THE EASTON GAZETTE.

WHERE THE PRESS IS FREE—"Literature well or ill-conducted is the Great Engine by which all Popular States must ultimately be supported or overthrown—RELIGION purifies the Heart and teaches us our Duty—Morality refines the Manners—Agriculture makes us Rich, and Politics provides for the enjoyment of all."

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MR. VAN BUREN'S LETTER.

We publish below the letter from Ex-President MARTIN VAN BUREN which was read at the Barnburners' Convention by the Hon. B. F. Butler, many of our citizens having manifested a desire to read the letter in full, having seen only occasional extracts. This letter was elicited by one which had been addressed to Mr. Van Buren by some of the Delegates to the Utica Convention.

LINDENWALD, June 20, 1848.

GENTLEMEN,—I have received your kind letter with feelings of no ordinary character. It comes from the representatives of a body of men who posses unsurpassed claims upon my respect and gratitude. My reception by the honhearted democracy of your great city, after my defeat in 1840, was marked by circumstances and displayed a depth of friendship, which I can never forget. It made impressions upon my heart which are as vivid now as they were then, and which will never lose their hold upon my affections until that heart ceases to beat. It is not in my nature to decline a compliance with any request which such are capable of making, except for reasons of the strongest character, and which they themselves will, on further consideration, approve.—The determination announced in 1844, in my letter to the New York committee, advising my friends to unite in the support of Mr. Polk and to regard my public life as forever closed, was made upon the most mature reflection, and with an inflexible determination to adhere to it to the end. I beg of you to do me the justice to believe that it was in no degree influenced by that spirit of resentment which political disappointments are so apt to engender in the best regulated minds. Having been defeated during a highly excited, and as the result has shown, an unsound state of the public mind, for adhering to a financial policy which I believed to be right, the democratic masses everywhere, as soon as it became evident that the country had recovered from the delusions of the day, resolved, with extraordinary unanimity, that the policy which had been so successfully decried should be vindicated, and the justice of the people illustrated by my re-election. This decision of the masses was reversed by their representatives in the Convention. More than compensated for any mortification which my discomfiture in 1840 had occasioned, by these expressions of confidence and regard, proceeding directly from the people themselves, and anxious above all things for the success of the measures for which I had been so unsparingly arraigned, I forebore to scan either the motives by which my opponents in the Convention of '44 were actuated, or the means they resorted to for the accomplishment of their object, and united with zeal and alacrity in support of the democratic candidate.

But whilst thus in good faith discharging what I thought to be my duty, it did not fail to occur to me that the circumstances by which I was surrounded, presented the occasion I had long desired, when I could retire from public life, consistently with what was due to the country, to my friends and to my own self-respect. I embraced it with my whole heart. From that day to the present, my mind has not for a moment wavered in regard to the determination then announced. At an early period in the present canvass, and before the democratic mind could be regarded as having taken anything like a distinct direction in reference to its candidate, I reaffirmed my resolution in this regard in a letter to a worthy citizen of Penn., which has been extensively published, and in many others with which it was not deemed necessary to trouble the public. A friendly application from our delegates to the last national convention, for authority to use my name as a candidate if they could do so under proper circumstances, made it, as you appear to be informed, my unpleasant duty to refuse my consent to their doing so under any circumstances whatever.

Having thus assumed and so long occupied this position, I trust to your friendship and past indulgences to be excused for repeating my unchangeable determination never again to be a candidate for public office. The fact of my having long since retired from public life, with the tacit approbation of my friends, gives me a right to say so. If whilst in the political field, willing to receive honor and advancement at the hands of my political friends, I did not shew myself at all times ready to obey, without regard to personal consequences, their calls to posts of difficulty; I failed to make myself understood by those whom I was most anxious to serve.

The considerations to which I have adverted, are not entitled to the same controlling influence in regard to the remaining subject of your letter. Whatever would be my preferences in such matters on ordinary occasions, I feel that I could not, under existing circumstances, refuse to comply with your request, without doing injustice to my democratic friends in this State. I shall therefore give you my unreserved opinions upon the question to which you have called my attention, and in doing so I shall endeavor to observe that respect and courtesy towards the conflicting views of others, which it has been my desire to practice, and which is now more than ever appropriate to my position.

To give the doings of a Democratic National Convention a claim upon the support of the democracy of any State, it is indispensable necessary that the democracy of that State should be fairly represented in such Convention, and allowed equal right and privileges with their political brethren from other States in regulating its proceedings. Neither of these, although perseveringly demanded, was conceded by the recent Convention to the democracy of New York, and they are of course in no degree bound by its decisions. But although their rights and their duties are thus clear, it is notwithstanding material to the fraternal relations which have heretofore existed between them and those who composed the Convention, that it should be distinctly shown at whose door lies the wrong of their exclusion; whether at that of our own delegation or of the Convention.—Upon this point both sets of delegates claiming to represent New York, although differing in almost every thing else, appear to have concurred in the opinion, that the action of the Convention had been such as to put it out of their power to participate in its proceedings, without a total disregard of what was due as well to their own honor as to the honor and just right of their State. It was, therefore, but reasonable to expect that here, at least, the opinion against the slightest obligation on the part of the democracy of New York to sustain the doings of the Convention would be universal. To find either set of the delegates who claimed to represent New York in that Convention, or their friends who approved of their conduct, casting reproach upon their opponents for not sustaining the decisions of a body, of whose action in regard to their own state, they had respectively formed and expressed the opinion to which I have adverted, must, it seems to me, be regarded as a very extraordinary occurrence in politics.

It was plainly the duty of the Committee on Credentials to examine into the facts and report their opinion upon the conflicting claims referred to them. It is an indisputable fact, that instead of doing so, they required an unqualified pledge from both sets of delegates from New York, that they would support the nominee of the Convention, whoever he might be, and resolved that without a compliance with this arbitrary exaction, they would not even look into in the merits of their respective claims.

Now when it is considered that no such pledge was required at any previous National Democratic Convention from any person—that at one of them the delegates from an entire State (Virginia) were permitted to announce their determination in advance not to support a certain nomination, if it should be made, without causing a question to be raised in regard to their seats in the Convention, and that they carried such refusal into full effect, without subjecting themselves or their State to the reproaches of their associates in other States—that this very convention contained, without dispute as to their eligibility delegates from several States who could not enter into such pledge, without violating the instructions of their constituents, and whose intentions not to enter into it, were not concealed—that the convention itself had previously and expressly refused to impose such a pledge upon its members, and that on the very committee, which so imperiously demanded it from the N. York delegates, there were members who openly denounced its exaction as an outrage—declared their utter unwillingness to take it themselves, and who also, were nevertheless recognised as eligible and fit members of the Convention—when these things are considered, is it possible that any right-minded citizen among us can fail to regard this treatment of the New York delegates as an indignity to them, and to their State, of the rankest character? If it is our misfortune to live in a community with whom it is necessary to resort to argument to prove this, whose minds do not rush to that conclusion at the mere presentation of the subject, it is of very little importance to us what is said or done in a democratic convention! Others may think differently, and I have neither the right nor the disposition to become their accusers. But speaking for myself, and myself only, I do not hesitate to say that the representatives of the radical democracy of this State, were entirely right in their appreciation of the treatment they received, and in the course they adopted.—Were I to advise them or those whom they represented, to any steps which would indicate the slightest insensibility on their part to the degrading distinction, that was applied to them, I should, in my best judgment, be counselling them to an act of political dishonor, by which they would justly forfeit the respect of all upright minds. God forbid that I should be induced, by any considerations, to leave my memory exposed to the imputation of having made so poor a return for a whole life of public favors received at their hands.

The committee carried out their designs to the extent of their power, and the question occurs, did the convention itself relieve your delegates or yourselves from the injustice of their committee? Most sincerely do I wish that I could think so But is that possible? That the difference between the two delegations was irreconciliable, was apparent to that body, nor was there room for a moment's doubt that at least one of the delegations would not attempt to represent the State, unless their right to do so exclusively was examined and decided by the convention, and if had not yet become too late for the convention to do its duty in the matter, when it appeared that the resolutions not to take their seats was common to both delegations. There was then no other way in which the difficulty could be properly disposed of, than by examining into and deciding upon the conflicting claims before them. The unavoidable result of failing to do so, was to cause the proceedings of the convention to be regarded as without authority in New York. The expedient of admitting both delegations might do well enough in a case where the differences between them was not one of principle, and where both parties finally assented to the arrangement, but was wholly inapplicable to the one under consideration. The matter was nevertheless so disposed of. New York was allowed a double representation with the inevitable and well understood consequence, that she should not have a single effective vote upon the proceedings of a convention whose decisions she is now called upon to sustain. Your delegates claimed the exclusive right to represent the democracy of this State in the convention, and offered to maintain their title thereto before that body by documentary proof. Not certainly on the ground that they were unable to sustain it, for their credentials and proofs were returned to them u opened, and the convention itself did not profess to put the rejection of their demand on any such ground; and yet that was the only ground on which, if well founded, their claim could be properly overruled. It is not to be disguised, that the belief that your delegates were refused admission on the ground of the opinions entertained by their constituents upon the question of the prohibition of slavery in the territories, is very general in this State. The course of proceeding adopted by the convention, renders it not a little difficult to define with precision for what particular reason the rejection of both sets of delegates by the nominal admission of both, was ordered. That many members were influenced by the consideration referred to, I am well satisfied, whilst it is equally clear, that the number of those who were, was neither small nor unimportant in character.—Those who feel themselves constrained to believe, that their delegates were rejected for that cause, cannot indeed but regard it as an extraordinary spectacle in the political field, to find their votes demanded for the nominee of a convention, in the deliberations and discussions of which they were not deemed worthy of participation.

I cannot, under such circumstances, refrain from concurring with you in the opinion, that the decisions of that Convention are in no degree binding upon the democracy of this State, or entitled to any other weight in their estimation than as an expression of the wishes and opinions of respectable portions of their political associates and friends in other States, qualified as their expression is, by the acts by which it has been accompanied.

You desire also my views in regard to the prohibition by Congress of slavery in territories where it does not now exist, and they shall be given now in a few words, and in a manner which will not, I hope, increase, if it does not diminish, the existing excitement in the public mind.

The illustrious founders of our government were not insensible to the apparent inconsistency between the perpetuation of Slavery in the United States and the principles of the Revolution, as delineated in the Declaration of Independence, and they were too ingenious in their dispositions to attempt to conceal the impressions by which they were embarrassed. But they knew also, that its speedy abolition in several of the States was impossible, and its existence in all without fault on the part of the present generation. They were also too upright, and the fraternal feelings which had carried them through the struggle for independence were too strong to permit them to deal with such a matter upon any other principles than those of liberality and justice. The policy they adopted was to guarantee to the States in which slavery existed an exclusive control over the subject within their respective jurisdictions, but to prevent, by united efforts, its extension to territories of the United States in which it did not in fact exist. On all sides the most expedient means to carry out this policy were adopted with alacrity and good feeling. Their first step was to interdict the introduction of slavery into the Northwestern Territory, now covered by the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.—This may justly be regarded as being in the main a Southern measure. The subject was first brought forward in Congress by Mr. Jefferson. Virginia made the cession of the territory upon which the ordinance was intended to operate, and the Representatives from all the slaveholding States gave it a unanimous support.—Doubts having arisen in the minds of some whether the ordinance of 1787 was authorized by the articles of the Confederation, a bill was introduced in the new Congress, at the first session under the Constitution, recognizing and adapting it to the new organization, and it has ever since been treated and regarded as a valid act. This bill received the constitutional approbation of President Washington, whose highest and sworn duty it was to support the Constitution under which it was enacted. Nor was the North backward in doing its part to sustain the policy which had been so wisely adopted. They assented to the insertion of provisions in the Constitution necessary and sufficient to protect that interest in the States, and they did more

The trouble apprehended at the commencement of the Government from this source began to show itself as early as the year 1790, in the form of petitions presented to Congress upon the subject of slavery and the slave trade, by the Quakers of Philadelphia and New York, and by Dr. Franklin as President of a Society for the promotion of abolition. These petitions were, in the House of Representatives, referred to a committee of seven, all but one of whom were Northern members, whose report, as amended in the Committee of the Whole, affirmed "that Congress have no power to interfere in the emancipation of slaves, or in the treatment of them in any of the States, it remaining with the several States alone to provide any regulation therein which humanity and true policy might require."

The perseverance and good faith with which both branches of the policy thus adopted have, until very recently, been recognised and carried out, are highly honorable to the whole country. The peculiar liability of the subject to be converted into an element of political agitation, as well in the slaveholding as in the non-slaveholding States, may have led to occasional attempts so as to employ it, but these efforts have been very successfully frustrated by the good sense and good feeling of the people in every quarter of the Union.

A detailed account of the numerous acts of the federal government, sustaining and carrying into full effect the policy of its founders upon the subject of slavery in the States, and its extension to the territories, and the steps taken, in the non-slaveholding States, to suppress or neutralize undue agitation in regard to it, would be alike instructive and honorable to the actors in them. But it will be readily perceived, that this could not be given within the necessary limits of a communication like the present. It must therefore suffice to say, that, from 1787, the date of the ordinance for the prevention of slavery in the northwestern territory, down to and including 1838, at least eleven acts of Congress have been passed, organising territories which have since become States, in all of which the constitutional power of Congress to interdict the introduction of slavery into the territories of the United States is either directly exercised or clearly asserted by enactments, which, as matters of authority, are tantamount to its exercise; and that at the only period when the peace of the slaveholding States was supposed to be seriously endangered by abolition agitation, there was a spontaneous uprising of the people of the North, of both parties, by which agitation was paralysed, and the South re-assured of our fidelity to the compromises of the constitution.

In the laws for the organisation of the territories which now constitute the States of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa, Slavery was expressly prohibited. The laws for the organisation of the territories of Mississippi, Orleans, Arkansas, Alabama and Florida, contained enactments fully equivalent in regard to the extent of power in Congress over the subject of slavery in the territories to the express exercise of it in the other cases.—These acts were approved by Presidents Washington, the elder Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson and myself, all bound by our oaths of office to withhold our respective approvals from laws which we believed unconstitutional. If, in the passage of these laws during the period of half a century, and under the administration of so many Presidents, there was anything like sectional divisions, or a greater or less participation in their enactment on the part of the representatives of the slaveholding, or of the non-slaveholding States, I am not apprised of it. I believe the plan devised by the founders of the government, including the fathers of our political Church, for the treatment of this great subject, and which has hitherto been so faithfully sustained, and which has proven so successful in preserving the Union of these States, to be not only the wisest which the wit of a man could have devised, but the only one consistent with the safety and prosperity of the whole country. I do therefore desire to see it continued so long as slavery exists in the United States The extent to which I have sustained it in the various public stations I have occupied is known to the country.—I was at the time well aware that I went further in this respect than many of my best friends could approve. But deeply penetrated by the conviction that slavery was the subject that could endanger our blessed Union, I was determined that no effort on my part, within the pale of the Constitution, should be wanting to sustain its compromises as they were then understood, and it is now a source of consolation to me that I pursued the course I then adopted.

The doctrine which the late Baltimore Convention has presented for the sanction of the nation is, in substance, that the laws I have referred to were but so many violations of the constitution—that this instrument confers no power on Congress to exclude slavery from the territories, as has so often been done with the assent of all. This doctrine is set forth in the published opinion of the highly respectable nominee of that Convention, who, it is well known, received that distinction because he avowed that opinion, and who it is equally certain would not have received it, if he had not done so. It is proposed to give this doctrine the most solemn sanction known to our political system, by the election of its declared advocate and supporter to the Presidency. If it receives the proposed sanction of the people of the United States the result cannot be doubtful. The policy in regard to the extension of slavery to the territories of the United States, into which it has not yet been introduced, which has existed since the commencement of the government, and the consequence of which have been so salutary, must cease, and every act of Congress designed to carry it into effect be defeated by the vote of the Executive.

The territories now owned by the United States, and every acquisition of territory that may hereafter be made by the United States, whether obtained by annexation by cession for valuable consideration, or by conquest, must, as long as this opinion is held, and as far as the action of the national legislature is concerned, be subject to the inroads of slavery. And this consequence is to be submitted to, on the assumption that the framers of the constitution, with their attention directed to the subject, and with a well understood desire to do so, have failed to clothe Congress with the necessary powers to prevent it.—I cannot, by my vote, contribute to this sanction. I cannot do so, because I cannot concur in the opinion which we are called upon to sustain.

Entertaining these views of the constitution, I could not, by my vote, contribute to the proposed sanction of this new principle in the administration of the federal government, without, at the same time, avowing myself to be in favor of the extension of slavery in the abstract, and this I can never do. Those who agree with me in regard to the existence of the power, and the expediency of our exercising it, and can still bring their minds to dissent from this conclusion, must have more light upon the subject, or have greater powers of discriminating than I possess. I do, therefore unhesitatingly approve the course you propose to pursue, in withholding your votes from Governor Cass, and shall do so myself. If no other candidates than those now before the country are presented, I shall not vote for President. The manner in which our political brethren in other non-slave-holding States shall dispose of their suffrages is for them to determine, and with it we have nothing to do But that they accord with us in the opinion as to the existence of the power in question, and the expediency of exercising it whenever the occasion for so doing arrives, we have the best reason to know.

The power, the existence of which is, at this late day, denied, is in my opinion, fully granted to Congress by the Constitution. Its language, the circumstances under which it was adopted, the recorded explanations which accompanied its formation—the construction it has received from our highest judicial tribunals, and the very solemn and repeated confirmations it has derived from the measures of the government—leave not the shadow of a doubt in my mind in regard to the authority of Congress to exercise the power in question. This is not a new opinion on my part, nor the first occasion on which it has been avowed. Whilst the candidate of my friends for the Presidency, I distinctly announced my opinion in favor of the power of Congress to abolish slavery in the district of Columbia, although I was, for reasons which were then, and are still satisfactory to my mind very decidedly opposed to its exercise there. The question of power is certainly as clear in respect to the Territories as it is in regard to that District: and as to the Territories my opinion was also made known in a still more solemn form, by giving the executive approval required by the Constitution to the Bill for the organization of the Territorial Government of Iowa, which prohibited the introduction of slavery into that Territory.

The opinion from which we dissent was given in the face of, and directly contrary to the views expressed, in forms the most solemn and explicit, by all or nearly all the non-slaveholding States, and we are not at liberty to suspect the sincerity of these expressions. Honest and well meaning men, as we know the masses of our political friends in those States to be, are incapable of trifling with so grave a subject.

Our ancestors signalized the commencement of this glorious government of ours, by rescuing from subjection to slavery, a territory which is now covered by five great States and peopled by more than four millions of freemen, in the full enjoyment of every blessing which industry and good institutions can confer. They did this when the opinions and conduct of the world in regard to the institution of slavery, were very different from what they are now.—They did so before Great Britain had even commenced those gigantic efforts for the suppression of slavery, by which she has so greatly distinguished herself. After seventy four years enjoyment of the sacred and invaluable right of self-government, obtained for us by the valor and discretion of our ancestors, we their descendants are called upon to doom, or if that is too strong a word, to expose to the inroad of slavery a territory capable of sustaining an equal number of new states to be admitted to our confederacy—a territory in a great part of which slavery has never existed, in fact, and from the residue of which it has been expressly abolished by the existing government.

We are called upon to do this at a period when the minds of nearly all mankind have been penetrated by a conviction of the evils of slavery, and are united in efforts for its suppression—at a moment, too, when the spirit of freedom and reform is everywhere far more prevalent than it has ever been, and when our republic stands proudly forth as the great examplar of the world in the science of free government.

Who can believe that a population like that which inhabits the non-slaveholding States, probably amounting to twelve millions, who, by their own acts, or by the forsights of others, have been exempted from the evils of slavery, can, at such a moment, be induced, by considerations of any description, to make a retrograde movement of a character so extraordinary and so painful? Such a movement would, in my view of the matter, and I say it with unfeigned deference to the conflicting opinions of others, bring a reproach upon the influence of free institutions, which would delight the hearts and excite the hopes of the advocates of arbitrary power throughout the world.

Holding these opinions, you have duties to perform as important as they are delicate. In the first place you should adhere inflexibly to your opinions, as long as you believe them to be right and no longer. This you will do. In the next place you should present your views in regard to them, calmly and distinctly but firmly to your political brethren of the slaveholding States with a full statement of the reasons on which they are founded, that those reasons may be controverted if they are not sound—This you have done. In other important respects your positions are unassailable. The movement to advance the principle you desire to promote, was commenced in the right place, though, perhaps, not at the most desirable moment, and was not accompanied by partizan measures or founded on political designs of any description, as far as I know or have reasons to believe. If I understand your course, your delegates went to the Convention prepared to accept the nomination of any sound Democrat, who had not actually submitted to a test which implicated the well known and repeatedly expressed opinion of your State, without interrogating him in regard to his opinion on this particular question. In taking this ground you pursued the only course which the Democratic party of the Union, as hitherto organized, can be perpetuated; and the just and fair minded men of the party every where will, when the present excitement has passed away, approve your conduct. One thing more, and your whole action will, in the end, attract the attention and enlist the good feeling of all just and generous minds. Let your farther proceedings in this whole matter be distinguished by moderation and forbearance.

Injustice must be resisted—indignities repelled, and all this can be done, with decency and without impeachment of the motives of whole communities on account of the conduct of individuals. This situation of your political brethren in the slave holding states is not as favorable to a calm discussion and dispassionate consideration as yours, and more will therefore in this respect be expected at your hands. If your differences must continue, do you at least sustain your views, without vituperation or unnecessary excitement of any description. Exemplify your firmness and your confidence in the justness of your cause, by the best of all tests—the dignity and moderation with which you uphold it. When the election is over and reasons resumes her empire, the ground which has been taken by your Southern brethren will be reviewed with calmness, and if found to be untenable, you are bound to believe it will be abandoned. If in this you are disappointed, it will still be a consolation to know that you have done nothing unnecessarily, which could serve to exasperate alienations which may then become incurable.

Accept, gentlemen, my warmest acknowledgments for the obliging expressions contained in your letter, and believe me to be

Your friend,
MARTIN VAN BUREN,

To Messrs. Samuel Waterbury, David Dudley Field, and others, New York.

GOT THE ADVANTAGE.—*The Pittsburg American* says:—A Locofoco desponding-ly remarked to us the other day, "You Taylor men have a great advantage over us. You can talk and sing of the battles of Palo Alto, de Resaca, Monterey, and Buena Vista, of which your candidate is the hero, and we have nothing wherewith to answer but the SURRENDER OF HULL.

☞ The Kennebec Journal states that every Whig paper in the State of Maine, as well as in Massachusetts, with one exception, and some that were neutral support the nomination of Gen. Taylor.

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