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Centinel VIII

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(excerpts)

To the PEOPLE of PENNSYLVANIA.

. . . The conspirators against our liberties have presumed too much on the maxim that nations do not take the alarm, until they feel oppression: the enlightened citizens of America have on two memorable occasions convinced the tyrants of Europe that they are endued with the faculty of foresight, that they will jealously guard against the first introduction of tyranny, however speciously glossed over, or whatever appearance it may assume: It was not the mere amount of *the duty on stamps*, or *tea* that America opposed, they were considered as signals of approaching despotism, as precedents whereon the superstructure of arbitrary sway was to be reared.

Notwithstanding such illustrious evidence of the good sense and spirit of the people of these United States, and contrary to all former experience of mankind, which demonstrates that it is only by gradual and imperceptible degrees that nations have hitherto been enslaved, except in case of conquest by the sword; the authors of the present conspiracy are attempting to seize upon absolute power at one grasp, impatient of dominion they have adopted a decisive line of conduct, which, if successful, would obliterate every trace of liberty. I congratulate my fellow citizens that the infatuated confidence of their enemies has so blinded their ambition, that their defeat must be certain and easy, if imitating the refined policy of successful despots, they had attacked the citadel of liberty by sap, and gradually undermined its outworks, they would have stood a fairer chance of effecting their design; but in this enlightened age thus rashly to attempt to carry the fortress by storm, is folly indeed. . . .

So flagrant, so audacious a conspiracy against the liberties of a free people is without precedent. Mankind in the darkest ages have never been so insulted; even then, tyrants found it necessary to pay some respect to the habits and feelings of the people, and nothing but the name of a Washington could have occasioned a moment's hesitation about the nature of the new plan, or saved its authors from the execration and vengeance of the people, which eventually will prove an aggravation of their treason; for America will resent the imposition practised upon the unsuspecting zeal of her *illustrious deliverer*, and vindicate her character from the aspersions of these enemies of her happiness and fame.

The advocates of this plan have artfully attempted to veil over the true nature and principles of it with the names of those respectable characters that by consummate cunning and address they have prevailed upon to sign it, and what ought to convince the people of the deception and excite their apprehensions, is that with every advantage which education, the science of government and of law, the knowledge of history and superior talents and endowments, furnish the authors and advocates of this plan with, they have from its publication exerted all their power and influence to prevent all discussion of the subject, and when this could not be prevented they have constantly avoided the ground of argument and recurred to declamation, sophistry and personal abuse, but principally relied upon the magic of names. Would this have been their conduct, if their cause had been a good one? No, they would have invited investigation and convinced the understandings of the people. . . .

View the desperate fortunes of many of his co-adjutors and dependants, particularly the bankrupt situation of the principal instrument under the *great man* in promoting the new government, whose superlative arrogance, ambition and rapacity, would need the spoils of thousands to gratify. . . .

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