EASTON GAZETTE.

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MR. BURNET'S SPEECH.

Mr. PRESIDENT,—As one of the objects of this meeting, is to support and advance the claims of our friend and fellow citizen General Harrison, to the Presidential chair, we may devote, advantageously, a part of the evening to the recollection of those traits in his character, & those acts of his life, public & private which we have seen and approved, & which have induced us to prefer him to any other candidate who has been named, for that high and important station. I am aware, Sir, that no man can recite the prominent acts of his life, and enumerate his virtues, in an hour, or a day. A volume would not contain them all. Yet it may be useful, at this crisis, to take a rapid glance at some of them. But first let me repeat an observation made by the Hon. B. Hardin, of Kentucky, a few years ago, on the floor of Congress, when discussing the bill for the relief of the widow of Commodore Decatur, and others. The bill proposed to give a large sum to the widow, and a small one to his two neices. Mr. Hardin was opposed to the bill, but contended for a different distribution, if it should pass. He would give the large sum to the neices, who were of the Decatur blood, and the smaller to the widow. Sir, said he, in Kentucky, we look to the breed—we lay great stress on it—I like the Decatur breed—it is a good one. Now, sir, I am disposed to adopt the rule of Mr. Hardin, and say, that I admire the Harrison breed, and am disposed to patronise it. —But, Sir, what is it? The enquiry may be answered in a few words: General Harrison is the youngest son of the late Benjamin Harrison, of Virginia, formerly Governor of that state—one of the most devoted patriots of the revolution, from it's commencement to its close—a Whig in 1775, he opened his breast to the storm, and defended the liberty of his country, till the struggle terminated in victory. I need only add, that he was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.—Such is the parentage of Harrison, and in the language of Mr. Hardin, you will respond the breed is good—it is worthy of patronage. But General Harrison does not look to the talents or the achievements of his ancestors, as a foundation on which to build his own fame. He desires to stand or fall, on his own merits—he invites a strict scrutiny into his own life, the greater portion of which has been devoted to public duties, and open to the inspection of the world—If it shall be found that he has been deficient, either in talent, integrity, or in zeal, for the public good, he is ready to abide the consequences; but if on the contrary, in the multiplied offices he has held, he has discharged his duty to his country, with great fidelity, and great success, then he has a right to expect at the hands of his fellow-citizens, such an award as justice may require. His supporters, one and all, are prepared to appeal to his life, public and private—to exhibit it to the American people—to invite their strictest scrutiny, and they do it with a conviction, amounting to certainty, that he will not only pass the ordeal, unscathed, but will secure the approbation and the plaudits of the nation.

In the year 1791, the public life of Harrison commenced. He had then finished his collegiate course, & engaged in the study of a profession—the profession of medicine. In that year the veteran St. Clair was defeated, his army routed, and almost annihilated, and as a consequence, the infant settlements, in the North western Territory, were left to the mercy of the savages. At that gloomy period the attention of Harrison was turned to the West. He saw the danger of the pioneers—his sympathy was excited in their behalf, and he resolved, without delay, to join them, and share their fate. Through his friends R. Morris and Thos. Willing, he applied to the the President for a commission in the army, as a most efficient mode of contributing to their safety. Washington, then at the head of the Government, informed his friends that the army was full, and that he had nothing to offer worthy the acceptance of Harrison. A subaltern's commission was all he could give. They reported the result, and advised their young friend to abandon his project and continue his studies. He rejected their advice, and told them he was willing to accept of any thing the President could give, as his resolution was unalterably made to go to the West. From that moment he threw aside his books, quit his studies, and with the commission of an ensign in his pocket, hastened to Cincinnati. In the succeeding winter—the Siberian winter of 1791—2—he marched from this place on foot, with his knapsack on his back, at the head of a small detachment—through an uninhabited wilderness, infested with hoards of savages—to one of the frontier posts. This was the commencement of his military career. Shortly after this, General Wayne arrived and took command of the army. His penetrating eye soon discovered the talents and merits, of Harrison, and he appointed him one of his Aids. In the school of that veteran commander, and with his example constantly before him, during the period of four years of constant, active service, he acquired the rudiments of military tactics, and learned the most perfect system of conducting a campaign in an Indian country, that has ever been practiced—On that system, Wayne entered the Indian country, and passed through it at his leisure, with entire safety to this army, as his pupil, practicing on his plans, has often done since. We all remember the victory obtained by General Wayne in 1794, over the Indians, at the rapids of the Miama of the Lake, which led to the treaty of Greenville in the succeeding year. —In that engagement, Harrison was in 'the foremost front of the hottest battle;' his person was exposed from the commencement to the close of the action. Wherever duty called he hastened, regardless of danger, and by his efforts and example, contributed as much to secure the fortune of the day as any other officer subordinate to the commander-in-chief.—These facts I learnt from the lips of Gen. Wilkinson, Col Shamburg and others who were on the ground, and took part in the engagement. The results of that victory were important. By it, the Indians were disheartened and sued for peace. Safety was given to the frontier settlements, and the British posts, at the foot of the rapids, at Detroit, at Mackinac were surrendered to the United States.

The object of the war being thus accomplished, and the army having no more fighting to do, Harrison, unaccustomed to a life of indolence, and unwilling to contract that habit, resolved not to remain in camp, when he had no active duty to perform, and resigned his commission.

About that time he purchased a farm on Mill Creek, near this city, and became an operative farmer. He exchanged the sword and the epaulet of the soldier, for the plough and plain garb of the farmer, and commenced cultivating the soil for the maintenance of his family.

In the spring of 1798, Col. Sargeant was appointed Governor of Mississippi, and resigned the office of Secretary to the North-Western Territory. Harrison was appointed to the vacancy, and (St. Clair being absent from the Territory) discharged the delicate and responsible duties of Governor of the North-Western Territory, to the approbation of the people. In the succeeding year, it was ascertained that the Territory (which then extended from the Pennsylvania line to the river Mississippi, & from the Ohio to the Lakes) contained five thousand free males of full age; which, by the Ordinance of 1787, authorized us to enter on the second grade of territorial government; under that grade we were entitled to a legislature, consisting of a Council and House of Assembly, and also to have a Delegate in Congress, to be appointed by a joint ballot of the two branches of the Assembly.

It so happened that I was a member of the Legislative Council, and, of course, entitled to a vote in the choice of the Delegate. Harrison was a candidate—and here let me say he was my intimate friend. Some years before, when I arrived at Cincinnati, I found myself in a society of strangers—not a face presented itself, that I had ever before seen. I brought letters to Capt. Harrison, then commandant of Fort Washington—he received me with open arms and a warm heart, and I became almost an inmate of his family. On this statement, you are prepared to hear me say I voted for him. Sir, I did not—I voted against him, and it was the most distressing vote to my feelings that I ever gave. But he soon became acquainted with my motive, appreciated it correctly, and our former friendship was restored. And now let me exonerate myself from the charge of ingratitude, on that occasion, which, without an explanation, would naturally fall upon me. It is generally known that Judge Symmes had contracted with the United States for the purchase of a million of acres of land—that he had obtained a patent for about three hundred thousand acres—that he had (no doubt under a full conviction that his contract would be completed) sold a large quantity of land, beyond the limits of his patent, to actual settlers, who paid the purchase money, and were then improving the land they had bought. Prior to the year 1799, Congress had refused to execute the contract with Symmes, by which that numerous and industrious class of men were liable to be dispossessed. They had just obtained some indulgence from Congress as pre-emptioners, and were anxious to have it continued and extended. The vendor had and still did oppose their views, from a belief that it might prevent him from obtaining a fulfilment of his contract, and it was supposed that his son-in law had taken the same view of the subject, & under a belief that the contract would be confirmed, and the purchasers thereby confirmed in their titles, would also oppose them. Under that impression, the purchasers were alarmed, and besought the Legislature to elect a person on whom they could rely with confidence. Thus you see the situation in which I was placed: on the one hand, were these unfortunate persons, numerous & meritorious, presenting their grievances—on the other, my bosom friend, expecting my vote. —With me, it was a struggle between duty and friendship: I could not hesitate—I voted against my friend. He was, however, elected—and what was the result? Under a sense of duty, he became the friend and advocate of those very persons who had feared and opposed him; and gave proof to the world, that his integrity could not be moved by considerations of personal interest. His integrity had never before been probed to the bottom. But, sir, this is not all. he had seen the injustice of the monopoly introduced into the land system of the United States, by which the poorer class of citizens were effectually excluded from its benefits.—The public lands were sold in tracts so large, that none but the wealthy could purchase.—The poor man was compelled to buy second handed, &, consequently, at an advanced price: he was at the mercy of the speculator. Harrison had witnessed the oppressive operation of that principle and resolved to correct the evil. He brought the subject before Congress, exposed the injustice and iniquity of the plan, and obtained the passage of a law directing the lands to be subdivided and sold in small tracts. That alteration in the system, placed the poor man on a footing with the man of wealth, and put it in the power of the entire west to become freeholders and independent farmers. If that had been the last act of his life—if he had then been *gathered to his fathers*—his fame would have survived—his name would have been loved and cherished; and his country, at least the western country, would have erected a statue to his memory: but he survives, and hundreds and thousands who are now enjoying the fruits of that beneficent measure, planned and carried through by him know not by whose agency they obtained it—The records of Congress show, and many witnessess still living can testify, that it was Harrison He secured the boon; and, in justice to him, the public should be advised of the fact; every man in the nation ought to know it.

In the year 1800 Congress, divided the north-western territory, by creating the territory of Indiana, and our friend Gen Harrison was appointed its first Governor; but before we look at his conduct in this important office, suffer me to notice a falsehood, relating to this period of his life, which his enemies have recently propagated. In one of the resolutions adopted by the Jackson Convention of Kentucky, they assert 'that he is a federalist of the old *black cockade order*, in the time of the elder Adams.' A more unfounded falsehood was never invented. My personal acquaintance with him commenced in 1796, under the administration of Washington. The intimacy between us was great, and our intercourse was constant, and from that time, till he left Cincinnati, I was in the habit of arguing and disputing with him, on political subjects. I was a federalist; honestly so, from principle, and adhered to the party, till it dissolved, and its elements mingled with other parties formed on different principles. I can therefore speak on this point with absolute certainty, and I affirm, most solemnly, that under the administration of Washington, and the administration of the elder Adams, William Henry Harrison was a firm, consistant, unyielding Republican of the Jefferson school. He advocated the election of Mr. Jefferson, and warmly maintained his claims, against Mr Adams.

Let us now follow him to Indiana, and take a concise view of his conduct while at the head of the government of that territory. Time will not admit of much detail—It must suffice to say, that he was Governor of that territory about twelve years, and during the whole of that time, superintendant of Indian affairs. The duties of those offices were discharged with intelligence and integrity, and secured the unqualified approbation both of Jefferson and Madison, under whose administrations he served. During that time he made more Indian treaties, and obtained for the United States, larger districts of land, and on better terms, than any other agent in the employ of Government. Plain and republican in his manners and intercourse, and vigilant and intelligent in the discharge of his duty, he secured the confidence and affection of the great mass of the people.

From the necessity of the case, great discretionary powers have always been vested in territorial governors; such as the people of no State have trusted to their Chief Executive Magistrates—powers easily abused and perverted to purposes of oppression—powers tempting to an ambitious mind, and grateful to a tyrannical one. Hence the frequent and bitter quarrels between such officers and the people whom they govern. It may be affirmed with safety, that Governor Harrison was the first of that description of officers, who applied his discretionary powers, exclusively to the public good, rendering them blessings instead of curses—he was the first territorial Governor who retired from office with the praises of those whom he had governed, resting upon his head. For the truth of this statement we may appeal to living witnesses, in every part of Indiana. Since that period, the powers of such officers have been greatly diminished, by acts of Congress. In this way he passed through twelve years of arduous duty in the service of Government, and of the people of Indiana. As superintendent of Indian affairs, very large sums of money passed through his hands every year, and such was the nature of that office—of the manner in which the money was necessarily disbursed, and of the impossibility, in many cases, of obtaining vouchers, that the Government was compelled to rely on the integrity of their agents for the correctness of their accounts. Such being the nature of that agency, Gov. Harrison might have saved an ample fortune, without the possibility of detection. But such was not the fact. When he retired from the office; he settled and balanced his accounts, and not a dollar of public money remained in his hands. He was as poor then, as when he accepted the agency.

Towards the close of his term of service in Indiana, the difficulty with Tecumseh and the Indians under his influence took place. That highly gifted chief had formed a plan to unite the Indians from Florida to the lakes, against the U. States for the purpose of causing a recession of a part of the lands granted by treaty, and of restricting the settlements of the whites, within certain limits; and with that view he visited the tribes in person, and was on the eve of succeeding in his project, so far at least, as related to the union he sought.—But Harrison was not asleep; such a movement could not evade his vigilant eye. He penetrated the scheme of the wary chief, and communicated it to the government, in time to defeat it. As soon as the information was received by the President, he directed Harrison to raise a force of about eight hundred men, to consist of the fourth regiment, and militia volunteers; and to march to the Prophet's town, on the river Tippecanoe, for the purpose of securing peace. That order was executed so promptly, and the troops marched with such dispatch, that our little army reached their destination, before the return of Tecumseh. It was the special order of the President, that General Harrison should carry the olive branch—invite the Indians to a treaty—assure them of the friendly disposition of their great father, and on no account to provoke or molest them, unless he should be actually attacked. That order was obeyed. The little army reached the village in the afternoon. The Indians were invited to meet the Governor in council, and were assured that no hostility was meditated towards them.—They promised to meet him the next day; but he was confident, from their manner, and conduct, that they intended to meet him in combat, and not in the council house, and made his arrangements accordingly. He ordered the encampment to be so made, as to form the line of battle; he dictated the plan and overlooked its execution; he caused each corps to occupy the ground on which it was to fight, in case of an attack, and the men were ordered to sleep in their clothes, and on their arms. The result proved his sagacity. As he had predicted, the Indians attacked his line, an hour or two before day-light, and one of the most desperate battles ensued that the records of Indian warfare contain. The enemy kept their ground two hours, and what is unusual with them, made repeated charges on our troops. During the whole of the battle, Governor Harrison was on horseback, in the midst of the conflict, directing every movement in person. At length the Indians gave way and fled. Our troops took possession of the town—burnt it—destroyed the cornfields, and then decently returned to Vincennes. By that movement the deep laid plan of Tecumseh was frustrated, the Indians disheartened, and the entire frontier of Indiana, obtained security.

Notwithstanding the important results of that victory were manifest, there were those who attempted to rob the victor of his well earned laurels. Among other things it was alledged that his force was greatly superior in numbers to the Indians. This falsehood was easily put down. As soon as the report began to circulate, I wrote to my friend Capt. Wells, Indian agent at Fort Wayne, requesting information on the subject. He answered me promptly, that a number of his own tribe (Miamis) had returned from the battle, some of them wounded; that he had seen a number belonging to tribes on the Lakes, on their way home from the battle, some of them badly wounded: that he had conversed with them, and that from their reports, the number engaged against Harrison, was at least twelve hundred. Sir, I will venture to affirm, that twelve hundred Northern Indians, were never before defeated and routed by eight hundred white men. Hamer and St. Clair out numbered their opponents, yet both were defeated, and the victory of Wayne was obtained over an Indian force much inferior to his own. It will be recollected that the battle of Tippecanoe was fought and won shortly before the commencement of the late war with Great Britain. Harrison had scarcely rested from the fatigues of his recent campaign, when the war commenced. He had just obtained security for the frontier of Indiana, when his attention was attracted to the exposed situation of ours. Hull had marched to Detroit, without establishing posts on his route to secure supplies. The Indians were between him and our frontier settlements, which, of course, were exposed to depredation. Harrison saw our danger and hastened to our relief. He resigned the government of Indiana, came to this place, as a private citizen, and a volunteer in our cause, ready to throw himself between us and the danger that threatened. This movement excited general attention, and all eyes were turned to him, as the defender of Ohio. As yet, however, he was a private citizen, without military rank, or command. Our sister State, Kentucky, knew him thoroughly, and having entire confidence in his talents, prudence, and courage, created him a Major General in their militia. About the same time, the President appointed him a Brigadier, and soon after a Major General, and gave him the command, in chief, of the north western army.—From the time he assumed the command, the frontier settlers felt themselves safe, and those who had left their cabins and retreated with their families to the more dense settlements, for safety, left their block houses, and returned to their farms. Such was the confidence inspired by the presence of Harrison.

It is impossible to estimate, correctly, the distressing, perplexing difficulties he had to encounter in collecting and transporting to the neighborhood of the lake, the material necessary to make a descent on Canada. Every article was to be carried over an extensive wilderness, then uninhabited, without roads, or canals of any description. It frequently happened that wagons started from the settlements, loaded with provender, which was almost entirely consumed by the teams which drew it before they reached their destination. During the time these preparations were in progress Hull having surrendered, Harrison had a numerous and vigilant enemy before him to watch and keep in check. Witness their attempt on Fort Wayne—their attack and defeat of Winchester, at Raisin—the assault on Fort Stephenson, and the memorable seige of Fort Meigs. The defence of the latter was one of the most brilliant achievements that occurred during the war. Harrison commanded the garrison, and conducted the defence in person. The work was temporary—thrown together in haste, the principal security of which was pickets of wood. The garrison consisted of a few hundred militia, and the Fort was invested by an army of British and Indians, the former commanded by Proctor, the latter by Tecumseh, amounting to three thousand. They were furnished with every engine of war, necessary to their enterprise.—Yet, with that fearful odds against him, Harrison maintained his ground, repaired the breaches in his works, as fast as they were made, and was able successfully to resist their efforts for twelve days, when the enemy, in despair, raised the siege and retired. It was afterwards ascertained that Proctor had made a solemn contract with Tecumseh, to deliver General Harrison to the Indians, to be put to the torture. That stipulation was demanded by the savage, as the only condition on which he would join in the expedition.

After the siege was raised, Harrison again directed his energies to the work of preparation for a descent on Canada. The moment that object was accomplished, he struck his long meditated blow. In a few weeks he captured Fort Malden—retook Detroit, with the territory surrendered by Hull—pursued the British and Indians—overtook them at the river Thames—forced them to a battle, in which he routed and dispersed the Indians, and captured the entire British army, with their artillery and baggage.

That decisive victory closed the war in the West. The victor then went down the Lake in pursuit of another opportunity of fighting for the glory and safety of his country; but finding none, he returned to his family, and the Government having no further need for his services, he resigned his commission, and Cincinnatus like, returned to the plough, and became again the humble, unassuming farmer of North Bend.

If time permitted, it would be a pleasant task to trace his subsequent career, in political life. To view him in the Legislature of Ohio. In Congress, on the floor of the House of Representatives, and subsequently in the Senate Chamber, where he maintained the same principles, and the same fidelity to the interest of his constituents, that has marked his whole life. To the complaint of the war worn soldier, his ear was ever open; that meritorious class of sufferers never sought his aid, or called for the exertion of his talents in vain.—In short his time and the energies of his mind, were devoted to the business he was sent to perform.

We might follow him, on his mission to Bogota, and see the firm, yet conciliating manner, in which he maintained the rights, and sustained the dignity of his government. In that land of superstition, where priest-craft and military rule were predominant, and all the powers of government concentrated in one man, our envoy did not cease to be a republican. The principles he had learnt in infancy, and practiced in manhood, became more valuable in his estimation, by witnessing the effects of arbitrary power, on the unfortunate people around him. Bold and daring in the performance of what he considered a duty, and feeling compassion for the oppressed inhabitants of the country, as he heard them groan under the yoke of military despotism, he resolved to make an effort in their behalf, by a direct appeal to the honor, interest and patriotism of the dictator, Bolivar. The letter which he wrote on that occasion, is in print, and does honor to his head and heart. It is replete with sound republican principles, and contains an able argument in favor of civil liberty, intended to shew the usurper, that his course was as destructive of his own happiness and fame, as it was of the happiness of the people. We all know the rude, insulting manner of Gen. Harrison's recal from that mission, which again consigned him to private life.

And for these brilliant services, rendered at the imminent hazard of his health and life, what has been his reward? has it been money, or fame? As to the first, we all know, that he left the public service as poor as he entered it, and as to the second, let me ask your attention to the thousand slanders which have been propagated, and are still circulated against him, for the wicked purpose of robbing him of a character, in the acquisition of which, he has devoted forty years to the service of his country. To what quarter can you direct your attention—into what administration print can you look, and not see this pure, unassuming patriot branded with epithets, which belong to knaves and traitors only. It seems as if every braying politician, who looks for office, without merit to sustain him, attempts to conciliate the powers that be, and gain a standing in the ranks of *the party*, by pursuing this unhallowed course. The public services, and private virtues, which he honestly claims, and which are legitimately his own, are wrested from him. The laurels which his gallant deeds have won, are torn from his brow, to decorate, and give false lustre to a would-be-rival.—"Every thing amiable, lovely, and of good report," however appropriately his own, is denied him, and there is no epithet in our language too degrading to be applied to his character.

Believe me sir, nine tenths of those who thus assail him, do it in despite of their better judgment. They know the truth—they understand his character—they are conscious of the falsehood and injustice of their charges; but, having made up their minds to cast off principle, in pursuit of personal aggrandisement, they go ahead, reckless as the pirate or the highway robber. They pursue this course from policy, because they know the firmness and purity of the Ohio farmer. They know he cannot be won by partisan services—that in his hands the patronage of the government would not be brought into conflict with the freedom of elections; and that therefore the demagogues of the day would not find the political caucus, or the election ground, a safe road to office. Our candidate displays no flag inscribed with the motto of the Albany regency, "The spoils of victory, (meaning the offices & the treasury of the nation,) belong to the victors." Hence it is that his talents, public services, firmness and integrity of purpose, are the procuring cause of the persecution he endures.

Under such circumstances, it is consoling to know that he is not indebted for his nomination to executive influence, official caucusses, or his own intrigues, but to the free, spontaneous will of the people themselves, firmly and loudly proclaimed in their primary assemblies.—Yes, the people of Pennsylvania, of their own free will and accord, were the first to place his honored name on the roll of candidates, and they have sustained, and they will sustain it. The people of the west, particularly owe him a debt of gratitude, which they never will expunge, till it is amply paid. They are now reaping the fruits of his foresight and his toil, and are impatiently waiting for the time when they may render him a suitable return: and may I not add the people of the east and the south are rousing from their slumbers—opening their eyes on the truth—discovering the gulf, deep and wide, which lies before them, and directing their attention to Harrison, as the only pilot within their reach, on whose skill and fidelity they can rely, to navigate their ship across it. But however that may be, let us keep our eye steadily fixed on *this star* of the west, as it rises to the zenith, forgetting for the present, the lustre of others, equally and even more brilliant. And when the day arrives on which the Constitution permits the people to speak with authority, we shall hear a voice not to be resisted, calling the statesman, patriot and farmer of the West to the highest office in the gift of a free and grateful people.

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