

on the conclusion of a treaty of peace. Two cross batteries were also constructed on two small islands a little distant, in order to prevent any approach to the city; so greatly do this people dread a government without principles or moderation.

Most of the merchants or proprietors of vessels have docks, in which their ships are defended from the tide and the winds. These docks, which are of great advantage to commerce, are extremely prejudicial to the health of the city. They are in the greatest number on the river towards the east, which is the most mercantile, and at the same time the most unhealthy part of New York.

That epidemic disease so generally known by the name of the yellow fever, constantly manifests itself here; which seems to oppose the population of the cities of this continent, and to conspire against the prosperity of their inhabitants. As soon as the first symptoms discover themselves, the cities are almost deserted, the shops are shut, and the public buildings abandoned. Even the exchange is forsaken, and every individual who possesses the means of subsistence, employs them to escape the contagion. If ambition and avarice cannot determine the Americans to brave the yellow fever, it may easily be imagined that sentiments of friendship, attachment, or love, would not be able to detain them: the men approach with fear; fathers, and even mothers themselves, refuse assistance to their children, and forget their affection; children abandon their parents; in a word, the fear and horror which this disease inspires break the most sacred ties of society, and cause all ideas of humanity to vanish. The sick are left to the care of negroes, who seem privileged from the effects of the contagion, and who often dispatch the patient in order to get possession of his property; certain to escape punishment when the courts are shut and the officers fled. Notwithstanding the opinion of the inhabitants of the United States, I am induced to attribute it to the dirtiness of some parts of the city, but principally to the merchants' docks, or wharfs, in which, till lately, no outlet was contrived for the accumulated filth; which, acted upon by the intense heats of August and September, produces those mephitic effluvia which are so unfavourable to life. Experience is found to confirm this opinion. The inhabitants nearest the river on the east, are always first attacked by the contagion; while those on the river, to the north, where there are fewer docks, and the streets wider and better aired, seldom feel its dreadful effects. The obstinacy of individuals respecting the causes of this disease, has not prevented the government from taking those measures which prudence required. The construction of the docks has been altered. New York has already experienced the advantages of this wise resolution, which probably