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Valerius

Baltimore *Maryland Gazette*, 1 February 1788 (excerpts)

Strictures, on “The Address, and Reasons of Dissent, of the Minority, of the Convention of Pennsylvania, to their Constituents,” concluded from our last.

After following this junto through all the parts of their laboured address to their constituents that merits in the smallest degree an answer, or from which the smallest danger of misleading even weak minds can arise, I request the people of this State to be on their guard—Consider the great business now before them and waits for their adoption and ratification. . . .

I hope there will be no hesitation as to the propriety of adopting the new constitution. And I sincerely wish that this State will think for herself and not be influenced by the contemptible part which the enemies to the constitution have taken in Pennsylvania and elsewhere—Their numbers are few, and those few are unworthy of imitation.—The proceedings of the minority can only infect those whose minds are predisposed to its operation;—and the poison let loose from its fermenting and putrifying source, will be contagious only to those whose constitutions are too weak to resist its baneful influence.

If the public will only reflect who are the enemies to the new constitution in Pennsylvania, and examine into their public characters and dispositions, she will find their exertions against the constitution to be the off-fallings of weak intellects, the excrementitious discharges of minds either too weak to digest the simple appearance of a common argument, or too malicious to acknowledge truth, or administer justice where it is due, within their comprehension, and at their easy command—men who would rather stab in the dark, the reputation and future happiness of America, than extend an arm to withdraw the dagger from the bleeding wounds of their country. As to the former class of beings, they are entitled to our compassion—the latter can only excite our contempt—The one has no other claim to the attention of the public but that which arises from their form, our pity and mercy.—The other class of men are still lower, because from the corruption of their mind and morals, they have forfeited even their title to the solitary emotion of pity, and sunk themselves beneath the dignity of human thought.—Can the virtuous ambition and noble pride of the people of Maryland, fall from its dignity and be misled by such men as these? Reason and Heaven forbid it.

After finding their arguments so inadequate to the purposes for which they were intended, and so far below the dignity of reason in support of the part which they have taken in the convention: I say, after discovering such deficiency in their understandings, we are justified in

suspecting the corruption has extended to their morals—And perhaps upon examination we will find their motives as viciated as their intellects are depraved. . . .

They have been more distinguished for cunning and malicious resentment against men, than remarked for the proposal and adoption of good or wise measures.—If necessary, the public shall have a list of the names, who from this black catalogue—whose constant and unwearied business has ever been to oppose every measure proposed and advocated by particular men.—Whether a measure is for the benefit or disadvantage of the State is not a question with them, whose most glorious efforts of soul consists in personal resentment, and rather than stifle the inflammatory dictates of hearts calous to public or private virtue, would violate every principle of law and good government.

It is not one instance in their conduct from which the world is to form an opinion of them—It is not their proceedings in the present instance—It is not that they are now sinning against conviction, and premeditating unhappiness to their constituents; but it is that their minds has ever been so watchful over itself that they have never been betrayed into a wise or benevolent action. . . . But it is the confirmed and uniform genius of their whole political life that will render them contemptible while alive, and record their names for the benefit of posterity; not as patterns to be imitated, but as monuments for their detestation and abhorrence, and as negative examples to all future generations of men—Elevated on the immortal standard of merited infamy, they will there remain conspicuous and contemptible, not worthy of exciting the solitary emotion of pity, or a merciful thought of possible sincerity to their constituents, but consigned to eternal disgrace without even the colour of virtue.—Riveted to their fate—Gibbeted in the opinion of all virtuous men,—they have no chance of escape but through the corruption of their nature, or the lot of oblivion.—Scorched by the rays of truth—darkened by the heat of observation—they have no alternative but in the ashes of annihilation, or to be reduced to their original state, the calks of human nature.

Their attack on the characters of the members who composed the continental convention, measures the extent of their capacity, and at the same time discovers their abhorrence of virtue and hatred towards good men.—As contemptible as this attack is upon those illustrious characters in convention, let me follow their example for once, and extend the comparative idea a little further—After requesting the public to take a view of those great and good men, under whose authority the federal constitution is recommended to America—and also take under their observation the few pitiful characters who refused to subscribe to the constitution, together with the reasons given on each side of the question—I then request of the Pennsylvania junto to contemplate the names and characters of those men who composed the majority in their State convention, and then look down upon the minority, digest the reasons given by the former, and if possible, comprehend the rough and inflammatory declamation thrown out by the latter. If upon trial they find the splendor of the characters they have yet to understand, should be too powerful for their comprehension, and demonstrate to them a truth, the impossibility of their beholding righteousness, then permit the world to draw the conclusion, and benefit by the contrast.

A word or two to the minority themselves, and then I shall take my leave of them forever, unless they should again transgress.—It must excite the compassion of every friend to human nature, when we see men from the weakness of their understandings betrayed into measures, for the commission of which, if the severity of justice was to operate against them, the just vengeance of their country knows not where to pause, whether under the gallows, or at the wheel-barrow!

Though the weakness of the head is sometimes urged as an argument to excuse the corruption of the heart; yet this benevolent construction of [— —], is [— —] [— —] hour; but when men subscribe to measures, and continue to make every exertion to breed a civil war in their State, their stupidity and gross ignorance can be no excuse; though they do not premeditate or plan the mischief, yet they are the executors of it—If the extent of their understandings were known by the public, their ignorance would counteract their infamy;—but their insignificance protects them from observation.

Coming forth as a minority in convention, they conceived the world would give them credit for the composition to which their names are annexed; when it is well known the address was written by Mr. B——, of Philadelphia, and corrected and amended by an attorney, who the public cannot but know, when the junto is thought of—The mind unites him with them, by the same involuntary propensity, that she connects infamy to the whole of them.—Happy, thrice happy, were this minority in being brought into public view, some of them for the first time, by any means; and rather than be unknown, they would be notoriously infamous. . . .

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