

The distance of government diminishes its force ; either because, in the absence of the splendor and magnificence of the throne, men yield obedience only to its power, unsupported by the influence of illusion and respect ; or, because the agents of authority in distant countries, exercising a larger discretion in the execution of the laws, inspire the people governed with greater hope of being able to escape their restraints.

What idea must we then form of the force which the British government could exercise in the new world, when it is considered, that the two countries being separated by an ocean three thousand miles in breadth, entire months sometimes transpired, between the date of an order, and its execution ?

Let it be added also, that except in cases of war, standing armies, this powerful engine of coercion, were very feeble in England, and much more feeble still in America ; their existence even was contrary to law.

It follows, of necessity, that, as the means of constraint became almost illusory in the hands of the government, there must have arisen, and gradually increased, in the minds of the Americans, the hope, and with it the desire, to shake off the yoke of English superiority.

All these considerations apply, especially, to the condition of the eastern provinces of English America. As to the provinces of the south, the land being there more fertile, and the colonists consequently enjoying greater affluence, they could pretend to a more ample liberty, and discover less deference for opinions which differed from their own. Nor should it be imagined, that the happy fate they enjoyed, had enervated their minds, or impaired their courage. Living continually on their plantations, far from the luxury and seductions of cities, frugal and moderate in all their desires, it is certain, on the contrary, that the great abundance of things necessary to life rendered their bodies more vigorous, and their minds more impatient of all subjection.

In these provinces also, the slavery of the blacks, which was in use, seemed, however strange the assertion may appear, to have increased the love of liberty among the white population. Having continually before their eyes, the living picture of the miserable condition of man reduced to slavery, they could better appreciate the liberty they enjoyed. This liberty they considered not merely as a right, but as a franchise and privilege. As it is usual for men, when their own interests and passions are concerned, to judge partially and inconsiderately, the colonists supported impatiently the superiority of the British government. They considered its pretensions as tend-