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Plain Truth, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 7 November 1787 (excerpt)

FRIEND OSWALD, Thy correspondent, *Timothy Meanwell*, is a weak man. I would in charity hope, that the very unworthy motive which appears to actuate him, is rather the consequence of imbecility in his brain than corruptness in his heart: and I am the more inclined to think of him in this compassionate manner, as I find his invention fails, even his scurrility, which is a feeble imitation of some of his silly predecessors. How often alas! has the public been nauseated by the paltry witticisms against my signature!

I shall not trouble thee with any more personal observations on this poor man; but it may not be amiss to shew how falsely and how weakly he has quoted that part of the new constitution which is supposed to relate to the slave trade. The constitution saith, that, this importation “shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year 1808.”—This is thus represented by TIMOTHY; “mark these words (saith he) *shall not be prohibited*,” and thence he draws this wise conclusion, that, the new government (notwithstanding this importation is already prohibited in at least 10 of the states) hath “*established slavery for 21 years*.” Suppose this federal compact had said that Congress should not prohibit theft; would that abolish the state laws and establish theft in Pennsylvania?—If friend TIMOTHY were in that case to reason in such a manner, and to act accordingly, I fear he would discover his error, under the discipline of the wheel-barrow. . . .

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