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Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 26 June 1787

Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Virginia, to his friend in this city.

*Who knows not, FRANKLIN, that within itself
AMERICA is safe, if true within itself?*

SHAKESPEAR.

“It is not owing to a want of knowledge, if the present respectable Convention fail to establish an energetic government, which will diffuse equal advantages to the remotest corner of the United States. It will be owing to the narrow minds, or selfish views of little politicians, perhaps corrupted by the influence of a foreign power, who hates to see the United States rise into importance and respect among the nations of the earth.

“It is thought that the persons who opposed the impost, and laboured for emissions of paper, were ignorant of, or inimical to, the interests of America.

“The idea of having the Supreme Federal Power divided into two or more branches meets with universal approbation—it will be a check on the intriguing spirit of the members of one House, and will be the means of bringing the deliberations of the supreme power to greater maturity—it will be a guard against precipitancy and temerity of Council.—The advantage of two branches has been conspicuous lately in Maryland—the firmness of their *Senate* saved their country from perdition.¹

“I reprobate the idea of a division of the States into three or four republics—the greatest enemy to America could have suggested nothing worse or more destructive.

“By reading the history of Ireland, when each of its provinces was a separate state, we may judge of the fatal consequences. The ancient and brave inhabitants of Spain would never have been conquered by the Carthaginians, or Romans, had they not been divided into different independent states, and employed one against the other, by the intrigues and corruption of their enemies:—But we need not look so far back, to mark the certain and fatal consequence of such division—Not to mention the unhappy state of England during the Heptarchy; Chevy-chace, Flowden Field, and Bannack-burn, are unanswerable arguments against it. What calamitous times these were, when Britain was divided only into *two* states.—My opinion is, that America would be happier under the government of France, or the present Empress of Russia, than be divided according to that malevolent suggestion.—But let us be under one vigorous government, established on liberal principles; possessed of coercion and energy sufficient to pervade and invigorate the whole—we will then rise immediately into the highest consideration—our friendship and trade will be courted by all the powers of Europe, and in a few years, the Algerines themselves will stand in awe of the brave and enterprising American.

“You mention the Federal debt:—The domestic debt rose to the enormous height by the inexperience of the supreme power, in ’78, ’79 and ’80. They employed their *Commissaries*, *Quarter-Masters*, and *Contractors*, upon *commission*, instead of agreeing for the ration; the commutation for half-pay increased it considerably.—For what purpose the foreign debt was contracted, or how it was *expended*, I believe no particular account has been given.—But if you and I, and all the men in America, do but wear our old coat one year longer, we would save a sum nearly equal to the half of our foreign debt.

“Can you mention a nation on the face of the earth, that does not manufacture, that exports so much as the United States? After our trade is put under proper regulations, and we have begun to manufacture, the public debt will dwindle into nothing. A more extensive plan of finance will probably be adopted by the new government, by which means many partial, ill-contrived taxes, will be taken off the people, which will fix their affection and attachment to government.

“You tell me that you suspect a combination against the Federal Government in Rhode-Island and New-York.—The majority of the House of Delegates of Rhode-Island have lost all character and even shame itself: Yet you see there are honest men in that state—the Judges behaved handsomely in the affair of the Tender Law, and the minority have sent some gentlemen to the Convention, who no doubt will meet with all the attention they can expect.

“There were a number of British General Officers and Members of Parliament in New-York last year, whether they have been tampering with government, time, the revealer of secrets, will display. But there being a dead vote against the impost, without the least altercation, after the necessity of the measure was demonstrated, gives room for suspicion.³ Let the case be as it will, such is the present temper of the Americans, and the resentment for the contempt they have so universally incurred on account of the weakness of government is so great, that I believe, upon my honor, the Supreme Federal Power, after an adequate government is determined upon, may command the service of 20,000 volunteers for a year without pay, to execute their orders, and fix government upon a firm and permanent basis.”

1. In May 1787 the Maryland Senate defeated an act allowing debts to be paid in installments.

2. In September 1786 the Rhode Island Superior Court, in the case of *Trevett v. Weeden*, declared unconstitutional a law that provided penalties for anyone convicted of depreciating the state’s paper money. The justices who supported the decision were not reappointed by the Assembly in May 1787.

3. In May 1786 the New York legislature granted Congress the Impost of 1783, but under conditions which were unacceptable to Congress.

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