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COMMUNICATION.

BUONAPARTE.

The powers exercised by the First Consul of France are so interesting, not only to that country, but to the whole world, that his character is well worthy of the consideration of every individual who wishes the welfare of mankind. It particularly merits an attentive, cool and deliberate examination, as his military exploits have surrounded it with a lustre that dazzles common observation.

If he possess the disposition to do good, if he is superior to personal aggrandisement, if he pursues the path of true glory, there can be little doubt of his ability to accomplish many great and useful results; but should he on the other hand, like most of his predecessors, promote his own personal views, regardless of the public good, the injuries he will inflict on his own country, and through her, on all Europe may be as mournful as any presented by history.

It will be agreed that the character of a man is generally to be deduced from his *actions*, and not from his *professions*; when the one differ from the other, the inference is irresistible, that views dictated by a dark policy, that dreads an avowal of its purposes, are entertained; and no less irresistible, generally, is the inference that such views are hostile to the public good.

It will be proper previously to making any animadversions, to state a few of the prominent features of Buonaparte's life.

Born in Corsica in the year, he had not attained much eminence at the commencement of the French revolut on. He does not appear to have had any agency in those measures which subverted the monarchy and erected a republic in its room. The first indications of superiority furnished by him were entirely military, and he enjoyed but a moderate portion of fame before his Italian campaign. Italy became the seat of his glory. By the astonishing, if not unprecedented vigor of his operations, he completely conquered that country. After overcoming all resistance, and clearing the road to Vienna, he arrested the career of his arms, and formed the peace of Campo Formio; a pacification that in its effects has not realised a single promise which it held out. Nor should it ever be forgotten, in estimating the character of Buonaparte, that he was the negociator who through state policy, altogether uncontrolled by any imperious necessity, subverted the freedom of Venice, and restored it to the despotic government of Austria. The act was reprobated throughout the world. French faith fell prostrate beneath it. The attachment of the nation to republicanism was rendered equivocal; and talents, prepared, through the whole extent of Europe, to exert themselves in the advancement of freedom, under the conviction that France was her friend, and that her honor, once pledged, would triumph over all seduction, were palsied by this fatal blow. When the nature and consequences of this measure are fully weighed, every laurel that adorned the brow of the hero of Italy fades and perishes, his pretensions to the character of a republican become ridiculous in the extreme, and his talents as a statesman sink below mediocrity.

Between the æra of his Italian exploits and the Egyptian expedition, we heard nothing of Buonaparte, but the vague sounds of panegyric. We do not contemplate him participating in the discharge of civil duties; he continues still in the character of the soldier.

So little is yet distinctly understood of the origin of the expedition to Egypt, that we hazard much in saying who were its authors. As it failed in the objects contemplated to be atchieved, no man in France is ambitious of the reputation of having planned it. We know from unquestionable authority that the conquest of Egypt was long since contemplated by the French government as an object of immense importance; and we also know that this importance rose to an almost incalculable height, on the loss, or perilous state, of the French West India islands. It is probable, therefore, that the measure would have been attempted by any set of men, either republican or monarchic. But it is not equally probable that a man, whom no event of his life has exhibited as deficient in self-confidence, a man who, by one daring act, has thrown himself in the scale against the whole government and outweighed it, is it probable, nay is it possible that such a man would be a dupe of his enemies, and suffer himself to be driven into inglorious exile: No such belief can rationally be entertained. Buonaparte was impelled by an insatiable thirst for military glory. He beheld in the conquest of Egypt the first step to Eastern dominion, unbounded in extent. To be the founder of a new Empire has ever been the favourite vision of military madness. Nor could a scene be opened, calculated to awaken more ardour of imagination, or intoxicate with more splendid visions, than the unresisted prowess of the French arms in the East.

But, no one expectation that was excited by this celebrated expedition has been realised. Gallic valour has triumphed over accumulated difficulties. But it has been compelled to yield to a succession of disastrous circumstances, too powerful to be overcome by any spirit.

The French forces wasted away without gaining any substantial advantages. The future presented no other prospects than such as were more gloomy than the past. In the midst of these discouraging circumstances, commanding an army, surrounded by danger, and in want of every comfort, Buonaparte abruptly returned to France.

How did he return? Was it with the permission of the government, of which he was the agent, and whose commands he had sworn to obey? Or was it in direct opposition to its authority? These questions have never been answered; though they have been often put. The silence which follows then constitutes the strongest presumptive evidence that his return was *his own act* entirely; for if not his own unauthorised act, why conceal the instructions that produced it; when such instructions would demonstrate his obedience to the civil power, and prove, that in this instance at least, he merited the character of a good citizen. No false delicacy would have prevented him or his friends from claiming this merit, if facts justified it. No such claim having ever been made is proof sufficient that no such claim can be made with effect.

Until, therefore, more transpires than is yet known, we must contemplate Buonaparte in the light of deserting an army confided to *his* care, an army in the greatest distress, and incompassed by the greatest dangers; an army, whose establishment in Italy had covered him with his brightest glory.

For this daring act what were his motives? were they *personal*, or were they derived from an ardent love of his Country?

Confide in his professions, and you must believe they were the latter; examine his actions, and you will not hesitate to consider them as the former.

Physical power is always resorted to in the attainment of ends which truth and reason condemn. When these are our friends we seldom draw the sword. It is necessity only that dictates this last step, and this necessity seldom exists when truth is on our side.

When Buonaparte reached the capitol, the grand principle of republicanism remained unimpaired. Whatever may have been the misconduct of the Directorial government, it was, notwithstanding, the representative of the nation. The power which the nation had conferred, it possessed the constitutional right to revoke, and to place in such hands as it pleased. An abuse of power might be redressed without convulsion or violence. The public opinion was either friendly or hostile to the existing system. If friendly the acts of the Consul violated, instead of consulting, the national wishes. If hostile, an early change in a constitutional way might have been relied upon. In either case violence would be detrimental.

But the Consul, regardless of these considerations, resolved to subvert the whole political edifice. For the first time under the republic, the military power rose triumphant over the civil; and its triumph sprung from the *consolidated* energy of the combined military talents of all the armies. It was not simply the appearance of this force that produced the subversion of the republic; it was its actual application. The nation beheld the gloomy spectable of the bayonet dispersing the depositaries of its confidence.

The great mass of mankind derive their estimates of character from the measure of success which attends individuals. We should not, therefore, be surprised at finding Buonaparte the idol of the multitude. Heretofore success in the most unlimited extent has crowned all his military operations, excepting those in Egypt.

No deduction can, however, be drawn from his present popularity as to the duration of it. The French nation appear to be very desirous of peace. The first Consul thinking that by making a peace he will increase his reputation, and willing perhaps, to supercede all rivalship for military glory, which might arise from continuing the war, appears sincere in his wishes and unremitted in his efforts to bring the pending negeciations to a successful close.

Whether he succeeds in this object or not, it is highly probable that in either event his popularity will be impaired.

If he does not procure peace, the disappointment of the nation will be extreme. The failure of the negociations will be ascribed either to the insincerity of his professions, or to his want of talent. If he obtains peace for France, his army will be taken from him, and with its removal will disappear, in all probability, the fear which at present keeps in subjection his enemies. The power which he has usurped derived its avowed justification from the alarming crisis in the affairs of his country. That crisis being past, the people will expect to be reinstated in the rights surrendered but for a season.

Whether this effect will be produced by the calm expression of the public will, or whether its price will be a civil war, time only can divulge.

LEGISLATURE of PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Monday, November 10, 1800.

The Bill, for appointing Electors of President, was called up, read a second time and committed to a Committee of the whole; Mr. Snyder in the Chair.

In the Committee, several Amendments were moved by Mr. Penrose; the blanks filled up for the meeting of both houses in the Representatives Chamber, on the 15th inst. and agreed to, without opposition.

Upon the motion for adopting the Preamble, Mr. Preston moved to strike out the word *joint*, and to insert in its place the word *concurrent*; seconded by Mr. Scott.

Mr. *S. W. Fisher* rose and said, that he was much surprised to find the present bill introduced as it had been, without any one reason why, or upon what grounds, it should be adopted. The House had heard the bill read, and not one member had expressed an opinion or argument; but the House was called upon to adopt it silently. It was to be expected, that, when a measure of this kind, new and unusual, was offered to the representative Body, some motive should be assigned, some incentive given, upon which to ground a decision. Those who had introduced it must have thought, and thought deeply, upon the subject; and they must have been prepared, with a string of forcible reasons, for introducing it. Why were these reasons withheld? Why were they not openly and fairly declared, in order that men who had not made up their minds, should have some grounds upon which to vote?

Difficulties, he was free to confess, had arisen in his mind, upon this important subject. Were we called upon to perform a legislative, or a ministerial act! Why has not this been explained? Was it to be expected, that the Legislature would proceed to a measure, tending to its own dissolution? How would this measure appear to the Senate? What would they say to it? If it was incumbered with such difficulties; if it was not prescribed or directed by the Constitution; how came it to be referred to a committee of the whole? The opinions of some of our Constituents have been expressed, in Petitions and Memorials laid on the Table. Would it not be, at least, respectful to our Constituents to state their sentiments, on introducing this Bill, and to accommodate our proceedings to their will? But not a word is uttered: A profound silence prevails. Why not give us reasons; why not comment upon those Petitions? Let us have the reasoning of our Constituents, or some other sort of reasoning.

For his part, his mind was open to conviction. Let him see good reasons for his vote, and he would vote: He was ready to do it explicitly. But he was ready to confess, that he did not think the Bill would answer the end, or meet the judgment of the Legislature. In a legislativ capacity there can be no joint vote. Either, then it is a legislative, or a ministerial measure. If the former, the bill is informal: If the latter, it is given in such a mode as, perhaps, the Senate cannot adopt. The Memorial on the Table, from Millerstown, calls upon the Legislature to vote. This bill goes directly in opposition to the Prayer of that Petition; For, the Legislature cannot vote jointly; and the amendment proposed is, therefore, necessary to accommodate the measure to the spirit of the Petition. The Constitution will not carry this bill through. He had given his sentiments, to draw forth the reasons of those who have introduced it; and because he did not wish to give any vote, without some sort of reasoning. He was in favor of the amendment.

Mr. Boileau said, the Gentleman, when he rose first, undertook to censure us for not giving our reasons. Was the Gentleman really unacquainted with our reasons? The matter had gone through his mind, he said. We can assure him, that it has not merely passed through our minds; but has been brought forward on grounds the best founded, and after considerations the most deliberate and solemn. But, with what consistency has he made this charge on us? Why did that Gentleman and his Friends suffer this bill, if it be so exceptionable, to pass through to this stage, without the shadow of opposition or Investigation? Why were not its errors and objectionable parts—its unconstitutionality and insufficiency before noticed or shown? We might, if disposed to cavil, retort upon those Gentlemen, in the same strain. You have brought forward an Amendment to a bill, which you did not oppose before: And without offering a single reason, for altering our deliberate judgment, you call upon us to adopt this Amendment, hastily brought forward. But such cavils are beneath us.

The importance of the occasion supercedes them. The eyes of the union are fixed upon us. And not only our own country, but foreign nations take an interest in the interesting question which now agitates Pennsylvania. Deeper interests were perhaps never involved, in any season, since our existence as a people. It is not a mere question between this party and that party of men; but whether our constitution shall be administered in the spirit of republican government, and purified from abuse; or that it shall mean any thing, or nothing. This is the light in which it is viewed by our constituents; and it is upon this sense we are expected to act. The duty we owe to our constituents compels us to regard their will; and, when we consider that we are acting under the impressive obligations of an oath to discharge our duty faithfully, no honest man can deliberate long upon the vote which he is to give.

But gentlemen wish to have reasons. Did they suppose we were not ready, or unwilling to answer them? It appears, that they already agree with us in the necessity