

# “Chapter X: Parties in the United States” from Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835 (pg.1)

## "Chapter X: Parties in the United States" from *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835

### Chapter X: Parties in the United States

#### Chapter Summary

Great distinction to be made between parties—Parties which are to each other as rival nations—Parties properly so called—Difference between great and small parties—Epochs which produce them—Their characteristics—America has had great parties—They are extinct—Federalists—Republicans—Defeat of the Federalists—Difficulty of creating parties in the United States—What is done with this intention—Aristocratic or democratic character to be met with in all parties—Struggle of General Jackson against the Bank.

#### Parties in the United States

A great distinction must be made between parties. Some countries are so large that the different populations which inhabit them have contradictory interests, although they are the subjects of the same Government, and they may thence be in a perpetual state of opposition. In this case the different fractions of the people may more properly be considered as distinct nations than as mere parties; and if a civil war breaks out, the struggle is carried on by rival peoples rather than by factions in the State.

But when the citizens entertain different opinions upon subjects which affect the whole country alike, such, for instance, as the principles upon which the government is to be conducted, then distinctions arise which may correctly be styled parties. Parties are a necessary evil in free governments; but they have not at all times the same character and the same propensities.

At certain periods a nation may be oppressed by such insupportable evils as to conceive the design of effecting a total change in its political constitution; at other times the mischief lies still deeper, and the existence of society itself is endangered. Such are the times of great revolutions and of great parties. But between these epochs of misery and of confusion there are periods during which human society seems to rest, and mankind to make a pause. This pause is, indeed, only apparent, for time does not stop its course for nations any more than for men; they are all advancing towards a goal with which they are unacquainted; and we only imagine them to be stationary when their progress escapes our observation, as men who are going at a foot-pace seem to be standing still to those who run.

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But however this may be, there are certain epochs at which the changes that take place in the social and political constitution of nations are so slow and so insensible that men imagine their present condition to be a final state; and the human mind, believing itself to be firmly based upon certain foundations, does not extend its researches beyond the horizon which it decries. These are the times of small parties and of intrigue.

The political parties which I style great are those which cling to principles more than to their consequences; to general, and not to especial cases; to ideas, and not to men. These parties are usually distinguished by a nobler character, by more generous passions, more genuine convictions, and a more bold and open conduct than the others. In them private interest, which always plays the chief part in political passions, is more studiously veiled under the pretext of the public good; and it may even be sometimes concealed from the eyes of the very persons whom it excites and impels.

Minor parties are, on the other hand, generally deficient in political faith. As they are not sustained or dignified by a lofty purpose, they ostensibly display the egotism of their character in their actions. They glow with a factitious zeal; their language is vehement, but their conduct is timid and irresolute. The means they employ are as wretched as the end at which they aim. Hence it arises that when a calm state of things succeeds a violent revolution, the leaders of society seem suddenly to disappear, and the powers of the human mind to lie concealed. Society is convulsed by great parties, by minor ones it is agitated; it is torn by the former, by the latter it is degraded; and if these sometimes save it by a salutary perturbation, those invariably disturb it to no good end.

America has already lost the great parties which once divided the nation; and if her happiness is considerably increased, her morality has suffered by their extinction. When the War of Independence was terminated, and the foundations of the new Government were to be laid down, the nation was divided between two opinions—two opinions which are as old as the world, and which are perpetually to be met with under all the forms and all the names which have ever obtained in free communities—the one tending to limit, the other to extend indefinitely, the power of the people. The conflict of these two opinions never assumed that degree of violence in America which it has frequently displayed elsewhere. Both parties of the Americans were, in fact, agreed upon the most essential points; and neither of them had to destroy a traditionary (sic) constitution, or to overthrow the structure of society, in order to ensure its own triumph. In neither of them, consequently, were a great number of private interests affected by success or by defeat; but moral principles of a high order, such as the love of equality and of independence, were concerned in the struggle, and they sufficed to kindle violent passions.

The party which desired to limit the power of the people endeavored to apply its doctrines more especially to the Constitution of the Union, whence it derived its name of Federal. The other party, which affected to be more exclusively attached to the cause of liberty, took that of Republican. America is a land of democracy, and the Federalists were always in a minority; but they reckoned on their side almost all the great men who had been called forth by the War of

# “Chapter X: Parties in the United States” from Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835 (pg.3)

Independence, and their moral influence was very considerable. Their cause was, moreover, favored by circumstances. The ruin of the Confederation had impressed the people with a dread of anarchy, and the Federalists did not fail to profit by this transient disposition of the multitude. For ten or twelve years they were at the head of affairs, and they were able to apply some, though not all, of their principles; for the hostile current was becoming from day to day too violent to be checked or stemmed. In 1801 the Republicans got possession of the Government; Thomas Jefferson was named President; and he increased the influence of their party by the weight of his celebrity, the greatness of his talents, and the immense extent of his popularity.

The means by which the Federalists had maintained their position were artificial, and their resources were temporary; it was by the virtues or the talents of their leaders that they had risen to power. When the Republicans attained to that lofty station, their opponents were overwhelmed by utter defeat. An immense majority declared itself against the retiring party, and the Federalists found themselves in so small a minority that they at once despaired of their future success. From that moment the Republican or Democratic party <sup>a</sup> has proceeded from conquest to conquest, until it has acquired absolute supremacy in the country. The Federalists, perceiving that they were vanquished without resource, and isolated in the midst of the nation, fell into two divisions, of which one joined the victorious Republicans, and the other abandoned its rallying-point and its name. Many years have already elapsed since they ceased to exist as a party.

*a*

*[It is scarcely necessary to remark that in more recent times the signification of these terms has changed. The Republicans are the representatives of the old Federalists, and the Democrats of the old Republicans.—Trans. Note (1861).] The accession of the Federalists to power was, in my opinion, one of the most fortunate incidents which accompanied the formation of the great American Union; they resisted the inevitable propensities of their age and of the country. But whether their theories were good or bad, they had the effect of being inapplicable, as a system, to the society which they professed to govern, and that which occurred under the auspices of Jefferson must therefore have taken place sooner or later. But their Government gave the new republic time to acquire a certain stability, and afterwards to support the rapid growth of the very doctrines which they had combated. A considerable number of their principles were in point of fact embodied in the political creed of their opponents; and the Federal Constitution which subsists at the present day is a lasting monument of their patriotism and their wisdom.*

Great political parties are not, then, to be met with in the United States at the present time. Parties, indeed, may be found which threaten the future tranquility (sic) of the Union; but there are none which seem to contest the present form of Government or the present course of society. The parties by which the Union is menaced do not rest upon abstract principles, but upon temporal interests. These interests, disseminated in the provinces of so vast an empire, may be said to constitute rival nations rather than parties. Thus, upon a recent occasion, the North contended for the system of commercial prohibition, and the South took up arms in favor of free trade, simply because the North is a manufacturing and the South an agricultural district; and that the restrictive system which was profitable to the one was prejudicial to the other. <sup>b</sup>



# “Chapter X: Parties in the United States” from Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835 (pg.4)

*b*

*[The divisions of North and South have since acquired a far greater degree of intensity, and the South, though conquered, still presents a formidable spirit of opposition to Northern government.—Translator's Note, 1875.]]*

In the absence of great parties, the United States abound with lesser controversies; and public opinion is divided into a thousand minute shades of difference upon questions of very little moment. The pains which are taken to create parties are inconceivable, and at the present day it is no easy task. In the United States there is no religious animosity, because all religion is respected, and no sect is predominant; there is no jealousy of rank, because the people is everything, and none can contest its authority; lastly, there is no public indigence to supply the means of agitation, because the physical position of the country opens so wide a field to industry that man is able to accomplish the most surprising undertakings with his own native resources. Nevertheless, ambitious men are interested in the creation of parties, since it is difficult to eject a person from authority upon the mere ground that his place is coveted by others. The skill of the actors in the political world lies therefore in the art of creating parties. A political aspirant in the United States begins by discriminating his own interest, and by calculating upon those interests which may be collected around and amalgamated with it; he then contrives to discover some doctrine or some principle which may suit the purposes of this new association, and which he adopts in order to bring forward his party and to secure his popularity; just as the imprimatur of a King was in former days incorporated with the volume which it authorized, but to which it nowise belonged. When these preliminaries are terminated, the new party is ushered into the political world.

All the domestic controversies of the Americans at first appear to a stranger to be so incomprehensible and so puerile that he is at a loss whether to pity a people which takes such arrant trifles in good earnest, or to envy the happiness which enables it to discuss them. But when he comes to study the secret propensities which govern the factions of America, he easily perceives that the greater part of them are more or less connected with one or the other of those two divisions which have always existed in free communities. The deeper we penetrate into the working of these parties, the more do we perceive that the object of the one is to limit, and that of the other to extend, the popular authority. I do not assert that the ostensible end, or even that the secret aim, of American parties is to promote the rule of aristocracy or democracy in the country; but I affirm that aristocratic or democratic passions may easily be detected at the bottom of all parties, and that, although they escape a superficial observation, they are the main point and the very soul of every faction in the United States.

To quote a recent example. When the President attacked the Bank, the country was excited and parties were formed; the well-informed classes rallied round the Bank, the common people round the President. But it must not be imagined that the people had formed a rational opinion upon a question which offers so many difficulties to the most experienced statesmen. The Bank is a great establishment which enjoys an independent existence, and the people, accustomed to make and unmake whatsoever it pleases, is startled to meet with this obstacle to its authority. In

# “Chapter X: Parties in the United States” from Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835 (pg.5)

the midst of the perpetual fluctuation of society the community is irritated by so permanent an institution, and is led to attack it in order to see whether it can be shaken and controlled, like all the other institutions of the country.

## **Remains Of The Aristocratic Party In The United States**

Secret opposition of wealthy individuals to democracy—Their retirement—Their taste for exclusive pleasures and for luxury at home—Their simplicity abroad—Their affected condescension towards the people.

It sometimes happens in a people amongst which various opinions prevail that the balance of the several parties is lost, and one of them obtains an irresistible preponderance, overpowers all obstacles, harasses its opponents, and appropriates all the resources of society to its own purposes. The vanquished citizens despair of success and they conceal their dissatisfaction in silence and in general apathy. The nation seems to be governed by a single principle, and the prevailing party assumes the credit of having restored peace and unanimity to the country. But this apparent unanimity is merely a cloak to alarming dissensions and perpetual opposition.

This is precisely what occurred in America; when the democratic party got the upper hand, it took exclusive possession of the conduct of affairs, and from that time the laws and the customs of society have been adapted to its caprices. At the present day the more affluent classes of society are so entirely removed from the direction of political affairs in the United States that wealth, far from conferring a right to the exercise of power, is rather an obstacle than a means of attaining to it. The wealthy members of the community abandon the lists, through unwillingness to contend, and frequently to contend in vain, against the poorest classes of their fellow citizens. They concentrate all their enjoyments in the privacy of their homes, where they occupy a rank which cannot be assumed in public; and they constitute a private society in the State, which has its own tastes and its own pleasures. They submit to this state of things as an irremediable evil, but they are careful not to show that they are galled by its continuance; it is even not uncommon to hear them laud the delights of a republican government, and the advantages of democratic institutions when they are in public. Next to hating their enemies, men are most inclined to flatter them.

Mark, for instance, that opulent citizen, who is as anxious as a Jew of the Middle Ages to conceal his wealth. His dress is plain, his demeanor unassuming; but the interior of his dwelling glitters with luxury, and none but a few chosen guests whom he haughtily styles his equals are allowed to penetrate into this sanctuary. No European noble is more exclusive in his pleasures, or more jealous of the smallest advantages which his privileged station confers upon him. But the very same individual crosses the city to reach a dark counting-house in the centre of traffic, where every one may accost him who pleases. If he meets his cobbler upon the way, they stop and converse; the two citizens discuss the affairs of the State in which they have an equal interest, and they shake hands before they part.

But beneath this artificial enthusiasm, and these obsequious attentions to the preponderating power, it is easy to perceive that the wealthy members of the community entertain a hearty

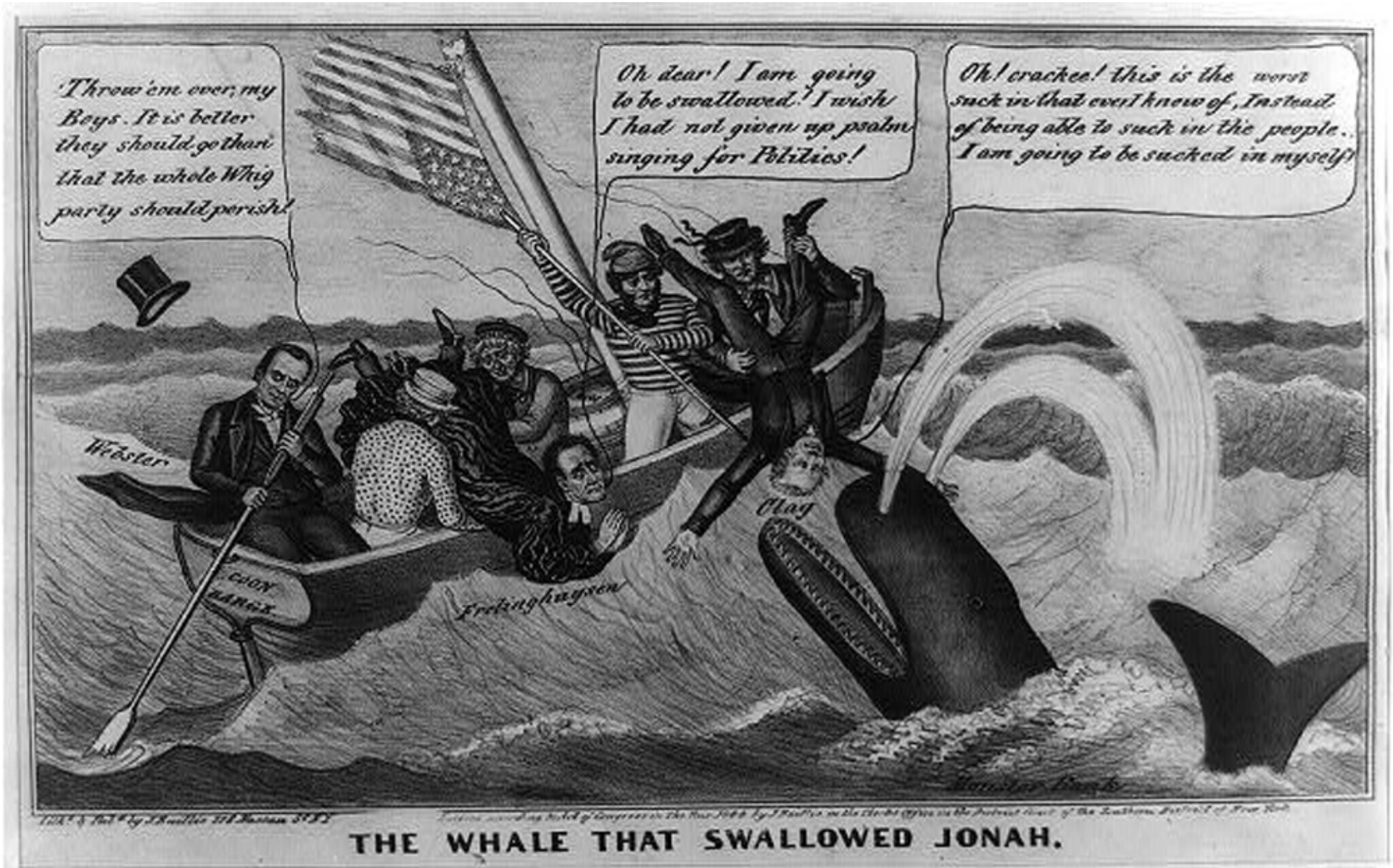
# **“Chapter X: Parties in the United States” from Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835 (pg.6)**

distaste to the democratic institutions of their country. The populace is at once the object of their scorn and of their fears. If the maladministration of the democracy ever brings about a revolutionary crisis, and if monarchical institutions ever become practicable in the United States, the truth of what I advance will become obvious.

The two chief weapons which parties use in order to ensure success are the public press and the formation of associations.



# “The Whale that Swallowed Jonah,” 1844



# "Whig Harmony," 1848



Historical accuracy noted of Congress the first and last in the North of the United States of the Southern States of the West

**WHIG HARMONY.**

Published by J. Baillie 67 N. 3rd Street, N.Y.C.

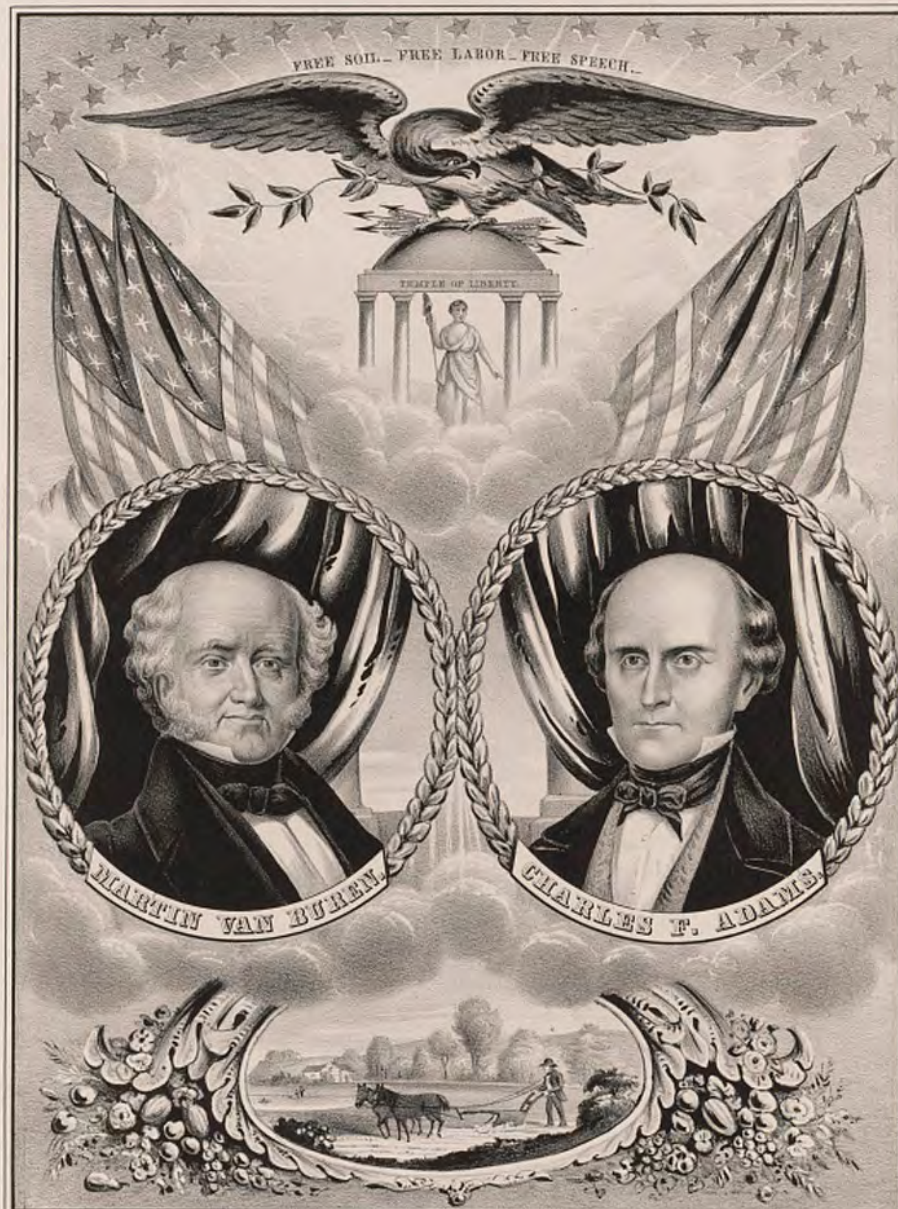
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# Grand Democratic Free Soil Banner, 1848



1848. D. P. B. BY N. LEITCH. Engraved according to Act of Congress in the year 1848 by N. Leitch, in the Clerk's office of the District Court of the Southern District of N. Y. 352 NASSAU ST. COR. 59 SPRING ST.

**GRAND DEMOCRATIC FREE SOIL BANNER.**

From Daguerreotypes by F. S. Cole.

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Deposited in the Clerk's Office S. & C. N. Y. Sept. 1. 1848.

# “Marriage of the Free Soil and Liberty Parties,” 1848



**MARRIAGE OF THE FREE SOIL AND LIBERTY PARTIES.**







# Grand National Union Banner, 1860



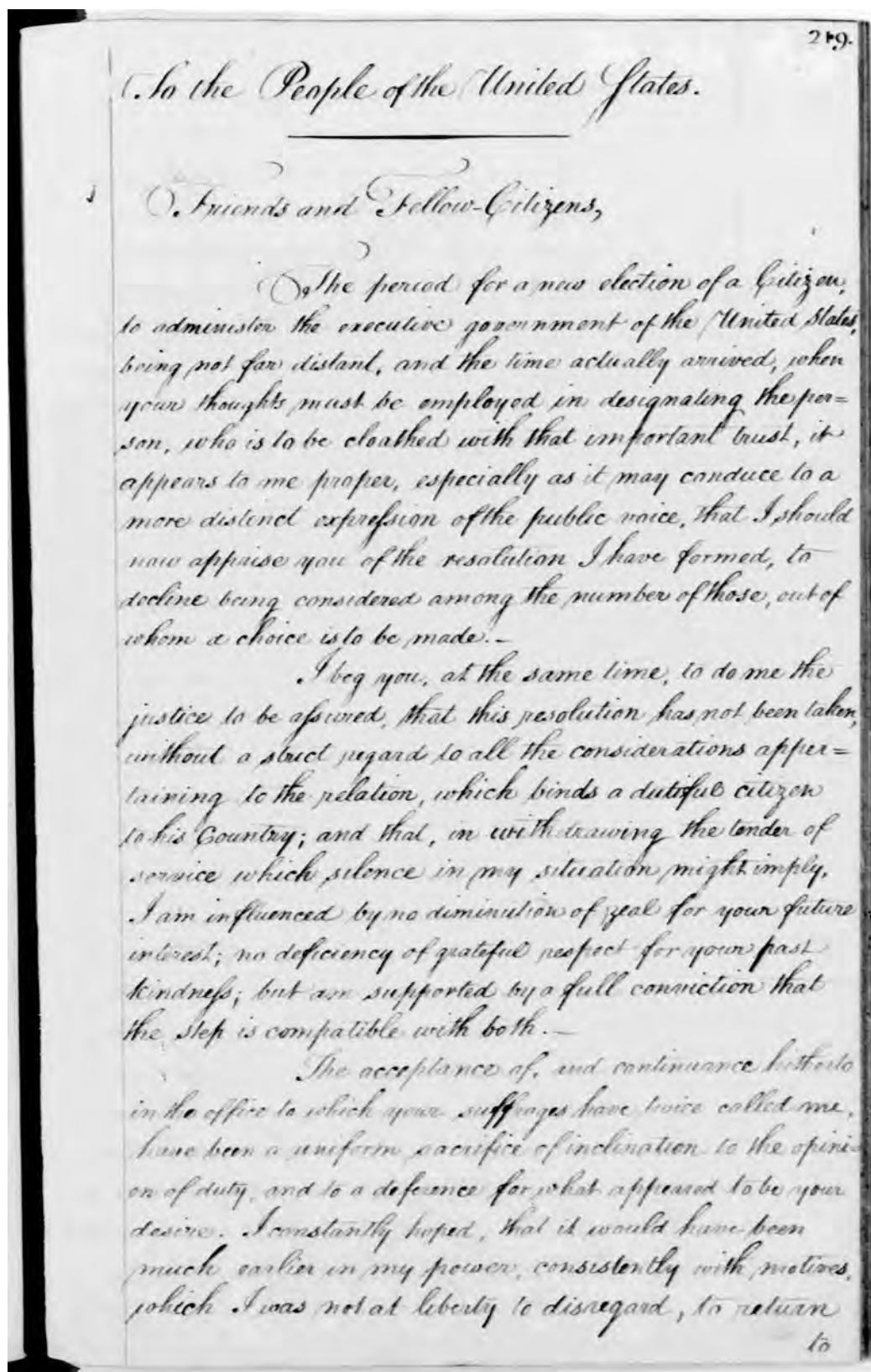
"Grand national union banner for 1860. The candidates and their platform," Currier & Ives, 1860. Courtesy of Library of Congress







# President George Washington's Farewell Address, September 19, 1796 (pg.1)



# President George Washington's Farewell Address, September 19, 1796 (pg.2)

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to that retirement, from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice, that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety; and am persuaded whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that in the present circumstances of our Country, you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust, were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say, that I have with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government, the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset, of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself; and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more, that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they



# President George Washington's Farewell Address, September 19, 1796 (pg.3)

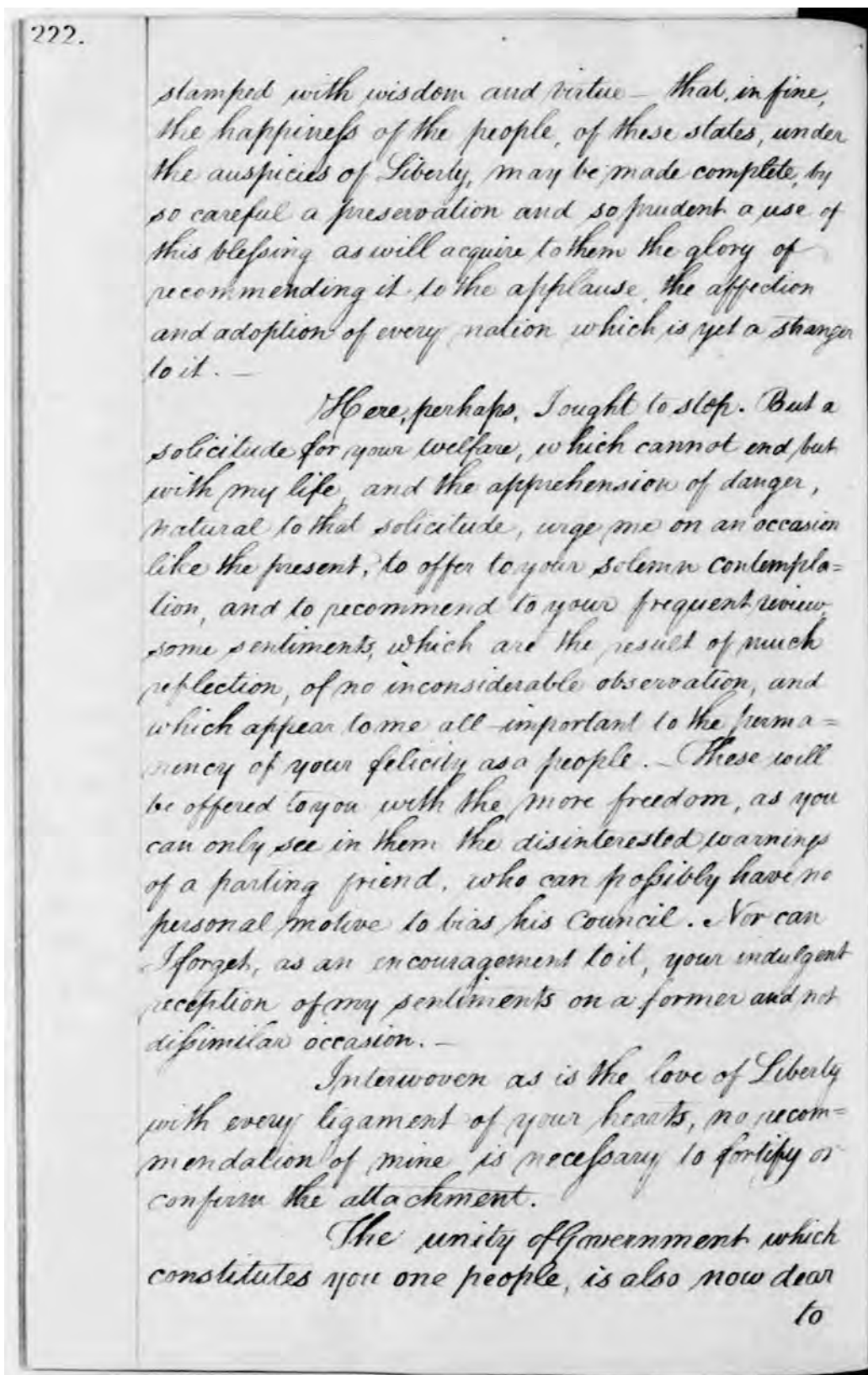
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they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe, that while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

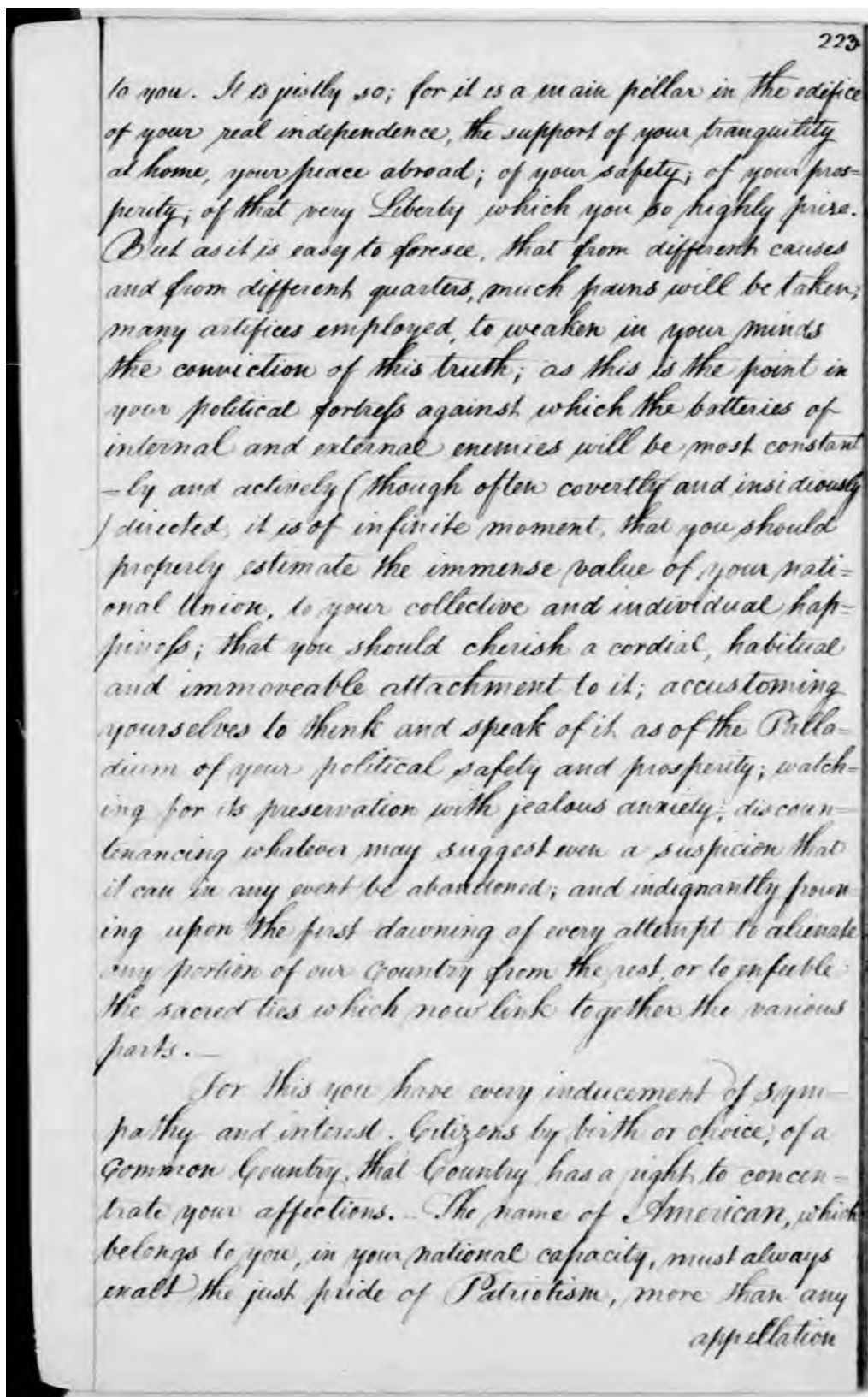
In looking forward to the moment, which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved Country, for the many honours it has conferred upon me; still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me; and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment, by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our Country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in every direction, were liable to mislead, amidst appearances sometimes dubious, — vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging, — in situations in which not unfrequently want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism — the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts, and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. — Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing vows that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence — that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual — that the free Constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained — that its administration in every department may be stamped



# President George Washington's Farewell Address, September 19, 1796 (pg.4)

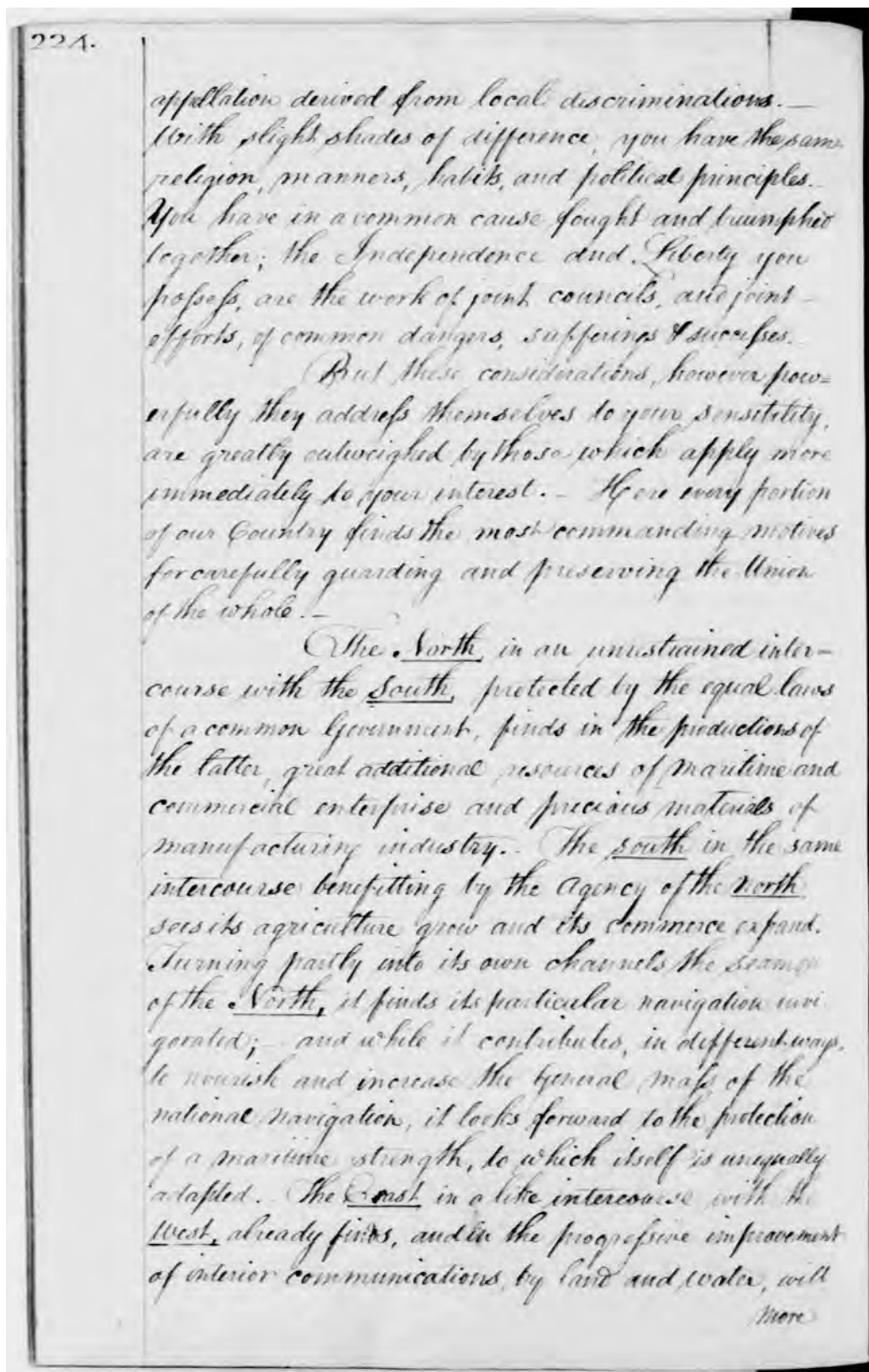


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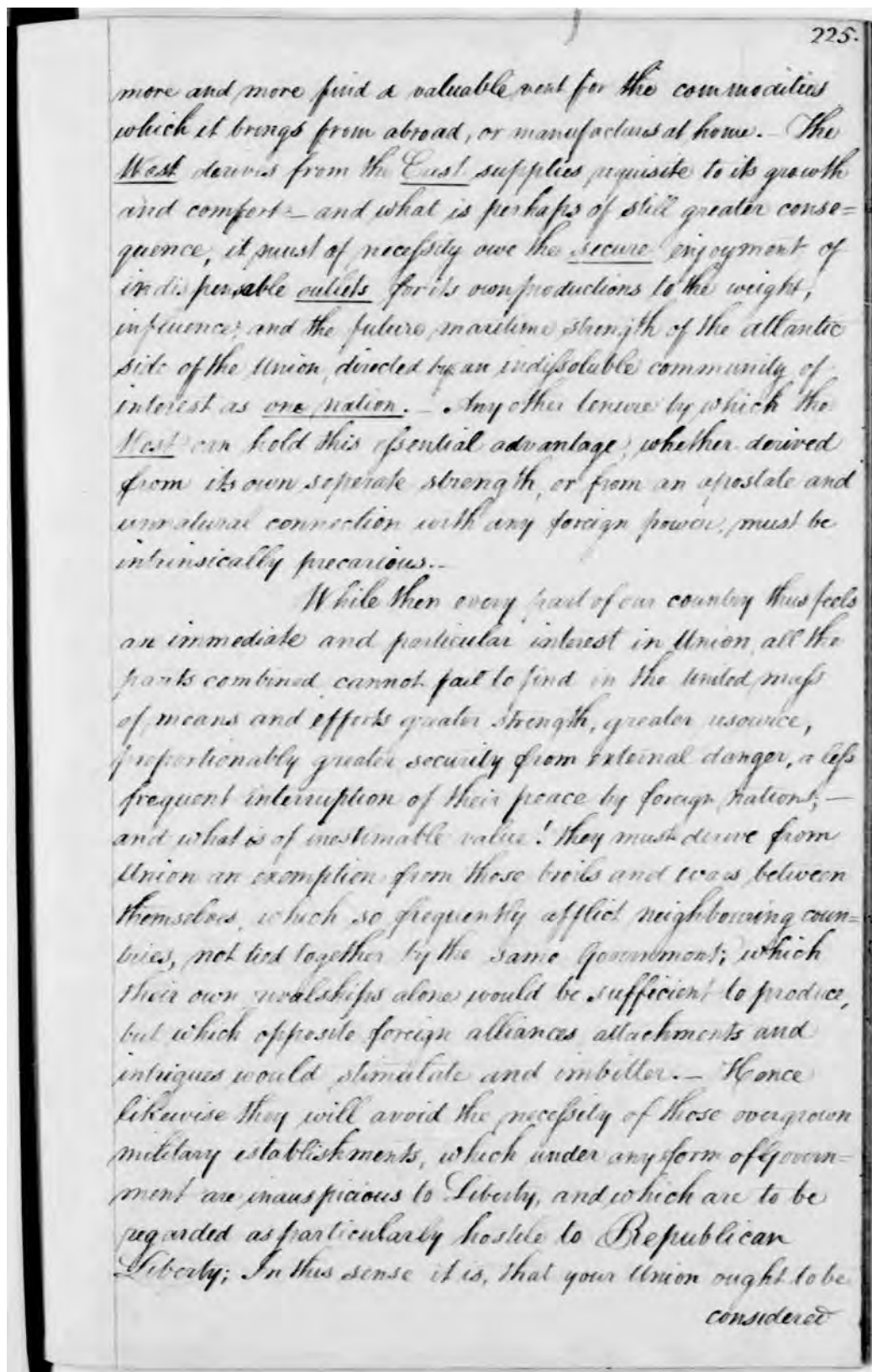


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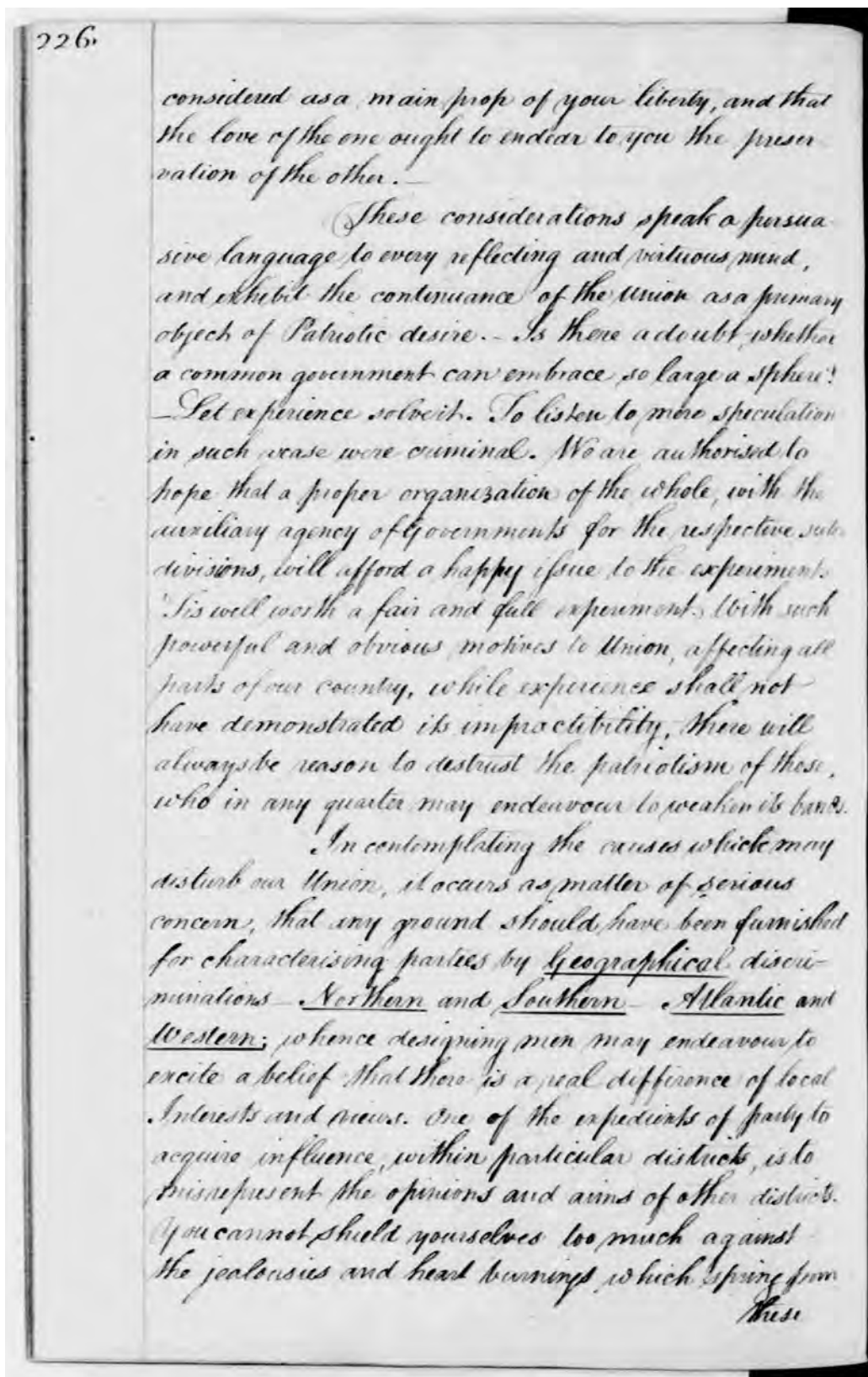




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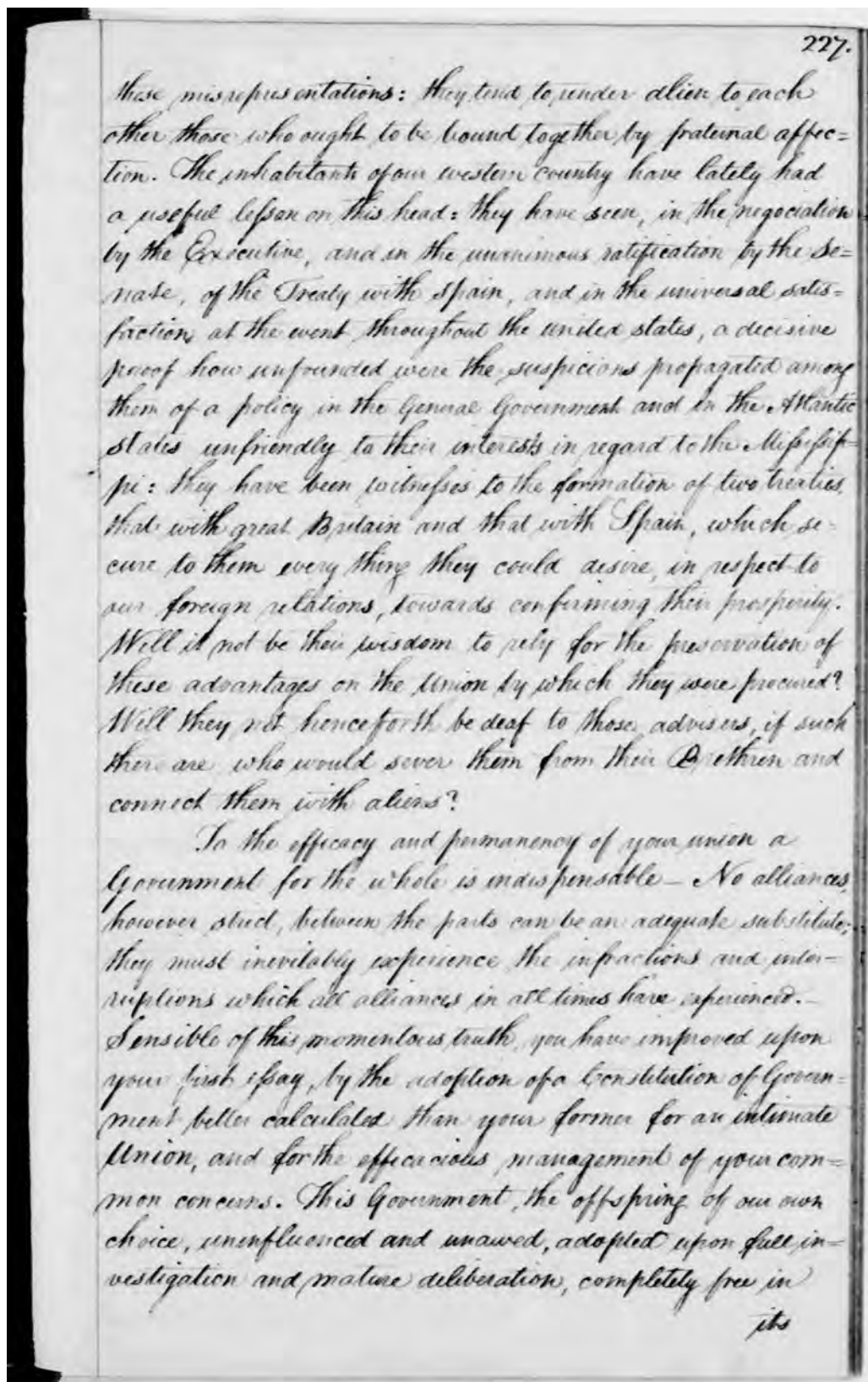


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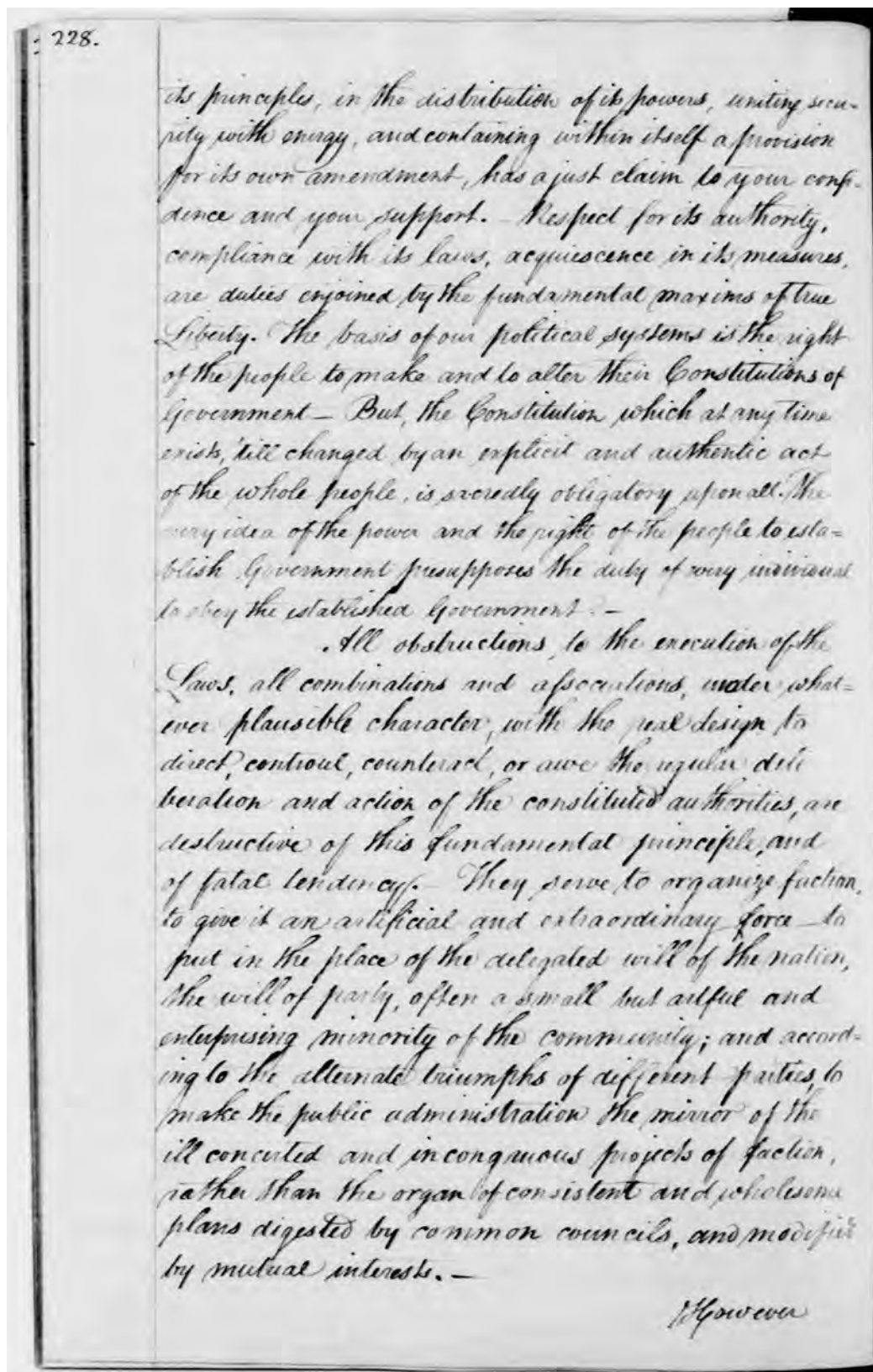


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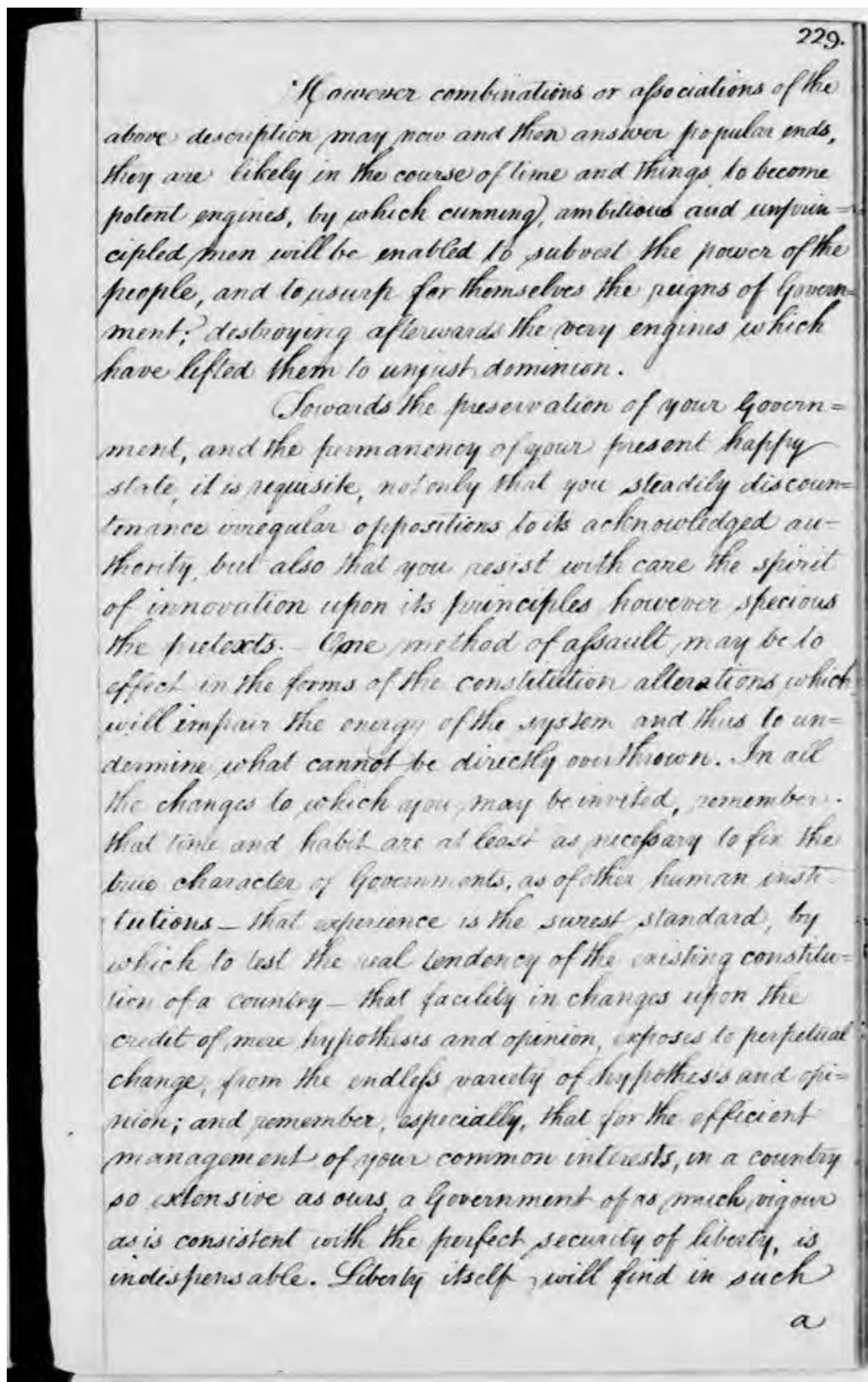




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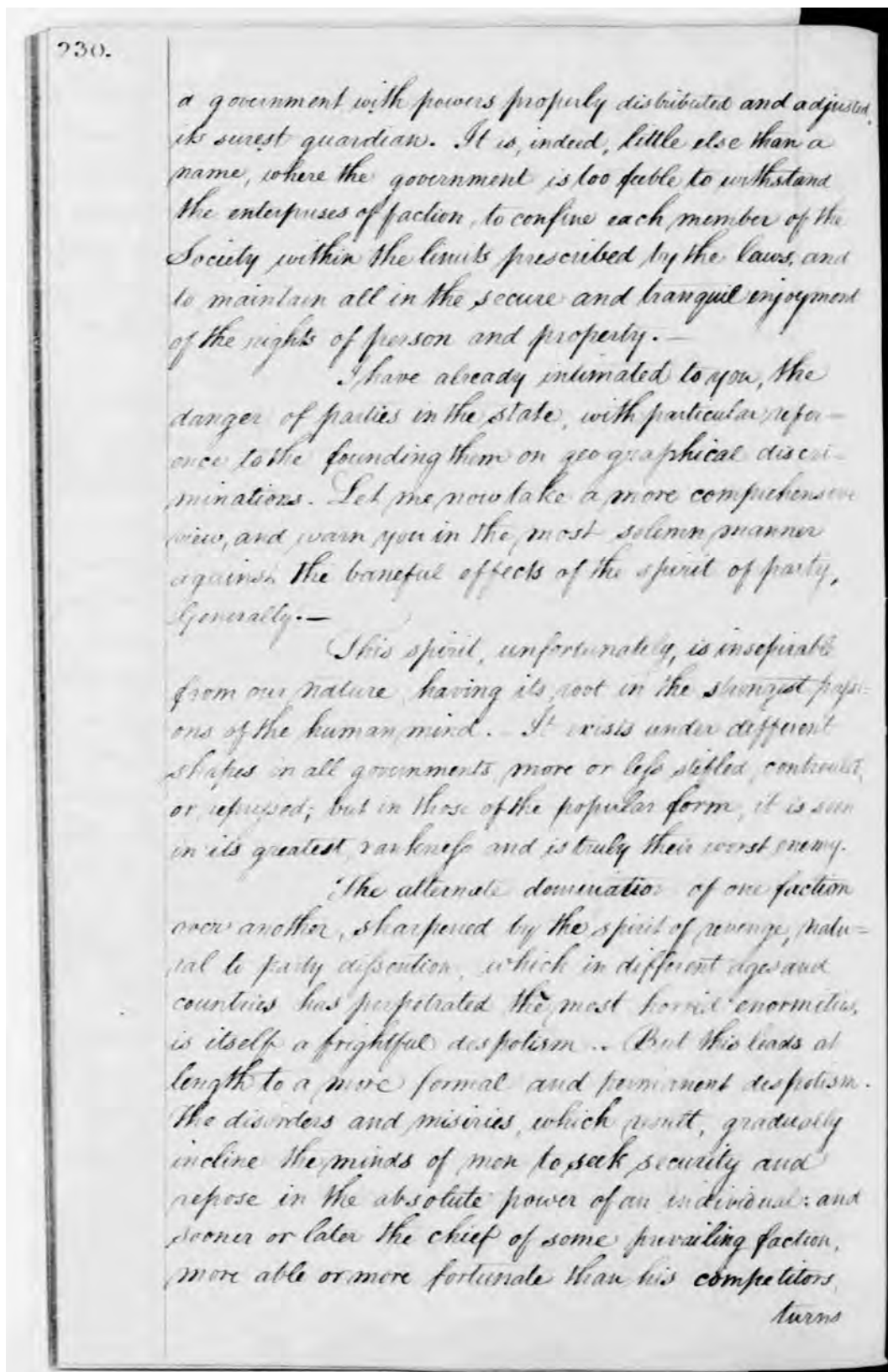


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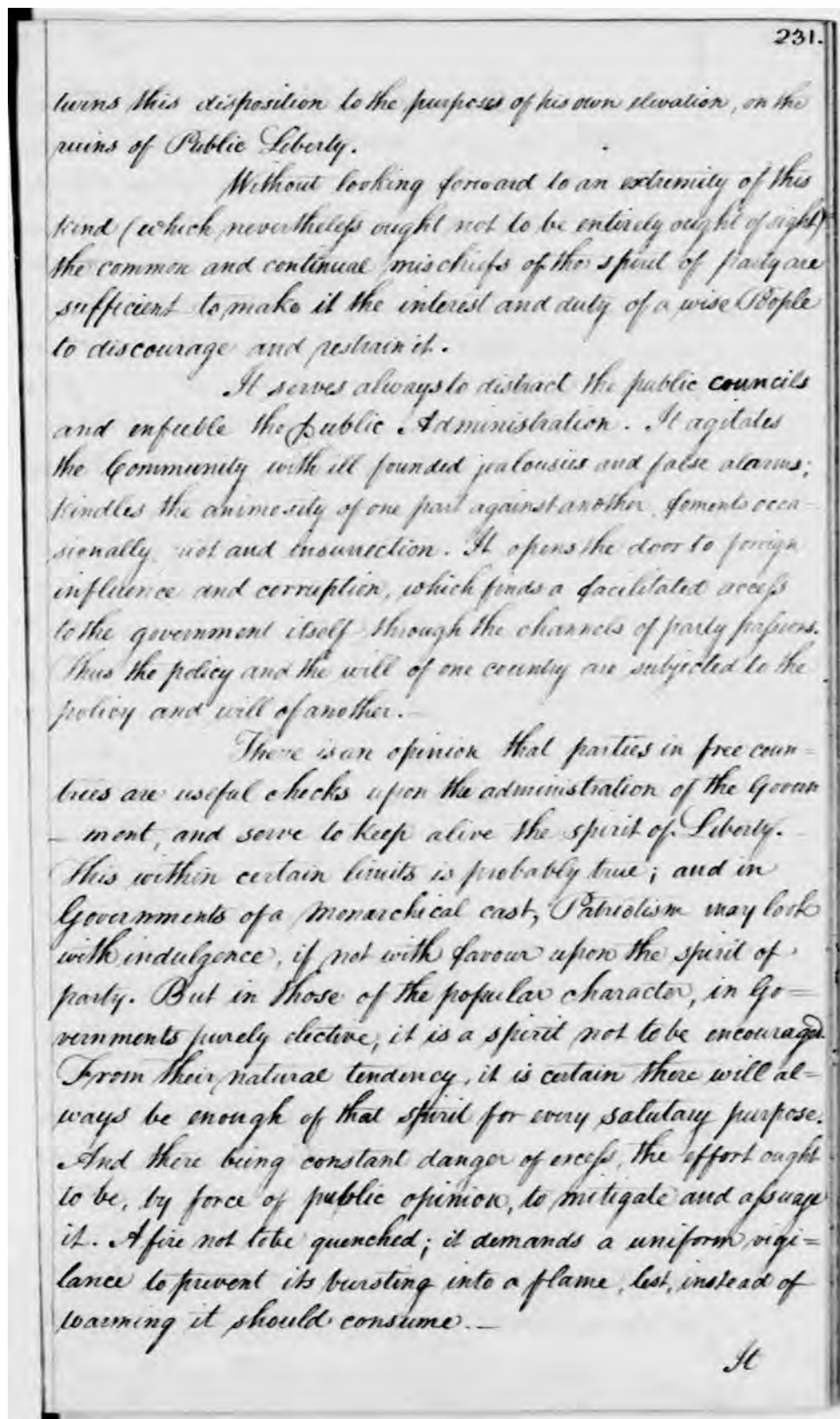




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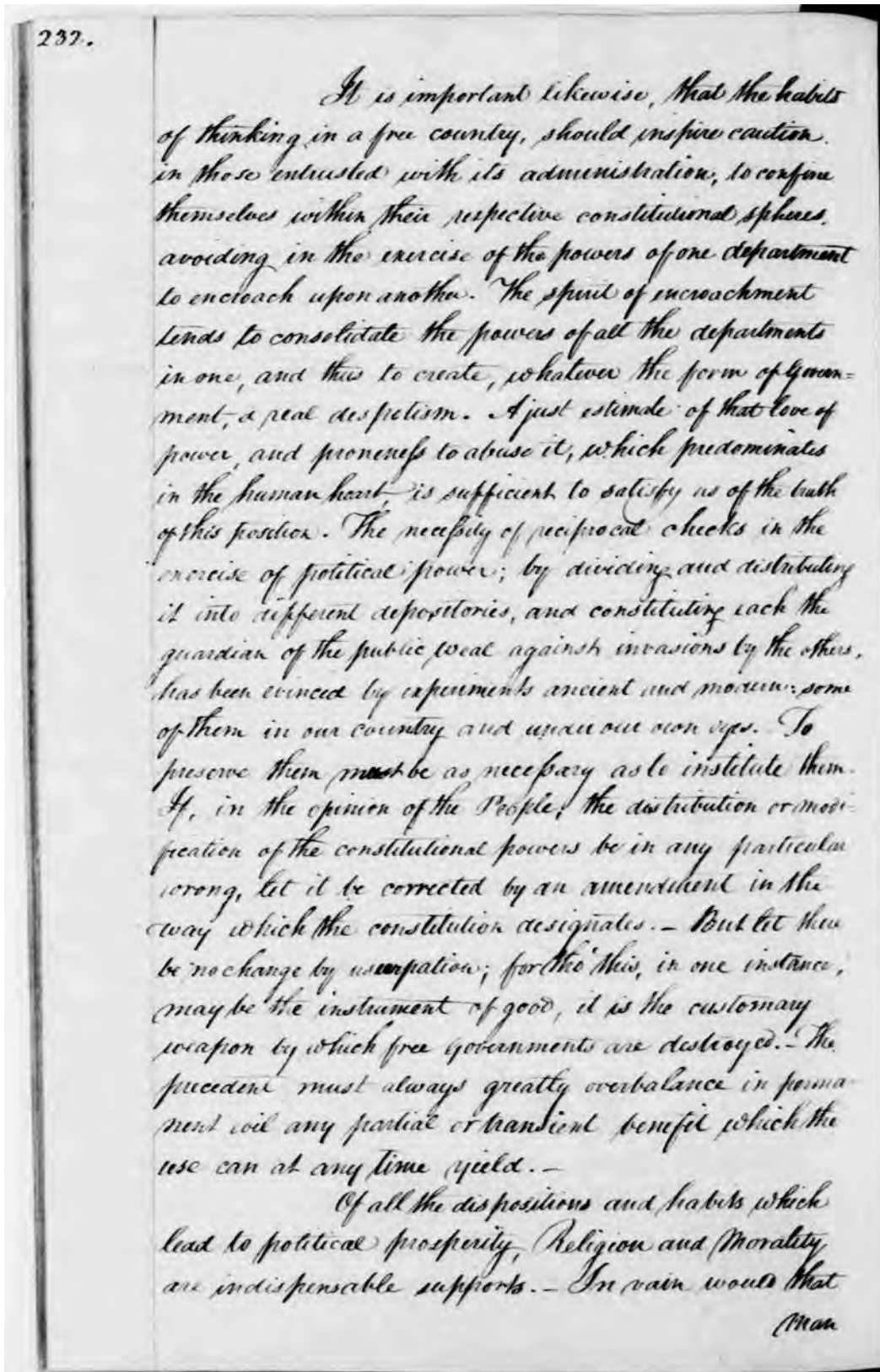


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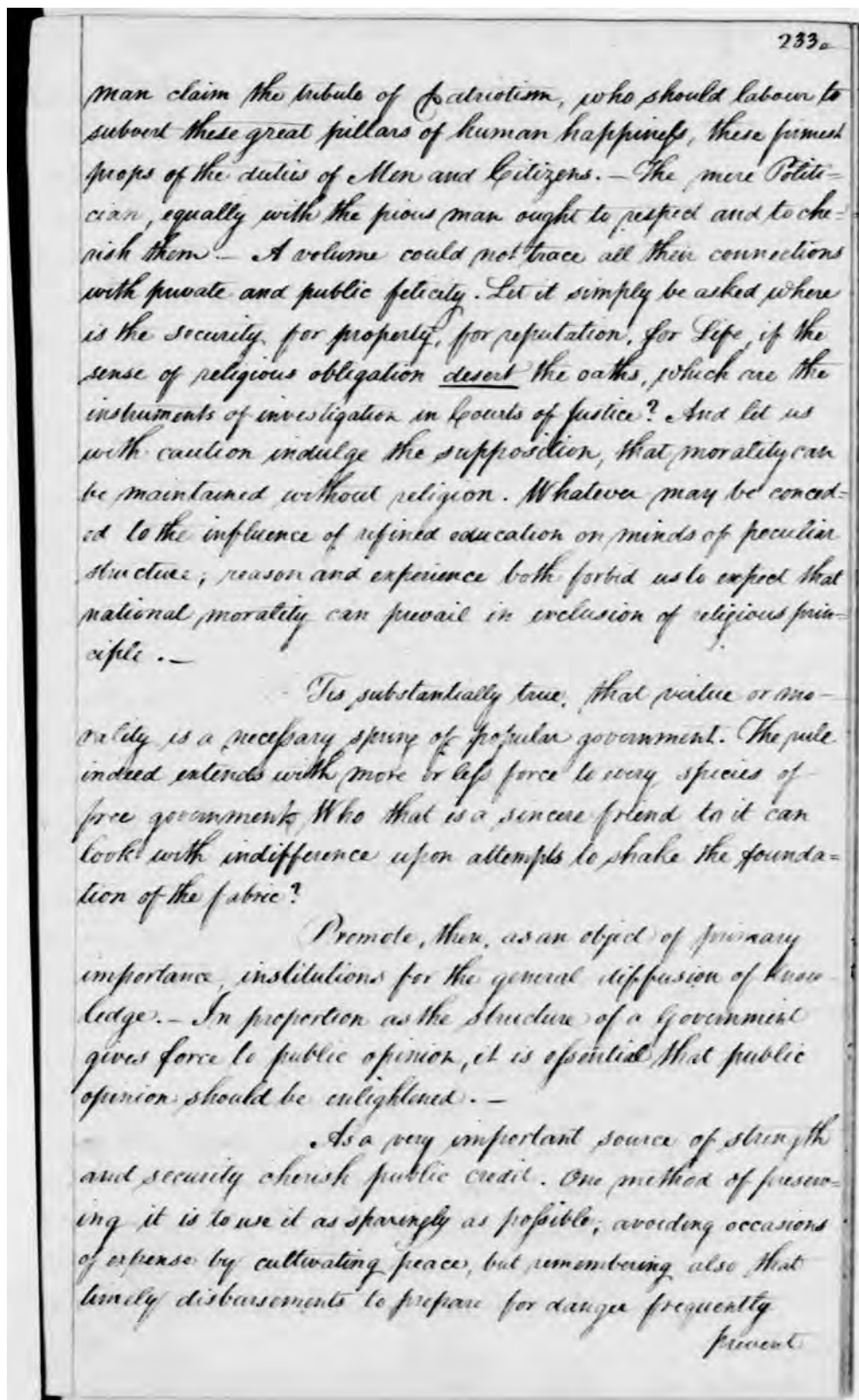




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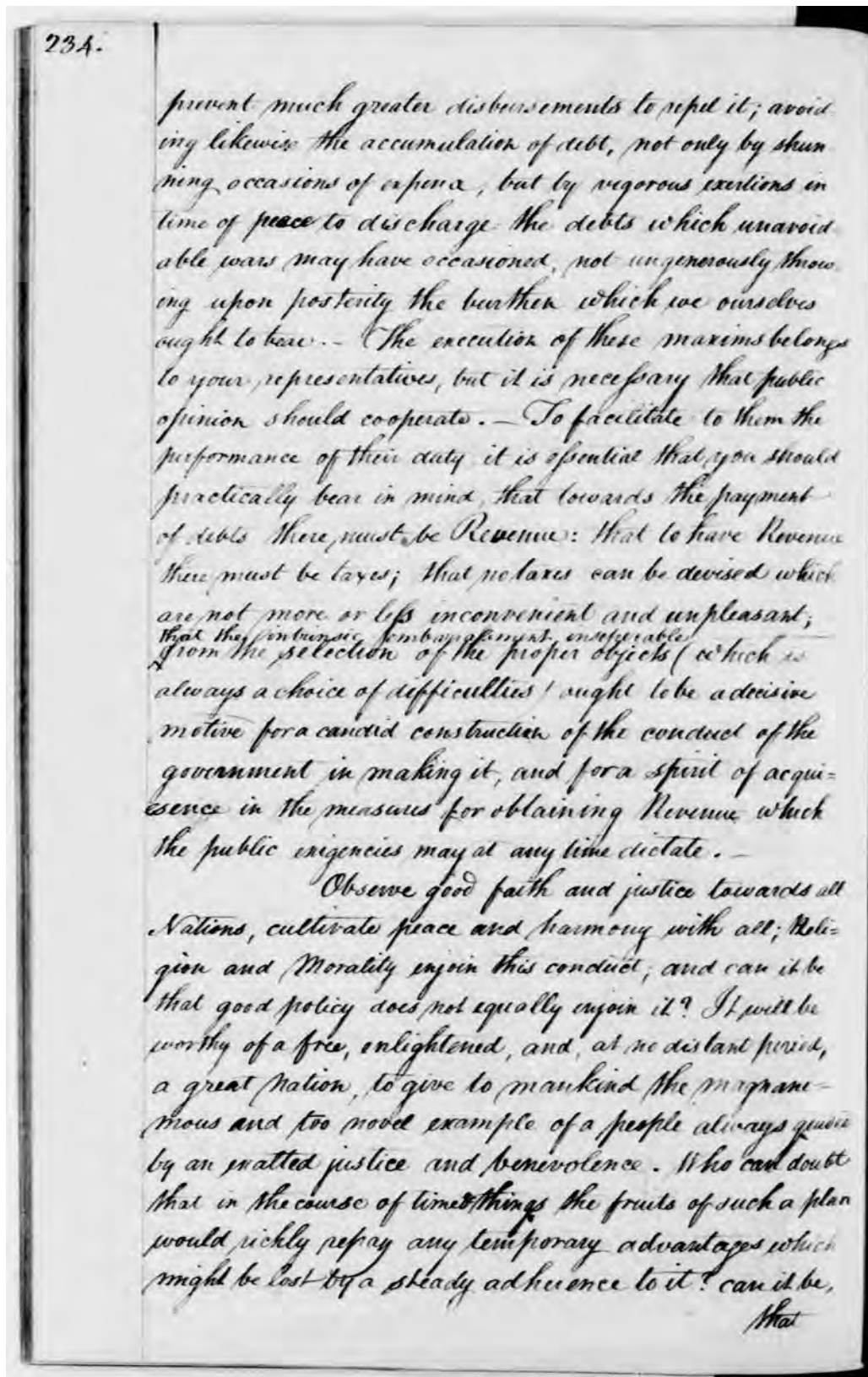


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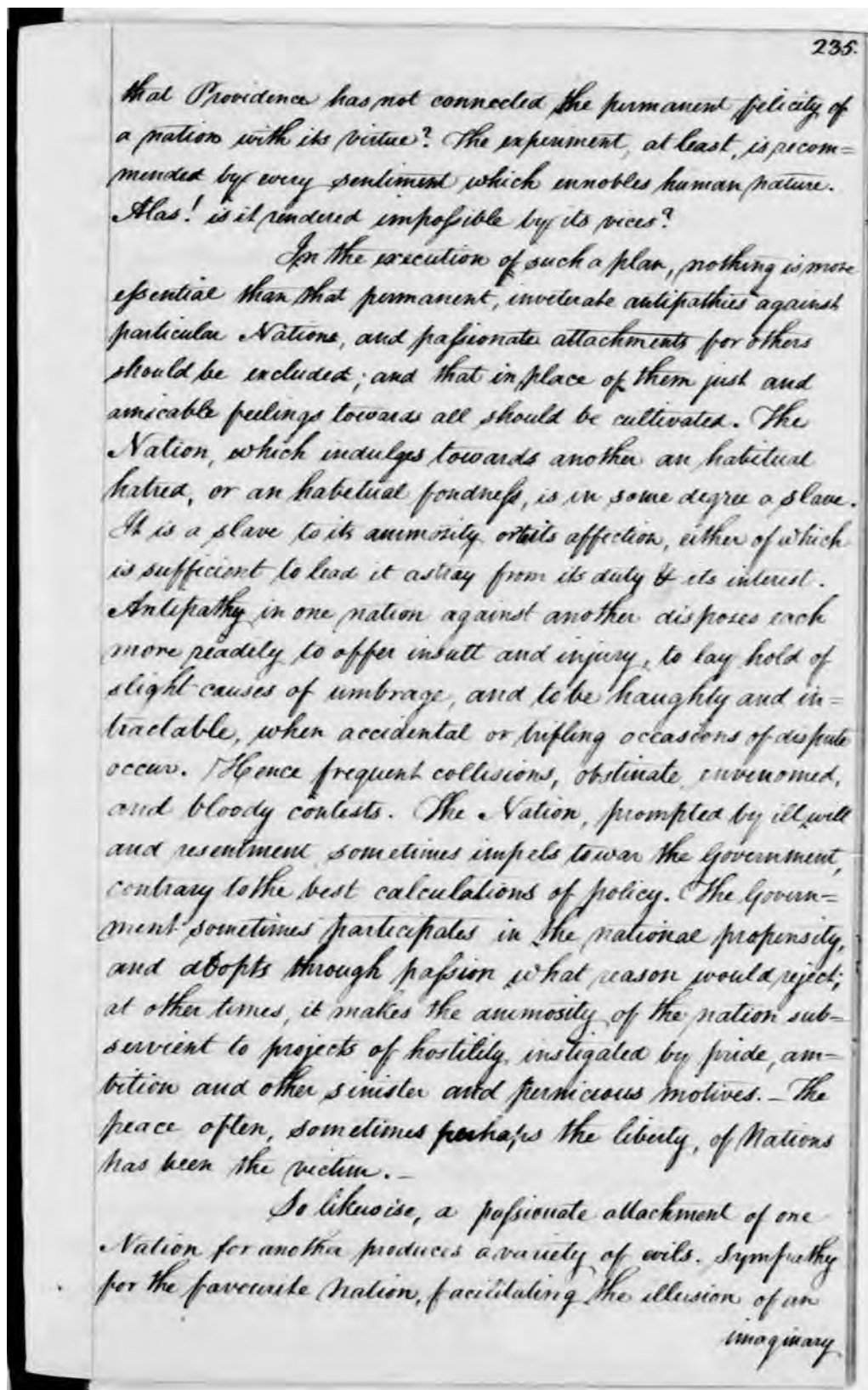




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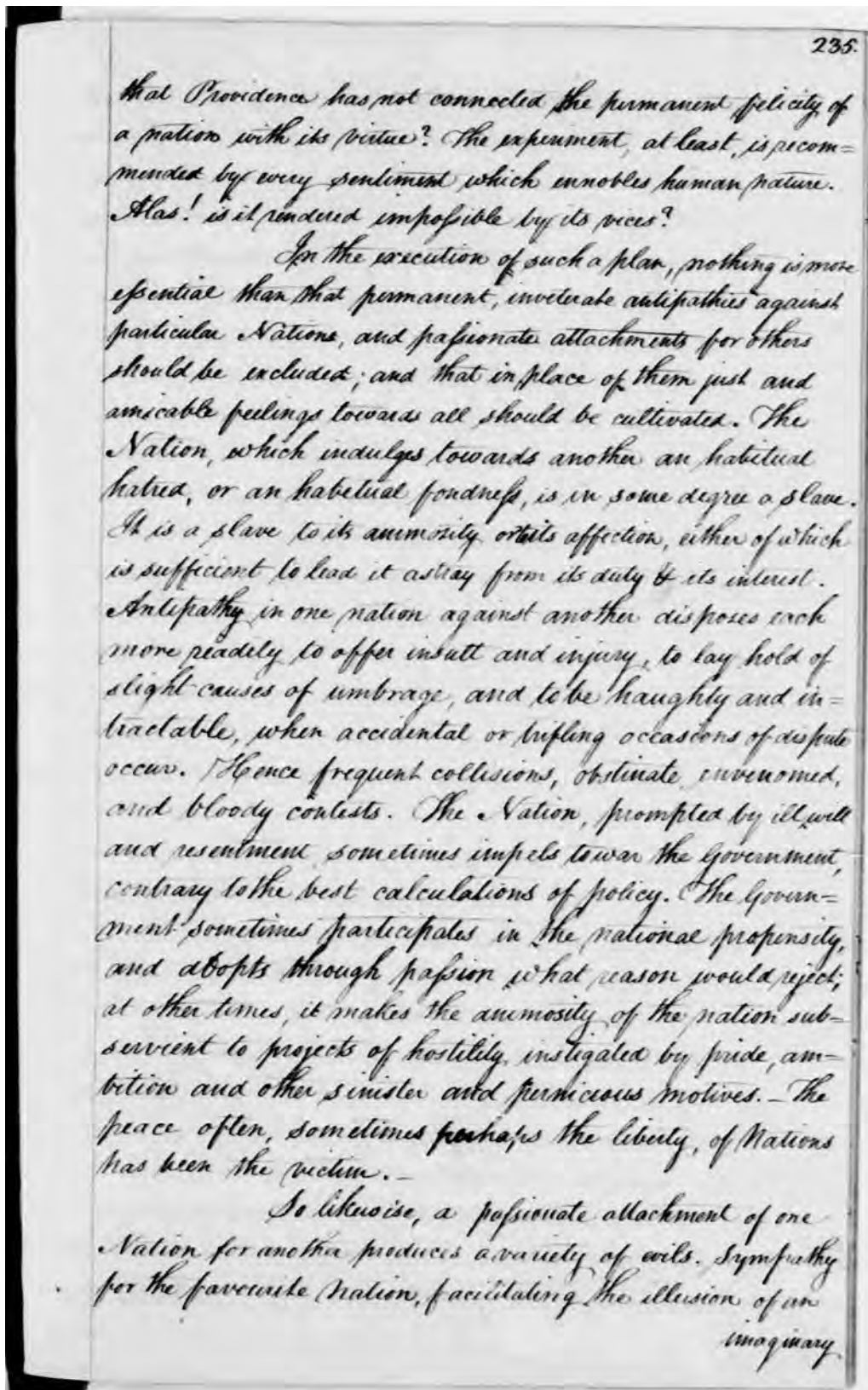


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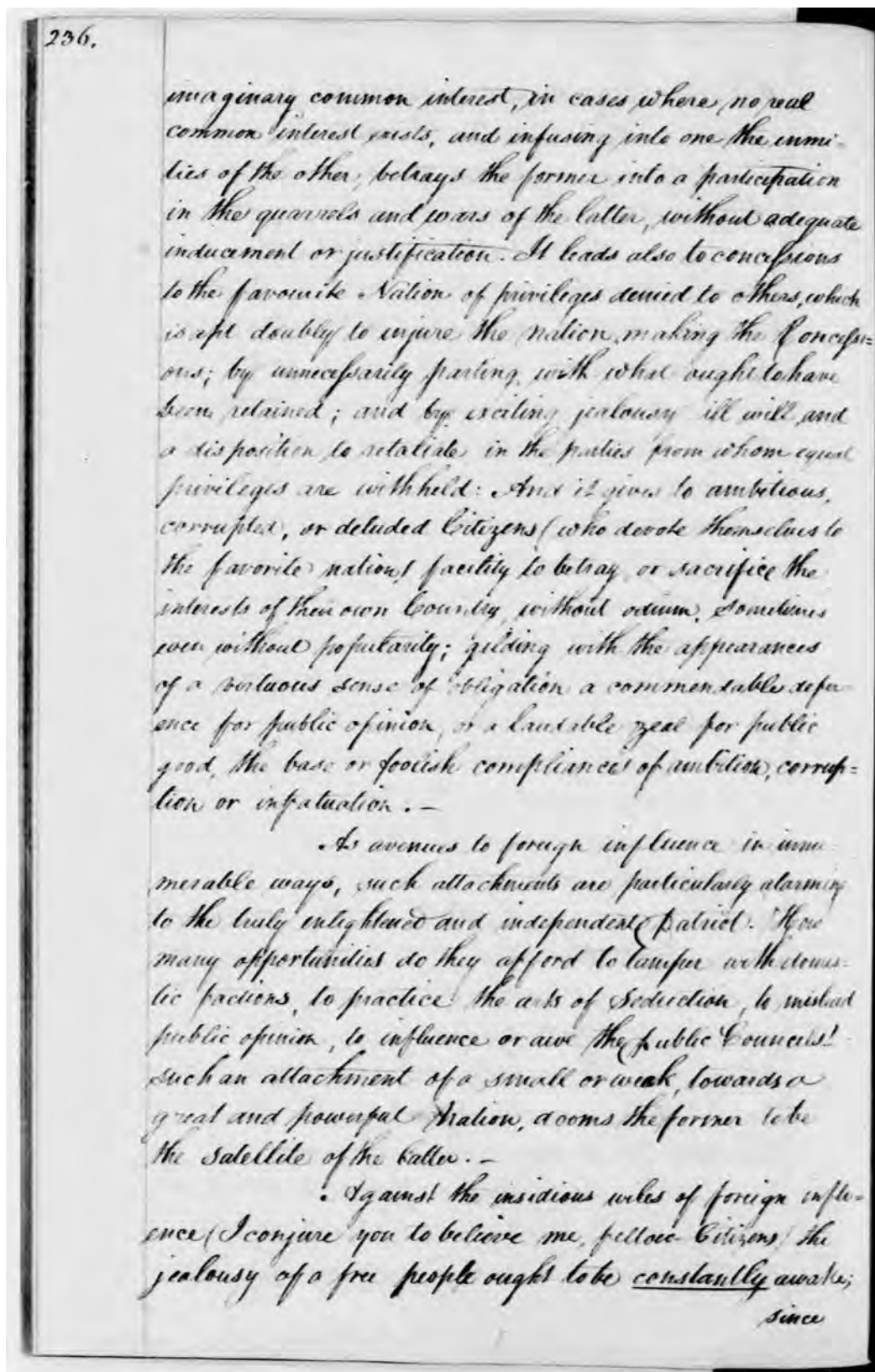




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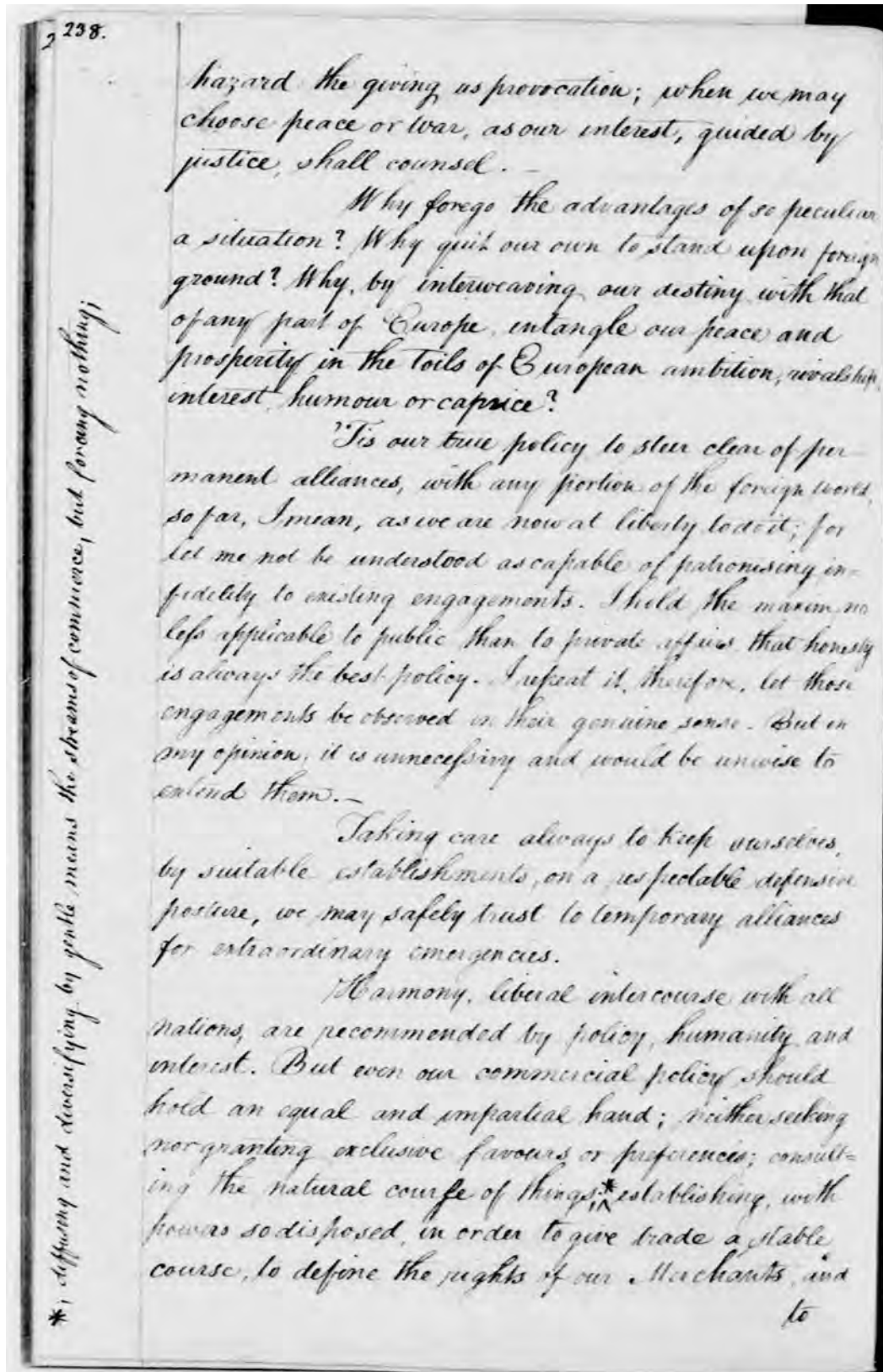


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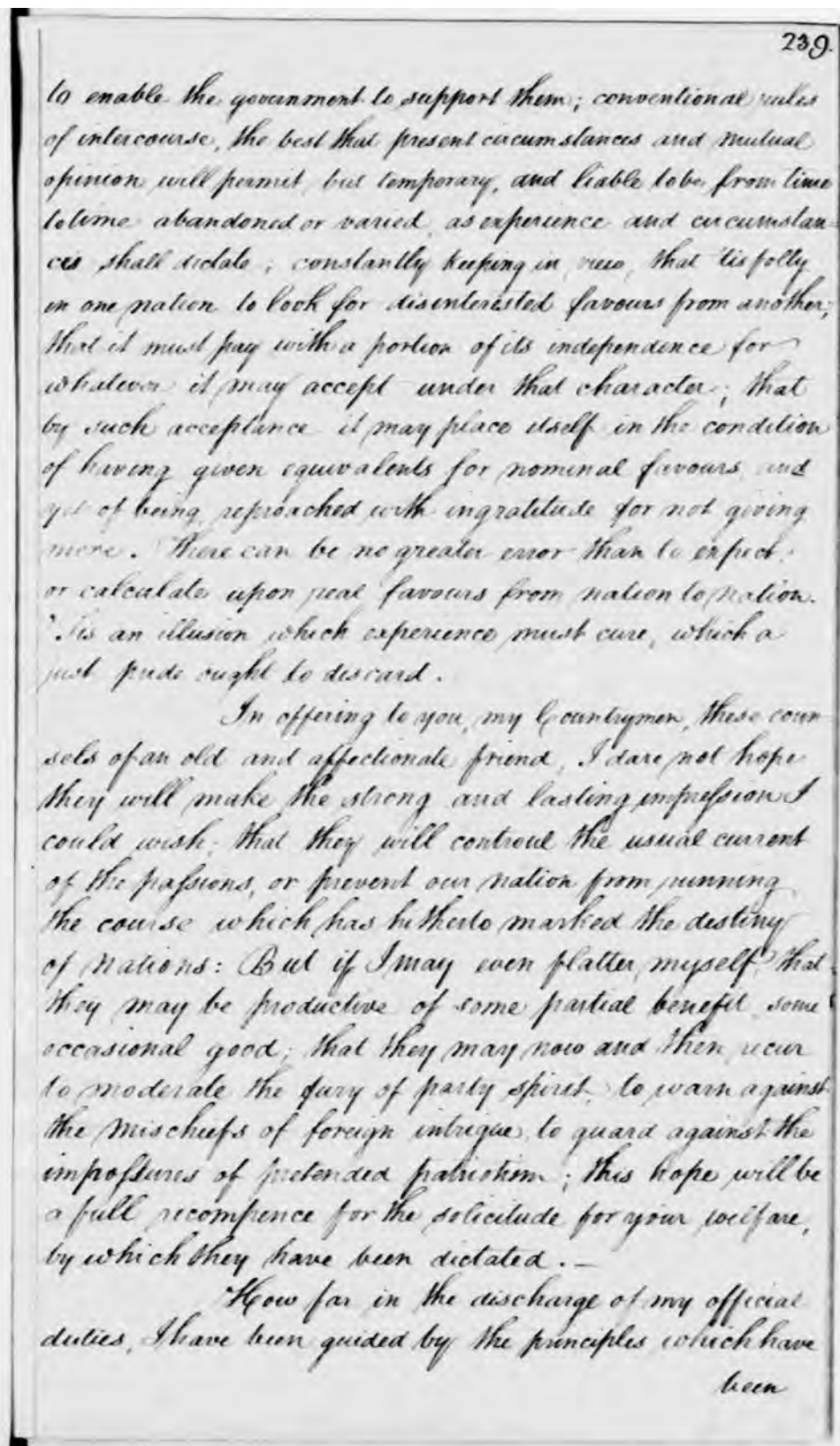




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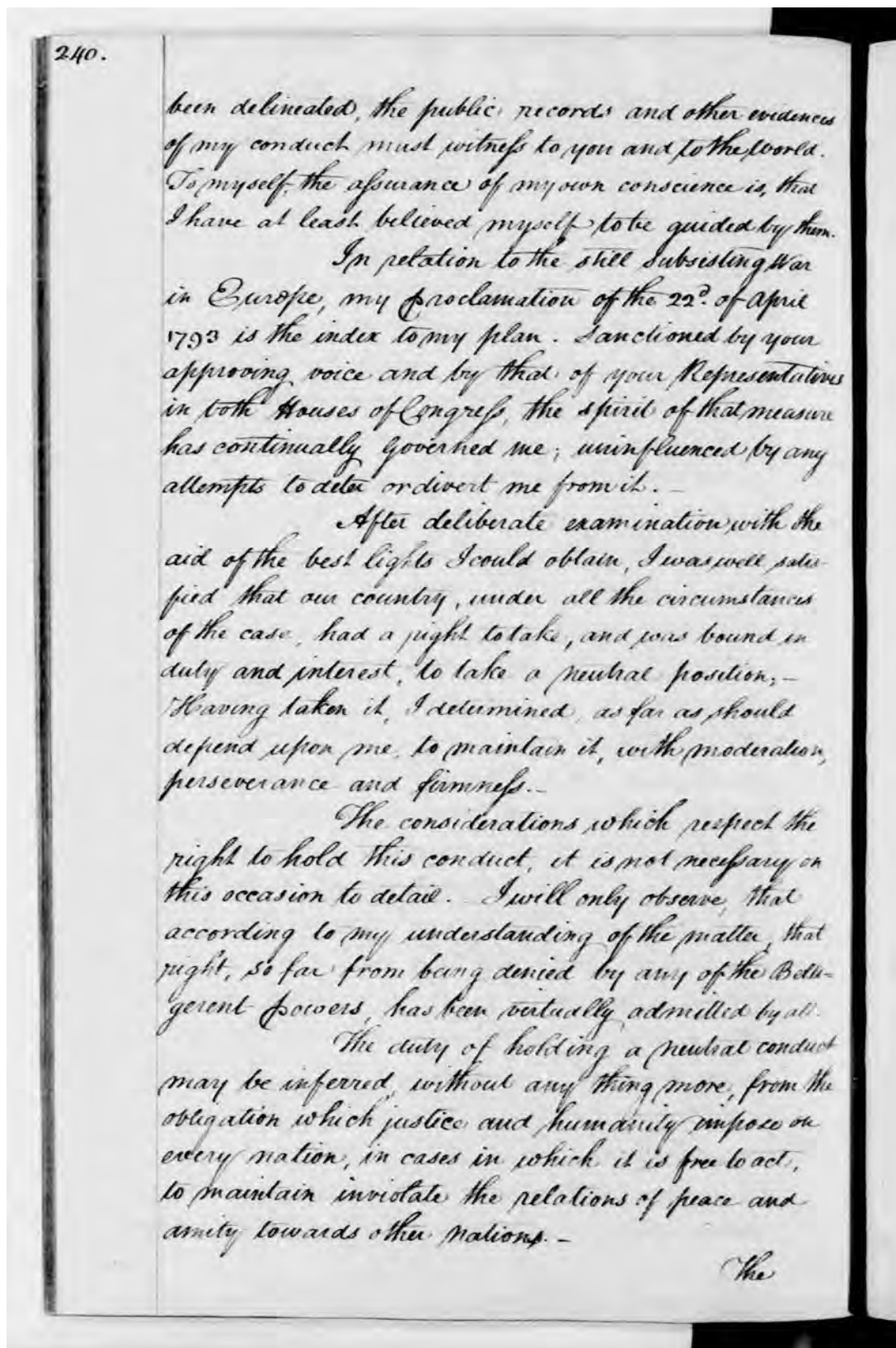


# President George Washington's Farewell Address, September 19, 1796 (pg.21)





# President George Washington's Farewell Address, September 19, 1796 (pg.22)



# President George Washington's Farewell Address, September 19, 1796 (pg.23)

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The inducements of interest for observing this conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavour to gain time to our country to settle & mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though in reviewing the incidents of my administration I am unconscious of intentional error; I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects, not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors, whatever they may be I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my Country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that after forty five years of my life dedicated to its service, with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it, which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations; I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow Citizens the benign influence of good laws under a free government—the ever favourite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labours and dangers.

United States,  
17<sup>th</sup> September, 1796.

G. Washington.



# Letter from Former President Andrew Jackson to Amos Kendall, June 2, 1840

XLI.

HERMITAGE, June 2nd. 1840.

MY DEAR SIR: I have just seen your letter of resignation in the Globe, and your announcement that you will, until next November, become the editor of the extra Globe. Altho I regret your resignation & still more the cause, still I am rejoiced that you will take hold of the extra Globe, as I well know you will give life & spirit to the paper, as well as to the democratic republican party throughout the union. The present crisis requires this, and all our papers require a stimulus to call things by their proper names, and to bring to the view of the people the present attempt of the Federalists to bring our republican system into perfect contempt by holding forth to the world there are none fit to rule a representative Government but those who drink some cider & live in Logg cabins. Was there ever such an attempt to degrade our republican system & bring it into perfect disgrace by the Federalists and all its unprincipled coalitions? This, by your pen, can be brought before the people in such strong colours that will destroy the opposition, and cause them & their humbug, to be deprecated by all men who are in favour of a republican government & representative system. It is only necessary to bring this attempt to degrade & destroy our government by the hard cider system fairly before the people, to destroy them.

By the way of a small encouragement I enclose you a five dollar Tennessee Bank bill just handed me by a Mr. William W. Gift, of Holly Springs, Mississippi, with a request that you will forward to his address to that place, five copies of the extra Globe. It is impossible here now to get Eastern funds to remit. Mr. Gift is a thorough going democrat, & wishes the five to be enclosed to him for distribution.

I enclose you a quarter Eagle, sealed to this letter, for which you will please send me two copies, one for myself & the other for Major A. J. Donelson, which you will please send to my address.

If you have leisure please write me & give me the political views of Washington. Our democratic members from some cause get on badly in Congress. Why is it that the independant treasury bill has not yet been acted upon? The passage of that bill now would have a fine effect upon our republican cause.

I have been quite sick lately; am a little better to-day; but with my various & continued affliction, my glass must soon run out.

I would be very happy to see you at the Hermitage once more.

With the kindest feeling myself & family salute you & yours.

Yr friend

ANDREW JACKSON

P. S. 5 copies to be sent to W. W. Gift, Holly Springs, Marshall County, Mississippi.

AMOS KENDALL Esq late P M General, Washington







# "True Republican Ticket" Ballot, 1860

## True Republican **TICKET.**

FOR PRESIDENT

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN.**

FOR VICE PRESIDENT

**Hannibal Hamlin.**

ELECTORS OF PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT.

Senatorial—FITZ HENRY WARREN of 1st Dist.

" —JOS. A, CHAPLINE " 2d "

Congressional—M. L. McPHERSON " 1st "

" —CHAS. POMEROY " 2d "

Judge of the Supreme Court—GEO. G. WRIGHT.

For Secretary of State.....ELIJAH SELLS.

" Auditor of State..... J. W. CATTELL.

" Treasurer of State.....JOHN W. JONES.

" Register of State Land Office..A. B. MILLER.

" Attorney General.....CHAS. C. NOURSE.

Representative to Congress..SAMUEL R. CURTIS.

Member of the Board of Education..S. F. COOPER.

Clerk of the District Court..... Wm. S. EDGAR.

For Supervisor, ..... S. A. AIKIN.

For Justices of the Peace, GEO. BENNETT,

" " " JOHN FUNSTON.

For Constable, ..... JOHN VOORHEES,

" " " CARLISLE CANTERBERRY.

For Assessor,..... JACOB MILLER.

Trustees, T. SHANNON, PETER CANINE,

and MADISON TICE.

For Clerk, ..... WM. MILLER.

Road Supervisor Dist. No.