



Auguste Levasseur

LAFAYETTE IN AMERICA

IN 1824 AND 1825

(Vol. I & 2)

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**An Eyewitness Account of the Landmark Tour of the
United States by General Gilbert du Motier**

Translator: John D. Godman

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Contact: info@e-artnow.org

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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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In publishing at this late period the journal of my voyage to the United States, along with General Lafayette, in 1824 and 1825, I think it right to account for the circumstances, which have so long delayed this publication.

The duties of private secretary, which I performed for General Lafayette, were prolonged for three years after our return. During all this time, I thought that the intimacy of my relations with him, rendered it a point of delicacy, that I should not cause to emanate from his cabinet a narrative, of which he was the principal object. Swayed by this sentiment, I resisted the solicitations of my friends, and resolved to await the period, when having become entirely independent, and entering into a career of industry, I could publish my journal without exposing any one to participate with me in responsibility for the opinions or facts produced. This time has now arrived, and there is no longer any inconvenience in my publishing details, not altogether unknown, but which cannot be found any where so complete as in this journal, which moreover, has a character of incontestible authenticity, for in addition to the testimony of several millions of witnesses, that might be adduced if necessary, I can also say, *all I relate I have seen*.

I need not say, that in offering to my friends and the public, the details of a triumph, which honours the nation that decreed it, as much as the man who was its object, the recital of which, I hope, will one day prove the greatest

encouragement that can be offered to the sincere friends of a wise liberty, I am less concerned to adorn my narration, than to preserve that character of verity, which will be its greatest, perhaps even its only merit.

Involved during fourteen months in the torrent of popular festivities, which uninterruptedly followed the steps of Lafayette throughout the twenty-four states of the Union, it was only during the brief hours of the night, and as I may say, in presence of the events of the day, that my journal was written. It necessarily must partake of that extreme agitation; however I have not thought of making any other change in it, than that of dividing it into a certain number of chapters, each of which contains a series of facts more particularly attached to some epoch or locality. This division appears to me more suitable, because it allows of the suppression of all the dates, that would embarrass the narrative, and a multitude of details which could only interest a small number of individuals.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

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The MSS. translation of the first volume, was revised by an intimate friend and correspondent of the author, P. S. Duponceau, Esq. whose name is justly associated with deep learning, great intellectual acumen, and urbanity of manners; he also furnished the occasional notes marked with the letter D.

CHAPTER I.

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Invitation of the Congress of the United States to general Lafayette: departure from Havre: voyage: arrival at Staten Island: reception at New York: review of the troops: entertainments given to Lafayette: statistics of New York: its constitution, &c.

Nearly half a century had elapsed, since Lafayette, inspired by the love of glory and liberty, tore himself away from the sweets of domestic affection and the dangerous seductions of a court, to offer the aid of an illustrious name and ample fortune, to a nation, which, though bravely combating for independence, seemed by the inequality of the contest to be threatened with destruction. After his return to France, Lafayette, although entirely occupied by the French revolution, for the success of which he sacrificed his fortune and repose, and sometimes endangered his popularity and life, often turned his thoughts upon America, the theatre of his first exploits; in the dungeons of Olmutz, and under the imperial despotism, he comforted himself with the thought, that in America, at least, the tree of liberty he had assisted in planting, bore fruits as delightful as abundant, and that a happy people, worthy of the happiness they enjoyed, remembered him with sentiments of lively gratitude. But withheld by various causes, he could only cherish the wish of again beholding America, without being able to form any plan for revisiting it. The confidence reposed in him by his fellow citizens, who after the events of

1815, recalled him into political activity, appeared to be a still stronger reason for his remaining in France.

Nevertheless in 1824, the intrigues of a corrupt and corrupting minister, having removed him from the national representation, he was free from engagements, when the following letter was addressed to him by the President of the United States.

Washington City, February 24th, 1824.

My dear General,

I wrote you a letter about fifteen days since, by Mr. Brown, in which I expressed the wish to send to any port in France you should point out, a frigate to convey you hither, in case you should be able to visit the United States. Since then, Congress has passed a resolution on this subject, in which the sincere attachment of the whole nation to you is expressed, whose ardent desire is once more to see you amongst them. The period at which you may yield to this invitation is left entirely at your option, but believe me, whatever may be your decision, it will be sufficient that you should have the goodness to inform me of it, and immediate orders will be given for a government vessel to proceed to any port you will indicate, and convey you thence to the adopted country of your early youth, which has always preserved the most grateful recollection of your important services. I send you herewith the resolution of congress, and add thereto the assurance of my high consideration and of my sentiments of affection.

James Monroe.

It was impossible for Lafayette to refuse so honourable and so pressing an invitation, and the month of July was resolved on for his departure. He had refused the offer of Congress to send a frigate to convey him with greater safety and comfort, and he was also obliged to refuse numerous applications of his fellow citizens, who thinking perhaps that some new expedition in favour of liberty, was to be attempted, wished to share with him the perils and the glory. Accompanied only by his son, and the writer of this narrative, he left Paris on the 11th and arrived at Havre on the 12th of July, where the Cadmus, an American merchant ship, had waited for him some weeks.

The patriotism of the citizens of Havre had prepared for him a reception well calculated to gratify his feelings, but the absurd jealousy of the police checked this expression of the public sentiment, and would have produced a scene of disorder and bloodshed, if the inhabitants had been less discreet. Police officers, gendarmes, and Swiss soldiers, rivalled each other in their zeal to repress the noble ardor of the citizens, during the short time that general Lafayette remained among them. However, it was in the presence of the whole people, and amid the most vivid demonstrations of public feeling, that he embarked at noon on the thirteenth of July, 1824.

The weather being fine, and the sea perfectly calm, we embarked with facility; all the crew, paraded upon deck, waited for the arrival of the general, with an expression of joy mingled with noble pride. As he passed beneath the

American flag, to whose glory and independence he had so freely contributed, he was greeted with three cheers, which were re-echoed by all the crews in port, and by the crowds which thronged the shore. Some particular friends who accompanied the general on board the Cadmus, received his final adieus. Almost immediately afterwards, our sails were filled by a fresh breeze, which wafted us along until we lost sight of that loved land, in which, in spite of all that may be said or done, virtue and patriotism will always find courageous defenders.

In a good vessel, skilfully commanded and managed as was the Cadmus, our voyage could scarcely be otherwise than prosperous. The squall which struck us the next morning and carried away two of our top-gallant masts, produced no other effect than that of furnishing us with an opportunity of admiring the calmness of our excellent captain Allyn in giving, and the vigour of the crew in executing his orders.

On the first of August we were becalmed, the sea was motionless, and our progress suspended. Seated on deck, about the general, with four young American passengers, we contemplated with pleasure the smooth surface of the ocean which nothing disturbed, when suddenly we perceived as far as the eye could reach, a black speck near the horizon, that seemed to be advancing towards us. During nearly half an hour, we were lost in conjectures as to what that could be, which was evidently approaching us rapidly; the motion of oars soon enabled us to perceive that it was a boat, and the sound of a bugle led us to believe it contained soldiers; we were not mistaken; in a few minutes

a light skiff, containing seven persons dressed in uniform, came alongside. The leader of this adventurous party, measuring with a steady eye the height of our ship's side, called for the ladder, that he might come on board; the rope-ladder was thrown out, and in a moment his companions and himself stood on the deck of our ship. He informed us, in rather a cavalier manner, that they were English officers, who were going in a transport, which he pointed out at a great distance, and which was becalmed like ourselves, to serve in garrison at Halifax, N. S. and that the beauty of the sea, want of something to do, and curiosity, had induced them to pay us a visit. Our captain received them with cool politeness, the crew scarcely noticed them, but their aspect and their arrogant manner appeared to recall the burning of the capitol to the minds of the young Americans. Notwithstanding their rather discouraging reception, our English officers began at once to multiply their questions, when captain Allyn, as a sufficient answer to the whole, pointed out and named to them general Lafayette; at this name, and so unexpected an appearance, their manners immediately changed; they took off their hats and respectfully received the hand which the general presented them, with cordiality. They were then invited into the cabin, where refreshments were served. Conversation followed, but frequently during its continuance, they gazed sometimes at the general, and then at the admirable arrangements of the vessel and crew, which examination appeared to cause them much absence of mind. How many recollections, in fact, must have been awakened by the sight of these Americans, but a short time

since their tributaries, now their powerful rivals, conveying to their country the man who had so efficiently aided them in its noble and just struggle for liberty against oppression. After half an hour's conversation, as the sun began to decline, they took leave, accepting very frankly some bottles of madeira and claret, which our captain had stowed in their boat.

Our voyage was continued without any event of importance, until the 14th, when we descried land. The next morning at day-break, the pilot came on board, and in a few hours we could easily distinguish the fresh verdure which adorns Staten-island, the charming white dwellings which enlivened it, and the movement of its inhabitants, which the expectation of some great event had caused in all haste to run down to the shore. Already the sea around us was covered with a multitude of long, light and narrow boats, managed by vigorous, active men, the neatness of whose dress and the propriety of whose language contrasted singularly with the ideas which in Europe are generally associated with the sight of mere sailors. As soon as one of these boats arrived near the ship, her course was slackened; those on board cast anxious looks towards our deck, inquiring of our sailors if Lafayette were among us; as soon as answered in the affirmative, joy was expressed in all their features; they turned quickly to each other, shaking hands and congratulating themselves on the happiness they were about to enjoy; then returning towards the vessel, they asked a thousand questions, relative to the general's health, how he had borne the voyage, &c. but without noise or disorderly impatience. We heard them rejoicing among

themselves that Lafayette's voyage had been pleasant and quick, that his health was good and that the wishes of their fellow citizens were about to be gratified; and all as if they had been the children of one family, rejoicing at the return of a much-loved and long-expected parent. While contemplating this novel and interesting scene, the thundering of cannon called my attention in another direction; this was from the artillery of Fort Lafayette, which announced the arrival of the Cadmus to the city of New York. At the same moment a steam-boat arrived, and we received on board a deputation, at the head of which was Mr. Tomkins, son of the Vice-President of the United States. He came to inform the general, that this being Sunday, the city of New York, which wished to give him a brilliant reception, but was unwilling to break the Sabbath, and which moreover had still some preparations to make, requested him to postpone his entry until the next day; in the mean time the Vice-President invited him to his house on Staten-island. The general accepted this invitation, and in a few minutes afterward, we were on shore, where we found the second officer of a great republic, on foot, without his coat, and his head covered with a military cap, cordially greeting his old friend, who on the morrow was to commence, amidst twelve millions of freemen, the most brilliant, and at the same time, the purest of triumphs. Mr. Tomkins conducted us to his house, where we were kindly received by Mrs. Tomkins and her daughters. But the report of Lafayette's arrival was quickly spread over the great city of New York, and the bay was already covered with boats conveying crowds of citizens, who hastened to Staten-island

to give him the first salutation, that *Welcome*, which the whole nation afterwards repeated with so much enthusiasm.

Very early on the morning of the 16th, the preparations for the reception of general Lafayette were completed in New York, and about the same time he received a deputation at Staten-island from the city, consisting of several members of the municipal corps, and the commanding general of the militia, who came to announce the arrival of the steam-boat Chancellor Livingston, which was to convey him to New York. At one o'clock the cannon of *Fort Lafayette* gave the signal for embarking; we immediately descended to the shore where we found numerous steam-boats, all resembling floating palaces. On board of the Chancellor Livingston, were the various deputations of the city, the generals and officers of the militia, the army and navy; a detachment of infantry and more than two hundred of the principal citizens of New York, among whom the general recognized many of his old *fellow soldiers*, who threw themselves into his arms, felicitating themselves on seeing him once more after so many years and dangers past. During these moving scenes of gratitude and joy, a delightful music performed the French air "*Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille*,"¹ and the flotilla began to move.

It is impossible to describe the majesty of this procession towards the city. The sea was covered with boats of every sort, elegantly decorated with flags and filled with people; these boats which were moved with a swiftness and lightness almost inconceivable, appeared to fly around us.

The Cadmus which followed us, appeared rather to be led in triumph, than to be towed by the two steam-boats, which accompanied her. As we advanced, the forts which protect the harbour, and afterwards the houses bordering on the water, became more distinctly visible: soon after we could distinguish the crowd which everywhere covered the shore, perceive its agitation, and hear the shouts of joy. At two o'clock, the general landed at the battery amid the acclamations of two hundred thousand voices, which hailed him with sounds of blessing and welcome. The *Lafayette Guards* dressed in an elegant and neat uniform, bearing on their breast the portrait of the general, escorted him in front of the long line of militia drawn up to receive him. The general, attended by a numerous and brilliant staff, marched along the front; as he advanced, each corps presented arms and saluted him with its colours; all were decorated with a ribband bearing his portrait, and the legend "Welcome Lafayette;" words which were everywhere written and repeated by every tongue. During this review, the cannon thundered on the shore, in the forts, and from all the vessels of war. "Ah! could this thundering welcome but resound to Europe," said a young American officer who accompanied us, "that it might inspire the powers which govern you with the love of virtue, and the people with the love of liberty!" These wishes which were also those of my own heart, turned my thoughts to my own country, and drew from me an involuntary sigh.

At the extremity of the line of troops, elegant carriages were in waiting. General Lafayette was seated in a car drawn by four white horses, and in the midst of an immense

crowd, we went to the City Hall. On our way, all the streets were decorated with flags and drapery, and from all the windows flowers and wreaths were showered upon the general. On his arrival at the City Hall, he was received by the municipal authorities, at the head of whom was the Mayor, who addressed the general, on behalf of the citizens in an animated and appropriate manner.

After the general had expressed his grateful sense of the honorable manner in which he had been received, and his admiration at the prodigies he witnessed, we were conducted to the peristyle of the City Hall, to see that army of militia file off, which we had found drawn up in line on the battery. We could at our ease remark its composition and equipments; its composition is that of a truly national army, being formed entirely of young and vigorous citizens, capable of bearing arms and enduring fatigue, without distinction of wealth or birth. The firm march of the divisions, and the martial air of the men, appeared to me a proof of the care, with which each individual prepared himself to be, in case of need, a defender of his country. The artillery which followed the infantry is formidable in number, but I believe is far from fulfilling the conditions necessary to constitute a good light artillery. The variety of caliber must necessarily prove an embarrassment in providing munitions for a campaign. It is said this inconvenience will soon disappear, because the government has undertaken to furnish cannon to every new company that is organized, and that the guns will be cast only of a very small number of determined calibers.

After the troops had defiled, we entered the great saloon of the City Hall, which is adorned with the portraits of many men who, by their talents or valor, have rendered service to their country: among the portraits was one of general Lafayette. The doors of this saloon were left open to the public, which pressed towards it, and during more than two hours the general was as it were, given up to the enthusiasm of the people. Mothers surrounded him, presenting their children and asking his blessing, which having obtained, they embraced their offspring with renewed tenderness; feeble old men appeared to become re-animated in talking to him of the numerous battles in which they had been engaged with him for the sake of liberty. Men of colour reminded him with tenderness of his philanthropical efforts at various periods, to replace them in the rank, which horrid prejudices still deny them in some countries; young men whose hard and blackened hands announced their laborious occupations, stopped before him and said with energy, "We also belong to the ten millions who are indebted to you for liberty and happiness!" Many others wished to speak to him, but were prevented by their tears; those who could not approach him, endeavoured to compensate for it by addressing George Lafayette, whom they pressed in their arms, while talking to him of their admiration for his father. At five o'clock, the general with difficulty separated himself from the embraces of his numerous friends, and was conducted to the City Hotel, which had been magnificently fitted up for his reception. The national standard displayed over the door, indicated from afar the residence of "The Nation's Guest," the glorious

and moving title by which he was greeted with acclamations, when he entered. A splendid dinner, at which all the civil and military authorities were present, terminated this day, which alone might be considered as a glorious recompense for the greatest sacrifices, yet which, however, was but the prelude to the unexampled triumph reserved for Lafayette.

During the four following days, the general found it difficult to divide his time in such a manner as to satisfy the wishes of all his friends. He devoted, daily, two hours to the public in the City Hall, into which the crowd pressed as on the first day, and he there received numerous deputations from neighbouring cities, and different states, which expressed their desire and hope of receiving him. The rest of the time was employed in attending the meetings of the learned societies of the city. The Historical society held an extraordinary session, under the presidency of Dr. Hosack, and received him and his son as honorary members. The members of the bar, the society of the Cincinnati, and the French residents of New York came to compliment him. The latter, under their president Mr. Monneron, expressed with animation the sentiments which the triumph of their compatriot inspired. At the conclusion of his address, a little girl carried by her father, saluted the general, and placed a chaplet of *immortelles*² on his head. The general answered it with deep emotion.

At the mention of the best days of our revolution, every one felt himself deeply affected, and came to shake hands with the general, saying, "Yes, the condition of an immense majority of the people is improved. May France carefully

preserve the remains of the public liberties won by the revolution.”

On the 18th, the officers of the navy wished to entertain the guest of the nation, who crossed the East river in a steam-boat to Brooklyn, where the navy yard and marine arsenal are situated. On this short passage, the general was saluted by the guns of several frigates and ships of the line lying at anchor. This visit, which the naval officers knew how to render both agreeable and interesting, gave us an opportunity of examining a fine steam-frigate. This formidable machine resembles a floating fortification; its sides strengthened by strong masonry, are shot proof; its necessarily slow movements do not allow of its being used in the open sea, but render it very suitable for the defence of the coasts, the threatened points of which it can readily cover, by placing itself under the protection of the land batteries. It is said that the government intends to complete its system of maritime defence, by the construction of many similar frigates.

From Brooklyn we could at our pleasure contemplate the aspect of New York, its harbour and immense bay. I believe it is difficult to find a more picturesque and at the same time more commanding view. The Hudson and East rivers, of which the latter is only an arm of the sea running between Long Island and the continent, wash two sides of the great triangle upon which the city stands, and meeting in front of the battery, mingle their waters in the bay formed by Long and Staten Islands. At the wharves which margin the two rivers, we behold forests of masts at all seasons, which present to the admiring beholder the flags of all nations.

The town which in 1615 was nothing but a small fort built by the Dutch, is at present the most populous, the largest and richest city of the New World. Excepting the City Hall, there is not a single public edifice worthy of the attention of an artist; but to compensate for this, the breadth of the streets, the goodness of the pavements, and the neatness of the houses are all admirably calculated for the comfort and health of the inhabitants. Its extent and population annually increases in a remarkable manner. In 1820, it contained 120,916 inhabitants; at present the number is 170,000, in which is included the population of Brooklyn, which should be considered as a suburb of New York. Notwithstanding the great advantages of its situation, its commerce and its resources, the city of New York is not the seat of government for that State. In this happy country where every thing is more calculated for the good of the citizen than for the satisfaction of the authorities, it is necessary, before all other requisites, that a city should be as near the centre of a state as possible, in order to be selected as the seat of government. The city New York is at the extremity of the state. It has, however, a sufficient number of other advantages; the security of its harbour; the vastness of its bay, capable of containing all the fleets in the world; the facility of its internal communications by the navigation of the Hudson, and especially by the grand canal which unites the waters of Lake Erie with the ocean, must always make it one of the most important commercial situations. More than eighty steam-boats, always ready to brave contrary winds, convey in every direction, not only the products of New York, but of all the adjacent states.

In 1820, the exports from the port of New York amounted to 13,162,000 dollars, \$7,899,080 of which were in the especial products of New York state. These details which were given me by a naval officer, while from the heights of Brooklyn, I gazed upon the imposing scene around, greatly excited my curiosity, and induced me to lay hold of the first favourable opportunity to gain a more extensive knowledge in relation to a city and state, so suddenly emerging to such a state of grandeur and prosperity. Nor was my gratification long delayed. The same evening, after a dinner which had been enlivened by the presence of a great number of the distinguished men of New York, I found myself near Mr. M., an old gentleman, whose conversation is always interesting and instructive; during dinner he had informed me that after having devoted his youth to the establishment of the independence of his country, he had not since ceased to employ himself in augmenting the means of happiness to his fellow-citizens. Notwithstanding the circumspection with which I asked my first questions, he soon discovered my wishes, and having seated ourselves in a corner of the room, he made the following observations. "I hope, although our country is still very new, and has not yet like Europe enjoyed the advantage of a long civilization, that you will not receive the less pleasure from your visit. You will not find the arts and sciences carried to the high degree of perfection here, in which they exist in France, but every where you will discover peace, abundance and liberty; you will see almost every where, a numerous and active population, procuring with facility the necessaries of life, by an industry which government has no power to interrupt;

and this view is sufficiently rare in Europe, I believe, to be worthy of attention: but without entering into details, which you had better collect yourself during your excursions, I will by giving you a short historical and statistical view of this state, show you results, in which you will probably be obliged to recognize the influence of our institutions, which we have not the vanity to consider perfect, but which we believe, nevertheless, to be superior to those of all the nations that have preceded us in the vast career of civilization. Our origin is not lost like yours in the night of time, and the gods have never been at the trouble of showing by prodigies, the interest they took in our first establishments. The science of history is not, therefore, among us monopolized, by a few of the initiated. It is a national domain whose limits, still very close to us, may easily be examined and understood by everyone. It was in 1609, that the Hudson was discovered by the navigator whose name it bears. As early as 1610, some Hollanders had built their cabins by the side of the Indian lodges; but it was not until 1614, that permanent establishments were made. Soon after the English came to dispute with the Dutch, the possession of a country that belonged to neither, and the blood-stained soil was covered with fortresses. Finally a treaty was made in 1674, and in which the legitimate proprietors were certainly not consulted, assuring tranquil possession to the English. In 1683, the colonists for the first time assembled a representative body to regulate their affairs, but James II. of England alarmed at the representative system and publications from the press, proscribed both. The reign of Mary, who came to the throne

in 1689, gave more liberty to the colonists, who in 1691 re-assembled their representatives. The population was then considerably augmented by emigrants from Germany, who came in great numbers to settle in the province. The first journal published in the colony was printed in 1733, but after the following year the press was altogether silenced, and the colonists again fell under arbitrary rule. In spite of the despotism, which during the next twenty years, weighed down the colony, the people remained strongly attached to England, and were very active in the war which that power carried on against France in 1754. Finally in 1765, their patience was tried to the utmost; they burned the law establishing the stamp-tax, refused English importations, and ardently engaged in the revolutionary war. The state of New York, during the entire duration of that struggle, was the theatre of operations, and the city was almost constantly in possession of the enemy; but the ardor of the people was undiminished. I need not enter into the details of that glorious campaign, which had our enfranchisement for its result. Placed as you have been near the man, who shared the labours of our immortal Washington, you doubtless have frequent opportunities of collecting from his lips more exact and interesting relations than I can give you. Let us now pass on to a view of our present situation.

“From the peace of 1783, our state has made surprising advances of every sort. Our territory has been ascertained, and our limits determined by compacts with the neighbouring states. At present we are bounded on the north by Lower Canada, on the east by the states of Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut; on the south by

New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and on the west and north-west by Upper Canada, from which we are separated by Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the Niagara and St. Lawrence. Within these bounds, the surface of our territory measures 46,200 miles. Eighty thousand souls, at most, were scattered over this immense extent at the beginning of our revolutionary war. Notwithstanding the continuance of this contest for eight years, the population increased, and amounted in 1788 to 200,000, a number but little exceeding the present actual population of the city alone. Since that period, the increase has taken place in a ratio, which of itself will suffice to demonstrate the superiority of our institutions over the colonial government, from which we had freed ourselves. In 1790, the general Census gave us a population of 349,120 souls; in 1800, 586,050; in 1810, 959,049, and in 1820 of 1,372,812; while at the present time we count a population of 1,616,000 souls.

“Our agriculture, manufactures and commerce have been developed in proportion to the increase of our population. Wheat is the principal product of the southern part of the state; in the west we raise hemp in great quantity. 280,000 persons at least are employed in agriculture, and cultivate 169,167 acres of good land. We can readily collect in the state 1,513,421 horned cattle; 3,496,539 sheep; 349,638 horses, and 1,467,573 hogs. Almost every county has an agricultural society formed of the most enlightened citizens, who devote themselves successfully to the advancement of agriculture, and even to the progress of the arts.

“A capital of 15,000,000 of dollars, and about 70,000 persons are employed in our various manufactories, which

are principally situated in the vicinity of New York city; upon the banks of the Hudson; near to Utica, and in the fertile western regions. One of the last computations, informs us that we have 170 forges; 125 oil mills; seven pearl-ash factories; 250 cotton and woollen manufactories; 1,222 fulling mills; 1,129 distilleries; 2,005 potash factories; 1,584 carding machines; 2,264 flour-mills; 5,595 saw-mills,—but I perceive,” said my complaisant friend, interrupting himself, “how much you are astonished at these details, thinking perhaps that I exaggerate, or that my memory enfeebled by age, recounts imaginary numbers. You can readily convince yourself of the exactness of my calculations. Examine Melish’s excellent work, entitled Geographical description of the United States, a work carefully prepared, and from the most authentic documents, and you may there find numerous other views, which at this moment escape my memory, that will excite your surprise to a very different degree. If you were acquainted with our institutions,” said he, with growing animation, “you would better comprehend, how with us every thing turning to the benefit of the community, necessarily adds every day to its prosperity and happiness. Our simple and economical government has no need as with you, frequently to seize upon the necessaries of the citizen to cover expenses, which no one has power nor courage to control. Whatever each of us earns by his industry during one year, remains and augments his means of industry for the year following, whence flows the rapid augmentation of wealth at which you are so much surprised.

“I have now to speak of the form of our government. I shall be very brief, for it grows late, and I believe you will

stand in need of some hours of repose, to enable you to endure the fatigues of the entertainments we know to have been long since prepared, on the route General Lafayette is to travel.

“The constitution of New York state was adopted in 1777; it was amended in 1801, and again in 1821. The authors of our first constitution, thought correctly, I believe, that the people should always have the right to modify the laws according as their situations and necessities were changed; we have twice, already, profited by this privilege, as above stated, and it may be presumed that our posterity, profiting by our experience and their own knowledge, will still farther perfect this work of their ancestors. This constitution thus revised, is very similar to that of other states of the union, and establishes three distinct powers. These powers, emanating from the people, are the legislative, executive and judiciary. The legislative power is vested in a senate and assembly of representatives. The senate is composed of thirty-two members, elected for four years, and one fourth of it is renewed every year. To be a senator, it is requisite to be thirty years of age and an owner of property. The house of representatives, or assembly, is composed of one hundred and twenty-eight members, elected annually by the different counties, according to their population. The executive power is confided to a governor and lieutenant governor elected by the people, bi-ennially. The governor has the right of nominating to all the public offices; but his nominations must be approved by the senate. The highest judiciary authority is vested in a court of appeal, composed of the senate, of the chancellor, and the judges of the

supreme court. These, as well as the district judges are not removable, but cannot perform their function after their sixtieth year." "How," exclaimed I, "a judge declared incapable at sixty years of age? Do you think then that the human faculties are so very limited, or that this premature incapacity is owing to the influence of your climate?"

"Neither the one nor the other," replied he, "it is merely a great error committed by the authors of our political code; it is hoped that it will be corrected at the first revision of our constitution. It is truly absurd to dismiss a judge at the moment when age and experience have enlightened his mind and ripened his judgment. It is cruel also to discharge him at an age when neither time nor energy enough is left him to commence a new career, and consequently exposes him to the danger of ending miserably a life honorably commenced in the service of his country.

"Every white man, having attained the age of 21 years, resided six months in the state, and paid some tax during the electoral year, has the right of voting. Every man of colour, 21 years old, having been three years a citizen, a holder of property, and paying a tax of 250 dollars, has also the right of suffrage. This distinction of colours may surprise you, I shall not attempt to justify it, but shall content myself with requesting you, before you condemn it, to wait until you shall have passed through the different parts of our union, before you form your judgment of the relative conditions of the two races.³

"This government which is sufficient for all our wants, does not cost us very dear; its expenses together with the salaries of the principal officers, does not exceed 300,000

francs per annum. The revenue of our western salines alone, amounts to as great a sum; the money arising from the sale of public lands, of our funds placed in banks, of different investments in public and private institutions, is reserved for the expenses of the state, and when we have any extraordinary expenditures to meet, such as the purchase of arms, military equipage, the building of arsenals, furnishing of magazines, &c., we are not obliged to increase our taxes, which have not varied since the year 1800, and are so slight that they do not exceed the thousandth part of the value of the property taxed.

“Thanks to its economy and good administration, the government has still found means to apply a fund of 1,730,000 dollars to public instruction. This year the treasury has expended 730,000 dollars upon the schools, which moreover have received from private subscription more than 150,000 dollars; so that at this moment there are 7,642 public schools established in the different districts, employed in imparting instruction to 403,000 children and youth, that is to say, to one fourth of the population.”

It was now midnight, and every one else had retired, while I still continued to listen eagerly to the interesting details given to me by Mr. M. when we were suddenly interrupted by a great tumult of voices, mingled with the sound of bells and the rumbling of fire engines over the pavement. “This is fortunate for you,” said my friend, “fire has broken out in some part of the town, go to it; what you will witness, will teach you more of our habits of order and police, than I could tell you during all the rest of the night.” His advice was hardly necessary, for the moment I had

ascertained the cause of the tumult, I began to move towards the door. On the stairs I met George Lafayette, who was hurrying down as eagerly as myself. Once in the street, it was only necessary to follow the crowd in order to arrive at the fire. On our way, our imaginations were excited, and presented this event, unfortunate in itself, as still a fortunate circumstance for us, since it would afford us an opportunity of testifying by our zeal in the midst of danger, how much we were affected by, and grateful for, the infinite kindnesses the citizens of New York had shown us since our arrival. After a long race we reached the extremity of a street, opening on one of the wharves of the East river; here we found the burning house. The fire had caught first in a store-house filled with combustible materials, and had quickly communicated to some neighbouring frame buildings. The flames which blazed up with violence, gave us a fair opportunity to behold the situation of the conflagration, and the surrounding crowd. Five or six thousand persons standing upon the wharves, or mounted upon the masts of vessels, remained still and almost as silent, as if they were at a theatrical exhibition. This silence was only interrupted by the horrible crackling of the rafters, which every moment were tumbling amid the flames, by the monotonous sounds of the engines, and the orders of their directors. To get near the burning house, it was necessary to traverse a great part of the surrounding crowd, which was difficult; but by the light of the fire we were recognized by some one near us, who pronounced the name of Lafayette. This name, repeated from mouth to mouth, was the lucky talisman which opened our way to the desired point. There,