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The founding farce, or, the lost debates of the constitutional convention: Being an account of the discovery of an overlooked document, and the loss again, and rediscovery of said document, wherein is written unheard proceedings in the crafting of the glorious constitution of these 13 colonies (which has lately been misplaced)

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The Founding Farce, or, The Lost Debates of the Constitutional Convention: Being an Account of the
Discovery of an Overlooked Document, and the Loss Again, and the Rediscovery of Said Document,
wherein is Written Unheard Proceedings in the Crafting of the Glorious Constitution of these 13 Colonies
(Which has Lately been Misplaced)

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*To James Madison, without whom this work would not have been possible, and to all the
Founding Fathers, my sincerest apologies.*

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Prologue, Being an Apologetic Explanation and Sublime Justification of the Author's Intent

Historical narrative is, in addition to being highly informative and entertaining, consistently inconsistent. I can recall reading biographies of Aaron Burr and with every new book I opened I encountered a different glint of the exquisitely rarified stuff with which the alchemists fashioned Mr. Burr. This was not an uncommon experience. My perspective of Benjamin Franklin underwent a glorious transfiguration after reading *A Great Improvisation* by Stacey Schiff. Because the human condition precludes omniscience and perfect impartiality, every historical narrative is a story, a form of creative writing (nonfiction) in which the narrator contrives to influence the thinking of his readers by imparting meaning to a series of events, especially when implying causality such as is often done in modern times with historical positivism or Marxist visions of cyclic class upheavals.

Failure to appreciate the complexity of historical narratives often leads to unnecessary rancor and arrogance in the public discourse. Sufficiently exposed to learning, an intellectual or average citizen sometimes finds that he not only equals his peers but soon outstrips rivals in unfamiliar expertise and, were it not for the constraints of time, would scrawl blueprints for a tower whereby he would ascend into the intellectual heavens and attain immortality. If the world would but stop and hearken, he would be the philosopher-king leading everyone to the Promised Land, never once suspecting that he might instead be the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Very often the dubious position stems from a kind of narrative that tells a story which does not allow for the possibility of a speaker's frailty. We believe in our own interpretation of political progress or a historical event to the exclusion of other interpretations or new learning. Proper

learning ought to make men more aware of what they don't know rather than what they think they know. A dogmatic narrative of American history operates in the same way. A critique of the interaction of history and the manner in which it is retold leads us to inspect the role of the *narrator*.

In chapter 5 of *Tropics of Discourse*, Hayden White argues that in recording events historians inevitably tend to interpret, Herodotus notwithstanding, by engaging in storytelling that at times resembles the fictive elements that imaginative writers employ. Particularly potent is his statement that the distinguishing division between historians and novelists is the directness of their presentation. While historians often state unequivocally their interpretation of history and society, novelists insinuate. White's hearkening back to the transformation of historical narratives at the turn of the 18th century from the realm of literature to a more scientific "fact" is perhaps the most important contribution to this discussion, namely, that the division between history and opinions of history is at times unclear. Prior to the 19th century, there were historical events that were understood to have occurred, but the exact details were acknowledged to be sometimes elusive. I believe we have strayed significantly from this model and ought to return to a more objective stance. The method I have chosen to prod the reader in this direction is satire.

Satire in its historical context was not the same as the idle humor of low comedy but an intellectual pursuit typically undertaken by men who knew the rulers and intellectuals as well as commoners and crusaders, producing works that questioned major societal assumptions. The literature of satire was as much philosophical as humorous; indeed, the humor was often nothing more than a vehicle to inspire philosophical inquiry, the satirists contributing to the

public discourse by ridiculing institutions, encouraging their readers to think differently about a topic. In satire, this phenomenon is known as the *cognitive shift* because it promotes “not emotions but thinking—and rethinking” (Morreall, 82). Such men as Swift and Orwell provide excellent models.

The main reason I suggest satire as an effective means of reversing the trends of society is that with increasing dogmatism comes increasing sensitivity (after all, if one believes that one can save mankind with a certain skillset, one sees intellectual disagreement as obstructionism or heresy). Satire allows ideas considered strictly forbidden to enter discussions, thereby “preventing blind discipleship and other kinds of intellectual conformism” (Morreall, 137). Because of this the satirist is allowed creative license and encouraged to engage in more critical dialogue. Orwell’s *1984* is discussed by men of both sides specifically because it is an impartial scene of investigation where men can fancy themselves to be discussing the opposition and are thus unwittingly being induced to think critically.

I cannot help but wonder if the reason satire is so rare today is that to be a true satirist is to be a societal outlaw. In former ages, satirists were prominent writers of their time and were protected from the backlash of the court and society through systems of patronage. Indeed, modern commentaries on society and history usually align with mainstream ideology rather than question it. Citizens of former Soviet nations have expressed bewilderment at the conformity among intellectual and literary circles in Western society (Legutko, 123-125), specifically noting the passionate persecution toward offensive humor that belittles the holy crusader toward Utopia (Legutko, 98-105).

The power of satire, while certainly limited, should not be underestimated. There is a story told of a tyrant in Asia who was considering a war that would have bankrupted his nation and led to immeasurable suffering. None of his court attendants dared question the edict of the tyrant, but when he told his court jester, the fool laughed at him so hard for so long that the tyrant eventually abandoned his project. Sometimes the only way to dislodge society from self-insulated delusions of grandeur is to laugh hysterically at them since, after all, the root of the problem is that they take themselves far too seriously.

The abruptness of my satirical work is intended to dislodge citizens from modern machinations of self-importance. Though I mean no offense, I mean to startle the reader with this satire, as only a work of exceptional sharpness can cut through the miasma of historical narratives which have alternately lifted historical figures onto a celestial pedestal and condemned them to the historical underworld for misdeed which were only faulted by subsequent generations. Those who worship our forefathers as mythic demigods are confronted by a narrator who views such men as Jefferson and Madison with an equal veneration that is shattered within the narrative itself. On the other hand, those who would condemn our founders with various glorified *ad hominem*s according to their ethics and conspiratorial secrecy meet with an exaggerated depiction that is tied to history enough to cause the reader to wonder if perhaps he has deluded himself with the fervor of his holy passion and suspicion.

Therefore, though my pen is unrefined and an optimistic observer might assess my satirical abilities as amateurish at best, I have herein attempt to reawaken the reader's mind to the possibility that our Founders have been immortalized in a manner that rivals Aeneas and

Arthur through a retrospective narrative that has been constructed by interested parties.

While the modern literary circle, as noted by the aforementioned White in chapter 12, has at times been reduced nearly to absurdism in its uncertainty in the era of postmodernism when language is critiqued as overdetermined and underdetermined, this is a work more after the fashion of the satirists who sought to enlighten by encouraging men not to look so much at society but at their beliefs about society. To do this it was necessary to research the historical epoch about which our society is at times driven to distraction.

While my work manipulates and misrepresents incidentals to a grotesque degree, the narrative has remained faithful to many historical facts. The topics of the debates, the progression of the arguments, the sentiments of contingencies, and the overall focus have been recreated nearly unedited from corroborated historical accounts of the topics discussed and the general arguments put forth by various parties in attendance (such as the division that soon manifested itself between small states and large states). The meeting was technically treason since the delegates were only authorized to conduct business upon which the states sent them and the states did not authorize them to completely overhaul the Articles of Confederation; the delegates jealously guarded the secrecy of the proceedings (General Washington reacted with anger when one delegate left an early draft of the Constitution lying around); the West was fascinated with electricity at this time, to the extent that electrostatic machines as Franklin created were being used in the French court to electrically charge ladies whom would then be kissed (think of a massive static electricity shock), while Franklin's story of electrifying his iron fence to discourage constant tourists visiting his house is true; the discussion of representation of the slaves was carried out in an incredibly bizarre manner that follows many details

recounted in this work; and outrageous carousing during which massive quantities of alcohol were consumed and inns damaged indeed took place toward the end of the Convention. Those historical incidents not directly relevant to the Convention were also true, such as the placement of a horse in the consul (Suetonius' *Twelve Caesar's* retells this story) and the auctioning off of Caesar's throne during the declining days of the Roman empire (see Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*). In addition to resources and my own prior historical research, the book *Plain Honest Men* by Richard Beeman provided an excellent outline of the events and people of the Constitutional Convention. Any event of a strange nature inspired further research and some level of speculation, such as Luther Martin's intoxicated rant and the discussion of representing humans as property (along with the continual undercurrent of egotism of the founders). In this way I hoped to critique historical narratives with a work that is absurd both for its inaccuracy and its *accuracy*.

Whenever a historical narrative is produced information must be left out. I have chosen to focus on the issues and diction of the Constitutional Convention which are today passed over so that the history of the Constitutional Convention conforms to the beliefs of various mainstream narrators. Of particular note are the rhetorical styles which have been discarded by historians wishing to portray a more venerable breed of men. Not only were the founders fond of denigrating each other in vulgar ways (George Washington, John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton were called an earwig, fiery crackpots, and bastard, respectively), many of them were unrivaled wits and wags. Benjamin Franklin's essay to the most enlightened scientists of his day suggesting a method of making farts more savory is the stuff of legend. Franklin the economist, inventor, diplomat, and living legend presiding over the Convention once wrote (while a

diplomat to France) to the Royal Academy proposing that the most useful way to spend their time was to search for a means of rendering gas pleasant to the smell so that well-bred men would delight polite company by “discharge[ing] freely the Wind from his Bowels” (Franklin, 17) with a variety of smells which men would savor with the same vigor that connoisseurs sample wine. The point that Franklin, who cited scientific authorities, was making is simple yet profound: if science does not better the lot of mankind, and if it overlooks the basic inconveniences, then is science truly useful?

The author who collected Franklin’s satirical works did so because most citizens are never exposed to such work in their readings of American History. This is significant because the image of Franklin that is given by historians is so incomplete as to render it inaccurate. Why was he so unusual? More important, why do we as a society never allow our political leaders whom we revere as leaders of movements to engage in such levity? The author argues that the cause of the disparity between Franklin’s writing and modern political writings stems from timidity of employing satire in the face of “the horrid specter of Social Conformity and Niceness” which has rendered “‘freedom of the press’...only a nostalgic idea” (Japikse, 7).

Rhetoric such as Franklin used was not uncommon in discussions of the Constitutional Ratification process. Consider the following excerpt taken directly from Antifederalist 10 in which John Francis Mercer of Maryland classifies the various bodies of American voters:

First, those men who are so wise as to discover that their ancestors and indeed all the rest of mankind were and are fools. We have a vast overproportion of these great men, who, when you tell them that from the earliest period at which mankind devoted their

attention to social happiness, it has been their uniform judgment, that a government over governments cannot exist- -that is two governments operating on the same individual-assume the smile of confidence, and tell you of two people travelling the same road-of a perfect and precise division of the duties of the individual. Still, however, the political apothegm is as old as the proverb-That no man can serve two masters-and whoever will run their noodles against old proverbs will be sure to break them, however hard they may be. And if they broke only their own, all would be right; but it is very horrible to reflect that all our numskulls must be cracked in concert. Second. The trimmers, who from sympathetic indecision are always united with, and when not regularly employed, always fight under the banners of these great men, These people are forever at market, and when parties are nearly equally divided, they get very well paid for their services. Thirdly. The indolent, that is almost every second man of independent fortune you meet with in America-these are quite easy, and can live under any government. If men can be said to live, who scarcely breathe; and if breathing was attended with any bodily exertion, would give up their small portion of life in despair. These men do not swim with the stream as the trimmers do, but are dragged like mud at the bottom. As they have no other weight than their tat flesh, they are hardly worth mentioning when we speak of the sentiments and opinions of America. (Bailey, 34.)

Capturing this archaic and quirky style was paramount if my satire was to work as I hoped. It was incredibly difficult. By studying primary sources recounting the Constitutional debates, including *The Federalist Papers* and *The Anti-Federalist Papers*, I was able to unearth

those moments of subjective and petty discourse. The book which provided an excellent linear narrative of the debates in the Convention, supplemented with primary historical documents, was *The Antifederalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates* by Ralph Ketcham. For instance: when a particular topic was being discussed, New Jersey delegates spoke in opposition of certain regulations; a delegate from a larger state then responded not by directly answering the New Jersey delegate but by recounting how New Jersey had abused a privilege relating to the regulation at hand. With a little imagination one might envision the indignation that the New Jersey delegates might have felt and the extent to which Madison's record might have sanitized the interaction, as Madison dwelt in the era when historical narratives were still considered a literary pursuit.

Mr. Madison and other dignitaries who had a personal interest in beautifying the proceedings for the sake of solidifying the document itself have been the subject of such books as *Madison's Hand* by Mary Bilder, who reports that advances in technology have allowed historians to see the true extent to which Madison altered his notes on the Constitutional Convention in order to redefine his legacy in light of his changing political landscape. Similarly, the author of our text-within-the-text has his own intentions antithetical to those of Mr. Madison, namely, to illustrate the absurdity of the Founders. All of this is intended to raise the question: Why have we chosen to believe the accounts of a man, or collection thereof, who told history with pragmatic intentions? Should we not just as likely accept a narrative stemming from an opposite motive? Thus, while my account is fiction, a constructed account that pretends to provide an opposing viewpoint satires the tendency in modern America to assign complete impartiality to historians we deem trustworthy. Perhaps it is best not to see

this as an attempt at an alternate history but instead as an effort to reimagine an unhinged intellectual gladiator match in which the only survivor was the Constitution itself, a document flecked with the blood of wounded pride and the spit of vendetta-inspired tirades from eccentric and sometimes bizarre men that have metamorphosed through time into figures they might even find unrecognizable.

There are elements that are pure fantasy. Contrary to my narrative, the Founders knew why they were assembling in Philadelphia. There was no secret mission to retrieve the Declaration of Independence, and there certainly is no secret document recording the 'real' proceedings of the Convention. Yet, like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, I only intend fantasy and humor to enlighten men to a deeper understanding of reality, particularly when men are loath to take an objective look at something they venerate. After reading the novella the reader may question the prevailing idea that the Constitution is an example of compromise, as compromise would imply distinct concessions, whereas the delegates bent their collective intellectual brilliance toward a system of government that minimized concessions. This lack of compromise was identified by the Antifederalists, who insisted that two parallel governments in the federalist system was a kind of grotesque farce that would lead to a civil war. By raising these questions in a work of comedic fiction I hope to inspire those who would not otherwise think of such questions.

Comedy is an apt scene of inquiry that will lead us back toward a rethinking of historical narratives. Humor is by nature disarming and intellectually divergent. While commonplace low humor is not intend to cause any enjoyment beyond simple jocund revelry, the satirist indirectly seeks after truth by inspiring thought, falling most in line with White's description of

indirect instruction inherent in fiction and the cognitive shift of Morreal which challenges conventions in a less-threatening manner, making humor a close brother to philosophy (Morreall, 125). The benefits of this are important, as humor can become an effective tool for reducing social friction by making criticism non-threatening. Finally, by encouraging men to laugh at themselves and realize that “the biggest joke I shall ever experience is me” (Morreall, 137) satire will help prevent the overproportion of self-confident men which the aforementioned Mr. Mercer saw in his day. My work, like the man of La Mancha who ridiculed romantic ideas dominating his society and the buffoonish intellectuals of *The Clouds* that inspire men to discover the absurdity of self-proclaimed experts, while not discounting contributions their members make to society, encourages the reader to question the questionable.

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By John Merryweather

PART I: THE GATHERING

It was the 7th of June when, after several months of hunting legends hiding within sundry nooks of the countryside and bagging manuscripts of the nation's nascent years, my quest to illuminate the dawning of the nation took me to Monticello. Though I upon a simple mortal's quest had not intended to arrive at such a prestigious mound upon the globe, Destiny had set my feet upon a path that led me up this intellectual Mt. Olympus to the home of the deity who had intricately woven the political tapestry of these states, to his halls where the banquet of the patriot demigods was on occasion held.

Though I, humid beneath a sultry sun, staggered against the incline in a miasma of choking dust that hung in the torpid air behind the cart ahead of me, it was as paradise compared to the days spent sloughing through the mire more southern states. The nearness of my desired end eased the burden, for I would at last know the origin of the rumors that had enticed me hither. As I rested upon that hillside, reflecting upon the venerable personage who had withstood the Constitution itself in his governance in the expansion of Louisiana; the madness of that scourge upon the nation, the American Judas, Mr. Aaron Burr, and the collusion at Richmond perpetuated by Justice Marshall; the man who began the custom of shaking hands with foreign dignitaries, a ceremony that horrified many. He would resolve the conundrum of the document which had passed through many august persons with great confidence to inexplicably and abruptly vanish from history.

Mr. Jefferson was in his drawing room. So rapt in contemplation was he, in the midst of reconstructing a primordial creature whose ossified remains had been exhumed in some quarry

in the Kentucky territory and transported to him, the solver of ancient mysteries, that he took no note of my approach. His backside to me, his bearing hardly slumped with age, he held his regal head askew as he surveyed the skeleton of the primordial creature towering over him, the serpentine mastodon now casting the same shadow that it had cast millennia before upon the noble stature of Mr. Jefferson who, having picked the locks of the British shackles that held The Colonies, now passed his time rebuilding primordial worlds. He remained concentrated upon his creature when I arrived and I hesitated to distract his genius from the task at hand.

Presently, Mr. Jefferson, stroking his hair serenely and murmuring at the monstrosity he had recreated which now towered over him, concluded his zoological divination by observing that enormous demons from a forsaken underworld had found their way to the surface of the earth; for indeed, the creature that he had recreated was of the hellish variety, as it had a long tail and curled horns and two rows of teeth and two sets of arms of different lengths. As I had interrupted the mystic cycles of his thoughts, Mr. Jefferson, abandoning his latest reconstruction momentarily, turned his gaze upon me and affixed his gaze upon my person with some chagrin. Recovering his regal bearing, he inquired after my business.

When I had laid before him the particulars of my journey, that I had been told by unnamed acquaintances of a clandestine variety that there was a record of that momentous convention which had borne the Constitution, and that said script had passed through the collections of sundry demigods of the country's heritage until it had settled in his guardianship, his expression became curious as he tapped the temples of his head wherein the divine ouroboros of his brain was attempting to wrap itself around a memory. When he asked how I had come to hear of such a work initially, I confessed that I could not say, as the first

communication which I had regarding the document arrived to me in epistolary form, writ in a hand which was hardly legible for its feebleness of both hand and mind, which instructed me that there was a document which lay in the archives of a certain Mr. Charles Pinkney. Not until I arrived at the estate of South Carolina did I learn that this document had been discharged into unknown hands and, groping my way through society into the wilderness of North Carolina, I picked up the trail again like a dog with the scent of the fox. And, indeed, the document was as a fox to my nostrils and jaws, for e'er I drew nigh and snapped at the tail it would vanish anew within brambles and hovels. When I was at Richmond and at last discovered the location of the document's repose, I received a letter from unknown origins admonishing me to abandon my untimely hunt which, said the scribe who had affixed his signature as *Emperor B the First*, was premature for the stratagem and would alert the President to his own impotence, a letter which I dismissed as nonsensical. There was no threat to our venerable magnate from a document which predated the nation itself.

Some niceties exchanged, Mr. Jefferson wondered after my extended journey, whereupon I recounted the origins of my sojourn through the plantations of Charleston, South Carolina, where the lords of that estate passionately urged me to locate the document in question, adjuring me with many a blasphemous oath. Mr. Jefferson's expression, which had been serene as he attended to my words with practiced acuteness, stirred upon the intelligence of the oaths from Southern origins and he admitted that he might indeed be in possession of a peculiar manuscript fitting that description. As he apologized for not being in a more cogent mental condition to properly entertain company, he wandered into a stately room whose walls were adorned with portraits and sketches of fossilized creatures and specimens of flora and

fauna to which Mr. Jefferson had taken a liking. I assured him it was nothing to concern his unrivaled mind, though by this time his boundless brain was gnawing on other conundrums as he wandered his halls in search of some forgotten object.

Presently, the venerable personage found his library.

The volume that he placed before me was a plain and simple booklet that bore no external markings of identification, with pages of such crispness and leather binding of such unspoiled varnish that it curled the hair of my nostrils. A thought hopped upon my brain, and the thought nested therein and laid eggs which presently began to hatch into thoughts of my own about the origin of the manuscript, though I spoke nothing of these fledglings just yet, as this was a book that had seldom, if ever, been peered upon by the prying populace and deserved some reverence before judgement was pronounced. Decades had passed since the Convention, it had passed into the ether of an immortal memory as Founders were lost to the nation, and I had come upon an artifact that ought to be treated with utmost reverence. As the first pages peeled apart in my fingers, I gazed upon an inscription, a symbol that I did not recognize. Beneath it was a Latin phrase which, owing to an egregious oversight in my education process, I was unable to read.

The sacred record of the mystic proceedings unfurled before my eyes:

Herein follows the account of the drafting of the Constitution of the United States as written by a dutiful servant of the nation, wherein the sentient presence of American Independence shaped the Colonies into an American nation. The account which follows is of a most veracious variety, however much men contend to the contrary, and heed ought to be taken

by any who are in the habit of looking to the heavens that the cabals and intrigues of a nation be lost in the blinding glory of a braggart's vision. The writer is but a scribe bearing witness to true and accurate events herein recorded.

Though the promptitude of the script was peculiarly simple, lacking the profusion or eloquence that the comity of eras by the confluence of philosophies had formed in the nation, this was the chimeric manuscript that had led me through the taverns, estates, athenaeums, stables, cesspits, cellars, and parlors of the nation. Mr. Jefferson, observing that I had finally bagged my vulpine Will-O-the-Wisp, graciously rose to his feet and begged leave to attend to some minor errands of his household. In my feeble attempts to be egalitarian I assured him his presence was no intrusion, to which the venerable sage responded that he indeed hoped he was not an intrusion in his own home and begged leave to depart that he may instruct one of his female slaves on the peculiar art of churning butter.

With that, the sanguine personage of antiquity departed the chamber, and with him I fancied I heard the rustle of attendant spirits of historic intellectuals who were following this sagacious demigod about that they might only touch his mantle or have his shadow fall upon them, attending upon his brain's whims in order that no spark of inspiration be squandered. Alone with the manuscript, I unfolded the text which held so much promise, a text which I had been told by sundry queer and cryptic sources, nearly all of whom declined, gazes askance, to be thoroughly forthcoming in their communication, would prove a curiosity to compliment other records. With this mindset, I turned my probing eyes to the pages that lay prone before me.

May 26th. The first delegates have arrived this day. The Virginians were the first to cross the threshold. While the other delegates tarried, attempting to dislodge themselves from various roads or taverns, Edmond Randolph and George Mason determined to pass the time in discussing their late hunting exploits while inhaling of snuff, which occasioned a spirited discussion about the virtues of excessively spacious nostril cavities and the contribution to longevity that came of having the ability to snort copious quantities of the herb, which occasioned a rather sardonic comment from the delegate from Pennsylvania that good snuff facilitated the pursuit of happiness, after which there was much discussion about that phrase which they noted had a familiar sound. The delegates speculated after its origin and familiar acquaintance with the unknown phrase.

June 2nd. A quorum having been collected, the delegates to the Convention became very grim and rested their gaze upon various men of import. None spoke, though many expectant gazes were exchanged, which rapidly gave way to squints of confusion and distrust and fondling of pistols and shifting of delegates into parties of states and neighboring states, which uncertainty was ended when the venerable delegate from New York rose to his feet and inquired after the purpose of the meeting. There followed a lengthy span of inarticulate repositioning of posteriors and the scratching of increasingly inaccessible patches of bristle and the picking of sundry orifices and expelling of excessive air by natural means; this span was broken when the venerable delegate from North Carolina, reclining in his chair with a loose-jointed posture, observed that he seemed to recall a war, though he added that he was not certain of this fact because, said he, stroking his chin, he wasn't confident owing to his inability to clearly recall a

military being fielded by the Colonies. A murmuring of assent flowed through the gathered dignitaries, who began inquiring after the cause of the conflict. It being soon discovered among the various accounts of rumors about skirmishes waged between gatherings of vagrants and ruffians beneath a ragged standard of the Colonies that there had indeed been a conflict of the armed variety within the nation's borders, a further intellectual logjam was occasioned when no one could ascertain the nature of the discord that had precipitated these localized cataclysms.

June 5th. The delegates from New York, including Mr. Alexander Hamilton, along with the intractable sage from Connecticut, Elbridge Gerry, whose dragging feet and inarticulate muttering announced his arrival, passed beneath the hallowed arch of the halls of Philadelphia. When interrogated concerning the occasion of our gathering, Hamilton replied that there had been many skirmishes of a militant variety, though he had an indistinct recollection of the causes as he was carried about by liquid spirits for many of these days.

Shortly thereafter Dr. Franklin arrived. As he was borne on a bier by four malefactors conscripted from a nearby penitentiary (whose names have passed into the bottomless pit of historical apathy), the bearers found it necessary to reposition themselves multiple times before the bier would pass over the threshold. When Dr. Franklin was laid in our midst, the hired convicts who had transported Mr. Franklin stood in a sheen of sweat as they expanded their lungs like bellows and sucked and blew, some staggering on unhinged legs, until at last the weakest of the group slumped forward and expired before us.

June 6th. The delegates have lighted upon a solution to their conundrum. In the course of a discussion of the variety of beers at the Indian Queen, Dr. Franklin, whose age prevented his wit from the celerity which others had, began to stir within his bier, startling his neighbors (who had forgotten his presence until his quivering limbs began to churn) and managed to erect himself, leaving many astounded. With sagacity befitting—nay, even surpassing—his many years, Dr. Franklin recalled having affixed his mark upon a document which, he believed, precipitated the disruption of late, which document, he was certain, was kept in the Town Hall nearby. A scheme was then constructed, whose designs were both indistinct and reflected a certain adventurism that is inherent in a body of men who have gathered about and grown restless after many days of idleness and quaffing of libations. The egg of this scheme was hatched by the brooding Mr. Gerry, and the wise delegates from Maryland loudly pronounced that only a man of unmixed daring, who would produce no dross no matter how hot the furnace was fired, would be suitable for this venture; hearing which, Mr. Hamilton stood with great pomposity and turned his nose to the heavens but, hearing no one volunteer him, he humbly begged leave to volunteer himself for this mission. The delegates from Maryland heartily approved, exchanging not a few winks and nudges and licking of teeth and fingering of heads. General Washington cautioning him to exercise prudence in his foray, as there was much concern regarding the citizens of the city knowing of the proceedings, Mr. Hamilton departed.

June 7th. While discussing the merits of various historical methods of violent interrogation that some delegates, upon reflection, insisted had its inception in the choleric of Mr. Elbridge Gerry, the restlessness that attends an extended period of inactivity began to

overtake the convention. During a less-malevolent interchange, the delegate from SC intimated that Dr. Franklin's visage put him in mind of an obese possum that his family had raised from "a powerful puny possumling," noting especially the grotesque nature of Mr. Franklin's smile. This jocund observation did not sit well with Dr. Franklin, nor with his followers, who promptly compared the frames of Dr. Franklin's detractors to a particularly species of worm which, according to their account, emerged from the earth after deluges in unnamed semi-tropic regions; of gargantuan dimensions, these vermicular specimen were noted by the savages for their copious quantity of mucus that rendered them difficult to grasp during extraction from the earth. The contention grew so sharp upon this zoological homology that the room was soon divided into two camps: on one side of the room assembled the Dr.-Possum-Face faction, which included such men as Charles Pinkney and Pierce Butler and Edmund Randolph, while the Lumbricoid-Talebearer faction gathered itself on the opposite side of the room by, unwilling to raise their inertia from recline, bouncing upon their seats and pulling their persons while in their chairs in a manner that put viewers in mind of their more youthful years of tutelage.

Rallying about their cause, the Lumbricoid-Talebearer faction chose a spokesman for themselves; the Dr.-Possum-Face faction, sensing that this put them at a disadvantage, and not wanting to be outflanked by the prospect of an intellectual, chose their own representative, Mr. Charles Pinkney of South Carolina, a man rumored to be most proficient in the recognition of mammalian traits associate with the possum. On the other side, Mr. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, whose acrimony toward diminutive vermin of unsavory appearances was judged by the adversary to be sufficiently lethal to provide the appropriate response, was anointed spokesman. General Washington of Virginia assumed post as adjudicator.

Standing before the congregation, Mr. Pinkney, following a brief eulogy upon the memory of his father's domesticated possum, 1. assured the opposition that the term "possum" was not a pejorative appellation but rather that possums are well-loved in regions of his hearkening, wherein the citizenry are intimately acquainted with their habits and tendencies, and that they often welcome them to the dinner table, a comment which evoked many broad grins and noises of gestation (viz., grunts of gesticulation and stroking of distended bellies). Mr. Pinkney's rhetoric prowess was unmatched as he assumed a noble posture and propounded the laudable traits of the possum that distinguished it as an exceptional creature, noting that 2. Choctaw savages of the Gulf region worship the Possum Spirit, the deity upon which they call when being overwhelmed in a military conflict, casting their arms to the ground and cleverly lying sprawled upon the dirt as the opposing militia invade their ranks. Indeed, claimed Mr. Pinkney, the Choctaw are among the most proficiently skilled at this artful feint, which they practice with industrious rigor, keeping specimens of the possum in their custody in order to acquaint themselves with the creatures' tactics. In conclusion, and after mimics of sundry stratagems and postures of the feinting possum which the Dr.-Possum-Face faction proclaimed were of exceptional quality, Mr. Pinkney proposed affixing an addition nomination to Mr. Franklin's title; after soliciting suggestions, he christened Dr. Franklin: Dr. Slewface. He returned to his ranks amidst many felicitations and hearty blows from his neighbors.

Following the lofty elocution of Mr. Pinkney, the representative from Mass., Elbridge Gerry, came forth from his lair within the center of his faction and fastened his acrid gaze upon the Dr.-Possum-Face faction until at length a timid silence reigned. Stooping with earnestness, he relieved himself of a speech before the convention, muttering deontic inclinations in such an

undertone that the assembled delegates leaned forward in their seats to hear him; when the members of the faction were most hazardously positioned upon their seats, Mr. Gerry burst into vehement condemnation of his detractors. Upon his eructation the delegates, some of whom fell from their precipitous perches, fell back, attempting to right themselves with vigorous churning of limbs and grasping of chairs, recovering dignified stances and escaping this dishonourous exigency. 1. The possum, quoth Mr. Gerry, is the most unsavory collection of zoological flotsam skulking about dank tunnels of the earth; to assign to Dr. Franklin such misaligned countenance was libel of such an opprobrious nature that the offending personages were 1a. undercutting the prestige of the assembly through the misappropriation of traits characteristic of hellish vermin to one of the most estimable representatives, thereby projecting upon humanity a calumny which 1b. might lead, contrariwise, to a general emulation, to wit, the wearing of possum ornaments and clothing and praising of the possum and the adoption of the possum as a national insignia, a phenomenon which would damage national perception abroad. Therefore, concluded the delegate from Massachusetts, those who have cast aspersions on Dr. Franklin ought to be cast back into the dung heap "from which they squirmed" and repent in mire and filth. This infraction upon the ethics of discourse rendered the Dr.-Possum-Face faction worthy of the name of Lumbricoid-Talebearer, as the worm is a creature which writhes within the bowels of earth and man alike, causing discomfort as it devours offal therein, only emerging from tunnels in the cover of night to defile the surface whereon decent creatures have their dwelling. 2. This worm was a suitable allegory due to its highly gelatinous flesh; similarly, members of the Dr.-Possum-Face faction, when pinched between the fingers of a syllogistic dichotomy will coat themselves in rhetorical mucus and distort their form in order

that any attempt to catch them in some logical syllogism might be frustrated. With a concluding flourish of profanity and the hurling of an inkwell at a chortling delegate from Georgia, Mr. Gerry proposed calling the southern regions of the nation Wormwood and promptly moved for a vote.

There followed no small uproar as both sides mingled cries for reparations and condemnations and accusations of fallacious guile; indeed, the uproar was of not a such small variety that it awoke Dr. Franklin from his afternoon slumber and drew the attention of General Washington who, becoming cognizant of the dire disinclination both parties had for the others' usage of the space and atmosphere, op'ed his jaws most egregiously broad and there followed such a noise as has never been heard upon earth, nor ever shall be. The convention was cowed into conciliation and it was determined that the topic would be continued on the following day.

June 8th. During discussions concerning which delegate from Pennsylvania had consumed the most copious quantity of beer the previous night, a conversation that was transforming into a comparison of distended stomachs, a specimen of mankind who took after the feminine variety burst into the halls. This reprehensible intrusion upon the masculinity of the atmosphere occasioned first a violent abandonment of matters such as the detection of belches at various distances and the careful measuring of beer-filled girth and a rapid preoccupation with dignifying pursuits such as speculation upon how many angels would fit upon the head of a beetle and peering into the ear of one's neighbor while rhapsodizing upon the immense dimensions of said delegate's brain.

Soon there arose an outcry from all corners of the room, which was hushed when the intruder claimed to be Alexander Hamilton, returned with all celerity from his mission and brandishing a document which he proclaimed would illuminate the purpose of the gathering. The delegate from Maryland announced himself unconvinced the intruder was not a woman and demanded that she reveal her bosom as proof of his veracity, which invoked agreement among other skeptics present, who demanded the right to inspect her bosom, adding that, should such prove inconclusive, they may needs inspect further. As the skeptics were moving for a vote, the intruder stripped, deposing himself of the dress and revealing a manly form, much to the chagrin of the skeptics.

The nature of the sensational document Mr. Hamilton bore caused the delegates to congregate around a table whereupon it was displayed and a pall of sobriety held them as they read. The text began thus: "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one nation..."

When a sufficient section had been read, Mr. John Dickenson turned his face about to Mr. James Wilson and proclaimed, "By God, we declared independence from England." An exchange concerning the nature of the conflict arose, at which several delegates noted that there must have been a war, and a gathering recollection of a conflict after the military sort was discovered in the recessive memories of the congregation, though an army mustered from the Colonies appeared to be absent in this conflict. A promising youth from Delaware observed that the Colonies casting off the English yoke necessitated a vacuum in power; Dr. Franklin (viz., Dr. Slewface) and several delegates versed in the natural sciences proclaimed that nature abhors a vacuum and that this travesty must be amended with all haste. General Washington, sensing a

mood within the assembly, stood forth and proposed that the convention determine the destiny of the nation as it related to the vacuum within the governance, assuring the assembly that he would furthermore send forth a secret man of his Culper Ring to descry the expectations of the populace. The motion was passed unanimously and the assembly adjourned to The Tavern to continue their discussions regarding the consumption and aftereffects of beer.

It was at this point in the befuddling text that I paused, reflecting that the progression of events entirely confounded my expectations. For several moments I was in a stupor of deep meditation, unable to settle upon the nature of the document. Impressions of the Convention which had inspired such devotion that I had ranged the states in pursuit of a document which I believed would only further burnish the glory of the Founders clung for a purchase upon my mind. All was right in the new United States, was it not? Hadn't we settled our Presidency in the years of Mr. James Madison, rectified the misdeeds of Adams in the XYZ Affair and the Alien and Sedition Act in the instructive tutelage of Mr. Jefferson himself? Uncertainty crept over my youth spent in deep contemplation upon the lives and deeds of the Patriarchs of the nation during my time within the hallowed walls of the College of William and Mary.

Since by this time evening was approaching, I determined to take my leave of Mr. Jefferson and retire to his guesthouse, wherein I was met with disconsolate dreams, visions which could not settle upon the events which I had always believed to be true or these new unfoldings which now confronted me. Had I not heard from Mr. George Washington himself when I was so fortunate as to visit Mount Vernon that he was, in a manner, the steadying weight in the hull of the American ship during the glorious Convention? Indeed, I had. There

was no other explanation, and even within this document I could see the vestiges of nobility within the players of this foisted farce, for farce it had to be if I were to take it seriously.

The next day I determined to discover the verity of the document and made my way again to Mr. Jefferson's parlor; however, when I arrived, the venerable forefather was absent. With little to occupy my time, and still unable to see through the turbidity of my thoughts, I began an expedition about Monticello, which Mr. Jefferson sometimes refers to as his Hermitage where he contemplates the glories of the paradise which has been raised as a city upon a hill to the world. Ever watching over me were the geological ossification which Mr. Jefferson had been reconstructing when I had interrupted his divine meditations upon ancient civilizations. To my untrained perception it appeared that this towering monstrosity was a jumble of several primeval creatures and several femurs had been mistaken for tailbones while another beasts humerus now served as the bones of fingers and from rib-bones had been constructed a crown of devilish horns, yet Mr. Jefferson was far more learned in the finer points of paleontological zoology than I. Indeed, Mr. Jefferson has posited a fantastic theory that our civilization overlies an ancient civilization ruled by such monsters and that their horrendous appearance was due to the nearness to an underworld of an unknown variety, a hypothesis which has met with some chagrin in the circles of natural science.

Mr. Jefferson at length entered the room, a halo of holiness still wreathing his head, singing a delightful bagatelle that had no words except those which his impulses dictated which comforted my languishing soul immensely as I realized that the sage before me embodied all that I had envisioned to be true of the American vision. When he became cognizant of my presence, he composed himself and begged to be excused for his tardiness as it took longer

than anticipated to inspect the hemp fires, hemp being the latest fancy which had overtaken him and which he would no doubt employ to the enrichment of the nation. While being led to his study I considered noting the nature of the document to Mr. Jefferson, but as he appeared to be in a highly abstracted mood (observable inasmuch as he had plucked a dandelion from the field and after staring at it with poetic contemplation he tasted of its flower and commenced masticating publically upon his weed with the pleasure of a botanist in search of the deepest essence of nature, capturing the molecular sensation of the fauna with his tongue that he might better describe it in his texts) I was disinclined to bring the issue before him. In addition, I was beginning to suspect that the document in question was apocryphal.

His esteemed presence departing to further rustic meditations, I turned my attention again to the document to discover these unusual proceedings.

June 10th. It being determined that the vacuum in power which had been discovered on the previous day was of no small consequence and becoming increasingly dire with the passage of time, the delegates proposed that the vacuum be stoppered in as timely a manner as possible. Furthermore, as General Washington had learned from his spies that the populace was in expectation that a delegation had gathered for the purpose of modifying The Articles of Confederation, Robert Morris stood forth and loosed a verbal fire and brimstone upon the assembly concerning the obstreperous nature of the vulgar souls who infested the state legislatures of the sundry Colonies, swearing in several languages when lighting upon Rhode Island. As he waxed rhapsodic upon the various punishments which should first be exacted upon recalcitrant members of the nation, the particulars of which were lost in a flurry of violent

gesticulations and vulgar anathemas, and that by animating the inferno beneath the colonies the dross would run off and return from whence it came. He then proposed to install Dr. Benjamin Franklin as the absolute ruler to gain glory and prestige for a previously vagabond nation, a movement which met with much admiration from Mr. Hamilton, who proposed remedying the impecunious condition with mint, a proposal which drew some confusion from the delegates from North Carolina who expressed their confoundment at the use of mint weed as currency.

Hamilton's address unfinished, he was interrupted by the delegate from South Carolina, Mr. Charles Pinkney, who replied: He would concede that Franklin was a suitable nomination for the task at hand, as his copious girth was excessively sufficient to the task of stoppering the breach in power; furthermore, as the Articles of Confederation had failed in harnessing interstitial glory and commanding obedience of the colonies, most notably in gathering the wealth due all men of prestige, he proposed that the sundry states be subjugated to the will of those states with the greatest import, which ought to be the state whose citizens were of the highest regard. Edmund Randolph, who, having received previous instruction from James Madison, seized with a sudden haste to present his designs for a new government: as it is self-evident that all great men hail from Virginia, and as Virginia is the most populous state in the Confederation, Mr. Randolph, with the utmost burden of responsibility pressing on his unworthy shoulders, pronounced it suitable to let that region be granted power to define national affairs and become the capital district of the nation, with George Washington as the new emperor and the delegates from that glorious commonwealth placed at heads of diplomacy and finance and war. This became known as the "Virginia Plan."

This promulgated proposal incited an uproar from every corner of the hall as some called for a removal of The Articles of Confederation, others called for a censure of the Virginia delegation, Charles Pinkney charged that the Virginians had poached his designs, the delegate from New Hampshire (having just arrived that morning) walked out, while the disembodied sentiments of the delegate from Maryland, Mr. Luther Martin, resounded off the walls of the chamber, his person being indiscernible in the corpus turbus.

From this disarray stood forth Mr. Gouverneur Morris and, in an attempt to quell the disquiet, discharged his pistol into the roof; the attention of the convention seized, he proposed that there be some ordinances for the governance of the convention. Because it was rapidly becoming evident that the Convention intended to do over the Articles of Confederation which, he noted, might not sit well with a populous that had nominated them to revise a document they intended to voraciously sabotage; furthermore, as the latest uproar had drawn the attention of several passersby on the street outside, townsmen who were previously unaware that the Hall was being used; as an uncouth people would determine their designs odious owing to the superstitious fear men have of things which they do not understand should they discover them; he urged that all men exercise extreme circumspection.

When the topic of democracy was mentioned, several delegates noted it strange that Patrick Henry had chosen to absent himself. Mr. Randolph replied that the honorable gentleman had declined the invitation owing to how he "smelt a rat," a reply which invoked the curiosity of Mr. Sherman of Connecticut: what species of rat was it that he had smelled and how had he managed to detect its scent hundreds of miles afar off? Mr. William Blount of N.C. seconded Mr. Sherman's question, noting that he could barely detect a Negro from 100 paces,

and that downhill. The nature of the rat being unresolved, some speculated that Mr. Henry was referring to an allegorical rat, though this caused some confusion as none were quite sure of the nature of a vermin allegory, lest it be Aesop's fables, which Mr. McClurg of Virginia insisted contained a fable of a rat and a weasel wherein a rat stole the weasel's fruit, whereupon the weasel hunted the rat down and slew him egregiously, though Mr. McClurg could not divine a morale to the tale. Mr. Sherman noted Henry's intense predilection for democracy and that Mr. Henry would be highly displeased with their designs to beguile the states of pretended powers. Combined with the admonition of G. Morris, Mr. William Jackson moved for a vow of secrecy to be implemented that Mr. Henry not learn of their designs.

A copy of such an oath was drafted by General Washington and James Wilson. The oath was copied and distributed among the delegates to read aloud and then sign. The text of the oath was as follows:

*"I swear upon that Deity which breathed soul into my nostrils
that I shall never divulge the proceedings of this Convention
to any member of the unlearned masses who might take fright
at the unfamiliar wisdom whereby the Articles have been nullified.
And if a revelation of any variety should occur at my hands
may I be hung by my privy parts and then may my privy parts
be tied to four untamed stallions and quartered that I may not
blight mankind with further offspring from my loins.*

Several revisions were necessary before a draft of the oath was approved. The first was made when, upon reading the 6th line concerning one's privy parts being drawn and quartered, there was a sudden uncertain mumbling which ended in a silence that was accompanied by a general crossing of legs and shifting upon seats and incidental exploring of nether regions in apprehension of missing appendages. When a discussion of the origin of this treatment was made, the intractable Scotsman Mr. Wilson was faulted and several delegates then affirmed that a note should be added to the new constitution to prohibit cruel and unusual chastisement. After the document was revised with limbs serving in the place of privy parts, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts stood forth and insisted that the oath be merely spoken since a written document that revealed the secret which the delegates swore to conceal that might fall into a commoner's hands was of the highest order of imbecility and censured the assemblage for their fatuous proceedings and then declared the day's proceedings concluded due to a necessity to imbibe.

However, Mr. Charles Pinkney, aggrieved by the perceived slight of having his brain plundered, insisted that he be granted an audience before the assembly adjourn. He berated the delegates from Virginia for purloining his inspiration regarding a new government, producing from his disheveled affects a document which contained the outlines for a proposed government that was in similarity to the Virginia Plan. While many of the delegates were intrigued by his waxing vainglorious, Mr. Madison, often busied with taking notes upon the speeches delegates were making, took up his pen and began sketching a facsimile of Mr. Pinkney with a distended head and protruding eyeballs as he struck a rhapsodic posture atop a dung heap, causing his neighbors to be seized with silent paroxysms of levity. Mr. Pinkney, mistaking their convulsions

for nods of affirmation, was seized by greater inspiration and thundered forth upon his plan for creating a glorious nation combining the most noteworthy aspects of historical nations: the Senate of Rome, the Prime Minister of England, and the slavery of Egypt—which he called “Virginia’s South Carolina Plan,” urging those present to give consideration to this plan.

June 19th. While awaiting the fullness of the assemblage, there arose a debate about which personages lent the most gravity to the Convention. Some insisted that it was General Washington, though the delegate from Virginia, Mr. McClurg, surveying the dimensions of the immediate delegates, insisted that Dr. Franklin had brought the most gravity with him. As Mr. McClurg had previous been of the Dr.-Possum-Face Faction, J. Wilson inquired how Mr. McClurg reconciled his position with his previous allegiance with this faction, to which he replied that the possum in said simile was an extravagantly corpulent specimen. Upon realizing they were at an impasse whose shape and constitution neither of them could divine, the topic of the previous day was resumed.

Mr. W. Paterson of New Jersey, after some council with R. Yates of New York, outlined his sentiments concerning the Virginia Plan: he proposed that, owing to the principles of ‘federalism’ and the spirit of the Articles previously ratified and the nature of certain states as the industrial spirit of the nation, less populous states ought to be allowed to pursue provincial interests for the benefit of national policy at the expense of the more riotous states where the agrarian citizenry, saturated with ignorance and mendacity, would operate with excessive licentiousness and therefore ought to serve the wise and virtuous states, and the democracy-

mongers from Virginia and Pennsylvania be sent back to the dusky wilderness from which they wallowed.

The Southern delegates, sensing an aspersion upon their rustic cultivation, began to rebuff Paterson for multitudinous infractions upon civility, while many who supported provincial interests affirmed W. Paterson's speech.

Since the core of the sharp contention was the issue of representation, the issue was brought before the members. Seeking to reconcile the two parties, Madison struck the phrase "free inhabitants" from the wording of the drafts of representation in order to balance the numbers, an action which induced the ire of the delegates from the Southerly states, who insisted that their population be fully represented which, when their enslaved population was counted, would give them a preponderance in representation. Elbridge Gerry of Mass. found this arrangement opprobrious and replied that the Southern states would wield a disproportional clout if this commensurate proposal were adopted; furthermore, said Mr. Gerry, slaves were considered property of the southern delegation and if the Southern states were to have their slaves included in their representation Mr. Gerry wanted all of his property to be included when measuring Mass. representation, counting such commodities as his livestock and his furniture when determining proportional representation. Mr. Madison, attempting to regather rapidly spiraling thoughts, informed Mr. Gerry that this was an outrageous assertion owing to the inability of furniture to express its sentiments or to need advocacy, to which Mr. Gerry replied to Mr. Pinkney that slaves were also devoid of sentiments befitting that of a hominid and that they ought merely to be represented.

As Mr. Pinkney and other southern delegates, aware of the peculiar sensation of horns of a dilemma prodding their posteriors, drew themselves into rank according to their familiar spirits of the nether regions and took up a frontal assault of the controversy, Mr. Madison relinquished his grasp of the discourse and retired to the ranks of spectators. Peirce Butler of S.C. put forth that to accept Mr. Gerry's argument that livestock and other commodities be represented was perilous because governance founded upon representation leads to an adherence to delegated representation and, a segment of the populace having been given a proportional representative, there would come a time when they would insist a member of their class be given a place with the national legislature, a prospect which was deemed preposterous, he ventured, as no one wanted to hold office with elected livestock.

He was, however, interrupted by the delegate from Virginia, the honorable G. Mason, who, in response to to Mr. Butler's chimeric scenario, referenced legal precedent in ancient Rome, where Emperor Caligula made his horse a consul during the Roman Empire; to which the delegate from Georgia turned to his neighbor and remarked, "I wager he voted 'nay' a lot." His neighbor, Mr. Peirce Butler, cast into a sudden distemper by this whimsy, turned about violently until he identified the evildoer and located the head in which was lodged the mouth that uttered and, drawing forth his hand, he smote the delegate from Georgia upon the cheek.

While considering the prospect of elected livestock, the delegate from Virginia reminded those assembled that Patrick Henry had compared the delegates to rats; thus a further interlude upon the nature of representation was occasioned and delegates considered governance with members of the animal kingdom. Mr. Pinkney, reviving the specter of Dr. Franklin in the likeness of an opossum, argued that he could be a titular emissary to any populous of a varmint

disposition. As this inspired Mr. Gerry of Mass. again to his former pertinacious acrimony at the sleight by inquiring whether the representatives from his state were in the habit of raising communities of opossums, he was interrupted by the delegate from Delaware, Mr. John Dickinson: first, said he, the prospect of succoring livestock to be proportionally represented would result in accelerated breeding to increase a state's prestige and, competition fathering excess, men would be housing idle livestock, which would damage the nation's economy and lead to livestock outstripping the numbers of men; should the livestock ever become sentient to this condition, they would insurrect as did the peasants of England during The Great Rising of 1381 and the nation's ministers might repeat Richard II's fatal error and attempt to reason with them. Finally, said Mr. Dickenson, representation of livestock was offensive to his sectarian sensibilities as his state had fewer domesticated creatures (unless women were counted, as their representation would be a logical outgrowth of the deformity that had been presented to the assembly, for if representation were granted to beasts and slaves then women might find their way into the halls of ministry, a prospect which inflamed many members who had previously been reticent upon the matter of representation to align with the New Jersey plan) and that his state, already being at a disadvantage, would be "trampled" by the delegates from other states.

As he had ended upon this witticism, the delegate from Pennsylvania, Mr. G. Morris, took up the mantle with further gibes upon words: "It becomes the convention to settle the questions of what is entailed by livestock lest boorish and asinine men become confused and stampede into factious herds." He was interrupted at this point when Mr. Butler of Georgia,

again inflamed by the perceived levity, yet discovering that the offending delegate was beyond his grasp, seized the cane of a neighbor and hurled it at the metaphorical malefactor.

Finding the attention of the room turned upon him, Mr. Butler declared that a simple solution to the dilemma was to have representation based upon quotas. As wealthy and well-born men of a landed plutocracy had in the past been trusted at the helm of the state, reviving the views of Mr. Roger Sherman that the people, like the eddies of a putrid river collecting at the most inactive junctures in the flow of society to release noxious fumes that the masses mistook for cerebration, stint the progress of more learned men if so allowed. This, however, inflamed those of Delaware and New Jersey and Maryland, who could not explain the source of their umbrage.

The convention being unable to determine how the vacuum in power should be divvied up, it was in threat of dissolution with the conflict of representation disorderly, and men parted with uncertainty and trepidation about the destiny of the nation.

There was no doubt in my mind now that what I was reading was an apocryphal work which held in contempt the traditions of the nation. The text was not only inaccurate, it was slanderously petty, every jot and tittle unworthy to be perused even by the lowliest of plebeians who has collapsed in a wagon rut amidst the cesspit backwash after a night of drunken depravity. Accordingly, I shut the book with great disdain and departed the study, determined to never allow the document to soil my finger again.

I retired to the shade of Mr. Jefferson's veranda, reluctant to depart Monticello due to the heavy, inelastic air of summer which had settled upon the Piedmont region, a watery haze

over the jungle of verdure. As I reclined in the shade of a spreading oak to meditate upon my consternation at discovering that the Holy Grail which I had eagerly sought had turned out to be a heretical blasphemy, recovering not the sacred chalice of Arthurian legend but the hammer with which the pagans had nailed Christians within the torch cages when Nero had tarred and lit them aflame to illuminate his garden party, my thoughts became lucid and the nature of the document presented itself: it had been lost to the saints of the nation who understood its impiety and departed from it with just cause, and I had become the fool of dubious hearsay and pursued it. This revelation left me in doldrums and a tainted mood.

The papers of the venerable Mrs. Jay, Hamilton, and Madison fluttered in the tempest of my thoughts, and I began to speculate on their existence. Those enlightened rationalists who argued so eloquently for the nation's designs—this malignant tumor upon the body of the United States would have me now believe were mere propagandists for a pragmatic end. The subtleties of the syllogistic genius of these men had been reduced to mere manipulations of a clandestine society of plotters against the people. There had never been a republic, never a democratic process whereby the people cast their votes, and the rallying standard which bore the semblance of a republic was in fact a new kind of government never before witnessed in the history of the world, one in which the people were so many dupes believing that they exercised direct power over their delegates—nay, the travesty extended beyond mere election, for it had been impressed upon the States that there existed some path for a satisfactory deliberation and effectual realization of redresses, a fact that now appeared to be merely a method of quelling the unpredictable multitudes. The Constitution of these United States, a document which embodies the most sacred and profound utterances of the divine Founders,

which has been held up to the world as an ensample of the golden sayings of the most enlightened minds, is instead a signed testimony of the machinations of a coalition of miscreants who were but playing demigods in the play which they wrote, afterward convincing the nation that attended them that the world beyond the stage was the true theater.

This inane babel was madness! This was an epithetical farce, a treatise upon the nonsensical, a journal copied from the inmost walls of a sanitarium. The glorious founders were of no such disgraceful disposition, and the United States of America was indeed the most elegantly constructed republic for, although we had not used the routes left unto us, and though it is true that there lies always between us and our delegates a safeguard such as the Electoral College in nearly all offices, it was placed there merely for our own benefit, just as our means of rectifying abuse is always open to our usage though we have never used it. If we have not made use of it, it is merely a testament to the sagacity of our Founders who have chosen from their lot the most capable and wise men for us to elect. This unspeakable document, then, ought to be abandoned, never again exhumed from the pit into which the Founders in their immeasurable wisdom cast it.

I resolved to depart forthwith.

That evening while making the final arrangements for my departure, I was approached by Mr. Jefferson, whose presence had been sporadic of late on account of a lengthy disquisition undertaken as the result of a highly complex recomposition of ancient mastodon bones which revealed a dual-headed species with teeth which I at first mistook for rib bones, a manifestation inspiring some fear that he had accentuated to Dr. Wistar of the American Philosophical Society. When I confessed myself perplexed he explained that, as no species ever ceases to

exist, he believed this bizarre creature to be roaming the Mississippi where future expeditions might unwittingly disturb them; given the physical disposition of the creature (he showed a vivid sketch of a mastodon devouring a disemboweled human), he feared their unrefined and impolite mannerisms might lead to a massacre. As he was taking his leave he faltered and his countenance became inquisitive as he recalled something: a man had come calling upon me and was currently awaiting my audience on the lawn, as he had declined Mr. Jefferson's invitation to enter the drawing room.

The man in question was of a peculiar appearance. Cloaked and armed with a sword and pistol, his hood thrown back to ventilate his perspiring head, he stood near the veranda contemplating the sunset. His clothing was of a European mark, fine boots and black cloak, and I surmised he had arrived from the northern states, most likely New York. His impassive bearing halting my approach, he turned his face toward me, a face that was disfigured and weary with some unseen burden, and spoke: "I know why you are here," said he, clasping his hands behind his back as he gathered his thoughts. "There are rumors in this region of the state that there may perhaps be a document crafted long ago by dubious men which had previously been lost to historians and recently discovered in Mr. Jefferson's possessions. Sadly, the fetid machinations of designing men had begun to crawl into the nostrils of the most estimable men of the nation, some of whom wish the document to be lost to the annals of history while others wish to exhume it from obscurity."

Given this turn of events, and as it impressed upon me that I had unwittingly cast my lot in a game of chance, I earnestly inquired of him who these men were, but my entreaties were met with grim silence.

He continued: "One of the men has sent me to warn you, for the document which you have exhumed has been interred at Mr. Jefferson's estate by a sacred oath."

By this I understood that a collusion had taken place and that the document that I was perusing was not lost to history but deliberately concealed. I became more circumspect about the mouth. Without disclosing whether I had found the document, I asked after the nature of the document and why it was not simply destroyed and whether it were a forgery; he merely turned his gaze back to the lethargic summer atmosphere and delivered a final malediction: "Return from whence you came, dear friend, ere someone of a less constrained temperament find you and be displeased at your undertaking. The document at hand could throw the nation into unrest. Ask yourself: Do you want to be the one responsible for this nation being cast into an upheaval and risk splitting it in twain? Men who were unhappy with the passage of our original document have eagerly sought after this document, and there are some in this very state, men who have suspicions that are reckoned overly zealous right now who would go to great lengths to get hold of a document which would lend weight to their beliefs. I abjure you again to depart this place and leave Mr. Jefferson in peace."

Across the lawn and into the forest he rode upon his steed and departed Monticello.

PART II: POWER SEIZURES

My interested, which had just died upon the altar of my skepticism, was newly piqued—nay, stirred to something tending toward a distraction of mind. I located Mr. Jefferson and, when I found him busily transcribing a letter to the Comte de Buffon upon the intellectualism inherent in the Columbian mastodon, I inquired after letters from attendees to the Convention that were adjoined to the document. My plan had changed, as the reader may have intuited, upon the intelligence brought from the hooded stranger: if this was indeed a faithful document, there must be surrounding works which would illuminate its origin and purpose.

Mr. Jefferson promised to browse his private possessions for such epistolary remnants.

As I felt the heat of curiosity and perhaps some trepidation about my lingering at Monticello, though the former was primarily animating me, I settled in Mr. Jefferson's study determined to master the document and learn its cryptic history after which men so eagerly sought. The maddening pages which I had but so recently condemned to The Pit slid apart, and I thrust forth my intellect once more.

June 25th. While assembling the delegates continued a conversation which they had undertaken on the previous night concerning the nature and origin of electricity, some insisting that it was of a fluid nature while others insisted it took after the gaseous elements and could not be sensed. Dr. Franklin, around whom the debate had been convulsing, and who was at that moment imbibing of the brandy at The Tavern near Philadelphia's town hall, was in the midst of a ribald tale from his rustication in which he grew weary of omnipresent sightseers

around his home and affixed his largest electrostatic dynamo to his iron fence to await the touch of unsuspecting intruders, some of whom were felled by the current. Many delegates still unpersuaded, Dr. Franklin vowed that his machine would accompany him on the following day.

As Nathaniel Gorham attempted to resume the matters of the previous day with the Committee of the Whole, Dr. Franklin arrived, several delegates accompanying him bearing the limbs of his electrostatic device, which they assiduously erected according to Dr. Franklin's alchemic wisdom of that natural science. Once complete, the sphere was rotated and the electrical charge stored until the delegate from New Jersey, Mr. William Livingstone, overcome with curiosity, stretched forth his hand and was repulsed by the machine with such intensity that he was cast into his chair where he sat dumbfounded with an agitated left eyeball.

An uproar ensued as delegates, still animated by the spirits of which they had imbibed on the previous eve, clamored for Franklin's mystic orb, Mr. Gorham calling upon the order of the day.

Dr. Franklin's gyro became the center of the conversation upon this instant. The atmosphere of the discussion became scintillating as men began thrusting fingers upon their neighbor to convey some electrical message; the delegate from N.C., Mr. Blount, who was exceptionally well-saturated from his tryst of the evening prior, lay hold of the orb and was seized with a apoplectic fit that left him with a spasmodic right arm for the remainder of the day, an arm which on several occasions ventured beyond his person and struck a neighbor's countenance, Mr. Blount apologizing profusely and censuring his twitching arm, though not too sternly, as he feared lest it might turn against its owner; the enterprising delegate from South Carolina, Mr. Pinkney, whet his wits and touched his tongue to a rod, there following a crackling as of walnuts underfoot, the sensation of which caused Mr. Pinkney to bite his tongue, which swelled to such

proportions that he spoke with a lisp for the remainder of the week; Mr. Hamilton of N.Y. boldly lay both hands upon the sphere and brought forth lightning from his loins; G. Morris of Penn., when he encountered the orb, was so stunned a noxious turbulence erupted from his nether regions, a phenomenon which prompted Mr. Dickenson to peer out the nearest windowpane and speculate upon the largeness of Philadelphia thunderstorms; and G. Mason of Va. saw his shoes explode when he grasped the dynamo; until at length the delegates sated their jocund inclinations and settled into their places, some discomfited and giddy, while others were nervous and unseemly, the acrid aroma of the delegates more undeniable than on previous days.

Mr. Gorham, whose fingers sparked when he touched the gavel, then returned order to the room and proposed that the previous discussion of representation be renewed, though the delegates, animated by a nascent spirit of optimism, replied for the issue of the executive and soon overcame Mr. Gorham's attempts at order.

Mr. Pinkney spoke first, a sibilant hiss in his speech as spittle accumulated upon his lips, lauding his aforementioned outline for government and the place it left for the chief executive, as he believed a strong and singular executive would restore lost harmony to the nation, though the details of how such glory was lost were yet indistinct; Mr. Mason of Virginia, whose shoes were emitting smoke like unto a tobacco pipe, challenged Mr. Pinkney's plan upon the grounds that there should be several members of the head of the executive branch that all men might share in power.

Mr. Hamilton of New York, whose wig had affixed itself to the ceiling due to the electric attraction it had acquired for the nearest structure, having patiently endured many a speech from men much his elder, stood forth and delivered a rousing speech: "It becomes men of note,

gentlemen of refinement and dignity," said he, a sparkle in his step that traveled across the floor and struck the delegate from Delaware, Mr. Dickinson, who rose to his feet with a feral noise, which gave the assemblage reason to pause, "to govern and employ whatever utensils necessary to keep the masses in order for the beatitude of the power which he has gotten. We have an opportunity before us to seize upon power but also the dispensations of honor and emoluments by ensuring to ourselves power from the people, for such is the purpose of our gathering. The Articles of Confederation were undertaken to sate a monarch-phobic masses, a hideous depravity that had neither the propinquity nor the power to command admiration such as exist in England and France, whose citizenry are in constant obeisance. What better government is there that can so thoroughly insure our perpetuity as the masters of the nation than the monarchial? In order to ensconce this system," says Mr. Hamilton, his choler rising as he struck upon that crescendo which contained the crux of his sentiments, "it is but necessary to contract with each other in a manner that exploits those flaws which will be perpetually discovered in the common folk. A monarchy will accomplish this. We need exploit the five predominant flaws: Firstly, the people are fundamentally indolent and shirk the arduous task of caring for their communities and will have a constant and active interest in a government that bears responsibility for them. Such is the monarchy. The masses, ever the rutting beasts, are habitually myopic and will be duped by splendor which they see, and the honor which this garners for them abroad, for they love to see power and might when it is linked to their fatherland. Such is the monarchy. The common man is as ignorant as Balaam's ass and will be enlightened only when sensing blows of a rod, as Shay was made sensible to his misdeeds when squinting down the tube of a musket trained upon his dullard's nog, and therefore the new

government ought to exercise the coercion of laws ex cathedra and military arms to this end. Such is the monarchy. All mankind functions by that glorious system of favors and cavils, of which a monarchy is not only proficient but masterly, and therefore avoids the tumults commonly found in such bodies as the proposed Virginia Plan. However, in order to secure such glory for the delegates assembled, it is necessary to absolve the boundaries that divide the current territories, as provincial allegiances are now in operation contrary to and subversive to such acquisition of glory. Therefore," concluded Hamilton, "we ought to dissolve the states and anoint a king after the British model."

Concluding his speech with a flourish and a rousing anthem for the British monarchy and a great cry of God Save the King, a disorderly debate began upon this topic, many of the delegates attracted to the notion of emoluments and seats of power; however, the sagely delegate William Patterson of New Jersey, having endured the lively diatribe of the youthful Hamilton, and after contemplating the revelry associated with Dr. Franklin's electrostatic gyro, rose to his feet and rebuked the "yapping whelp of a whoremonger" who, because he had touched his nose to a few pages, now considers himself as sagacious as the most elegant philosophe: "It is not to men of renown that the people of these good colonies will submit themselves, nor to men of honor and estate, or of learning, for such men they will associate with estranged figures. The people of the sundry states, furthermore, will never abide having the lines which their forefathers blazed in the forests along territory which they pried from the pallid claws of the heathen savages who rampage through the western territories in monstrous ignorance altered by the hands of men from distant realms. Mr. Hamilton is not mistaken in identifying the vices of men toward which they tend when smitten with power, yet he is woefully

simpleminded in his proposed methods and therefore I only agree with the residue leftover from his vehement ideological diffusion that, while we verily intend not to mold our government after the fashion of a virtuous configuration, it becomes us to form a nationalist plutocracy under the guise of a democratic confederation so that we may appear to be virtuous men, thereby ensuring for our posterity perpetual preeminence while the simpletons of the nation believe they have been granted freedom. Let us implement Mr. Hamilton's plan, but in such a manner that the simpleminded masses never suspect us."

This speech was met with such boisterous acclamation as men of every ilk praised Mr. Patterson for his wisdom that it roused Dr. Franklin from his repose who, sensing that Hamilton had been rebuked for his pride, strongly affirmed Mr. Patterson's speech, noting that citizens would be more handily controlled by men who appeared to accede to their wishes and would be more beloved by the people, for, "as Poor Richard's Almanac has said, 'He who loves himself shall have no rivals.'" Hearing Dr. Franklin make this observation the delegate from New York, Mr. Yates, turned to the delegate from Mass., Mr. Elbridge Gerry, and observed that Mr. Gerry must love himself immensely. Mr. Gerry replied with conviction that it was axiomatic that his love for himself would drive away rivals all rivals would know that they could never compete with Mr. Gerry and despair.

The discussion turning upon this novel axis, the delegates debated what would be the best method of seizing power while appearing to establish a government that promotes to the masses additional freedom. The task at hand was of such a heterogeneous and tortuous nature that the delegate from Penn., Mr. Wilson, suggested a simpler method of merely declaring that absolute rule was necessary to stave off instability, just as Cincinnatus of ancient Rome was

granted complete control over that glorious empire in the face of disaster. Mr. G. Morris, however, underlined the difficulty at hand inasmuch as there was no impending cataclysm, a comment which inspired Mr. Rutledge of S.C. to offer his own solution, namely that if a disaster was not forthcoming, then one ought to be manufactured, to wit: a committee ought to be created which would conscript the ablest defamers in the nation to invent the most defiling invectives; these men would then be sent to the palaces and dukedoms of Europe where they would unleash a torrential hail of blasphemy upon princes and popes and priests, and proceeded to nominate to head that committee Mr. Elbridge Gerry, a nomination which Mr. Gerry accepted with a gracious bow.

But The Committee of Blasphemy, as it became known, was aborted when Mr. Madison interrupted. Reminding the delegates that the people at large are a grotesquely incompetent body, he asserted that this intellectual incapacity afforded them the answer, for all they need do is create a government whose designs were so tremendously complex, whose powers inexact, whose responsibilities broad, embodied in a document whose language of such sublimely transcendental construction that the common man, who, as Aristotle noted, is so easily beguiled by what he does not comprehend, be dumbfounded into support. In order that this scheme may work, Mr. Madison redoubled his exhortations to secrecy, reminding the delegates that if word of their designs to abjure The Articles of Confederation and seize upon more complete power escaped these walls and found place in unwholesome ears, then it would be unlikely that the frothing masses would be cowed into submission by the document produced. His motion was passed unanimously and with great solemnity.

The delegates, newly resolved on this scheme of government, returned their attention to the executive and indulged with this design to fashion a personage who would be a monarchical leader: the head of the executive would be the ultimate safeguard against the riotous disorders that are commonly found among a people whose freemen have been granted suffrage. Mr. Wilson of Penn., in discussions with Mr. Madison and G. Morris, led in the formation of this personage, presenting that the head of the executive ought to be singular so as to not only concentrate honor and purpose for national decisions but also to make it unlikely he be corrupted by the people. While his method of election ought to be whatever means would be the ultimate guarantee of the perpetuity of the established administrations: some urged for allowing the people to elect him directly owing to the right to select their foremost ruler assuaging suspicious conjecture, while their opposition, led by Mr. Sherman of Connecticut, suggested that to risk the tumults of suffrage upon the primary ruler ought to be the first concern, and that he ought to be chosen by that upper body of the house that was elected by the state legislatures so as to be as distantly removed as possible from direct election. While the assembly appeared to arrive at a full halt upon this difference, they agreed that the pool from which the executive would be drawn ought to be jealously guarded from infiltration by the common folk.

Dickenson, reprimanding the delegates for neglecting the necessity of a pretense of piety, moved for a method of removing the executive. Some suggested that the upper house should again handle this matter to avoid the caprice of the masses, and that the causes for removal should be limited and indistinct. Mr. Pinkney objected to the inclusion of the word "incompetent" in the negating qualities of that governing person, noting that it might disqualify

a larger number of representatives from some states than others, benevolently citing his neighboring state of North Carolina as sufficient exemplum, wherein their tobacco farmers were wont to wander through their fields contemplating earthy commerce with a minute understanding of matters beyond the miasma of malodor that perpetually befogged their perception of affairs beyond their farmlands. This incisive observation precipitated a minor unrest whose focal point appeared to be in that corner of the room that housed the delegates from North Carolina; Franklin, revived by the tumult, mistook it for a clamor for his device and began revolving the orb with enthusiasm. As no one touched the orb, Dr. Franklin's churning intensified the dormant spark to such an intensity that when the delegate from Maryland, Luther Martin, became imbalanced owing to the innumerable mugs of brandy which had vanished when left unattended near his person the previous evening and stretched forth his hand for purchase and, like that man of Israel steadying the ark in the wilderness, touched that which he did not understand, was convulsed by a stimulus of such concentrated amplitude that he briefly departed this earth and struck down several delegates in his path as he soared across the room, possessed by the spirit of Dr. Franklin's device.

Nathaniel Gorham was at last able to quell the disquiet as Luther Martin revived and sprang to his feet, not altogether confident of his location and, as it would become evident, his own thoughts. This incident appeared to alter the mood of the room and the delegates aligned with Mr. Pinkney's presentiments and, the delegate from South Carolina calling for a vote, the Committee of the Whole tallied the delegates' votes and the measure was passed 10 to 1, with Virginia dissenting. The term 'incompetent' was struck from the document.

Mr. Luther Martin of Md. insisted upon having an audience before the conclusion of affairs, which Nathaniel Gorham permitted, stood and gazed upon room and commenced his oration. Mr. Martin's faculties appeared to have been misarranged by Franklin's harvester of lightning bolts. The essence of his thesis could not be divined by even those practiced in the subterfuges and abstruseness of rhetoric, his speech filled with feinting arguments and detachments from various apologetic militias that had wandered from the main army, while battalions of arguments fled when no man pursued. He spoke of governments and senates and trees in the wilderness and savages who had no government but were as the animals, spoke of the bison who roam freely and yet will follow one of their members over a precipice, and railed against the tyranny of the people and charged Virginia and Pennsylvania with colluding to pander to the will of the people, then abjuring all delegates to guard themselves that Mr. Madison and Mr. Wilson not steal their snuff bags in the night; then speaking of Artaxerxes who destroyed Athens by sponsoring their enemies within the state, a strategy which Mr. Madison and Mr. Wilson were colluding to enact. "For what is democracy but incorporated insanity?" said Mr. Martin. "And what are democratic governments but guilds of madmen, men who, like the aforementioned ass installed in the Consul, are fascinated by the power which is suddenly in their hoofed grasp and, unacquainted with the sensation, charge about with the smell of alfalfa in their nostrils. I remain convicted, sirs, that to continue to reverence such men as Mr. Morris and Mr. Gerry will soon have us bowing the knee of servitude to a golden swine at the foot of Mount Saini, and the two houses of legislation will merely be dens of thieves and the executive will, as Edward Gibbon tells us concerning decaying Rome: the office will be auctioned off. Therefore let us be wary lest we, like the man of Marathon, cause ourselves to expire from an

eruption of innards due to our eagerness of bringing glad tidings to tyrants. For I ask you before all: What of my state? What of the schooners and cutters, the cracking of lobsters in New England, the hunting of the ursine variety in Virginia? It is at times unprofitable to run one's noodle against the temples which the ignorant masses have erected to their pursuit of commerce, and if we, dear gentlemen, fight against the sentiments of a senseless mob that has once caught the scent of cents, then there will be a symphony of cracking noodles which we would fancy as a rhapsody but which will be perceived by foreign dignitaries as a dirge. It will be the noodle-crack heard round the world! The people must not be disappointed with a pact dictated by the most incompetent of delegates! I abjure thee, therefore, to be mindful of what becomes of worshipping cows." He made a motion in Dr. Franklin's direction before leaving off his bovine declamation; then turned his attention to tyranny, quoting Suetonius at length and recounting how Caesar, when met with a man who brought a crab of exceptional dimensions for his pleasure, instead ordered the man's face to be ground against the crab; Mr. Martin, drawing the allegory that it was a perilous task to "offer up the crabs of our labor" to the tyrant of the Universe, who would not approve of the proceedings which had pitted states against others on the basis of power, would "have their countenance ground against the crabs of judgement." His unfathomable harangue meandered forth from the dark recesses of his mind for hours, various members of the Convention attempted to record the pattern of his thoughts, though they tired of his peculiar oration and laid their pens to rest to marvel at the performance. With weariness at the growing fervor of Mr. Martin, concluding his speech for the day (for he swooned beneath the weight of his passion and the prodigious quantities of liquor which were noisily shifting within his bowels as he spoke, and which he continued to quaff intermittently), by calling down

fire and brimstone upon any who would defraud others within the convention, several of the delegates prepared to depart the halls for the day.

Delegates of Maryland and Delaware attending his senseless body which lay stretched out upon the floor, Dr. Franklin was suddenly roused to a pious disquietude by the oration and requested the attention of the assembly. "If I am beholden by respectful gazes, grant me an audience, dear sirs. Seldom in my many years have I witnessed an event which was not touched by the Divine hand, and the undertakings of devout men fare more fruitfully than those of the wicked; because Mr. Martin's speech is onerous and tiresome is not cause to reject his apprehension, for mankind being reprov'd often responds to the sting of guilt but will be put in a repentant spirit upon judicious reflection. If, then, we are benefited by this reflection, we ought to seek the most expeditious and direct means of being influenced by that Divine hand without regards for how much discomfort it may cause us, for present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory which will light up our gazes. Therefore, I propose that we set about affixing lightning rods to the ridge of the roof in order that, should we stray from the righteous path of Destiny, the Divine will may more easily manifest itself with bolts of lightning from the heavens which will excite us to our misdeed; I am fully convicted that this will draw us nearest to the Divine path and guide our proceedings, putting us in proper reverence, for no word will be spoken or deed done without the knowledge that should we be wayward lightning will leap upon us from the nearest scone or hearth; if we are fortunate, this may even result in the putting of some number of the assembly into that righteous fervor which has come upon Mr. Luther Martin, in whom a proper veneration for the awesome Almighty has manifested itself. Therefore, I propose that we affix metal lightning rods to the ridges of the town hall roof."

His proposal, which had drawn the attention of the entire assembly, was met with a general lull, some delegates stilled in the midst of common activities as resting their feet upon a sill, preparing to inhale piles of snuff, gathering their notes, evacuating their nostrils, scratching beneath their arms, putting their pants back on, etc., while the only movement in the room was a general shifting away from fireplaces and sconces. Eventually, Mr. Nathaniel Gorham, aware that the proceedings had come to a full halt, understood that Dr. Franklin was expectant of his proposal being debated but, as no one was eager to examine the proposal's benefits and deficits, he simply called for a vote. It was discovered that every state abstained from voting, which occasioned a discussion about whether a complete abstinence constituted support or opposition for a measure. As none took a definite stance, either for or nay, the delegates determined that their business might be concluded for the day and adjourned with great care, checking the skies before departing the building.

When General Washington announced that, Dr. Franklin's conscripted bearers lacking a member, it was necessary for one of the delegates to "transport Dr. Franklin's bier back to the tavern," the homophone caused some confusion: departing delegates turned at the threshold and peered about and jostled for position as they inquired after the location of Dr. Franklin's beer and after the variety and quantity, offering to transport as much as they could envelop. When Washington noted that the bier in question was Franklin's reclining pyre and their confusion was discovered, the delegates departed with sudden haste amidst a babel of recalled impending engagements, the enterprising delegate from Georgia, Mr. William Peirce, making use of the window to evacuate himself from the bowels of the town hall, while the enterprising Mr. Pinkney crawled into a hearth and wallowed himself in the soot and then lay motionless in

the gloom in hopes that none would detect him, until at length only the delegate from Massachusetts and Penn., Mr. Gerry and Mr. G. Morris, were left with General Washington observing them. Mr. Morris' presence being due to his inability to depart speedily owing to having misplaced one of his limbs, the task fell to Mr. Gerry; Mr. Gerry, muttering anathema upon the Fates and his heaviness of foot, then took up a corner of Dr. Franklin's bier, straining and cursing most foul as the troupe raised Dr. Franklin and departed the room, Mr. Gerry noting as he staggered beneath the load that he now knew why the Bonhomme Richard sank.

June 29th. The celebration of Independence impending, the delegates desiring to depart for the revelries offered by the city, inventory was taken of their progress and to their consternation they had not advanced their designs to the fullness hoped for. The issue appeared to hang upon how power would be divvyed up, the disagreement being the Virginia and the New Jersey plan and the nature of the chief executive. Mr. James Wilson, highly impatient with the sluggishness of the proceedings, spoke against the proponents of the New Jersey plan, insisting that an equal representation was the utmost calumny for the populous states, which would respond by dividing themselves into a multitude of lesser states and gaining power in the new house; the shameless avarice of Mr. Paterson and Mr. Luther and Mr. Yates ought to be censured by the heads of the Convention and the Virginia Plan adopted with all celerity.

The advocate of the New Jersey Plan, Mr. Yates, responded, indicting the Virginia Plan's license for pacts to be formed between the major states of Virginia and Penn., the smaller states becoming their footstool, and that Mr. Wilson, "rather than taking this threat into his account,

is a mere earwig whose vile stench, like the passage of foul odors, is filling this Convention, dividing the men into two parties: those who are fond of the stench because it most resembles their own, and those who find it repugnant.”

Mr. Madison, wearied with the proceedings, replied that equal representation would as readily lead to an abuse of the large states as the smaller states were more numerous and therefore the stench which he thought originated from Mr. Morris had actually come from his own posterior, and that “the New York ass” led him to believe that such a circumstance was, in fact, probably. In fact, he cited Connecticut for its spectacular failure to handle its financial affairs in the course of the war, intimating that perhaps “the mysterious art of arithmetic had not made its way into the backwoods of the marshy wasteland where the muskrats have congregated and fancy themselves enlightened because the pile of shite upon which they sit is more voluminous than that of their neighbors.”

Even as Connecticut was assembling its syllogisms to propound Madison back into his logical den, Gunning Bedford of Delaware, who had been reticent until that very moment, started to his feet (disturbing his neighbors who had forgotten he was in attendance) and brandished a rifle as he shouted for Mr. Madison and Mr. Wilson to heed his proclamation, charging the larger states with not only conspiring to swindle the smaller states (viz., Delaware) of their sovereignty but also reduce to servitude his countrymen; in consequence he vowed an oath that before he let the “lords of disorder unleash the pestilence of democracy” upon him he would go to foreign powers for he fancied the English military fared quite well in the previous engagement when they marched in military drills upon American soil while occasionally being harassed by a cornfed rabble led by a “lummoX of the highest order.”

This precipitated a fervor of acrimony that spread through the assembly as delegates cast vulgar aspersions upon their foes and members aligned themselves with the two sides, several of the delegates tarrying between the ranks until it became clear which camp had the more skillful maligners. Mr. Martin referred to Alexander Hamilton of New York as “the Loyalist scab” and Mr. Hamilton responded to Mr. Martin by commending the delegate from Maryland for draining the cellars of wine stores in the face of the invading British so as to deprive them of liquor, and several delegates discovered sectarian interests hitherto unbeknown upon the issue of whose Indians were the most enjoyable to slaughter.

The division becoming ever sharper, delegates from every corner tried their hand at the invention of aspersion, even the president of the Committee of the Whole, Mr. Nathaniel Gorham, contributing when he called upon speakers. When at length Mr. Elbridge Gerry demanded an audience, Mr. Nathaniel Gorham spoke an epithet thus: “The chair recognizes the miserable pipsqueak from Massachusetts.” Said manikin appeared to alter his prepared speech, crushing his parchment in his grasp as he requested a moment to rewrite his notes, which he undertook with great vigor, afterward unleashing a salvo of such intensely repugnant allegories and metonyms that several delegates recoiled in alarm. Mr. Wilson voicing his support of Mr. Gerry, Mr. Gorham replied: “The chair recognizes the sound made by the flatulent pachyderm from the fetid swamplands.” Mr. Abraham Baldwin of Georgia sought to offer ameliorating wisdom, Mr. Gorham replying, “The chair does not recognize the man seeking audience.” When Dr. Franklin, attempting to return calm, motioned for an audience, Mr. Gorham granted it: “The chair recognizes the monstrous Byzantine toad from Pennsylvania.”

Franklin's apparent scheme, captured in a moment of despair at beholding the states so divided, was to turn the delegates' attention to their absent member and inspire some fraternal empathy and encourage them to be sober of mind at the magnitude of their calling, noting that the absence of Rhode Island should stand as a forewarning to the states to apply all devotion to their neighbor, being mindful that the states must hang together or they will hang apart; the delegates, however, turning their impassioned thoughts to that absent state, began to curse Rhode Island coarsely for its indolence and, discovering a common animosity in their midst, concentrated their furor upon that state with shouts for reprimand and expulsion. Delegates then deliberated upon methods of chastising that absent state. R. Morris of Penn. declared that Rhode Island should be laden with the nation's debt of war, as "they made no other contributions to that struggle." Mr. Dickenson in his fervor for justice reasoned that Rhode Island having shown itself a suitable locale ought to become the nation's penal colony. Yet it was Mr. C. Pinkney's proposal to excavate that state from the continent, digging great trenches along the boundaries and then dislodging the state from the continent in order to disgorge its inhabitants into the ocean that won the most support. The movement was passed by a vote of 10 to 1, with Delaware voting against the measure owing to their continued suspicion that this was the latest gambit to molest the smaller states (and a certain shared geographical likeness with Rhode Island).

The assembly adjourned in high spirits.

June 30th. When the delegates assembled themselves and began upon a discussion of the revelry that was to come in celebration of the Independence of the nation, vying for the

most tumultuous establishments in the city and what locations had superior liquor in greatest quantity, they turned their attention to the matters of the nation and discovered their work exiguous; determining that some compromise and progress must be made soon, they drew lots to see who would compose a committee for this undertaking but, none wishing to neglect the raucous revelries, members of the Grand Committee were loath to undertake the task. Dr. Franklin, stirred to a remembrance of the homophone of the prior evening, offered to host the event, assured them that, where liquor was concerned, every delegate's "cup would runneth over," describing the vast stores of liquor within his cellar which he offered freely. Luther Martin of Md. was seized with a patriotic spirit and volunteered for the committee, replacing a member of his own state in the committee. The matter resolved, the delegates then departed each to their riotous gaiety.

July 8th. The business of the Convention was delayed when it was discovered that not more than two states had a quorum, the others being found wanting (*viz.*, besotted in nearby taverns and the inns of neighboring states). Indeed, as it would happen, many delegates were so thoroughly saturated with spirits and befogged with snuff that they were unable to find their way again to the city hall until mid-July, while others, such as Mr. Luther Martin, whose wits were simply too confounded to serve him aptly, failed to arrive again at Philadelphia.

Seeing so many delegates tardy, those delegates which had assembled recounted stories of their revelries, in which Mr. Luther Martin played a role in many tales of ribald debauchery, as he had gradually become of such an intoxicated state that he escaped Dr. Franklin's residence whereat remained the Grand Committee, the delegates bearing witness to Mr. Martin having

ridden a sow through the streets of Philadelphia, Mr. Wilson having received intelligence that Mr. Martin was last sighted in a bell tower during a thunderstorm with a metal rod secured to his person, attempting to revive that spark which Dr. Franklin's device had awakened in him.

A contingent of delegates gathered for festivities in Philadelphia and, after consuming a prodigious quantity of brandy, beer, stout, rum punch, etc., became wondrous hysterical and laid waste The Indian Queen. In the City Tavern, Mr. James Wilson and Hugh Williamson along with Mr. Houstoun of Ga., imbibing immoderately of the nectar of the gods, determined to render their drinks more potent after the fashion of frontiersmen and filled their tankards with saltpeter, which resulted in an infirmity of the intestines that became so severe that Mr. Houstoun laid waste the toilet in unspeakable fashion and was unable to return to the convention on this account. The proprietor of the Indian Queen referred to his deed as "The Abomination of Desolation" and was demanding reimbursement from the Convention. At the nearby City Tavern Mr. G. Morris and Mr. T. Fitzsimons were most industrious during the holiday, inventing an indecorous bagatelle which was fervently sung by the calamitous company that had been a-swilling for nearly a fortnight, though they denied it afterward for fear of their Oath of Secrecy; the men then impersonated the great luminaries of the nation, with Mr. Morris stumbling about the tavern with catastrophic clumsiness as he delivered a lofty paean upon the topic of freedom to ape Mr. Thomas Jefferson, Mr. Fitzsimons delivering a bombastic oration which left everyone dumbfounded and causing several to soil their pantaloons to ape Mr. John Adams; finally, the two men visited that famous bell which was rung upon the first reading of the Declaration of Independence and sought to crack their noodles upon it in order that, claimed

they, the spirit of liberty might echo in their thoughts during the coming days of the convention, though their noodles were of such a dense variety that, after hours of ringing, the bell cracked. Mr. Rufus King of Mass. reported that the festivities in New York had been of a unique variety, as Mr. Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut, in financial straits with his time spent in the Convention with a meager salary from his state, had been compelled to replenish his snuff pouch from a dubious merchant hailing from the West Indies; he was afterward seen that evening conversing with himself and in his fervor for the nation happened upon a keg of powder which he threw into a bonfire in the central square. There were no mortalities, though several bystanders were relieved of limbs which flew revolving through the night; Mr. Ellsworth suffered no harm to his person except in having his face singed of hair and being transported into a nearby building. He was afterward of a blackish hue and had his hearing diminished.

As the delegates shared such tales, they set aside the chairs and entered upon a match of bowling in the halls while they awaited the arrival of their brethren. As they spoke their conversation turned to the location of the new nation's capital, those from the southern regions insisting that the capital be located in one of their states to avoid Northern aggression, while those of the North insisted that they continue to host the seat of federal administration. Simultaneous to this discussion a bowling match was had between G. Mason of Va. and J. Morris of Penn; the rivalry waxing sharp, the delegates put forth increasing sums, wagering estates and then debts incurred during the war, until the stakes had become so great that J. Morris of Penn. wagered the capital of the nation, which G. Mason met with like promise. G. Mason then performed himself most manly and defeated J. Morris, from whose defeated lips came accusations of deception and chicanery, which G. Mason regarded with contempt. J.

Morris then challenged G. Mason to a duel, a comment which invoked Mr. Butler of S.C., estimating Mr. Martin's Girth, to declare that his chances of success in a duel were lesser by a proportion of 1-to-3, though his neighbor Mr. Hugh Williamson insisted it was a ratio of 1-to-4 owing to the impressive dimension of his midsection which contain his extraordinary collection of intestines.

The disagreement inspired delegates to gather behind that representative which hailed from his respective region, North or South, and Mr. Madison noted that the division thenceforth was between northern and southern states, and the issue of slavery would become the pretended centerpiece of the division.

July 14th. A majority of states now having a quorum, the idleness of the delegates was dispelled and the Committee of the Whole then called upon the Grand Committee to report on its progress. However, that committee revealed that their only deed was to create another committee comprised of 11 members, which committee, finding themselves suddenly in existence and being none too pleased with the Grand Committee, then nominated several members of the Grand Committee to a new committee which they called The Committee of Detail to seek after a solution to the task of creating a new government. The Committee of Detail exacted their vengeance upon that former body by nominating from its ranks certain members to a council which they termed The Committee of Grumbling Louts, which committee, taking exception to their glorious demarcation, nominated their creators to a new body which they called The Committee of Asses, who then nominated their benefactors to The Committee of

Imbecilic Inquiry, who nominated the former to The Committee of Churlish Swine, who created from the opposition the Committee of God-Forsaken Leftovers comprised of only one soul. Mr. James Madison, impatient with the irresolution of this process, then intervened and declared that a Committee of Postponed Parts should be formed from the ablest of men to devise some solutions to their quandaries lest they never arrive at a scheme for a new government and be confined in that hall indefinitely; noting Dr. Franklin's putrescence, the members became more sober-minded. The Committee formed, the assembly departed.

July 17th. The Committee of Postponed Parts presented its proposal, which was debated vigorously. Roger Sherman devised a compromise which was agreed to by the lesser and greater states on the best method of stoppering the vacuum in power, that there would be a bicameral legislature with equal representation in one house and proportional representation in the other, called a House of Representatives and a Senate. James Wilson objected to this design on the grounds that it resembled the British system and would alert the people to their intentions, thus hindering their attempts at a direct rule; Mr. Madison responded by assuring him that the inclusion of the word "representatives" and the larger number of delegates in this house would sufficiently convince the people that they were in control of the newly-fashioned government; furthermore, he announced that two houses would give them twice as much power, a fact which excited the atmosphere of the hall and won over skeptics.

R. Morris, joined by Mr. Paterson, acceded to the wisdom of this statement but insisted that in order to maintain order in the nation it was necessary that suffrage be limited to the

landed citizenry, thereby insuring the perpetuity of those delegates present and avoiding an invasion of their ranks from the people.

G. Morris dissented, refuting with the argument that the people, being more ignorant, will be more easily manipulated in the future when incumbency is threatened. James Wilson agreed. Dr. Franklin then delivered one of his rare sermons on the vices of the people and the nature of the public spirit, assuring the delegates that the masses can always be trusted to do the wrong thing and elect those candidates which would progress contrary to their interests as the people tend to be liars and petty tyrants, for the myopic instincts of the people would allow designing bastards to secure office by mere feints toward honesty, an announcement that reassured the delegates.

Yet many still dissenting where the chief executive was concerned, as such power would be concentrated in his person, it was determined that the method of election ought to be restricted in such a way that would prevent the people from direct election and yet be of such a sufficiently elaborate design that the common people in their unsurpassed nescience would be forever ignorant of the schemes of the apothecary's bill. Several designs were suggested, each more complex than its predecessor, until Mr. Rufus King set forth the following: the Senate would create a panel composed of electors who would choose from the ranks of Senators several candidates, who would then be voted on by members of the House of Representatives, of which the top three would be selected, which persons would be subject to a vote by a second panel of electors created by the supreme Judiciary, who would be appointed by the Senate in accordance with the chief executive, to guard against insinuation by the masses, after which time incense would be burned while the judiciary casts lots when the celestial bodies were in

symmetry, along with a few safeguards which Mr. King detailed in obscure language with the inclusion of a secret body of men which should have power to execute at any time a candidate thought to have sympathies with the people. These designs, however, soon escaped the mental faculties of the delegates themselves, who became so bewildered by the process that several, including Mr. Blount of N.C., began to suspect Mr. Rufus King of attempting to erect his own governing body under the guise of an election that he might secretly rule the nation from within the capital, and objected.

Madison then intervened and suggested a simpler mode, which was modified and passed.

Edmond Randolph reminding the people that there ought to be an impeachment mechanism so that the people will not become suspicious, the delegates agreed on a similar design: the House of Representatives would initiate the process but the Senate, which was serving so well to protect the jealousies of the landed plutocracy present, would try the chief executive, thereby preventing all attempts of the people to get at the glorious executive.

When the issue of gathering funds for the federal treasury was raised, it was Mr. Dickenson who addressed the assemblage: experience being the only foundation upon which a nation could be laid, as reason often misleads man into the worst of errors (all of the delegates were overcome with reflection and heartily expressed their concurrence with this statement), experience has shown that the people are overly fond of glutting themselves. In sum, the people care only for their money; it is therefore essential to convince them that they have control of any wealth with which they part. Therefore, the power to raise taxes should be vested in the House of Representatives, yet power will not verily be left unto them, for all bills will pass through the

upper house, the Senate, chosen by state delegates rather than elected by the people, which may amend any bill; and finally, the President, who must never be directly elected, will have a negative over any financial bill. The motion was passed unanimously. As for the purpose of the spending, Mr. Madison urged that this was a matter that would become evident in the fullness of time and would be in constant variation with the whims of the rulers (viz., the needs of the nation), and therefore the stipulations for the treasury ought to be sufficiently indefinite to allow for an infinitude of meaning, Mr. Madison suggesting such phrases as "general welfare" and "necessary and proper," which were promptly inscribed in the text.

As the topic of finance was still present in mind, the delegates discussed payment for terms of office. The suggestion that states be responsible for paying their representatives was met with vehement railings and jeers as the delegates recounted the straits which they had of late suffered, many of the delegates having their coffers emptied following the copious quantities of "necessary and proper" drink and snuff which they consumed during the celebration of Independence, a meager funding that was due to the parsimony of their respective states. After calling down oaths upon the citizens of their states, the delegates from Pennsylvania cursing their citizens for not reimbursing them one jot or tittle, the North Carolina governor recounting that his state treasury was depleted and could not reimburse a penny for his service, the delegates swore to never again rely on the caprice of the people and passed a motion to have delegates perpetually funded from a national vault, which the states would never approach. Mr. Langdon of N.H. then moved for a vote to remove all state legislatures for their financial negligence and have their estates confiscated to pay for the construction of a new capital and their persons publically flogged and doused in tar to be lit afire, which was debated

with some interest but saw an untimely end as being too obvious an attempt upon state sovereignty.

The delegates, carried away by a distemper of contempt for the states and the people, and, invigorated by the prospect of that magnitude of awesome power which would soon be their prestigious possession, reflected as they congratulated one another upon their cleverness and bespoke of the ancient legends and clever daemonic personages as Perseus and Odysseus, which set them upon imagining themselves in the likeness of mythic progenitors as Romulus, and amidst the tumult Mr. James Wilson moved that there be signs and wonders established by that body to guarantee veneration from the people, to immortalize their office and personages that they become like the divine emperors of antiquity, it being necessary that their names and likenesses be affixed to some object which the people will reverence and guard jealously and keep near unto whereby the men of the Convention be permanently engraved upon the minds of the masses. This was met with hearty approbation which rapidly gave way to a dismal reticence as the delegates were unable to conjure a path to secure the aforementioned esteem.

Mr. Hamilton, whose ambition spurred his agile wit in the service of ever-higher offices, solved this conundrum. The most expedient means toward immortality, said he, was twofold: 1. a national mint ought to be established wherein could be printed and coined such currency as the nation needed, and upon this currency would be affixed their own names and likenesses, which would allow for the assembled demigods to have their persons and names perpetually cherished and near unto the people. 2. Furthermore, explained this unrivaled pathfinder in the realm of glory, there should be 2a. a national capital wherein temples would be constructed after the fashion of antiquity, pillared rotundas and gilded monuments, that a simile would be

made in the minds of the people, for in ancient times were housed the gods whose felicitous grace favored a people who lived in hope that such denizens would deign to show favor when they came to collect meager sacrifices (viz., taxes), the greatest temple being the residence of the representatives of the nation who would pass through on occasion like the perambulatory lords of heaven, while 2b. some great obelisk would be erected in homage to the virility of the men who planted the seed which will yield the bounteous fruit of posterity that will bless the masses by ruling over them and arouse proper veneration whenever their gaze falls upon it. There was such a glorious uproar of approval that Mr. Morris could scarcely be discerned moving that Mr. Hamilton's proposal be voted upon.

Nevertheless that inglorious rod in the mire, Mr. Gerry, insisted that an amendment method be provided. The longsuffering Mr. Wilson immediately objected upon the grounds that fallibility was reserved for the mortals languishing in the slime of ignorance, it being an affront to the luminaries therein gathered, to which Mr. Gerry cautioned that he was merely anticipating the grumblings of a people who, like Saul of Tarsus, would be blinded should the heavens part and a divine light strike them directly, and therefore even a document of unblemished hue should be shielded from their sight by an amendment process, something they would no doubt demand. However, the previous requirement that all amendments be passed by unanimity was opprobrious as it left states sovereign, and none but a federal legislature ought to wield absolute power. His sagacity became evident and the delegates determined that, while unanimity left too much power to the states, too small a portion would leave too little influence to the government, and therefore a compromise of 3/4 was settled upon, though the men of the assembly determined that a portion of 2/3 of the states would be necessary to

ratify constitution, that the feeble-minded states be unwittingly persuaded along the path to bountiful blessing by having ratification require fewer states than modification.

Again expressing felicitation unto one another following such wise dealings, the delegates moved that the business of the day be concluded, as they had already surpassed their customary departure (viz., 2 P.M.), many of the delegates having arrived early at 11 A.M.

JULY 20th. Mr. Pinkney, being of an agitated humor, rose and delivered himself from a speech: the assembled delegates were among the best and wisest in the nation, and he would own that he was not against being like unto the gods, and he looked forward to witnessing the erection of Mr. Hamilton's colossal obelisk, yet this prospect held less appeal to him and his brethren from the lower southern states so long as his negro population was not counted in the national representation, as their power would diminish without such; neither did divine veneration appeal as thoroughly, for they but had to rise in the morning and they commanded veneration from their negro population, and, indeed, Mr. Pinkney had already cast an iron bust of himself which he had distributed among his negroes with instructions to be worshipped, and he was certain some Africans practicing pagan arts had absorbed him into their pantheon of divines. Mr. Pinkney asserted that unless concessions were made on the unresolved issue of his negro representation, then states of the lower East would have little cause to join a new union of states.

Mr. Franklin replied that it became Georgia and South Carolina to behave more honorably and equitably, particularly as that perfidious institute was an affront to the humanitarian spirit among man, a motion seconded by George Mason, who blamed those

states for the presence of those negroes which were “of such an unsuitable temperament for any task other than manual labor, and that peculiar trade was darkening the prestige of the nation abroad by mingling a race of such chaotic mental faculty, of such proclivity for destruction, whose every instinct tended toward inertia, who sometimes expressed uncertainty about the number of fingers each hand possessed, who understood only the simplest of dialects spoken by children and a rod of hickory,” and proposed ending the forced consignment of the negro population in order that they might all be shipped back to the jungles of Africa or extirpated. Mr. Morris thirded the motion upon the grounds that citizens of his state would revolt if they knew they were electing men to serve alongside men representing that accursed race. Mr. Franklin concluded by noting that to bring such a pestilent people into the nation was unfeeling, for he ought to have more compassion upon the freemen of the country than to burthen them with a negro presence.

Pinkney admitted Mr. Mason’s description of the negroes and acknowledged Mr. Franklin’s astuteness at calling them a “pestilence” for their tendency of reproducing so rapidly that Mr. Pinkney has, on occasion, visited the mud-daubed huts to discover that the number of occupants had doubled since his previous visit and their rate of expansion exceeded that of the vermin in his forests—something, said he, that Mr. Slewface ought to appreciate. Further addressing “The Putrid Whale from Pennsylvania,” Pinkney insisted that negroes were the lower states’ only natural resource, which they mined as New York mined coal and harvested as France gathered truffles, and that to attempt to deprive the South of that resource would be no different than thrusting a firebrand into that state’s breeches, peradventure something good might come of it. The negroes’ proclivity for accelerated replication distinguished them from

furniture, for a bureau and a table do not know each other and bring forth a footstool; and as negroes increased their multitude in such an astonishingly illustrious manner, Mr. Pinkney insisted that it was essential for the interest of his share of power that they be represented. As Franklin asked leave to answer "The Disputatious Blight upon Mankind from South Carolina," and Mr. Pinkney responded that he was eager to learn what "novel mucus The Malodorous Toad would secrete" to entrap him, and Mr. Gorham cautioned the "the Ass-faced Fop" from S.C. not to speak out of turn, and the assembly was in threat of being reduced again to disorder over the issue of representation, Mr. Sherman of Conn. proposed a compromise.

As it was self-evident that furniture was not fruitful and multiplying, and he agreed that negroes were overly fond of multiplying, they ought to be represented for the good of gaining power unto the national repository; and as they were in some measure not equal to livestock which cannot comprehend any language; yet not being fully human but resembling mankind more than beasts; the representation ought to be allotted in proportion to that extent to which they resemble men. After some deliberation, the northern states announced that a negro was equal to three fifths of a human being in their estimation. This, said Mr. Sherman, was the wisest solution to the issue of their representing themselves as well; for if the negro population should ever attempt to gain suffrage they could not conceivably elect 3/5 of a person to represent them. However, he added that there must be an end to the importation of slaves at some future date, as granting representation to negroes might result in accelerated importation which would only serve to further darken the glory of the nation.

The proposal put forth, the delegates from the lower southern states assembled themselves together in a conglomeration to deliberate privately upon this offer. Their

discussion began upon the nature of the negro and whether 3/5 was a fair assessment of his human attributes, most of the delegates insisting that the offer was exceedingly generous, and discussed the hue of the negro skin being as dark as molasses and molasses being a saporous condiment, each delegate recounting how molasses is consumed most delectably, with Mr. Baldwin insisting that the savor of the "god-awful most hideous creature, the swamp rat" was enhanced when marinated in molasses, though Mr. Pierce objected that Dr. Slewface was uglier than the swamp rat due to his enormity, at which point individual sentiments became indiscernible amidst the general rancor.

Presently, the Committee on Slave Trade concluded deliberation and turned about to face the convention, electing from their ranks Mr. Rutledge of S.C., who responded to the proposal: "Dear sirs, we agree that Dr. Slewface is indeed the most god-forsaken hideous creature to defile the earth owing to his being vastly larger than a swamp rat." There followed some silence until presently General Washington inquired after the compromise proposed by Mr. Sherman concerning negro representation, to which Mr. Rutledge called again the Committee of Slave Trade, and, after some deliberation, the proposal found favor in their eyes, though they added that they wanted it to be recorded that Dr. Slewface was esteemed to be the most repulsive rodent which earth ever brought forth by evacuating its bowels.

Having resolved the most contentious issues, the Convention then turned its attention to particulars of the new government, determining that it was necessary to write the document in such a manner that will be undetectable by the masses and to ossify their designs into a document to this effect and created The Committee of Style, retiring to nearby taverns to celebrate their progress.

August 2nd. A grave discovery has been made this day.

Mr. Jefferson returned to his study and expressed his surprise upon finding me there as he believed me to have departed after the visit from the strange gentleman. Graciously excusing myself in the midst of my research, I explained that I had not, though I would likely soon be departing, as I was nearly finished with the booklet he had kindly lent for my curious perusal. He then produced from his person a series of parchments which were stored with the selfsame booklet and told me that I could retire to my room with them and explore the grounds of Monticello, as he had some business which demanded his attention on the following day and could not lend me the booklet in that time. I expressed my gratitude again and departed.

But my heart was troubled.

That evening, atop Mr. Jefferson's gloriously modest mountain, the call of the nighthawks echoing in the wilderness, with sundry lights of distant villages and farms in the evening haze, I reclined on the veranda and reflected upon my journey and the discoveries made therein. It was not without some consternation that I became sentient to my own plight, a crisis of mind, for every one of those sentiments which that Convention had conspired to inspire had been found out in my own thoughts, implanted by historians and forefathers. None had venerated those noble personages of the nation's founding more than I, who had assumed their deeds virtuous and equitable, men made of tougher fibers who had seen clearly while the common man wandered the slough of despond. Yet now that I happened upon a booklet that revealed their true character and, in so doing, revealed to me mine, I was as a schooner that

had come loose from its moorings in a great tempest, full of men distracted in mind flailing their oars in every direction, creating a great disturbance that was lost in a greater disturbance as they remained in place.

Should I pursue the matter? I found myself greatly perturbed by reading this document and did not wish to further disrupt my thoughts, however much curiosity might compel me; there was no manner of document other than this wherewith to verify the proceedings. Doubt about the veracity of the document remained unresolved. These pages might have been scrawled by some embittered defamer of the nation, a Royalist or Benedict Arnold risen from the grave. Perhaps that is the reason for the reticence and the stowing of this book in a forgotten nook, a slanderous parchment which had been discarded for the safety of the people of the glorious country.

From the edge of the forest a creature of singularly unwholesome appearance and gait emerged, nibbling at the flotsam of the forest near some rotting stump. My thoughts continually returning to traitors and Loyalists, I paid little heed to the creature except to allow that the unpleasant sentiments aroused by the zoological anomaly could not be denied. The solution to my increasingly complex dilemma lurked in my mind, it seemed, as that creature lurked upon the boundary of the wood, yet lingered on the threshold of death, as did that creature, were the observer to judge merely upon its ghastly countenance. Yet thoughts of the unknown document fled when I of a sudden understood that the creature now thrusting its snout into the rubbish heap which the slaves had not yet cleared away was in fact a possum, and I recalled that Franklin had written many letters to family and men of import in his lifetime, thereby revealed much about his person.

My eyes fell upon the letters before me. I lit the lamp within the study and broke the seal upon the letters, which had been arranged in some order that was lost. When my gaze passed over the words that were written, the truth of the matter soon became apparent.

Dear Mr. Adams,

The proceedings of the day have been exceptionally tedious. Our designs to subvert state sovereignty have proceeded largely unhindered, though the delegates from the southerly regions, led by Mr. Pinkney, have thwarted all efforts at unity by returning to their discourse of a most peculiar nature upon the visage of Dr. Franklin. In private conversations at taverns that evening, in concourse with Mr. Sherman, the possibility of stripping the delegates and beating them with dead frogs, then sending them home from the Convention, was discussed.

Nevertheless at the urging of Mr. Wilson that Mr. Pinkney and Mr. Rutledge of S.C. would prove their utility in subtlety and pilfering of power from the people after some time, as Mr. Pinkney's designs have already been appropriated by Mr. Randolph, the nascent designs of a national government having emerged, the party was ameliorated.

I abjure you, good sir, that the matter remain unmentioned, as it is of utmost import that the Convention remain hidden from the national eye. The people and the states must never become conscious of our designs or our aspirations will be for naught. When it becomes necessary, a new Committee will be formed to determine the most suitable report to lend to the scribes who are responsible for that most delightful farce, the annals of history, for ingurgitation by the people whereby they may be brought to a greater veneration of our deeds.

Discarding this letter, not bothering to complete it, I opened another, hoping that therein would lie an account that would right the travesty before me. But alas! there was no such account. Indeed, the matter became only more befogged by the accounts which I beheld.

Dear Mr. Jefferson,

It is with trembling had that I pen these words, for that dismal scourge upon all governments from your state, Mr. Patrick Henry, is rumored to be searching the East for the whereabouts of the Convention to which he was neither invited nor sent. His intentions, as you well know, are to anatomize and dismember any body of men whose intent is to subvert the people of imagined freedoms. We know not who has disclosed the proceedings of the Convention, though General Washington is determined to see to it that the particulars of our original oath of secrecy are upheld, a prospect which has filled every delegate with dread. The proceedings have been accelerated to keep apace with Mr. Henry's assumed travels. You yourself know, dear sir, that should he discover the location of the Convention and invade its walls, the delegates will flee to the ends of the earth as affrighted birds when a prodigious lynx lands suddenly in their midst, and it is doubtful that every bird would escape. I implore you to engage in some private communicates to dissuade Mr. Henry from these pursuits...

Casting aside this parchment, my hand lighted upon another.

To My Beloved Mrs. Pinkney,

The Convention has accepted my designs for a new government and I am confident that they will soon install me in some office of prestige owing to my having distinguished myself in a discourse concerning the nature of Dr. Franklin's resemblance to one of our most prodigiously hideous creatures, though not without a member of one of their God-forsaken states, whose character reflects the frigid polar conditions of his origin, agitating his faction into a defense of Dr. Franklin (viz., Dr. Slewface)...

Another read:

Dear Mr. Jay,

Our task nearly complete, an unfortunate delay has led to sundry complications that the delegates have been making all haste to remedy, particularly as all are sorely afflicted with dread that Mr. Henry draweth nigh. The delegates are so greatly troubled that they have acceded to the recommendations of Mr. Morris that they assemble as early as 10 A.M.; while Mr. Dickinson often rises in the witching hour of night in terror-stricken disorder, afraid that the wrath of God is upon him for the proceedings of the Convention and that His divine scourge, the angel of liberty or death, Mr. Henry, is upon him; and Mr. Gerry passes his time in the city hall sharpening his dagger on his perch in the corner; while Mr. Hamilton is oft practicing with his pistols after the assembly adjourns...

There was yet another letter which appeared to have been written by a man who had not attended the Convention.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

The documents which you claim you have sent, many of which I have anticipated with some eagerness, have not arrived. If you indeed sent them then they were purloined along the highway and we have greater concerns than my potential assassination from malcontents enamored of the Bastard whom I dispatched to his eternal rest. I urge you to look into this matter with all celerity, as the hour draws nigh when I shall be too old to attempt to attempt another Empire. Look well unto yourself.

Yours,

A.B.

The strangest letter, inscribed in far less elegant script, appeared to have been written in some disoriented state.

Greetings Ye Beslubbered Swine,

On this glorious day, O Loathsome Toad, your servant has proved himself worthy of the office to which he has been called, for in the performance of feats beyond historical compare I have imbibed more prodigiously than my peers among winebibbers...transported into a celestial state, my tongue guided by that divine nectar, I invented a delightful bagatelle...

A second letter was tucked within this letter, also of an unrefined script, though this for lack of training rather than transportation of state.

Greetings Mr. Church,

Yesterday I witnessed a peculiar sight. For several weeks now many delegates not part of our Penn. legislature have been visiting the taverns and inns, and last eve I witnessed one such delegate consume an enormity of drink, after which he ascended a table and began singing a most peculiar ballad:

Asses riding asses to congregation

Like Bottom's rakish faeries

To pilfer from a dumb-struck nation

Full of foul fartleberries

For weeks we carouse and debate

Leave nothing in the least

Seize the sovereignty of every state

For the people are a great beast

My reading was interrupted by a light appearing within the halls of Monticello. Laying aside my parchments, which had been filling me with increasing consternation, I looked about to behold in the pallid gloom of dusk a tall figure which appeared to me to be Mr. Jefferson, who, like an ungainly apparition, hovered upon the lawn of his estate, a lamp in hand, and speak with a waiting phantom. They exchanged some word and then Mr. Jefferson imparted to

him a small package, after which the foreign adumbration departed and Mr. Jefferson returned to his halls.

My wits cast into complete disorder, I lay upon my bed, exhausted from the disquietude that had held me in its grasp for several days. As I lay in repose I determined to resume my study of that peculiar document which Mr. Jefferson had in his possession in order that I might finally determine the outcome of this strange meeting.

When Mr. Jefferson returned several days afterward I went calling upon him that I might complete my studies. His manservant informed me that he was indisposed on that day and invited me to return the following day. Nevertheless, on the following day, he delivered the same message. In the afternoon I wandered the halls of Monticello and bethought myself that I saw a figure after Mr. Jefferson's loose-boned construction, though when I looked more closely this figure had vanished near the dumbwaiter and I reassured myself that I had seen nothing but the incarnation of my having missed breakfast.

The next morn I witnessed Mr. Jefferson walking his gardens and I emerged from my lodgings to join him. When I began following him, both of us walking apace, he took no notice of me. As I called out his name he paused in his ambulation, listening to a mockingbird perched on a nearby fig tree, and still took no notice of me nor turned himself about. He resumed walking, keeping abreast of me. As I was drawing no closer, I walked more swiftly afoot; the distance between us remaining constant in spite of an alteration of my pace. As I was impatient to speak with him about the document, I began to gallop across his lawn, though Mr. Jefferson aped me expertly and I failed in reducing that distance between us. Indeed, Mr. Jefferson, being lengthier of leg than I, outstripped me in a moment and then crossed over the boundary

into the forest and vanished into the trees with a tremendous crashing of branches and rustling of leaves, propelled by his great limbs which blended with the arboreal limbs about him, and was seen no more.

As Mr. Jefferson was proving to be unaccountably elusive, after dinner I let myself into his private library and began browsing his collection, though I could find nothing of that document which I had once held. In addition, the letters that had been given to me had vanished from my possession the evening before. Yet I found not that personage who had been of such helpful disposition only days prior.

It soon became evident that Mr. Jefferson was avoiding any direct concourse, so I wrote a letter to him and gave it to his manservant Long Rich. His manservant returned only hours later and informed me that the letter had been lost, after which I gave him another; he returned the next day and informed me that Mr. Jefferson had such an ailment as prevented him from the use of his eyes. I informed his manservant that I had seen Mr. Jefferson walking his garden on previous occasion, after which the manservant departed and returned to report that Mr. Jefferson's eyesight was afflicted only in his ability to read. I asked his manservant to read the letter to Mr. Jefferson, to which he returned shortly thereafter and informed me that he had lost my letter again. I expressed to his manservant that I would not be against risking becoming ill myself in order to speak with Mr. Jefferson, but was told that Mr. Jefferson valued my health too much to inflict such undeserved suffering.

As it was becoming evident that Mr. Jefferson had contracted a highly unusual illness, yet my desire to read that document which lay incomplete in my study increasingly twentyfold, I lay upon my bed upon a summer's eve and devised a scheme whereby I would catch Mr.

Jefferson unawares and get from him the book after which I so longingly sought. The following day I explored Monticello until I found the key which unlocked Mr. Jefferson's study. I then informed his manservant that I would be departing that afternoon and was told that Mr. Jefferson was indisposed and wished me health and prosperity upon my future endeavors. That evening, lodging in the insufferable nearby town of Charlottesville, I returned in cover of darkness to Monticello. Climbing that hill by the spectral moonlight, keeping to the edges of the road in the watery shadows of the oaks, I soon came upon Monticello and beheld a light in Mr. Jefferson's study. Letting myself in, I entered Mr. Jefferson's private chamber where I found the mighty scholar leaning upon his chair, inspecting a parchment so studiously with his afflicted eyeballs that he was not aware of my approach. When I spoke he started and knocked his inkwell over, covering the map which he had with a great blot which he made no effort to contain, so dumbfounded was he at my sudden appearance. Apologizing for my impertinence and burglary, I explained that I was compelled by curiosity to study the remainder of that document which I had been studying of late. As I spoke, he glanced about the room, searching for any cavity into which he could fit his person or orifice through which he could make his limbs pass.

It was then that I understood that Mr. Jefferson was in good health. Why then, I asked, had he claimed to be ill? Why had he avoided me so assiduously in prior days, and misled me about his condition? And why, I demanded, was he refusing to lend me that document which was the sole object of my desire?

Realizing that he had been caught, that regal fox resigned himself to his fate, releasing a great breath as he at last righted the toppled inkwell and considered the task before him. He

spoke haltingly, uncertainly at first, but quickly recovered his nerve as he recounted his tale.

“The document which you lately held in your grasp,” said Mr. Jefferson, “was left in my possession by Mr. Edmund Randolph, with little instruction about its nature, but only an admonition to keep it safe. The clarity of his intentions was lost to me at the time, and...perhaps—I cannot recall—he gave more explicit instructions concerning its concealment. You see, dear sir, he never intended for the document to be read by anyone other than those who attended the Philadelphia Convention. That you have read it, sir, has been a grave misdeed.”

I inquired of him what the consequences of this misdeed might be, after which he informed me it would be wise for me to avoid large cities and small town and to depart from anyone of note or any town crier or any traveler who inquired about my recent travels. Finding me yet inquisitive of the book, he averted his eyes and became preoccupied with the niceties of a bust of Mr. James Madison. Nevertheless, he eventually admitted that it was no longer in his possession, a revelation which compelled me to recline in a chair in speechless wonder.

“I have sent it away,” said he, “with a man who will be more studious in keeping it secure. I have sent it to New England, to Massachusetts, far away from here, away from innocent hands.”

I demanded to know why he had sent it away, why he did not wish to remain in possession of it, after which he became agitated and leaned across the table, his eyes gleaming in the candlelight as his fervor rose.

“It was not meant to be read; no one was to find it, to lay hands upon it, for there are men abroad who would use it, men of an erratic temperament who have long suspected its

existence and have recently heard rumors that began upon your arrival, intemperate men who have exhumed corpses of our forefathers in search of the document, men whose insatiable rage at what they suspect about the convention drives them across the countryside ever closer to this room.”

He then leaned so far across the table he lay in the pool of ink, seizing me by the lapel, dragging me across the table to be closer to him as his unafflicted eyeballs intruded upon mine and he lowered his voice as he spoke.

“Patrick Henry is coming.”

He then released me and sat back, looking about the room, as if afraid that speaking his name might conjure the man’s form in our midst or his face might have appeared at the window, pressed against the glass with a deranged grimace upon his face, having at last located a party to that cabal which kept the document hidden from him.

He then rose and announced that he was retiring for the evening, inviting me to stay the night in the guest room though he informed me that his manservant was currently in the habit of skulking about the bedrooms and smearing the grease of bacon on slumbering guests and that he had lost track of his hunting hounds the day before.

I thanked him for the offer and then took my leave, more bewildered than ever. Had not Patrick Henry died in the year 1799 of our Lord? Was Mr. Jefferson speaking of a former time and, if so, what inspired this divine delusion?

On my way to retrieve the steed which Mr. Jefferson offered me, I stepped in something malodorous. With a squelching from some gelatinous impurity I raised my heel and inspected the contamination, discovering it to be a small deposit of excrement, and I remembered the

possum which I had witnessed not two nights betides. Nearly in that same moment the answer to my agitating conundrum rushed upon me. The letter which I had found that had been signed "A.B." bore a marked resemblance to the letter which I had received when first arriving in Virginia to search for the document, a letter which appeared to have been designed with the purpose of turning my desires elsewhere by one who jealously guarded the document, or, as I now reflected, desired it for himself. The letter which I had of late found had mentioned Mr. Marshall and the western Empire, and there was but one denizen of the Founding Pantheon who matched these descriptors, a demigod who had been cast down, a veritable Hades whose well-known ambitions ruined him: Mr. Aaron Burr. He was at that moment carrying on private practice of law in the city of New York. While this did not settled the ghoulish specter of Patrick Henry, nor many of the other mysteries which appeared to be multiplying the more closely I gazed upon this Gordian Knot of history, my intuitive magnetic attraction for the truth that had so clearly led me hence now pushed me toward Mr. Burr.

While standing on the edge of that glorious estate, holding the reigns of the horse which Mr. Jefferson had lent me, I looked out upon the slumbering valleys of Virginia, the cryptic oaks in slumber like death, beneath them foxes and nighthawks hunting their prey, the call of the Whip-Poor-Will mingling with the sound of the brooks in the ravines. A force was compelling me, the sense of incompleteness enveloping me. The book was being transported to New England, undetected in a traveler's pack, but there were forces seeking to intercept it. I, a mere mortal, had journeyed for years hunting demigods and legends along a twisted road that on multiple occasions left me penniless and bruised, until at length I had crept up Mt. Olympus, wriggling stealthily up to its pillars to glimpse the divine personages, to marvel at the discourse

of the gods, only to find them mocking mankind as they enjoyed the fruits of the mortals' sacrifices. Where I had hoped to find celestial enlightenment I found a salacious banquet of demigods, with a hound of hell hot in the mouth hunting their location. Perhaps somewhere along my journey I had lost my sense of location and confused the direction in which lay the two afterworlds. Whatever the case, as I alone had glimpsed this confounding banquet, it became me to pursue the matter until I had recovered that document and spoken with those associated with such proceedings who were yet alive, taking all precaution to avoid detection by those who would do me harm. It was time to visit Mr. Aaron Burr.

Rising to my saddle, I urged my horse onward and set my face to the north.