

THE RALEIGH MINERVA.

[THREE DOLLARS PER YEAR.]

RALEIGH, N. C. — PUBLISHED (WEEKLY) BY LUCAS AND A. H. BOYLAN.

[FOR \$2 50 CENTS IN ADVANCE.]

VOL. 17.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1812.

No. 858.

Political.

ADDRESS

Of the committee of the city of New York, acting under the authority of the General Committee of correspondence of the State of New York, in support of the nomination of the Hon. De Witt Clinton, to the Presidency of the United States, at the ensuing election.

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE U. STATES. FELLOW CITIZENS:

THE most important interests of the United States are interwoven with the acts of their chief magistrate. Every citizen has therefore a deep concern in the choice of that high officer, and an undeniable right to lay his reflections on that subject, respectfully, but with freedom, before the community, of which he is a member. On that broad basis we might perhaps justify this address, and trust to the correctness of the principles we maintain, for vindication with our countrymen; but we are induced to present ourselves before you by another, and we think a sufficient consideration.

The state of New York has, by an open nomination of a candidate for the presidency, entered its formal protest against the practice of congressional nominations. Convinced as we are of the superior worth and talents of Mr. Clinton, we are also impelled by the sincerest respect for the federal constitution; by our desire to preserve the sovereignty of the states, as guaranteed and marked out by that instrument; by a regard to the rights of the people, and to the freedom of election; to maintain her in the stand she has taken.

The General Committee of Correspondence on the part of the state, have appointed us a select committee to explain and vindicate the grounds on which the nomination has been made, and to aid in carrying it into effect. We have accepted the trust, and shall perform it at least with fidelity. The fear of criticism and censure shall not overawe the sense of duty, nor silence the strong convictions of our judgment. Our interests and obligations, whether as citizens of this state or of this confederation, have, we know, a reciprocal relation, and we cannot be true to the one, without diligently discharging the other.

Nevertheless we feel much constraint and embarrassment in thus appearing before the American nation; we are sensible of the delicacy of the undertaking, and enter upon it with diffidence and solicitude. While most anxious to avoid blame, and to obtain consideration only through the purity of our motives, and the soundness of our opinions, we anticipate harsh animadversions: we shall be held up to the scrupulous as rash, and to the formal as innovators: our appeal to your tribunal will be stigmatized as presumptuous. Our sincere persuasions on subjects of national concern will be imputed to unworthy motives; will be treated with levity by some, and opposed with bitterness by many.

We are, however, convinced that those will be loudest in their invectives, whose interests are engaged, or whose prejudices have been enlisted against the cause we espouse, and in favor of the doctrines we conceive it our duty to dispute. Does the Musselman, who venerates the Koran, and bows before the crescent, abide the scrutiny of the understanding, or weigh the force of argument when he reviles the Christian infidel that rejects the Mahomedan faith?

Free citizens of America, be not deceived by such as, wrapping themselves up in the mantle of infallibility, disdain to enquire after truth by the sober light of reason, or to learn wisdom in the school of experience: distrust those who shrink from investigation, because it is their interest to maintain prevailing tenets, and to continue existing practices: examine national questions for yourselves; decide upon them according to the counsel of your own unbiased judgments.

We have said that the state of New York has entered its protest against congressional nominations. In doing so, it has acted wisely. The nomination of a candidate for the presidency of the United States, by an association of members of congress, convened at the seat of government, is hostile to the spirit of the federal constitution, dangerous to the rights of the people, and to the freedom of election.

Whoever examines that constitution with attention, will perceive that the election of the president is intended to be made, not by the people of the United States, in the sense in which they may be said to choose the members of the house of representatives; but by the states composing the union, in their sovereign capacities, each state voting in the ratio of its population.

The unbiased exercise of this invaluable right of state sovereignty, has been guarded in that instrument with jealous care. "No senator or representative, or person holding an office of trust or profit under the United States, shall be appointed an elector." Even a state, in delegating its own sovereign right, is restrained from confiding its power to any person connected with the congress or the general government.

Permit us now to ask, did this pointed exclusion of the individuals composing congress, or interested in the general government, from participating in the election of president, merely contemplate the avoiding of corrupt influence? Even if that were its only object, no evasion of it should be tolerated; but we believe it further and more particularly aimed, at maintaining the rights and au-

thority of the individual states; and we are confirmed in that opinion by observing that where the members of the house of representatives are, from necessity, permitted to interfere in the election, they are compelled to vote by states. The constitution, thus, in every case, maintaining the principle, that the chief magistrate is to be chosen by the states, in their separate sovereign capacities.

It is perfectly manifest, therefore, that those who compose a congressional caucus are, except in one event, and that in the last extremity, excluded by the express words of the constitution, from intermeddling in the election of a president. Can their attempt then in the first instance, to nominate the candidate for that office, be consistent with its spirit? Who should nominate? Some among the states which enjoy the constitutional right to elect. Surely none of those persons, whose interference is cautiously prohibited as tending with danger, and who are therefore made subject to an incapacity imposed upon no other citizen; and yet, these prohibited and disqualified characters, are to stand forth and designate the president with an authority so conclusive, that to differ from them, and exercise an independent right, agreeably to the letter and spirit of the constitution, is stigmatized as nothing short of political heresy!

The very power possessed by congress of selecting among the different candidates, where a choice has failed through a division of the electoral votes, though it may be, and we believe has been the routine and ground work of congressional nomination, ought, in all delicacy and fairness, to be an insuperable bar against them. The bias of that nomination is certain of influencing the result of that selection. The connection between a nomination originated through members of congress, and an eventual choice by their conformity thereto, is obvious, and has we fear, been contemplated. But is it consistent with the spirit of the constitution, or the principles of justice, that those should decide in the last appeal, who had made themselves partisans in the first resort, and had committed themselves by previous engagements?

We are aware of the distinction taken by the members of congress. When making those nominations, they affect to act in the capacity only of private citizens. Is it possible that the good sense of the community can be deceived by such a shadowy artifice? If rigid faith they mean to set only as private citizens, let them do so in their respective states, to which the right of election, and the consequent right of nomination belong. There, if any where, their guidance would be cordially expected. But from every seat of government, on forbidden ground, that almost all the disqualified persons in the union should assemble, & designate a presidential candidate, seems to us something like an indecent infringement of the rights of the states, and an open contempt of the provisions of the constitution. If the members of the house of representatives were to assemble and point out to the president and senate, a foreign ambassador or a judge, would it not be considered as monstrous arrogance? How, then, are we to characterize the act of the same men, and of the senate, who, notwithstanding their personal disabilities, presume to nominate to the respective states, the officer whom they are required to choose? Suppose the two houses, by a concurrent resolution, recommended a candidate for the chief magistracy, who would hesitate to say it was a violation of the constitution? If then, such an act by them in the forenoon, would be a violation, is not the very same act, by the very same men in the afternoon, at least an evasion of the constitution? Are not the mischiefs to which we have already alluded, and those we are about to suggest, as likely to result from their vote in caucus, as from their vote in congress? Indeed, of two evils, let us choose the least. If they are to interfere, let them do it in such a way, as that their conduct may be fairly cognizable by their constituents. If they must act, at least let them act under their official responsibility.

If we are not much mistaken, we have demonstrated that a nomination to the presidency, by members of congress, is repugnant to the constitution; we shall now vindicate that instrument, by shewing that the measure, if it shall grow into usage, will also be dangerous to the rights of the people, and to the purity and freedom of election. "If it shall grow into usage," and has it not already grown into usage? Is it not engraving itself upon our institutions, and acquiring strength after the manner of all other successful usurpations? Even now, acquiescence in the regular nomination at Washington, is considered by many as the touchstone of republicanism. The individuals, or the state that dare to exercise the right of independent choice, are denounced as schismatics and factionists; and if already an innovation so recent, and so flagrant, be called the regular nomination, what will be its influence, should time and repetition give it additional sanction? Let the encroachments of constituted authorities, upon every free government that has been undermined, furnish the answer. Should the practice become inveterate, we do not hesitate to say, that to promulgate a nomination will be to decree the election. The congress will appoint the president, and the constitutional electors will be mere officers, to register its edicts.

Would this change in our system produce beneficial results? At best it would endanger the independence of the executive, by giving to congress an influence over the measures of government, never contemplated by the constitution, and calculated to diminish the responsibility of the president, the people's only security for his faithful conduct in office. The chief magistrate of the union would

owe his elevation and continuance in office to a junta of congressmen, and not to the nation. A sovereign right of the states would be absorbed in congressional influence, or sacrificed to executive patronage; and an inestimable controul, provided by the constitution over the measures of the federal administration, and vested in the states, would be thus defeated and destroyed. But in truth, the general government would be made to depend upon itself, and upon its skill in generating a cabal through intrigue, and intriguing through a cabal.

If the heads of departments, with their clerks and the other persons holding offices of trust and profit under the United States, were to assemble in the individual capacities, as the capitol at Washington, and nominate a presidential candidate, would you not be disgusted and shocked? And yet do you believe that they are passive spectators of a regular caucus nomination? Mark the danger at least, that on some future occasions, men whose station and standing, nay, whose very bread may depend upon the continuance of the same administration, will cultivate the opportunities of private friendship, of official intercourse, of familiar hospitality, of public magnificence; will labour the understandings, engage the hearts, work upon the weaknesses, and perhaps tamper with the purity of your representatives, collected as they will be in the very focus of executive influence; and having made them fitting instruments, will remain in the background, but in fact promulgate the nomination of their own peculiar patron and protector, or perpetuate the succession, if not in the same family, at least in the same dynasty.

How far the germ of these evils is already observable, we do not wish to inquire; but rather proceed to indicate another danger which would grow out of this change of system, and become daily more imminent from the increasing importance of this country. As yet, we hope, no foreign power has attempted to influence the elections of our chief magistrate. The thing is impossible, so long as the provisions of the constitution are observed in spirit as well as letter. While the choice of that officer is in truth made by the states, no foreign agents can approach them or bias their suffrages; and thus a calamity that has harassed Poland, Venice, Genoa, the Papal See, and almost every other people having an elective executive, is effectually guarded against. But as we rise in the scale of nations, should we concentrate the real electors (or at least those whose nomination is to be received as the first regular step to an election) in the one place, and that too the residence of foreign ministers, whose diplomatic office it often is to conciliate and corrupt, can we be so foolish as to suppose, that the opportunity would be neglected by them of obtaining a hold in our councils, and a controul over our government?

These are our convictions respecting the unconstitutional and dangerous of congressional nominations. Were we not restrained by respect for many of the individuals concerned in them, we would expatiate on them as a public offence; and did we not hope that general reprobation would henceforward abolish their use, we should urge their prohibition by law. Very different indeed is the nomination by individual states. Though not enjoined by the constitution, it is perfectly consistent with its principles, and can never produce any inconvenience but the number of candidates; which would at least be accompanied with the advantage of affording a greater opportunity for judicious selection. The inconvenience, however, is merely imaginary, and would never have practical existence. Mutual forbearance, reciprocal intercourse, and good understanding, would be established by the common interest. Circumstances would almost always decide which state should nominate. The acknowledged celebrity or worth of some prominent character; the propensity to rotation; the importance of some member of the confederation, and other similar considerations, would combine to indicate the state from which the chief magistrate, for a term, should be taken. If any one among them should be perpetually urging pretensions and claiming superiority, or should seek to retain to itself a monopoly of honors or power, the spirit of independence, equality, and participation in the other states, would check its pretensions and teach it moderation.

The state of New York has now, for the first time, put forward its claim; and examine, we request you, whether some considerations do not strongly mark the propriety of its giving the next president to the union.

The state of Virginia has, for twenty out of the twenty-four years of our present government, enjoyed that honor; she seems desirous of possessing it for another term, and perhaps for as many more as the patience of her sister states will permit. We cheerfully acknowledge the worth and services of the magistrates she has produced; nor do we doubt her competency to furnish a brilliant succession for many years to come; but may we be permitted to suggest, that the patriotism and wisdom of the union are not entirely confined within her precincts. If her pretensions be founded on exclusive, or even superior talents, they are offensive to her compeers, and we think unjust. If other states then, can furnish able and intelligent chief magistrates, there are reasons of no light moment, why she should for a time, retire from the competition.

Perhaps if the original framers of our constitution, had inserted a provision for the practical rotation of the presidential office, in the different states, and in some proportion to their population or importance, they would have given an additional proof of their wisdom and foresight. If they had done so, we should not now have occasion to

allude to jealousies, the existence of which it is vain to deny, however deeply they may be lamented, as gradually undermining the habitual attachment of many for our confederation. We will abstain from inquiring into their justice; it is unnecessary; since to render them dangerous to our prosperity, it is not essential, that they should be well founded; it is sufficient if they exist. They will in that case equally rankle in the heart, bias the understanding, and animate the affection of whoever feels them. To what are they chiefly owing? Why is Virginia influence a bye word in the Eastern states, while no one talks of South Carolina or Pennsylvania influence? We are not disposed to facilitate our success, by encouraging those jealousies against Virginia influence. The best interests of the union require that they should be allayed; but we are convinced they never will cease, while the cause or pretext for them remains. Virginia herself, as she values the confederation, should abdicate a situation, which she cannot retain without wounding the feelings of her associates, and weakening their attachment for our union.

Another evil has resulted from the protracted continuance of power in the same quarter. The agricultural and commercial states are beginning to be arrayed against each other, and to feel as if they were not connected by a common bond of interest. The errors of this sentiment we disclaim; but the practical merchants and farmers are prone, in every country, to regard each other as rivals; nor will either party ever patiently submit to be long and exclusively governed by the other, or regulated by its peculiar views or tenets. The population and resources of this state place it in the first rank, while its local situation makes it one of the fit depositories of power, until the distrust and suspicions alluded to shall have subsided, or the evils they complain of shall be remedied. It is a middle state, not deeply tinged with either northern or southern prejudices: it is eminently commercial, and most extensively agricultural; it would be likely to hold the balance even, and to conciliate the interests and good wishes of all.

These considerations would be weighty, even in times of profound peace; but the existence of a war, furnishes another and a most powerful argument. New York is indeed a middle state, but she is also emphatically a frontier state. Whatever disasters may be produced by the war, she will share them as a common calamity, and probably she will also feel them with peculiar severity, as inflicted on herself. We do not utter this in the spirit of querulous repining; nature has placed us in the post of danger, and our hearts and principles determine us to defend it as the post of honor. But if our borders are to be harassed, and, per adventure, our territory invaded; if our opulent and defenceless capital seems to invite the foe, does not the welfare of the union at large, require that its resources should be directed to the protection of those exposed places, by a statesman to whom their wants are perfectly known, and who would guard them with affectionate zeal? If to this a gument of general concern, we added somewhat of personal gratification, should we do wrong? If we said—now that our fortune is so peculiarly tried; that our population is to be poured out; that our property may be laid waste; that our individual happiness is put at risk, we offer you a chief magistrate, whose republican principles you cannot doubt; of whose competency and talents to discharge the duties of that station, you are well convinced; gratify us in his election. He enjoys our utmost confidence; he inherits the blood, the principles, and the firmness of that hero, whom ourselves and our fathers long delighted to honor; who was the guide and guardian of this his native state, when the same enemy formerly desolated our lands, and burnt our towns; who was never appalled in its utmost difficulties, and whose valor and wisdom eminently contributed to the ultimate triumph of America. If we even urged a persuasive like this, is there an American heart, susceptible of feeling or gratitude, that would repel our claim?

There remains to us another subject, which we most reluctantly enter upon, and which we shall endeavor to discuss with candor and forbearance. We are not enemies to Mr. Madison, and should regret exceedingly if we were considered as disparaging his reputation. Much as we esteem Mr. Clinton, and desirous as we are of his success, we should reject it, if it could only be accomplished by vilifying his competitor; but the merits of the one do not require to be set off by censuring the other. Mr. Madison has passed through a life of honor and public services, and has been already exalted to the first office in the union. His friends are desirous of his enjoying it for another term, and allege something like usage in the election of his predecessors. It is true Washington, the idol of all parties, was so exalted; it is true Jefferson, the idol of the republicans obtained the same distinction; but a magistrate may be very meritorious, without deserving the honors conferred upon Washington and Jefferson.

We are not aware of any advantage that can result by establishing the rule, that every President, who is not extremely disapproved of, shall be re-elected. The next step would be, that some favorite public servant, as a proof of our peculiar esteem, will be continued in office for three successive terms; and soon, three terms will be the ordinary period for a President whom it is not intended to displace; thus we shall imperceptibly slide into an election for life, and perhaps towards an hereditary succession. Eight years are not an improper length of time as a reward for uncommon services; but there is no reason why they