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VOL. XXIII. EASTON, (MD.) SATURDAY MORNING, MAY 9. 1840. No. 20.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED EVERY *Saturday Morning*, BY **Alexander Graham.**

TERMS.

TWO DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS Per annum, payable half yearly in advance

ADVERTISEMENTS

Not exceeding a square inserted three times for ONE DOLLAR; and TWENTY-FIVE CENTS for every subsequent insertion.

POLITICAL.

AN EXAMINATION

Of the claims of Mr. Van Buren and Gen. Harrison to the support of the South, in an address of the Hon. WADDY THOMPSON, *to his constituents.*

TO MY CONSTITUENTS.

It has been my habit, on my annual return from Washington, to mix so freely with you, that I have not found it necessary to address you in the form of a circular; circumstances have changed, and I now find myself holding opinions opposed to those of the undivided newspaper press of the State. It is due to myself & to you that I should not conceal these opinions from you, nor withhold the reasons which have led to them. I have not made up my mind hastily as to the course which it was proper for those occupying the peculiar position which I do, to take in the coming Presidential election. I have done so with the utmost deliberation, and after the fullest inquiry. Not that I have ever once thought of supporting Mr. Van Buren: you sent me here opposed to him; all that I have since seen of the principles and character of his Administration has only tended to confirm and add energy to that opposition. But I had doubts whether there were not grounds of opposition to the other candidate, though not equally strong: yet strong enough to forbid my supporting him. There are differences of opinion on important subjects between Gen. Harrison and myself, but there is no prospect for the present, and I see but little for the future, of the elevation to the Presidency of any one holding my peculiar principles. I have therefore to choose between the two, and having a decided preference, I cannot consent to withhold the expression of that preference. I do not intend to go into the canvass; but between that and voting at the election there is a wide difference. I do not intend to be forced into any position which will in any way interfere with my placing myself in opposition, if Gen. Harrison shall be elected, to any measures which he may propose, or generally to his administration, if duty shall demand it of me. Not to vote is mere child's play, and unbecoming the State. If it had pleased the leaders of the old nullification party to have abstained from any participation whatever in the contest, I should have been gratified, but it has not. The most strenuous advocates of Mr. Van Buren that I know are politicians and leaders of the nullification party. That party has been indeed dissolved, and the largest portion in our own State are *now distinctly* mustered under the banner of Mr. Van Buren. I cannot enlist in that service, and for the following among many other reasons: I have always looked with the greatest fears to the introduction into the politics of the Union of the system of the Albany Regency—a system commenced immediately after the close of the Revolution, by Aaron Burr, and of which Mr. Van Buren is the acknowledged head. The great characteristic of that system is to govern men by addressing the lowest of their selfish passions, the love of money and of office. The same system upon which Sir Robert Walpole practised with such corrupting influence upon English morals, and with such fatal effects upon English liberty. If for no other reason I would not sanction, by a re-election, the influences which brought Mr. Van Buren into power; no fair man will deny that he was brought into office by the overpowering influence of General Jackson. The first step in the decline of all free republics has been the nomination by the executive head of the Government of his successor. It is a curious fact, and will be so regarded hereafter, that a man should have attained the Presidency without having associated his name with one single important period or measure in the history of his country.—If the most prolix and minute historian were to write the history of this country previous to Mr Van Buren's election, there is no single point in that history with which he would find occasion or excuse for connecting his name. I regard as the very greatest danger of the times in which we live, greater even than the encroachments of the Federal on the State Governments, the alarming tendency to the accumulation in the Federal Executive of all the powers of the co-ordinate department of the Federal Government. We have seen Mr. Van Buren persisting in pressing upon the country his financial schemes, after repeated decisions of the People against them, in defiance of their remonstrances, and in disregard of their great and universal sufferings. We have seen him urging these schemes by all the vast patronage and power with which he is invested, and receiving the aid of those who have denounced these measures as destructive of the best interests of the country. What difference is there between an acknowledged despotism, where the Executive makes the laws, and such a state of things as this, where he makes the laws through the agency of others, many of whom are themselves opposed to these laws?

There is one ground of objection to Mr. Van Buren which would forbid me to vote for him if I approved of his measures, which I do not; and if I had confidence in his professions, which I have not: I allude to the ferocious war which he has been waging, and which, if re-elected, he will carry on with increased energy, upon the currency, commerce, and the credit of the country. Never has the world known a people as prosperous and as happy as ours when he came into power; never has any people suffered more severe trials since. It has been one unbroken series of suffering, disaster, and misery. I do most sincerely believe that nothing can restore prosperity to the country but taking power from his hands; nothing else will restore public confidence, and confidence is all that is now wanting. It is true that many of the causes of embarrassment existed before the last election; we should have suffered somewhat; but that the troubles and embarrassments of the country have been infinitely aggravated by his measures, I do not doubt. We have had other periods of deranged currency, but they have passed speedily away. Why has this been so protracted and severe? For no other reason than that the whole power of the Government has been exerted to the destruction instead of to the sustaining of credit and confidence. It is said that Mr. Van Buren has come to our principles. He says not; but that he is carrying out his own principles--those of his illustrious predecessor, in whose footsteps, with much more of policy than of dignity, he was pledged to follow. Has he come to our State rights principles? It is not to be denied that he makes an annual profession of some of these principles; so did his proclamation and force bill predecessor. I do not look to his professions; what has been his practice? I propose to examine that, and to contrast the opinions of his competitor with his, on every one of these points. First, as to the tariff: General Harrison regards the compromise of 1832 as of the highest obligation, and is disposed to adhere to it: and, if more revenue is required, not to increase the duties on protected articles, but to impose duties on those articles which are now duty free—such articles as the people of the South use and do not manufacture, and as to which the exemption from duties is more beneficial to them than to us.

What are the opinions of Mr. Van Buren on this subject? No one knows. I say no one knows what are the present opinions of Mr. Van Buren. We do know what his past opinions are: that he voted for the bill of abominations, the tariff of 1828; and that he boasted at Albany, on his return from Washington, in a public speech, of his unvarying support of the tariff. It was then said at the South that he gave that vote against his own opinions, and under the coercion of legislative instructions. This I never believed, and it has been lately charged, and Mr. Talmadge, of the Senate, referred to as authority to prove, from under the hand of Mr. Van Buren, that he wrote to his friends in the New York Legislature that those instructions were only in conformity to his own fixed opinions; and it has not been denied. As to internal improvements, Gen Harrison holds precisely the opinion of General Jackson—that Congress possesses the power to appropriate money to works of a national character. I dissent from that opinion. But he is at the same time, opposed to the exercise of the power. Mr. Van Buren professes to believe that Congress does not possess the power, but habitually sanctions its exercise. More money was appropriated for internal improvements in the first year of his administration, than was done in the whole four years of the administration of Mr. Adams. Now, I would rather have a President who admitted the power, but was opposed to its exercise, than one who denied the power, but habitually exerted it. As to internal improvement; it is no more a practical question than would be the embargo, except as to the Cumberland road and harbors; Mr. Van Buren sanctions both of these. I regard this as the very worst form in which the power can be exerted. It is not only necessarily partial, as it is confined in its benefits to the seaboard, but that is the very region where, from vicinity to markets, these improvements are not needed, and, if they are, the people, being wealthy, can make them for themselves. It is in the remote interior where they are needed, and where the people are generally too poor to make them.

A National Bank.—General Harrison denies the power under any express grant in the Constitution, but says, that if it shall be *demonstrated* that the public revenues cannot be collected without such an institution he thinks that Congress may in that event, establish a bank. I have never seen any man, even of the strictest sect, who denies the power thus qualified. No Government can exist without revenue; it would not, in such a case, be a question of convenience, but of necessity; absolute, imperious, and involving the very existence of the Government. If Congress may not, in such a case, charter a bank, that clause of the Constitution which gives all "powers necessary and proper to the execution" of granted powers is a mere nullity, and its framers were not that body of sages that we have supposed them. It was on this ground that the charter of a bank in 1816 received the support of Dallas, Crawford, Lowndes, and Calhoun, and the Republican party of that day: and at a later day, it was on this ground that the constitutionality of a bank has been advocated by Mr. McDuffie, & every leading politician of South Carolina. I expressed these views in a letter, published during my last canvass. I do not, however, think the establishment of a national bank within the powers of Congress, as no such necessity has been demonstrated; and I do not anticipate any such. But I am not disposed to denounce those as either knaves or fools who think differently, when I remember that the first charter was signed in 1791, four years after the adoption of the Constitution, by General Washington, President of the Convention which formed that instrument, with all the debates fresh in his memory, & the second by the great and virtuous Madison who was its great architect. Nor have I any such apprehensions as some express of the dangers of such an institution, when I remember that, of the fifty three years of our national existence, we have had a national bank for forty years, and that our liberties have not only survived it, but that no injurious influence was either exerted or attempted and that those forty years were precisely the period of our greatest prosperity and happiness, and of advances in civilization and power, unprecedented in the history of the world; and that the thirteen years when we have had no such institution were years of universal stagnation of all the employments of life, and of that suffering and distress which results from a deficient or a vitiated currency.

I do not doubt that a bank, not sufficiently guarded, may become a dangerous engine in the hands of a corrupt Government, and that it may be used injuriously to the South. But, properly guarded, I have just as little doubt that the chief benefits of such an institution will be to the South, for the simple reason that the south is the paying, not the receiving section, and is therefore mainly interested in having a uniform currency.

But whatever may be the dangers real or supposed, of a national bank, they sink into utter insignificance in comparison with those of a Government bank; and that such is the alternative contemplated by Mr. Van Buren. I do not think any longer doubtful; and I think I have heretofore proven it.

But it is said that General Harrison is an abolitionist, and that it was for that reason that he has been nominated over Mr. Clay—who was so obnoxious to the abolitionists that none of them would vote for him. You cannot have forgotten that the very men, and the very presses, who now tell you this up to the very moment of the Harrisburg nomination, said that Mr Clay was an abolitionist.—Now you are told that he not only is not, but is especially objectionable to the abolitionists. Both cannot be true. What is it that has so suddenly transformed Mr. Clay from an abolitionist into an enemy of abolition? I will tell you. He is no longer a candidate for the Presidency. He is in nobody's way—and has therefore respite from calumny.—He is now a marvellous proper man.—But let that illustrious citizen—illustrious for every great quality that elevates our nature—be once more brought before the country, and the same war of calumny and falsehood will again be waged against him.

Harrison an abolitionist—a Virginian and that Virginian a Harrison—an abolitionist! Does any one really believe it?

No man living, North or South, has done and suffered as much in the cause of defending this institution of the South as General Harrison; and no statesman of this country has given as many votes against that institution as M Van Buren; and he never changed or wavered in this course until, without such change, he could not have hoped to be elected President.

Now it is bad enough to challenge our especial confidence for an old undeviating enemy who never ceased to oppose us until the necessities of his political position made it expedient—but it is too bad at the same time to ask us to denounce an old long tried friend; who has sacrificed himself to our interests. What friendship can we hereafter expect—what friendship do we deserve, if we thus act! Allow me to submit the proofs in support of the broad proposition which I have asserted.

Mr. Van Buren voted in the New York Convention to confer the highest privilege of a freeman upon negroes. It was carried mainly by his influence; and it is to him that we are indebted for the fact, that the powerful representation of forty members from the State of New York are sent here in part by negroes.

In 1819, Mr. Van Buren voted to instruct Rufus King, then a Senator in Congress from New York, to vote against the admission of Missouri into the Union unless slavery was abolished. It is to me a melancholy illustration of the decadence of public feeling, and of a want of proper tone and spirit in the South, that one of the prime movers—perhaps the very prime mover of that dangerous measure—should not only be urged upon the confidence of the South, but is so pressed as the only anointed saviour of Southern institutions. Mr. Jefferson said that the news of that movement came upon him like the cry of fire in the night. No one crisis in our public affairs has so excited the fears of every patriot; and, most strange and unaccountable, he who lighted the torch is held up as our best friend, and he who extinguished it as our worst enemy. Is this grateful fair, or just? No later than 1822, Mr. Van Buren voted to restrict the introduction of slaves into Florida. If Congress has the power to restrict, has it not power to forbid the introduction of slaves into a Territory? Who denies this? If you have power to restrict it to settlers, why may you not restrict it still further to settlers over eighty years of age, or altogether? Look on that picture, and now look on this! In 1802, General Harrison presided over a Convention in Indiana, whose object was to obtain a modification of the ordinance of 1789, so as to admit slavery in that Territory. In 1819, General Harrison was a member of Congress from a district in Ohio containing more abolitionists than any other in the State. The Missouri question, raised by Mr. Van Buren and his associates, was brought before Congress. It was one of those trying occasions which few men have the moral courage to meet. General H had, and acted worthy of his own fame, and the patriot name which he had inherited from a noble ancestor. He was told, If you vote with the South you will destroy yourself. "That is probable," he replied, "but it is better that I should destroy myself than to destroy the Constitution of my country"—an expression and an act sufficient of themselves to stamp him a patriot. He voted, with two others, and only two, from the non slave States to sustain the chartered rights of the South. Never did a wilder, fiercer, or more furious storm burst upon the head of any man. At the next election, he was, notwithstanding his overwhelming popularity, beaten for Congress; and never was more vituperation and opprobrium heaped [illegible] any man than he suffered. The town of Cheviot was in his district, and in that neighborhood there were more abolitionists than any where else in the State; and there the denunciation of General Harrison was most violent. In 1833, the people of Cheviot, remembering his public services, and willing to forgive, not to forget his great political crime—for abolition had increased, not diminished—invited him to a public dinner. His friends urged him to make no allusion to abolition; that a decent respect to those who had invited him—a very large portion of whom were abolitionists—demanded that he should make no allusion to the past. He at once determined that he would not; but, on his way to Cheviot, he found the dangerous spirit of abolition more rife than ever. He determined to rebuke it, and he did so. I wish you to remember that this speech was not made to slave holders, but that there was not a man in the assembly who was not opposed to slavery, and a large number of them abolitionists. To such an assembly he held the following language:

"There is, however, a subject now beginning to agitate them (the Southern States,) in relation to which, if their alarm has any foundation, the relative situation in which they may stand to some of the States will be the very reverse of what it now is. I allude to a supposed disposition in some individuals in the non-slaveholding States to interfere with the slave population of the other States, for the purpose of forcing their emancipation. I do not call your attention to this subject, fellow-citizens, from the apprehension that there is a man amongst you who will lend his aid to a project so pregnant with mischief and still less that there is a State in the Union which could be brought to give it countenance. But such are the feelings of our Southern brethren upon this subject—such their views, and their just views, of the evils which an interference of this kind would bring upon them, that, long before it would reach the point of receiving the sanction of a State, the evil of the attempt would be consummated, as far as we are concerned, by a dissolution of the Union. It there is any principle of the Constitution of the United States less disputable than any other, it is, that the slave population is under the EXCLUSIVE CONTROL of the States which possess them. If there is any measure likey to rivet the chains, and blast the prospects of the negroes for emancipation, it is the interference of unauthorized persons. Can any one who is acquainted with the operations of the human mind doubt this? We have seen how restive our Southern brethren have been from a supposed violation of their political rights What must be the consequence of an acknowledged violation of these rights, (for every man of sense must admit it to be so,) conjoined with an insulting interference with their domestic concerns?

"I will not stop to inquire into the motives of those who are engaged in this fatal and unconstitutional project. There may be some who have embarked in it without properly considering its consequences, and who are actuated by benevolent and virtuous principles. But, if such there are, I am very certain that, should they continue their present course, their fellow-citizens will, ere long, 'curse the virtues which have undone their country.'

"Should I be asked if there is no way by which the General Government can aid the cause of emancipation, I answer that it has long been an object near my heart to see the whole of its surplus revenue appropriated to that object. With the sanction of the States holding the slaves, there appears to me to be no constitutional objection to its being thus applied, embracing not only the colonization of those who may be otherwise freed, but the purchase of the freedom of others. By a zealous prosecution of a plan framed upon that basis, we might look forward to a day not very distant when a North American sun would not look down upon a slave. To those who have rejected the plan of colonization, I would ask if they have well weighed the consequences of emancipation without it? How long would the emancipated negroes remain satisfied with that? Would any of the Southern States then (the negroes armed and organized) be able to resist their claims to a participation in all their political rights? Would it even stop there? Would they not claim admittance to all the social rights and privileges of a community in which in some instances they would compose the majority? Let those who take pleasure in the contemplation of such scenes as must inevitably follow finish out the picture.

"If I am correct in the principles here advanced, I repeat my assertion, that the discussion on the subject of emancipation in the non-slaveholding States is equally injurious to the slaves and their masters, and that it has no sanction in the principles of the Constitution. I must not be understood to say that there is any thing in that instrument which prohibits such discussion. I know there is not. But the man who believes that the claims which his fellow-citizens have upon him are satisfied by adhering to the *letter* of the political compact that connects them, must have a very imperfect knowledge of the principles upon which our glorious Union was formed, and by which alone it can be maintained."

The following extract of a letter from an intimate friend of General Harrison places his conduct on that occasion in a striking point of view:

"But his speech at Cheviot affords still stronger proof on this point. It was delivered, you will recollect, on the 4th of July; it was delivered, too, before the very men who had opposed him because of his slavery views. Surely, then, he would not now touch this dangerous topic. The occasion did not require it; the occasion, indeed, would hardly justify it. Besides, this was the first opportunity which the General had enjoyed since 1822 of addressing the People; and how easy, how natural it would have been to improve it for his own ends; to seek, by talking of old times, of his feats of arms, and of the glorious West, to kindle afresh those friendly feelings which once burned so strongly in his favor? Why not so embrace it? Why, at any rate, discuss a subject which was full of excitement, which might rouse against him passions that were even then only slumbering—which had before, and on that very spot, marred his political prospects? He did it, it is evident, because a foul spirit was about him, which, if allowed to spread, would peril all that was noble in the land; and he forgot himself, and thought only of his country, in the effort to destroy that spirit."

Afterwards, in a speech at Vincennes in 1835 he used the following language upon this subject:

"I have now, fellow citizens, a few words more to say on another subject, and which is, in my opinion, of more importance than any other that is now in the course of discussion in any part of the Union. I allude to the societies which have been formed, and the movements of certain individuals, in some of the States, in relation to a portion of the population in others. The conduct of these persons is the more dangerous, because their object is masked under the garb of disinterestedness and benevolence; and their course vindicated by arguments and propositions which in the abstract no one can deny. But, however fascinating may be the dress with which their schemes are presented to their fellow citizens, with whatever purity of intention they may have been formed and sustained, they will be found to carry in their train mischief to the whole Union, and horrors to a large portion of it, which, it is probable, some of the projectors, and many of their supporters, have never thought of. the latter, the first in the series of evils which are to spring from their source, are such as you have read of, to have been perpetrated on the far plains of Italy and Gaul by the Scythian hordes of Attila and Alaric; and such as most of you apprehended, upon that memorable night when the tomahawks and war-clubs of the followers of Tecumseh were rattling in your suburbs. I regard not the disavowals of any such intention upon the part of the authors of these schemes, since, upon the examination of the publications which have been made, they will be found to contain the very facts, and very argument, which would have been used, if such would have been their object. I am certain that there is not, in this assembly, one of these deluded men, and that there are few within the bounds of the State. If there are any, I would earnestly entreat them to forbear; to pause in their career, and deliberately consider the consequence of their conduct to the whole Union, and to those for whose benefit they profess to act. That the latter will be the victims of the weak, injudicious, presumptuous, and unconstitutional efforts to serve them, a thorough examination of the subject must convince them. The struggle (and struggle there must be) may commence with horrors such as I have described, but it will end with more firmly riveting the chains, or in the utter extirpation, of those whose cause they advocate.

"Am I wrong, fellow citizens, in applying the terms weak, presumptuous, and unconstitutional, to the measures of the emancipators? A slight examination will, I think, show that I am not. In a vindication of the objects of a Convention which was lately held in one of the towns of Ohio, which I saw in a newspaper, it was said that nothing more was intended than to produce a state of public feeling which would lead to an amendment of the Constitution, authorizing the abolition of slavery in the United States. Now, can an amendment of the Constitution be effected without the consent of the Southern States? What, then, is the proposition to be submitted to them? It is this: The present provisions of the Constitution secure to you the right (a right which you have never given up) to manage your domestic concerns to your own way; but as we are convinced that you do not manage them properly, we want you to put in the hands of the General Government, in the councils of which we have the majority, the control over these matters, the effect of which will be virtually to transfer the power from yours into our hands.'

"Again: in some of the States and in sections of others, the black population far exceeds that of the white. Some of the emancipators propose an immediate abolition. What is the proposition, then, as it regards these States and parts of States, but the alternatives of amalgamation with the blacks, or an exchange of situations with them? Is there any man of common sense who does not believe that the emancipated blacks, being a majority, will insist upon a full participation of political rights with the whites; and, when possessed of these, they will not contend for a full share of social rights also? What but the extremity of weakness and folly could induce any one to think that such propositions as these could be listened to by a people as intelligent as the Southern States? Further: the emancipators generally declare that it is their intention to effect their object (although there are contradict the assertion) by no other means than by convincing the slave holders that the immediate emancipation of the slaves is called for, both by moral obligation and sound policy. An undirected youth, at the moment of leaving (indeed in many instances, before he has left it) his theological seminary, undertakes to give lectures upon morals to the countrymen of Wythe, Tucker, Pendleton, and Lowndes; and lessons of political wisdom to States whose affairs have so recently been directed by Jefferson and Madison, Mason and Crawford. Is it possible that the annals of greater vanity and presumption could be exhibited? But the course pursued by the emancipators is unconstitutional. I do not say that there are any words in the Constitution which forbid the discussions they are engaged in; I know that there are not. And there is even an article which secures to the citizens the right to express and publish their opinions without restriction. But in the construction of the Constitution it is always necessary to refer to the circumstances under which it was framed, and to ascertain its meaning by a comparison of its provisions with each other; and with the previous situation of the several States who were parties to it. In a portion of these, slavery was recognised, and they took care to have the right secured to them to follow and reclaim such of them as were fugitives to other States. The Laws of Congress, passed under this power, have provided punishment to any one who shall oppose or interrupt the exercise of this right. Now, can any one believe that the instrument, which contains a provision of this kind, which authorizes a master to pursue his slave into another State, take him back, and provides a punishment for any citizen of citizens of that State who should oppose him, should, at the same time, authorize the latter to assemble together, to pass resolutions and adopt addresses, not only to encourage the slaves to leave their masters, but to cut their throats before they do so?

"I insist that, if the citizens of the non-slaveholding States can avail themselves of the article of the Constitution which prohibits the restriction of speech or the press to publish any thing injurious to the rights of the slaveholding States, they can go to the extreme that I have mentioned, and effect any thing further which writing or speaking could effect. But, fellow-citizens, these are not the principles of the Constitution.—Such a construction would defeat one of the great objects of its formation, which was, that of securing the peace and harmony of the States which were parties to it. The liberty of speech and of the press was given as the most effectual means to preserve to each and every citizen their own rights, and to the States the rights which appertained to them at the time of their adoption. It could never have been expected that it would be used by the citizens of one portion of the States for the purpose of depriving those of another portion of the rights which they had reserved at the adoption of the Constitution, and in the exercise of which none but themselves have any concern or interest. If slavery is an evil, the evil is with them. If there is guilt in it, the guilt is theirs not ours since neither the States where it does not exist, nor the Government of the United States, can, without usurpation of power, and the violation of a solemn compact, do any thing to remove it without the consent of those who are immediately inter-

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