

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

"I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man."—Thomas Jefferson.

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TERMS:

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ADDRESS

Of the Convention of Democratic Young Men, assembled at Harrisburg on the 4th of July, to the Freemen of Pennsylvania.

FELLOW CITIZENS:—

In directing your attention to the present political aspect of the Commonwealth, and the various features by which it is characterized, we are aware of having undertaken a task of no small magnitude. Consideration of the importance which much necessarily attach to the results of the contest in which the people of Pennsylvania are now engaged,—important not alone to this Commonwealth, but to the Union at large—we have endeavored to divest ourselves of the passions and prejudices of the hour, in order that we may present to your consideration some facts and reflections in that spirit of calmness, coolness and candor, which best becomes the narration of truth. Fully aware that we are addressing—not merely an enlightened, but also a virtuous people, we are warned against the indulgence of any disposition—could such have existence, to distort and discolor facts, or to reason falsely from admitted premises.

From the first formation of the present government of this country, two leading and opposing principles have been in perpetual collision. The one prefers institutions, which, though republican in name, shall be strongly marked by aristocratical features, bordering in some traits upon the essentials of a limited monarchy—the other proclaims equality of political rights, and, avowing the sovereignty of the people, is not afraid that the people shall be entrusted with the conduct and regulation of their own concerns. That, would sacrifice the mass for the aggrandizement of the few; this, insists upon "the greatest good of the greatest number." It is not necessary, and it would be superfluous, to illustrate these positions by more than a reference to the historic page of the last half century, and we appeal to all who have lived and acted during that period. The recollection of the past, and the observation of the present, will alike point, to a party, which, though assuming from time to time various names, and forming new combinations, has never for a moment lost sight of the one grand object of its association—if not the overthrow of, at least the effecting of a great change in, the democratic features of our system of government. It made war upon the administration, and assailed the character of Thomas Jefferson; it systematically opposed the measures of Mr. Madison—it waged an incessant warfare alike upon the public acts and private life of Gen. Jackson—and seeking to destroy the hold which the abilities and integrity of President Van Buren have given him upon the confidence of his countrymen, it seeks to cripple and paralyze his administration by an opposition of the most ferocious and indiscriminate character.

Professing to be composed of the admirers and supporters of the Constitution of the United States, it contends, as it always has contended, for so lax a construction of that instrument, as must end in the entire destruction of the instrument itself. Declaring its readiness ever to bow to the will of

a majority of the people, it has, here and elsewhere, openly avowed an intention to defeat that will, by bringing so many candidates into the field as to prevent a choice from being effected, and thus devolve the selection of a President upon Congress, with the view to practice the same species of fraud by which the elevation of John Quincy Adams to the executive chair was achieved. Though repeatedly defeated, it has as often returned to the contest, with a perseverance stimulated by the magnitude of the stake contended for. At one time apparently disorganized, it drops its name, and, claiming to be composed of new materials, again presents itself under the imposing title of "National Republicans," and this is, in its turn, abandoned for the seductive appellation of "Friends of the National System." Based on a pretence too gross to mislead the public mind, the assumption was not followed by the anticipated success; and now, regardless of the political opinions, the devoted patriotism, and the disinterested sacrifices with which the term of "Whigs" as associated, it has, and with sacrilegious hand, and a desperate boldness, characteristic of its leaders, ventured to usurp the sacred name of the fathers of our Revolution.

Made up of men differing in their views on questions of public policy, and agreeing only in the single object of pulling down the Democratic party from the ascendancy to which an approving people have advanced it, we behold these self-styled "Whigs" associated in Pennsylvania, with another party—if party it may be called—a monstrous creation owing its birth to frenzied fear and wide spread alarm, and its continued existence to falsehood and delusion, and which, acknowledging no other tie than opposition to the masonic fraternity, and, professedly, aiming at no other end than the destruction of the lodge, has already been turned aside from its path by the adroitness, and to gratify the ambition, of its leaders, and is now made to cherish what it affects to abhor—the votary of freemasonry.

Busied in the selection of an "available" candidate for the Presidency of the United States, this party, at the command of its new allies, has forgotten its distinctive feature, and is now preparing to support and, if that were possible, to elect to the highest office in these States, not only an adhering member of the lodge, but one who a short time since, in the language of scorn and indignation, rebuked anti-masonry for its presumption in addressing him on the subject of his masonic connection.

These are but a few of the enormities and inconsistencies of which these associated parties have been guilty, briefly, and imperfectly told. We do not recapitulate them because they are unknown to you, but because it is wholesome, at a time like this, to recur, frequently, to the opinions and actions of our antagonists that we may know how to estimate them, and be the better enabled to anticipate and counteract their designs.

Such are the parties now arrayed against each other. On the one hand, Democracy, the parent of free representative Government, with all its purity of purpose and soundness of doctrine—on the other, Federalism, with all its political errors and its ancient predilection for a strong central government, closely resembling monarchy; allied with anti-masonry, avowing no principle of action but one based on proscription and persecution.

Irrespective of the merits of the two candidates who have been presented to your choice, no good citizens, who loves his country and reveres her democratic institutions, can, for a moment, hesitate on which side to array himself. Relying on the correctness of the delineation we have given of these parties, and confident that the truth of the picture will be, at once, acknowledged by those who have been attentive and impartial observers of men and measures for the last few years, we might here desist from our task, and pointing to the doc-

trine and practice of Thomas Jefferson, and his distinguished democratic successors, rest content that a large majority of the people of the Keystone State, emulous of the example of their sires, and burning with the desire to rescue their beloved Commonwealth from the disgraceful thralldom which accident, and the late unfortunate division in our own ranks, has for a little time subjected her to, will eagerly deposit their votes in favor of the democratic candidate for Pennsylvania's executive chair DAVID RITTENHOUSE PORTER.

But custom, as well as propriety, demands that some notice should be taken of the respective merits and claims of the rival candidates for your favor.

In drawing a parallel between David R. Porter and Joseph Ritner, we shall confine ourselves to the contemplation of their public characters and public acts, and will deviate from this course, only, so far as may be necessary to vindicate the fair fame of our candidate against the malignant aspersions and "thrice refuted slanders" which have been so lavishly poured forth. We do not decline to "examine your ears against the stomach of your sense" with a comparison between the private lives of the two competitors, because we fear the result of such a contrast, but because we believe that such an enquiry, conducted as it must necessarily be, under the influence of inflamed party feelings, always ends in the adoption of falsehood and the wide spread circulation of calumnious error. Experience, too, teaches that however, for a time, such a course may detract from the strength and overcloud the prospects of the denounced candidate, there exists in the public bosom an innate love of truth which eventually causes a reaction, and the evil which was intended to be visited upon the aspersed, more frequently falls upon the heads of the traducees. We have all seen public men absolutely persecuted into the affections of the people; and, though dear to them before, calumny and detraction, long persisted in, has throned them in their "hearts core, eye in their heart or hearts," from whence all the exertions of their enemies have been powerless to pluck them.—Thus it was with Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Andrew Jackson and Simon Snyder, and so it has been and will be with the eminent man who now fills the Executive chair of the Union. Thus may it ever be, until men and parties discover that true policy, as well as a sense of propriety and honorable feeling, forbid the attempt to vilify the private character of a private citizen merely because he is nominated for office by a portion of his fellows. Entertaining these views, and therefore, in this particular declining to follow in the footsteps of our adversaries, we say to them "go on—however fertile may be your invention, and how numerous soever the falsehoods you may fling abroad, the democratic party stands ready to disprove them."

Of Joseph Ritner, the present incumbent, it may be truly said that nature never fashioned him for that which accidental fortune has made him. Without calling into question his domestic habits, of which we know nothing—or impeaching the existence of the private virtues which his friends may claim for him—it may be fearlessly asserted that he possesses not one statesmanlike quality.

Adhering to his own opinions in cases where his passions are aroused or his interest involved, with a tenacity which no reasoning, however cogent, can relax, in most other instances he yields himself, blindly, to the guidance of others, content that the dignity of his office should be made the stalking horse for their ambition, and that his power and patronage as Executive Magistrate, and his potent voice as a constituent part of the law making power, should be made subservient to the aggrandizement of some favorite—used to promote vicious and injurious legislation, or to defeat the wholesome action of the legislative will.

Without the knowledge to guide, or wis-

dom to decide aright, which so eminently distinguished the late President of the United States, he has used the veto power more frequently than it was ever before brought into operation in this State; and, in consequence, his opposition to the regular action of the two houses has been marked by gross inconsistencies and contradictions.

Devoured by an inordinate and morbid desire to be re-elected, he has not hesitated to stoop to the practice of childish trickery and miserable chicanery for the purpose of effecting his object, and calculating largely on the credulity of the people and their supposed ignorance of passing events, he seizes on any opinion or practice that may be popular or about to become so, and making it the subject of a message or a "proclamation," with hypocritical zeal, urges it upon the public attention; when it is well known that, in one instance, he was privately, and his friends publicly, opposed to his own recommendation, and in another, that what he enjoins with so much apparent earnestness, had already been resolved on by the corporations to which his "proclamation" is addressed.

Though Chief Magistrate of the "Key Stone of the federal arch," he has dared to calculate the value of the Union; and finding it, in his estimation, less worthy of preservation than the antimasonic faction, now "tottering to its fall," he has endeavored to stay its declining fortunes by calling to its aid the imported fanaticism and madness that seeks the immediate and unconditional emancipation of the slaves on the soil, or presents the alternative of an entire destruction of the confederacy. In order to seduce to his support, those who would not hesitate to involve us in civil and servile war, and to outrage all the best feelings of our nature, in the insane attempt to carry out their visionary schemes, he presumed to denounce an acknowledgment of the constitutional right of the Southern States, to regulate and modify their domestic institution as "a base bowing of the knee to the dark spirit of slavery." Lamenting, as we all do, the existence of this great evil among us, we have to add to our regrets the fact that the unadvised and fatal measures of the immediate abolitionist, so far from ameliorating the condition of the slave have imposed on the master, almost the necessity of adding to the weight of his chains and increasing the number of his fetters.—It is this melancholy reflection in connection with a foresight of the consequences which must, inevitably, follow the strengthened action of the abolitionists, which has checked the augmentation of their numbers and prevented the further extension of their dogmas, and when the anticipations entertained in 1836, that they would constitute a powerful sect in Pennsylvania is disappointed, the Governor is struggling to retrace his false step, and with what place he may, recede from the difficulty into which he had plunged himself.

But, "out of his own mouth do we condemn him." The message from which we quote his sentiments, must be regarded as conclusive on this point, and until in the same solemn manner he retracts what he has thus put forth as expressive of his deliberate opinion, Joseph Ritner must be viewed as the friend and supporter of a scheme fraught with disaster and ruin.

In illustration of some of the features of the governor's public character, and the course of his administration, we will detain you for a short time while we pass in review some of his public acts. Within the narrow limits necessarily assigned to this address, it would be, of course, impossible to enter upon a detailed history of the manner in which he has discharged his trust, or to point out all the reprehensible acts of which he has been guilty. A few must suffice, but these are of such a character, as to prove Mr. Ritner utterly unfit to occupy the high place to which accident has elevated him.

Among the most reprehensible of these, inasmuch as it evinced a total disregard of the opinions and wishes of his constituents,

may be mentioned his sanction of the recharter of the Bank of the United States. Owing to the dispute on the subject of the gubernatorial candidates which divided the democracy in 1835, the opposition succeeded in electing a majority of the members of the House of Representatives. Taking advantage of this accidental circumstance, and aware that the power thus acquired would not be prolonged beyond the then session, the Governor and his friends in the legislature, conceived the iniquitous design of reviving, for the period of thirty years, an institution which the public voice had once and again, condemned. Without a single petition from any quarter, or a request emanating from any number of citizens, a bill was introduced into the lower house, under a title calculated to mislead, by a committee to whom the subject did not belong; and lest the people in the exercise of their constitutional right, might remonstrate against the perpetration of this fraud, and thus impede, if not altogether defeat the design of the conspirators, the bill was hurried through the necessary forms with the most indecent haste, and received the signature of the Governor, when, without the slightest previous intimation, the community of Pennsylvania were astounded by the intelligence that an odious institution was recalled from the grave to which the popular voice had consigned it, with increased energies and augmented power.

We will not enlarge on this painful topic. All the facts attendant on the nefarious transaction are so deeply impressed upon your memories as to render it unnecessary. We may, however, be permitted to add, that so gross was this infraction of popular rights, and so dangerous to popular ascendancy, that the Convention which lately sat to propose amendments to the Constitution, by a vote comprising the assent of men of all parties, recommended the adoption of a constitutional clause prohibitory, in future, of a course of Legislation necessarily tending to corrupt and demoralize, by holding out an example of successful fraud as a temptation to abuse the power, temporarily delegated to our political agents.

If no other objection could be urged against Governor Ritner, his participation in, and approval of, this most disgraceful prostitution of power, it ought, of itself, to be sufficient to prevent his re-election. So far as Joseph Ritner and his advisers are concerned, the question is not one depending upon the utility or inutility of the Bank of the United States as a fiscal agent, or the benefits it confers, or the dangers it entails on the community. It ought to be sufficient, in the estimation of a virtuous people that the act which recalled it to existence was concocted in fraud, and consummated in iniquity.

This is an instance of his readiness to lend himself and his constitutional prerogative, to the promotion of vicious and injudicious legislation.

Permit us now to furnish an example of his willingness to sacrifice the public good, and to condemn an expression of the legislative will in a case where the supposed interest of a favorite demanded it at his hands.

It will be recollected that in December, 1837, the legislature passed a bill making partial provision for the further prosecution of our system of internal improvements.—Among the several appropriations, was one to the Gettysburg rail road, to pay off existing debts, accompanied by a direction to suspend further work on that road after the first of January, then next. This proviso was inserted because of the strong doubts entertained by the legislature, of the utility of the proposed road, and, in view of the embarrassed state of our finances and the heavy load of debt under which the state is groaning, from the desire to avoid unnecessary expenditure. But the chief favorite and principal director of the Governor was deeply interested in the Gettysburg rail road, and it was not his pleasure that the work upon it should be delayed. Will it be believed, that to gratify the wishes of