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OBSERVATIONS by a Member of the Convention at Harrisburgh.

Countrymen, This convention had not a Franklin, or a Washington at the head of it, but it had a [Charles] Pettit and [George] Bryan. It may be observed, that in the amendments proposed we have said nothing about *a bill of rights, the liberty of the press, or the trial by jury*. It was found upon examination there was nothing in the constitution which interfered with any of these. The people might try their causes, advertise their stray colts, and wear their breeches just as they used to do. It may be thought wrong to have made such a noise about these things, when there was no ground for it; more especially to have *run away from a house of assembly*,¹ to have *signed protests*, setting forth the want of these particulars, to have *voted against the constitution*, and published a *dissent in writing*; by these means setting the whole country in a flame, & representing those as traitors who did not raise the same clamour. But the people do not consider that they might not have been all villains and rascals who did this, but some of them actually well meaning ignorant men, who believed, at least a great deal of what they said.

It is true the amendments now proposed, are a great part of them unnecessary, contain[in]g little more than what is in the constitution already, but it was expedient to do something to satisfy the people; just as a physician who has led a man to believe that he is sick, and to make him think that he is well again, gives him a little warm water, with the powder of a dried leaf in it perhaps; that if it does no good, it can do him no harm.

There is one thing a little different, viz. the power of “recaling the senators.” This is right; and is like a man tying a string to his monkey, or his racoon, that he is afraid will run away; so that when it climbs up the tree a certain distance, he can at his pleasure bring it back again. It will be perfectly expedient in this state, where there are two parties, for the senators will be changed, as these alternately prevail; so that like buckets in a well the one goes down, while the other comes up; and the senate from being the most stable and dangerous body, will become the most fluctuating and absurd. In this case there will be nothing to dread from them and the immediate representatives of the people may do just what they please. Perhaps after all it might have been as well to have proposed lessening the period, for which they are chosen, but make the appointment irrevocable for the time.

It is said the Congress shall not have the power of “altering the places, times and manner of chusing senators.” They have not the power as the case now is. The clause in the constitution respects only the choice of representatives in the second house; but this was put into the amendments, either seeming to imply that it was otherwise before, or was a mere blunder and oversight in some of us that drew up the writing.

Take notice that there is to be no *poll tax*, so that the new-comers, the shop-keepers, jobbers, wayfaring-men, and bachelors, that *have no land*, are to go free; and the *farmers*, because they are able, pay the whole.

There is to be no standing army, because it is better that people should go out and be shot themselves, than pay others for doing it. The militia are to serve only two months at a time, because there can be no war that can last longer. And if the time should expire just a day before the battle ought to be, it is only to put it off until the recruit comes, and leave the *baggage and artillery standing there as a scare crow to the enemy*.

There are to be no subordinate courts established, as for instance at Pittsburgh, or in Kentucky, or elsewhere, but must all go to one *supreme court*, at the federal town I suppose, which will help to encrease the domilitium of the empire.

As to the proceeding of the convention, you will hear of them in due time. I will mention only some particulars, viz. It was insisted much amongst us, to put in a clause, that all doctors should tell diseases by the water; but it was thought this would be construed into a slur upon the Germans and the Scotch Irish, and so left out. It was [Robert] Whitehill that proposed this. [William] Findly did not come to the convention; he had thrown out such r[h]apsodies before in speaking and writing, that he was ashamed to appear and support them at this place.

We made a ticket at this meeting for the new Congress. Blair M'Clenachan is one. He may be no conjurer, as the saying is, but he is a good man. Doctor [Joseph] Gardner is also in the ticket; he is a relation by marriage, to the Simpsons in Chester county, and I think will do very well. There is one Simon Drusback pitched upon. I imagine being of the same name with one *Simon a tanner*, who made good leather in the scriptures, a great while ago. It was right that Findly should be put in nomination, because he can "Address the chair," and say, "Myster Spacker." and avoid being "parsenal," and will do great credit to the western country, amongst the orators in the new Congress. I think it would not be amiss to have him sent ambassador to the Barbary states, or some part of the world, where his dialect would be understood as an original language.

I am just thinking with myself, what these [men?] when they first go to the Congress, will propose. I should be glad to get a law passed, "Myster Spacker," to have all Fridays turned into Saturdays, and all Saturdays into Sundays, for I have observed for several years, that all Saturdays are days of rain; when we might as well be going to sermon as any where else, but can get no work done.

But we must let these things rest, and in the mean time rejoice, that this convention have, with such unanimity, agreed upon what was of no consequence nor ever will be. However, that is as it takes, and so wishing you all health and happiness, and meaning no ill to any man, I am the public's humble servant.

1. On 28–29 September 1787 enough opponents of calling a convention to ratify the Constitution stayed away from the Pennsylvania Assembly to prevent a quorum. Two of these assemblymen were taken forcibly from their lodgings to the Assembly, which then completed the resolutions calling the state Convention.

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