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and Songs

Lansingburgh *Northern Centinel*, 11 December 1787<sup>1</sup>

THE SYREN'S SONGS,

*As sung by the celebrated modern CATO,*

*And set to music by his X—L—N—C.*

*To the tune of the Hypocrite: a new tune very much in vogue.*

SONG FIRST.

Halloo, halloo Americans, who sail  
The sea of life with passion's driving gale;  
Bring to,—heave in the wind—alas, the waves  
Scarce hide the rocks, that cause ten thousand graves.—  
Behold you breakers—see the surges beat!  
Your dangers past are small to those you'll meet:  
Whirlpools all round display impending fate—  
Bring to, my friends, and leisurely debate.—  
Here on these rocks, from lofty thrones of mud,  
I stretch my lungs across the raging flood;  
The hollow sound re-echo's in the gales,  
Distroys the sharks and frights approaching whales;—  
Taught by experience all the coast around,  
Fears when I yell, and trembles at the sound;—  
Aw'd by my howling, storms and whirlwinds cease,  
And leave reluctantly the waves at peace.  
Then hear attentive and with rage pursue,  
A plan for safety—lengthy, weak and new:  
Your ship is leaky, has been long confest,  
But leaky ships in storms are much the best;  
For when o'erwhelm'd by seas on every side,  
The gaping chinks discharge the briny tide,  
You cry, *we sink*; I grant it's even so,  
But then, my friends, it's lamentably slow;  
You may with care some hours preserve your breath,  
But yon new ship is fraught with snares and death.  
Step not on board, first view her well all round,

(’Tis safer sinking where with ease we drown)  
See if her stern new constitution wears,  
If so, she’ll founder in a thousand years.  
No ship is fitting o’er the waves to climb  
That may impair by age or endless time;—  
Search out her faults, nor credit empty fame,  
Who’d make immortal ev’ry builder’s name.  
What of itself should teach ye to dispise her  
Is—*they were men, and might, perhaps, be wiser.*  
In one like her, where yonder breakers roar,  
There ship-wreck’d Holland sinks to rise no more.  
A ship like her, while vet upon the strand,  
Made Shays, her builder, quit his native land.  
Who would not sooner perish in the flood  
Than risque their lives on such delusive wood?  
Then search her well, nor quit your crazy float,  
Some may escape with nothing but the boat;  
But if no faults your searching eyes explore,  
In future I shall lamentably roar;  
I’ll make her flaws in ev’ry dismal howl  
Plain to the night hawk and the hooting owl.  
Here I’ll remain and grope about my cave—  
From hence my future comments you shall have.  
*(The remaining Songs to appear in future papers.)*

1. This satirical verse attacks his Excellency (“X—L—N—C”) Governor George Clinton, the alleged author of the Antifederalist “Cato” essays.

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