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BY GEORGE HOWARD.

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REGULAR AGENTS.

J. M. REDMOND, } Tarboro'.
Geo. HOWARD, }
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January, 1840.

POLITICAL.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS. Of Gen. HARRISON.

Called from a retirement which I had supposed was to continue for the residue of my life, to fill the Chief Executive office of this great and free nation, I appear before you, fellow citizens, to take the oaths which the Constitution prescribes, as a necessary qualification for the performance of its duties.

It was the remark of a Roman Consul, in an early period of that celebrated Republic, that a most striking contrast was observable in the conduct of candidates for offices of power and trust, before and after obtaining them—they seldom carrying out in the latter case the pledges and promises made in the former.

Although the fiat of the people has gone forth, proclaiming me the Chief Magistrate of this glorious Union, nothing upon their part remaining to be done, it may be thought that a motive may exist to keep up the delusion under which they may be supposed to have acted in relation to my principles and opinions; and perhaps there may be some in this assembly who have come here either prepared to condemn the one I shall now deliver, or, approving them, to doubt the sincerity with which they are uttered.

However strong may be my present purpose to realize the expectations of a magnanimous and confiding people, I too well understand the infirmities of human nature, and the dangerous temptations to which I shall be exposed, from the magnitude of the power which it has been the pleasure of the people to commit to my hands, not to place my chief confidence upon the aid of that Almighty Power which has hitherto protected me, and enabled me to bring to favorable issues other important, but still greatly inferior trusts, heretofore confided to me by my country.

The broad foundation upon which our Constitutions rests, being the people—a breath of theirs having made, as a breath can unmake, change, or modify it—it can be assigned to none of the great divisions of Government but to that of Democracy. If such is its theory, those who are called upon to administer it must recognize, as its leading principle, the duty of shaping their measures so as to produce the greatest good to the greatest number.

The boasted privilege of a Roman citizen was to him a shield only against a petty provincial ruler, whilst the proud democrat of Athens could console himself

under a sentence of death, for a supposed violation of the national faith, which no one understood, and which at times was the subject of the mockery of all, or banishment from his home, his family, and his country, with or without an alleged cause; that it was the act, not of a single tyrant, or hated aristocracy, but of his assembled countrymen. Far different is the power of our sovereignty. It can interfere with no one's faith, prescribe forms of worship for no one's observance, inflict no punishment but after well ascertained guilt, the result of investigation under rules prescribed by the Constitution itself.

Notwithstanding the limited sovereignty possessed by the people of the United States, and the restricted grant of power to the Government which they have adopted, enough has been given to accomplish all the objects for which it was created. It has been found powerful in war, and hitherto, justice has been administered, an intimate union effected, domestic tranquility preserved, and personal liberty secured to the citizen.

But the great danger to our institutions does not appear to me to be in a usurpation, by the Government, of power not granted by the people, but by the accumulation, in one of the departments, of that which was assigned to others. Limited as are the powers which have been granted, still enough have been granted to constitute a despotism, if concentrated in one of the departments.

When the Constitution of the United States first came from the hands of the Convention which formed it, many of the sternest republicans of the day were alarmed at the extent of the power which had been granted to the Federal Government, and more particularly of that portion which had been assigned to the Executive branch.

I proceed to state, in as summary a manner as I can, my opinion of the sources of the evils which have been so extensively complained of, and the correctives which may be applied. Some of the former are unquestionably to be found in the defects of the Constitution; others, in my judgment, are attributable to a misconstruction of some of its provisions.

As, however, one mode of correction is in the power of every President, and consequently in mine, it would be useless, and perhaps invidious, to enumerate the evils of which, in the opinion of our fellow-citizens, this error of the sages who framed the Constitution may have been the source, and the bitter fruits which we are still to gather from it, if it continues to disfigure our system.

It may be observed, however, as a general remark, that Republics can commit no greater error than to adopt or continue any feature in their systems of government which may be calculated to create or increase the love of power, in the bosoms of those to whom necessity obliges them to commit the management of their affairs. And, surely, nothing is more likely to produce such a state of mind than the long continuance of an office of high trust. Nothing can be more corrupting, nothing more destructive of all those noble feelings which belong to the character of a devoted republican patriot.

But if there is danger to public liberty from the acknowledged defects of the Constitution, in the want of limit to the continuance of the Executive power in the same hands, there is, I apprehend, not much less from a misconstruction of that instrument, as it regards the powers actually given. I cannot conceive that, by a fair construction, any or either of its provisions would be found to constitute the President a part of the legislative power.

It may be said, indeed, that the Constitution has given to the Executive the power to annul the acts of the legislative body, by refusing to them his assent. So a similar power has necessarily resulted from that instrument to the Judiciary; and yet the Judiciary forms no part of the Legislature. There is, it is true, this difference between these grants of power. The Executive can put his negative upon the acts of the Legislature for other cause than that of want of conformity to the Constitution, whilst the Judiciary can only declare void those which violate that instrument.

ple, and the enlightened character of the State Legislatures, not to have the fullest confidence that the two bodies elected by them would be worthy representatives of such constituents, and, of course, that they would require no aid in conceiving and maturing the measures which the circumstances of the country might require; and it is preposterous to suppose that a thought could for a moment have been entertained that the President, placed at the capital, in the centre of the country, could better understand the wants and wishes of the people than their own immediate representatives, who spend a part of every year among them, living with them, often laboring with them, and bound to them by the triple tie of interest, duty, and affection.

There is another ground for the adoption of the veto principle, which had probably more influence in recommending it to the Convention than any other. I refer to the security which it gives to the just and equitable action of the Legislature upon all parts of the Union. It could not but have occurred to the Convention that, in a country so extensive, embracing so great a variety of soil and climate, and, consequently, of products, and which, from the same causes, must ever exhibit a great diversity in the amount of the population of its various sections, calling for a great diversity in the employments of the people, that the legislation of the majority might not always justly regard the rights and interests of the minority—and that acts of this character might be passed, under an express grant by the words of the Constitution, and, therefore, not within the competency of the judiciary to declare void; that, however enlightened and patriotic they might suppose, from past experience, the members of Congress might be, and however largely partaking in the general of the liberal feelings of the people, it was impossible to expect that bodies so constituted should not sometimes be controlled by local interests and sectional feelings. It was proper, therefore, to provide some umpire, from whose situation and mode of appointment more independence and freedom from such influences might be expected. Such a one was afforded by the Executive Department, constituted by the Constitution. A person elected to that high office, having his constituents in every section, State, and subdivision of the Union, must consider himself bound by the most solemn sanctions to guard, protect, and defend the rights of all, and of every portion, great or small, from the injustice and oppression of the rest. I consider the veto power, therefore, given by the Constitution to the Executive of the United States solely as a conservative power, to be used only, 1st, to protect the Constitution from violation; 2dly, the people from the effects of hasty legislation, where their will has been probably disregarded or not well understood; and 3dly, to prevent the effects of combinations, violative of the right of minorities. In reference to the second of these objects, I may observe, that I consider it the right and privilege of the people to decide disputed points of the Constitution, arising from the general grant of power to Congress to carry into effect the powers expressly given. And I believe, with Mr. Madison, that repeated recognitions, under varied circumstances, in acts of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of the Government, accompanied by indications in different modes of the concurrence of the general will of the nation, as affording to the President sufficient authority for his considering such disputed points as settled.

Upwards of half a century has elapsed since the adoption of our present form of Government. It would be an object more highly desirable than the gratification of the curiosity of speculative statesmen, if its precise situation could be ascertained, a fair exhibit made of the operations of each of its Departments, of the powers which they respectively claim and exercise, of the collisions which have occurred between them, or between the whole Government and those of the States, or either of them. We could then compare our actual condition, after fifty years' trial of our system, with what it was in the commencement of its operations, and ascertain whether the predictions of the patriots who opposed its