

MEDICAL

THE BEST REMEDY

The collected wisdom of the union, in that august body, after four months deliberation, proposed a new constitution, as the best remedy that could be devised for the distresses under which they, in common with their fellow-citizens, laboured.

New York Daily Gazette, 10 January 1789 (RCS SUPPL. R.I., #248, p. 198)

THE BITTER PILL

A writer, by the signature of Aristides, has labored to gild the bitter pill, but no art or sophistry can alter the nature of things.

“Extract of a letter from a gentleman of distinction in North-Carolina, dated, March 3,” *New York Journal*, 3 April 1788 (RCS N.C., 86)

CANDIED PILL

But, fellow citizens! beware of this candied pill—under this specious covering lurks a deadly serpent, which like Aaron’s, will swallow up the liberties of your country.

Benjamin Russell to Eleazer Oswald, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*
4 December 1787 (RCS MASS., 47; CC I, 579)

A CURE

Our government having apparently lost all respect for its Officers and Magistrates, by Subjecting them to the rude insults of every petty passion, Seems attentive only to the exercise of those powers which tend most to Oppress and distress the people, merely to Satisfy the mutual rage of Faction, or personal peak and resentment. When this is the case it does not require any Extraordinary degree of Present Skill to discern that anarchy and confusion must Shortly follow.

The Foederel Constitution is proposed as a cure for these evils, and such others as prevail.

From Thomas Rodney, Poplar Grove, Del.
15 April 1788 (RCS SUPPL. DEL., #42, p. 74)

DOSE

And surely the case is sufficiently desperate when we consider that violent as the dose is, the best thing we can do is to swallow it: for I confess to you I see at present [no alternative to?] an acceptance of this constitution or a dissolution of the union.

William Short to William Grayson, Paris
31 January 1788 (RCS VA., 342)

FATAL DRAUGHT

Let me ask you, my fellow-citizens, what you would think of a Physician, who, because you were slightly indisposed, should bring you a dose, which properly corrected with other ingredients might be a salutary remedy, but, of itself was a deadly poison, and with great appearance of friendship and zeal, should advise you to swallow it immediately, and trust to accident for those requisites necessary to qualify its malignity, and prevent its destructive effects?—Would not you reject the advice, in however friendly a manner it might appear to be given, with indignation, and insist that he should first procure, and properly attemper, the necessary ingredients, since after the *fatal draught* was once received into your bowels, it would be too late, should the antidote prove unattainable, and death must ensue?

Luther Martin: Address No. III, *Maryland Journal*
28 March 1788 (CC 4, 502)

THE GILDED PILL

On a careful examination, you will find, that many of its parts, of little moment, are well formed; in these it has a specious resemblance of a free government—but this is not sufficient to justify the adoption of it—the gilded pill, is often found to contain the most deadly poison.

“Brutus” III (Melancton Smith), *New York Journal*
15 November 1787 (RCS N.Y., 252; CC 2, 119)



These violent partizans are for having the people gulp down the gilded pill blind-folded, whole, & without any qualification whatever, these consist generally, of the NOBLE order of C[incinnati], holders of public securities, men of great wealth and expectations of public office, B[ro]k[er]s and L[aw]y[er]s.

“A Federalist,” *Boston Gazette*
26 November 1787 (RCS MASS., 322)



I am not alone in this opinion, for there are many of the first abilities in this and the neighboring states with whom I correspond, as well by letters as otherways, besides the above 41, that think this new Constitution a gilded pill.

Hugh Ledlie to John Lamb, Hartford, Conn.
15 January 1788 (RCS CONN., 576–77)



We trust in the State at large, to refuse the gilded pill proffered in this newly fangled constitution.

“A Real Federalist,” Poughkeepsie, N.Y., *Country Journal*
11 March 1788 (RCS N.Y., 1446)



Much more might be said to shew the bitterness and mischief contained in this gilded pill, but being fond of brevity, I shall rely on the good sense of the public to keep themselves out of the trap.

“A Newport Man,” *Newport Mercury*
17 March 1788 (RCS R.I., 118)



When the gilded Pill was swallowed by a Majority of Ten out of one hundred and four Members present.

Joshua Atherton to John Lamb, Amherst, N.H.
23 June 1788 (RCS N.H., 396)

THE GREAT AND EFFECTUAL REMEDY OF OUR COMPLICATED POLITICAL DISORDERS

Against these evils the system under consideration, in our opinion furnishes effectual provision; and with such a provision it can scarcely

contain any defects, sufficient to warrant its rejection. This we esteem the great and effectual remedy of our complicated political disorders.

New Haven Gazette, 20 December 1787 (RCS SUPPL. CONN., #52, p. 75)

INDIGESTIBLE PANACEA

While several very worthy characters, too timid for their situation, magnified the hopeless alternative, between the dissolution of the bands of all government, and receiving the proffered system *in toto*, after long endeavouring to reconcile it to their consciences, swallowed the indigestible penacea, and in a kind of sudden desperation lent their signature to the dereliction of the honorable station they held in the Union.

“A Columbian Patriot” (Mercy Otis Warren): *Observations on the Constitution*
Boston, February 1788 (CC 4, 286)

MEDICINE

But, alas! to my great mortification, and no doubt to yours, the wound we gave our country is almost healed, and a medicine is now preparing, which, if taken, will absolutely effect a radical cure.

“Junius,” *Massachusetts Gazette*
4 January 1788 (RCS MASS., 612)

PANACEA

And whereas it hath been reported that several of our *lowborn* brethren have had the horrid audacity to think for themselves in regard to this new system of government, and, *dreadful thought!* have wickedly began to doubt concerning the perfection of this evangelical Constitution which our political doctors have declared to be a panacea, which (by inspiration) they know will infallibly heal every distemper in the Confederation and finally terminate in the salvation of America.

“John Humble,” Address of the Lowborn, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*
29 October 1787 (RCS PA., 205)

THE PANACEA OF AMERICA

Mr. Barnwell concluded by declaring that this constitution was, in his opinion, like the laws of Solon, not the best possible to be formed, but the best that our situation will admit of—He considered it as the Panacea of America, whose healing power will pervade the continent, and

sincerely believed that its ratification is *a consummation devoutly to be wished*.

Robert Barnwell, Speech in the S.C. House of Representatives
17 January 1788 (RCS S.C., 133; RCS SUPPL. S.C., #11, p. 35)

THE PANECEA OR CURE OF EVERY GRIEVANCE

Fellow-Citizens, The new constitution instead of being the panecea or cure of every grievance so delusively represented by its advocates will be found upon examination like Pandora's box, replete with every evil.

"Centinel XVI" (Samuel Bryan), Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*
26 February 1788 (CC 4, 218)

THE PILL

These lawyers, and men of learning, and monied men, that talk so finely and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill.

Amos Singletary, Speech in the Massachusetts Convention
25 January 1788 (RCS MASS., 1345–46)

PRESCRIPTION

The prescription is no sooner made known however, than a number of persons interpose, and without denying the reality or danger of the disorder, assure the patient that the prescription will be poison to his constitution, and forbid him under pain of certain death to make use of it.

"Publius" (James Madison): *The Federalist* 38
New York *Independent Journal*, 12 January 1788 (CC 3, 355)

REMEDY

Members of the convention would not have proposed so desperate a remedy if the evil had not appeared to them equally desperate.—I am afraid the case will not be mended by the Patient's refusing to take the violent dose prescribed.

William Short to James Madison, Paris
21 December 1787 (RCS VA., 256; CC 2, 486)



The new constitution may not only be inadequate as a remedy, but destructive of liberty, and the completion of misery.

“Centinel” XI (Samuel Bryan), Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*
16 January 1788 (CC 3, 387)



We all know however the more desperate any disease has become, so much more violent must be the remedy.

“The State Soldier” I (George Nicholas?), *Virginia Independent Chronicle*
16 January 1788 (RCS VA., 304)



The remedy will prove infinitely worse than the disease.

“A Farmer” VII (Part 6), Baltimore *Maryland Gazette*
25 April 1788, RCS MD., 535)



All men saw no alternative. Everyone knew of no other remedy, and there was none but prefigured to himself those convulsive scenes which are too apt to afflict a government whose sinews were not sufficiently strengthened by the maturity of manhood.

“A Georgia Backwoodman,” Charleston, S.C., *City Gazette*
24 May 1788 (RCS SUPPL. GA., #40, p. 34)

REMEDY PROPOSED

Are they agreed, are any two of them agreed in their objections to the remedy proposed, or in the proper one to be substituted? Let them speak for themselves.

“Publius” (James Madison): The Federalist 38
New York *Independent Journal*, 12 January 1788 (CC 3, 356)



There are others who acknowledge that a reform is necessary, but at the same time start numerous objections to the remedy proposed.

“Publicola” (Archibald Maclaine): An Address to the Freemen of North Carolina
State Gazette of North Carolina, 20 March 1788 (CC 4, 436)

VIOLENT DOSE PRESCRIBED

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21 December 1787 (RCS VA., 256; CC 2, 486)