

THE MINERVA.

J. D. Murphy

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From the Vermont Journal.

MR. ELLIOT TO HIS CONSTITUENTS.
LETTER X.

I am accused of abandoning the principles of liberty, and of joining in a plot for the division of the Union. The charges are false, and the authors of them know them to be false.

Who are the real friends of liberty, of genuine, regulated liberty? Is the frantic revolutionist a more rational friend of freedom than the sullen monarchist? Is the man who advocates peace and union to be considered as a disorganizer? But is it said that the federalists are all monarchists, and that the principles of republicanism and monarchy can no more be united, than oil and water can be mingled, or than the glare of day and the gloom of night can be amalgamated. A few days since my constituents were also professed federalists: I was myself a member of the little band who opposed in this district the administration of Mr. Adams. Should I dare to ask my constituents, were you, in 1798, when you supported federal candidates and federal measures, enemies to the rights of man, enemies to your own rights? They would instantly answer with indignation, No—we have always been republicans. It is then more than common charity to conclude that the immense majority of those who still profess the principles of federalism are also republicans? Among the many thousands who have left the federal standard, how many have told us that they had been concerned in a plot for the destruction of liberty? Not one. Monarchical principles are confined to a few individuals in our country, and among these individuals may be placed some of our most ardent republicans!

It is said that the idea of a union of the people of the northern states in one great political interest will produce a division of the Union: and those who say this look with perfect complacency upon that gigantic mass of influence which a similar union in the southern states has already created. In other words to preserve the Union, the southern states must be united as one man, and the northern must be divided and distracted.—Miserable sophism! Absurd and foolish dogma! Let me here repeat that a perfect union among ourselves would induce us to demand no more than our due share of political weight, which would then be yielded to us, and the Union would be preserved, and even rendered more secure.

Various are the opinions of men of reflection in relation to the probable effects of the acquisition of Louisiana.—Upon no subject have I found it more difficult to form an opinion for myself. Some believe that a commercial connexion will take place between the eastern and the western states; that the people of New England will carry to those of the Mississippi the productions of all other parts of the world, and export for them their own productions; and that this commercial connexion will produce a political one, favourable to us, and unfavourable to the southern states.—Others argue that the inhabitants of the west will be a shipbuilding and agricultural people; that their vicinity to the West-India markets will enable them to supersede us in some of the most profitable branches of our commerce; and that the idea of a political connexion with us, though splendid, is perfectly delusive. The prospect indeed is rather gloomy. But putting Louisiana out of the question, the number of representatives allotted to which the southern states must forever secure them a majority in the matrix of the Union.—The slaves are not represented, but three fifths of their number added to the number of the persons, & this determines the number of representatives from the state.—Were the slaves made free, we could not refuse, upon our own principles, to allow them representatives; but, deprived as they are, of all civil rights, and considered merely as property, it would be unjust that the Vermont farmer should be entitled to a representation for his estate, as the Virginian planter for his negro. No northern man who has caught

a single spark of freedom's flame from the altar of patriotism, but must wish that these things were not so. Such however, is the confusion of our country, that sacred instrument, which I hope never to see violated in any of its essential principles; and as it is not to be expected that the people of the southern states will ever agree to an alteration fraught with ruin to their interests, it is to be hoped that the subject will not again be agitated.

We are continually told that there is no dissimilarity of interests between the people of the northern and those of the southern states. When we prove that clashing interests do exist, we are lured to sleep by siren songs and melodious eulogies upon southern magnanimity. We are told that our southern brethren will take better care of us than we could take of ourselves. On this subject, the contempt with which northern representatives are treated, the trifling attention paid to any measures which they propose, the attempt to extinguish the state balances, to abolish the loan-offices, and to reject the Georgia claims, the additional duties upon commerce, the late alteration of the constitution, and the other alterations which are contemplated, speak a language more expressive than all the thunder of eloquence. As the demerit rests of the demerits, we are told that the immortal Washington cautioned the people against those who should attempt to create geographical parties. He did so. He had in view the great and general interests of the nation, the constitution itself, and not those minor interests which exist in the very nature of things; for, in the high character of President of the National Convention, he had before told us that "the constitution is the result of a spirit of amity, & of that mutual deference and concession which the peculiarity of our political situation rendered indispensable." If, however, the sagacious mind of Washington did not anticipate the present state of things, that circumstance can form no argument against our accommodating our conduct to the events and prospects of the times.

It cannot be too often repeated that "man is man." Did the northern states possess power, their political system would probably be analogous to that which now governs the southern. But power is departed from us; and I hope that we shall never attempt to regain it by any other than honest means. The editor of the principal paper published at the seat of government, an honest and candid man, has not been able to conceal his exultation at the prospect of northern humiliation. Admitting that the northern states no longer possess political weight, he asks, with an air of triumph, "And why does the south rule the north? Because the south is united and the north is divided." I have just said the same myself. *The north goes up, and the south creeps not back.* There are men who are less honest on this subject than the editor of the National Intelligencer. I am assured, from unquestionable authority, that it is part of the system of some young and ambitious politicians of the south, to add fuel to the flame of party spirit in the north, that they may divide & govern us, as the Romans divided and governed the Greeks.

It may be arrogant in me to declare that the opinions which I now avow will one day command the universal assent of the people in the northern quarter of the Union: But as I always make it a point to say what I think, I shall hazard the assertion.

If at a future day new parties should arise in our country, and we should be divided into northern men and southern men, instead of federalists and democrats, would any one doubt the propriety and patriotism of supporting the northern interest in all its constitutional and reasonable rights?—Should we be divided into large state and small state parties, would it be contended that the people of the north ought not to embrace the interest of the small states?—Vermont, New-Hampshire, Rhode-Island and Connecticut, by an irrevocable law of nature, must always be small states. Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, though now small, will very soon be in the first class of large states. Hence the absurdity

of the triumph of the friends of the late amendment of the constitution, upon its unanimous adoption by the *small states* of the south and west. Should we be divided into a constitutional and an anti-constitutional party, would any one censure a "union of honest men" for the purpose of preserving the constitution?—As well might it be contended that men of different political parties ought not to unite, to stop the progress of a destructive fire or inundation, or to repulse an invading enemy! And it requires no prophetic powers to predict the existence of all these different parties in our country. In a greater or less degree, within the course of a very few years.

A few individuals of the republican party suffered more, in their feelings, at least, from federal persecution, than myself. I am willing, however, to sacrifice even my just resentments upon the altar of my country. But I will never sacrifice my principles. Some of those who declaim the most violently against me at this moment, were federalists while federalism was fashionable.—My constituents will remember that important fact when they hear the future declamations of those gentlemen. Others have changed. I remain unalterable. I repeat it, I advocate the northern union with a view to the preservation instead of the destruction of the constitution. And I advocate it upon republican principles alone. I will oppose it whenever it is attempted to be established upon principles favourable to aristocracy or monarchy.

JAMES ELLIOT.

FOR THE MINERVA.

INDEPENDENCE—July 4th, 1805.

The Young Men of North Carolina, and Jacobins of Rowan County,

THE occurrence of any particular season or day of the year, that has once been a period of peculiar importance to us, naturally inspires our minds with the same sensations with which we were agitated on the memorable era. And tho' an important circumstance in which we may feel ourselves interested, may not have taken place within our own observation, or under circumstances in which it was possible for us to have had any active share in the concern, yet we eagerly imbibe the spirit of the moment from those who have been on the stage before us, or by whom the lively remembrance is communicated.

One of the most solemnly and majestically important periods, the remembrance of which we have inherited from our fathers, is the 4th of July—a period once highly interesting, and the remembrance of it yet dear to every friend of liberty. Who can remain unimpressed with the most solemn gratitude on the reflection, that our fathers hesitated not to purchase our peace at the risk of their lives; and the bones of thousands to be strewed over Columbia's plains, that we might triumph in the blessings of liberty and independence? Whose breast can remain insensible, while the echo of the intrepid declaration still sounds in his ears! Methinks every voice is ready to cry,

"*FIXED COLUMBIA I HAPPY LAND,*
"*IT IS THOU WHO'ST HEAVEN BORN BORN!*"
Methinks every bosom expands with ardour to imbibe their heroic zeal; and our lungs are ready to heave with a shout of independence. And while we reflect on the peculiar circumstances that combined to give to this one of the most interesting events that America ever witnessed, we vividly ourselves as it were, with in an inch of our very sparks that inflamed their patriot-breasts.—Long live the spirit of '76! and let all the people say, AMEN.

From a theme so animating, we should be unwilling so soon to call our attention, were it not, that it is not so much our part to extol the heroism of the action, as to make a proper improvement of the advantages that we enjoy in consequence of it.

However important and interesting any circumstances that are past may have been, they are seldom of as much con-

sequence to us as those that are yet to come.—Among the many privileges that we enjoy from the virtue and patriotism of our fathers, the duty to which we shall be called on the 2d Thursday and Friday in August is not a small one.—The situation in which we live as an extensive community, unavoidably requires laws and rules by which we as individual members are to regulate ourselves, or be regulated. It is certainly then our high privilege that we have it in our power to have such laws and regulations as we in general may conceive to be most salutary to our circumstances—best calculated to preserve our rights and liberties as individuals, and consequently to promote the general happiness. I say *we have it in our power.* It is you, fellow citizens, and I who have the power.—Those to whom we commit this power, are only our servants, who receive our authority by delegation; and are subject to be dismissed from our service at any time we please. The peculiar danger then, of such a form of government is, that either we, or they to whom we commit the trust of legislating for us, make a bad use of power.

Brothers & Fellow-Citizens, permit me to speak my mind freely, with regard to a circumstance which is of the highest importance to us as a community, and in which I as an obscure individual have felt myself deeply interested. We profess highly to esteem our liberties and privileges as free citizens; and so we ought. We applaud a happy government under the auspices of which, we have secured to us every thing that we can call our own; and so we ought.—For my own part, from the little observation that I have taken of our standing as a people, and the liberties and blessings that we do, or might enjoy, both civil and religious; I have been almost ready to conclude, that as far as human policy and laws can affect us, there never was a people on earth that lived under circumstances nearer to what our Maker intended we should live, than we do, if we only knew it; nor ought to be more grateful; nor would be more virtuous, and consequently more happy, if we would only make our conduct correspond with this knowledge.

When I read the constitution & laws of our country—consider the principles on which they manifest themselves to be founded—their tendency, and the effects they are calculated to produce. I think I have sufficient evidence to believe that those who planned them, truly had "the fear of God before their eyes." In this opinion, gentlemen, am I mistaken, or am I not? Are the laws of our country good, or are they not? When we voluntarily delegate men to adopt or constitute laws for us, are these laws then virtually our own act, or are they not?—If these laws be our own choice and we esteem them good, are we, individually, by the faith which we voluntarily pledge to the community, bound to obey them, or are we not? Is there any possible way whereby a man can more substantially prove himself to be a good or a bad citizen, a real friend or an enemy to the true interests of his country, than by his obedience or disobedience to its laws? If this be a fair way, and I think it is, of judging of the honesty of those who call themselves our friends, and profess a virtuous attachment to our best interests; is it politic—is it consistent with the spirit of our laws—is it consistent with reason, for us to place our confidence in those whom we certainly know to be open and habitual violators of some of the most express and most salutary institutions of our community? Every man's reason says no; but what says our practice? Have we not repeatedly by our own voluntary suffrages placed such characters in authority over us? It is a man's own fault when his conduct is not conformable to the laws of his country; but it is our fault when such characters are suffered to be in office.

The whole intent and meaning of offices and officers, of whatever department or character, from the President to the lowest office in the Union, is barely to promote and preserve the virtue and happiness of the people. Every circumstance that can affect us as a community or as individuals, will, if I mistake not, fall under this position. How extremely preposterous then must it be for us to