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A Republican

New York Journal, 6 September 1787 (excerpt)

... I by no means assent to the reasoning of the writer, admitting it to be inferred from uncontrovertible facts; I deny that it is *unwarrantable and culpable*, in any citizen of a free state, (much less in a man, who is from office, one of the guardians of our liberties) freely and unreservedly to express his sentiments on public measures however serious the posture of our national affairs may be; on the contrary, it is his essential duty; and the more critical our situation, the more loudly he is called upon to perform it, and to approve or disapprove, as he may think the public good directs. Should ever this inherent right be destroyed, it is easy to foresee, that a tyranny must, sooner or later, be the inevitable consequence.—Every attempt then to call it in question, I consider as high treason against the majesty of the people. In governments, conducted by intrigue and deception, and where ignorance is their chief support, candour will be arraigned as a vice, and reservedness construed into wisdom.—We ought to esteem it one of our greatest blessings, that the administration of our government does not depend upon such shallow and feeble artifices.

There is something extremely novel and singular in the manner, the performance under consideration is introduced, which cannot have escaped notice, and which must lead to a discovery of the spirit that dictated it—It is founded on a report, of the truth of which, the writer himself expresses his doubts: is not this a refinement upon the system of slander? by adopting this new-invented mode of detraction, the reputation of any man, or family, may be wounded; nothing more is necessary than to have a malicious report circulated, which it will be easy to effect, by characters unworthy of notice, and then insert it in a newspaper, with an *if it is not a misrepresentation*, and deduce the most injurious traducations; and such is the depravity of human nature, that where party-spirit prevails, these productions will be read with pleasure, and command the applause of the malignant mind. It might have been wise in the author, to have reflected, that however elated with his *situation, connections* and *prospects*, they do not exempt *him* from the ungenerous attack.

An eminent author has predicted, that the opulent and ambitious, would never rest contented with the equality established by our democratic forms of government.

This was the case in the once free states of Athens and of Rome; the wealthy were continually harrassing and injuring the poor;—the eloquent were frequently luring them to destruction, by their pernicious orations. The ambitious were always at work to circumvent, and deprive them of their freedom. And they, unhappy people, were finally plunged into slavery. That this predic-

tion, is already in some measure realized must be obvious to every man of the least discernment, it cannot admit of a doubt, that a certain lordly faction exists in this state, composed of men, possessed of an insatiable thirst for dominion, and who, having forfeited the confidence of their fellow-citizens, and being defeated in their hopes of rising into power, have, for sometime past, employed themselves with unremitted industry, to embarrass every public measure; they reprobate our laws, censure our rulers, and decry our government, thereby to induce the necessity of a change, that they may establish a system more favorable to their aristocratic views, in which, honors and distinction shall not depend upon the opinion and suffrages of the people: every drone, every desparate debtor, and every other worthless character, though a despot in principle, even though he has drenched his hands in the blood of his fellow citizens, that enlist under their banners, are received with applause, and dubbed patriots and foederal men: no measure, which low cunning can devise, or wicked exertion effect, is omitted to ensure the attainment of their wishes; every virtuous man, who dares to stand in the way of their ambitious and arbitrary projects, becomes the victim of their keenest resentment, and is devoted to destruction—hence we find our newspapers daily disgraced with calumny, personal scurrility and falsehood—and hence we can trace the motives which influenced this writer.

I shall conclude with a few lines from the works of the celebrated Churchill, and leave the application to the reader.¹

“Smit with the love of honor, or the pence,
O’er-run with wit, and destitute of sense,
Legions of factious authors throng at once;
Fool beckons fool, and dunce awakens dunce.
To Hamilton’s the ready lies repair;
Ne’er was lie made which was not welcome there.
Thence, on maturer judgment’s anvil wrought,
The polish’d falsehoods into public brought;
Quick circulating slanders mirth afford,
And reputation bleeds in ev’ry word.”

1. The stanza is from Charles Churchill’s *The Apology. Addressed to the Critical Reviewers* (London, 1761).

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