

THE WASHINGTONIAN

VOL. III.

WINDSOR (VERMONT)

MONDAY, MAY 17, 1813.

No. 148.

EQUAL AND EXACT JUSTICE TO ALL PERSONS—EXTENDING LIBERTY TO THE SLAVE—WASHINGTON.

Political.

AN ORATION,

Delivered before the *WASHINGTON BENEVOLENT SOCIETY* of Massachusetts, on the 30th day of April, 1813, being the anniversary of the first Inauguration of President WASHINGTON.

By *JOSIAH QUINCY*.

Assembled in the name of Washington, we inquire of his spirit concerning our duties. In his life and writings, by precept and example, his spirit responds. "SONS OF WASHINGTON! BE FAITHFUL TO YOUR COUNTRY!"

But in times like ours, what is fidelity to our country? His spirit, living in the records of his virtues, replies—"SONS OF WASHINGTON! SEEK AND SPEAK WHAT IS TRUE AND WHAT IS USEFUL!"

We yield to the venter tid influence and devote this hour, to what is true and what is useful to be known, concerning the condition and prospects of our country. Over these heavy clouds hang, it is a solemn scene; and no time to collect flowers of fancy, or to indulge in sports of the intellect. May the spirit of Washington, rest upon us! May it invigorate our thought; chasten and direct every patriotic purpose; elevate our minds above the poor project of present relief to the generous search after future security; and teach us to be as true to our posterity as our fathers were to us; and as he was to his country.

The circumstances and prospects of our times are best viewed by the light of Washington. What is false or counterfeit, will easily be detected when tried by the standard of his character, conduct and principles. Viewed by his light, what is true of our nation, its principles, and what is false, its vices, who are they, and what is true of them? Mr. Madison is President—Mr. Monroe, Secretary of State. Mr. Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury. Mr. Armstrong, Secretary of War. Every man of them, in Washington's day, the enemies of his policy. All of them laid the foundations of their present elevation, on the ruin of his influence, and that of his selected friends.

The President is that individual, who, for almost eight years, was one of the leaders in the House of Representatives of an opposition to him and his measures, equally bitter and determined. The Secretary of State is that individual, who, during the same period, publicly and laboriously, libelled his administration, as *useless, covetous, and (a) "contrary to the public feeling and judgment."* Need I tell you of the clerks of the Pittsburg forts, when they "noted unanimously" (b) "to withhold all the comforts of life" from officers, acting under his authority? Or, need I name the author, now not denied, of the anonymous letters to the revolutionary army, towards whom Washington revised the army (c) "to express their unshaken horror and detestation."

But although it is undeniable, that the enemies of the living Washington, preside over our destinies, perhaps, now that he is dead, they are converts to his principles.—Stray, indeed, if the principles, which, in his day, secured our peace, vindicated our honor, maintained tranquillity at home and respect abroad, and raised our country to the high pitch of greatness, should be the same principles, which, in our day, have led our peace, scattered our honour, scattered discord at home, and made us the scorn of one belligerent and the victim of the other. It cannot be. The same mountains send not forth fire and water and lightning.

The principles of Washington, which lay at the foundation of his glory, and was the basis of the blessing of his day, was to introduce virtue and talent into the conduct of public affairs. The principles of our present rulers is to introduce vice and indolence. With these men, the great requisite is political subservience. This single feature is, alone, sufficient to account for the whole difference of our political condition. For the particular in which that difference consists, is, in fact, the corner stone of the republican system of government. The theory of such rests upon this basis, that, in its result, the virtue and talents of a country shall pre-empt its ills. Whenever this virtue and attachment to a party, or fidelity to a chief, or subservience to a cabal; whenever, as was distinctly avowed, in the outset of the power of these men, other considerations (1) "honesty, capacity, and fidelity" to the constitution, become the criterion of office and appointment, the moral basis of the republic is gone. Its form may indeed, remain. But its vital spirit has fled. The stream of corruption, when once it begins to

flow, in a free country, never retreats to its fountain; nor does the spring which feeds it, ever become dry. At first, it winds its way, in secrecy and silence, straddling to its current, only, what is light, and hollow and rotten and leucine but, soon, gathering boldness, in its course, it advances with an irresistible torrent, and sweeps away every honor of the field, and every mound of safety.

Whenever the rulers of a nation become, the mere heads of a party, the last and least consideration, with them, is the good of the people. How to secure their power; how to manage the elections; who is the fittest tool; who will run the tallest, go the farthest, and hold out the longest, for the least wages of corruption, are the only inquiries. To give muscle and durability to their influence is the single end of their political system. For this British antipathies are stimulated. For this British injuries are magnified. For this French affronts are cultivated and French insults and injuries palliated or concealed. For this we had restriction. For this, embargo. For this, we have war. For this, war shall be continued. And if peace come, for this peace shall be concluded. For unprincipled ambition, in power, feeds, not even public good, except from corrupt motives.

Need I farther illustrate the difference of principle, which distinguishes the present from that of Washington? Then the spirit of patriotism predominated. Now the spirit of cabal. Then virtue was in high places. Now, there is intrigue. Then we had wisdom for our guide. Now cunning. Then debate in either house of Congress, had an influence upon public measures. Now what is to be done, is settled, before debate or without it. A cabinet, or a "council," brooding in darkness, decides the fate of the country, and a Congress, called to order, ratifies the measures. Washington, indeed, all the forms of freedom, constitutionally speaking, and as far as the measures of the national government have effect, we wear as a pill and soul depressing chain as ever afflicted a people. All this is natural. All is characteristic. All is necessary. The spirit of cabal put down the spirit of Washington, by appealing to base passions and exciting corrupt hopes. A cabal, in power, must maintain its ascendancy by the means, through which it was obtained. Base passions must be fostered. Corrupt hopes must be gratified. Power, which lives by corruption, must find, or will make, the ailment necessary for its support. It hastens to glut its ravenous appetite on our morals, that it may devour our liberties, at its leisure.

Such are our rulers and their principles, when viewed by the light, and tried by the standard of Washington.

In treating of our condition, I shall not waste the hour in idle regrets, or vain criticisms. The hand of ruin is upon us and upon our chiefs. The deep and ancient root of the prosperity of Massachusetts is withering. Our commerce, navigation and fisheries are gone. A whirlwind from the west, is passing over those many pillars of our greatness and they are already, prostrate. Lamentations and despair suit not the condition of freedom. Least of all, of the freedom of Massachusetts. To them it brings to be mindful of the character of their ancestors; men, keen to discern and resolute to perform their duties; generous spirits, whom power could not tempt, nor fraud ensnare, nor force subdue. The descendants of such men ought to blush, at being satisfied with drifting along from one mode of oppression to another; and from one stage of corruption to another; each individual happy if his head escapes the bolt intended for the general ruin; content with life and precarious enjoyment in day and to-morrow; careless of the loss, extent of time, which is to come afterwards. The grave will soon close upon us and our vain joys and vain anticipations. You are fathers.—What political inheritance do you leave to your children? Where lie the sources of the evils, which we suffer? What are the remedies? What are our duties?

The sources of a people's sufferings, for the most part lie hidden from casual observation and superficial research. It often requires firmness and fidelity, as well as labor, to penetrate their sources, and explore oppression to its fountains. There is, also, a self-deception which, from indolence, or apathy, or the love of ease, or of business, mankind, even the best, are perpetually inclined to practise, and which, for the most part, makes such inquiries abortive. They mis take effects, for causes. Escape from present suffering, for relief from the disease. When perhaps it is only that morbid torpor, which precedes idleness or madness; that state of nervous imbecility, into which nature sinks, while she prepares fuel for new

times; and collects stimulants, for farther sufferings, and stronger convulsions.

Who, that understands the real condition of our country, can refrain from such reflections, when he hears the greetings in our places of public resort, and the dreams of our newspapers? "What think you? Is not peace coming? The Russian mediation, will not that be successful? Can loans be obtained? Without loans can the war be protracted?" As if, in this war, was included the sum of our evils! As if this was the cause of our calamities or was anything else than the symptom of our disease!

Suppose peace. What then? Is confidence restored? Is the anti-commercial spirit of your rulers subdued? Will the double duties be repealed? Can commercial property revive under these impositions? Or, if it revive, for a moment is there any reason to hope that the machinations against its vital principles, which have now become systematized, and already reduced it to the verge of annihilation, will not be repeated; and in other modes, and under more favorable auspices made successful?

Alas! people of Massachusetts! I cannot conceal the deep conviction of my soul, that peace, as well desirable as it is and anxiously as every lover of his country ought to pant for it will be, in truth, only an alleviation from present ills, and will be very far from restoring to your prosperity that solid basis, which a wise people ought to seek, and a powerful people, in the exercise of constitutional rights, to demand.

The sources of our sufferings lie deeper than embargo, or war, great as are both these evils. Washington foresaw and foretold, that these men would be satisfied with "nothing short of a change in our political system." But Washington himself did not foresee, nor could any human eye have foreseen, the change, which in to flout a face of our nation, and in the internal have taken the change, which a real contraction and interred usurpation have made in the principles of our constitution.

These changes make little noise, and excite less emotion. They are treated as topics of mere curiosity; yet it is the condition of things, which these changes indicate and make permanent, that encourages the spirit of cabal; that makes intrigue and corruption the necessary instruments of power; and renders commercial embarrassments, modified indeed by occasional circumstances, inevitably perpetual, as an essential means of success, in the projects of its ambition.

I speak under the sanction of the spirit of Washington. He has told us that "existence is the first standard, by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country." He taught us "to resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles." He instructed us that "the spirit of innovation is a bad tendency to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create a cabinet government, a real despotism." And his paternal voice now warns us, as from the grave, against "change by usurpation, as the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed."

I shall speak concerning the changes which time and usurpation have produced in our political condition; I shall explain their effect upon our present and future prosperity; and inquire concerning the remedies, for the evils, which they suffer.

It is a notorious fact, that, partly by the operation of the slave ratio in the constitution, and partly by the unexampled emigrations, into the west, the proportions of political power, among the States of this country, have changed, since the adoption of the federal constitution, to a degree, as unanticipated as the result is eventual and ominous. On the proportion of political power, is, as an illustration like ours, does the safety of every State, which is a member of it depend, and consequently, peace and safety require, that this proportion should have some reference to the nature and greatness of our interests. I shall have occasion to illustrate these principles, hereafter. I refer to them, at present, only as the basis of this position, that, inasmuch as the safety of every State depends upon its proportion of political power, in an association, it is both the right and the duty of every State to require into that matter a free people have a right, and it is their duty, to inquire into the securities they possess for their liberties and properties; & to see, whether they be such, as ought to give content to wise and virtuous minds.—There is nothing more in the fabric of our freedom. There is no divine right of Kings, or Presidents, or Congresses, in the

whole compound. By the constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, it is made our duty frequently to resort to first principles. We have not only the right to examine the top and the shaft of the column of our liberties, but, if it appear out of plumb, or out of level, it is made our duty to look at the corner stones and see if they are not falling away. I know that when these topics are touched, all the craftsmen, those, who make profit by the stirrings, and are growing fat on the oil of the sacrifices, are in an uproar; and run about crying, "the constitution is in danger. These things lead to a dissolution of the union. 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!'"—What? Are we not freemen? If, to any individual, the result of our political institutions appear incompatible, with general, or particular, safety, shall he not speak?—How then, can the evils, which we feel, or fear, be remedied, or prevented? How else can we bring our existing constitution to that test of experience, which Washington has told us is the sure standard of its real tendency?" In my judgment, concealment, in such case, is not so much an error, as a crime. For a crime it is, for a citizen, in a free country to see, or believe that he sees, distant dangers surrounding the Commonwealth, and be silent concerning them, either through fear of personal responsibility, or in subservience to the apathy, or the prejudices of the times.

* Marshall's life of Washington, 5th vol. p. 54. of the notes.
† Washington's Valedictory Address to the people of the United States.

Nor is it true that such inquiries tend to the dissolution of the union. On the contrary their natural tendency is to strengthen it. For, if such inquiry result, in the conviction that the rational security we ought to seek, exists, then surely there is content; and thence strength; and thence continuance. But, if the result of the inquiry be, that rational security, exists no longer, then, indeed, this conviction has a tendency to produce a conscientiousness of sentiment and a determination, which will not fail to bring, in a constitutional way, oppressors to a sense of their duty and their interests. If this should not be the case, still our duty remains. The duty of freemen is, frequently, to examine into the basis of their liberties. Unless, indeed, it be asserted which, at this day, and in this country, I think it will hardly be, that a free people are necessarily of that tribe of Hittites, which must crouch under all the burdens imposed upon it; and not open its mouth, whatever be its sufferings, provided its sides are belaboured with "blows of a legal size; and with cuts and flourishes practised, according to the forms of a written manual.

The degree in which the proportions of political power, among the States of this union, have been changed, by time and usurpation, since the adoption of the constitution, admits of a very varied and extensive illustration. I shall confine myself to the statement of one or two facts, rather by way of indicating the state of things than deferribly in it. This cannot be done, in all its relations, within the limits of the present occasion. To show the progress of political power to the fourth and the west, I state this fact. At the time of the adoption of the federal constitution, the three States, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, did not exist. Their territories contained somewhat more than one hundred thousand souls; and had no perceptible weight in the national scale. They, now together, contain a white population, somewhat exceeding that of Massachusetts. Of commerce and navigation, they have none; at least none worth the estimate. The revenue of customs, which they have paid, since the adoption of the constitution is, scarcely, an item in the books of the Treasury. Yet these States, on every question touching the interest of that commerce and navigation, so vital to the prosperity of Massachusetts, have twenty-two votes in the House of Representatives, while she has twenty; and while Massachusetts has two votes in the Senate, they have six!

Without reference to other considerations and viewed only in relation to the most familiar notions of equity and equality, is it not monstrous that a mass of population, scarcely more than equal to that of Massachusetts, recent, of twenty years collection, for the most part emigrants from Europe, or the older States, located a thousand miles from the seaboard, knowing nothing of the interests, having nothing at all in fact bearing a direct interest in embarrassing them should have one-half more weight in the House of Representatives and three times more, in the Senate, than the ancient rich, intelligent, powerful population of Massachusetts, inasmuch, industry, intellect and principles have been nearly two centuries consolidating. A people, who have arts and arms and virtues. A State which alone possesses

nearly half a million of tons of shipping; and all the capital and cultivated intelligence necessary for its employ?

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Take another fact. The States of Virginia and Georgia, together, possess a white population, but a little exceeding that of Massachusetts. Yet through the effect of the slave ratio, and the principles of the constitution, while Massachusetts possesses, in the Senate and House of Representatives, twenty-two votes, they possess thirty-three! All these States, which I have named Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio, have paid into the Treasury of the United States, on customs, scarcely more than fifteen millions of dollars, since the adoption of the constitution (c). The single State of Massachusetts has paid more than forty-two millions net revenue. Yet upon every question touching the life blood of our commerce, while Massachusetts, in both branches of the legislature, has but twenty-two votes, those States have sixty-one. I state one other fact. The power attained, in the House of Representatives, by the effect of the slave ratio, is twenty votes. The State of Massachusetts has but twenty. So that this great and ancient and once proud, but now, constitutionally speaking, humbled Commonwealth has absolutely no more weight in the national scale, than a species of beings, in fact as destitute of political rights, as the brute creation. Upon theoretical principles, can any thing be more shameful. The practical effect is worse than the theory.

Perhaps however, it may be said that this evil is temporary, and that the causes, which have produced this inequality, are ceasing to operate. The fact is, directly, the reverse. The causes are permanent, progressive, and unlimited. All the policy of the government is shaped to strengthen them. The constitution, itself, has been violated in order to augment the oppressive preponderancy of that quarter of the country.

Natural causes, and the result of our policy, have produced this inequality, with an unparalleled rapidity. Within the next ten years, an addition of three more States, on this side the Mississippi is spoken of confidently. Some say there will be more. But be they more, or be they less, of this rest assured, that they will be multiplied with no sort of reference either to the convenience, or the necessities even of the people of those territories, but solely with reference to the political wants of the leaders of the predominant cabal, at the seat of government, and with a distinct view, to create a new counterpoise, in case the political scale appear to vibrate in favor of the interests of this quarter of the union.

Even this state of things, humiliating as it is, might be endured. Notwithstanding it presents little comfort, for the present, and less consolation for the future; notwithstanding it indicates this strange condition, as the result of our political ascension; that the new States govern the old; the unsettled the settled; that the influences of emigrants prevail over those of the ancient natives; and that a black population outbalances the white; that from woods, and lakes, and desert wildernesses, legislators issue, controuling the destinies of a seaboard people, paralyzing all their interests and darkening all their prospects; all this notwithstanding, still the condition might be endured, upon the principle that it was the fair result of the compact. We had agreed that all the people, within the ancient limits of the United States, should be placed on the same footing, and had granted an undoubted right to Congress to admit States at will within the ancient limits; we had done more, we had submitted to throw our rights and liberties, and those of our children, into common stock with the southern men and their slaves; and had agreed to be content with what remained, after they and their negroes, were served. We had signed the bond, and notwithstanding the enormous inequality of the condition, honor might, in such case, have required that we should be silent concerning our birth rights. At least, in such case, want of sense, or want of spirit would find ample refuge from self reproach, in the acknowledged solemnity of the obligations.

But what shall we say to what is called the admission of Louisiana into the union? What shall we say to the annexation of a territory greater than the whole of the old United States? What, to the vested power, indeed, already in one half more merciful, of making States, beyond the Mississippi, as unlimited in point of number as of extent? The indifference, with which that usurpation of power has been viewed in this part of the country, is an event, as all things as it is ominous. Notwithstanding the general nature of the terms of the constitution, relative to the admission of new States, there is not a third part of the people, nor the history

