

THE SCOTSMAN

OR EDINBURGH POLITICAL AND LITERARY JOURNAL.

This is not the cause of faction, or of party, or of any individual, but the common interest of every man in Britain.—JUNIAS.

Vol. VI. No. 262.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26. 1822.

Price 10d.

LESSONS OF ECONOMY AFFORDED BY AMERICA.

To fix the revenues of the State in a proper manner, regard should be had both to the necessities of the State, and to those of the subject. The real wants of the people ought never to give way to the imaginary wants of the government.

MONTESQUIEU.

A SINGLE successful experiment has a greater influence on the judgment of mankind, than a thousand general speculations. The inhabitants of the United States, by setting up a government on the plan of a Benefit Society, have reduced political science to its elements, and given the weight and force of practical axioms to truths which had long remained buried in the breasts of philosophers. When men had the bible put into their hands in their own tongue, at the Reformation, and, through the lights which this afforded them, looked at what then bore the name of the Christian Church, they found genuine religion crushed and destroyed under the weight of the machinery ostensibly erected for its preservation. Perhaps many good men at that time believed, that tithes, annates, dispensations, relics, fasts, and a luxurious hierarchy, living in idleness and dissipation, were essential to the existence of Christianity. But the Reformers shewed that religion not only could exist, but flourished the more, when separated from these base auxiliaries, and by this bold experiment opened the eyes of mankind, and shamed even the mother church out of many of her corruptions. The American Revolution has rendered the same service to men in their civil capacity, that the Reformation did in their religious. When we look at the European governments through the lights the American system affords, we see that in the former the true object has been frustrated by the cumbrous and costly apparatus erected to give it effect. The severe and majestic simplicity of the latter, shews us how little is essential to the proper purposes of government—how much worse governments are for being complex and expensive, and how many frauds have been practised on mankind under the pretext of governing them. Generally speaking, it has been the fate of human beings to be pillaged by those who pretended to protect them in the enjoyment of their property,—oppressed by the nominal guardians of their civil rights, and insulted by those who were called their representatives. To all these evils America has opened the eyes of nations, by holding up a model from which they are excluded. Whether we measure the value of that government by the burdens it imposes, or the protection it gives, it leaves most others at an immeasurable distance behind; and yet its virtue, as we have often stated, consists, not in its republican form,—in the absence of a King and aristocracy, but solely in its possessing a system of representation which is a faithful index of the opinions and interests of the people.

Our object, at present, however, is only to show the cheapness of this government,—and cheapness, as we now know by experience, though a quality of little name or account, comprehends much of what is good in government; because its opposite, extravagance, includes almost every thing that is pernicious. The following table shews the extent, population, and expenditure of the United States and Britain.

	United States.	British Isles.
Extent in square miles of inhabited-country,	700,000	120,000
Population in 1821,	10,000,000	20,000,000
EXPENDITURE.		
Civil, Diplomatic, and Miscellaneous,	L. 366,000	L. 5,321,334
Military and Ordnance,	1,120,000	10,328,009
Naval,	539,000	6,857,779
Interest of public debt,	L. 2,025,800	L. 22,057,142
	1,253,000	31,252,612
	L. 3,283,000	L. 53,289,754

We thus see that the whole civil and miscellaneous charges of the government of the United States amount to no more than *one-fourteenth* part of ours.

The expense of all the civil establishments at Washington is only 350,000 dollars, or L. 77,000. The civil lists of England and Ireland alone, without including pensions and Judge's salaries, amount to L. 1,062,011; or *thirteen times* as much.

The President's salary of the United States is 25,000 dollars, equal to L. 5,500. The charge in our civil list for the King's household is L. 857,780, exclusive of allowances to the other branches of the Royal Family; and exclusive of extraordinary expenses discharged by special grants of Parliament.

The charge for the army and ordnance of the United States is less than *one-ninth* part of ours; and that for the navy of the United States, including the expense of building new vessels, is only *one-thirteenth* part of the corresponding charge in our expenditure.

The entire expenditure of the United States for all the branches of the government, exclusive of the public debt, is only L. 2,025,000, or about *one-eleventh* part of that of Great Britain and Ireland. It is true, that the State governments defray a part of the public expenses in America; but we are prepared to shew, that the amount so disbursed is not more than from half a dollar to two-thirds of a dollar a-head for each inhabitant, which certainly does not equal our county rates, to say nothing of tithes and poor's money.

These facts furnish matter for deep reflection. We do not contend for reducing all our establishments to the scale of those in the United States. Monarchy requires a certain degree of pageantry which, to a reasonable extent, no person will grudge. We admit farther, that the establishments of an old country become, perhaps, necessarily more complex than those of a new one; and a state situated in a quarter of the world where wars are frequent, must have a larger military force, than one which has little chance of being embroiled in hostilities.—Though, however, it would be difficult to state, in pounds sterling, what precise allowance should be made for these circumstances; every person can see at a glance, that they can never justify an expenditure in Britain *eleven times* as great as in the United States. But the great value of the example furnished by America is, that, independent of forms of government, it shows at how moderate a charge the business of a nation can be conducted. Setting aside the interest of the national debt, the people of that country pay about 4s. a-head for the support of a government, which secures property, dispenses justice equally, guards the national honour and rights, maintains liberty of person, speech, and writing, in a degree never equalled, and (what is of no small moment) is always in harmony with the opinions and feelings of the people. What is the secret of this extraordinary economy? It is, first, that the people themselves fix the sums they shall pay to the State, and of course take care that they shall pay no more than is necessary; and, secondly, that the public establishments are all regulated on the broad and intelligible principle of *utility*. In this country, on the other hand, a certain degree of that pageantry and parade, which ought to be confined to the royal household, pervades every branch of the government down to the lowest county court, which has its sinecures, its trappings, and its offices for ostentation. In judging of any office or establishment, so long as we keep to the strict principle of *utility*, we have only to inquire, are there duties to be performed? And for what sum can a person of competent abilities be got to discharge them? The moment we quit this sure ground, and attempt to estimate what is requisite for the splendour of the crown, the honour of the country, the dignity or respectability of such and such a court or body, we launch into extravagance. Who can tell what such indefinite things as the *dignity* of a court or public body, or the *honour* of the crown require? We may as well attempt to weigh light or magnetism. These are, no ideal evils, as our establishments of all

kinds testify. For instance, why has the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, a barren promontory with 150,000 inhabitants, a salary of L. 10,000 a-year, or about twice as much as the President of the United States? Or why does Sir THOMAS MAITLAND draw L. 15,000 a-year for offices in Malta and the Ionian Islands? The answer is plain. It is the dignity of the crown and the honour of the country which require it; and these will always require just as much as Ministers can afford to squander on their dependents. When it has been proposed to abolish any of the large sinecures about the Exchequer and other public boards, the proposal has always been resisted on the ground that the honour and dignity of the crown require that it should have the means of rewarding its servants; and this sort of equivocal logic affords a shield for abuses of many different kinds. To break up a rotten burgh, or give the elective franchise to the inhabitants of a large city, would be to abridge the influence of the crown; and who can measure such an element as *influence*, or tell whether it is too small or too great? There will always be political charlatans ready to delude mankind by this sort of sophistry, till other nations, like the Americans, bring their institutions to the test of common sense.

The people of Britain pay about 2s. a-head for the mere expense of their government, exclusive of a sum two or three times as great for public debt, tithes, poor's rates, &c. Supposing the Americans, by way of amending their government, to adopt our scale of expenditure, and pay 2s. instead of 4s. a-head: What improvements would they introduce as a compensation for the four-fifths of additional outlay? We are really unable to answer this question, because their present system seems to want nothing that is essential to good government—unless it be sinecures, rotten burghs, a pensioned aristocracy, restrictions on the press and public meetings, and functionaries who hold the sentiments of the people in utter contempt and derision. The Americans, we may therefore be assured, will adhere to their simple and frugal system. And when ministers tell us, that it is impossible to reduce the peace establishment to seven millions, as it stood in 1792, we will still point to a government ruling a country six times as large as the British Isles, and containing two-thirds of the population these isles then contained, which costs only *two millions*. They despise theory and speculation; but as practical men, here is a fact, which may enlarge their ideas of what is possible in the way of economy. Let them say what they please, they cannot shut our eyes to this obvious truth, that the utmost evil a rigid economy would inflict upon us, would be to bring us into the condition of the United States.—An alternative, we venture to affirm, which would not much alarm the tax-payers, however dreadful it may sound to the tax-receivers. Let, then, the advocates of retrenchment keep their eyes on the example afforded by the United States, and let us not be told that Britain would be undone by the smallness of a peace establishment, three times as great as that under which North America finds herself flourishing and happy.

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE.

FRANCE.

SUPERSTITION IN FRANCE.—Letters from the French capital mention a fact or two concerning the efforts of a certain religious party in France, with which the English are not generally acquainted. Great exertions have of late been making by the Pavilion Marsan, in conjunction with a great body of the clergy, and a portion of nobility, to restore, in its pristine rigour, with all its ornamental appendages, and in all its exclusive intolerance, the ancient superstition. For this purpose missionaries have traversed all the provinces of France, as if France was a heathen land, preaching conversion, and planting the cross. In some cases they bearded the authorities, and threatened them with dismissal if they opposed their views. They even about two months ago appeared in the capital, and took up their station at one of the principal churches, addressing the Parisians as heathens. The working of miracles, the efficacy of relics, and every part of the old system, which requires the most subject surrender of the understanding, are the themes of their