

B. Russell

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## POLITICAL.

From the American Mercury.—No. X.  
TO THE FREEMEN OF CONNECTICUT.

### Fellow-Citizens,

IT appears by Mr. Griswold's own declarations published in the Mercury of last week, that Mr. Tracey's interview with him was not requested by Mr. Tracey. I feel great alacrity in correcting the mistake. It is a circumstance of little or no importance as it respects the main question before the public. I have already observed that every thing which I stated relative to the interview, except the substance of Tracey's remarks, was stated from memory—that with regard to the substance of the conversation I had stated that from minutes taken at the time I received the information. Mr. Griswold it seems after the conversation was over, did, on reflection, consider it as having been particularly intended and previously planned by Mr. Tracey. At least so I now understand him; and it is highly probable that this idea, not so distinctly expressed, as at present, or perhaps heard with less attention, as being a circumstance of little moment, impressed my mind as a declaration that the interview was requested by Mr. Tracey. And indeed as it respects any question that the public are to decide, I see not how it is to be affected whether Tracey requested, or only designed and sought for the interview. The advantages of this conversation, however, be they what they may, belong fairly to Mr. Tracey. You will understand then Fellow-Citizens, that the conversation took place, as has been constantly stated, at the house of Parson Champion—that it was not five or six, but more than eight years ago—that Dr. Sheldon was present during part of the conversation, and as will appear in the sequel, that part of it which he did hear, he was at the time able to comprehend—and you will also understand that the interview was not solicited by Mr. Tracey.

Mr. Griswold, in his statement above-mentioned, informs the public that minutes of the conversation taken at the period it took place, are contained in what he calls a Memoir. He observes also that with respect to the substance of the conversation as stated by me, it is generally correct, tho' expressed some what differently from the Memoir; and that my statement "varies in some respect from the precise ideas communicated by Mr. Tracey." I did endeavour to convey the ideas precisely as I received them, without pretending, however, to close them in the same language in which I received them. It will perhaps inevitably happen that in the course of a lengthy and multifarious communication, there will be in some respects, shades of difference between the ideas of the speaker, as he means to convey them, and those impressed on the mind of the hearer. Mr. Griswold has been so obliging as to entrust me with his Memoir, and that the public may be enabled to judge whether I have been unjust to Mr. Tracey in my statement of the conversation, and wherein consists this difference of which Mr. Griswold speaks, I now communicate the conversation in Mr. Griswold's own words:

"After flattering me for a Sermon he had heard me preach on the divine government of the world, he took occasion to open to me his ideas on civil government, and suggested a system of policy, scheme or plan which he said was well understood and settled with many of the leading men in our government; particularly in the New-England states, & some at the southward, and which was determined to be brought about in this country. He observed that there was something in it very clever for the clergy. The substance was as follows:

"That the people of this country enjoy too much liberty, and by far too much equality. He described how they are owners of the soil they till, each man being a little lord of his possessions: all generally about equal in property—not obliged to toil very hard—having somewhat to spare of their earnings over and above a bare subsistence, and having leisure to attend to many idle objects, &c. He applied this description particularly to Connecticut, and New-England, & spoke of it as being a condition of society highly prized by the people, tho' in his opinion they greatly mistook their own happiness.

"That so long as this condition continues government must forever be weak and good for little or nothing, continually exposed to opposition, hindrance, turmoils, insurrections, and an overthrow. For beside the natural spirit of pride and insubmission, inseparable from people of such habits and such circumstances, they are able to lay out their warnings in buying Newspapers, Books, &c. and having leisure to read, they of course become mighty politicians, acquainted beforehand with all that ought to

be done by government, and with all that ought not to be done, are ready to pronounce what is done right & what wrong; and so will condemn public measures which happen not to comport exactly with their great knowledge, or which cross their present interests, and will not suffer them to be carried into execution. You know, said he, that every man in Connecticut is a politician, and knows more than those he sends to Congress.—He had much to say upon the inconveniences and dangers of such a state of things; and belittled not a little ridicule upon the boasted liberty and equality of the New-Englanders, for the preservation of which they so strenuously contended in the revolution. Classing it all with French Liberty, he condemned the whole decidedly (tho' French Liberty was not then unpopular in this country). In speaking on this subject one of his observations was, that the *Tree of Liberty grows in hell*, and all the Liberty Poles that ever were in America, France and Holland, were but twigs and shoots of the grand tree in hell.

"That this condition of the people must be broken up, and that our country can never be happy until it is done.

"He adverted to the British government and state of society as the best in the world, and signified that this country must assimilate to Great-Britain, in these respects. That we must have a King here, but that he must not be called King—for the good old whigs would start at the name, because they once fought against a king and have been led to consider the name with abhorrence. He must be called a President, but must have every essential requisite of a king in a limited monarchy.

"That we must have a body of Noblemen here, but they must not be called Noblemen, for the whigs would start at this also. They must however have the essential requisites of a body of Noblemen.

"That we must have an established religion here, and an established clergy, with good fat salaries, independent of the people.

"That after all this the rest of the people must be reduced to a condition in which they will be obliged to toil hard, be supplied with drains to take off their spare money, leaving them barely a sufficiency to support life, unable to buy Newspapers, and to become such mighty politicians—knowing no more than how to plough, and hoe, and go to meeting, mind their own business, and let gentlemen go on & make laws, and the executive administer them without saying why do ye so. Then it will be happy times—the people will be easily governed, and the government will have energy. And not till then will the country be happy. In this stage of the discourse he remarked, with disapprobation, upon the fondness of New-England people to school their children—and said he wished the Connecticut Western Reserve were sunk out of existence, and that the people of Connecticut might never reap a cent's benefit from it for the purpose of schooling.

"That one great means to bring all this about was a Public Debt, Funds, and Taxes. He laughed at the motives which impelled the honest old Whigs to undertake the American Revolution, and achieve the Independence of this country—he approved the independence, but ridiculed the motives by which the people were led to accomplish it; as if they were thereby going to secure themselves forever from heavy taxation, and preserve their equal and free state of living, and he equally laughed at their motives for adopting the federal government, so far as they hoped by facilitating the collection of Revenue, to pay off the public debt. Instead of paying it off, or lessening it at all, he held that it must be increased by every possible means. A public debt, in the first place, was necessary in order to create funds—and funds were necessary, in order to raise up a body of Noblemen, or what were equal to Noblemen with a strong executive at their head. Then taxes would be necessary in order to discharge the interest of the fund or debt; which by falling upon the people to pay, would prove convenient drains to take off their spare money—and in time when the debt should become large enough, would oblige them to relinquish their idle curiosity about Newspapers and politics, and compel them to attend to nothing, and to know nothing but to plough and hoe, and go to meetings, and let government alone.

"Such was the outline of the plan as suggested to me. Through the whole I had reason to believe him serious and sin-

cere. It is certain I took him to be so, and was greatly alarmed at what I had heard. I expressed my utter astonishment, and told him that whatever reason he might have from my personal friendship, professional character, or other circumstances, to expect that I would approve of such a scheme, I must call it wicked beyond measure, totally opposite to the principles of our revolution, and of what I believed to be eternal equity and righteousness, that I must resist it in every part—that I considered our country in a most perilous situation, if such a scheme were really contemplated by our leading men—and that if the people of this state had heard what I had heard, popular as he was, they would instantly execrate him, and hurl him from his place, and consign him to ignomy and contempt. He entered into a spirited vindication of what he had laid down, and was at times exceedingly warm. The debate continued till one or two o'clock at night, when he left me without being at all nearer together in sentiments."

The conversation as now stated, Mr. Griswold solemnly declares did take place. This is denied by Nathan's two gentlemen, Dr. Sheldon and Betsey Champion. With regard to the latter enough has perhaps been said to convince most of you, fellow-citizens, that her name ought to be struck out of the list of gentlemen, as it has for thirty years been erased from the list of ladies. In short it is unquestionably true that where she is known her testimony would not decide the property of a straw; and if it could be necessary to make further answer to such testimony, of such a woman, it can now be proved that since subscribing the certificate that has been published, she has declared that it was with great reluctance she did it, as she recollected nothing particular about the conversation that she was told that it was a duty she owed her God to say something, and that it probably would not be published, and she really hoped it would not. The danger is, fellow-citizens, that to honest, uncorrupted men such as most of you are, that a transaction like this will appear impossible; you will be apt to reject all evidence that goes to prove men who call themselves respectable and whom you have been in the habit of considering as such, capable of such transcendent depravity. What I apply to a drunken brute who swears in the name of the Most High, to bear witness to a downright palpable falsehood!! Is this possible? Yes this is possible. It will be recollected that in my last number I intimated that the certificates of Sheldon and Betsey Champion were written and prepared by Nathan. I now repeat the charge, and challenge either Nathan or Hudson and Goodwin to contradict it. Betsey Champion's testimony may be laid out of the question, especially as it has ever been understood that she has at all times stood ready to do any thing to gratify Mr. Tracey.—With regard to Dr. Sheldon, the following certificates will shew how he formerly understood what he heard of the conversation, and of course what credit is due to his certificate. The character of Esq. Prindle is extensively known. I think I shall not be contradicted when I say that his integrity is undoubted, and that he is not like Dr. Sheldon, noted for a treacherous memory. His certificate explains the reason why Sheldon unboasted himself to him. Of Sheldon's answer to Mr. Griswold's letter I have heard nothing more than is stated by Esq. Prindle—if an answer was ever made, probably Dr. Sheldon will publish it. The Messrs. Grants are, as I am informed, very reputable men, of fair characters.

I, MARK FRINDLE, of the town and county of Litchfield, do certify, That in the month of July, 1795, I employed Dr. Daniel Sheldon, of Litchfield, as a Physician to attend my son, who was at that time ill, and of which illness he died—it was on a Sunday morning he came—he carried with me the whole day (at which time I resided at Huntington) and after he had attended in his Patient, he immediately broached the subject of Politics:—To make my Certificate more intelligible, I premise, that I was a Tory (so called) in the revolutionary war—I was also at that period a French federalist (so far as federalism of that time was known and understood)—Dr. Sheldon was well acquainted with these facts, he truly unboasted himself to me on the subject of government. He said that the Old Tories who were such upon PRINDLE, were the best men for us at the present day, as their sentiments generally formed the best and safest mode of Administration.—Dr. Sheldon very soon mentioned to me that Parson Griswold the 1st of Spring, being the Spring of 1795, preached at Litchfield, and after meeting he went to Parson Champion's, and in the evening, he, he don called on him, and pretty soon after Gen. Tracey, he said, also came to Parson Champion's, and there held a very lengthy political conversation with Parson Griswold. Dr. Sheldon at this time related to me very minutely the whole conversation, as he then told me, which was very lengthy; the particulars at this distance of time have in a considerable measure escaped me; but it is with perfect cleanness and consciousness that I recollect and state, that he told me that Tracey's whole bent was to establish the idea that a limited Monarchy was the best and safest form of government that ever existed—that his sentiments there advanced to Mr. Griswold were anti-revolutionary, and anti-republican. I said Tracey took highly of the British form of government, and expatiated largely on the happy consequences resulting therefrom. I then asked Dr. Sheldon whether it was possible that Mr. Tracey should such sentiments in that manner? Yes, Dr. Sheldon, he does not hesitate to go so—he then said that he, Tracey, had

been to Hartford, the May before, during the session of the General Assembly, to disseminate those principles, and that he had no other business—I further certify, that at this time Dr. Sheldon read me the letter which he had received from Parson Griswold, relating to this conversation, as also an answer which he had prepared to send Mr. Griswold, or a copy of a letter which he had actually sent, which I cannot with clearness remember—I further certify that the principles which Dr. Sheldon observed to me, as coming from Gen. Tracey, did not so much surprise me as that he should be thus active in propagating them—for I, at that time and ever since the spring of '95, have uniformly entertained an opinion that Gen. Tracey was hostile to both civil and religious liberty; as he on his way from Hartford that Spring, fell in company with me, in Huntington, and informed me of the Confidence Bill (so called) which was passed into a law that session, and took much pains to convince me of the propriety of the law; the October session following, I well remember (being a member myself of the house) but on a resolution offered for the repeal of that law, Mr. Tracey was foremost in the ranks in his opposition to the repeal.

MARK FRINDLE,

December 19, 1803.

WE the Subscribers, of the town and county of Litchfield, do certify, that Dr. Daniel Sheldon, a considerable time ago, being at our house as a physician, began to talk with us on the subject of politics, and among other things he told us that Gen. Tracey in the noted conversation with Parson Griswold said that the common people ought to put on their Leather Aprons and attend to their own business and let politics and the concerns of government alone, and that he (Tracey) would attend to his Co-greivous business without intermeddling in the business of common people."

AMBROSE GRANT,  
CHARLES GRANT.

Litchfield, Dec. 24, 1803.

ASI intend here to finish what I have to observe relative to this part of the charge against Mr. Tracey, that is, his conversation with Mr. Griswold, I beg leave to recapitulate in few words the proof that has been produced on either side.—In the first place, then, Mr. Griswold declares the conversation to have been such as now stated—he says he took minutes of it at the time—it is certain that at the time he wrote a letter corresponding with his present declarations—it is certain too that when he wrote the letter he was on terms of intimacy with, and strongly attached by the ties of personal friendship to Mr. Tracey—he could not have mistaken the purport of the conversation; this is not pretended—no motive has been, nor do I believe can be imagined, that should have induced him wilfully to calumniate Mr. Tracey; for if the conversation was such as Sheldon states; it could not possibly have given an offence to Mr. Griswold—it could not have interrupted his friendship for Mr. Tracey—I might add, but that is certainly unnecessary, that his character and the uniform tenor of his conduct through life, place him out of the reach of a suspicion of this base kind.

On the other hand, Dr. Sheldon (I shall say nothing further of Betsey Champion) declares that no such conversation as is stated, took place; at the same time he is guilty of gross self-contradiction; and publishes Mr. Griswold's letter, which to any candid mind demonstrates his statement to be incorrect. Then follow the certificates of three men, either of them entitled to as much credit as Dr. Sheldon, even if he were not known to be so entirely under the influence of Tracey and other great men, as to say what they say, and to believe what they believe, without even the power of recollecting what he had ever said or believed to the contrary. These certificates are too explicit to need comment. In short, the only difficulty seems now to be, how I shall preserve to the Doctor the character for honesty which I have allowed him. Perhaps I was mistaken, I still think, however, as before. The Doctor seems to me to be much such a character as the celebrated Sancho Panza, who having stoutly asserted his knowledge of certain incredible facts, when pressed on the subject, confessed that he was not present when they took place, but that his friend had assured him that they were so true that he might safely swear he had seen them with his own eyes.

That the Doctor has testified directly in the face of truth, and of his former declarations, is, if I am not greatly mistaken, for the present put beyond all doubt in every mind not resolved against conviction. DAVID.

The following is copied from a miscellaneous volume, published in 1792:—

"One striking feature in the political complexion of the Dutch Republic is, that the children of both sexes are from the moment of the earliest capability, initiated them. So of industrious avocation are chalked out on and Lycurgus could not of the Grecian States. It was an opinion of Alexander the Great that boys, artured and brought up in the camp, were ever after fond of arms—and practice good, that children, early train-holds equally, ever incline to it in maturity—in the language of the poet, "it grows with their growth, and strengthens with their strength." To our countrymen, we hope the application is evident. If they accustom their little ones to honest employments (such as will suit their years, constitution and choices) they will thereby render them virtuous and independent citizens, a credit to themselves, and an ornament to society. The consequences of a different conduct are evident."