



Ours are the plans of fair, delightful peace,
Unwarp'd by party rage, to live like brothers.

HOLLAND.

Speech of M. Schimmelpennick, at the opening of the Session of the States General.

"HIGH AND MIGHTY LORDS!

"For a long time have our countrymen felt the necessity of preventing, by the introduction of a new order of things, the downfall of the tottering edifice of the State. This necessity was so generally felt and in so lively a manner, that I deem it superfluous and unfit to enlarge upon a truth universally acknowledged; but it is this general conviction which holds to us the rule by which we are to measure the hope which the nation has again recovered, and the expectation which it grounds upon our exertions.

"The burthen which we took upon ourselves, and the most troublesome and painful part of which is to fall upon me, is heavy. The difficulties in which the state is involved, are manifold and great; the first proof of our courage will be, to dare to contemplate those difficulties, such as they actually exist; the second, not to despair of conquering them, that is to say, of the salvation of our country.

"In my opinion, it would be little consistent with that calm impartiality and unshaken integrity which must be esteemed in a Government, to ascend in any manner, either to the nearer or to the more remote causes to which we have to impute the present situation of our country.

"I deem this the more repugnant to wisdom and equity, because, whatever partial inconvenience may have arisen from individual misapprehension, prejudices, or actions, yet the main force of our disasters is by no means to be looked for in our bosom, but in causes entirely without, and quite independent of us.

"Our country could not fail, by its situation and relations, deeply to partake of the great events which have changed the whole face of Europe; and the powerful impulses which have shaken the great bodies situated around us, most naturally cause a sensible agitation in our contracted territory. And ought we, then, to continue searching into our entrails, or rendering the wounds of our State more incurable, by seeking after their causes in our own bosom; a search, the result of which would always be exposed to different judgments always lead to dangerous reproaches, and would be always most adverse to a conciliation?

No, High and Mighty Lords, let us leave the causes, and let us only view the wounds clearly; solely with intention to heal them: and permit me, who am now placed at the head of the Government, to point out the means, and, on this solemn occasion, to state to your High Mightinesses, the principles by which I shall regulate my administration, and which I deem the most proper for securing our political existence abroad, and our tranquillity at home.

"Among the great acts which I imagine a wise nation expects of us, principally have the following before my mind:—

"In the first place, the putting an end to that state of uncertainty with respect to our internal government, which has long since tired and fatigued the people, and which would have terminated in despair and dissolution.

"In the second place, the improvement of the finances of the country, brought to the brink of absolute ruin, by the consequences of internal troubles, and of ruinous war.

"And lastly, the embracing and maintaining a firm political system, calculated according to the situation of Europe, and fit to inspire our allies with confidence, our friends with good will, and our enemies with a respect.

"When we shall have attained the two former objects, the latter (as far as depends on us, and not on events out of our power) will be easily attainable, provided we only take care that we (always keeping in mind the great changes which have taken place in Europe, and in our relations with our neighbours) do convince all nations which surround us, that our welfare and our possibility can never be detrimental to theirs, and that they may fully de-

pend upon our good faith in fulfilling our engagements.

"In order to restore the solidity and energy of our internal Government, I deem nothing more fit than an unchangeable attachment to the holy principles of justice; the doing equal justice to all, without difference of rank or opinions; the restoring the necessary vigor to the laws, and the requisite authority and the ancient respect to all the lawful authorities; homage to talents, bravery, and merit; every possible indulgence to misapprehension; inexorable rigor to misdeeds.

"The restoration of the finances of the country will be our most laborious branch.—Can you deem it necessary, High and Mighty Lords, that a melancholy picture thereof should be exhibited to you on this occasion? Or is that sad truth not sufficiently known, that all the present ordinary revenue of the State is hardly sufficient to pay the interest of our debts? And can it after this be required to add any thing, to make you feel the grievous state of our finances?

"Without efficacious remedies, there is no possible salvation for so great an evil; and all the authority granted by the Constitution to the Executive Powers is absolutely necessary to arrive at these great measures, which since the origin of the Republic, at various periods, have always been desired by great Statesmen, and recommended by some; but constantly frustrated by the clashing of the powers, and the eternal opposition either of prejudice, or of mean self-interest, oftentimes badly understood.

"By those efficacious remedies, High and Mighty Lords, I do not by any means aim at a violation of our engagements. As little do I aim at an order for new and extraordinary imposts. These would, in my judgment, either be politically impracticable, or end in a general emigration of all who can emigrate, and in a total corruption of those remaining behind.—And therefore they shall never make a part of the measures which will be proposed to your High Mightinesses in the course of my administration.

"The measures I aim at, High and Mighty Lords, consist, on the one hand, in the introducing a much greater simplicity in the branches of administration, and in making very considerable savings; and, on the other hand, and principally, in introducing a new system of general taxation.

"This system, operating uniformly according to the relative abilities of the inhabitants in the different districts, will be able very considerably to increase the resources of the country, as well by its simplicity as by the certainty of the receipts. This increase, united with the saving of the expenditure, will enable the public treasury regularly to answer all ordinary demands; and when war, or other evils require any extraordinary expences, they will be raised by such means as will be found the least pressing upon the public.

"It is towards these important objects that I wish to draw the attention of your High Mightinesses, and in the completion of which I expect the most earnest assistance from your wisdom and patriotism; and in the accomplishment of which, I cannot but think the people will, in a great measure, re-establish the former state of affairs.

"I think what I have advanced is sufficient for the present; but perhaps your High Mightinesses, perhaps the nation, have a right to examine and consider upon the measures I intend to adopt for the redress of their grievances, and the renewing of their prosperity.

"It is needless to say a single word respecting my inclination and resolution to sacrifice what is most dear to me, in order to accomplish so desirable an object. This very Hall, Paris, Amiens, and London, can testify my love and zeal for my country.

"I have no doubt of succeeding in these undertakings. My hopes are founded on Providence, whom I adore, and whose care and protection we have so often experienced.

"On the calm reason and sound judgment of the nation; on that valor which ever distinguished them; on their good faith, honor, and inward conviction, depends this last attempt to re-establish their happiness.

"I likewise depends on the assistance, and concord in opinion, of your High Mightinesses; on the wisdom of your resolutions; on the power of your example; and on the firmness of your courage; objects in which I cannot be disappointed, if I have acquired any knowledge of mankind.

"Finally, it depends on our love for our country, and the great promises I have of the assistance of the great Napoleon, that extraordinary genius, who is admired by friends and foes, who, after having caused a change in the affairs of France, which will be a subject of wonder and astonishment to future ages, has obtained the greatest influence over us, as well as over several other nations, of whose friendship I have the greater reason to boast, because it was obtained by never swerving from truth or rectitude in all my words, my actions, or even in my thoughts, which his penetrating eye read in the deepest recesses of my heart.

"Notwithstanding these hopes, I am not certain of attaining my end. The book of fatality is shut to yourselves as well as me. As for myself, I shall never quit my object, till I have used every possible effort in my power to attain it; I shall never quit it dishonorably. May Heaven avert all disappointments, may its blessings crown our labours with success, and re-establish the nation in its former flourishing state and happiness."

REMONSTRANCE

OF THE PROVINCE OF UTRECHT.

The following remonstrance of the inhabitants of the Province of Utrecht against the new Constitution, contains an ingenious and spirited protest against the imposition of that form of Government by the hands of a foreign nation:

All the undersigned Citizens and Inhabitants of Utrecht, to the Electors and Members of the State Directory of the Batavian Republic.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

"A new plan of a Constitution being again proposed to the Batavian people, in order to its being subjected, without delay, to their assent or rejection, and as we have it not in our power to make known the reasons for our dissent at the time of voting; we take the liberty to inform, that after minute investigation and mature consideration of the said plan, the same appeared to us, far from amending the present Constitution, to be on the contrary, liable to produce much greater evil, which, sooner or later, must necessarily proceed therefrom to the nation; and we therefore feel no difficulty in stating that the said plan, according to our view of it, is at variance with the interests of the people of Batavia, and Republican Liberty, for which our ancestors have sacrificed so much blood and treasure. It appears from the contents of the plan, that,

I. The possessions and property of the inhabitants, are left at the mercy of the most arbitrary disposition of the political power, the experience whereof has proved of great injury to so many eminent inhabitants from the year 1795, down to the present time, without obtaining any redress, notwithstanding their just complaints have been presented against these abuses; which is the cause of so much dissatisfaction at this time.

II. That by the said plan, justice, and the course of the law, that palladium and sacred support of liberty, which was still left free by the present Constitution, and which ought always to remain free unto all the inhabitants in all cases, is impeded, and can be suborned in the most arbitrary manner, which cannot be limited by any Constitution, since it is the incontrovertible right of every member of society.

III. That the Supreme Power is placed above every law, and a most unlimited and despotic authority is committed to one person, as it were, under the old title of Pensionary of

the Council; a power much greater and more extensive than ever belonged to the ancient Counts of Holland, and to the late Stadtholders, nay, which even exceeds that of a Constitutional King, there being abandoned to him without the least limitation:

1. The whole supreme administration of the national pecuniary means, to dispose of them according to his pleasure.

2. The disposal of the whole military force of the country, as well by sea as land.

3. The arbitrary nomination of all high functionaries, & the free appointment of the administration of the place where the Government resides, to the prejudice of the rights of its inhabitants to the free election of their own Magistrates.

4. The exclusive right of alone making propositions in the assembly of their High Mightinesses, and the limitation of the power of that assembly, which cannot deliberate on any other subjects but such as are proposed to it by him; thus, when he is silent, all are silent, and a deadly lethargy ensues.

5. That he is made accountable to no man, but only to the Supreme Being, who is contemplated with far too much boseness and liberty; for there being no ruling or distinguished religion established, surely a wide door is opened for every body's conscience, upon which the people of Batavia must entirely depend, and embark all their concerns.

A power, therefore, of which one of members of the Legislative Assembly has justly observed, that if the person who possessed it be a Cato, managing the Republic wisely and honestly, the commonwealth may possibly be happy for the time being; but on the contrary if he be a Cæsar it must stoop under his controul.

And it is now eligible and prudent for the inhabitants of this country to adopt a plan of a Constitution of that nature upon an uncertainty, and for the nation to be hazarded on the chance whether a Cato or a Cæsar shall be at any time placed at its head? With great reason did the aforesaid member exhort the inhabitants of this country to watch diligently over this point, that they might not deliver themselves up indiscriminately to despotism and violence, and thus suffer themselves to be fettered with the bonds of slavery.

These are the reasons, citizens, why we, as well for us as our posterity, are never willing nor able to resolve upon the acceptance of a Constitution, by which under the specious forms of old names or titles the most arbitrary government may be introduced.

Far be it nevertheless, that by this our rejection of the proposed plan, we should be understood to approve of the existing constitution in the whole, and that we should not be considered as disposed to agree with you in any wise improvement of a concentrated administration: no, the contrary is the fact! For if we are to speak out what we think and what our hearts dictate, we have experienced none but unfortunate years since the revolution of 1795; and the sounding words of Equality, Liberty and Fraternity, of Batavian Liberty, of Unity, Indivisibility, of a pretended Patriotism, and of a far famed and loud cry of Love of our country, have produced none but the bitterest fruit to the principal part of the nation, to those who have not enriched themselves by the treasures levied at so dear a rate.

We long, therefore, for a change, but at the same time for an improvement; and nothing will be more agreeable to us (this we speak confidently in the name of the whole nation) than, after being tossed to and fro, to see for once a good plan of a constitution offered, resting solely upon the same basis of Rights, of Equity, and of sound Politics, by which Liberty and Divine Worship should be maintained, every individual protected in the possession of his lawful property, justice exercised without impediment; so that even the meanest inhabitant may obtain his due right, and by which the Supreme Power shall not be placed above the law, and a sovereign and unlimited authority not entrusted to

any single individual, whosoever he be, and by whatever application he may be distinguished.

And how great it is to be lamented, citizens, that in the present instance, an inconsiderate enthusiasm should have deviated so far from the Union, and placed every thing upon a vague foundation; from the Union, by which our Republic, under the blessing of God, had to the highest summit of felicity, from the Union, by which every man's liberty was provided for, and Divine Worship duly maintained, without tyranny or compulsion of conscience, and all predominance of one Province over the others was duly prevented, and as you yourselves have not obscurely hinted in your note to the Legislative Body, the country has experienced such happiness during two centuries.

And if this be true, as it is undoubtedly, can the nation desire any other plan of a constitution than such a one as, being purged from all former defects, as much as is consistent with the present circumstances, shall be principally founded upon the Union?

If, however, the critical circumstances in which we are involved by a ruinous war, require for that period a concentrated administration, to give more energies to the decrees which are to be passed for the welfare of our country; well then, in that case, let us follow the steps of the ancient Romans, and appoint, until the peace, or for a limited time, five years at the longest, a Dictator, after the Roman manner; let us name even the intended person (Schimmelpennick) to this pre-eminence; and let all necessary power and authority be entrusted provisionally to him, without impairing the people's liberty and justice; but let us by no means deprive the nation thereof forever, under a constitution, the consequence of which may be the most arbitrary oppression under which we must suffer and endure violence, or be reduced to the disgraceable necessity, (like so many other respectable families, which have already removed their residence into other countries,) of quitting this our native soil, once so free: but to the introducing of this constitution and of necessity, we can never give our assent, after so many sacrifices as we have made to liberty; we must, therefore, in giving our suffrage, reject the proposed plan with the most decided negation.

UTRECHT, April 4, 1805.

To his Excellency M. R. J. Schimmelpennick, Ambassador from this country to his Majesty the Emperor of the French.

As the people of Batavia had sanguinely flattered themselves that they should receive, under your concurrence, a wise plan of a Constitution, they were sensibly affected on seeing the States Directory offer a plan to the nation, for its assent or rejection, by which the liberty of the inhabitants of this country is, in our opinion, undermined in all its parts.

Now, since no faculty is given or permitted at the time of voting, to state the reasons of our rejection, we thought proper to inform the State Directory of those reasons by a note, at the same time taking the liberty to transmit to your Excellency a copy of that note, to which we refer you, for the sake of brevity.

And although we have declared by that note our willingness to agree with the State Directory, in assisting to establish an improved plan of a Constitution, founded on justice, equity, sound politics, and as nearly as possible upon the Union; and in order to bestow, during the present critical circumstances, more energy to the decrees for the welfare of our country, by a more concentrated administration, to entrust the necessary power and authority for a limited time to a person, in whose abilities, probity, and love of his country, the people of Batavia may safely confide, and have made no difficulty to propose to the Directory for that purpose, in the said note, the nomination of your Excellency, who, at the present moment, certainly appears to us the properest person to save our country from decay and ruin; yet we think, our being called upon