneval reports of this as follows to the Count de Vergennes:

“No greater manifestation of sensibility and delight could be made than was shown by this assemblage of two hundred and fifty persons every time an allusion was made to France and the alliance. When the health of the King was proposed every room rung with cheers and hurrahs. General Reed, the new President, having shown to those near him the portrait of the King which His Majesty deigned to present to

me on my departure, everybody desired to see it. The box made the tour of the tables, each sending a guest to thank me and to testify to the pleasure with which they had regarded the features of a monarch, Protector of Humanity and the best friend the States could possess. I do not exaggerate, Monseigneur, in this account. The transports of welcome regarding everything which concerns France satisfy me more and more that everybody in office, as well as all who are able to think on the subject, feel in spite of national prejudices the full value of the friendship and proceedings of His Majesty."

One of the most interesting letters of Gérard de Rayneval is that on the Quakers, dated September 18, 1778:

"The following details in regard to the Quakers, which I have the honor to transmit to you, are of a mixed character.

"At the beginning of the troubles, when the colonies rebelled against the (English) project of deriving a revenue from America, the Quakers had the most influence in the government of Pennsylvania. With one exception, all agreed to defend by force of arms the exemption from

every tax. Previous to this they had voted for the war against the Indians, and when the question of independence came up, the Quakers opposed it with all their might. Steps were then taken to excite the English and German population of the remoter sections of the colony, and Pennsylvania fell in with the sentiments of the other colonies. Upon this the Quakers made an outcry against war taxes, which placed them in such contradiction with themselves as to increase their discredit.

“During the occupation of Philadelphia by the English, proofs were obtained of the services rendered to them by the Quakers; some of these were caught acting as spies, and, as it has been thus far the mistaken policy of the fraternity to support all individuals belonging to it, the odium and blame of this have reacted against the whole body. This devotedness did not preserve them from the exactions of the English, who disposed of whatever suited them, even of the furniture inside their houses. The Quakers furnished General Howe with money to redeem themselves, notwithstanding which their houses and gardens in Philadelphia were destroyed; a prom-

inent man among them, who had given a considerable sum to Lord Howe, publicly reproached him, and declared that he would follow him wherever he went to recover the value of his dwelling.

“These barbarous proceedings, which have made more Whigs in America than there are Tories now, have not had the same effect on the Quakers. You will remember, Monseigneur, a document full of a kind of arrogance which they had circulated in the State of Pennsylvania, where they no longer are representatives. The only result was the indignation and contempt of the Whigs: but real or affected sentiment has no shame, and they rather borrowed glory from this on the ground of persecution. The feeling, however, did not last, and when the news came of the evacuation of New York (taken by the British), it was believed that, through secret intelligence, they were aware of it, and, afterward, that they would try to make up with the actual Government. The President of Congress notified me that they would confer with me. They sounded him beforehand, and several deputations waited upon him, who confined themselves to



recommending private matters. They went further with me. I will relate, Monseigneur, how this embassy was prepared and carried out.

“Only the Quakers possessed any merchandise; they had bought it at low prices of the English, at the time of the evacuation (of Philadelphia), and re-sold it very dear. This furnished me with opportunities to have relations with many of them, and the desire to judge for myself of the actual state of such a celebrated sect led me into conversations with them, which turned only on general matters relating to their sect and principles. One day, one of them bluntly said to me: ‘Thee hast a good deal of trouble in finding furniture. Come into our houses and select what thee likes; thee wilt then address thyself to Congress, and Congress will take from us to give to thee at any price thee pleases.’ I felt the full force of this rejoinder. I asked him why he did not pay voluntarily. ‘Our religion forbids us,’ he replied. ‘I fear then,’ said I in return, ‘that, as people accuse you, you have an easy conscience when called upon to pay money and to concern yourselves for things not to your

taste; and that a religion which has no other public influence in society than to produce avarice and an inordinate love of ease and indolence must strike enlightened people as a mask for hypocrisy.' I manifested a desire to have this doubt cleared up. This led to a discussion, which ended by the Quaker telling me that he would bring me a person who knew more than himself, able to solve my doubts, and with whom I could explain myself in French. The name of this person is Benezet, son of a French refugee, who has turned Quaker, and who is a man of intelligence and learning. He prepared me for the mission by sending me one of the brethren, who praised highly the merit and virtues of this sort of patriarch.

“Finally he came, and we had several conversations on the history, principles, and career of his sect. It was only at our last interview, two days ago, that he at last declared, yielding to my arguments, that, agreeing with most of the fraternity, he thought that the Quakers ought to submit to the actual government and pay taxes, without questioning the use to which these might be put; but that they had weak brethren among

them, whose scruples they were obliged to respect. I made him sensible of the dangers of this mistaken policy, one which involved a loss of public esteem universally, and warranted the distrust and rigorous measures of the government. I remarked to him that since they had been able to secure the confidence of the English administration, the principles of which differed so much from their own, it would be easy to come to terms with a government tolerant in principles and which would not persecute them when once combined with it. *Sieur Benezet* seemed to have resolved to expound these truths; he ended by begging me to favor the fraternity, and especially to exercise my good offices in behalf of some Mennonites affiliated with them, who had been imprisoned and fined for not taking up arms. I replied that it was not in my mission to arrest the energies of the American government, and that when the Quakers had performed their duties they would no longer be in fear of persecution.

“The President of Congress expressed his best thanks to me for the way in which I had conducted this affair, and begged me to treat the

ulterior demands of the Quakers in the same fashion.”

Subsequently, May 16, 1779, he says :

“The Quakers keep constantly asking me to mediate in their behalf and to give them advice. I have confined myself to recommending them to again become citizens and to resume their place in the republic. They begin to realize the illusion of their expectations, and there is good reason to believe that, whatever the result of the campaign may be, the sect will submit. This would be of great advantage to the United States, because the number, wealth, and consideration of the Quakers, alone of itself, give standing to the Tory party. Congress, to which I report the requests of the Quakers, is satisfied with my conduct and with my replies to them.”

It seems, however, that the Quakers did not submit. Six months later, Chevalier de la Luzerne, who had succeeded Gérard de Rayneval, reports (November 26, 1780), that Pennsylvania is making every effort to maintain its army contingent by suitable taxation, but that the Quakers, together with other religious bodies, obstruct their efforts.

“Their head men, questioned at the bar of the Assembly, replied in the most equivocal manner,

Among other questions put to them was this one, 'Do you recognize the House of Representatives of this State as legitimately endowed with legislative power and the Council with executive power?' To this question they answered: 'We believe that the Legislature and magistrates, who act in fear and honor, are entitled to respect and obedience, and that it is our duty to live peaceably and honorably.' It was impossible throughout this interrogatory to draw them out of this *amphibologie*. One of them called on me afterwards, and I made him ashamed of such affectation. He admitted that I was right, for he disliked disputes, but he did not alter his course."

May 4, 1781, Luzerne writes :

"The Quakers, whose numbers diminish daily in Pennsylvania and throughout the thirteen States, have imagined for many years that the Indians could be made to supply the deficiency in their numbers, several tribes of which have been converted to their religious and pacific ideas, the Iroquois, the Minnisinks, and the Delawares. The only effect of preaching this

morale to the Indians has been to diminish the number aiding the English. All the Quakers in Philadelphia who have taken up arms, or voluntarily paid war taxes, have been excommunicated; these, increasing in number, declare themselves loyal."

Gérard has an interview with a deputation of the Delaware tribe of Indians, of which he gives the following account, under date of June 4, 1779. The Delawares complained of the non-fulfillment of treaties; the chief, "Capt. Kilbuck," exposing his griefs with admirable force and dexterity, said :

"You have made baneful presents to us in making us familiar with the value of gold and silver, and in giving us strong drink. Gold and silver have made a people poor who lacked nothing, and you have made them contract wants which it is just that you should satisfy. Strong drink has made us weak, but we still have virtue enough left to enable us to do without it. We have seen the sincerity of the French friendship in not giving it to us notwithstanding the profit they might have derived from its commerce. But it is a vice of the individual and not of the nation,"

Alluding to William Penn, they referred to old treaties with him, and said that "their own traditions were more reliable than the writings drawn up by interested parties."

Gérard animadverts on duelling. He writes under date of January 17, 1779 :

"The rage for duelling here has reached an incredible and scandalous point. No repression of such a pernicious spirit is even thought of. This license is regarded as the appanage of liberty. Fortunately, in these combats nothing but the priming is burnt. Out of eight or nine duels which have occurred in the last few weeks, only one shot took effect in the coat of General Lee, who fought Colonel Laurens, son of the ex-president (of Congress), on account of the General's statements in relation to his condemnation. A senator, made to descend from his seat where he exercises sovereign authority, is led to the battle-field and forced to risk his life in support of a suffrage dictated by duty! If this is freedom, it must be admitted that it is not for those who hold office."

During this year, 1778, Arthur Lee and Ralph Izard, then in Europe, send letters home filled with ridiculous charges against Franklin, which circulate

among members of Congress and do mischief. Gérard writes thus under date of October 17:

“I told those who mentioned these charges to me that, following the example of the children of Noah, one half of Congress should strip off its clothes and cover up his faults.”

The following observation, in relation to the political action of States as well as of individuals, helps explain the Toryism of the epoch. Writing December 4, 1778, Gérard says:

“It seems to me that the Americans were not ripe, if I may use this expression, for popular government. They were too much accustomed to the distinctions of authority, rank, honors, birth, and of wealth, for the class of citizens who enjoyed these advantages to willingly confound themselves with the masses. We accordingly see that the most democratic of the (state) governments have yielded to this penchant. The people of Massachusetts, among others, already fear that they have entrusted their governments and councils with too much power; however this may be, it appears still very doubtful whether popular principles will prevail and purge constitutions of this tinge of aristocracy.”



De Rayneval's first interview with Washington, who came to Philadelphia to arrange the campaign for the following year, is recorded under date of December 25, 1778 :

“General Washington arrived a few days ago, amidst public acclamations. I have had repeated conversations with him. It is impossible to express one's self in better terms on the alliance, and the gratitude due to His Majesty, who is called their benefactor. . . . Washington seems to deserve, as a man and a citizen, as much praise as for his military talent.”

On the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1779, Gérard orders a *Te Deum* sung in the Catholic church. In his reports on the anti-patriotic sentiments of various sectarians he does not overlook those of his own religion.

“It is the first ceremony of the kind in the thirteen States, and it is thought that the éclat of it will have a beneficial effect on the Catholics, many of whom are suspected of not being very much attached to the American cause. My chaplain delivered a short address which has obtained general approbation, and which Congress has demanded for publication.”

The correspondence of Gérard de Rayneval furnishes interesting information about men who played secondary parts in the revolutionary drama, but who were not the less valuable agents in achieving the independence of the country. One of these was Dr. Cooper, a clergyman at Boston, friend of Dr. Franklin, and "one of the best speakers in Massachusetts." Dr. Cooper had voluntarily published several articles in defense of Count d'Estaing, against whom, as well as against the French generally, General Sullivan had excited public sentiment in New England. Pleased with these articles, Gérard sent his acknowledgments to Dr. Cooper and engaged a mutual friend to propose to him to exercise his talents further in the same direction. The Doctor accepted the proposal. Gérard accordingly gave him a regular salary for this service, "as indemnity for his losses in the common cause, as well as to enable him to employ a vicar, so that he might give himself up wholly to the work he undertook." General Sullivan himself, made sensible of his error in fostering bad feeling against the French, is brought over and likewise paid for his services. He proves to be one of the most energetic and successful of Gérard's American supporters, both in Congress and in relation to the army. Another of these agents is Tom Paine, of whom mention is made elsewhere.

We now reach the most remarkable political event of the war, of which American historians say little, the Cabal against Washington, carried on mainly in Congress the first half of the year 1778. It is some-

times called the "Conway Cabal," but not correctly. Conway was a mere tool in the matter, and, historically, he serves as a scapegoat for more prominent personages. Washington, so far, had not been successful, the situation and sufferings of the army at Valley Forge being the result of the Revolution up to that time. American affairs were desperate. General Gates, the year before, 1777, had won the battle of Saratoga, which gave him some prestige as a military commander. Steps, accordingly, were taken to displace Washington and put Gates at the head of the army. Hildreth says: "While Washington was exerting himself to the utmost to preserve the army from total disorganization, a project was on foot to remove him from the chief command. Several persons, conspicuous in Congress and the army were more or less concerned in this movement, but most of the information respecting it has been carefully suppressed, and its history is involved in some obscurity. Every biographer has been anxious to shield his special hero from the charge of participation in this affair." This party ascribed to Washington "a lack of vigor and energy, and a system of favoritism deleterious to the public service." Washington's successes in New Jersey, with the French alliance, put an end to the Cabal as far as the displacement of Washington was concerned. But the Cabal, notwithstanding, was kept up for a long time. Its subsequent existence is either openly or covertly manifest in a steady opposition by certain members of Con-

gress, with their supporters outside of Congress, to Washington's military supremacy, as well as in the persistency with which, in all discussions of measures in which the French Minister had a voice, the acceptance of them was more or less thwarted. The speeches and votes in Congress reported by Gérard de Rayneval and Luzerne bear witness to this spirit.

With reference to the Cabal Lafayette says :

“At Yorktown, behind the Susquehanna (to which place Congress retreated on the capture of Philadelphia in 1777), Congress was split into two factions, which, in spite of their distinction as Eastern and Southern, contained, nevertheless, members from each of the States. Instead of obeying their constituents, these members carried out their own intrigues. Many who had acted impartially had withdrawn, while some of the States were not represented at all, or had only one representative.”

“Gates was at Yorktown. Through the tone he assumed, his promises, and his European acquaintances, he made himself important. Among the members who joined in with him, the Lees (Virginians) and the two Adamses were the most prominent. Mifflin, quartermaster-general, helped them with his talents and brill-

iant eloquence. They required a victim, and they adopted Conway, who imagined himself the head of a party. To laud Gates was, in some places and among some of the troops, an opportunity for self-boasting. The people follow successful generals, and the commander-in-chief (Washington) had not been so. He personally inspired respect, and even affection; but his best friends, Greene, Hamilton, and Knox, were decried. The Tories fomented this disposition. The presidency of the War Committee, created for Gates, restricted the General's powers. This was not the only discouragement. A Congressional committee arrived at the camp and presumed to suggest an attack on Philadelphia."

Efforts were made to have Lafayette join this party.

"Attached to the General, and still more to the cause, I did not hesitate, but held to him whose ruin was anticipated. . . . 'I did not seek this position,' said Washington to me, 'but if the people are dissatisfied with me I will resign. Until that moment comes I will resist intrigue.' "\*

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\* "Mémoires, Correspondence et Manuscrits du General Lafayette, publiés par sa famille," vol. i, p. 21.

These two parties, into which Congress was divided, may be better styled a national party and a state-rights party. Debates between them were acrimonious, and the effect of these was a certain paralysis of both the diplomatic and military genius of the country. The representatives of the national party were Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, Robert Morris, Madison, the two Livingstons, and the Virginian statesmen generally; while the leaders of the state-rights party were John Adams, Samuel Adams, and, exceptionally among the Virginians, Richard Henry Lee and Arthur Lee. Owing to the joint action of the Adamses and the Lees, whose States were most influential in the confederacy, on account of their population and superior resources, they dominated largely in Congress. These men, in addition to their devotion to the interests of their own States, cherished certain English sympathies and were strongly anti-French, because the French, naturally relying on the collective power of the States, would not favor any policy which seemed to undermine this. To enable the reader to appreciate the conduct of this party, which the following extracts from the French ministers' correspondence fully explain, it is necessary to glance briefly at the prominent questions before Congress during the war, in the disposal of which the French minister had to be consulted.

The Fishery question (still a bone of contention in these days) was a very important one at this time to New England. The other States thought it was

pushed too far. Gérard de Rayneval writes, May 14, 1779 :

“Whatever opinions on the subject the present members of Congress may entertain, nine, and perhaps ten, of the States will refuse to continue the war for this necessary advantage to New England, which offers no reciprocity of interests.”

Certain members of Congress from other States show him the letters received by them from their constituents, in which the idea of treating the Fishery question to suit New England is rejected with warmth and indignation ; while the Eastern people are not disposed to regard the matter mildly.

The Invasion of Canada, coupled with the possession of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, is another question on which the New England representatives in Congress lay great stress. Washington, in an able and practical report, treating the question on its military merits, decides against it, which settles the point for a time. Subsequently he is disposed to favor an attack on Canada, to keep the army employed ; but the French refuse to participate, on the ground that the French government simply undertook to free the original thirteen States, and not make fresh conquests for them.

The effort to bring Spain into the alliance, considered so important in Paris, and which involved

complicated boundary questions, was another question which seriously disturbed Congress, and gave rise to a great deal of worrying discussion.

To the Cabal against Washington, more or less active on account of these questions, must be added one against Franklin. Both were largely rendered abortive by the diplomatic skill of Gérard de Rayneval in America, and of the Count de Vergennes in Paris. Louis XVI. and his minister had implicit confidence in the integrity of Washington and Franklin, and regarded them as the real representatives of the moral and material forces of the country, and therefore desired to maintain them in their respective positions.

The frequent agitation of peace was the most serious of all these questions. It continued to be a thorny matter down to and after the capitulation of Cornwallis. England tried repeatedly to negotiate for peace directly and indirectly, both in Paris\* and in America, openly appointing commissioners for the purpose as well as secretly authorizing individual agents. There is no doubt that many in America apart from the Tories were anxious for peace with a view to future commercial and social relations with England: and there is equally no doubt that the chief political leaders of New England were not disposed to consult French interests in that event when the time for it should arrive. Such were the principal questions which agitated Congress in a way to

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\* See Appendix III.



excite the fears of the French envoys and keep them watchful of the debates.

As early as December 6, 1778, Gérard writes to the Count de Vergennes that he suspects a Mr. Temple, who had made his appearance in Philadelphia with letters of introduction from parties in the State of Massachusetts, of being a British emissary or spy sent to the United States to sow distrust of France, and to effect a separate reconciliation with England. Henry Laurens, at that time president of Congress, assures him that Temple will be sent off, and that Samuel Adams himself, notwithstanding a warm personal interest in Temple, is in favor of his dismissal. Richard Henry Lee pretended that the United States had a right to treat independently with England.

“Members of Congress have assured me,” says Gérard de Rayneval, “that Lee’s assertion was received with contempt and indignation. A plurality of the members of his own State and of those from Massachusetts, in spite of the influence of Mr. Samuel Adams, thought with Congress that such a principle would be a manifest infraction of the alliance and a lasting dishonor to the United States. . . . All the delegates . . . affirmed to me that not two men in Congress were capable of listening to Temple’s proposals,

but that the conduct of the State of Massachusetts hampered their resolution."

Although Congress sat with closed doors and the public was ignorant of what transpired at its sessions, something, of course, leaked out, which, coupled with its dilatory action, excited among the people more or less discontent. The army had petitioned for publicity of Congressional proceedings, especially in all matters appertaining to the conduct of the war, but without effect. Silas Deane had published a pamphlet relating to these points, "which," says Gérard, "was not distasteful to the plurality of the members of Congress, wearied and ashamed of the ascendancy enjoyed by the party headed by Richard Henry Lee and Samuel Adams." Referring again to the Temple affair, De Rayneval says that Samuel Adams called on him and "swore to me that he had seen Temple but once at his house, and that he had only been polite to him because recommended by the State he represented."

Continuing the subject a fortnight later, he adds :

"The Congressional Committee is much excited over the way in which I am to be answered in relation to the (peace) doctrine of Mr. Lee. Four of its members have drawn up an answer, which has been confidentially communicated to me, and it is quite satisfactory. But the fifth

member, Mr. Samuel Adams, the friend of Mr. Lee, does not agree to it, and tries to persuade the others that, as peace is provided for by the terms of the treaty, so explicit an answer is not required. I have fortified his colleagues against this fallacious argument, and trust that they will adhere to their opinion."

Both Richard Henry Lee and Samuel Adams write to De Rayneval in order to exculpate themselves. His distrust, however, is not removed, for, as he says :

"I know positively that it is Mr. Adams alone who, by his petty ruses and caviling, prevents the communication to me of the clear and satisfactory reply which the other members of the Committee adopted long ago."

The peace question, nevertheless, remains an irritating subject until the following month of March, when it seems to have been settled, for a time at least, according to French views. Gérard writes to the Count de Vergennes under date of March 10, 1779:

"Our friends (in Congress) began to attack their opponents yesterday. They first brought forward the principle of treating with France and showing perfect confidence in her. The Lee

faction was actively and successfully driven back to its last entrenchments. Mr. Samuel Adams became so irritated as to abandon his usual reserve and exclaim, 'Why must our interests be so closely united with those of France? Here,' said he, stamping on the floor, 'is the spot where our independence must be established!'"\*

Throughout this period of vexatious discussion, Washington at home and Franklin abroad were urging the French government to furnish money, and dispatch the arms and vessels so much needed for the coming campaign. Aware of the necessity of obtaining these supplies without delay, they knew the importance of deferring to French conditions for giving them, and it is evident that they viewed this persistent disregard of national interests with great concern. Gérard de Rayneval himself was puzzled by such an apparently unpatriotic policy, and he determined to get to the bottom of it. One result of his investigation is the following letter, dated May 4, 1779:

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\* The following anecdote helps explain the political conduct of Samuel Adams. Duponceau, Steuben's secretary, attended a reception in Boston, where he was presented to many of the eminent men of the city, and among these John Hancock and Samuel Adams. The latter, listening to a conversation in which Duponceau took part, and in which he expressed republican ideas, asked him where he got them. "In France," replied Duponceau. "Impossible!" rejoined Adams. "Why not?" said Duponceau, "because a man is born in a stable does that make him a horse?"

“General Washington, with several general officers, have told me that if the army knew of Congress wishing to take action against the alliance it would be disposed to revolt. No patriots are more reliable nor more zealous. The principal officers have taken special pains to assure me in the most positive and satisfactory manner concerning the dispositions of the people of their States. General Sullivan, especially, has made every possible advance to me, so as to leave no doubt about what he thinks. . . . I have had repeated conversations with General Washington, some of which lasted three hours; it is impossible to give a connected account of them, but I shall carefully avail myself of his information in my letters according as the opportunity presents itself. I content myself now by stating that I have conceived as much esteem for this general in relation to his intelligence, moderation, patriotism and integrity, as for his military talents and the incalculable services which he has rendered to his country.”

Another report is made two days later, May 6, 1779:

“I have continued my researches in order to discover the real object of the Opposition. The

members of Congress whom I have interrogated reply almost unanimously that Samuel Adams wanted a continuance of the troubles in order to maintain his own importance, and that his association with R. H. Lee originated in their mutual support of John Adams and Arthur Lee; that the object of the delays, which this party excites by all sorts of ruses, was to avoid the appointment of a plenipotentiary (for negotiating peace) because it felt that the latter would not obtain a vote of the present Congress. I observed to one of the most esteemed members that I admitted these motives and personal views, but that I was strongly disposed to think, according to the action in common of the Opposition, that its views extended farther; and that Messrs. Samuel Adams and Lee intended to postpone the decision in order that the English commissioners, who were to make new overtures to the States, might arrive; that they undoubtedly flattered themselves they would forestall the confidence of the commissioners, so as to render themselves masters of the negotiations, have these take place in America, and thus obtain a credit which would counterbalance that acquired

by the opposite party in concluding the treaty with the King of France. I supported this conjecture by the statement he himself had made to me, that these two men had insisted on Congress treating with the last English commission after the arrival and ratification of our treaties."

May 7, he says: "Boston is the theater of the opposition party." Next day he continues:

"The personal tie between Messrs. Adams and Lee dates from the beginning of the troubles. It was through the good offices of the former that Mr. Arthur Lee procured the agency in London of the State of Massachusetts Bay. Hence the political importance of Lee, who showed his gratitude by every sort of reciprocal kindness. The Virginians are not the only ones who entered into the quarrel with ideas of political freedom and independence. When these ideas began to work in the other provinces, the Eastern States affected a pride and a tone of superiority which circumstances favored, and which engendered the desire to dominate over a freedom they had founded, while the esteem they had acquired, whether on account of their popularity, and other

advantages which they thought they possessed, led them to believe that this preëminence was their due. Lee, through his connection with Adams, readily entered into a project suited to his character. He has a secret ambition, dissimulation equal to that of the people of the East, rigidity of manners, and the gravity that is natural to the Presbyterians. He is laborious, intelligent, and supple, so far as is requisite in a growing republic. His first successes in Congress secured him the confidence of his province. He felt that, in uniting with four provinces which had agreed to be always of the same opinion, it would be easy for them to be in the plurality, or at least to exercise a tribunal power. Success answered their hopes, and, for a long time, they ruled Congress. They began to lose standing only when the elections brought about a new composition of this body. One of the most important objects of this league was to hinder the army from obtaining too much credit. It affected a dread of its power, and allowed itself every sort of proceeding and imputation in justification of this pretended dread. They prevented the army from arriving at any degree of stability.



It is certain that if General Washington were ambitious and an intriguer he might have effected a revolution ; but nothing on the part of this general, nor of the army, has caused the slightest umbrage ; the principle that the quality of citizen is first, and that of officer second, is constantly on the general's lips. The policy of the faction on this point is to secure for the Eastern States and Virginia, in times of peace, the ascendancy which these powerful provinces will possess over both the States and the armies, for lack of a force common to the States, and under the direction of the general power of Congress. Hence the idea which has obtained such credit here, of revising the army when peace is declared, and of only retaining a small corps of provincial soldiery. The Eastern States would find this to their advantage, because they are already provided with a numerous militia.

“Another view of the faction, which I had the honor of transmitting to you, is to bring about the necessity of peace in such a way as to negotiate directly with England, and stipulate some sort of alliance with this power, the credit of which would sustain the faction. Such is the

purpose to which its conduct constantly tended, when its two chiefs at Yorktown voted and maneuvered so obstinately to bring about a negotiation with the English commissioners, even after the arrival of the treaties, and when Lee maintained that open hostilities did not deprive the States of the liberty of treating with Great Britain. It is, probably, through a consequence of this same system that Messrs. Adams and Lee do all in their power to render our present negotiations impossible, so that the new English commissioners may have time to get here, of whose confidence they are assured, and with whom they flatter themselves they can treat.

“Many members have repeated their assurances to me that Congress was not disposed to treat, except under the King’s auspices and in the face of all Europe.

“The crisis between the two parties is at hand, and, to all appearances, their fate will be decided by the issue of the debates.

“I add, in other respects, that Mr. Lee has lost control over the suffrages of his province, this being now in the hands of Colonel Smith. The State of Virginia has re-elected Mr. Lee only up

to the month of May. His presence in the Assembly did not prevent many charges being made against Mr. Arthur Lee, and if he is recalled as well as Mr. John Adams, the credit of the party founded on their support will be lost, while many of its partisans will throw off the yoke which they had imposed on them. A number of delegates who entertain these views urge me not to be under any apprehension as regards the present moment. It must be added that, for some time past, the plurality of the Southern States has detected the snares laid for them by those of the East; that they are disposed to counterbalance their association with a similar association; and that they have strenuously labored to bring Virginia over to their side—a plan probably of service now, but which might become the germ of serious evils should circumstances permit each State to care only for its own interests and follow its own caprices.”

The reader will find further on, in the correspondence of Gérard de Rayneval's successor, another allusion to a similar plan. It is evident that Gérard obtained his explanation of the policy of the state-rights party from those opposed to it and who were strenu-

ously upholding national interests. Their loyalty to the alliance reassured him.

And yet, notwithstanding these manifestations of fidelity and good will to France, the proceedings of Congress created alarm in the mind of Gérard de Rayneval. The debates indicated an anti-French feeling which he was obliged to counteract by a sort of protest. The following letter to Vergennes, dated May 16, 1779, describes the effect of it :

“I must inform you that Mr. Penn, the leading member from North Carolina, after listening to the reading of my first memoir, arose and exclaimed enthusiastically that never had any prince shown so much magnanimity as the King, nor afforded such striking proofs of friendship; that America owed him eternal gratitude and unlimited confidence; that these principles had always been his guide, and that the recent endorsement of his conduct by his constituents was proof that they entertained the same sentiments. ‘I have always held my own honor sacred,’ he declared, ‘and my constituents have entrusted me with theirs; I shall do the same in this hall with the honor of our ally. I declare that whoever shall dare attack this in this chamber is an

enemy to his country, and my enemy as a senator, a citizen, and a man!’

“The other members gave utterance to the same sentiments with more or less emphasis according to their character. The leaders of the opposition alone remained silent. The resolution giving the King the strongest assurances of gratitude and attachment, and of the loyalty of Congress to the principles of the alliance, and especially regarding negotiations with the common enemy, was passed without a dissentient voice.”

A month later, the Fishery question is again brought up in Congress. He writes, June 12, 1779:

“The danger arising from Adams and Lee pressing the Fisheries question is lessened by the absence of R. H. Lee and Samuel Adams. Lee has been charged in open session of the Virginia Assembly of having sacrificed the best interests of America and of the alliance, while the storm raised against Samuel Adams in Boston has just compelled him to return there. . . . These two champions find it necessary to talk in a different way on account of public clamor. They are now doing all they can to make it appear that they

were eager for peace, and to throw the blame of delays on their antagonists. . . . All the States approve of the decision in favor of France."

The members from Virginia, New York, Maryland, Jersey, and Connecticut, with several members from the other States, express warmest thanks to De Rayneval for "the truths presented by him to Congress the last four months," through which he was able to circumvent Lee and Adams.

The correspondence of Gérard de Rayneval must now be dropped, for the departure of the French envoy was drawing near. In September, 1779, Congress, to show its appreciation of Gérard de Rayneval's character and services, passed a resolution requesting him, in the most complimentary manner, to sit for his portrait. This portrait, painted by Charles Willson Peale, full length, is now in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. Congress accompanied this resolution with an address which concludes as follows:

"Sir, we should be deficient in the respect due to distinguished merit if we should fail to embrace this opportunity of testifying to the high esteem which you have obtained throughout this country by your public and private conduct.

"You have happily combined a vigilant devo-

tion for the dignity and interests of our most excellent and illustrious ally with a generous attachment to the honor and welfare of these States.

“Your prudence, integrity, ability, and diligence in discharging the eminent trust reposed in you have secured our entire confidence, and now solicit from us the strongest declaration of our satisfaction in your behavior.

“That you may be blessed with a favorable voyage, the approbation of your sovereign, the perfect recovery of your health, and all happiness, is among the warmest wishes of every member of this body.

“JOHN JAY, President.”

Another testimonial is sent to Louis XVI:

“GREAT, FAITHFUL AND BELOVED FRIEND AND ALLY:

“The conduct of Your Majesty’s Minister, the *Sieur Gérard*, during his residence in America has been in every respect so commendable that we can not forbear testifying to Your Majesty our sense of his merit, without feeling that

uneasiness which arises from a neglect of the obligation of justice.

“His behavior appears to us to have been uniformly regulated by devotion to Your Majesty’s dignity and interest and an adherence to the terms and principles of the alliance; while at the same time he demonstrated his attachment to the honor and prosperity of these States. Thus serving his sovereign he acquired our entire confidence and esteem, and has evinced your royal wisdom in selecting a person so properly qualified to be the first Minister sent to the United States of America.

“That the Supreme Ruler of the Universe may bestow all happiness on Your Majesty, is the prayer of your faithful and affectionate friends and allies.

“Done at Philadelphia the seventeenth day of September, 1779, by the Congress of the United States of America.

“JOHN JAY, President.

“Attest—

“CHAS. THOMSON, Secy.”

Other bodies offered him similar testimonials, the “Merchants of Philadelphia,” and the “President and



Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania." The address of the latter runs :

"I assure you, sir, it gives me infinite satisfaction that I have this opportunity of declaring to you, in the behalf of the House and of all the freemen of Pennsylvania, that your name and your services to America will be held in grateful remembrance so long as the love of Liberty and our extensive Empire shall remain amongst the nations. . . . Your eminent services in forming the union between the two nations and your conduct . . . . will fully justify in the opinion of the world this special mark of our attention and respect, and transmit your name to posterity among the first and most distinguished friends of this rising Empire.

"JOS. REED, President."



## XII.

### CORRESPONDENCE OF CHEVALIER DE LA LUZERNE.

ON the Chevalier de la Luzerne assuming his duties as Minister, the Count de Vergennes informs him, July 18, 1779, " what the King and his Council think " about affairs in America :

" We clearly perceive that an opposition party exists in Congress which, if not sold to England, nevertheless favors the views of that power, and which seeks to establish and to bring into credit principles diametrically opposed to those which form the basis and spirit of our treaties with the United States. The leaders of this party are Richard Henry Lee and Samuel Adams. We do not know who their associates are, but it is indubitable that, among them, may be counted Mr. John Adams, who has been a Deputy to France, and who has just returned to America. The party in question is principally engaged in effecting a reconciliation between the United States and England, in negotiating with and

forming an alliance with the court of London. As you know the existing engagements between the King (of France) and the Americans you can judge yourself that the system of Messrs. Lee and Adams is directly opposed to these engagements, and that if Congress should adopt it, it would destroy the alliance it has contracted with His Majesty. Thus far, the sound-thinking party in Congress has resisted the insinuations and motions of the two opposition leaders, and we are persuaded that their plans will have been frustrated and even set aside before your arrival in Philadelphia.”

Luzerne, on reaching America, visits Boston first and reports to the Count de Vergennes under date of September 3, 1779. The most interesting part of his letter is that relating to popular sentiment regarding the French in New England. He states that the people are attached to the alliance and determined to maintain it at all hazards. His opinion is founded on what he sees in the public journals, which are popular only as the editors are zealous for the Revolution ; on what ministers say in the pulpit, who pray for a Catholic King once odious to them ; on the ill-feeling constantly manifested toward the Tories ; and on the favorable reports of the Frenchmen doing business in the colony.

“ In a word, I think the State of Massachusetts strong for independence and the alliance. Nevertheless, in spite of this disposition, I have good reason to believe that we shall find her more exacting and more obstinate than we like regarding her own interests and the system of pacification she has adopted.”

The statements of an eye-witness on the management and sufferings of the army have special interest. Luzerne writes January 14, 1780, that, through lack of foresight, the supplies of food for the American soldiers were so scant it was necessary to draw on those provided by the French government for its own soldiers; the Committee on Subsistences in Congress gratefully acknowledges his kindness in yielding to their request for them. The effect of scant supplies in the American army was deplorable.

“ The soldier, suffering from the severest cold known since the beginning of the century, was obliged to live on half-rations for a fortnight and then to resort to pillaging and marauding; and as this produced great disorder, General Washington was forced to put a stop to it, which caused a complete famine in the camp. It was finally necessary to order regular foraging and marauding expeditions, which went from house

to house and took everything that was not absolutely essential to their inhabitants. The General sent these expeditions purposely into Monmouth and other counties near New York, which swarmed with Tories. During this crisis, and a very remarkable circumstance, the soldier was no less submissive and attentive to his duties, while the inhabitants who were annoyed by the pillaging made no resistance. In a country where liberty and property are watchwords, both are violated without exciting any popular commotion."

This testimony to the patriotism of the people, of the country population distinguished from that of the cities, is only one out of many due to other incidents which came under the observation of the French ministers.

The following letter written in the spring, dated April 16, 1780, accounts to a great extent for the sufferings of the army :

" It is difficult to form a just conception of the depredations which have been committed in the management of war supplies—foraging, clothing, hospitals, tents, quarters, and transportation. About nine thousand men, employed in this ser-

vice, received enormous salaries and devoured the subsistence of the army, while it was tormented with hunger and the extremes of want. Congress determined to apply a prompt remedy, and has just appointed a Committee of three, invested with the amplest powers ever conferred on a deputation of this kind. This resolution brought on long and warm discussion, in which a large party, jealous of seeing three individuals endowed with such unlimited power, strove to restrict it by instructions. They insisted on the *danger of associating the Commander-in-chief with it, whose influence, it was stated, was already too great. His virtues were spoken of as an additional cause of alarm ; it was remarked that the enthusiasm of the army, joined to a sort of dictature conferred on him, placed Congress and the thirteen States at its mercy ; that it was not well to expose even the most virtuous man to the subtle temptations of ambition ; and it was accordingly proposed to have the Committee consist of one member from each of the twelve States represented.* It being evident that this proposition would produce in the Committee the same dilatoriness for which Congress is blamed, after a long and ani-

mated discussion the actual danger to the Republic prevailed against every other consideration. The Committee of three was appointed. They propose to divide among themselves the different objects on which each has the most information, and are to visit the army in a few days to commence operations. These instructions authorize them to dismiss all useless or ignorant employés, or whoever has made improper disbursements, to appoint others, to change, suppress, and reform all parts of the administration which they deem unsound. They are to concert with the Commander-in-chief on all that relates to his functions, and do nothing without his consent. . . . If this great work is conducted as vigorously as is expected, there is no doubt that it will restore Congress to the consideration which this senate has lost. If I may believe some of its members it deserves to lose a favor through the interested manœuvres to which certain delegates have surrendered themselves, in availing themselves of their knowledge of the secret operations of the administration to ensure the success of their commercial speculations."



Later on, November 7, 1780, Luzerne adds :

“Everybody in connection with the army assures me that it can not subsist on the resources of the continent. I was afraid that there was a concerted plan to exaggerate the sufferings of the army, but on my way through the camp I myself saw the constant recurrence of its necessities, the generals being often unable to show themselves to the men without having demands made upon them for bread and clothes.”

We must now recur to John Adams. On the recall of Arthur Lee, in consequence of the difficulties caused by the transactions of Silas Deane and Beaumarchais, Franklin and John Adams remained the sole American Commissioners in Paris. Early in 1779 the Commission was dissolved and Franklin made minister plenipotentiary at the French court, to the great chagrin of Adams, although he indites an approval of the appointment. Adams returned home, and on leaving Paris addressed the following note to the Count de Vergennes, dated at Passy, February 16, 1779 :

“I assure you that I shall leave this kingdom with the most entire confidence in His Majesty’s benevolence to the United States and inviolable adherence to the treaties between the two powers.”

Vergennes returned a polite reply as suited the occasion. Adams passed the summer in the United States. In September he was chosen by Congress to negotiate the treaty of peace as well as a treaty of commerce with Great Britain, when the time should arrive for it, with which commission he again departed for France. In the mean time, between February and July, Gérard de Rayneval's letters had enlightened Count de Vergennes on the political situation in America, the result of which is apparent in the letter of instructions to the Chevalier de la Luzerne previously cited. Mr. Adams, according to Mr. Bancroft, owed his appointment as Peace Commissioner to "the civil letter" in which Vergennes bade farewell to him on his retiring from Paris, and which the supporters of Adams brought out and had "read in Congress in proof that he would be most acceptable to the French Minister." That this was at least a mistake is very evident, as some of the members, probably through information furnished by Gérard de Rayneval, vigorously opposed the appointment. To make clear what follows it must be stated that John Adams, through vanity or through his ambition to be thought the ruling spirit of the Revolution, not only apparent then but long after the Revolution was over, wanted to be formally recognized in France, England, and Holland as an independent minister, to the great annoyance of Vergennes and Franklin, who both considered such a step at that time detrimental to French and American interests.

John Adams reached France early in 1780. Rumors were rife of the English trying to effect a peace through him, and he writes to Vergennes on this subject, May 12 :

“When we hear them affirm in Parliament that America is on the point of returning to an Allegiance with the King of England; . . . . when the members of the opposition, . . . . such as Mr. Hartley, Gen. Conway and others, discover plainly by their motions and arguments that their object is a separate peace with America in order to be the better able to gratify their revenge against France and Spain, I can have no expectations that they think of applying to me, because I think they might be convinced of this, at least, that I shall make no separate peace. . . . Our alliance with France is an honor and a security which have ever been near my heart. . . . I have ever thought it, therefore, a national Alliance and contended for it as a Rock of Defence. This object I proposed in Congress with persevering assiduity for more than a year in opposition to other gentlemen of much greater Name and Abilities than mine.” \*

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\* “I will be buried in the ocean, or in any other manner sacrificed, before I will voluntarily put on the chains of France, when

His views of the alliance thus expressed may be contrasted with the following documents. M. de Chaumont, a friend of Dr. Franklin, who had procured and was more or less responsible for war supplies sent to the United States, calls on Mr. Adams and has a conversation with him a month after the date of the above letter, which conversation he reports to an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as follows:

“PASSY, June 16, 1780.

“MONSIEUR: I have had a conversation with Mr. Adams so interesting that I think His Excellency the Count de Vergennes should be informed of it; I have the honor to enclose a memorandum of it, and beg you to hand it to the Minister if you deem it worthy of his attention. I thought that Mr. Adams, now separated from Mr. [Arthur] Lee, would see otherwise than when inspired by the latter. But it seems that he persists in thinking, for I have always found him maintaining this sentiment, that it is France which is under obligations to America; these principles, on becoming one of the Peace Congress, he will carry with him into it,

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I am struggling to throw off those of Great Britain.”—Diary in France, April 29, 1778, Works, vol. iii., p. 157.

and he is a man to publicly support them, which, in my opinion, would be very scandalous. . . .

“ I have the honor to be, etc.,

“ DE CHAUMONT.”

The reader must bear in mind that, at this time, the disastrous effect of the depreciation of Continental money was felt in France and in Europe generally by those who had contracted obligations based on faith in American integrity. The action of Congress, therefore, in forcing the value of Continental money was received by foreigners with alarm as well as indignation.

“ I called on M. Adams,” says De Chaumont, “ to give him news from Cadiz adverse to the American Congress, because it had fixed the value of the paper dollar at forty per cent. in specie. I observed to M. Adams that the commercial world had reason to complain, and especially the French merchants. . . . I added that many merchants would be unable to fulfill their engagements if Congress did not alter its decision of March last, or did not add a declaration in favor of European negotiators, which it would be well to indicate so as to meet the evil.

“ M. Adams replied that ‘ the course taken by Congress was wise and just, and particularly so ; that those who complained of it were *emissaries and spies of the English* ; that it would be very unjust to treat Europeans differently from Americans ; that the country could get along without the former should they abandon trade with America ; that the French had less reason to complain than anybody else, since France derived the greatest advantages, because, without America, *to which France could not be under too great obligation*, England would be too powerful for the house of Bourbon ; that, had it not been for America, Russia, Denmark, Switzerland, Portugal and Holland would not be in league against England ; that the merchants in danger of bankruptcy would be delighted to have the pretext of the fixed valuation (*fixation*), and that Congress had been forced to this valuation by the refusal of credit which it had asked of its European allies.’ ”

“ I confess that this answer astonished me, and that if Mr. Adams possesses the secret of the Americans, we must give heed to it.”

This communication gave rise to an official correspondence between John Adams and the Count de Vergennes, in which John Adams maintained, substantially, the above views. His letter to the French Minister bearing date June 22, 1780 (to which we must refer the reader as published in his works, vol. vii., p. 193), is, to say the least, a curious document. Vergennes replies in a letter, the spirit of which is apparent further on, to Franklin. The draft of Vergennes's letter, in the archives, bears the following note: "Any ulterior explanation with M. Adams on the depreciation of paper money would be superfluous. M. de Luzerne is instructed to treat with Congress on this subject, which better appreciates the alliance between the King and the United States than Mr. Adams."

Franklin, nevertheless, at Adams's request, writes to Vergennes, June 24, to ask a delay in the dispatch of the orders to Luzerne, as follows:

" JUNE 24, 1780.

"In consequence of the enclosed letter, which I have received from Mr. Adams, I beg leave to request of your Excellency that the orders therein mentioned, if not already sent, may be delayed till he has prepared the representations he proposed to lay before you on that subject, by which it will appear that these orders have been obtained by misinformation. I am, etc.,

" B. FRANKLIN."

Vergennes replies, June 30, 1780 :

“ I did not receive the letter you did me the honor to write me on the 24th of this month until yesterday. You ask me, in accordance with Mr. Adams’s request, that the orders given to M. le Chevalier de Luzerne, in relation to the resolution of Congress of March 18th last, be revoked, or, at least, suspended, because that plenipotentiary is able to prove these orders to have been based on misinformation. Mr. Adams, on the 22d instant, addressed to me a very long discussion on the matter in question ; but his letter contains nothing but abstract arguments, hypotheses, and calculations which have only an ideal basis, or, at the very least, which are incomprehensible to the King’s subjects ; in short, principles which are anything but analogous to those of the alliance which subsists between His Majesty and the United States. You can well see by this, Monsieur, that the pretended proofs referred to by Mr. Adams were not of a character to make us modify our sentiments, nor, consequently, to ensure the revocation or suspension of the orders transmitted to the Chevalier de la Luzerne.



“The King is so persuaded, Monsieur, that your personal opinion on the effects of the resolution of Congress in relation to what concerns foreigners, and especially the French, differs from that of Mr. Adams, that he does not apprehend giving you any embarrassment in soliciting you to support before Congress the representations which his minister is charged to lay before that body; and, that you may do so with a full comprehension of the matter, His Majesty has ordered me to enclose to you a copy of my letter to Mr. Adams and one of this plenipotentiary’s observations to me, together with the answer I have just communicated to him. The King expects that you will lay the whole before Congress, and His Majesty flatters himself that this senate, imbued with other principles than those developed by Mr. Adams, will satisfy His Majesty that it judges the French worthy of some consideration on its part, and that it knows how to appreciate the marks of interest which His Majesty does not cease to manifest towards the United States.”

“As for the rest, Monsieur, the King does not indicate to Congress any steps which might be taken to indemnify French holders of paper

money; His Majesty leaves that entirely to the equity as well as wisdom of that assembly."

Franklin, July 10, repudiates Adams's letter, and returns it to Vergennes. John Adams, July 13, indites another long appeal to Vergennes in which he says at the close of it :

"There are some remnants of Prejudice against Americans among the French; and it must be confessed there are some in America against France. It is really astonishing, however, that there are so few, and it is the interest and Duty of both to lessen them as fast as possible, and to avoid with the nicest care every colorable cause of reviving any part of them."

Adams is at length convinced that he is on the wrong track through a communication Vergennes addresses to him on the 20th of July. Nevertheless he continues to write long letters of the same tenor to this Minister, until finally, July 29, Vergennes tells him rather bluntly that he will correspond only with Franklin on all matters which concern the American Congress. Franklin, out of patience, and seeing the necessity of repudiating Adams's diplomatic conduct, thus writes to the Count de Vergennes :

“ PASSY, August 3, 1780.

“ It was indeed with very great pleasure that I received and read the Letter your Excellency did me the honor of writing to me, communicating that of the President of Congress and the resolutions of that Body relative to the Succours then expected; for the Sentiments therein expressed are so different from the Language held by Mr. Adams in his late letters to your Excellency as to make it clear that it was from his particular Indiscretion alone, and not from any Instructions received by him, that he has given such just cause of Displeasure; and that it is impossible his Conduct therein should be approved by his Constituents. I am glad he has not admitted me to any Participation in his Writings, and that he has taken the Resolution he expresses of not communicating with me or making use of my Intervention in his future Correspondence; a resolution that I believe he will keep, as he has never yet communicated to me more of his Business in Europe than I have seen in the Newspapers. I live upon Terms of Civility with him, not of Intimacy. I shall, as you desire, lay before Congress the whole Corre-

spondence which you have sent me for that purpose.

“With the greatest and most sincere Respect,

“I am, Sir, etc.,

“B. FRANKLIN.”

This muddle, created by John Adams, occurs at the most critical period of the war. New York and Charleston are in possession of the English, while the South is overrun by them; the country is without credit and a suitable navy, and the spirit of the people is flagging; there is nothing to rely on but the friendship of French rulers and their contributions of money, men, arms and ships. The struggling colonies besides these have to rely mainly on the matchless diplomatic genius of Franklin, and the equally matchless abnegation, patience, and wisdom of Washington.

August 7, 1780, Vergennes informs Luzerne of the “paper-money” correspondence of John Adams:

“I give you these details, Monsieur, in order that you may confer confidentially with the President and principal members of the Congress, and thus enable them to judge whether the character of Mr. Adams is such as to qualify him for the important task confided to him by Congress. As far as I am concerned I foresee

that this plenipotentiary will do nothing but raise difficulties and cause vexation, on account of a stubbornness, a pedantry, a self-sufficiency and a self-conceit which render him incapable of handling political questions, and especially of treating with the representatives of the great powers, who, assuredly, will not accommodate themselves either to the tone or logic of Mr. Adams. These reflections seem to me to deserve all the more attention because this plenipotentiary, if really attached to independence, which I can not verify, seems to me to be only very feebly attached to the alliance; so that it will cost him nothing to take steps which would imply the ingratitude of the United States, whilst the opposite sentiment forms the basis of his instructions. Is such an agent suitable for us, can he be suitable for the United States?"

The effect of this letter is visible in Luzerne's reply to the Count de Vergennes under date of January 2, 1781. He states that John Adams's letters on the paper-money question had been laid before Congress, and that that body regarded the view Mr. Adams took of his instructions and mission abroad as absurd, and that his proceedings were considered as strange and unexpected. In a subsequent

letter, January 28, 1781, Luzerne writes that Congress disapproves generally of John Adams's management of his mission, and "regrets that negotiations for peace should be in the hands of one so capable of being mistaken in its real object." Excuses are made for him on the score of his patriotism, so useful to the American cause.

After Vergennes had dismissed Adams, as we have seen above, Adams went to Holland, where Vergennes, nevertheless, assisted him in his negotiations for a loan. Luzerne states that "his letters from Holland are well calculated to sustain the courage of the Americans and excite their activity." He continues :

"There is a party in Congress headed by the Massachusetts delegation, of which Samuel Adams is the soul. This delegate is the oldest and most avowed enemy of England in the present Revolution, but he has adopted a system of jealousy, distrust, and disquietude which makes him think that it is better to risk a prolongation of the war than incur the danger of any inward or outward influence. He devotes himself to exciting alarm against General Washington, and the more popular Washington is on account of his services, the more dangerous does Mr. Adams regard him. As he pursues this course obstinately, as no difficulty discourages him, as

he centers everything in the end he has in view, he has made many proselytes in Congress. Only a few days ago, at the close of a small dinner-party, one of his pupils gave utterance to a violent denunciation of General Washington, declaring that distrust is the guardian of republics, that no man is safe against the temptations of ambition, that Washington's virtues, real or apparent, form one demerit the more, that he had himself voted against every motion made to extend his authority, that he would do the same in every circumstance, and that it was essential to be on one's guard against a man who attracted general attention. He would have gone further, but his colleagues, who had kept cool, rose from the table and observed to me, smiling, that they would adjourn this matter until another day."

These disputes in Congress and the partisanship they develop, bring Congress into discredit with the people, and cause the chagrin which Washington expresses with so much feeling in private and public letters of this period, as will be seen further on.

The Count de Vergennes writes to Luzerne, February 18, 1781, that if Congress is determined to give a successor to Franklin he hopes it will not be John

Adams. He is now satisfied about his adhesion to the alliance, but he doubts his discretion.

“I have no doubt that this American is a zealous patriot, and that he is invariably devoted to independence and the alliance, but his character and turn of mind are essentially opposed to what is proper in political intercourse; he is, and will be, a negotiator as embarrassing for his superiors as for those who have business relations with him. I am so convinced of this as to foresee with a sort of pain Mr. Adams taking a part in the negotiations for peace. I have already observed this to you in preceding dispatches and repeat it now, so that you may see, if possible, in case another may not be substituted for him, that he may have a colleague capable of restraining him.”

Again, March 9, he adds :

“I confess to you that, whatever good opinion I may entertain of the patriotism of John Adams, I see him, with regret, entrusted with so difficult and so delicate a duty as that of pacification, on account of his pedantry, stubbornness and self-



importance, which will give rise to a thousand vexations to the despair of his co-negotiators."

Vergennes directs Luzerne to abstain from trying to procure Adams's removal, but to get Congress to give him instructions which will keep him from doing mischief.\*

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\* It is interesting to place Bancroft's account (vol. x., p. 443) of the Adams mission, side by side with the foregoing documents: "John Adams arrived in Paris with full powers to treat with Great Britain for peace and commerce; the French minister desired that the object of his commission should for the present remain unknown. Adams replied by enumerating the reasons for communicating it to Great Britain without delay; but he was not obstinate, and waited for the opinion of Congress. A discussion next followed on applying to French creditors the reduction by Congress in the value of its paper-money. Adams argued vigorously that the reduction must affect all nations alike, for which he obtained the approbation of Congress. These points being disposed of, he not only assumed a right to give advice to the King of France on the conduct of the war, but, to a court where the sanctity of regal power formed the accepted creed, he laid it down as certain that 'in this intelligent age the principle is well agreed on in the world that the people have a right to a form of government according to their own judgments and inclinations.' Vergennes broke off correspondence with him, as not being accredited to France, and complained to the French minister at Philadelphia of his want of a conciliatory temper. Franklin, too, though with reluctance, suffered himself to be made the channel of communicating officially the censures which Vergennes did not spare. In the favor of Congress Franklin lost ground by his compliance, while Adams was supported more heartily than before." On page 452, Bancroft adds: "But, on reflection, and through French influence, it was wisely de-

We now follow the letters of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, down to the capitulation of Cornwallis. They go to confirm what has already been placed before the reader, as well as furnish other items that more or less enliven the dryness of political and diplomatic records. They are specially interesting in relation to Samuel Adams.

Early in 1780, Luzerne reports to his government :

“The influence of the four New England States is always very great, and, as they are united in external and internal policy and act systematically, and as Pennsylvania and Delaware, both little on their guard against their intrigues, have formed a kind of coalition with these States, all constitute a league which enables them to frustrate every resolution of Congress opposed to their interests.”

In a subsequent letter Luzerne reports that Governor Livingston of New Jersey had proposed to

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cided to strengthen the hands of the New England man by joint commissioners selected from other sections of the country. With the aid of Sullivan of New Hampshire, who was in the pay of France, instructions such as Vergennes might have drafted were first agreed upon; then, on the ballot, the choice fell on Jay, Franklin, Henry Laurens and Thomas Jefferson. . . . ‘Congress have done very well,’ wrote John Adams to Franklin, ‘to join others in the commission for peace who have some faculties for it. My talent, if I have one, lies in making war.’”

form a separate confederation of the other States and leave New England out, the plan of which Livingston had shown to him. Luzerne, however, recommends Livingston to maintain the existing state of things and strive to detach Pennsylvania and Delaware from the coalition. The New England States and the Southwestern States, he says, being "rivals in interests, power, trade and aggrandizement," it is for the Middle States to preserve the balance of power.

December 15, 1780, Congress is filled with intrigues and cabals to secure the recall of Franklin. The Massachusetts delegates employ every means to influence their colleagues to this end. Luzerne adds :

"This minister has no one to support him here openly; it is only the fear each party has of seeing him replaced by a successor of the opposite party which keeps him where he is. Massachusetts, South Carolina and a few individual votes, brought over by Messrs. Izard and Lee, have positively asserted that anybody was preferable to a minister who, they say, has lost the American cause in France through nonchalance and the empire over him of his surroundings."

It was found in the Continental Congress that "committees" were poor managers of the various departments of the government, and that it would be

better to have these, respectively, under the direction of one person.

Luzerne says :

“ Mr. Samuel Adams, whose stubborn and resolute character was so useful in the beginning of the Revolution, but who shows himself ill-adapted to the conduct of affairs in an established government, has taken the lead among the defenders of the old forms and methods employed in the transaction of affairs by committees.”

So great was the evil in the War Department that Washington had been obliged to keep the plan of his campaign secret from Congress and have it so arranged that military affairs should be entrusted exclusively to himself, Gérard de Rayneval, and Count d'Estaing of the French fleet, each being leaders of separate forces and resources. De Rayneval had written, May 16, 1779, that Congress

“ has just given Washington full power to determine the operations of the campaign along with myself and Count d'Estaing, relieving him of reporting to anybody, and begging him to set aside on this occasion the principles which inspire his modesty and a distrust of his own ability.”

Countless difficulties of the same kind occurred in the department of Foreign Affairs, as in the cases of Silas Deane, Beaumarchais, and Franklin, while the evil becomes equally great in the department of the Finances.

“Congress,” says Luzerne, “has appointed Robert Morris Secretary of the Treasury, a merchant who has rendered essential services to his country. He seems disposed to accept the office on condition of being allowed to appoint his subordinates and be free to dismiss them. Everybody wants him to accept, and it is thought that this post could not be in better hands.”

In this as in other cases the wisdom of the change is proved by the fact that Robert Morris brought order out of chaos. Other examples are given.

May 18, Luzerne states that Congress had long been occupied with the choice of a Minister of Foreign Affairs. Samuel Adams nominated Arthur Lee, and did all that friendship and intrigue could accomplish to secure his election; but Luzerne put a stop to it by declaring to the President of Congress that he would not transact business through him. Samuel Adams, an intimate friend of General Gates, then tried to have him nominated for the place, but Gates being under suspicion on account of his defeat at Camden, S. C., Washington, to whom the matter

was referred, declared that Gates could not enter on his duties until he was purged of the charge in conformity with military law.

De Marbois, Chargé d'Affaires in the absence of the Minister, writes about Lafayette as follows to the Count de Vergennes :

“It is difficult to imagine, Monseigneur, to what extent the prudence of M. le Marquis de Lafayette, joined to firm and decided conduct, has won the affections of the inhabitants. His presence attracts both men and supplies. No man, say the delegates from Virginia and Maryland, except Washington, could have obtained such universal popularity; having shown in his first campaign bravery even to rashness, he now shows consummate prudence. On his arrival in Virginia the people were aghast at his youth, but now they would regret exceedingly to see the command pass into other hands.”

De Marbois, July 14, reports, in his turn, on the sentiments of certain States with regard to peace. Massachusetts always goes as Samuel Adams says. Connecticut, more independent, nevertheless adheres to the league because its delegates are Presbyterian. Presbyterianism also inclines New Jersey to side with Massachusetts, but as New Jersey does not care

for the fisheries, and has no claim on Western lands, it will vote independently.

Luzerne, in November, 1780, goes again to Boston. Either on his way there, or at this city, he encounters Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, the famous and trusted "Brother Jonathan" of Washington. Gérard de Rayneval, in the month of March, 1779, had already borne witness to the good government of Connecticut in the following terms :

"Connecticut is in a good situation. Its government is well ordered; it lacks nothing; its finances are on a level (with demands on them); its contingent of troops is well kept up; its militia is numerous and well-disposed, without division of sentiment and without any Tory element. No other State enjoys the same advantages."

Gov. Trumbull favors the project of enrolling soldiers for the war instead of on time enlistments, and urges Luzerne to press this matter on the States of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The States north of Pennsylvania do all in their power, but Luzerne is satisfied that their resources are limited to recruiting men and to paying them; but these are not sufficient to maintain an army. This state of things leads him to mention what is thought by the public of the aid furnished by France, and, by

way of contrast, how exhausted American resources are generally. Writing Nov. 7, 1780, he says :

“There is nobody who does not admit that France has done more than their allies had a right to expect, and that these have been far from doing what was expected of them. . . . Everybody belonging to the army assures me that it can not be maintained on the resources of this continent. I was afraid that its sufferings were exaggerated, but on my way through the camp I myself saw its pressing necessities, the generals being often unable to show themselves without the men demanding bread and clothes.”

Another letter by M. de Marbois contains, in this connection, an abstract of a letter written by Washington to the Count de Guichen, a copy of which he had also sent to Luzerne, exposing the need of money and stating that, without this and a fleet, the cause was lost. In January, 1781, Washington sends Colonel Laurens, one of his aids, on a special mission to Paris to explain the situation. He gives him a long letter to Franklin, evidently intended to be shown to the French authorities, and now on file in the archives, from which I make the following extract :

“What I have said to him (Col. Laurens) I beg leave to repeat to you that, to me, nothing



appears more evident than that the period of our opposition will very shortly arrive if our allies can not afford us that effectual aid, particularly in money and in a naval superiority, which are now solicited."

Other letters by Washington of this epoch express the same conviction. In one of those cited by Bancroft, moved by the disputes and wiles of politicians in Congress, he writes :

"I have beheld no day, since the commencement of hostilities, that I thought American liberty in such imminent danger as at present. . . . We seem to be verging so fast to destruction that I am filled with sensations to which I have been a stranger till within these three months."

"The conjuncture requires all our wisdom and all our energy. Such is the present state of this country that the utmost exertion of its resources, though equal, is not more than equal, to the object." \*

"The country in general is in such a state of

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\* Letter of Washington to Philip Schuyler, John Matthews and Nathaniel Peabody, Committee of Congress. Morristown, May 25, 1780,

insensibility and indifference to its interests, that I dare not flatter myself with any change for the better." \*

"As I always speak to your Excellency in the confidence of friendship, I shall not scruple to confess that the prevailing politics for a considerable time past have filled me with unexpressible anxiety and apprehension, and have uniformly appeared to me to threaten the subversion of our independence." †

Before many more months pass, however, things improve through the assistance which France affords in response to these entreaties. How it is appreciated is best shown in the following reply of Washington to a public address made to him by the citizens of Newport, R. I., in March of this year on his visit to that town.

"Among the distinguished honors which have a claim to my gratitude since my arrival, I have seen, with peculiar satisfaction, these effusions of esteem and attachment which have manifested themselves in the citizens of this town. My happiness is complete in a moment that unites the

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\* To Joseph Reed, May 28.

† To Governor Trumbull, Ramapo, June 27.

expressions of their sentiments for me with their suffrages in favor of our allies.

“The conduct of the French army and fleet, of which the inhabitants testify so grateful and affectionate a sense, at the same time that it evinces the wisdom of the commanders and the discipline of the troops, is a new proof of the magnanimity of the nation. It is a further demonstration of that general zeal and concern for the happiness of America which brought them to our assistance: a happy presage of future harmony—a pleasing evidence that an intercourse between the two nations will more and more cement the union by the solid and lasting ties of mutual affection.”

Next comes in the order of dates an important letter by Vergennes, prompted by the conduct of Ralph Izard :

“This American, with a naturally restless mind, has tried in vain to meddle with French politics, and he is now desirous of avenging himself by casting imputations on us or on Mr. Franklin. But I have too good an opinion of the wisdom and intelligence of Congress and of all good patriots to suppose that they can be

misled by the reports of a man whose character they must be familiar with, and that, in judging us, they will base their judgment on the generous action of His Majesty. As far as Mr. Franklin is concerned, his conduct leaves nothing for Congress to desire ; it is as zealous and as patriotic as it is wise and circumspect ; and you may state, whenever you think proper, that the method followed by this plenipotentiary is much more efficacious than if he took it upon himself to be importunate by multiplying demands ; and especially if these were enforced by threats to which we should attach neither value nor importance, and which would only serve to render him personally disagreeable. You can not make it too strongly felt, Monsieur, that threats would be all the more superfluous, inasmuch, supposing, as we do, Congress incapable of prescribing them, we should place them to account of its representative, who would derive no other advantage from them than the irreparable loss of our confidence."

The allusion to threats is due undoubtedly to the indiscreet conduct of Col. Laurens, the special envoy mentioned in Washington's letter above cited. Ver-

gennes then states in his dispatch the sums of money already advanced to Franklin and the amount that would be furnished the coming year; he closes with this remark, "I dare flatter myself that these marks of interest will be appreciated by all patriots."

Luzerne, March 14, 1781, alludes to a Congressional regulation which, it seems, provided that no deputy to Congress should hold his seat more than three years, but which had not been observed. Some had sat longer, and their time was up. Particularly was this the case with the Massachusetts delegates, who had ruled Congress on account of their long standing in that body, by closely following up business, and who had

"often used their advantage to the detriment of the public cause for the benefit of their own State, and especially for their friends and adherents. Mr. Samuel Adams is at their head, and although his patriotism can in no respect be suspected, nevertheless the jealousy he has of every foreign power, and even of France, has led him into several proceedings of which I have avoided making complaint, because I have prevented their effects by other means."

July 21, 1781, Luzerne again expresses his opinion of Washington, in relation to his treatment of one of the divisions of the French army :

“General Washington’s kindness and consideration have won for him everybody’s affection. The natural dignity of his character is mingled with a modest familiarity which belongs to American habits and which renders him all the dearer to the (French) soldiers, although he can not make himself understood by them. The French officers have had the good sense to show greater respect for him and be more deferential than the Americans themselves. He receives the extraordinary honors paid to him without appearing to be surprised, and yet with an air of grateful acknowledgment.

Two ships from Spain now arrive with supplies, including clothing; some of this clothing consists of red coats, which the soldiers refuse to wear on account of red being English colors. Meanwhile the French soldiers, the two divisions of the army being encamped side by side, crack jokes on the nudity of the Americans, which jokes the French officers repress, whenever there is danger of disturbance. Luzerne comments on this as follows:

“I predict more favorably of this contact than I would have done if I had not seen it myself. The people of the States through which our divisions have passed flocked from all sides to

see them on their route ; the regimental bands played in the evening at all places where the men were to pass the night, while the inhabitants mixed in with the officers and soldiers, almost every march terminating with a dance. The Americans seemed to have been touched with the generosity of a nation which had come so far in their defense and shed its blood in behalf of freedom. Every Frenchman must cherish with the greatest satisfaction the enduring fame this expedition will reflect upon the nation if the issue proves a favorable one."

The realization of this favorable issue is soon to come.

On the 1st of August, 1781, Luzerne, however, writes that, flattered by rumors of peace, and especially by the news of the King having made a loan, efforts to provide financially grow languid. He thinks it best to inform Congress that the loan now made is the last, and that no further help of this kind will be afforded. It was proposed to give the disbursement of this loan exclusively to Washington, but Luzerne recommended its disbursement by Congress, with the understanding that it should be applied to military purposes, through Robert Morris. Washington thanks Luzerne with "*parfaite cordialité*" for this service in preventing what his enemies would undoubt-

edly have made the most of. A New York gazette states, for instance, that the object of this loan was "to make Washington king, and put a Virginia farmer in the place of the English monarch."

August 11th, Luzerne narrated his influence in getting Livingston appointed Secretary of State. His opponents declare that the French minister's support of any candidate is a warrant for defeat. Luzerne praises Livingston highly, but, in spite of his esteem for him, is obliged to admit that he is indolent and loves quiet. He also praises General Sullivan, and says that it is largely owing to his influence that all the effective resolutions passed in Congress for the last four months are due. He hopes that the good disposition of Congress will last, but this body is subject to too many changes to enable him to guarantee it.

Writing October 3, 1781, Luzerne says in relation to the re-establishment of the government of Georgia after the expulsion of the English :

"The courage shown by the Georgians in a long course of misfortunes is really astonishing, the inhabitants having abandoned their houses to live by hunting in the woods, pressed by the English on one side and by the savages on the other."

Affairs are improving. Through the supply of money from France and the arrival of a French fleet, military operations are carried on with energy and



success. Boston merchants, excited by Samuel Adams, begin again to try and make the people believe that national existence depends on the Fisheries. The siege of Yorktown, however, goes on, and the capitulation of Cornwallis soon arrives.

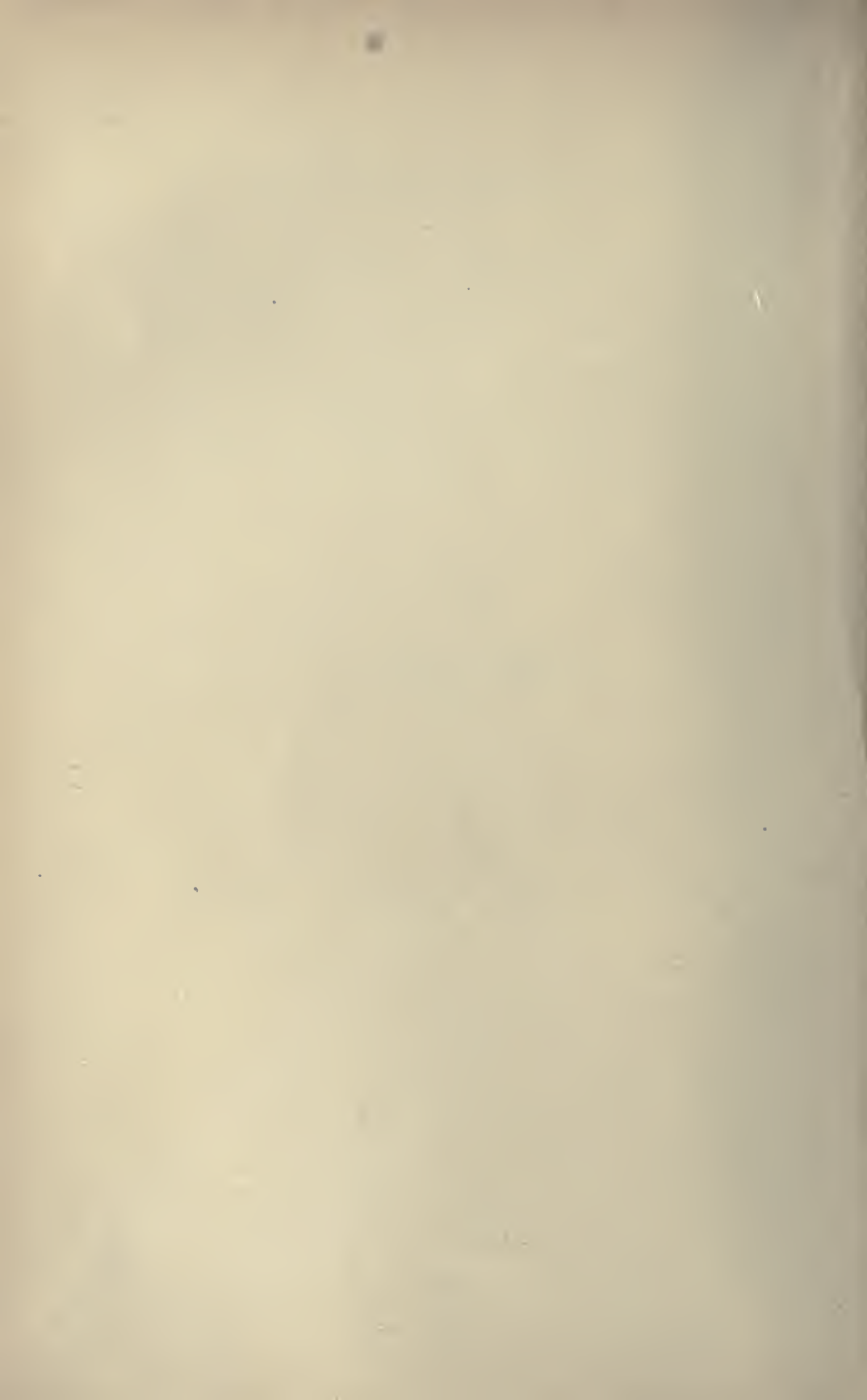
November 20, 1781, on the news of this event reaching Paris, Franklin writes to the Count de Vergennes :

“ Your very obliging letter communicating the News of the important victory at York gave me infinite pleasure. The very powerful Aid afforded by His Majesty to America this Year has rivetted the Affections of that People, and the Success has made millions happy. Indeed the King appears to me from this and another late Event (the birth of the Dauphin), to be *le plus grand Faiseur d'heureux* that this world affords. May God prosper him, his Family and Nation to the End of Time.”

An epilogue to the foregoing series of extracts, might be added, consisting of the expressions of gratitude to the French government by the statesmen, diplomats, soldiers and others who were parties with the French in securing American independence. Franklin, in the above letter, expresses his sentiments. The reader will have noticed the like sentiments on the part of Washington. It is merely nec-

essary to add that addresses at public meetings in all the States, declarations from pulpits, articles in the newspapers, statements by officers of the army, and the revelations of private correspondence bear witness to the same feeling, all of which is still more formally expressed in repeated testimonials by the Continental Congress, elegantly engrossed and on file in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

# APPENDIX.



## APPENDIX I.

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### TOM PAINE.

(See p. 137.)

THE engagement with Tom Paine did not last long. In the month of May following, Paine having "tarnished his reputation" and "sold himself to the opposition," Gérard de Rayneval lets him go, substituting for his pen in the newspapers that of two other writers, one "An Honest Politician" and the other "Americus," the latter a member of Congress. Later on, in December, Paine strives to reinstate himself with Luzerne, who keeps him at a distance. Subsequently, however, he concludes to employ him, and Paine retrieves himself to a certain extent; but Congress and Pennsylvania have lost faith in him. "He is constantly destitute. . . . It can not be denied that his early writings influenced the Revolution," says Luzerne, who is disposed to employ him to write a history of the Revolution for the instruction of the people of the country, and thus keep them straight in their tendencies. This object, however, is not carried out.

In connection with Tom Paine, the following letter is of interest, although having no relation to my sub-

ject. I am indebted for it to M. Taine, who found it in the archives, in his researches for his work on the French Revolution, and which he cites in part in the second volume of that work. The letter is here printed entire for the first time.

LETTER OF THOMAS PAINE TO DANTON.

PARIS, May 6, 2d year of the Republic (1793).

CITOYEN DANTON :

As you read English I write this letter to you without passing it through the hands of a translator.

I am exceedingly distressed at the distractions, jealousies, discontents and uneasiness that reign among us and which, if they continue, will bring ruin and disgrace on the Republic. When I left America in the year 1787 it was my intention to return the year following, but the French revolution and the prospect it afforded of extending the principles of liberty and fraternity through the greater part of Europe have induced me to prolong my stay upwards of six years. I now despair of seeing the great object of European liberty accomplished, and my despair arises not from the combined foreign powers, not from the intrigues of aristocracy and priestcraft, but from

the tumultuous misconduct with which the internal affairs of the present revolution is conducted.

All that now can be hoped for is limited to France only, and I agree with your motion of not interfering in the government of any foreign country, nor permitting any foreign country to interfere in the government of France. This decree was necessary as a preliminary toward terminating the war. But while these internal contentions continue, while the hope remains to the enemy of seeing the republic fall to pieces, while not only the representatives of the departments but representation itself is publicly insulted, as it has lately been and now is by the people of Paris, or at least by the tribunes, the enemy will be encouraged to hang about the frontiers and await the issue of circumstances.

I observe that the confederated powers have not yet recognised Monsieur, or D'Artois, as regent, nor made any Proclamation in favour of any of the Bourbons, but this negative conduct admits of two different conclusions. The one is that of abandoning the Bourbons and the war together, the other is that of changing the object of the war and substituting a partition

scheme in the place of their first object as they have done by Poland. If this should be their object, the internal contentions that now rage will favour that object far more than it favoured their former object. The danger every day increases of a rupture between Paris and the departments. The departments did not send their deputies to Paris to be insulted, and every insult shown to them is an insult to the departments that elected and sent them. I see but one effectual plan to prevent this rupture taking place, and that is to fix the residence of the Convention and of the future assemblies at a distance from Paris.

I saw, during the American Revolution, the exceeding inconvenience that arose by having the government of Congress within the limits of any Municipal Jurisdiction. Congress first resided in Philadelphia, and after a residence of four years, it found it necessary to leave it. It then adjourned to the state of Jersey. It afterwards removed to New York; it again removed from New York to Philadelphia and, after experiencing in every one of these places the great inconvenience of a government within a government it



formed the project of building a Town not within the limits of any municipal jurisdiction for the future residence of Congress. In any one of the places where Congress resided, the municipal authority privately or openly opposed itself to the authority of Congress and the people of each of those places expected more attention from Congress than their equal share with the other states amounted to. The same things now take place in France but in a far greater excess.

I see also another embarrassing circumstance arising in Paris of which we have had full experience in America. I mean that of fixing the price of provisions. But if this measure is to be attempted it ought to be done by the Municipality. The Convention has nothing to do with regulations of this kind; neither can they be carried into practice. The People of Paris may say they will not give more than a certain price for provisions, but as they cannot compel the country people to bring provisions to market the consequence will be directly contrary to their expectations, and they will find dearness and famine instead of plenty and cheapness. They may force the price down upon the Stock in hand, but

after that the market will be empty. I will give you an example—

In Philadelphia we undertook among other regulations of this kind to regulate the price of Salt; the consequence was that no Salt was brought to market, and the price rose to thirty-six shillings sterling per Bushel. The price before the war was only one shilling and six pence per Bushel; and we regulated the price of flour (*farine*) till there was none in the market and the people were glad to procure it at any price.

There is also a circumstance to be taken into the account which is not much attended to. The assignats are not of the same value they were a year ago and as the quantity encreases the value of them will diminish. This gives the appearance of things being dear when they are not so in fact, for in the same proportion that any kind of money falls in value articles rise in price. If it were not for this the quantity of assignats would be too great to be circulated. Paper money in America fell so much in value from this excessive quantity of it that in the year 1781 I gave three hundred Paper dollars for one pair of worsted stockings. What I write you

upon this subject is experience and not merely opinion.

I have no personal interest in any of these matters nor in any party disputes. I attend only to general principles.

As soon as a constitution shall be established I shall return to America ; and be the future prosperity of France ever so great I shall enjoy no other part of it than the happiness of knowing it. In the mean time I am distressed to see matters so badly conducted and so little attention paid to moral principles. It is these things that injure the character of the Revolution and discourages the progress of liberty all over the world.

When I began this letter I did not intend making it so lengthy, but since I have gone thus far I will fill up the remainder of the sheet with such matters as shall occur to me.

There ought to be some regulation with respect to the spirit of denunciation that now prevails. If every individual is to indulge his private malignancy, or his private ambition, to denounce at random and without any kind of proof, all confidence will be undermined and all authority be destroyed. Calumny is a species of Treachery

that ought to be punished as well as any other kind of Treachery. It is a private vice productive of a public evil, because it is possible to irritate men into disaffection by continual calumny who never intended to be disaffected. It is therefore, equally as necessary to guard against the evils of unfounded or malignant suspicion as against the evils of blind confidence. It is equally as necessary to protect the characters of public officers from calumny as it is to punish them for treachery or misconduct. For my own part I shall hold it a matter of doubt, until better evidence arises than is known at present, whether Dumourier has been a traitor from policy or from resentment. There was certainly a time when he acted well, but it is not every man whose mind is strong enough to bear up against ingratitude and I think he experienced a great deal of this before he revolted.

Calumny becomes harmless and defeats itself when it attempts to act upon too large a scale. Thus the denunciation of the sections against the twenty-two deputies falls to the ground. The departments that elected them are better judges of their moral and political characters than

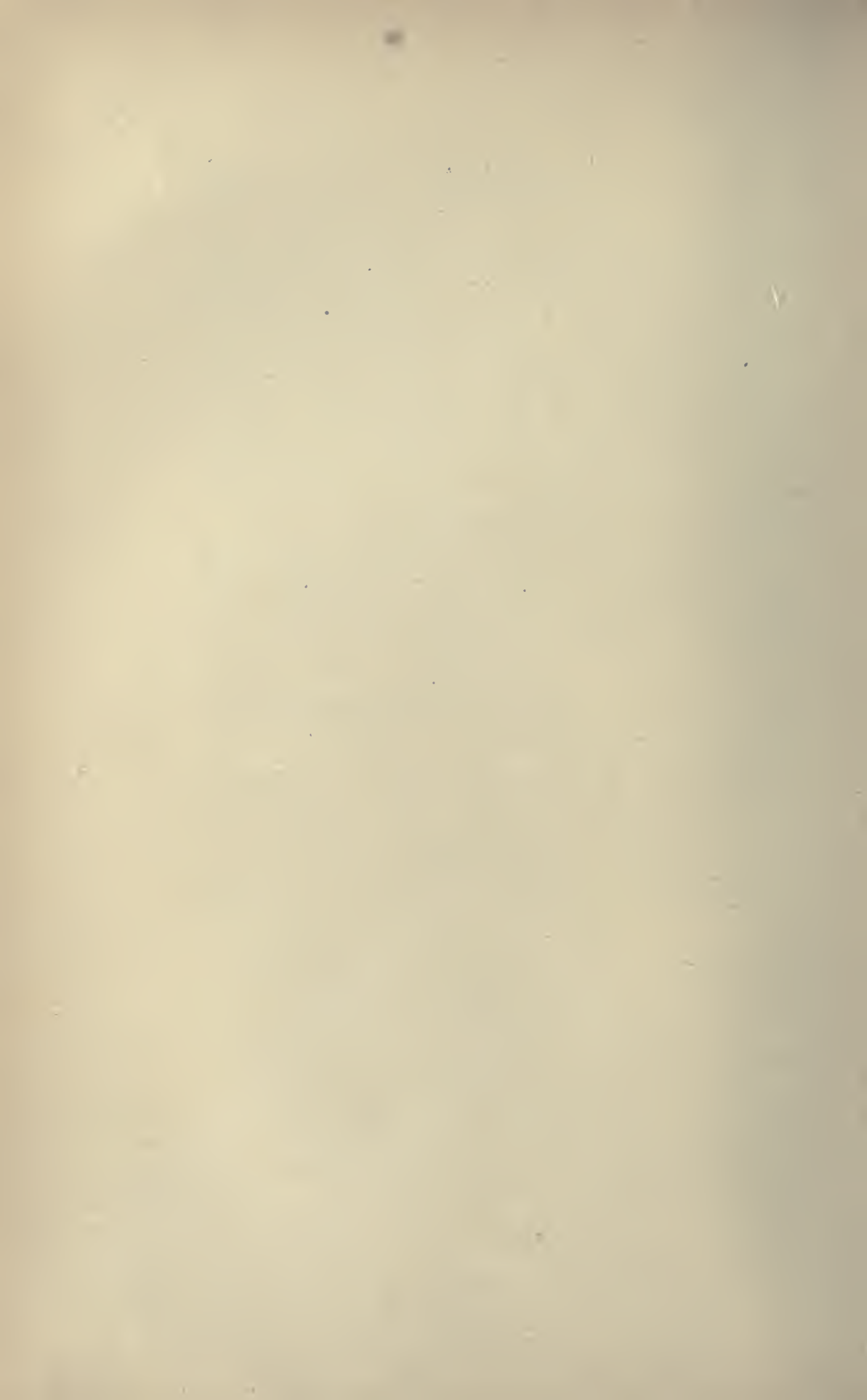
those who have denounced them. This denunciation will injure Paris in the opinion of the departments because it has the appearance of dictating to them what sort of deputies they shall elect. Most of the acquaintances that I have in the Convention are among those who are in that list, and I know there are not better men nor better patriots than what they are.

I have written a letter to Marat of the same date as this but not on the same subject. He may show it to you if he chuse.

Votre ami,

THOMAS PAINE.

CITOYEN DANTON.



## APPENDIX II.

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(See Page 156.)

THE daughter of Beaumarchais, before leaving Paris for America, prepared the following appeal to Congress which she had printed both in French and English, probably for distribution among its members on her arrival.

THE DAUGHTER OF PIERRE-AUGUSTIN CARON  
DE BEAUMARCHAIS.

To the honorable the Members of the Senate  
and House of Representatives of the United  
States:

PARIS, October 20, 1822.

GENTLEMEN :

At the epoch when the second session of the seventeenth Congress is to begin, I have thought it serviceable to my interests, and to your equity, to collect the facts which establish the justice of my claim.

You will not disavow the source from whence

I took them : if I claim *justice*, it is in the way the most accordant with your dignity ; for almost all the testimonies I have now the honour of submitting to your consideration, have been brought forth by some of your most respected and most respectable fellow citizens, viz.:

I. The message of President Madison.

II. The letters of your Minister in France to the Duke de Richelieu.

III. The answer of the Duke de Richelieu.

IV. The letters of the French Minister, M. Hyde de Neuville, to the Secretary of State.

V. The report of the Committee appointed by the House of Representatives.

VI. The message of President Monroe.

VII. The opinions delivered by Messrs. Rodney and Pinkney, attorneys-general of the United States.

VIII. The copy of the important document which proves that the million paid on the 10th day of June, 1776, has not been received under any obligation to account for it to the United States, and that the application of it has been approved by the French government.

IX. The letter written, according to a resolu-



tion of Congress in 1779, by their President to M. de Beaumarchais.

After having paid some attention to the aforesaid documents, you will wonder, no doubt, that justice has been asked for without success for so many years. Will it be refused to me again? As a reward for the devotion of Beaumarchais to your cause, shall his daughter be deprived of her fortune, and finish her life in vain and cruel expectation, as her father did, whose existence was shortened by troubles and sorrow? Till the last moment of his life he begged you to decide upon his claim. He said to you: "My proceedings towards you were zealous and pure; my letters, my commercial conventions attest it; they are in your hands; they have been thoroughly examined: examine them again. The proofs which those frequent examinations have established are warranted by illustrations and unexceptionable testimonies, among which I find, with pride, those of some of your countrymen: their veracity could not be questioned. *Decide, in your own cause, with equity and impartiality!* Or, at least, be pleased to appoint special commissioners to settle that discussion, to end that unequal struggle,

and I will accept them from you with confidence as my judges: but I beg that a speedy decision may take place." The same applications are addressed to you by his daughter; and, to conclude, I will express myself in the very words which his kind and noble heart, so great in his misfortunes, so generous to the misfortunes of others, has dictated to him in his last memorial on this case. After having quoted a letter written to him by M. Silas Deane, in 1778, when this gentleman was going to leave France, and wherein it is said:

"I hope Congress will not delay any longer to acknowledge the great and important services that the cause of America is indebted to you for. *The end of your exertions is now to be obtained*, since a French fleet is now ready to sail. This will show to the world, and to America, how sincere is the friendship of France, and how firmly determined she feels to protect the American independence. I congratulate you on such a glorious event, which you have promoted more than any one."

M. de Beaumarchais then goes on, speaking of his long troubles, of the justice of his claim, and adds:

“But I will leave this long computation of accounts and calculations, though it breaks my heart to feel in what a dreadful situation I am quitting my *only daughter*, leaving her without support, without a guide, without a protector, and wasting her life in the pursuit of contested claims. I will now address my ardent prayers to you: I will no longer dispute and establish my rights by proofs and reasoning but try only to turn your justice to kindness and interest towards my *orphan daughter*. My rights to such an interest are direct. It is you that I wished to serve, it is yourselves that I have served. I have gained no other reward than affliction. Allow me, dying, to bequeath to you my daughter, who, after me, perhaps will be ruined by other injustices, which will not then be in my power to repair. If nothing were to be left her in this world, perhaps she will find in future that these delays of payment may be a last resource that heaven has intended to leave her after my death. If so many proofs obtained their natural effect, be as just as Congress was in 1779! Reward me in the being I love best in the world. Let the compensation of what I have done

belong to my daughter when her father shall be no more; and, dying, allow me to recommend her to your kind protection."

Such were the last wishes of his heart; those anxieties for the loss of my fortune were paternal, and too truly proved.

To discharge debts contracted in his long proscription, and in the long pursuit of his just claims; to secure to my children, and my respectable husband, a better existence in future; to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of my father, by establishing the justice of his request, such, Gentlemen, are the wishes and the desire of which I hope the speedy accomplishment, with the most respectful confidence,

EUGÉNIE DELARUE.

## APPENDIX III.

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(See page 196.)

DR. FRANKLIN lived at Passy, a suburb of Paris. One day an envelope was thrown into the grating of the house, containing a letter written on six pages of large folio paper, of a blue tint, enclosing two other papers, one of eighteen articles entitled "Project for allaying the present ferments in North America," and the other, of thirteen articles, entitled "Great outlines of the Future Government of North America." Dr. Franklin believed that these documents were sent with the cognizance of George III. The letter bears this address :

TO BENJ. FRANKLIN, ESQ., &c., &c., &c.

Secret & Confidential.

Read this in private & before you look at the other papers but dont be imprudent enough to let any one see it before you have considered it thoroughly.

SIR: I shall wave apologies, if your intentions are as upright as mine they will not be suspected :

it is an Englishman who addresses you, but an Englishman neither a partizan of mere obstructive faction tending to confound all order of government, nor yet one who is an idolatrous worshipper of passive obedience to the *divine rights* of Kings; not one who holds that *everything* which can obtain the requisite *formality* of Law in the English Constitution must therefore be infallible, & *essentially* Law, & Liberty. Nay, to go further in my creed, I look upon many Acts, & declarations of Parliament, for some years past, but as *Phantoms* of British Liberty, conjured up by the spells of Scottish witchcraft, to calumniate, & attempt to draw down destruction, on that unsuspecting *angel* of which they are the lying representatives.

You are a Philosopher, whom nature, industry, & a long experience have united to form, & to mature—it is to you therefore I apply—I apply as to a man of cool judgement, a clear understanding, and an extensive reflection, entreating you by the name of that omnipotent, omniscient, & just God, before whom you must appear, & by your hopes of future fame, consider well, if some expedients cannot be invented to put a stop to

the desolation of America, and to prevent the baneful effects of that storm which threatens to deluge the *whole world* with blood.

It must be granted that every provocation capable of piquing national, or private resentment has been exercised on America—Insolence—Contempt—wanton injustice—tyrannick violence—and all those mischiefs, which stupid narrow minded Despotism can command, without a feeling for the sufferers, or a sollicitude about what is to be the consequence—whole towns destroyed, private murders shocking to mention or think on committed—agriculture and its peaceful professors ruin'd, Religion, & Science violated—in a word,—all the horrors of War, all the rancour, the madness of Civil War. The passions of human nature cannot behold these things with indifference, nor readily turn aside from the inviting prospect of revenge; but it is the part of Wisdom, it is the duty of Virtue to confine their wandering regards, & direct their attention towards the plainer, & more distinct objects of Reason.

England hath, also, been already, & America, will be a dupe, if she believes any other motive

to actuate those who have animated both Contenders to proceed the Lengths they have gone, excepting a hope, & systematick Policy to exhaust a Rival whose Power they dreaded, & whose wealth they envied.

The permanent establishment of any form of Government (whether as now, a confederate Republick), or a limited monarchy subordinate, or blended into that of Great Britain, which shall unite the Continent of North America, & give it activity for offence & defence, will equally meet with every obstruction which a Nation the most expert in the delusive wiles of negotiation, & the subtletys of Politicks can give it. Recollect how the miserable Race of Stewart was cajol'd: while they were openly encouraged in their narrow, half-witted projects to enslave our ancestors, a party was fomented by the same breath to oppose them. For a long time the Country was convulsed with internal pangs, till by a bold & unexpected effort she recovered her Constitution, & expelled her poison. Since the Revolution, the unfortunate victims of their artifice have been alternately treated as Kings & vagabonds as best suited the Interest of the



moment. Have ye any foundation to expect better treatment when the turn is served? "Your power to treat is previously acknowledged, the particulars of your treaty are amply specified, & solemnly formaliz'd." The House of Stewart is allied in blood to their monarch—the treaties with it were open & in the face of the Sun, not a loophole for a quibble about their original validity—how they have been regarded draws a blush from the Popedom, & *Italian* Politician, who unable to justify the perfidy, & esteeming the tie indissoluble even by the infallibility of God's vicar, affords an asylum & maintenance to the cheated fugitives.

The progress of this new alliance is easily foreseen, & to be traced out. For the present & for a year or two to come, ye will obtain the most ample promises, & ready acquiescence. Then will come evasions to your applications—contemptuous delays—& of a sudden, a declaration that ye must shift for yourselves. England has been just served thus, in hopes of her present inability to resent this treatment—in that there may probably be a great mistake—but with respect to America there can be no such

error, for when will she be able to combat France, & compell her to adhere to Treaties?

The vast scale of your new world, & the magnificence of its scenes fills the mind with romantic ideas. As ye gaze your admiration increases, & in the Language of Scripture, ye fall into a trance having your eyes open. Ye see in visions your waters cover'd with fleets, your Forests with innumerable people—the navy of England, the population of China, & the accumulated industry & commerce of both sink before ye. Ye measure Pigmy Europe with a single glance of the Eye. Ye despise the servile effeminacy of Asia, & consider Africa but as a Hara to breed your slaves. Yet these your offsprings are mere embryo's in the womb of Time, whose parturition (should no accident produce miscarriage, mutilation, or deformity) cannot arrive by the course of nature till ye its parents have long been blended with the Elements from which ye were composed & are insensible to all the splendour of this World.

By all dispassionate observers, the American notion of a present competence & ability to bear the weight of an independent Empire, &

the Scottish plan of catching two millions of People in a boundless desert with fifty thousand men, is equally absurd. They surpass every original exertion of the human mind to plan, of known Science to prepare, & of enthusiasm to carry into execution.

Let us candidly consider the state of affairs in this cursed War. It is not that America is so Powerful, or England so weak & exhausted, that hath so long suspended the Event. It is the vast extent of the country, its wild impenetrable surface, & the scattered & scanty subsistence found in it—Circumstances which should have stopped a Ministry endowed with wisdom & foresight from attempting to reduce, & retain ye by force of arms; had there been ten fold the pretext for coercion which they plead; but by no means sufficient if ye have wisdom, & foresight, to indulge the delusion of continuing an independent Empire. It is one thing to elude the Combat, another to vanquish your adversary.

The maintenance of a Standing Army, & the Creation of a Regular Navy are not within the compass of an inconsiderable revenue & thinly peopled country, nor can attend the efforts of a

few years, be activity & success as favorable as imagination can paint. Yet without these, your rising state will neither be in a capacity to secure itself from hostile savages, acquire new alliances, or preserve to any beneficial purpose, that which is already formed. Your seaport towns at the mercy of an enemy will be too insecure a deposit for the constituent stores of your commerce, & the navigation so precarious as to sink almost all the profit. Yet with all these disadvantages obviated, it takes a long time to acquire a rank amongst nations; nay, it seems impossible, when we enumerate them, to seize at once on any leading principle which shall embrace those very material circumstances, which Time & Custom has given the older states, in Guaranty, in Commercial treaties, in tacit Conventions, & a reciprocal intendment, of each others laws, temper & extent of Power, & which usually acquiesc'd in as of course—being dangerous to discuss. Ye may exist indeed uncertainly as corsairs and interlopers, but cannot for years we shall not live to see, as a Regular commercial state. Some, deceived by Parliamentary speeches, misrepresented in Print, & originally the ebullition of party violence

& passionate dispute, may think that England *must* acknowledge your independence; depend upon it that, even tho' there should be a man bold enough really to expose it, it is a *false light*. Nor can the acknowledgement be binding to Posterity. A people may authorize their representatives to regulate the exercise of an inherent right, but cannot other than superficially & in terms *absolutely alienate* that right unless by individually consenting thereto. Our title to the Empire is indisputable, & will be asserted either by ourselves or successors whenever occasion presents. We may stop a while in our pursuit to recover breath, but shall assuredly resume our career again.

The prudence of your deliberations, the perfection in their execution, the steadiness of your defence, the Spirit with which your people have been inspired, & the Laws which ye have instituted indicate a wisdom too calm, too profound to impute your conduct to those motives, which the Promoters of the War attribute it to—an original Scheme of yours to renounce all allegiance to the Mother Country, conceived even while she was bleeding with Glorious wounds in

your defence, and a determination to sacrifice the many actual benefits ye were ever possessed of, & to the wildest of all utopian projects. I am one who do not believe that your declaration of independency and your alliance to France is the Result of such a premeditated Scheme, but have arisen from the necessity of providing every security, and employing every means of resistance ye could devise when driven to those last stakes by the Perfidy, the narrowness of mind, the overbearing injustice and the peevish violence of temper of those who have for some years past mismanaged the affairs of the Empire. If these things are as I have conceived, now seems the time to rid both us & you of this malign influence, & to provide securities that none shall be able to practice hereafter (however they may hold forth in speech or in writing) such diabolical systems of Government.

I do not at all guess what are American views, nor what will please her; but thus much seems certain, that if, in the present state of affairs, proposals for accommodation came from thence, the Crown must attend to them, & the Ministers act *bona fide* thereupon, be they who they will, as

they will be strictly & severely watched by every order in the State. It is sincerely to be hoped that the happy event of Peace and reunion may not be the work of any mere Party, or Junto—but arise from that aggregated support which the sense of so great a General benefit should produce—indeed the Leaders on all sides have in the course of this complicated dispute & in the heat of argument, so often pledged themselves to insist on some conditions, and oppose others, which on a cool revision, & further investigation, their reasons must condemn; that they would probably be glad to save the imputation of inconsistency in avoiding to be the first movers, though they would readily be the supporters of a different system. Since then, as ye think, ye cannot safely trust administration, & its Emisaries; since opposition cannot procure compliance with your terms, not having the confidence of the People to aid its efforts; why not offer some conditions directly to the King himself. It is totally impossible, & ever was, to arrange a controversy of such a nature, by the meeting of Commissioners who peremptorily demand on one side, & assume the tone of command on the

other, without the trace of any outline of the Negotiation—when the substance is known, the formality is soon finished—but to begin with the latter, is only foolishly to complicate the dispute still more, & excite fresh aggravations.

I shall take it for granted that America is willing to treat, provided she can have the most ample security for the due performance of the Contract which shall be agreed on, & on that consideration will undertake through a most eligible mediator to transmit into the King's own hands any proposals on your part which are not couched in offensive terms, to return the answer if there shall be any, & if they are slighted to lay them before Parliament early in the ensuing session. As to the treatment of them there, or of those who reject or employ any tricking artifices about them, that must depend on the reason & equity which pervades your proposals; they will have a fair tryal by English good sense, English Honor & English Justice, which have not quite abandoned the Island, tho' a little out of fashion in the neighborhood of St. James's as some of your Friends say.

It matters very little for you in this state of



busyness to indulge your curiosity in knowing who I am. I can serve you more effectually while invisible; if *I succeed* perhaps I may never reveal myself; if I fail, surely my intentions merit some consideration from men professing Patriotism. I therefore must insist that, by printing or publishing this paper, or by any other manner, you do not point me out as a mark for witlings to whet their boars teeth upon, nor Rogues to spit their venom on, and this is our first condition. If you will keep it, & think the proffer'd occasion worth your notice, you will specify your Preliminaries in writing; & making use of some plausible pretext for that purpose, carry them yourself to the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame between the hours of twelve at noon and one; either on Monday the 6th of July instant, or on Thursday the 9th of July (6 or 9 July). If the iron gates on *either* side of the choir are open you will enter & there find a gentleman who has no idea of the nature of his commission, so do not give him any suspicions by taking extraordinary notice of him. He looks upon it as an intrigue, & has promised to convey the packet he finds to me, & to conceal

my real name whatever extraordinary circumstances may happen, & I am quite certain I can trust him even tho' he discovers what he has been employed about. You will ascertain my Friend by his having a Paper in his hands as if drawing or taking notes; on any one coming near him, he will either huddle it up precipitately or, folding it up, tear it with an appearance of peevishness & walk away; at that very altar where he stood, place your packet within reach, or if there is nobody else near, throw it on the ground & walk away instantly. Dont, if you can avoid it, let even him see that it is you that bring it, much less anybody else; as soon as he sees the coast clear he will return to look for the packet as often as these circumstances, of his having been interrupted thus, happen, & what he finds seal'd up and directed a Monsr.—Monsr. le Comte de Weissenstein a Spa, Allemagne, you may be certain will be safely & faithfully deliver'd. The same hand which conveys this to you delivers him precise correspondent instructions. If the iron gates above mentioned happen to be shut you will find him in the *aille* of the right hand on going in; on the same side (if I mistake

not) where the statue of St. Christopher is. For your more certain guidance I have desired him to stick a Rose either in his hat, which he will hold in his hand up to his face, or else in the button-hole of his *waistcoat*, either of which will be remarkable enough with the other circumstances.\*

You, Sir, are the best judge of the extent of your present powers, & your Influence in America; with whom to consult, & in what form to couch your conditions, I would not pretend to direct—yet in the sincerity of my heart, propose the enclosed; whether you adopt them or not, will not alter a Jot in my Conduct—there is one thing however, too material not to insist strongly upon, & that is, not to permit your offers to transpire untill Preliminaries are actually concluded on or the negotiation actually broken off. A different conduct empowered your Enemies to turn your last famous petition to the King against you & *in their way prove* its insincerity & insidious intention only to inflame Faction, & excite sedition.

If America is finally, & irvokeably determin'd to stake everything on its independence—there

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\* Nobody whatever is privy to this.

is nothing left but to play out this deep game— all good men on both sides will pathetically lament, that the Freedom of both countries depends on so precarious a speculation, We trembling with apprehension, at the irresistible influence, & power of corruption, which must accede to the Crown, if we conquer—& for you to lose all the ties of personal Friendship, or family connection, & the heart felt prejudices of Education, similarity of manners, & of speech—to unite with strangers who heartily despise you already, & ever will despise those who have neither nobility, nor a profusion of wealth—& to be obliged to submit to the supercilious haughtiness of those whose language is different, whose principles of Laws & Government are fundamentally & diametrically opposite to yours— & whose religion hath ever been invariably, directly, & essentially, in practice as in Doctrine, the persecutor the compulsive Tyrant over that which prevails amongst you.

And now, Sir, I will take my leave of you, confiding on your Personal honor, & that of the country which you represent, that if you do not chuse to accept my offers, & are not in earnest

to bring about this reconciliation, or if you have enter'd into a negotiation with England by other means; that you will instantly destroy these papers, & make no use of them disadvantageous to him whom I have employed on this errand, nor to me—in case you send any terms, dont be impatient to hear what has been done with them—there are many Circumstances of time & opportunity which must be managed & which cannot be previously foreseen—Sufficeth it, you can but stand in the same place you do now, whatever part Ministry or Parliament take.

Your humble servant & well wisher to all men of sincere & liberal minds & a friend of liberty,

CHARLES DE WEISSENSTEIN.

Bruxelles, June 16, 1778.

In the first paper of 18 articles devoted to preliminaries for peace and other proceedings, the following only are worth copying :

ARTICLE 6.

As the conspicuous publick Part some American gentlemen have taken may expose them to the personal enmity of some of the chief persons in Great Britain, & as it is unreasonable that their services to their country should deprive them of

those advantages which their talents would otherwise have gained them ; the following Persons shall have offices or Pensions for Life at their option—according to the sums opposite their respective names.

Messieurs	Adams
	Hancock
	Washington
	Franklin
	etc. etc. etc.

In case his Majesty, or His successors, shall ever create American Peers, then these persons, or their descendants, shall be among the first created if they chuse it. Mr. Washington to have immediately the Brevet of Lieut. General & all the honors & precedence incident thereto, but not to assume or bear any command without a special warrant or letter of service for that purpose from the King.

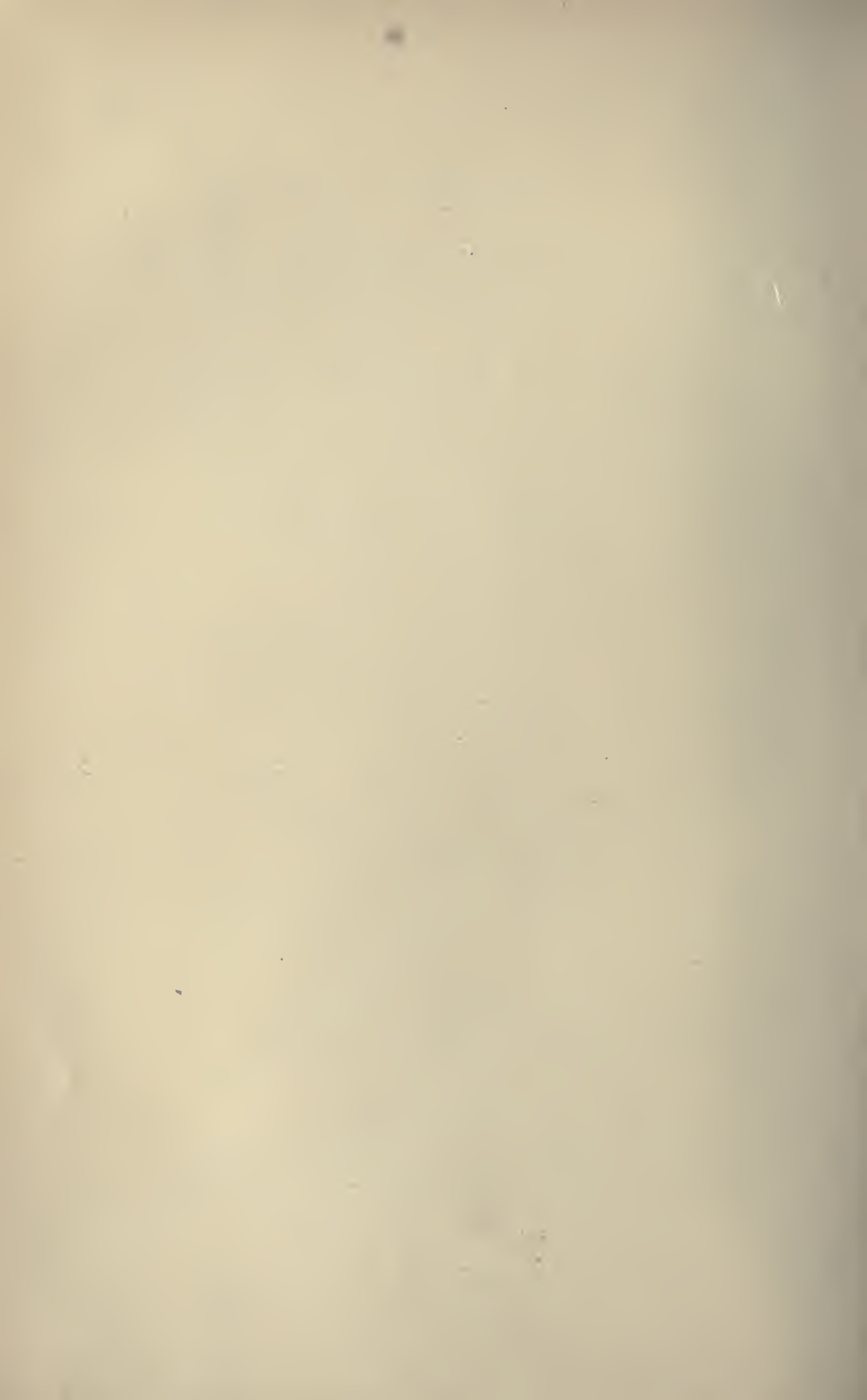
In the paper of 13 articles “for the future government of North America,” occurs the following article :

ARTICLE 10.

The British Manufactures shall always have the preference over those of all other nations, nor

shall any new taxes ever be imposed upon them without previous consent of the British Parliament.

Franklin, in reply to these documents, composed an answer, which, however, was never sent. A copy of this in his handwriting, and sent to the Count de Vergennes, is on file in the French archives. The reader will find the letter printed in the late edition of Franklin's works edited by Mr. John Bigelow.





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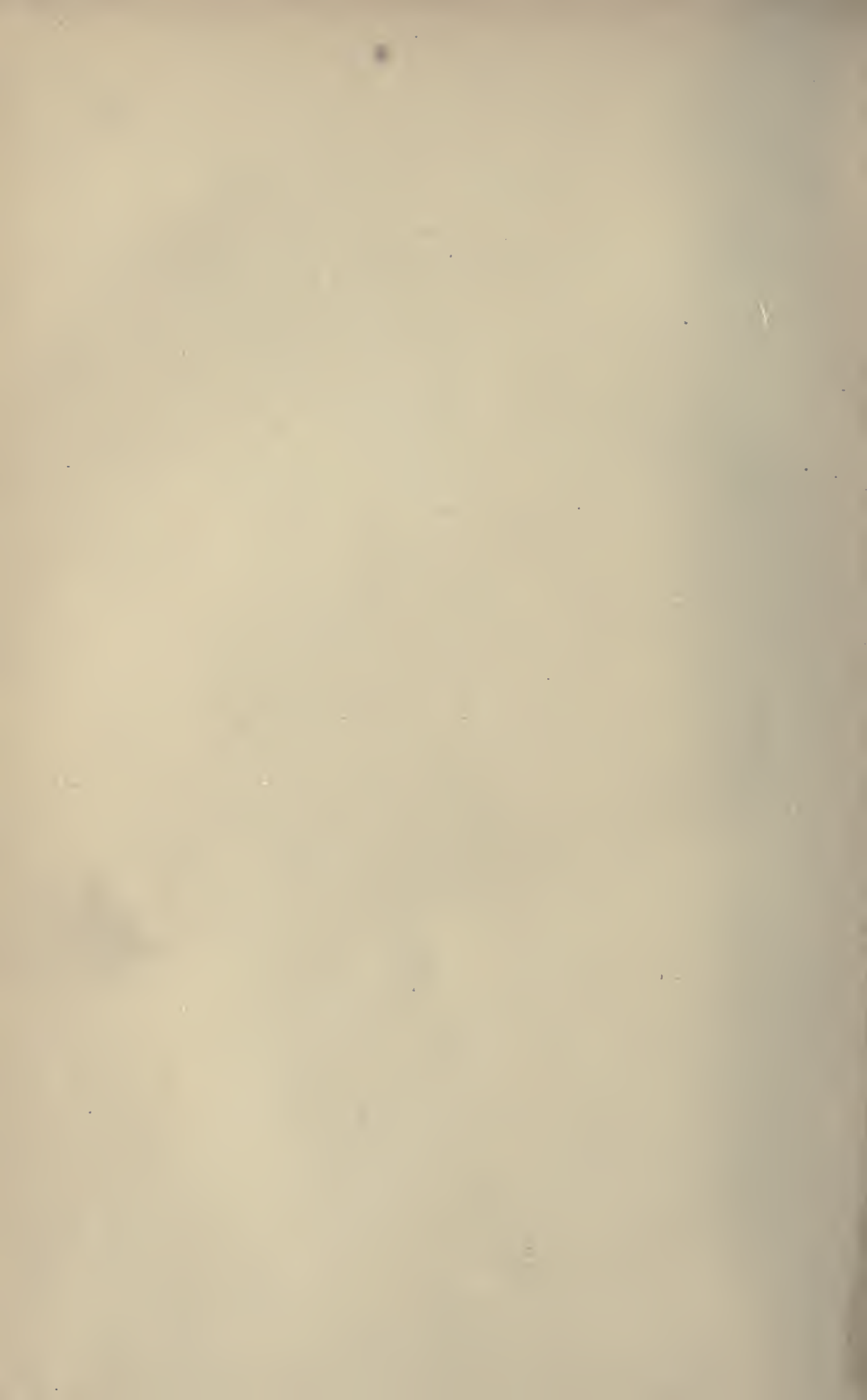
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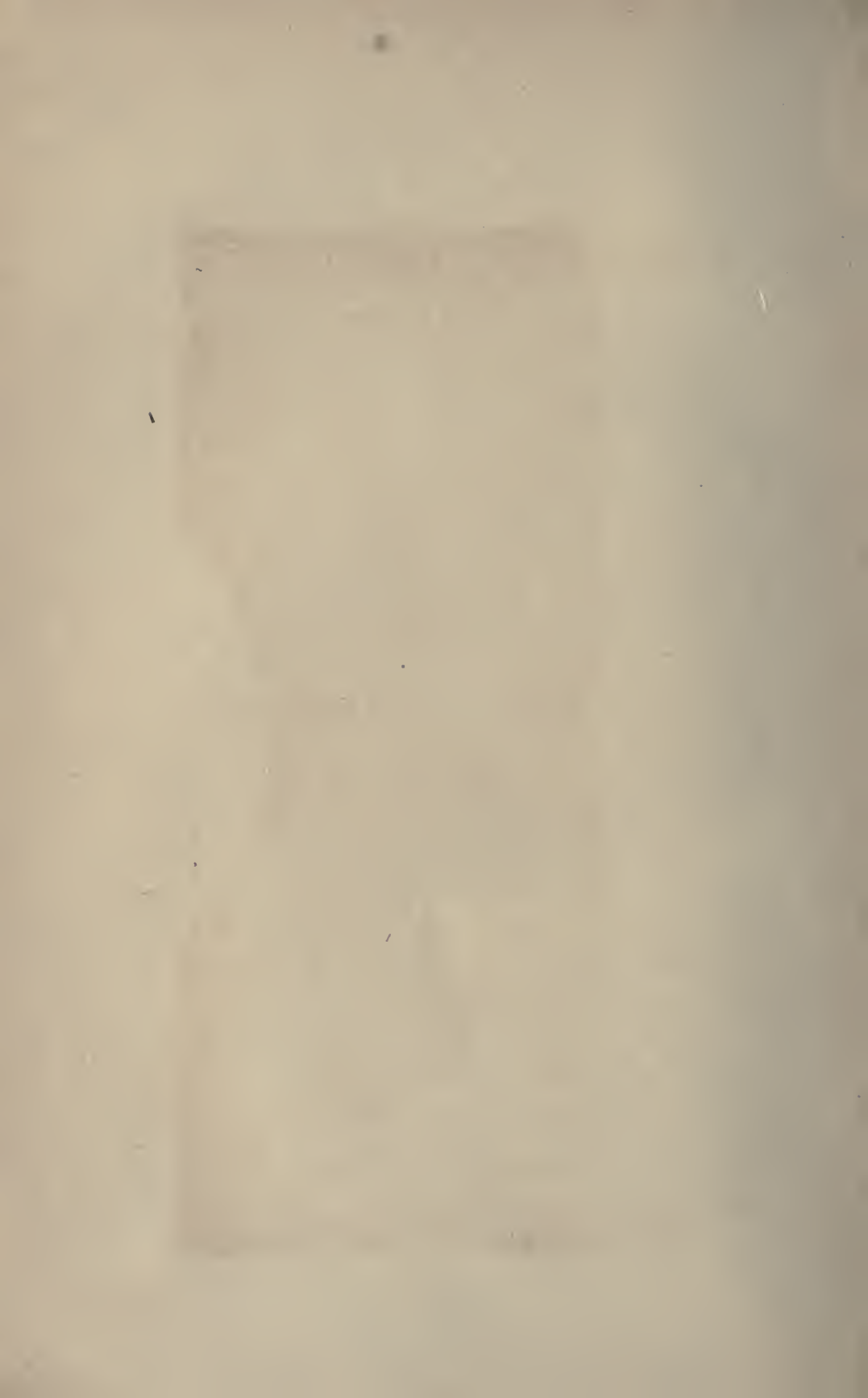
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