



EXTRACT

From the History of the United States, for 1796.

(Continued from our last.)

If the government of this country intended, and readily to give a drawback of six cents per pound on the exportation of American snuff, it is the most acceptable and joyful intelligence that your memorialists could ever hear of. They will immediately repair their mills, extend their purchases, and they have not a doubt of clearing, from the drawback, before the end of a year, twenty or thirty times the sum which they are to pay into the treasury! Twenty manufacturers, like Gernon and co. would each of them thus cost government ninety thousand dollars, or collectively, one million eight hundred thousand dollars per annum. The original object of the law was said to be a revenue of forty thousand dollars; there is an equal chance that, in search of it, forty-five times that sum will be sunk. It has been above-mentioned, that the drawbacks, within this state, already exceed the revenue. The first year of this law expires on the last day of March next, and, before that time, there will most likely be a balance of several thousand dollars against the revenue, at the port of Philadelphia. But if the law stands unrepaled, it is probable that two hundred thousand dollars will not make up the deficiencies in this state alone, for the next succeeding year.

In their history of excise, the manufacturers stated the principle, that all taxes ought to be levied in proportion to the quantum of personal property. Since their publication took place, they have seen this doctrine justified by an authority of the highest nature. The new constitution of France, in the sixteenth article of the first section, lays it down as a fundamental maxim "that, as all taxes are established for the general good, they ought to be apportioned among the taxed in the ratio of their means." Under the head of finances, also, in the same work, it is declared, that, taxes of all kinds are assessed among all those liable to contribution according to their means. "Your memorialists cannot deny that the word excise is to be found in the letter of the federal constitution; but they strongly contend, that it is entirely hostile to the spirit of that instrument. One of the principal fabricators of that production, was the present judge Wilson. When the subject was debated in the convention of Pennsylvania, he argued that it was necessary to give all power to government, but he was certain that an excise never would be imposed, unless in the last extremity. From the opinion which the convention of Pennsylvania expressed of excise, at that time, and which the assembly of this state have expressed since, it is evident that they never would have consented to ratify such a stipulation, if they had conceived that it was to become one of the first, and favorite, resources of government.

That your memorialists cannot help considering this excise on snuff as coming, exactly, under the description of an *ex post facto* law. They had no contemplanion of such a burden, when they built their mills, and gave credit to so great an extent, to their customers. Their mills would not, at present, sell for one half of the money which they originally cost, and one half of them are, at this hour, standing idle. This, of itself, would be sufficient to delist any set of manufacturers. Your memorialists likewise beg leave to state, as their opinion, that if the merchants and manufacturers of Britain had a liberty of petitioning Congress, they could not solicit a more favorable mode of conduct for their own interest, than that of persuading you to trammel, and distress, the manufacturers of America with excise, which do not pay the expense of their collection, which in one state produce bankruptcy and in a second rebellion. They humbly regard it as chimerical to term America independent of Britain, while she are forced to send to England for a coat, and to Ireland for a shirt. *It is this commercial chain of dependence in which Britain has entangled by many nations, and constitutes the office and soul of her strength, and that enables her to rally, in combats, and to rob her neighbours; but her superiority in manufactures, which has enabled this kingdom to subsidize and enable private and cut-throats, in every corner of the world, while he himself may be served a lacquer of African magnitude, whose grasp embraces the terraqueous globe, and whose flutes reaches from earth to heaven.*

To conclude, your memorialists ardently flatter themselves with a hope, that Congress will get the expediency, and even the positive and inevitable necessity, for an immediate and complete abolition of the excise upon snuff made in America. Though some ill-willed manufacturers to the eastward have called for the reformation of the act of 1794, the principal snuff-makers, in that part of the union, regard it with as much abhorrence, as the memorialists themselves do. To conclude, they entreat, and withhold the drawback, would be to prohibit, in a great measure, the manufacture of tobacco, the second staple of the plantation, and has already been de-

stroyed, that is, continue the law, and the drawback, in their present shape, is only to squander forty-five dollars in a fruitless search after one.

Your memorialists, therefore, earnestly to solicit an entire repeal of the excise upon snuff, and they, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

Philadelphia, February 8th, 1796. The statute hath been since repeatedly suspended, and it is supposed, will never more be put into execution.

FROM THE VIRGINIA ARGUMENTS OF OCTOBER 20th, 1801.

THERE is not, perhaps, in the present age, any one species of literary composition, that invites such universal attention as novels; and this popular avidity, by a natural consequence, has produced an uncommon multitude of competitors in the market of book-building. A few celebrated names, however, stand forward before the rest; and while the world is satiated with so many histories of kings and ministers, of patriots, and uturpers, a very amusing narrative might be compiled of the rise and progress of the writers of novels; or of the degrees of their merit, and the diversity of their talents.

But this subject is too comprehensive to be comprised within the column of a newspaper; and hence, the reader can, in the present instance, expect nothing more than a few transient remarks. In this hasty sketch, I shall confine myself to writers in the English language, that I may not say too little, by attempting to say too much.

The names of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollet, are familiar to every reader of novels. This incomparable triumvirate began their career much about the same time, that is to say, about the year 1740. This date is not exact, but it is quite as much so as appears necessary for the present outline. Richardson was by profession a printer, and had not the advantage of a classical education. Pamela was his first production; and from the perusal of a few pages, and the ultimate desertion of the public, I presume that it is but a very poor thing. Fielding, who was just then beginning his first regular novel, Joseph Andrews, has, in that piece, cast a sneer upon Pamela; and, on the other hand, Richardson declared that, if he had not known Henry Fielding, he would have conjectured that Joseph Andrews was written by an *ass-kicker*. Clarissa was the second and greatest, Grandison the third and last of Richardson's novels. This author possessed the most absolute and profound knowledge of human nature; and the most tyrannical dominion over the sensibility of the reader. But then he requires twelve pages to tell you what he might have said much better in four. He is prolix and diffusive to an excess, which would be insufferable in almost any writer but himself. Lovelace is one of the most perfectly finished characters that ever was drawn; and this may be regarded as his master piece. We are, at once, compelled to admire and to detest; but the latter sensation always overpowers the former, till the hero is finally absorbed in the villain. In Grandison, Miss Charlotte seems, by far, the most lively and interesting personage. Richardson is remarkably vigilant in the moral tendency of his novels.

Fielding was a scholar. In passing from Clarissa to Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, the distinction is, at once, discernible. Richardson was capable of correct merriment; but his favourite style was the tender, the serious and the sublime. On the other hand, it has been justly remarked of Henry Fielding, that he never seems to happy as when he sits down with the reader at the kitchen-fireside of an alehouse. He was fond of sociability, and of sport. But when the subject demanded the compassion of the reader, Fielding well understood how to burit upon him in a torrent of tenderness. Witness the admirable episode of Nancy Miller, which an unmarried young man ought to read ten times over.

Smollet was as distinct from both of these writers, as they are from each other. He had neither the pathos of Richardson, nor the diffuse good hu-

mour of Fielding. And yet, in many points, he much excelled both of them. He was a man of deep learning, of acute observation, and of correct taste. His style, with invariable elegance, the laughable and the hateful side of a character; and the poignant of ridicule was plunged upon Bowling, or Matthew Bramble. Their portraits are less pompous, but they are quite as interesting as those of Allworthy, & of Grandison. Richardson was redundant, Fielding was copious, and Smollet was concise. His ideas were always condensed into the smallest possible room. This is a general sketch of these great masters. A particular account of their beauties and their defects would fill a volume.

In the second rank of this class of writers, I pass over Sterne, because a few exquisite passages are ostentatiously scattered under volumes of puerility, buffoonery, and bawdry. Sterne has been followed by a swarm of imitators. Most of them are not worth reading. Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield is original and admirable. Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto gave rise to a host of imitations. The Romance of the Forest, and the rest of Anne Radcliffe's pieces, are perhaps the best of them. She excels in the description of a landscape, and often in the variety of her incidents; but we have too many spectres and murders; and the volume ought always to be far shorter than it is. The Children of the Abbey is perhaps an imitation of Anne Radcliffe; and the Rhyer, at least, has considerable merit. The novels of Miss Barne exhibit a compound imitation of Richardson and Fielding; but her attempts at humorous description are commonly wretched. Cecilia is brought into too many vulgar serapes, that we are sometimes afraid of her getting broken bones. Fielding could interest us for the lovely Sophia without such poor expedients. This forms a grand distinction between men of genius and their mimics. The former dissolve the heart; the latter strive to tear it in pieces; while the positive absurdity of their effort make us laugh, where the writer wanted us to cry.

I had long despaired of living to see a fourth British novelist, who might deserve to stand on the same shelf with Smollet and his rivals. I had sometimes, with envy, anticipated the triumph of posterity, when they were to riot in the luxury of such another group. At length, however, the present age may boast of a novelist, who is at least not inferior to the greatest of his predecessors. Every one who has read federal newspapers, for the last five years, must have heard of William Godwin, the notorious English atheist. As not one word of blasphemy can be found in his *Political Justice*, or his *Enquirer*, I lately took up his *Adventures of Caleb Williams*, where I held myself certain of detecting the impieties of this outcast. With equal surprize and satisfaction, however, I found that the book does not contain one syllable that should offend any sectarian, or moralist, upon earth. There is not even a single sentence, which conveys the remotest hint of disrespect for any tenet of religion whatever. As a classical composition, *Caleb Williams* ranks in the highest order; and in some features it resembles Rousseau's *Eloisa*. The text of Godwin is marked by the same boldness and compression of thought, the same luminous simplicity of arrangement, the same piercing and sublime eloquence. But in the moral of his tale, Godwin is altogether superior to the citizen of Geneva. We have here no girl, who writes clandestine letters to her lover; no domestic preceptor, who vindicates the debauchery of his pupil; no virtuous philosopher, who denes the immorality of the soul, and who, with all his boasted benevolence, accepts the extorted hand of a young, beautiful and defenceless woman, while he knows that her heart agonizes with attachment to a former lover. I approach with reluctance to the blemlities of Rousseau; but justice seems to require this comparison with Godwin.

From the first page to the last of *Caleb*

*Williams*, the reader constantly exclaims, in his mind, that the author bears abundant promise more than one faculty, and accomplishments of an ordinary man. For instance, remark the torturing felicity in which your heart is held, through the greater part of the first volume, respecting the guilt or innocence of Falkland, the remorse, but nice circumstances, which posse, in even scales, the balance of probability, the abrupt disclosure of the murder of Tyrell, the terror, the flight, the return, and arrestment of Williams, and then say whether such scenes resemble the wonted furniture of a circulating library? For Godwin's powers in the pathetic, peruse his account of the death of Emily Melville; and your eyes must be stronger than mine, if that story does not wet them.

But the master-piece of the whole work is in the last scene, where Williams unfolds to the magistrates the crime of Falkland. After relating his own speech before them, he proceeds thus:

"Such were the accents dictated by my remorse. I poured them out with uncontrollable impetuosity, for my heart was pierced, and I was compelled to give vent to its anguish. Every one that heard me was purified with astonishment. Every one that heard me was melted into tears."

So much for the impicity of the *Adventures of Caleb Williams*! Disappointed as to this source of impeachment, I sought and found Mr. Godwin's *St. Leon*, a novel first published about eighteen months ago. This performance deserves, in a superior degree, the attention of the public; for it is altogether worthy of the writer of *Caleb Williams*. As for atheism, or even the smallest atom of irreligion, or indecency, there is no such thing to be found from the first line to the last.

In the preface to *St. Leon*, Mr. Godwin makes an apology for some execrable passages in the previous editions of his *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*. He signifies that, for more than four years past, he has been anxious for opportunity and leisure; modify them. These are his exact words, and from other parts of the preface, it becomes plain enough that Mr. Godwin wishes to conceal his reprehensible opinions respecting the state of marriage. I am glad to hear of his recantation. As for blasphemy, or impiety, I suspect that the charge was utterly false; and that his real offence to the federal party consisted in his republican principles. *Caleb Williams* expresses, in the most striking manner, the absurdities and corruptions of the laws and government of England. *Hinc illa lacryma!*

The RECORDER.

RICHMOND.

JUNE 18th, 1803.

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT GEORGE HAY. THE SEDITION ACT. THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. AND THE ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA.

MANY persons imagine that one of the editors of this paper had once great obligations to this king of clubs, for the defence which he made before Samuel Chase. We shall state the facts if they occurred.

About the time that the first volume of the "Prospect before us" was written, it was the prevailing opinion in Virginia that the sedition law was unconstitutional, and that the author was in no danger in case of prosecution. It has since appeared that the latter part of this opinion is utterly false; and that Virginia is as completely fettered and subdued under the federal government, as Ireland is under the parliament of Britain. If Chase had ordered Callender's head to be cut off, if he had sent his council to jail, or if he had committed any other outrage in the character of a federal judge, it does not appear that there was either legal authority or manly spirit in the commonwealth sufficient to have



