The RIGHT CONSTITUTION *of a* COMMONWEALTH EXAMINED.

[*Continued from our last.*]

AT the critical moment, when the Gauls had approached the capital with such silence as not to awaken the centinels, or even the dogs, M. Manlius, who had been consul three years before, was awakened by the cry of the geese, which, by the sanctity of their consecration to Juno, had escaped with ther lives in an extreme scarcity of provisions. He hastened to the wall, and beat down one of the enemy, who had already laid hold of the battlement, and whose fall from the precipice carried down several others who followed him. With stones and darts the Romans precipitated all the rest to the bottom of the rock. Manlius the next day received in a public assembly his praises and rewards. Officers and soldiers, to testify their gratitude, gave him their rations for one day, both in corn and wine, half a pound of corn and a quarter of a pint of wine. "Ingens "caritatis argumentum, cum se victu suo fraudans, "detractum corpori & usibus necessariis ad hono-"rem unis viri conferre," says Livy; and in the year of Rome 365, the commonwealth gave to Manlius an house upon the capital, as a monument of his valour and his country's gratitude.

In the year of Rome 370, fifty-five years after the execution of Melius, and five years after the defence of the capital from the attack of Brennus, Manlius is suspected of ambition. Those who had hitherto excited, or been excited by, the people to faction, had been plebeians. Manlius was a patrician of one of the most illustrious families: He had been consul, and acquired immortal glory by his military exploits, and by saving the capital; he was, in short, the rival of Camillus, who had obtained two signal victories over the Gauls, and from the new birth of the city had been always in office, either as dictator or military tribune; and even, when he was only tribune, his colleagues considered him as their superior, and held it an honor to receive his orders as their chief. In short, by his own reputation, the support of the Quintian family, and the enthusiastic attachment to him, he had inspired into the nation, he was, in fact and effect, to all intents and purposes, King in Rome, without the name, but under the various titles of consul, dictator, or military tribune. "He treats," said Manlius, "even those "created with powers equal to his own, not as "his colleagues, but officers and substitutes, to "execute his orders." The aristocratical Livy, and all the other aristocrates of Rome, accuse Manlius of envy. They say he could not bear such glory in a man whom he believed no worthier than himself: He despised all the rest of the nobility: The virtues, services, and honors of Camillus, alone excited his haughtiness and self-sufficiency, and tortured his jealousy and pride: He was enraged to see him always at the head of affairs, and commanding armies. It is certain that this practice of continuing Camillus always at the head was inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution, by which a rotation was established, and the consuls who had the command of armies could remain in office but one year. But this is the nature of an aristocratical assembly as well as of a democratical one: Some eminent spirit, assisted by three or four families connected with him, gains an ascendency, and excites an enthusiasm, and then the spirit and letter too of the constitution is made to give way to him. In the case before us, when Camillus could not be consul, he must be military tribune; and when he could not be military tribune, he must be dictator.

Manlius is charged with envy, and with vain speeches. "Camillus could not have recovered "Rome from the Gauls if I had not saved the ca-"pital and citadel." This was literally true; but aristocratical historians must brand the character of Manlius, in order to depress the people, and extol and adore that of Camillus, in order to elevate the senate and the nobles. But there is no solid reason to believe that Manlius envied Camillus, more than Camillus and the Quintian family were both envious and jealous of Manlius. The house upon the capital was what the Quintian family could not bear.

The truth is, an aristocratical despotism then ruled in Rome, and oppressed the people to a cruel degree; and one is tempted to say, that Manlius was a better man than Camillus or Cincinnatus, though not so secret, designing, and profound a politician, let the torrent of aristocratical history and philosophy roll as it will. There were two parties, one of the nobles, and another of the people: Manlius, from superior humanity and equity, embraced the weaker; Camillus and the Quintii, from family pride, like that of Lycurgus, domineered over the stronger party, of which they were in full possession. Manlius threw himself into the scale of the people; he entered into close intimacy and strict union with the tribunes; he spoke contemptuously of the senate, and flattered the multitude. "Jam aura, non consillio ferri, "famæque magnæ malle quam bonæ esse," says the aristocrate Livy. But let us examine his actions, not receive implicitly the epithets of partial historians.—The Roman laws allowed exorbitant interest for the loan of money: An insolvent debtor, by the decree of the Judge, was put into the hands of his creditor as a slave, and might be scourged, pinched, or put to death, at discretion: The most execrable aristocratical law that ever existed among men; a law so diabolical, that an attempt to get rid of it at almost any rate was a virtue. The city had been burnt, and every man obliged to rebuild his house. Not only the poorest citizen, but persons in middle life, had been obliged to contract debts. Manlius, seeing the rigour with which debts were exacted, felt more commiseration than his peers for the people. Seeing a centurion, who had distinguished himself by a great number of gallant actions in the field, adjudged as a slave to his creditor, his indignation as well as his compassion were aroused; he inveighed against the pride of the patricians, cruelty of the usurers, deplored the misery of the people, and expatiated on the merit of his brave companion in war;—surely no public oration was ever better founded: He paid the centurion's debt, and set him at liberty, with much ostentation to be sure, and strong expressions of vanity; but this was allowable by the custom and manners of the age. The centurion too displayed his own merit and services, as well as his gratitude to his deliverer. Manlius went further; he caused the principal part of his own patrimony to be sold, "in order, Romans," said he, "that I may not "suffer any of you, whilst I have any thing left, "to be adjudged to your creditors, and made "slaves." This, no doubt, made him very popular: But, in the warmth of his democratical zeal, he had been transported upon some occasion to say in his own house, that the senators had concealed, or appropriated to their own use, the gold intended for the ransom of the city from the Gauls; alluding, probably, to the fact, for that gold had been deposited under the pedestal of Jupiter's statue. Manlius perhaps thought that this gold would be better employed to pay the debts of the people. The senate recalled the dictator, who repaired to the forum, attended by all the senators, ascended his tribunal, and ordered his lictor to cite Manlius before him. Manlius advanced with the people; on one side was the senate with their clients, and Camillus at their head; and on the other the people, headed by Manlius; and each party ready for battle at the word of command. And such a war will, sooner or later, be kindled in every state, where the two parties of poor and rich, patricians and plebeians, nobles and commons, senate and people, call them by what names you will, have not a third power in an independent executive, to intervene, moderate, and balance them. The artful dictator interrogated Manlius only on the story of the gold. Manlius was embarrassed; for the superstition of the people would have approved of the apparent piety of the senate in dedicating that treasure to Jupiter, though it was probably only policy to hide it. He evaded the question, and descanted on the artifice of the senate, in making a war the pretext for creating a dictator, while their real design was to employ that terrible authority against him and the people. The dictator ordered him to prison. The people were deeply affected; but the authority was thought to be legal, and the Romans had prescribed bounds to themselves, through which they dare not break. The authority of the dictator and senate held them in such respect, that neither the tribunes nor the people ventured to raise their eyes or open their mouths. They put on mourning, however, and let their hair and beards grow, and surrounded the prison with continual crowds, manifesting every sign of grief and affliction. They publicly said, that the dictator's triumph was over the people, not the Volsci, and that all that was wanting was to have Manlius dragged before his chariot. Every thing discovered symptoms of an immediate revolt.—Here comes in a trait of aristocratical cunning, ad captandum vulgus, much more gross than any that had been practised by Manlius. To soften the people, the senate became generous all at once, ordered a colony of two thousand citizens to be sent out, assigning each of them two acres and an half of land. Though this was a largess, it was confined to too small a number, and was too moderate to take off all Manlius's friends. The artifice was perceived, and when the abdication of the dictatorship of Cossus had removed the fears of the people, and set their tongues at liberty, it had small effect in appeasing the people, who reproached one another with ingratitude to their defenders, for whom they expressed great zeal at first, but always abandoned in time of danger; witness Cassius and Melius. The people passed whole nights round the prison, and threatened to break down the gates. The senate set Manlius at liberty, to prevent the people from doing it.

(*To be continued.*)

ANECDOTE.

A Madhouse in Germany being compleated upon a new plan, the architect requested the Emperor to honor him so far as to look at the internal parts of the structure before the lunatics were admitted; this the Imperial Joseph consented to, and, while he was in the house, some one chalked under the inscription, which was, The Hospital for Lunatics, "*Josephus secundus ubicunque, hic primus.*"

An ESSAY *on* FREE TRADE *and* FINANCES; *particularly shewing what supplies of public revenue may be drawn from* Merchandise, *without injuring our trade or burdening our people.*

Continued from our last.

I. This mode of taxation may safely be raised to such a degree, as *to produce all the money we need for the public service*, or sufficiently near it; perhaps a small tax in the ordinary way would be more beneficial to the States, than none, because this tax keeps the customary avenues from the wealth of individuals, to the public treasury always open, which may be used on emergencies; and the habit and practice being settled, would avoid the difficulties naturally arising from novelty, or innovations. But to return to my argument. 'Tis greatly in favor of this kind of tax, that it will bring money enough for the public service; 'tis matter of great animation in the pursuit of any object, to know that when accomplished, it will be adequate to its purposes. People all want to see the end of things, and to know when they are to have done: This will naturally produce much stronger efforts, vigor and cheerfulness, than if the thing when accomplished, would be but half adequate to its purposes.

II. This mode of taxation, *applies for money where 'tis to be had in greatest plenty, and can be paid with most ease and least pain.* If we apply to the farmer, tradesman or labourer for cash, they have mighty little of it, and 'tis hard for them to raise the necessary sum; but 'tis matter of common course with the merchant, *through whose hands the great current of circulating cash passes*; he will consider the tax as part of the first cost of his goods, and set his price and sell accordingly: It matters little to him, whether he pays half the cost of his goods abroad, and the other half at home, or whether he pays it all abroad, his object is to get the whole out of his sales, with as much profit to himself as he can.

III. This mode *lays the burden of tax on that kind of consumption, which is excessive and hurtful, and lessens that consumption, and of course mends the œconomy, and increases the industry and health of the people.* For 'tis plain, that no more money will be paid for the goods taxed, than would have been paid for the same kind of goods, had they not been taxed: The difference is, the same money paid for the taxed goods, will not buy so many of them as before the tax; because the tax will raise the price of them; and when the consumption or use of such goods is excessive and hurtful, this lessening of it is a benefit, though the same money is paid for them as before, for the same reason that 'tis better for a man that happens to be at a tavern with excessive drinkers to pay his whole share of the reconning but drink less than his share of the liquors, and *go home sober*, than to pay the same reckoning, drink his full share of the liquors, and *go home drunk.* 'Tis always better for a man to buy poison and not use it, than to buy the same poison and use it; in the one case he loses nothing but his money, in the other case he loses his money and health too. For the same reason 'tis better for a reaper to drink half a pint of rum in a day, than to reap for the same wages and drink a quart of rum. This reasoning will hold in its proper degree, with respect to every kind of consumption, which is excessive and hurtful.

(*To be continued.*

NATIONAL MONITOR.——No. VIII.

"A disposition to complain, creates cause of complaint."

FROM the earliest periods of history, mankind have been as tenacious of the right to criminate or find fault, as if their happiness was inseparably connected with it—whereas nothing is perhaps more certain, than that those evils of which they complain the loudest, often owe their existence to a spirit of repining.

The world has kept its usual course from age to age, "seed time and harvest, day and night, summer and winter, have not ceased"—and there is the highest reason to suppose, that the order of the natural world, will be continued, until the final consummation of all things.—To complain then of providence, that its arrangements do not suit our particular conveniency, is impious, is absurd.

The fate of mankind we may very fairly conclude, has not received a melioration of its condition from the spirit of complaint—and the moral world owes very little of its improvement in virtue and benevolence, to that temper of mind which leads us to rail against the times.

Nor is the political world any more indebted to this ungrateful propensity. The circumstances of a free country are often brought to a very critical situation, through the injurious exercise of this right to criminate the conduct of public officers.—Perhaps no people upon earth have more creative imaginations, are more jealous, and impatient, than the citizens of America.—Jealousy has been denominated a political virtue—but the jealousy of some persons is, by its effects, a mean, pitiful suspicion—derogatory to the dignity of human nature—and despised by every independent mind which is made the subject of its attack.—If our anticipations are beyond the probability of nature, the consequence willbe disappointment—in such case, crimination should begin at home.—We may be impatient in waiting to realize our expectations; but this impatience will add to our chagrin when the moment arrives of a total defeat to our unreasonable desires.

It is not wise, to expect a great deal of gratification from any thing in prospect.

As no man is so perfectly master of his own measures, as to be able to provide for every contingence, so disappointments with respect to the success of those under the direction of our civil rulers, should be submitted to without complaint, when there appears to be an honesty of principle.

It may be asserted with confidence, that an intemperate indulgence to a spirit of complaint, with respect to our civil rulers, will produce those very evils which we fear, by discouraging the wise, the virtuous, and independent, from taking any part in public life—This will open the way for such, as have no character to lose: Who, while they plunder, abuse and oppress the people, will alike contemn their complaints, and their sufferings. C.

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