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Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

The American citizen.
Dissertation, By J. C. Clawson,
Green Annisles.

Dickinson College
July 14th. 1853.

Ms.

The American Citizen

In every well organized government there is an appropriate sphere in which each member should act.

He who acts as chief magistrate can not with propriety withdraw his attention from national and direct it to secular or domestic engagements, nor can a private citizen be expected to have the knowledge necessary to direct the affairs of state.

In despotic governments it is the duty of the ruler to command and the subject to obey. In a government like ours the authority indeed must be vested in the hands of a few but when it is remembered that these few are chosen by the many it is a matter of no small importance to consider their duties and obligations. The statesman may indeed devise whole-

some laws and wise regulations but what avail these unless sanctioned by the governed? No form of government affords so many avenues to popular applause as the democratic. The masses have ever been swayed by popular harangues and these are always those to be found whose willing to sacrifice any principle or appeal to any passion for the sake of their own promotion.

Unfortunately for our country the term politics has become synonymous with intrigue and politician with one who seeks his own advancement.

There is no longer any contest for principles and selfish individuals seeing this determine to share the spoil as best they can.

With this loathesome spectacle honest, unassuming citizens have become disgusted and determined to withhold their influence altogether from political interests for -

getting that the success of our government
in a measure depends upon their action

The shame where most they do, at least,
is to cast their votes for the candidates of
respective cliques. Nothing is more common
than to hear a perfect indifference expressed
in regard to political matters. O shame
where is thy blush. Are these the liberties for
which so much blood and treasure were
expended - for which so much care and
anxiety were felt - which so many mon-
uments commemorate? Is this the privilege
for which independence day is celebrated?

Are these the examples they would hand
down to posterity? Is it a matter of no impor-
tance whether our property be secure - our quiet
undisturbed or the sanctity of the sabbath preserv-
ed? - then is it a matter of indifference who
are chosen as our legislators. The great variety
of characters which constitute society can not
have escaped the notice of the most casual
observer. Whether this variety is necessary

for the existence of society is not for us to determine. Such has always been the case and we may still expect to find the virtuous and the vicious - the honest and the dishonest - the firm and the fickle. Should the virtuous withhold their influence from political interests what can we expect but corrupt legislation?

Should men of integrity and justice withdraw from the political ranks what may we look for intrigue and bribery? Should the steady and industrious cease to cast their influence on the side of good order then will our institutions cease to be permanent and eropineism will be the characteristic of our government. Some need neglect their secular employments to engage in political strife. Only let the proper action. Let them not remain indifferent at home when nominations are to be made. Let them not tamely submit to the choice of a self-constituted nominating power. Here & arises the source of all our political evils and here must the remedy be applied. Would we have honest legislators

let them be nominated by interested citizens
Would we have wholesome laws let them
be made by honest statesmen. Would
we have vice and immorality banished
from our midst let the ~~the~~ sources whence
they arise be destroyed by the united efforts
of the people. Then will our institutions
be permanent and our country continue
prosperous and happy - then

Will the flag of our union continue to wave
Over the land of the free and the home of the ^{brave} ~~the~~

Commencement Oration of J. E. Clawson, Class of 1853
Transcribed by Sarah-Hazel Jennings, May 2008
Edited by Chris Altieri, June 2008

The American Citizen

In every well organized government there is an appropriate sphere in which each member should act. He who acts as chief magistrate can not with propriety withdraw his attention from national and direct it to secular or domestic engagements nor can a private citizen be expected to have the knowledge necessary to direct the affairs of the state.

In despotic governments it is the duty of the ruler to command and the subject to obey. In a government like ours the authority indeed must be vested in the hands of a few but when it is remembered that these few are chosen by the many is it a matter of no small importance to consider their duties and obligations. The statesman may indeed devise whole-

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Unfortunately for our country the term politics has become synonymous with intrigue and politician with one who seeks his own advancement.

There is no longer ~~and~~ contest for principles and selfish individuals seeing this determine to share the spoil as best they can. With this loathsome spectacle honest, unassuming citizens have become disgusted and determined to withhold their influence altogether from political interests for-

getting that the success of our government in a measure depends upon their action.

The ~~shame where~~ most they do at least, is ~~the~~ cast their votes for the candidates of respective cliques. Nothing is more common than to hear a perfect indifference expressed in regard to political matters. O shame where is thy blush. Are these the liberties for which so much blood and treasure were expended—for which so much care and anxiety were felt—which so many monuments commemorate? Is this the privilege for which independence day is celebrated? Are these the examples they would hand down to posterity? Is it a matter of no importance whether our property be secure—our quiet undisturbed or the sanctity of the sabbath preserved?-- then is it a matter of indifference who are chosen as our legislators. The great variety of characters which constitute society can not have escaped the notice of the most casual observer. Whether this variety is necessary

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Will the flag of our union continue to wave
Over the land of the free and the home of the brave.