

Cooper, Lafayette, and the French National Budget: A Postscript

JAMES FRANKLIN BEARD

WHEN LAFAYETTE LANDED in New York in 1824 to begin his triumphal tour of the United States, Cooper was, according to the general, 'one of the first New York friends I Had the gratification to take by the Hand';¹ and when Cooper arrived in Paris with his family two years later, Lafayette was one of the first Parisians to extend a warm and welcome hospitality. In a relatively short time, the two men became intimate friends and co-conspirators in advancing the cause of republicanism in Europe, where entrenched reactionary regimes were accustomed to look with disdain on American ideas and institutions. Hoping to counter the general misinformation and prejudice abroad, Cooper wrote, at Lafayette's suggestion, an extended description and defense of society, culture, and institutions in the United States, *Notions of the Americans* (1828). Two years later, after the July Revolution, Cooper hoped that Lafayette would seize his opportunity as the first citizen of France to declare France a republic and become her first president. Instead, Lafayette allowed himself to be persuaded to bestow his enormous political influence on Louis Philippe, only to discover that his own valued post as commander of the National Guard was abolished as soon as the new King of the French consolidated his power. Lafayette accepted his defeat gracefully and retired to his post in the Chamber of

¹ Lafayette to Cooper, July 24, 1826. James Fenimore Cooper [the novelist's grandson], ed., *Correspondence of James Fenimore-Cooper* (New Haven, 1922), 1:100.

Deputies, where he continued to function as the leader of the republican opposition.

In this capacity, Lafayette addressed the American novelist on November 22, 1831, to request assistance in a matter of mutual concern. In the letter, which bore the salutation 'Your affectionate friend,' Lafayette wrote:

You have already, in an admirable publication [*Notions of the Americans*], noticed the errors of foreign travellers with respect to the United States. It belongs to you, in vindication of republican institutions, to correct certain allusions published in the enclosed *Brittanic Review*. Besides our common American interest in this matter, I am anxious to undeceive those of my French colleagues who might, with safe consciences, oppose reductions in the ensuing budget, under the mistaken idea that taxation, in this country, falls short of the expenses of federal and state governments in the United States. Time fails me for a minute investigation, although, at first sight, I have been struck with mistakes easier to be discovered than that of the fine country seat, allowed to the President! I take the liberty to put the task in better hands.²

Although he was neither an economist nor a statistician, Cooper yielded to this appeal, as he later confessed, because it was

the earnest request of Gen. Lafayette, and because I thought it would be a lasting stain upon the national character, should it be hereafter known that this friend in our dark days had made such an appeal for succour against the attacks of his enemies, and no American citizen could be found sufficiently regardless of the glitter of monarchy, or of personal care, to afford him what is due to the meanest criminal—the benefit of the truth.³

The 'allusions' to which Cooper was invited to reply were contained in a long article in the *Revue Britannique* of June

² *Letter to Gen. Lafayette by James Fenimore Cooper and Related Correspondence on the Finance Controversy*, reproduced from the original Paris editions of 1831 and 1832 in English and in French, with a bibliographical note by Robert E. Spiller. Published for the Facsimile Text Society (New York, 1931), Baudry text, p. [3].

³ Cooper to the American Public, October 1, 1832. James Franklin Beard, ed., *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1960-68), 2:346. Hereafter, this edition is cited as *Letters and Journals*.

1831,⁴ written by its editor Louis Sébastien Saulnier, an editorial spokesman for the royalist majority of the Chamber of Deputies.⁵ In the article, which Lafayette had previously called to Cooper's attention, Saulnier attempted to prove statistically that the cost of government in the United States was 'greater than it was in France, or indeed in nearly every other country; and that a republic, in the nature of things, must be a more expensive form of government than a monarchy.'⁶ Despite his reluctance—as an American citizen without portfolio—to involve himself in an internal political controversy in France, Cooper responded to Lafayette's appeal by writing a *Letter of J. Fenimore Cooper, to Gen. Lafayette*, a pamphlet-length analysis of the costs of federal and state governments in the United States. It employed the most accurate information available to Cooper and was published in English in Paris by Baudry in December 1831. It also appeared in a French translation in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*⁷ and as a separate pamphlet published by Paulin.

The Paulin edition was evidently intended for use during the debate on the French national budget in the Chamber of Deputies early in 1832, for Lafayette prefaced it with his own address to his colleagues, dated January 6, 1832, and a letter from Gen. Simon Bernard, dated December 13, 1831, explaining the difficulties inherent in a detailed comparison of French and American budgets. Lafayette's letter inviting Cooper's response was printed with both the Baudry and the Paulin texts. Inevitably, therefore, Cooper's *Letter* became a centerpiece for discussion when the debate on the national budget came before the Chamber of Deputies. And, despite Count Joubert's sarcastic remark to the Chamber that 'Mr. Cooper is well known in

⁴ *Revue Britannique*, n.s. 6(June, 1831):272–324. In his authoritative study of Cooper's part in the Finance Controversy, Prof. Robert E. Spiller suggests that this and Saulnier's later articles 'actually appeared about three months later than their given dates.' 'Fenimore Cooper and Lafayette,' *American Literature* 3(1931):29.

⁵ Spiller, 'Finance Controversy,' p. 31.

⁶ Cooper, *A Letter to His Countrymen* (New York, 1834), p. 8.

⁷ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, n.s. 5(January 15, 1832):145–82.

the world as a writer of Romance,' the American novelist found himself—or his *Letter*—the chief target of Saulnier's second article in the *Revue Britannique*,⁸ which was reprinted with renumbered pages as a pamphlet. The article, or the reprint, or both, evidently appeared much later than the serial date suggests; for Cooper's replies were published in sequence in *Le National* between February 24 and March 7, 1832.

According to Cooper, the urgency of these replies was dictated by Saulnier's 'fresh misstatements, mingled with great scurrility on the character, habits, and pursuits of the people of the United States.' He considered it a duty 'I owed to myself, to the truth, and to all concerned, to answer.'⁹ Answer he did, in eight letters (the first merely an announcement of his intention to reply) written in English and sent to Armand Carrel for translation and publication in *Le National*. Founded in 1829 by Carrel, Thiers, and Mignet, *Le National* had helped to depose Charles X, and as the main republican journal it was now proceeding to harass Louis Philippe, his ministers, and his antirepublican allies in the Chamber of Deputies.

Although Cooper's seventh letter, published in *Le National* on March 7, 1832, was accompanied by Cooper's note in French breathing a sigh of relief ('Voici la fin de notre polemique'),¹⁰ the indefatigable Saulnier persisted, in a further article in the *Revue Britannique*.¹¹ Here, Saulnier reported that Albert Gallatin and William Cabell Rives, the former and present United States ministers to France, favored his own position; in addition, he introduced new statistics furnished by Levett or Leavitt Harris, an attaché in the American embassy, to refute Cooper's figures. Once more Cooper was roused to reply in a letter published in *Le National* on May 30, 1832.

⁸ *Revue Britannique*, n.s. 8(October, 1831):195-260.

⁹ Cooper, *Letter to His Countrymen*, p. 10.

¹⁰ Beard, *Letters and Journals*, 2:229.

¹¹ Spiller, 'Finance Controversy,' p. 37. Saulnier's third and final article appeared in the *Revue Britannique*, n.s. 9(November, 1831):164-94. This issue must actually have appeared after Cooper's seventh letter to *Le National*, published on March 7, 1832.

The novelist was in sufficiently friendly communication with Rives to report to him directly two days later: 'I have just finished Harris, in *two* senses. A short letter in the National was all that was necessary.'¹² As he surmised in his published letter, Cooper later learned that Albert Gallatin, then in the United States, had *not* given the opinion Saulnier attributed to him.

Cooper's part in the so-called 'Finance Controversy' is significant today chiefly as an instance of the novelist's sympathetic and patriotic efforts to assist the great French champion of American republicanism in his abortive struggle for republicanism at home. The controversy was more theoretical than practical. It apparently had no direct effect on the passage of the French national budget or on political considerations in the United States, though it seems to have prompted Secretary of State Edward Livingston to begin collecting statistics on the cost of local government. The matter at issue—a comparative determination of the accumulated costs of government in the United States and France—could not, as Cooper recognized early, be finally decided in the absence of complete and accurate figures and without methods of correlating differences in the computation of charges. Perhaps the major repercussion of the affair was its effect on Cooper himself; for the state of American politics and of journalistic reviewing was such that his involvement in French politics, however commendable and patriotic, could be and was interpreted to his disadvantage as a literary man at home. Ironically, as it must seem now, these costs were to prove exceedingly heavy; but Cooper never regretted his efforts to assist Lafayette.

Although the French translations of all the Cooper letters published in *Le National* are published in *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, together with the five English drafts available in the 1960s,¹³ the second of these English

¹² Beard, *Letters and Journals*, 2:252.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2:189-229, 245-52; 6:311-15.

drafts, the first important letter of the series, was not located at that time. It was recently purchased by the American Antiquarian Society on the Harry G. Stoddard Memorial Fund and is here made available through the courtesy of the Fenimore Cooper family and the Society. This draft may be compared to the corresponding French translation in the *Letters and Journals*, 2:190-95. Interestingly, the translator, following Cooper's markings, telescoped what had been originally intended as two drafts into a single letter, and throughout imparted a fluency and deftness to the translation of which Cooper would probably have been incapable. The many false starts, excisions, and substitutions in the English draft suggest not only Cooper's inexperience in writing in the French language but also his ambivalences about the appropriate tone for addressing an unknown audience. The manuscript is notable, if not unique, among Cooper manuscripts for the number and nature of its alterations. English drafts of the later letters in the sequence show far fewer false starts, awkward phrases, and cancellations, perhaps because Cooper had learned to trust the translator.

Cooper wrote on a well-made, ruled, folio sheet, folded to make two leaves, measuring 358 x 230 mm. The laid sheet bears as a watermark a bishop's mitre, right center. Another mark, an illegible monogram within an oval frame, is centered on the width of the sheet and located well toward its upper edge. The lower two-thirds of the blank second (left) leaf was cut away at some time in the past, eliminating the watermark on the other half of the sheet.

Below is a clear reading copy of the second of the English drafts of Cooper's letters, followed by the texts of the original two drafts as Cooper had written them.

Mr. Editor,

In commencing my replies to M. Saulnier, the first desire is to acquit myself properly of the courtesies of the debate. He is mistaken in attributing to me a charge that the *Revue Bri-*

tannique supports a system of *stationary politicks*, though he has been very plausibly misled. I am compelled to write in my mother tongue, and of course am obliged to appear before all foreign people through the medium of translations. The Error has arisen from some little latitude on the part of the translator. It is true that the translation published by Gen. Lafayette was submitted to me, but my attention was chiefly given to the figures, which do not, with all my pains exactly correspond with those of the English letter. The whole extent of my remark was to say that the article of the *Revue Britannique* appeared to me to be written as an *ex-parte* statement, and was liable to the usual objections of that character. Mr. Saulnier refers to the manner in which that publication has been pleased to speak of me as a writer, in proof of its liberal sentiments, and appears to think that I may have been possibly ignorant of the fact. I admit that I am little in the habit of reading either periodical works or the daily papers, but an amiable desire to please induced a friend to point out the flattering language of the *Revue* shortly after the number appeared, and, since there is question of it here, I beg to express my sense of its good nature, and to disclaim any pretension to a title of the merit which is there attributed to me.

A just comparison between the pecuniary burthens of different communities is of difficult attainment. The ability to pay, the uses to which the contributions are applied, and the voluntary or the involuntary nature of the taxation, are all necessary ingredients in the Estimates. In my letter to Gen. Lafayette, the principal object was to show the different impositions on the Citizen of New York, in such a manner, that each reader might make the best comparison he could with the French system of taxation. I accordingly presented certain statements, which I believe to be sufficiently near the truth for general purposes, though there is no pretension to minute critical accuracy, varying them in such a manner as might enable all who chose, to compare the different contributions with

those that most resembled them in France. It is usually objected to the American economy, that the situation of the country removes the necessity of a multitude of expenses to which European nations are unavoidably subject, and it was my wish to separate the items in the best manner I was able, in order that the expenditures that were in reality common to the two countries, might be compared, one with the other. The results of course vary, since we must pay more to government including the expenses of the army, the Navy, the Indians, the Pensioners &c &c than we do without them, and here is the simple explanation of my results, being at one time 14f. 5c. and at another 2.f! I say, *according to calculations which are given at length*, that the Citizen of New-York pays so much to the Federal and State Governments, *including* army, navy, Indians, clergy, schools, poor &c &c and so much to the Federal and State Governments, *excluding* all the latter interests, with the intention of letting the reader choose his own items of comparison. This manner of stating the case, M. Saulnier seems to think is being at variance with myself, and says, "une argumentation de ce genre ne merite pas une refutation serieuse." Now there is no argument intended, the object being merely facts, in different forms, though the reasons for the facts are given with the facts themselves. I can only regret my inability to state the case more fairly. Had M. Saulnier given his reasons or his evidence with all his facts, this controversy would have been much shortened. Nothing on my part is concealed, and it really appears to me the simplest thing in the world, that those who so strongly object to comparing the military expences and the other charges on France which are influenced by causes to which America is not subject, with their counterparts in the U. States ought to be glad to act as near as possible to those items about which there can be no dispute. But here are my results.

M. Saulnier in addition to what he calls this contradiction of myself—says I do not agree with General Bernard—"car" to

use his own words, "ils different sur tous les points, *meme sur la valeur du dollar*." A writer of M. Saulnier's practice ought to have seen that this very difference about the value of the dollar would of itself be a *reason* for a difference in the results, when they turn dollars into francs,—But here are his words—"meme sur la valeur du dollar que l'un porte a 5f. 25c, et l'autre à 5f. 35c, et qui vaut 5f. 42c. Tandis que M. Cooper estime la cote du contribuable [?], aux Etats Unis, tantot a 14.f. 15 cent. et tantot a 2f. le Général Bernard l'estime à 11f. 47 cent. Celui-ci evalue, *comme le dernier recensement* la population totale, y compris les esclaves, à 12,856,000 ames, et M. Cooper la porte à 13,500,000." In dissecting the matter of these few lines we shall see the difficulty of answering within reasonable limits a letter like this of M. Saulnier.

In the first place I profess to treat only of the contribution of the Citizen of the State of New-York, while Général Bernard makes his estimates for the citizens of New-York and *Virginia*; I nowhere estimate the contribution of the citizen of New-York higher than 14f.5c. and even that estimation, which is a result of premises openly given, I state to be probably beyond the truth; in obtaining this result of 14f. 5c. I include the cost of the clergy, the poor and the schools, while General Bernard excludes *all three*, and finally, so far from saying that the population of the U. States, *at the last census*, was 13,500,000, I expressly give it on page 25 (original letter) at 12,856,497! General Bernard makes his estimates for the year 1850, and mine are made for the year 1831, and I openly give 400,000 as the probable annual increase of the population at this moment. All my calculations are given at length on this subject and they speak for themselves. I assume that the population, on the 1st July 1831, was probably 13,250,000, furnishing *the reasons* for this assumption. When the advantages of the American system are likely to increase as the population increases, in ascertaining the ratio of contribution of the citizen, it struck me we were at least entitled to take the *present time* for our calculation! I

use, *in every case* 13,250,000 as the population 1st July 1831, and when I speak of the population as being 13,500,000 it refers to the time when the letter was written, and has no connection whatever with the calculations of the rate of contribution. I know no necessity for making the population appear stationary when all the world knows that it is rapidly on the increase although it would certainly help M. Saulnier's argument.

As respects the value of the dollar, the question is not what is the relative value between the dollar and the franc, but what is the amount of contribution paid by the American citizen. There are two manners of turning dollars into francs. My New-York banker, in a letter not long since received, values the dollar at 5f. 25 cent, and my Banker in Paris, tells me it is worth 5f. 33/13. cent. I chose the latter valuation because it made the results appear the most strong *against* the citizen of New-York, and for the sake of convenience even yielded the fraction. This fact is stated expressly in my letter! But M. Saulnier says that the dollar is in truth worth 5f. 42.cent. This may be true, for anything I know to the contrary, but if it be so, why has the *Revue Britannique* called 5000 dollars, 26,500 francs, the salary of the President, or 25,000 dollars, 132,500fr. cum multis aliis, as is done in the article on American finance!

M. Saulnier quotes, page 59 of his pamphlet, a paragraph from my letter which he calls another refutation of myself. Let us look into the justice of this charge also.

I state that the frequency of *assessments for the purposes of local improvements* sometimes cause foreigners to suppose the charge of government in the U. States to be much more than it really is. He construes this fact, into an admission of all that is in dispute. Does the French nation pay for every street that is opened in Paris, or does the money come from the Parisians? Does the nation pay for every *chemin de vicinage* that is opened in France or does the cost rest on the *commune*? If a new Hotel de Ville were to be erected for Paris would the cost appear in the budget of the nation, or in that of the city? In short is there

no such thing as local taxation for local improvements in France? What I say is simply this—that in 1790 the population of the State of New-York was only 340,130 souls, who occupied less than a fourth of the whole surface of the state, and that to-day it is 2,000,000 of souls who now probably occupy more than three fourths of the whole surface of the state. It is very evident that in a growth so rapid, if there be local improvements which are to be supported by local contributions, the assessments must greatly exceed those in a long settled country. But what we technically call an assessment is a very different thing from an ordinary tax. Here is a forest whose value in 1800 was probably 500 or 1000 dollars, and its site is favorable for a town. It is surveyed and sold in lots at 5 dollars a piece—We must have streets say the purchasers—an assessment of a dollar on each lot is levied to pay the cost. Then comes the necessity of pavements, and sewers, and wells, and pumps, and fire engines, and market-houses and many other conveniences each of which calls for a new assessment—When all is done, the forest is a town of five, or ten, or even of twenty thousand inhabitants. The lot has cost its owner 500 dollars and will sell readily for 1500, or perhaps for 5000 dollars. That all these charges should be crowded into a shorter space of time in America than they have been in European Countries is the consequence of the rapid growth and great prosperity of the former; but no town, no lots, and consequently no assessment. If there is the smallest contradiction in saying that this description of change is more frequent in a new country like America, than it is in an old country like France, while I say that the usual expenses of government are much smaller in America than they are in other nations, I confess my inability to perceive it. I leave the intelligent reader as the Umpire to decide which is in the wrong M. Saulnier or myself. I regret that M. Saulnier has not quoted more of that part of my letter than he has seen fit to do, for I feel persuaded it would have explained my meaning so that it would have been clear to any one at all conversant with this sort of subject.

In my next letter I shall endeavor to show more material errors of M. Saulnier.

J. Fenimore Cooper.

To the translator

Permit to request that no harshness of expression may be admitted in the translation, for we shall lose more than we shall gain by such expressions. I wish the original to be preserved.

Editors note: In the following texts of Cooper's letters, doubtful or partially obliterated readings are queried. The transcriptions are literal, except for passages employing the following sigla:

- < . . . > Side-angle brackets denote cancellations.
- † . . . † Daggers denote superscript additions or substitutions.
- ‡ . . . ‡ Double daggers denote subscript additions or substitutions.
- { . . . } Braces denote marginal additions or substitutions.
- [*italic*] Editorial remarks and conjectural readings are in italics enclosed by square brackets.
- [*p. 00*] Manuscript page numbers are set in italics within square brackets.

[*Letter 1*]

[*p. 1*]

Mr. Editor,

In commencing <this assault de plumes with> †my replies to† M. Saulnier, <my> †the† first desire is to acquit myself properly of the courtesies of the debate. He is mistaken in attributing to me a charge that the *Revue Britannique* <belongs to> ‡supports‡ a system of *stationary politicks*, though he has been very plausibly misled [*sic*]. <It is my> I am compelled to write in my <nat?^o> mother tongue, and of course am obliged to appear before all foreign people through the medium of translations. The Error has arisen from some little latitude on the part of the

translator. { It is true that the translation published by Gen. Lafayette was submitted to me, but my attention was chiefly given to the figures, which do not, with all my pains exactly correspond with those of the English letter. } The whole extent of my remark was to say that the article of the *Revue Britanique* appeared to me to be written as an ex-parte statement, and was liable to the usual (qualifications) †objections† of that character. Mr. Saulnier refers to the manner in which that publication has been pleased to speak of me as a writer, in proof of its liberal sentiments, and appears to think that I may have been possibly ignorant of the fact. I admit that I am little in the habit of reading either periodical works or the daily papers, but, (the) †an† amiable desire to please induced a friend to point out the flattering language of the †(number of the)† *Revue* (Enclyopedique?) (which [*illegible*] speaks of me) shortly after (it) ‡the number‡ appeared, and, since there is question of it here, I beg (publicly) to express my sense of its good nature, and to disclaim any preten‡sion‡ to a tithe of the merit which is there attributed to me. (Had (it been said, however, that I was Homer himself,) (even higher and still more unmerited praise has been bestowed) I must †however† continue to regard statistical facts as I believe them really to exist.)

A †just† comparison between the pecuniary burthens of different communities is of difficult attainment. The ability to pay, the uses (of) †to which† the contributions are applied, and the voluntary or the involuntary nature of the taxation, are all necessary ingredients in the Estimates. In my letter to Gen Lafayette, the principal object (on my part,) was to (present) †show† the different impositions on the Citizen of New York, in such a manner, that each reader might make the best comparison he could with the French system of taxation. I accordingly presented certain statements, which I believe to be sufficiently near the truth for general purposes, though (there is no pretention to †minute† critical accuracy) varying them in such a manner as †might† enable(d) all who chose, to compare the

different contributions with those that most resembled them in France. It is †usually† objected to the American economy, that the situation of the country removes †the necessity of† a multitude of expenses to which European nations are unavoidably subject, and it was my wish to separate the items in the best manner I was able, in order that †(civil?) the expenditures that were in reality common to the two countries, might be compared, one with the other. The results of course vary, †(as in America, we) †since we must† pay more to government including the †expenses of the† army, the Navy, the Indians, the Pensioners &c &c than we do without them, and here is the simple explanation of my †(figures) results, being at one time †(14f= +?) †14 f. 5c† and at another 2.f! I say, *according to calculations which are given at length*, that the Citizen of New-York pays so much †(for) to the Federal and State Governments, *including* army, navy, Indians, clergy, schools, poor &c &c and so much to the Federal and State Governments, *excluding* †all† the latter interests, with the intention of letting the reader choose his own items of comparison. This manner of stating the case, M. Saulnier seems to think is being at variance with myself, and says, “une a†r†gumentation de ce genre ne merite pas une refutation serieuse.” †(He appears to [hope?] both that the debt, *principal* as well as interest, and a multitude of) †Now there is no argument intended, the object being merely facts, in different forms, though the reasons for the facts are given with the facts themselves.† I can only regret my inability to state the case more fairly. †Had M. Saulnier given his reasons or his evidence with all his facts, this controversy would have been much shortened. †(Let us suppose it was desirable to ascertain the relative costs of the uniforms of the French †soldier,† and of that of a Sepoy, and that I had assumed the task of furnishing the cost of the former. It would not be long probably before I should be told that the Sepoy did not wear [it? omitted].) Nothing †on my part† is concealed, and it really appea†(rance?)rs to me the simplest thing in the world, †(for) †that† those who so

strongly object(ed) to comparing the military expences and †the† other charges on France which are †(the consequence of) †influenced by† causes to which America is not subject, with their counterparts †in the U. States,† †(would) †ought to† be glad to act as near as possible to those items about which there †could) †can† be no dispute. But here are my results.

M. Saulnier in addition to what he calls this contradiction of myself—((The contradiction of saying that the civil expenses of the U. States are not so much as the civil and military, pensioners, Indians &c)) says I do not agree with General Bernard —“car” to use his own words, “ils different sur tous les points, *meme sur la value du dollar.*” A writer of M. Saulnier’s †(acute-ness) †practice† ought to have seen that this very difference about the value of the dollar †(might be) †(must) †would of itself† be a *reason* for a difference in †the† results, when they †(il prendon)† †(were) turning †(from) dollars into francs,—(He says) But here are his words—“*meme sur la valeur du dollar, que l’un porte a 5f. 25c, et l’autre à 5f. 35c, et qui vaut 5f. 42c. Tandis que M. Cooper estime la cote du contribuable [?], aux Etats Unis, tantot a 14.f. 15 cent. et tantot a †(deux fran) 2f. le Général Bernard l’estime à 11f. 47 cent. Celui-ci evalue, comme le dernier recensement [p. 2] la population totale, y compris les esclaves, à 12.856,000 ames, et M. Cooper la porte à 13.†(6) †5† 00,000.*” In dissecting the matter of these few lines, we shall †(get a general idea of M. S) see the difficulty of answering within reasonable limits a letter †(of this) like this of M. Saulnier.

In the first place I profess †(only) to treat only of the contribution of the Citizen of the State of New-York, while Général Bernard makes his estimates for the citizens of New-York and *Virginia*; †(In in them) I nowhere estimate the contribution of the citizen of New-York higher than 14f. 5c. and even that estimation, which is a result of premises openly given, I state to be probably beyond the truth; †(and I) in obtaining this result of 14f. 5c I include the cost of the clergy, the poor and the schools,

while General Bernard excludes *all three*, and finally, so far from saying that the population of the U. States, *at the last census*, was 13,500,000, I expressly give †it† on page 25 (original letter) at 12, 856, 497! General †Bernard† makes his estimates for the year 1830, and mine are made for the year 1831, and I openly give 400,000 as the probable annual increase of the population at this moment. (I saw no good reason) All my calculations are given at length on this subject and they speak for themselves. I assume that †the population,† on the 1st July 1831, was probably 13,250,000, furnishing *the reasons* for this assumption. When the (highest) advantages of the American system (is?) †are† likely to (be reaped wh?) †increase as† the population increases, in ascertaining the ratio of contribution of the citizen, it struck me we were at least entitled to take the *present time* for our calculation! I use, *in every case* (thr[?]) 13,250,000 (for my [*divisor*?]) as the population 1st July 1831, and when I speak of the population as being 13,500,000 it refers to the time when the letter was written, and has no connection whatever with the calculations of the rate of contribution. (Were I to speak of the population of the U. States at this moment, I should say it was about 13.) I know no necessity for making the population †appear† stationary when all the world knows that it is rapidly on the increase, alth(ough) it would certainly help M. Saulnier's argument.

(M Saulnier) As respects the value of the dollar, the question is not what is the relative value between the dollar and the franc, but what is the amount of contribution paid by the American citizen. There are (two) †two† manners of turning dollars into francs. My New-York banker, in a letter not long since received, values the dollar at 5.f. 25, cents, and my Banker in Paris, tells me it is worth 5.f. 33 $\frac{1}{2}$. cent. I chose the latter †valuation† because (this) †it† made the results appear the most strong *against* the citizen of New-York, and for the sake of convenience †I† even yielded the fraction. †(This is stated in my letter)† This fact is stated expressly in my letter! But

M. Saulnier says that the dollar is in truth worth 5f. 42. cent. This may be true, for any (I?) thing I know to the contrary, but if it be so, why has the *Revue Britannique* called 5000 dollars, 26,500 francs, the salary of the President, or 25,000 dollars, 132,500 fr (cum multis aliis!) †cum mutis aliis, †as is done in the article (on) on American finance! (which I must now infer was written by M. Saulnier himself. (†)I presume that General Bernard [woul?])†

(I shall take an early occasion to show what I conceive much more material that †mistakes of M. Saulnier which that† are far more †material to the† mistakes of M. Saulnier main result pursue the investigation

J. Fenimore Cooper.

Letter II

Mr. Editor,)

M. Saulnier quotes, page 59 of his pamphlet, a paragraph from my letter which he calls another refutation of myself. Let us look into the justice of this charge also.

I state that the frequency of *assessments* (in the U. St) *for the purposes of local improvements* †sometimes† cause foreigners (often) to suppose the charge of government †in the U. States† to be much more than it really is. He construes this (con?) fact, into an admission of all that is in dispute. Does the French nation pay for every street that is opened in Paris, or does the money come from the Parisians? Does (France) †the nation† pay for every (cross-road) †chemin de vicinage† that is opened in France or does the cost rest on the commune? If a new Hotel de Ville were to be erected for (the City of) Paris would the cost appear in the budget of the nation, or in that of the city? In short is there no such thing as local taxation for local improvements in France? (Now) What I say is simply this—that in 1790 the population of the State of New-York was only 340,130 souls, who occupied less than a fourth of the †whole† surface

of the state, and that to-day it is 2,000,000 of souls who now probably occupy more than three fourths of the whole surface †of the state.† It is very evident that in a growth so rapid, if there be local improvements which are to be supported by local contributions, the assessments must greatly exceed those in a long settled country. But what we technically call an assessment is a very different thing from an ordinary tax. Here is a ‹field› †forest† whose value in 1800 was probably 500 ‹dollars.› or 1000 dollars, and its site is favorable for a town. It is surveyed and sold in lots at 5 dollars a piece—We must have streets say the purchasers—an assessment of a dollar on each lot is levied to pay the cost. Then comes the necessity of pavements, and sewers, and wells, and pumps, and fire engines, and market-houses and ‹fifty› many other conveniences each of which [p. 3] calls for a new assessment—When all is done, the ‹fiel?› forest is a town of ‹5,› five, or ten, or even of twenty thousand inhabitants. The lot has cost its owner 500 dollars and will sell readily for 1500, or perhaps for 5000 dollars. That all these charges should be crowded into a shorter space of time in America than they have been in European Countries is the consequence of the rapid growth and †of† great prosperity of the former; but no town, no lots, and consequently no assessment. ‹The State of New-York has made many great roads, but it leaves the neighborhood› ‹[.Now?] if› If there is the smallest contradiction in saying that this description of change is more frequent in a new country like America, than it is in an old country like France, while I say that the usual expenses of government are much smaller in America than they are in other nations, I confess my inability to perceive it. I leave the intelligent reader as the Umpire to decide which is in the wrong M. Saulnier or myself. ‹It strikes me as being much like› ‹Were there a question [b?›] I regret that M. Saulnier has not quoted more of that part of my letter than he has seen fit to do, for I feel persuaded it would have ‹spoken for itself clearly› have explained my meaning so that it would have been clear to ‹the

meanes) any one at all conversant with this sort of subject.

In my next †letter† I shall endeavor to show ‹far› more material errors of M. Saulnier

J. Fenimore Cooper.

To the translator

Permit to request that no harshness of expression may be admitted ‹to› in the translation, for we shall lose more than we shall gain by such expressions. I wish the original to be preserved.

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