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A Landholder VIII

Connecticut Courant, 24 December 1787 (excerpts)

To the Honorable ELBRIDGE GERRY, Esquire.

Sir, When a man in public life first deviates from the line of truth and rectitude, an uncommon degree of art and attention becomes necessary to secure him from detection. Duplicity of conduct in him requires more than double caution; a caution which his former habits of simplicity have never furnished him the means of calculating; and his first leap into the region of treachery and falsehood is often as fatal to himself as it was designed to be to his country. Whether you and Mr. [George] Mason may be ranked in this class of transgressors, I pretend not to determine. Certain it is that both your management and his for a short time before and after the rising of the Federal Convention impress us with a favorable opinion that you are great novices in the arts of dissimulation. A small degree of forethought would have taught you both a much more successful method of directing the rage of resentment which you caught at the close of the business at Philadelphia, than the one you took. You ought to have considered that you resided in regions very distant from each other, where different parts were to be acted, and then made your *cast* accordingly. Mr. Mason was certainly wrong in telling the world that he acted a double part; he ought not to have published two sets of *reasons for his dissent to the Constitution*. His *New England reasons* would have come better from you. He ought to have contented himself with haranguing in the Southern States, *that it was too popular, and was calculated too much for the advantage of the Eastern States*. At the same time you might have come on and, in the coffeehouse at New York, you might have found an excellent set of objections ready-made to your hands; a set that with very little alteration would have exactly suited the latitude of New England, the whole of which district ought most clearly to have been submitted to your protection and patronage. . . .

It is evident that this mode of proceeding would have been well calculated for the security of Mr. Mason; he there might have vented his ancient enmity against the independence of America, and his sore mortification for the loss of his favorite motion respecting the navigation act; and all under the mask of sentiments which, with a proper caution in expressing them, might have gained many adherents in his own state. But, although Mr. Mason's conduct might have been easily guarded in this particular, your character would not have been entirely safe even with the precaution above mentioned. . . .

I thought it my duty to give you these articles of information, for the reasons above mentioned. Wishing you more caution and better success in your future maneuvers, I have the honor to be, sir, with great respect your very humble servant.

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