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Political.

AN ORATION,

Delivered before the Washington Benevolent Society of Massachusetts, on the 30th day of April, 1813, being the anniversary of the first Inauguration of President Washington.

BY JOSIAH QUINCY.

(Continued.)

The degree, in which the proportions of political power, among the states of this Union, have been changed, by time and usurpation, since the adoption of the constitution, admits of a very varied and extensive illustration. I shall confine myself to the statement of one or two facts, rather by way of indicating the state of things than describing it. This cannot be done, in all its relations, within the limits of the present occasion. To show the progress of political power to the south and the west, I state this fact. At the time of the adoption of the federal constitution, the three states, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio, did not exist. Their territories contained somewhat more than one hundred thousand souls; and had no perceptible weight in the national scale. They now, together, contain a white population, somewhat exceeding that of Massachusetts. Of commerce and navigation, they have none; at least none worth the estimate. The revenue of customs, which they have paid, since the adoption of the constitution is, scarcely, an item in the books of the Treasury. Yet these states, on every question touching the interest of that commerce and navigation, so vital to the prosperity of Massachusetts, have twenty two votes in the house of Representatives, while she has twenty; and while Massachusetts has two votes in the Senate, they have six!

Without reference to other considerations and viewed only in relation to the most familiar notions of equity and equality, is it not monstrous that a mass of population, scarcely more than equal to that of Massachusetts, recent, of twenty years collection, for the most part emigrants from Europe, or the elder states, located a thousand miles from the seaboard, knowing nothing of its interest, caring nothing about them, in fact, having a direct interest in embarrassing them, should have one tenth more weight in the house of Representatives, and three times more in the Senate, than the ancient, rich, intelligent, powerful population of Massachusetts? A people, whose instructions, habits, manners, industry, interest and principles have been nearly two centuries consolidating; a people, who have arts and arms and virtues; a state, which alone possesses nearly half a million of tons of shipping; and all the capital and cultivated intelligence necessary for its employ?

Take another fact. The states of Virginia and Georgia, together, possess a white population, but a little exceeding that of Massachusetts. Yet through the effect of the slave ratio, and the principles of the constitution, while Massachusetts possesses, in the Senate, and the house of Representatives, twenty two votes, they possess thirty three! All these states which I have named, Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, have paid into the treasury of the U. States, on customs, scarcely more than \$15,000,000 since the adoption of the constitution. The single state of Massachusetts has paid more than fifty two millions net revenue. Yet upon every question touching the life blood of our commerce, while Massachusetts, in both branches of the legislature, has but twenty two votes, those states have sixty one. I state one other fact. The power attained, in the house of Representatives, by the effect of the slave ratio is twenty votes. The state of Massachusetts has but twenty. So that this great and ancient and once proud, but now, constitutionally speaking, humble commonwealth, has absolutely no more weight in the national scale, than a species of beings, in fact as destitute of political rights, as the brute creation. Upon theoretical principles, can any thing be more shameful? The practical effect is worse than the theory.

Perhaps, however, it may be said that this evil is temporary, and that the causes, which have produced this inequality, are ceasing to operate. The fact is, directly the reverse. The causes are permanent, progressive and unlimited. All the policy of the government is shaped to strengthen them. The constitution, itself, has been violated in order to augment the oppressive preponderancy of that quarter of the country.

Natural causes, and the embarrassment of the industry of the Atlantic states, still continue to augment the population of that country, with an unparalleled rapidity. Within the next ten years, an addition of three more states, on this side of the Mississippi, is spoken of confidently. Some say there will be more. But be they more, or be they less, of this rest assured, that they will be multiplied with no sort of reference either to the convenience, or the necessities even of the people of those territories, but solely with reference to the political wants of the leaders of the predominating cabal at the seat of government, and with a distinct view, to create a new counterpoise, in case the political scale appear to vibrate in favor of the interests of this quarter of the Union.

Even this state of things, humiliating as it is, might be endured. Notwithstanding it presents little comfort, for the present, and less consolation for the future; notwithstanding it indicates this strange condition, as the result of our political association; that the new states govern the old; the unsettled the settled; that the influence

of emigrants prevail over those of the ancient natives; and that a black population outbalances the white; that from woods, and lakes, and desert wildernesses, legislators issue, controuling the destinies of a seaboard people, paralyzing all their interests and darkening all their prospects;—all this notwithstanding, still the condition might be endured, upon the principle that it was the fair result of the compact.—We had agreed that all the people, within the ancient limits of the United States, should be placed on the same footing, and had granted undoubted right to Congress to admit states, at will, within the ancient limits; we had done more, we had submitted to throw our rights and liberties, and those of our children, into common stock with the southern men and their slaves; and had agreed to be content with what remained, after they and their successors were served. We had signed the bond, and notwithstanding the enormous inequality of the condition, honor might, in such case have required that we should be silent concerning our best rights. At least, in such case, want of sense, or want of spirit, would find an ample refuge from self reproach, in the acknowledged solemnity of the obligations.

But what shall we say to (what is called) the admission of Louisiana into the Union? What shall we say to the annexation of a territory greater than the whole of the old United States? What, to the asserted power, indeed, already in one instance exercised, of making states beyond the Mississippi, as unlimited in point of number as of extent? The indifference with which that usurpation of power has been viewed in this part of the country, is an event, as astonishing as it is ominous.—Notwithstanding the general nature of the terms of the constitution, relative to the admission of new states, there is not a shadow of pretence, from the history of the period and the known state of public opinion, at the time of its adoption, that the admission of any states were contemplated, or authorized except those within the ancient limits. And yet we have witnessed this astonishing seizure of power made by the general government, under the influence of the southern and western states, almost without a murmur.—A seizure of power, which unsettles all the proportions of political influence guaranteed by the constitution, as it came out of the hands of Washington. Bad and humiliating, in this respect, as was the condition of Massachusetts, under the principles of the real constitution, [yet] under the principles of the constitution [as] modified by this usurpation, its condition is an hundred fold worse. Yet none of us seem to realize it. Louisiana is spoken of as being an integral part of this nation, with as much indifference, as tho' it had been admitted by an unquestionable authority. We hear of the intention of cutting it up into new states, with as much unconcern, as though we had no interest in the matter. Yet every additional state augments that depressing inequality of political influence, which already grinds our interests in the dust; rivets our chains, and makes more certain and hopeless the condition of our political servitude.

What think you would the spirit of Washington have said upon this subject? Could he recognize our present constitution, ridden by this *In cubas*, as that constitution which he had framed and recommended to this country? Is it not notorious, that the extent of territory, even as it existed, at the time of the adoption of the constitution, was among the most serious objections to the success of the experiment? What said Washington upon the topic? "Is there no doubt whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. It is well worth a full and fair experiment." Yet, scarcely had twenty years elapsed, the ancient limits not yet half peopled [when] by an usurpation, as palpable, as it is, to us, ruinous, new territories have been added, (as it is called) to the United States of double the ancient extent! An equality in political rights with the old United States has been extended to a mixture of Frenchmen, Spaniards, emigrant Americans, Creoles and Negroes. Already the whole weight of the state of Massachusetts is neutralized, by this usurpation, in the Senate of the U. S. And soon the present miserable remnant of its political power will be trampled under the hoofs of a parcelled race of new states, to come rushing into sovereign influence, from those boundless woods and prairies. Is this that "full and fair experiment," of the practicability of a republican government, over the ancient extent, which Washington recommended? Before the admission of new regions of unlimited extent, would not the spirit of Washington have dictated that the result of the experiment within the ancient limits should first have been satisfactorily ascertained? If the result of a republican experiment, was, in his judgement, uncertain, within the ancient limits on account of their extent, is it not altogether hopeless, now that those limits are more than doubled? The truth is, that this annexation of Louisiana to the United States, is as irreconcilable with the spirit of a republican government, as it is unauthorized by the principles of our constitution. In fact, the influences, which settled that question, had no regard for either the one or the other. In its true point of view, and considered according to its real nature, the admission (as it is called) of Louisiana into the Union was a political intrigue, having for its object, to shift the balance of power still farther to the south and the west; and being intended by extending the sphere of population, and by increasing the ability to make new states to secure irredeemably, the pre-

ponderancy of the influences of that quarter; and perfect the political insignificance of this part of the country.

This, then, is the undeniable condition of the people of the commonwealth of Massachusetts.—That proportion of political power which they possessed at the time of the adoption of the constitution, is gone; and the proportion which remains has no one characteristic of equality or justice, whether we take age or intelligence, or enterprise or wealth, or physical strength or population, as the measure of what is just and equal. This proportion, thus diminished is every day diminishing still further, in a geometrical ratio, by the operation of changes, partly the effects of the fair principles of our association, and partly of usurpation. Such is the result of that "experience" to which Washington refers us as the "test of every constitution."—Is this a state of things which ought to give content to wise and virtuous minds?

Let no man startle at this question, as though it was a veil thrown over some dreadful image, which the mind dares not distinctly contemplate. Inquiries of this kind belong to the condition of freemen. They are sanctioned by the spirit and tenor of the constitution. Corrupt men in power, who are trampling upon the people's rights and laying snares for their liberties, will always stigmatise such inquiries as schemes for the dissolution of the Union. But what says the spirit of Washington?—"The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power by dividing and distributing it into different depositaries, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal, against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern: some of them in our own country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment, in a way which the constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation." Not only are the opinion of the people, and the power of the states, the natural "guardians of the public weal," and the declared constitutional resort, in cases of usurpation, or of manifest changes in the distribution of constitutional power, dangerous to political safety; but also there is in the nature of things, paramount obligations which make such resort impious as well as constitutional. As it is with the people of every state, so it is with the people of this commonwealth—the individuals composing this state owe to the people of the commonwealth of Massachusetts an allegiance original, inherent, native and perpetual. True it is, that the people of this commonwealth have transferred a certain specified portion of allegiance, originally due to them from the individuals composing their state to a certain extrinsic association, called the United States. This transferred portion of allegiance is not only limited in its nature; but it is also conditional. The condition is that the principles of the constitution should be preserved inviolate. Whether any such violation have occurred, or whether it be such as essentially affects the securities of their rights and liberties, are questions which the people of each of the associated states are competent, not only to discuss, but to decide. And we, in this commonwealth, have reason to thank the Great Giver of every good gift, that he has bestowed upon this people, not only the right to make, but the power to support, any decision to which they may be called, by a manifest violation of their liberties. If the people of the commonwealth of Massachusetts shall ever become slaves it will be from choice and not from nature. It will be, not because they have not the power to maintain their freedom, but because they are unworthy of it. The question recurs—Is this, our political state, safe or honorable?

As to those who maintain, if, indeed, there be any such, that the political rights of a state are safe; and that its prosperity is sufficiently secure, notwithstanding, it either has no proportion of political power, or a very small proportion in comparison with the greatness of its interests, I know not how to reply. An assertion of this kind exhibits so limited an acquaintance with the nature of the human heart, and with the history of man, that the who should make it, can scarcely be deemed the subject of argument. Certainly the plainest dictates of reason teaches, that as among the independent nations, no single nation is safe except in proportion to its physical power. There is no more friendship among states, in politics, than there is friendship among men, in trade. If an old, rich, laborious, plodding state become associated, in a political compact, with new, desperate and cunning states, in such a way that the whole or a great proportion of the political power should be vested in these last states, is there need of any ghost to tell us what would be the result? Is it not inevitable that the policy of an association, thus constituted, would be so conducted as to turn the wealth of that rich state into the coffers of the predominating state, and its population into their territories? The temptation is too strong for man, in the ordinary states of human virtue to resist. Yet, we every day hear the inquiry made—"Have the predominating influences of the southern and western states, any interest, in embarrassing our commerce or navigation?" To this I answer,—*"They have embarrassed it. They have prostrated it."* I should think this was answer enough. That it is embarrassed, that it is prostrated, I think no man will deny. As little can it be de-

nied that they have done it. Does any man believe that had the influence of Massachusetts, or of the other commercial states predominated, that the course, which has been adopted, would have been the resort, as the means of relief from such external difficulties as those, with which the nation has been pressed? Had New England, or N York, stood alone under circumstances of similar foreign embarrassment, would they, or either of them have resorted to proclamations, restrictions, non-intercourse, embargo, and gun boats? Would the navy have been neglected until the moment of war? Would the supports, after the war was declared, have remained thus wholly defenceless? Should we have marched into Canada to avenge impressment? Or on that point, in the relative state of our naval force, would war have been either declared or continued? Or if it had been, would it not have been differently conducted? This was the measure which preceded it, and the mode of carrying it on, are all, undeniably southern and western policy; and not the policy of the commercial states. Now it is in my apprehension, of little importance, if the vital interests of the commonwealth of Massachusetts are destroyed, whether the blow be given, through ignorance, indifference, or design. Under these influences they are destroyed. And if the apathy of the commercial states continue, and the present spirit of party render them blind to their natural interests, the policy, which has wrought this destruction, will be perpetuated. This policy perpetuated, we may call ourselves what we please; in the eye of reason and common sense we are slaves. And I add, for I know the nature of the predominating influences of those states—slaves to no very desirable masters.

The question, so often agitated, concerning the interest which the predominating influences of the south and west have to embarrass commerce is, in fact, of more curiosity than use.—The mere interest of a state never did, and never will shape its policy except in those rare times when such high minded men as Washington govern.—The Protean herd of ordinary statesmen, such as always will govern the U. States, the present proportions of political power continuing, never inquire how the interests of a people are to be served, but how their own power shall be perpetuated.

Such men lay the foundation of their power, in the passion and prejudices of the country, particularly of those sections, which possess the predominating influences. These are, in these U. States, undeniably those of the south and the west. Now the passions of a people, far inland, always did, and always will tend to jealousy and envy of the seaboard; and lead to a course of policy depressing to its prosperity.—Although many individuals, in such sections, may entertain juster and more liberal ideas, yet these opinions are those, which unavoidably penetrate the mass of their population. The reason is obvious.—It is the tendency of commerce and navigation to introduce into seaboard states, a rapid increase of wealth, and a population, compact, active, enterprising, intelligent and powerful. It is impossible, that states, which, from their situation, far inland, cannot share, or but very remotely, these advantages, should not look upon the wealth and strength of the seaboard, increasing in a very great relative disproportion of their own, without some fear and a mixture of envy.—Hence, there insensibly grows up in those sections, a disposition to check the prosperity of the seaboard, and above all a policy to embarrass and render uncertain the employment of capital and population on the ocean; and to give to both an inland direction. These dispositions, they will carefully conceal from the world, and perhaps even from themselves. But they must exist, because they are natural to men, in such circumstances, and because ambitious men, who would control those sections, are careful to instil them, if out of power, and to gratify them if in it, for the purpose of obtaining that control over the passions of such sections, as is necessary to effect the ends of their own ambition.

History shows, that such dispositions have always existed, in inland states towards seaboard states. That they are the natural result of the human passions, placed in such situations, will not be denied. Our experience is perfectly conformable with nature and history.

The men, who now govern this country, laid the first foundations of their power, by exciting in the inland states a jealousy of the Atlantic and commercial states. The policy of Washington was strictly commercial. The men who now govern the U. States, commenced their career of opposition to his influence, by appealing to the passions and fears of the interior, relative to the views and policy of the seaboard.—Washington warned the southern and western states against them without effect. He foretold, that these men would be satisfied with "nothing short of a change in his system of policy." The result has proved his prescience. They are in power. The whole system of his policy is changed. In other words, a policy friendly to commerce is pulled down, and one, hostile to it, is erected on the ruins of his system.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Strap,

Will stand at twenty-five dollars, and not twenty dollars the season as erroneously printed in the bills.

HENRY COTLEN.

Tarborough March 21st

Washington's Valedictory.