

A Countryman II (Hugh Hughes), *New York Journal*, 23 November 1787

Letters from a Gentleman in Dutchess County,
to his Friend in New-York.

In the Conclusion of my First, of the 19th [i.e., 10th] current, I promised that Mr. Dickenson, or the famous Author of the Farmer's Letters, and Doctor Franklin should speak for themselves; I now offer you as a Specimen of the Farmer's Rhetoric, the second Paragraph of his first Letter, which appears thus—"From my Infancy I was taught to love Humanity and Liberty. Enquiry and Experience have since confirmed my Reverence for the Lessons then given me, by convincing me more fully of their Truth and Excellence. Benevolence towards Mankind excites Wishes for their Welfare, and such Wishes endear the Means of fulfilling them. Those can be found in Liberty alone, and therefore her sacred Cause ought to be espoused by every Man, on every occasion, to the utmost of his Power. As a Charitable, but poor, Person does not withhold his Mite, because he can not relieve all the Distresses of the Miserable; so let not any honest Man suppress his Sentiments concerning Freedom, however small their Influence is likely to be. Perhaps he may touch some Wheel that will have a greater Effect than he expects." What gracious Sentiments, and how sweetly expressed!—But what are Sentiments, or the tenderest Expressions, when not accompanied by corresponding Actions? They certainly render the Author a greater Object of our Pity, if not of Contempt.—How is it possible to reconcile the first Clause of the 9th Section, in the first Article of the new Constitution, with such universal Benevolence to all Mankind?

Will this Gentleman say, that the Africans do not come within the Description of "Mankind?" If he should, will he be believed?—Besides, he seems to have run counter to a generally received Maxim in educating the rational as well as the irrational Creation; as he acknowledges, that he was early instituted in Virtue, which, now, in advanced Life, he seems either to have forgotten or stifled?

Had Cornwallis, Rawdon, Arnold, or any of the British, Marauding, Butchers, signed such a Clause, there would have been a Consistency; but, for the benevolent Author of the Farmer's Letters, which every where seem to breathe the pure Spirit of Liberty and Humanity, to lend his once venerated Name, for promoting that which the Framers of the Clause were either ashamed or afraid, openly, to avow, exceeds Credulity itself, were it not for ocular Demonstration.

Is this the Way by which we are to demonstrate our Gratitude to Providence, for his divine Interposition in our Favor, when oppressed by Great Britain?—Who could have even imagined, that Men lately professing the highest Sense of Justice and the Liberties of Mankind, could so soon and easily be brought to give a Sanction to the greatest Injustice and Violation of those very Liberties? Strange Inconsistency and painful Reflection!—And the more so, when it is considered, that not only Individuals in Europe, as well as in each of these states; but that several of the Nations in Europe have, for some years before the Revolution, been endeavouring to put a Stop to a Trade, which was a Disgrace to the very Name of Christianity

itself.—Nay, that Numbers among those whom we so lately considered as Enemies to Liberty, are now using every Means in their Power to abolish Slavery! Will not a contrary Conduct of the States tarnish the Lustre of the American Revolution, by violating the Law of Nations, and entailing endless Servitude on Millions of the human Race, and their unborn Posterity? Can any Person, who is not deeply interested in enslaving this Country, believe, that the Contrivers of such a diabolical Scheme had any Regard for the most sacred Rights of human Nature?

It really seems to have been, as Mr. Wilson acknowledged, a mere Matter of Accomodation between the Northern and Southern States; that is, if you will permit us to import Africans as Slaves, we will consent that you may export Americans, as Soldiers; for this the new Constitution clearly admits, by the 2d Clause of the 6th Article, which says, “that this Constitution and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all Treaties made, or which shall be made under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land, &c. any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.”

May not Treaties be immediately entered into with some of the Nations of Europe for assisting them with Troops, which, if they do not enlist voluntarily, may, by this Clause, be detached and transported to the West or East-Indies, &c.?

I ask the Doctor’s Pardon, I promised in my first, that he should be permitted to speak for himself in this; but Time will not now admit of it—He shall have the Preference of opening my next.

I am, with every Sentiment of Esteem, Dear Sir, Your most Obedient, A COUNTRYMAN.

November 17, 1787.

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