

For the Whitehall-Evening Post.  
THE LEVELLER'S CURSORY  
THOUGHTS.

I HAVE heard of a Scribbler, like myself, who imagined he had nothing to do but to draw his quill against any grievances complained of, and he should have them immediately redressed; because, forsooth, certain nuisances had been removed which he had occasionally attacked in the Newspapers.— Though not possessed of so much vanity as he, I am resolved to keep alive the subject of Press-warrants, till some more humane method is contrived of manning his Majesty's ships. After what I have offered in my Letters to *Junius*, and after all that more able Writers have written on the subject, I cannot believe that the City of London can be averse from letting the Liberty of a Briton, in this particular, be intrusted to the Verdict of a Jury. Not to dwell on the hardships we formerly mentioned, can we conceive that twelve free-born Englishmen will ever consent their fellow-subjects should be degraded to Galley-Slaves, as in the case I am going to instance? The Hampshire East-Indiaman put in, about three months ago, at Kinsale, in Ireland; a King's ship immediately pressed all her best seamen; and though but just returned, after a long voyage, from China, they are perhaps toiling, at this moment, on the Coast of America, or broiling among the Islands in the West-Indies. Upon a representation of the case from the East-India-House, the Lords of the Admiralty blamed the conduct of their Officer, because it might have been the loss of a most valuable cargo of merchandize;— but I would fain know what became of the poor Sailors, who were not suffered to set foot on their native shore, nor to visit their kindred after such a tedious absence.

—Has any thing been done for their relief? Alas! No; without crime or offence, they share the same hard fate of a Galley-Slave, confined in the hulk of a ship, and condemned to the oar for life! When we hear of such oppression, attended with labour incessant, and irksome to the most industrious of men, we can no longer be surpris'd that our Sailors should serve us with disgust.

In my Address to the Officers of the Militia last year\*, I promised a continuation of some thoughts on those parts of the Military Exercise, which, being particularly useful in the day of battle, ought to be seriously attended to by them; and of other articles, which, being chiefly calculated to prevent the regular Soldier from being idle, or otherwise to give grace to his motions, can never be accomplished, and ought not to be attempted in the short training of the Militia-men. Finding, however, that I could say little to the purpose, but what had already been inculcated by some of our best Authors on Military Discipline, I have reserved for one sole effort, the warlike exertion of my pen. The *evolutions* and the *firing* are the chief things to which our Militia Officers ought to attend. I mean not by the last, that *uniform* way of firing by divisions or subdivisions, or that graceful manner of presenting practis'd by some of our regular troops, without inclining the head, or taking the least aim; but the teaching men to prime, load, and fire with all possible expedition, and to level at some given object as if they were taking aim at a man. 'Tis true, that the smoke, in real action, will not always allow of the Soldiers taking aim at any particular object; yet, when there is a row, or rank of men in front, they may be taught to level, by guess, so as to hit some one or other of them. To this consideration, let it be added, that in firing at a mark, it will be found, where one shot deviates horizontally, ten will fly off in the perpendicular line. Instead, therefore, of practising the firing singly at a target (which is a tedious operation, and on that account the seldomer performed), I would recommend it to have the men fire, in their ranks, at a rail.—To explain myself:—Take several pieces of lath, of about two inches broad, and five or six feet long; let so many of them as will cover the front of a company, be supported on small posts of two feet in height; and let the soldiers, at the distance of forty paces, level their pieces at them, this will teach them to hit their object in the perpendicular line, as two inches only in that direction constitutes the mark; and when once expert in that, they need be little solicitous whether their shot fly off horizontally to the right or left in that line. The height of one man is, at the most, but six feet; but the length of a rank of men is of a considerable extent. To be certain that his soldiers level well, an Officer has only to place himself at a little distance behind the rail, and, by bringing his eye down to it, he will perceive all the pieces pointing in a line exactly parallel with the rail. The corps to which I belong has adopted this method of levelling, as thinking it both useful and uniform; it is principally practis'd in street-firings, by which one rail, that will cover the front of a division, can serve the whole battalion in turn. As we may see, in common shooting, that practice is the chief making of a marksman; when soldiers

\* See the Westminster Magazine for April, 1776.

are once accustomed to take an aim, they will know to level properly, whether they are to present up or down hill, as must frequently happen in real action; but by the ordinary regular method of firing, we must suppose the enemy to be always upon the same level, and the field to be as flat as a Bowling-green.

I am thus strenuous in recommending an useful and expeditious exercise for our Militiamen, because I firmly believe, that if the Americans are not soon either conquered or reconciled, we must inevitably have a war in Europe with their abettors. Far be it from me to recommend the needless slaughter of my fellow creatures; but war, open war, will be found more advantageous for this kingdom, than to suffer France and Spain to reap the benefit of distressing it, without hazarding their arms, or injuring their finances. That America will not be subdued so soon as it is predicted, one plain reason occurs to me, which I have not seen stated by any of our Politicians.—While General Howe is obliged to give our soldiers extra-pay, as labouring men, for every redoubt or entrenchment which he has occasion for, the Americans, in the same given time, will throw up works of seven-fold the extent, through their own free spirit of resistance. This is a fact that can be well attested by many Officers now in England; and the inference I draw from it is this: That the Americans are not all forced into the field by a few aspiring and ambitious Leaders; but are actuated by a love of Freedom that fires the breasts of their meanest soldiers. Nothing else could make men undergo such unexampled, such indefatigable labour! Was it their fear alone, they would soon become tired of their work, and desert to that Power which could afford them an easy protection. Was it solely the will of their Leaders, they would be apt to mutiny, and to cry out for open battle. No; the hostile Americans perceive the necessity of acting on the defensive; and while they dispute the ground with us in this laborious manner, each private soldier makes common cause with his Officer. In delivering myself thus, I declare myself to be a true friend to his Majesty's government.—To elevate my Countrymen with the hopes of a speedy termination to the American war, would be adding poignancy to disappointment, confusion to the disgrace which may ensue.

J. H.