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BY GEORGE HOWARD,

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## DOMESTIC.

### LETTER FROM MR. CALHOUN.

The citizens of Edgefield village, S. C. having invited Mr. Calhoun to a public dinner, the following is his reply declining the invitation:—

Fort Hill, March 27th, 1833.

Gentlemen—I have been honored by your note of the 18th inst. inviting me in behalf of my friends in the vicinity of Edgefield, to partake of a public dinner, to be given at such time as would suit my convenience.

In declining to accept this testimony of the approval of my public conduct, in the trying scenes through which I have so lately passed, I am governed by the course to which I have adhered throughout the arduous and noble struggle, which this State has maintained in the cause of liberty and the Constitution, for so many years, and not from any indifference to the honor intended, nor want of respect for those who have tendered it, in a manner so kind, and with an approbation so warm and flattering, as to command my most profound gratitude.

Foreseeing from the commencement of this controversy, that the part, which a sense of duty compelled me to take, would, from the position I occupied, expose the State, as well as myself, to the imputation of false and unworthy motives, and thereby tend to weaken the sacred cause, for which she contended, I deemed it my duty, in order to obviate, as far as practicable, such effect, to decline accepting all such testimonials of the public approval of my course, as has been offered me. This originating in a sense of duty, has been in strict accordance with my feelings. Having no personal object in view, I have looked singly to an honest and faithful discharge of what I believed to be my duty, regardless of the effects on my future prospects, or even on the standing I may have acquired by past services with a large portion of my fellow citizens, with whom it has and still continues to be my misfortune to differ, in reference to the public interest, at this important crisis. The reason which has heretofore governed my conduct, must still continue to influence me. The struggle to preserve the liberty and Constitution of the country, and to arrest the corrupt and dangerous tendency of the government, so far from being over, is not more than fairly commenced. In making this assertion, I do not intend to say that we have not gained already an important advantage. Commencing the contest, as the State did, alone, and under so many disadvantages—against a system apparently so immovably established and sustained by so large a majority and so powerful an interest; opposed and denounced both by the administration and the opposition—to come off not only without defeat, but with decided success is indeed a triumph. In spite of all those difficulties, we have upheld and successfully asserted our doctrines, and proved by actual experience, that the rejected and reviled right of nullification is not, as its opponents asserted, revolution or disunion, but is that high, peaceable and efficient remedy, that great conservative principle of the system, which we claim it to be, and as it has proved, that, too, after all the usual remedies had failed, and when, without it none other re-

mained, but secession, the last resort of an oppressed State, but which, like some powerful but dangerous medicine, cannot be prescribed till the disease has become more dangerous than the remedy, and when the life of the patient, with or without, is almost despaired of. Nor let any one suppose that I have stated the facts too strongly, in saying that we have successfully asserted our doctrines. To these assertions must be attributed the recent adjustment of the tariff, which, whatever objections there may be to some of the details, there can be no division of opinion on the point, that the principle for which the State contended, that the duties ought to be imposed for revenue, and that no more ought to be raised than the economical wants of the government may demand, is openly and explicitly acknowledged by the government. Time, it is true, has been liberally allowed for the gradual termination of the system, in order to avoid the shock and losses of individuals, which necessarily follow all sudden transitions, even from an erroneous to a correct principle of legislation; but I feel I hazard little in asserting, that the system will expire at the appointed time, never more to be revived. For this great result, you owe little to me, or any other individual. It is the work of the State—the truth of the doctrines for which she contended, and the firm and heroic zeal with which she has been sustained by her sons, in asserting them; and by none more so than by those of Edgefield, a district which has distinguished itself among the foremost for its union and promptitude in this great contest. It is, I repeat, to the noble resolve of her sons, to prefer the Constitution and liberty to life itself, to which, under Providence, we are to attribute this success of our righteous cause.

But let us not deceive ourselves by supposing that the danger is past. We have but checked the disease. If one evil has been remedied, another has succeeded; the force act in the place of the protective system; a measure striking directly at the fundamental principle of the Constitution, and deliberately passed to place on the statute book, and thereby to give legal sanction to a theory of the Constitution, utterly hostile to that entertained by us, and, I may add, almost the entire South. I rest not this assertion on inference. What I state was openly avowed in debate, and among others by its leading advocate, the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts, who conceded that if the theory be true, that the Constitution is a compact, formed by the people of the several States, as distinct sovereign communities, and is binding between them as such, then would the bill be, as we have asserted it to be, directly opposed to the fundamental principles of the Constitution, and utterly subversive of that instrument; and that the bill could be vindicated only on the opposite view, which he maintained, and on which he advocated its passage, the view which regarded the people of these States as one nation, and the government as possessing the exclusive right of interpreting, in the last resort, its own powers; and thus practically substituting for the Constitution the will of the majority, with the right of assuming at discretion whatever powers it might think proper, and to enforce their exercise, however oppressive and unconstitutional, at the point of the bayonet, or even with the noose of a halter. Such now is our Constitution as attempted to be established by an existing law of the land; and such will be the Constitution in fact, should this odious bill not be resisted, till it be erased from the statute book. If it be not resisted—if by our acquiescence, the principles on which it rests be practically established, then will there be an end to our constitutional and limited government, and, with it, to liberty and the Constitution, for to expect to preserve either, under such a govern-

ment, would be one of the vainest thoughts that ever entered into the imagination of man.

The theory of our Constitution, which is thus attempted to be established by law—a theory which denies that the Constitution is a compact between the States, and which traces all its powers to a majority of the American people, or in other words, which denies the federal character of the government, and asserts that it is a consolidated system, is of recent origin, avowed for the first time but three years since, and first officially proclaimed and asserted within the last few months. There was a party, it is said, in the Convention which framed the Constitution, in favor of consolidation; but it is a fact perfectly established by the journals of its proceedings, that they were defeated in that design; and from the dissolution of that body till the time stated, all parties, the federal as well as the republican, professed, at least, to believe that ours was a federal system of government; to use the language of Fisher Ames, one of the most zealous and distinguished of the former party, "a republic of States arrayed in a federal Union." The dangerous heresy, of which the odious force bill is the first fruit, after having been thus suppressed in the Convention, was revived, under the belief that it was the certain and effectual means of fixing on the country forever the unequal, unjust, and unconstitutional system, which so long oppressed the staple States, and is now placed among the acts of the government for future use; like fetters forged and fitted to the limbs of the States, and hung up to be used, as occasion may hereafter require. If it be permitted to remain there quietly, the time will come, when it will certainly be employed for the use intended; and we may rest assured, that an army of fifty thousand bayonets, encamped in the midst of the staple States, would not half so certainly subject them to the will of a lawless, unchecked, and unrestrained majority, who would not fail to wage a war under the color of legislation on their property and prosperity, more oppressive and more degrading, than would be a tribute exacted by actual force.

But, as formidable as would be this measure, if acquiesced in, it may be easily overthrown, if promptly and spiritedly opposed; which, I may add, would do more to restore the Constitution and reform the government, than any other conceivable event. I found my belief, as to the facility with which it may be overthrown, if properly opposed, on the character of the measure itself, its palpable unconstitutionality, in many particulars; its dangerous tendency; its novelty; the daring assumptions on one side, and denial of facts on the other, as necessary to sustain it; the absence of any direct and powerful pecuniary interest (as in the protective system) to support it; but above all, on the deep conviction which the weaker portion of the Union must shortly feel, if it does not already, of a concert of sentiment and action, not only to arrest the measures in question, but to guard against a recurrence of similar danger.

Another, and an important advantage, in this contest, will also result from the character of the measure. It will effectually separate the real from the pretended friends of State rights; a class that has done the cause of constitutional liberty more injury, than the most open and bitter opponents. To advocate or support the measure, is to be a consolidationist, in the strongest and most odious sense, by whatever profession accompanied; and of course all who advocate and support it, will forfeit all claims to be ranked among the friends of State rights.

Looking to the effects which must follow its overthrow, we shall have much to animate us in the contest. The point at issue is not, whether this or that particular

policy of the general government be right or wrong, but whether the general government be a consolidated government of unrestricted powers, or a Federal Republic of States with limited powers; an issue for the first time presented, and on the decision of which depends the liberty and the Constitution of the country, and, I may add, the very existence of the Southern States. Let us not forget, in this great contest, that we are acting, in maintaining the rights of the States, in our appropriate sphere of political duties; and that the due performance is not only essential to our security, but to the preservation of our system of government.

On maintaining the balance between the delegated and reserved powers, as established in the Constitution, the success and duration of our novel and complex, but beautiful and perfect system of government, obviously depends. Experience has now shown where the pressure and benefit of that unequal moneyed action, which necessarily results from the fiscal operations of all governments, in a greater or less degree, fall. We now know that the pressure must be ours, as the weaker party, at least in the present condition of the country. To those who profit by this unequal moneyed action, may be safely confided the defence of the delegated powers; and the passage of the force bill, as well as the history of the last sixteen years, clearly demonstrates that there will be no lack of zeal, on their part, in the discharge of that duty. To us belongs the defence of the reserved powers; and if we but perform that high duty with the same zeal on our part, the balance will be preserved, and the system be safe. In this conflict between the two powers, the patronage of the general government will necessarily be on the side of the stronger party, who will be in authority; and let us constantly bear in mind, that this great advantage cannot be counterbalanced, but by maintaining, in full force and authority, the reserved powers and the sovereignty of the States. Nor let us forget, that if the general government and the delegated authority represent our power and majesty, that the sovereignty of the States & the reserved powers constitute the citadel of our liberty.

In this action and re-action of our system, between the two, let us not repine at the part allotted us. If it has its disadvantages, it has also its advantages. What we lose, in a moneyed point of view, will be more than compensated in a moral and political point of view, if we but properly discharge our duty to our country and ourselves. To restrict the general government to its proper sphere; to guard against the approaches of corruption; to correct that tendency to despotic rule, so natural to governments of every description; these are the high duties assigned to us, to perform which, the highest qualities, intellectual and moral, are required; but which, if faithfully performed, will certainly be followed by their acquisition—an acquisition, in whatever light regarded, worth more than the wealth of the world.

With great respect, I am, &c.

J. C. CALHOUN.

M. Laborde, J. Terry, and J. P. Carroll, Esqs. Committee.

☞ A boy named Zeba Wilbur, recently hung himself in his father's blacksmith shop, in Baynham, Mass. He was discovered and liberated just as his spirit was on the confines of the eternal world. On being questioned as to the reason of his hanging himself, he replied, that he had heard so much about people's hanging themselves, that he was anxious to know how it felt.

☞ An assassin was hung at New Orleans on the 9th ult. named Sante-ro, who confessed to have committed seventeen murders.