



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Document Collections > Popular Culture and Ratification > Poetry
and Songs

Lansingburgh *Northern Centinel*, 18 December 1787

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 SECOND.

View, O! my friends, the laws the rights, the plan
Of gen'rous pow'r, prepar'd for ev'ry man;
By our grandfathers, in the days of yore,
The price of toil, of wounds, and clotted gore;
Ere fancy form'd us, ev'n in embryo,
They gain'd our freedom from the British foe:
Then be't not said, that in your hands decay'd
What to your offspring should have been convey'd.

In the last sound that stun'd your aking ears,
I bawl'd to fill each doubtful soul with fears;
To make you loiter on the brink of fate,
And while a sinking leisurely debate:
To hint how yon new ship, with as much ease,
Can steer on rocks, as sail upon the seas;
To warn you all that no one take a part,
Or *pro* or *con*, till I beguile his heart;
I promis'd to convince, in future howls,
The screaming night-birds and the greater owls.
Here had I stay'd, and rested on my mud,
An introduction fraudulent but good;
Had CÆSAR¹ slept—who treats you all—or me,
With ev'ry insult, short of calumny;
All I would say, unluckily he prates,
And what I fain would hide, anticipates.
And since, my friends, you cannot hear nor see,
Nor think aright without the help of me:

In me 'tis criminal to hesitate
A moment to appear your advocate;
You've none so fitting for a chief as I,
Therefore, unask'd, your combat mean to try;
For if I keep you in your present line,
Altho' you drown, your property is mine:
I mind not Caesar (tho' I grope in dust)
Who knows my actions always gave distrust;
And tho' he threats—he jeers—he ridicules,
Yet I'll with blanney try to make ye fools:
I'm slow of foot, but let me mount your backs,
I'd fight his shadow and destroy his tracks;
I'd chase him through the fields from side to side
And for my service ever after ride:—
Yon group of builders sent to overhaul,
Have built a new ship, rudder, keel and all,
With the same cost, and of a better mould,
But I am still for patching up the old.
To build a new was more than they'd a right,
Therefore I'd even burn her in their sight:
Then think my friends deliberate and free,
And censure Caesar while you honor me;
None shall henceforth make me my plan give o'er
While I've a cave along the dreary shore:
I mean to view, and view her o'er agen,
And find some fault about her if I can:
Then be prepar'd ye senseless drowning throng,
And you shall hear a lamentable song.

1. Probably a reference to Alexander Hamilton, the alleged author of the “Caesar” essays. Hamilton had attacked Clinton as early as July 1787 for criticizing the then sitting Constitutional Convention.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. XIX: New York [1] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2003), 429–30.