

fidence of the King and of his Ministers, de Maurepas and de Vergennes, so far as to overcome their scruples and hesitations as to the policy they should adopt on the American question. It was decided to support secretly the revolted Colonies and to Beaumarchais the work was entrusted. On the 10th of June, 1776, he obtained the promise of a million livres from the King. On this he began the great operation, in which he actually levied war himself on the British, having shortly after the promise obtained further powers.

It was in the same month (July, 1776) in which Beaumarchais received authority to fit out vessels secretly, to supply the Colonies, that Silas Deane, the political and commercial agent of Congress, arrived in Paris, to use his own words: "A stranger to the language as well as to the customs of the nation." He had no friend at court; his letters of introduction, however effectual to secure social recognition, were valueless in a political point of view. M. le Roy was an Academician, Dr. Dubourg a physician, both unconnected with and ignorant of politics. He was assured that no public assistance could be expected in France. M. de Vergennes, to whom he was introduced by Dr. Dubourg, was exceedingly polite, but assured him the court could afford him no assistance, consistent with the treaties subsisting with England, which His Majesty could on no occasion violate, adding—and the air with which he said it may be imagined, knowing that a million had just been given to Beaumarchais to enable him to fit out ships and purchase arms for Mr. Deane's constituents, that commerce was free to all His Majesty's subjects, from whom any articles wanted could be obtained; countenance and protection would be afforded, but His Majesty could do nothing as to the articles (warlike stores, to wit), that Deane had been instructed to solicit. The independence of the United States could not be then considered, and Mr. Deane was politely bowed out and referred to M. Gerard, the Minister's chief clerk, for any additional information.

It was now that Beaumarchais could appear with advantage on the scene. He accordingly wrote next day to the disappointed political agent. "I found him," says Mr. Deane, "the only person willing to venture a considerable credit on these States at this time, and from the favourable light he stood in with the Prime

"Minister the only person on whom I could rely with confidence to procure the supplies then indispensably necessary." The two soon came to an understanding, and now Beaumarchais' financial training came into play; an estimate was made for clothing for 30,000 men and for other necessities, also for 200 pieces of brass cannon and 28 mortars, ammunition, tents, etc., much of which Beaumarchais assured him, as well he might, could be purchased from the King's arsenals, and Beaumarchais kindly consented to become security for the payment of the freight of these to America.

In the meantime Spain had also been induced to enter into the same scheme for secretly assisting the Colonies, and was to advance another million of livres. Beaumarchais was told by de Vergennes that he would urge Spain to do so, but was informed at the same time explicitly that the operation must be in the eyes of the British Government and of the Americans a purely private speculation, and in fact it must be so in reality. A firm of merchants must be formed to furnish at its own risk all the arms and other necessities required by the Colonies for carrying on the war. The King's arsenals would supply these, but, whatever was obtained from them must be replaced or paid for. No money was to be asked from the Americans, but they were to pay in produce, of which admission into France would be facilitated. In short, said de Vergennes, the operation, secretly assisted at first, must support itself. An account, it was further agreed, was to be submitted to the French government, so that in case of heavy losses Beaumarchais might be in some measure relieved.

The evidence that Spain did advance the required million is clear and conclusive, but it was done in a round about way, so as, if possible, to keep it secret. The Spanish ambassador paid this amount into the French treasury, obtaining an acknowledgment, which he transferred to Duvernay, Beaumarchais' old trainer in finance. Duvernay gave the acknowledgment to Beaumarchais according to a receipt, still in existence, dated the 11th August 1776, and thereupon he drew the money from the French treasury.

A glance at the terms of the treaty of Paris of 1763, which was entered into by both France and Spain on the one side and Great Britain on the other, will show the treachery on the part of both powers in this secret plot. A most solemn agree-