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Moderatus No. III

Boston Gazette, 4 January 1790

Messieurs PRINTERS, I observed in my first paper, that I did not intend to enter particularly into every transaction of the different parties, or the causes which from time to time led to the different measures, pursued by either, otherwise I should not have so immediately recurred to the consideration of the adoption of the Constitution of the United States; but should have attempted to shew, what indeed I presume is so generally known, that it would have been needless, that the production of the Constitution was in a considerable degree owing to the influence of the Aristocrats; and as far as the same is calculated for the good of the whole, so far they deserve credit.

The adoption of the same Constitution being a favourite and darling point with the Federalists so called, no art was left untried, no stone unturned, to effect it. Our newspapers were continually filled with paragraphs to inflame the passions of the people in its favor; its opposers were described as enemies to all Government, to all honor and honesty, it was continually represented that nothing but an adoption of this Constitution, could save us from ruin and destruction, not only as a nation, but as individuals: that our Commerce without it, would be annihilated, that of consequence our Agriculture would not encrease—that our Mechanics must want employ, consequently they and their families must be reduced to beggary that in short, a second Insurgency or Rebellion would take place, and we should be involv'd in all the horrors of a civil war:— These arguments, addressed to the feelings and passions of men, unused to the art of reasoning, and unacquainted with the theories of government, or the histories of former times, could not but have some influence on their minds; in addition to this, it was represented that the men of property, of education and all professional men were in favor of it, that the opposers of it were such as could suggest but few objections, and these they were unable to support with argument. A Convention was called, they met, and the Federalists carried their point. Now all was their own, they did not know, or affected to be ignorant of, the real cause of the adoption taking place,—No, I am wrong, they did know, but they wished to forget, and to have it forgotten;— But, my fellow-countrymen, we must not forget.—At the proposal of the Constitution, there were many good and honest men, many men of property, of education and professional men, who had objections to it;—but it was at a time the most fortunate for its supporters, of any that perhaps could have happened. It is true there were numbers who opposed it publicly and spiritedly, and among these were various characters; some, I believe it to be true, opposed it, as the Federalists said, from an opposition to all good and efficient government, from an unwillingness to grant to

the Congress of the Union any new power, or in other words any power whatever; and perhaps the opposition of such characters prevented that of others, who had objections to parts of the Constitution, from a fear that a rejection of it (and that an adoption only in part would amount thereto) would prevent so much power being given to Congress as was necessary for the good of the whole.—Others were opposed to the adoption, without previous amendments; these considered the necessity of Congress having a power of themselves to do and transact for the good of the Union many things which it was not expedient to rely on being done by the different States, on mere recommendations of Congress.—These men also considered that it was best,—that it was necessary, there should be a more efficient National Government, to answer the exigencies of the Union, and they fear'd, if this was rejected, it would be difficult to procure one with the consent of the people; and without that, a worse one might be imposed on us by force, after, possibly, a great deal of confusion, disorder and bloodshed—They therefore, in which they were joined by the moderate men, thinking *any* Government was better than *none*, joined with the Federalists, so called, in adopting the Constitution, knowing that there were provisions contained therein, for the effecting such Amendments as they thought absolutely necessary for perfecting the security of the rights of the people, and trusting that the good sense and firmness of the people, would be able to effect them when and as they pleased.—The Federalists, having now gained a great point, set themselves to work to have it carried into operation by such characters, as they tho't, least liable to be anxious respecting any amendments, regarded by the Antifederalists, as they were called, as expedient, if not necessary, to secure the rights, not only of individuals, but of the respective States. Their employ now was to keep up the spirits of the people in its favour; almost every thing was attempted that could raise and inflame the passions, well knowing that when these are awake, Reason almost always sleeps.—And indeed they so succeeded, that it was almost forgotten that any Amendments were expected.—But on the meeting of the new Congress, it was found that the desire and expectation of Amendments were so general in most of the States, that they did not think it prudent to pass the matter over entirely, but handed out to the States a few propositions, which they call Amendments; on these the Federalists have been *remarkably* silent. But of these in my next.

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