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SPEECH OF HENRY CLAY,

Delivered at the *Mechanics' Collation*, in the Apollonian Garden, in Cincinnati, on the 3d of August, 1830.

Eighth Toast.—OUR VALUED GUEST. It is his highest eulogium, that the name of HENRY CLAY is inseparably associated with the best interests of the country, as their asserter and advocate.

When the enthusiastic cheering which followed the reading of this toast had subsided, Mr. Clay rose and addressed the company as follows:

Mr. President and Fellow-Citizens:—

In rising to make the acknowledgments which are due from me, for the sentiment which has been just drunk, and for the honors which have been spontaneously rendered to me, on my approach and during my visit to this city, I feel, more than ever, the incompetency of all language adequately to express the grateful feelings of my heart. Of these distinguished honors, crowned heads themselves might well be proud. They indeed possess a value far surpassing that of any similar testimonies which could be offered to the chief of an absolute Government. There they are, not unfrequently, tendered by reluctant subjects, awed by a sense of terror, or impelled by a spirit of servility.—Here, in this land of equal laws and equal liberty, they are presented to a private fellow citizen, possessing neither office nor power, nor enjoying any rights or privileges which are not common to every member of the community. Power could not buy nor deter them. And, what confers an inestimable value upon them to me—what makes them alone worthy of you or more acceptable to their object, is, that they are offered, not to the man, but to the public principles and public interests which you are pleased to associate with his name. On this occasion too, they emanate from one of those great productive classes, which form the main pillars of public liberty and public prosperity.—I thank you, fellow-citizens, most cordially, for these endearing proofs of your friendly attachment. They have made an impression of gratitude on my heart which can never be effaced, during the residue of my life. I avail myself of this last opportunity of being present at any large collection of my fellow-citizens of Ohio, during my present visit, to express my respectful acknowledgments for the hospitality and kindness with which I have been every where received and entertained. Throughout my journey, undertaken solely for private purposes, there has been a constant effort on my side, to repress, and, on that of my fellow-citizens of Ohio, to exhibit, public manifestations of their affection and confidence. It has been marked by a succession of civic triumphs. I have been escorted from village to village, and have every where found myself surrounded by large concourses of my fellow-citizens, often of both sexes, greeting and welcoming me. Nor should I do justice to my feelings, if I confined the expression of my obligations to those only with whom I had the happiness to agree, on a late public event. They are equally due to the candid and liberal of those from whom it was my misfortune to differ on that occasion, for their exercise towards me of all the rites of hospitality and neighbouring courtesy.—It is true that, in one or two of the towns through which I passed, I was informed that attempts were made, by a few political zealots, to dissuade portions of my fellow citizens from visiting and saluting me. These zealots seemed to apprehend that an invading army was about to enter the town; that it was necessary to sound the bells, to beat the drums, to point the cannon, and to make all needful preparations for a resolute assault and a gallant defence. They were accordingly seen in the streets and at public places beating up for recruits, and endeavouring to drill their men. But I believe there were only a few who were awed by their threats or seduced by their bounty, to enlist in such a cause. The great body of those who thought differently from me, in the instance referred to, remained firm and immoveable. They could not comprehend that it was wrong to extend to a stranger from a neighboring State the civilities which belong to social life. They could not comprehend that it was right to transform political differences into deadly animosities. Seeing that varieties in the mode of worshipping the great Ruler of the Universe did not disturb the harmony of private intercourse, they could not comprehend the propriety of extending to mortal man a sacrifice, which is not offered to our Immortal Father, of all the friendly and social feelings of our nature, because we could not all agree as to the particular exercise of the elective franchise. As independent and intelligent freeman, they would not consent to submit to an arrogant usurpation which assumed the right to control their actions and to regulate the feelings of their hearts, and they scorned, with indignation, to yield obedience to the mandates of would-be dictators. To quiet the apprehensions of these zealots, I assure them that I do not march at the head of any military force; that I have neither horse, foot, nor dragoon; and that I travel with my friend Charles, (a black boy raised in my family, for whom I feel the same sort of attachment that I do for my own children,) without sword, pistol or musket.—Another species of attempted embarrassment has been practised by an individual of this city. About an hour before I left my lodgings for this spot, he caused a packet to be left in my room by a little boy, who soon made his exit. Upon opening it I looked at the signature and *that* was enough for me. It contained a long list of interrogatories which I was required publicly to answer. I read only one or two of them. There are some men whose contact is pollution. I can recognise no right in the person in question to catechise me. I can have no intercourse with one, who is a disgrace to the gallant and generous nation from which he sprang. I cannot stoop to be thus interrogated by a man, whose nomination to a paltry office was rejected by nearly the unanimous vote of the Senate. I must be excused if, when addressing my friends, the mechanics of Cincinnati, I will not speak from his notes. On the renewal of the charter of the present Bank of the United States, which, I believe, formed the subject of one or two of these interrogatories, I will say a few words for your, not his sake. I will observe, in the first place, that I am not in favor of such a Bank as was recommended in the Message of the President of the U. S. at the commencement of the last session of Congress; that, with the Committees of the two Houses, I concur in thinking it would be an institution of a dangerous and alarming character; and that fraught as it would be with the most corrupting tendencies, it might be made powerfully instrumental in overturning our liberties. As to the existing bank, I think it has been generally administered, and particularly of late years, with great ability and integrity; that it has fulfilled all the reasonable expectations of those who constituted it; and, with the same committees, I think it has made an approximation towards the equalization of the currency, as great as is practicable. Whether the charter ought to be renewed or not, near six years hence, in my judgment, is a question of expediency to be decided by the then existing state of the country. It will be necessary at that time to look carefully at the condition both of the Bank and of the Union. To ascertain, if the public debt shall in the mean time be paid off, what effect that will produce; what will be our then financial condition, what that of local banks, the state of our commerce, foreign and domestic, as well as the concerns of our currency generally. I am, therefore, not now prepared to say whether the charter ought or ought not to be renewed on the expiration of its present term. The bank may become insolvent, and may hereafter forfeit all pretensions to a renewal. The question is premature. I may not be alive to form any opinion upon it. It belongs to posterity, and if they would have the goodness to decide for us some of the perplexing and practical questions of the present day, we might be disposed to decide that remote question for them. As it is, it ought to be indefinitely postponed.

With respect to the American System, which commands your undivided approbation, and in regard to which you are pleased to estimate much too highly my services, its great object is to secure the independence of our country, to augment its wealth, and to diffuse the comforts of civilization throughout society. That object, it has been supposed, can be best accomplished by introducing, encouraging and protecting the arts among us. It may be called a system of real reciprocity, under the operation of which one citizen or one part of the country, can exchange one description of the produce of labor with another citizen or another part of the country for a different description of the produce of labor. It is a system which developes, improves and perfects the capabilities of our common country, and enables us to avail ourselves of all the resources with which providence has blest us. To the laboring classes it is invaluable, since it increases and multiplies demands for their industry, and gives them an option of employments. It adds power and strength to our Union, by new ties of interest, blending and connecting together all it parts, and creating an interest with each in the prosperity of the whole. It secures to our own country, whose skill and enterprise, properly fostered and sustained, cannot be surpassed, those vast profits which are made in other countries, by the operation of converting the raw material into manufactured articles. It naturalizes and creates within the bosom of our country all the arts, and mixing the farmer, manufacturer, mechanic, artist, and those engaged in other vocations together, admits of those mutual exchanges, so conducive to the prosperity of all and every one, free from the perils of the sea and of war. All this it effects whilst it nourishes and leaves a fair scope to foreign trade. Suppose we were a nation that clad ourselves and made all the implements necessary to civilization but did not produce our own bread, which we bought from other countries, although our own was capable of producing it, under the influence of suitable laws of protection, ought not such laws to be enacted? The case supposed is not essentially different from the real state of things which led to the adoption of the American System.

That system has had a wonderful success. It has more than realized all the hopes of its founders. It has completely falsified all the predictions of its opponents. It has increased the wealth, and power and population of the Nation. It has diminished the price of articles of consumption, and has placed them within the reach of a far greater number of our people than could have found the means to command them, if they had been manufactured abroad instead of at home.

But it is useless to dwell on the argument in support of this beneficent system before this audience. It will be of more consequence here to examine some of the objections which are still urged against it, and the means which are proposed to subvert it. These objections are now principally confined to its operation upon the great staple of cotton wool, and they are urged with most vehemence in a particular State. If the objections are well founded, the system should be modified as far as it can be consistently with interests in other parts of the Union. If they are not well founded it is to be hoped they will be finally abandoned.

In approaching the subject, I have thought it of importance to enquire what was the profit made upon capital employed in the culture of Cotton, at its present reduced price. The result has been information that it netts from 7 to 18 per cent per annum, varying according to the advantages of situation, and the degree of skill, judgment and industry applied to the production of the article. But the lowest rate of profits, in the scale, is more than the greatest amount which is made on capital employed in the farming portions of the Union.

If the cotton planter have any just complaint against the expediency of the American System, it must be founded on the fact that he either sells *less* of his staple or sells at *lower* prices, or purchases for consumption, articles at *dearer* rates or of *worse* qualities, in consequence of that system, than he would do, if it did not exist. If he would neither sell more of his staple nor sell it at better prices, nor could purchase better or cheaper articles for consumption, provided the system did not exist, then he has no cause, on the score of its burthensome operation to complain of the system, but must look to other sources for the grievances which he supposes, afflict him.

As respects the sale of his staple, it would be indifferent to the planter whether one portion of it was sold in Europe, and the other in America, provided the aggregate of both was equal to all that he could sell in one market, if he had but one, and provided he could command the same prices in both cases. The double market would indeed be somewhat better for him, because of its greater security in time of war as well as peace and because it would be attended with less perils and less changes. If there be an equal amount of the raw material manufactured, it must be immaterial to the cotton planter, in the sale of the article, whether there be two theatres of the manufacture, one in Europe and the other in America, or but one in Europe; or if there be a difference it will be in favor of the two places of manufacture, instead of one, for reasons already assigned, and others that will be hereafter stated.

It could be of no advantage to the cotton planter, if all the cotton, now manufactured both in Europe, and America, was manufactured exclusively in Europe, and an amount of cotton fabrics should be brought back from Europe, equal both to what is now brought from there and what is manufactured in the United States together.—Whilst he would gain nothing, the United States would lose the profit and employment resulting from the manufacture of that portion which is now wrought up by the manufacturers of the United States.

Unless, therefore, it can be shewn, that, by the reduction of import duties and the overthrow of the American System, and by limiting the manufacture of cotton to Europe, a greater amount of the raw material would be consumed, than is at present, it is difficult to see what interest, so far as respects the sale of that staple, the cotton planter has in the subversion of that system. If the reduction of duties would admit of larger investments in British of European fabrics of cotton, and their subsequent importation into this country, this additional supply would take the place, if consumed, of an equal amount of American manufactures, and consequently would not augment the general consumption of the raw material. Additional importation does not necessarily imply increased consumption, especially when it is effected by a policy which would impair the ability to purchase and consume.

Upon the supposition, just made, of a restriction to Europe of the manufacture of cotton, would more or less of the article be consumed than now is? More could not be, unless in consequence of such a monopoly of the manufacture, Europe could sell more than she now does.—But to what countries could she sell more? She gets the raw material now unburthened by any duties except such moderate ones as her policy, not likely to be changed, imposes. She is enabled thereby to sell as much of the manufactured article as she can find markets for in the States within her own limits, or in foreign countries.—The destruction of the American manufacture would not induce them to sell cheaper, but might enable her to sell dearer than she now does. The ability of those foreign countries, to purchase and consume, would not be increased, by the annihilation of our manufactures and the monopoly of European manufacture. The probability is that those foreign countries, by the fact of that monopoly, and some consequent increase of price, would be worse and dearer supplied than they now are under the operation of a competition between America and Europe in their supply.

At most, the U. S., after the transfer from their territory to Europe of the entire manufacture of the article, could not consume of European fabrics from cotton a greater amount than they now derive from Europe and from manufactures within their own limits.

But it is confidently believed that the consumption of cotton fabrics, on the supposition which has been made, within the U. States, would be much less than it is at present. It would be less, because the American consumer would not possess the means or ability to buy as much of the European fabric as he now does to buy the American. Europe purchases but little of the produce of the Northern, Middle and Western regions of the U. States. The staple productions of those regions are excluded from her consumption by her policy or by native supplies of similar productions. The effect, therefore, of obliging the inhabitants of those regions to depend upon the cotton manufactures of Europe, for necessary supplies of the article, would be alike injurious to them and to the cotton grower. They would suffer from their wants, and there would be a consequent diminution of the consumption of cotton. By the location of the manufacture within the U. States, the quantity of cotton consumed is increased, and the more numerous portion of their inhabitants, who could not be otherwise sufficiently supplied, are abundantly served. That this is the true state of things I think cannot be doubted by any reflecting and unprejudiced man. The establishment of manufactures within the United States enables the manufacturer to sell to the farmer, the mechanic, the physician, the lawyer, and all who are engaged in other pursuits of life, and these, in their turn, supply the manufacturer with subsistence and whatever else his wants require. Under the influence of the protecting policy, many new towns have been built and old ones enlarged. The population of these places draw their subsistence from the farming interest of our country, their fuel from our forests and coal mines, and the raw materials, which they fashion and fabricate, from the cotton planter and the mines of our country. These mutual exchanges, so animating and invigorating to the industry of the people of the U. States, could not possibly be effected between America and Europe, if the latter enjoyed the monopoly of manufacturing.

It results therefore, that, so far as the sale of the great southern staple is concerned, a greater quantity is sold and consumed, and consequently better prices are obtained, under the operation of the American System than would be without it. Does that system oblige the cotton planter to buy dearer or worse articles of consumption than he could purchase, if it did not exist?

The same cause of American and European competion, which enables him to sell more of the produce of his industry and at better prices, also enables him to buy cheaper and better for consumption. It cannot be doubted that the tendency of the competition between the European and American manufacturer is to reduce the price and improve the quality of their respective fabrics whenever they come in collision. This is the immutable law of all competition. If the American manufacture were discontinued, Europe would then exclusively furnish those supplies which are now derived from the establishment in both Continents; and the first consequence would be an augmentation of the demand beyond the supply equal to what is now manufactured in the U. S. but which in the contingency supposed, would be wrought in Europe. If the destruction of the American manufactures were sudden, there would be a sudden and propably considerable rise in the European fabrics. Although in the end, they might be again reduced, it is not likely that the ultimate reduction of prices would be to such rates as if both the workshops of America and Europe remained sources of supply. There would also be a sudden reduction in the price of the raw material in consequence of the cessation of the American demand. And this reduction would be permanent, if the supposition be correct that there would be a diminution in the consumption of cotton fabrics arising out of the inability on the part of large portions of the people of the United States, to purchase those of Europe.

That the effect of competition between the European and American manufacture has been to supply the American consumer with cheaper and better articles, since the adoption of the American System, notwithstanding the existence of causes which have obstructed its fair operation, and retarded its full developement, is incontestible. Both the freeman and the slave are now better and cheaper supplied than they were, prior to an existence of that system. Cotton fabrics have diminished in price and been improved in their texture to an extent that it is difficult for the imagination to keep pace with. Those partly of cotton and partly of wool are also better and cheaper supplied. The same observation is applicable to those which are exclusively wrought of wool, iron, or glass. In short, it is believed that there is not one item of the Tariff, inserted for the protection of native industry, which has not fallen in price. The American competition has tended to keep down the European rival fabric, and the European has tended to lower the American.

Of what then can the South Carolina planter justly complain in the operation of this system? What is there in it which justifies the harsh and strong epithets which some of her politicians have applied to it? What is there in her condition which warrants their assertion that she is oppressed by a Government to which she stands in the mere relation of a Colony? She is oppressed by a great reduction in the price of manufactured articles of consumption.

She is oppressed by the advantage of two markets for the sale of her valuable staple, and for the purchase of objects required by her wants.

She is oppressed by better prices for that staple than she could command if the system to which they object did not exist.

She is oppressed by the option of purchasing cheaper and better articles, the produce of the hands of American freemen, instead of dearer and worse articles the produce of the hands of British subjects.

She is oppressed by the measures of a Government in which she has had, for many years, larger proportion of power and influence, at home and abroad, than any State in the whole Union in comparison with the population.

A glance at the composition of the Government of the Union will demonstrate the truth of this last proposition. In the Senate of the U. S. South Carolina, having the presiding officer, exercises nearly one sixteenth instead of one twenty-fourth part of both its legislative and Executive functions.

In both branches of Congress some of her citizens now occupy, as Chairmen of Committees, the most important and influential stations. In the Supreme Court of the United, one of her citizens being a member, she has one seventh part, instead of about one twentieth, her equal proportion of the whole power vested in the tribunal. Until within a few months she had nearly one third of all the missions, of the first grade, from this to foreign countries. In a contingency, which is far from impossible, a citizen of South Carolina would instantly become charged with the Administration of the whole of the vast power and patronage of the Executive of the United States.

Yet her situation has been compared to that of a Colony which has no voice in the laws enacted by the parent country for its subjection! And, to be relieved from this cruel state of vassalage, and to put down a system which has been established by the united voice of all America, some of her politicians have broached a doctrine as new as it would be alarming, if it were sustained by numbers in proportion to the zeal and fervid eloquence with which it is inculcated. I call it a novel doctrine. I am not unaware that attempts have been made to support it upon the authority of certain acts of my native and adopted States. Although many of their citizens are much more competent than I am to vindicate them from this imputation of purposes of disunion and rebellion, my veneration and affection for them both urge me to bear my testimony to their innocence of such a charge. At the epoch of 1798-9, I had just attained my majority, and, although I was too young to share in the public councils of my country, I was acquainted with many of the actors at that memorable period, knew their views and formed and freely expressed my own opinions on passing events. The then Administration of the General Government was believed to entertain views (whether the belief was right or wrong is not material to this argument, and is now an affair of history) hostile to the existence of the liberties of this country. The alien and sedition laws particularly, and other measures, were thought to be the consequences and proofs of those views. If the administration had such a purpose, it was feared that the extreme case, justifying forcible resistance, might arise, but no one believed that in point of fact it had arrived. No one contended that a single state possessed the power to annul the deliberate acts of the whole. And the best evidence of these remarks is the fact that the most odious of those laws (the sedition act) was peaceably enforced in the capital of that great State, which took the lead in opposition to the existing administration.

The doctrines of that day, and they are as true at this, were that the Federal Government is a limited Government; that it has no powers but the granted powers. Virginia contended that in case 'of a palpable, deliberate and dangerous exercise of other powers, not granted by said compact, the States, who are parties thereto, have the right to interpose for arresting the progress of the evil, and for maintaining within their respective limits, the authorities, rights and liberties appertaining to them.' Kentucky declared that the 'several states that framed that instrument, the Federal constitution, being sovereign, and independent, have the unquestionable right to judge of its infractions, and a nullification by those sovereignties of all unauthorized acts, done under color of that instrument is the rightful remedy.'

Neither of those two Commonwealths asserted the right of a single State to interpose and annul an act of the whole. This is an inference drawn from the doctrines then laid down, and is not a principle expressly asserted or fairly deducible from the language of either. Both refer to the States collectively (and not individually) when they assert their right, in cases of Federal usurpation, to interpose, 'for arresting the progress of the evil.' Neither State ever did, no State yet ever has, by its separate legislation, undertaken to set aside an act of Congress.

That the States collectively may interpose their authority to check the evils of Federal usurpation is manifest. They may dissolve the Union. They may alter at pleasure the character of the Constitution, by amendment, they may annul any acts purporting to have been passed in conformity, to it, or they may, by their elections, change the functionaries to whom the administration of its powers is confided. But no one State, by itself, is competent, to accomplish these objects. The power of a single State to annul an act of the whole has been reserved for the discovery of some politicians in S. Carolina.

It is not my purpose, upon an occasion so unfit, to discuss this pretension. Upon another and a more suitable theatre, it has been examined and refuted with an ability and eloquence, which have never been surpassed on the floors of Congress. But, as it is announced to be one of the means which is intended to be employed to break down the American System, I trust that I shall be excused for a few additional passing observations. On a late festive occasion, in the State where it appears to find most favor, it is said by a gentleman whom I once proudly called my friend, and towards whom I have done nothing to change that relation,—a gentleman who has been high in the councils and confidence of the Nation—that the Tariff must be resisted at all hazards. Another gentleman, who is a candidate for the chief magistracy of that State, declares that the time and the case for resistance had arrivad. And a third, a Senator of the U. States, who enjoys unbounded confidence with the American Executive, laid down principles and urged arguments tending directly and inevitably to violent resistance, although he did not indicate that as his specific remedy.

The doctrine of some of the South Carolina politicians is, that it is competent to that State to annul within its limits, the authority of an act deliberately passed by the Congress of the United States. They do not appear to have looked much beyond the simple act of nullification, into the consequences which would ensue, and have not distinctly announced whether one of them might not necessarily be to light up a civil war.—They seem, however, to suppose that the State might, after the act was performed, remain a member of the Union. Now, if one State can, by an act of its separate power, absolve itself from the obligations of a law of Congress and continue a part of the Union, it could hardly be expected that any other state would render obedience to the same law. Either every other State would follow the nullifying example, or Congress would feel itself constrained, by a sense of equal duty to all parts of the Union, to repeal altogether, the nullified law. Thus the doctrine of South Carolina, although it nominally assumes to act for one State only, in effect, would be legislating for the whole Union.

Congress embodies the collective will of the whole Union, and that of South Carolina, among its other members. The legislation of Congress is, therefore, founded upon the basis of the representation of all. In the Legislature or a Convention of South Carolina, the will of the people of that State is alone collected. They alone are represented, and, the people of no other State have any voice in their proceedings. To set up for that State a claim, by a separate exercise of its power, to legislate in effect for the whole Union, is to assert a pretension at war with the fundamental principles of all representative and free governments. It would practically subject the unrepresented people of all other parts of the Union to the arbitrary and despotic power of one State. It would substantially convert them into Colonies bound by the parental authority of that State.

Nor can this enormous pretension derive any support from the consideration that the power to annul, is different from the power to originate laws. Both powers are in their nature legislative; and the mischiefs which might accrue to the Republic from the annulment of its wholesome laws may be just as great as those which would flow from the origination of bad laws.—There are three things to which more than all others, mankind, in all ages, have shewn themselves to be attached, their religion, *their laws*, and their language.

But it has been argued, in the most solemn manner, 'that the acknowledgement of the exclusive right of the Federal Government to determine the limits of its own powers, amounts to a recognition of its absolute supremacy over the States and the people, and involves the sacrifice not only of our dearest rights and interests, but the very existence of the Southern States.'

In cases where there are two systems of Government, operating at the same time and place over the same people, the one general and the other local or particular, one system or the other must possess the right to decide upon the extent of the powers, in cases of collision, which are claimed by the General Goverment. No third party of sufficient impartiality, weight and responsibility, other than such a tribunal as the Supreme Court, has yet been devised, or perhaps can be created.

The doctrine of one side is, that the General Government, though limited in its nature, must necessarily possess the power to ascertain what authority it has, and by consequence, the extent of that authority. And that, if its legislative or executive functionaries by any act transcend that authority, the question may be bro't before the Supreme Court, and being affirmatively decided by that tribunal, their act must be obeyed until repealed or altered by competent power.

Against the tendency of this doctrine to absorb all power, those who maintain it, think there are reasonable and, they hope, sufficient securities. In the first place, all are represented in every legislative or executive act, and, of course, each State can exert its proper influence to prevent the adoption of any that may be deemed prejudicial or unconstitutional. Then, there are sacred oaths, elections, public virtue and intelligence, the power of impeachment, a common subjection to both systems of those functionaries who act under either, the right of the States to interpose and amend the Constitution, or to dissolve the Union, and finally, the right, in extreme cases, when all other remedies fail, to resist insupportable oppression.

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