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Poughkeepsie *Country Journal*, 18 March 1788

Copy of a letter from one of the people called *Friends* in New York, to an acquaintance of the same profession in Dutchess County.

New-York, the third day of the third month, 1788.

Friend * * *, I thank thee for thy communications of the 21st last month, and join with thee in praising that alone fountain from whence domestic happiness as well as eternal felicity floweth: To that great source I commend thee and thine.

The concern thou manifestest respecting the situation of this the land of our nativity is equally shared by me: with thee, I have beheld with anxiety the clouds of public commotion gathering, and with thee dread the fearful explosion. To bear up manfully against calamities, whether of a public or private nature, consistent with those principles of christian meekness, which they of our profession have adopted, is a course, assisted by divine grace, I mean to pursue. To unsheath the blade of human vengeance, and moisten the earth with my brother's blood, because his sentiments or practices are different from my own, is, I think abhorrent to that religion which speaketh peace, as well as to the conviction of my own mind which has adopted that religion. — I may not kill. But altho' restrained from sporting with an existence which when gone I cannot restore, I may, consistent with the word of truth prevent by unsanguinary exertions the evils feared. Thus in the present case, however ill it would become friends to enlist under the banners of heated party, and thereby add fuel to that fire which already blazeth too high; yet I think as a body, they might exhibit their united weight in the legal line of suffrage, and perhaps be a means of giving tranquility to their country.

How differently people in dissimilar situations view the same object! here, a very decided majority think (and with them thy friend) that a union of the American States, as exemplified in the new constitution, is friendly to *property*; consistent with *freedom*; and favorable to *morality* and *religion*. Whereas in thy county I am told many think exactly the reverse.

I believe it will not be contradicted that in proportion to the respectability of a nation, so its commerce flourishes and its prosperity is advanced: experience and reason both corroborate this idea.

If at only a frown of a potent State, its puny neighbour is thrown into convulsions, what must be its situation if a stroke succeeds the frown? Nothing less than public distraction and wreck of private fortune. Since the American revolution the people of this country have undoubtedly multiplied, houses have been reared, and arable acres wrested from the wilderness; but has the situation of the people at large been remarkably easy? I think not.—A shackled commerce, a decreasing medium, and a degenerating punctuality, is felt and acknowledged by all. And it must

from the nature of things continue so, till a permanent union of the States gives energy in every department, and system and order to the whole.

Why a nation consisting of only three millions of souls, (and the whole American empire contains scarcely that number) should be more in danger of losing its liberty, than thirteen disunited separate communities each on an average containing but little more than two hundred thousand inhabitants is mysterious.

I believe the history of mankind is pretty full in evidence, that, like the Magicians serpents, small communities have generally fallen a prey to some devouring neighbour. If an individual State's unremitted exertion of cabal, of stratagem, and of force, to support its pigmy omnipotence be called its *liberty*, from such liberty may thee and I my friend be set free. The wars of powerful empires occur but seldom, are unwieldly in their operation, and are generally felt but on the extremity of boundary; whereas the conflicts of more contracted districts affect every member and agitate the very base of the political structure. In this point of view the new constitution certainly looketh with a friendly aspect on the *freedom* of this country.

I think it also favorable to the morals of the people. For if jealousies, factions, cabals and war have a tendency to corrupt the manners that political situation which prevents jealousies, factions, cabals and war is desirable on a moral account: and if on a moral, certainly on a *religious*. — We my brother have seen the ship-wreck of both in the time of recent hostility.

If this State in convention finally rejects the constitution, how perilous our situation! Massachusetts, Connecticut, New-Jersey, and Pennsylvania, our immediate neighbours and all differing from us in political Ideas! without the spirit of prophecy, one may anticipating, behold Massachusetts uniting its western property to its eastern dominion,¹ and forming a huge parallelogram from the pine clad banks of the Kennebeck to lake Erie. — Connecticut in one campaign making the shore of the Hudson its western boundary — and New-Jersey adding the whole territory between the Hudson and Delaware to its former domain.

I know it may be said, that treaties with foreign powers may be contracted, and compacts made with the few antifederal States (if any such) to secure to this State its soil and its rights: However contradictory to cool reason this hypothesis may be, I will for a moment suppose it practicable; and what a scene of carnage and devastation rises to view! — Again will our cities be wrapt in flames — The country desolated, the peaceful husbandman drenching with his blood, that field which would have been his support; and the wife of his bosom, and the children of his love, forlorn and unbefriended flying from one destruction only to meet another.

In order to avoid these monstrous evils and to procure those solid benefits which I think a firmer union of the States bids fair to introduce, I would seriously recommend to *Friends* in every part of the State to make it a matter of real concern to give their suffrages in such a manner as to make their importance as a body felt, and felt for the general good. In this city the friends, as far as my intelligence has reached, will to a man vote for such to represent them in convention as are the avowed friends to UNION and PEACE. May the sons of peace in thy country do the same.

After all my brother, whatever the highest may determine concerning this land, may thee and I and all who are in fellowship with us, be ever found sincere followers of him who has made it the peculiar tenet of his religion to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Thy sincere well wisher.

* * * *

1. A reference to Massachusetts' landholdings in western New York. When Massachusetts ceded its western lands to Congress in 1784, it specifically retained its colonial charter rights to western New York. Commissioners from the two states met in Hartford in 1786 and settled the dispute. New York retained jurisdiction over all land within its borders, but Massachusetts was given title to more than six million acres in western New York.

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