

Congress, as is their usual mode, appointed a committee from their own body, to examine them, and report thereon. The report was brought in the next day, (the twenty-second), was read, and unanimously agreed to, entered on their journals, and published for the information of the country. Now this report must be the rejection to which the Abbe alludes, because Congress gave no other formal opinion on those bills and propositions: and on a subsequent application from the British Commissioners, dated the 27th of May, and received at York-Town the 6th of June, Congress immediately referred them for an answer to their printed resolves of the 22d of April.—Thus much for the rejection of the offers.

On the 2d of May, that is, eleven days after the above rejection was made, the treaty between the United States and France arrived at York-Town; and until this moment Congress had not the least notice or idea, that such a measure was in any train of execution. But lest this declaration of mine should pass only for assertion, I shall support it by proof, for it is material to the character and principle of the revolution to shew, that no condition of America, since the declaration of independence, however trying and severe, ever operated to produce the most distant idea of yielding it up either by force, distress, artifice, or persuasion. And this proof is the more necessary, because it was the system of the British Ministry at this time, as well as before and since, to hold out to the European powers that America was unfixt in her resolutions and policy; hoping by this artifice to lessen her reputation in Europe, and weaken the confidence which those powers, or any of them, might be inclined to place in her.

At the time these matters were transacting, I was secretary to the foreign department of Congress. All the political letters from the American Commissioners rested in my hands, and all that were officially written went from my office; and so far from Congress knowing any thing of the signing the treaty, at the time they rejected the British offers, they had not received a line of information from their Commissioners at Paris on any subject whatever for upwards of a twelvemonth. Probably the loss of the port of Philadelphia and the navigation of the Delaware, together with the danger of the seas, covered at this time with British cruizers, contributed to the disappointment.

One packet, it is true, arrived at York-Town in January preceding, which was about three months before the arrival of the treaty; but, strange as it may appear, every letter had been taken out, before it was put on board the vessel which brought it from France, and blank white paper put in their stead.

Having thus stated the time when the proposals from the British Commissioners were first received, and likewise the time when the treaty of alliance arrived, and shewn that the rejection of the former was eleven days prior to the arrival of the latter, and without the least knowledge of such circumstance having taken place, or being about to take place; the rejection, therefore, must