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A Countryman V (Hugh Hughes) *New York Journal*, 22 January 1788

Letters from a Gentleman in Dutchess-County,
to his Friend in New-York.

(Continued from this Register of the 15th ult.)

January 10, 1788.

DEAR SIR, Although an unavoidable impediment has prevented my corresponding with you, as often as I wished and intended, yet it has not, entirely, deprived me of all opportunity, of revolving the general convention and their proceedings in my mind. In doing which, I always endeavour to divest myself of every prepossession for, or against them, and their conduct, and, as impartially and candidly as I am capable, to view and consider the whole in every possible point of light, in which I can place it.—And, though it is readily granted, that the convention was composed of a number of very sensible men; yet, if we take the retrospect of the time, when it was first proposed, that there should be a general convention, and the design of it; and likewise reflect, that several of the gentlemen who composed the last convention, were also members of the first, as well as members of the different legislatures which deputed them, besides being delegates to Congress; by all which means they must have had frequent, and great opportunities of learning the sentiments of others with time to read and study the best authors on government, and make up their own minds, on the subject, previous to their last meeting. . . . from what they have done, that all these combined circumstances, added to four months close application of great abilities and wisdom, which have been so often bandied about, have produced any thing adequate to what might reasonably have been expected from such united advantages?—Nay, have they produced any thing but what they ought not to have produced? And, to say no worse of it, have they not descended below the dignity of their characters? Have they not said,—“Done in convention, by the unanimous consent of the states present, &c.” shortly after which, we see, “New-York,” and “Alexander Hamilton,” annexed to it, as though the state were fully represented by that one deputy, when it had sent three deputies?—And, either forgetting, or in hopes that others would forget, have they not afterwards said, “In convention, Monday September 17, 1787. Present, the states of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut,” “Mr. Hamilton for New-York, &c.?” By what name ought this to be called? May not some of the wisdom of this world be truly called foolishness? I could very easily imagine, that a gentleman of far less understanding than “Alexander Hamilton,” is said to be, would have had modesty enough to wait for further authority, before he set his name to an instrument of such immense importance to the state which entrusted him, and honored him with its interests and commands.

What was this but setting the state and his colleagues at open defiance, and, tacitly, telling the legislature and them, “I want none of your instructions, advice, nor assistance. I better know than you or they what ought to be done, and how to do it. Yes, I know what will suit you all, much better than any body else in the state. I know, that trial by jury, of the vicinage, is a foolish custom, besides frequently embarrassing the judges, it often disappoints the lawyers, and therefore, as I may never have it in my power again, I will now contribute all I can to the abolition of it.” If it be true, that actions may speak plainer than words, which, I believe, is a maxim pretty well established, must not the foregoing, or something like it, have been the language or ideas held by that gentleman?

Can the conduct of a man be spoken too freely of, who, unauthorised, has attempted to transfer all power from the many, to the few? Has this state, or, have the United States, expended so much blood and treasure for the sake of exalting one, or the few, and depressing the many? If they have, or, if that was their view, then have they been guilty of an unpardonable offence against God and their country. But it cannot be—that never could have been *even in contemplation*, with the *honest patriots* of seventy-six. . . .

If, at any time, I should trespass on your patience, I beg you will please to place it to the account of the general convention, and believe me to be, dear Sir, Your most obedient and very humble servant,

A COUNTRYMAN.

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