

## Gerry-mander

### THE GERRY-MANDER

A new species of Monster, which appeared in Essex South District in Jan. 1812.

“O generation of Vipers ! *who hath warned you of the wrath to come?*”

THE horrid Monster of which this drawing is a correct representation, appeared in the County of Essex, during the last session of the Legislature. Various and manifold have been the speculations and conjectures, among learned naturalists respecting the *genus* and origin of this astonishing production. Some believe it to be the real *Basilisk*, a creature which had been supposed to exist only in the poet's imagination. Others pronounce it the *Serpens Monocephalus* of Pliny, or single-headed *Hydra*, a terrible animal of pagan extraction. Many are of opinion that it is the *Griffin* or *Hippogriff* of romance, which flourished in the dark ages, and has come hither to assist the knight of the rueful countenance in restoring that gloomy period of ignorance, fiction and imposition. Some think it the great Red Dragon, or Bunyun's *Apollyon* or the *Monsirum Horrendum* of Virgil, and all believe it a creature of infernal origin, both from its aspect, and from the circumstance of its birth.

But the learned Doctor Watergruel who is famous for peeping under the skirts of nature, has decided that it belongs to the *Salamander* tribe, and gives many plausible reasons for this opinion. He says though the Devil himself must undoubtedly have been concerned, either directly or indirectly in the procreation of this monster, yet many powerful causes must have concurred to give it existence, amongst which must be reckoned the present combustible and venomous state of affairs. There have been, (says the Doctor) many fiery ebullitions of party spirit, many explosions of democratic wrath and fulminations of gubernatorial vengeance within the year past, which would naturally produce an uncommon degree of inflammation and acrimony in the body politic. But as the Salamander cannot be generated except in the most potent degree of heat, he thinks these malignant causes, could not alone have produced such diabolical effects. He therefore ascribes the real birth and material existence of this monster, in all its horrors, to the alarm which his Excellency the Governor and his friends experienced last season, while they were under the influence of the Dog-star and the Comet—and while his Excellency was pregnant with his last speech, his libellous message, and a numerous litter of new judges and other animals, of which he has since been happily delivered. This fright and perturbation was occasioned by an incendiary letter threatening him with fire-brands, arrows and death; (if his proclamation is to be credited) which was sent to him by some mischievous wight, probably some rogue of his own party, to try the strength of his Excellency's mind. Now his Excellency being somewhat like a tinder-horn, and his party very liable to take fire,

they must of course have been thrown into a most fearful panic, extremely dangerous to persons in their situation, and calculated to produce the most disastrous effects upon their unborn progeny.

From these premises the sagacious Doctor most solemnly avers there can be no doubt that this monster is a genuine Salamander, though by no means perfect in all its members; a circumstance however which goes far to prove its illegitimacy. But as this creature has been engendered and brought forth under the sublimest auspices, he proposes that a name should be given to it, expressive of its genus, at the same time conveying an elegant and very appropriate compliment to his Excellency the Governor, who is known to be the zealous patron and promoter of whatever is new, astonishing and erratic, especially of domestic growth and manufacture. For these reasons and other valuable considerations, the Doctor has decreed that this monster shall be denominated a *Gerry-mander*, a name that must exceedingly gratify the parental bosom of our worthy Chief Magistrate, and prove so highly flattering to his ambition, that the Doctor may confidently expect in return for his ingenuity and fidelity, some benefits a little more substantial than the common reward of virtue.

That astute naturalist Lucricostus however in the 26th section of his invaluable notes upon the Salamander, clearly shews that this word is a corruption of the Latin Salimania, expressing the characteristic dislike and almost hydrophobic antipathy of that animal for sea salt: "Oweinge (to use the words of the author) to the properties and virtues of the sayde "mineralle, as is well knowen to moste folke, in dampeinge the heate of that elemente of fyre, wherein the sayde beaste "doth abide, so that if a piece of salt, or any marine thinge be placed neare it, it dothe fret it sorely, and enrage it to such "madnesse that it dothe incontinently throw from its mouthe a venomous spittle, which dothe tarnishe and destroy all that "is of worth or value that it fallethe upon. A further and most manyfest prooffe of which deadlie hatred appearethe in "that, whereas, on and neare the renowned salt mountayne, so called, amydst alle the marvells and wonders with which "it dothe abounde, not any of this Lizarde species hath been discoverable thereyne." We therefore propose, with the utmost deference to the ingenious Doctor's opinion, that the term *Gerry-mania* be substituted for *Gerry-mander*, as highly descriptive both of the singular ferocity of the monster in question, and the influence which the moon at certain periods, more especially on the approach of April, is supposed to exert over it.

A friend of ours has further suggested that there is a peculiar felicity at the present time in adopting the term *Gerry-mania*, as according to his definition, *Gerry* is derived from the French *Guerre*, or the Italian, *Guerra*, (war) and that it therefore possesses the double advantage of expressing the characteristic ferocity of this monster, and that magnanimous rage for war which seems to have taken such possession of our worthy Chief Magistrate and his friends. But we mention this merely

as an ingenious speculation, being well convinced ourselves, notwithstanding appearances, of the truly pacific sentiments of that great man, whose *mild* and *charitable* denunciations of his political opponents have had such a wonderful effect in convincing their reason, allaying the spirit of party, and in reconciling all conflicting opinions.