

On a review of national opinions, it will be found that while particular ones have been productive of injurious errors, others have been equally productive of beneficial truths. The former have generally preceded the latter; as, indeed truth does not appear spontaneously to arise in the mind of man, but to be the offspring of long repeated and frequently unsuccessful efforts in individuals to acquire it, so correct modes of thinking in nations are usually the result of dear bought experience.

Such has been the case already with the United States. We have had our errors; they have led us to the brink of ruin—Not, however, depriving us of the power of reflection, whereby future danger might be discerned, we have paused before it was too late, and have fortunately saved ourselves from a contest with overwhelming perils.

It will be no less interesting than useful to review the late events which have occurred in the political world, and the effects they have produced on the people of this country.

The French Revolution unquestionably derived its origin from the successful establishment of our Republic. France had long cherished in her bosom men warmed by the purest and the most comprehensive philanthropy; men, who mourned over the degradation of human nature in that country, and foresaw the future triumphs of liberty. But an immediate reform, so far from being expected by them, scarcely kindled a transient hope. The American Revolution demonstrated the irresistible energy of moral truths; lightning was not more rapid or brilliant than were the effects of our glorious contest: its triumphant issue shed a light over the universe. France was the first to concentrate its beams. Many of the events which led to our emancipation and established our freedom, produced on imitation similar effects in that kingdom, but on a scale of bolder magnificence and grandeur. The admiration of the whole world, was tributary to the scene—The affection of America welcomed it with the liveliest sensibility.

This affection was, in the early periods of the revolution, not only amiable; it was also rational. The fabric of despotism, with its numerous incumbents, fell without a groan. The force of public opinion hushed all hostility, and the work of reformation proceeded with cool and dignified deliberation—Scarcely any thing was done that did not merit praise, or appear to flow from the purest intentions—This was an era of happiness probably unrivalled in the annals of nations.

Not to admire such a spectacle, not to indulge an elevation of thought, would have betrayed the apathy of slavery.—The enthusiasm that ran from one end of the continent to the other, attested in our citizens the strength and sincerity of their republican predilections, and was correctly viewed by the enlightened friend of his country as the best evidence of the stability of republican institutions in the United States.

To this period another succeeded still more sublime. As had been apprehended, a confederacy of monarchs interposed their arms to awe the rising spirit. Not content with keeping in subjection their own nations, they vainly attempted to subject to their will the French nation. Totally ignorant of the force of moral principles, sceptics as to the existence of the philanthropic sentiments inspired by liberty, and confident in the omnipotence of money and arms, they hesitated not to believe that the former would fly the approach of the latter.

So formidable were the consolidated forces of the coalition, that the enemies of freedom already triumphed in the certainty of anticipated victory, while its most ardent friends trembled at the impending danger. A few men, it is true, whose reflection had developed the surprising energies of freedom, still remained undismayed; but the multitude felt more fear than hope.

Still the American people, unshaken in their attachment to the principles for which the French contended, sympathized as sincerely with them in all their distresses, as they had exulted in their triumphs—nor was there a period, in which the affection of our fellow citizens was more decided, than at that period when the Prussian arms approached with rapid strides the capitol of the Republic.

In the prevailing opinions of our citizens, we still find nothing to reprove, but much to admire.

But another crisis opens upon us. England, lately our foe, becomes the foe of France. Still sensible to the irritations of unredressed grievances, we had not been able to discern in the conduct of that nation any evidences of friendship. Her unprovoked aggression upon France had no tendency to diminish our well founded jealousy;

and this jealousy was fully justified by her subsequent acts towards us. Without any right, but that which force confers, she struck at our extended trade with indiscriminating injustice—nothing escaped the rapacity of her privateers, and the insolence of her national ships. To the most wanton depredations was added the most farcatic contumely. Redress was sought, but it was answered with scorn.

Now it was the American heart began to beat with impetuous pulsation. The national character cried aloud for vindication. Shall a nation, it was exclaimed, the triumph whose infant arms subdued the haughty spirit of England, suffer itself to be trampled upon by that very nation, when its own resources are extended & its population doubled? Old resentments came in with renovated vigor, and increased the cry of vengeance.

We have now reached the dangerous crisis—War menaced us. I will not say that a majority of the people wished it, but I fear that a large portion of the people, among which were most of the ardent spirits, were for it. Unfortunately for the cause of humanity, and the great interests of mankind, but a small part of the miseries of warfare are foreseen by the people. War is a game, in which in reality, there is nothing but blanks, but each party is dazzled by the prospect of a splendid imaginary prize. The only gratification it brings along with it is an indulgence of the worst passions of the human breast.

Statesmen discerned that it was not the interest of the U. States to wage war with any nation. They knew full well that war invariably produces more misery than it attempts to avoid. They knew that *no contest can be defended on the ground of humanity, policy, or virtue, but that which the dire necessity of self defence dictates.*

But the enlightened sentiments of a few citizens held but a feeble control over the passions of the nation; and had it not been for other checks, it is too probable that war would have been the consequence of the injustice of Britain.

When one error is introduced, its only cure is frequently to be found in some hostile error; and one violent passion often requires the resistance of another to restrain it. Fortunately such errors and passions existed. A large number of our citizens, attached to England, from old habits, a portion equally large attached to her from immediate interest, and one of considerable weight tho' small in number, attached to her from a conviction of the superiority of her political institutions, united their powers to repress warlike measures. They so far succeeded as to gain time, and the event will shew that time was every thing.

While this contest of hostile sentiments was waged with acrimony, the President of the United States deputed a special envoy to the court of Britain. The instructions he received from the executive were such as were dictated by the soundest policy. They had for their object a cessation of commercial spoliation and the delivery of our western posts. These appear to have been the exclusive objects contemplated by the President. But Mr. Jay, like many other negotiators, hesitated not to overstep his powers; and instead of framing a treaty, confining himself to the accommodation of existing differences, he agreed to one, reciprocating commercial benefits, and materially affecting our relative state in regard to other nations.

The form that ensued the promulgation of this Treaty need not be described. The public indignation overwhelmed with censure its unfortunate author, and nothing but the ascendancy of the name of Washington accomplished its ratification. But though the Treaty was confirmed, and with its confirmation sprung up innumerable evils, yet some good flowed from it. The career of executive power received a memorable and a salutary restraint. The Constitution was restored to its true construction by the House of Representatives. A blaze of talent accompanied the elucidation of its legitimate construction, that must forever enlighten both the executive and legislative organs of the public will. Nor can any longer a doubt remain, but that to the legislature belongs the constitutional right of sanctioning those provisions of all treaties which apply to powers the exercise of which is vested in them.

The public sentiment was unequivocally expressed on another important point. It declared the true interests of this Country to consist in keeping free from all unavoidable European connection, and condemned, in terms of unqualified reprehension, the attempt made by this instrument to involve us in closer ties with the most litigious nation of the old world.

It was the boast of the friends of Mr. Jay's treaty that it restored peace to our

Country: How untrue this boast was, the future soon disclosed.

The direct effect of the Treaty was French hostility. By its provisions, advantages were conferred on England injurious to France, or such as France considered as injurious; and instantly our commerce, yet languishing under the scourge of British depredation, became a prey to French violence. Remonstrance with France was as fruitless as it had been with England.

From this state of things a new crisis arose. The partiality of our citizens for the French Republic began to decline. Its declension was rapid and decisive. It arose chiefly from her wanton aggressions upon us, but it was fortified by the numerous and tragical excesses committed by succeeding parties invested with the supreme power.

The Republic, enlightened, humane and pacific, while she pursued her own course in the discussion and adoption of political institutions, unassailed by foreign interference, exchanged these noble traits for traits of a darker hue, when foreign force threatened her territory, and foreign corruption seduced her citizens from their duty. A spirit of jealousy naturally sprang up in the place of confidence, and with its triumph expired many of her most virtuous and enlightened citizens. Hence the talent, which at first sustained without effort the political fabric of a mighty empire, became inadequate to repress the lawless inroads of faction.

It is the character of most men, without discrimination, lavishly to praise or censure whatever excites their attention. Few, therefore, separated the cause of France from the unfortunate excesses that accompanied it. Condemning the latter, they irrationally withdrew their confidence from the former.

This opinion, uniting with a sense of the injury done to our trade by France, and encouraged by the professions no less than by the actions of the executive magistrate, widened the existing differences between the two nations, and generated a spirit of undisguised hostility.

Measures were pursued by the government, which if not absolutely warlike, arose from the contemplation of immediate warfare.

France however would not wage war with us. The hostility of our attitude made no impression upon her conduct. She still took our vessels, but she made no declaration of hostility, unless those be considered as such that are reported by our envoys in their dispatches.

It was the forbearance of France that preserved to us the blessings of peace. This is a mournful truth, nor can its reality be too frequently the object of our most solemn reflection.

There is not at this day, an honest and enlightened citizen, who does not prize the preservation of peace with France as a boon of almost infinite value. Yet this blessing was hazarded by us, was actually thrown away, and our prosperity committed to the will of a foreign power.

It is immaterial to say, *we have avoided war*, therefore the measures of the government were right; for it is not owing to the government that war is avoided; the government proceeded as far as any government could do to produce war.

I mean not to confer any praise on France for her conduct towards us. Her measures have been dictated by an exclusive regard to her own interests. But it has so happened that her rulers have pursued her true interests, while our rulers have neglected or mistaken ours.

It is the misfortune of a nation that countenances war measures to experience many evils, which though not apparently necessary, yet for the most part follow in their train. The government, finding itself opposed by particular classes of the people, either in the projection or adoption of its favorite schemes, and either seriously believing or affecting to believe, such persons hostile to the general interests of the country, will generally adopt measures which bear hard upon them, either by depriving them of some of their rights, or by their oppressive and partial operation. Hence in this country the passing of the Alien and Sedition laws. By the first of these laws the executive magistrate is invested with an absolute control over all foreigners not citizens; by the last the freedom of the press becomes prostrate beneath executive power. Such measures as these are perhaps of all others the most dangerous to liberty. If they are submitted to, their execution forms a precedent for future encroachments. If they are opposed, insurrection with all its concomitant evils may ensue.

Fortunately for the peace of the nation, their warmest opponents have unanimously recommended legal obedience, while they have intrepidly developed by argument their per-

nicious effects: The result has been glorious to the cause of truth. The effervescence of passion that at first sustained them in the public opinion has gradually, though decisively, subsided; until, at the present period, an unequivocal majority of the citizens is against them. Alarmed at the danger threatened by such measures, they have become vigilant and animated. It is pre-eminently to these obnoxious laws that the extensive triumphs of republicanism are to be ascribed.

It is under the influence of these triumphs, which declare the wishes of the people to be pacific, and of course opposed to all war measures, that the present negotiation with the French Republic is opened. This step is undoubtedly an evidence of the strength of the national sentiment in favor of peace; nor can the executive claim other merit (which is indeed the highest merit) than that of obeying the public will.

We have now reached that crisis, which at present will be considered by the public as the most interesting, because past dangers are soon forgotten, while present ones engage all our fears.

A termination of our subsisting differences with France is contemplated as more than probable: But the important enquiry is, *what will be its price!*

I dread the auspices under which the negotiation is conducted. Not because I doubt the integrity of the public agents; but because I reflect, with alarm on the views of national policy by which they are guided. I consider an extension of our diplomatic relations, and commercial ties, with horror; they cherish such an extension with rapture. I am far from having no treaties with any powers, but treaties of amity; they are for having treaties of commerce with all the nations of Europe. I view such treaties as perpetual and inexhaustible sources of jealousy, ill-will, and war; they consider them as bonds of reciprocal and cordial friendship.

From this view of the past situation in which our country has been placed, several important inferences may be made.

1. That war next to slavery is the greatest of all human calamities.
2. That all nations from the unfortunate prevalence of passion, and the designs of insidious men, are prone to rush into war, heedless of its evils.
3. It follows that all wise and good men should oppose this disposition, and whatever promotes it, by an unceasing exposure of its fatal effects.
4. That the public opinion is now most fortunately hostile to war with France or any other nation.
5. That it is also hostile to all war measures of whatever character.
6. That the surest way of avoiding war is to make no treaties, or only treaties of amity.
7. That the treaty making power is a most momentous one, and that its exercise ought to be guarded with constant vigilance.
8. That the present administration is for carrying it to an alarming extent, whereby though peace may be made with one nation to day, war may be the consequence with another nation to-morrow.
9. That of consequence it becomes the sacred duty of every citizen seriously and coolly to reflect, whether a change in the administration of the government is not absolutely necessary to preserve the country in peace and prosperity.

FORTY DOLLARS REWARD.

FOR Apprehending and securing in any Goal, so that the Subscriber gets him again A NEGRO MAN named NAGE, ran away some time in the month of October, aged Thirty years, about five feet high, light complexion, wears his hair queued, a well set trunked fellow. I have cause to believe he is in the City of Washington. It is unnecessary to describe his Clothing as he will have it in his power to change them. I will give TWENTY DOLLARS if ten miles from home, THIRTY DOLLARS if twenty miles, and the above reward if a greater distance.

ZACHARIAH SOTHORON.
Charles County near Benedict, October 31.

BOARDING AND LODGING.

THE Subscriber respectfully informs the members of the ensuing Congress and the Public, that he has taken the two houses in square No. 690, on the New Jersey Avenue opposite the house at present occupied by Thomas Law, Esq. where he can accommodate either single Gentlemen or those who have families. The houses were finished last spring, so that no danger can be apprehended from damp walls. He has Stabling for several horses and two good Carriage houses.
ROBERT W. PEACOCK.
City of Washington,
October 31st 1800.

WANTED

A CARRIER TO DELIVER THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.