

GOV. GILMER'S DINNER SPEECH,

at Milledgeville, 10th inst.

Gentlemen—It is with great embarrassment that I rise to return you my thanks, for the honor you have done me, in the sentiments just expressed in relation to my character and public services. I am wholly unable to convey in words, the nature and extent of my feelings on the present occasion. My situation is novel indeed. Instead of meeting with a cold reception, from having been the instrument of the loss of party power, I find myself the subject of the most flattering distinction from this respectable assemblage of my political friends. Had the offering, which is now made of their good will and confidence, followed my induction into office, it would not have been received. I have no regard whatever for the honors attendant upon elevated stations. And yet my ambition is perhaps as ardent as others. I seek but to deserve and acquire, from my countrymen, the name of an honest man and faithful public servant. Your approbation of my conduct has been therefore too gratifying, to enable me to find expressions for my gratitude. And yet I would, if it were possible, render to this company a brief vindication of the course of policy which I have attempted to pursue in administering the Executive Department, and state some of the causes which have led to the result of the late election of Governor.

In my inaugural address, I stated to my fellow-citizens, that I considered myself the Chief Magistrate of the State, and not of a party.—For this expression I have received unmeasured abuse. It is known familiarly to all of you, that the heated party strife which had arrived at its acme in 1825, had, for some years, gradually subsided, as the measures of Governor Troup, in defence of the rights of the State, proved successful. The leader of the opposition party had removed from the State. I had received a large majority of the votes of that party. I then hoped that the time had arrived, when divisions among the people, arising from the quarrels and conflicting ambition of individuals, which had so long disgraced the State, might be healed, and parties formed upon principle alone. As one means of effecting this object, I have endeavored to fill all the offices in the gift of the Executive, with such persons as were supposed to be best qualified to discharge their duties, without regard to party distinctions. It was in the observance of this rule, that I had hoped to satisfy every one of the sincerity of the determination which I had expressed, of being the Governor of the State and not of a party. I have however been disappointed, as is now known to every one. Too many unworthy persons had continually profited by the violence of the contest for party supremacy, to be disposed to respect a rule which excluded them from the rewards to which they had been accustomed, for their successful support of candidates for office. Numerous applications were made to me for rewards for such services upon my entering into office—all have been disappointed. I have sought for public officers among those only, who were known to be worthy of confidence. I have considered the claims of all applicants lessened by the act of asking. Many of those who hear me, and who have been familiar with the course which I have pursued, are aware of the bitter opposition which I have received from disappointed applicants of both parties. I have acted without looking to personal consequences, and cannot but feel gratified that I can say with perfect sincerity, on this occasion, that I have not used the power which was placed in my hands by the people, in one instance, to aid in the accomplishment of any selfish purpose.

All who hear me are fully aware of the extraordinary responsibility which has devolved upon me in consequence of our relations with the Cherokees. The extension of the jurisdiction of the State over the Indians, the discovery of gold mines of great value in the land occupied by them; the right of the people to have those lands distributed without the extinguishment of the Indian title; the possession taken of the mines by thousands of persons, and chiefly from other States, in violation of the rights of the State, and regardless of the will of the Indians, all became subjects of the most absorbing interest with the people, shortly after I entered the Executive Of-

lice. The policy which I then recommended to the Legislature to pursue, in regard to these important matters, have been the constant theme of opposition ever since, and the most operative cause of the loss of my election. And yet, extraordinary as it may appear, the opinions which have thus deprived me of the confidence of my fellow-citizens, were at the time they were communicated to the Legislature, fully approved by the present Governor.

I knew that in opposing the immediate distribution of the lands of the Cherokees, without regard to their rights; in recommending the appropriation of the valuable gold mines to relieving the people of taxation, making internal improvements and extending the benefits of education to all classes of society; and in advising the repeal of the law which subjected our Indian population to a deprivation of much of their property by improper means, I was opposing the strongest prejudices, and most selfish feelings of the thoughtless and avaricious. I have not however been accustomed to throw out feelers, to learn the indication of public sentiment, previous to expressing my thoughts on any subject, much less when official duty required their open avowal. The opinions which were communicated to the Legislature, upon these subjects, have, however, been grossly misrepresented. Thousands of our citizens have by the operation of one or two corrupt presses, been made to believe that I was opposed to the acquisition of our Indian lands, and had insulted the poor by stating that they were unfit to partake of the benefits to be derived from the gold mines, in common with other classes of the community.

The authors of these charges knew them to be false, and the whole course of my public and private life, I trust, is testimony against them; but in popular governments like ours, there will always be found persons, who are ready to avail themselves of such base means of acquiring offices.

I take this opportunity of avowing, (what I have often stated privately,) that I had no individual interest or desire to continue in office; that I have been only anxious to do what duty to the State required of me, and that I now feel that I have no cause to regret my defeat, except as it may affect injuriously the measures of the Government; and as it wrests the administration from the hands of those with whom I have ever acted, and upon the success of whose principles depends the honor, safety, and character of the State.

Notwithstanding the difficulty which I find of expressing myself under my present embarrassment, I am yet anxious to add something further in explanation of the measures of my administration. In opposing the immediate survey and distribution of the Cherokee lands, I have been influenced not only by what was considered justice to our Indian population, but by what was due to the present Administration of the General Government. The firmness with which General Jackson has sustained his policy of removing the Indian tribes from the States, and placing them in the only situation in which their existence can be continued, or in which they can acquire the art of civilized life, his prompt acknowledgment of the rights of this State to extend its laws over all its territory, and the exertions which he has made, and is now making to remove the Cherokees from beyond our limits, impose upon us the strongest obligation to avoid the adoption of any policy which would be calculated to bring us into collision with the United States. Upon no subject have stronger efforts been made to excite the prejudices of the people against General Jackson, and to prevent his re-election, than his disposition to do justice to Georgia. And shall we give effect to these unprincipled efforts, by adopting such measures as must either sacrifice our best friends, or force him, under the pressure of public opinion, to resist their execution? Gratitude and policy both forbid.

Among the singular circumstances which have been attendant upon the late election, it is not the least remarkable, that the presses in this State, which have supported my successor, because he was in favor of the immediate survey and distribution of the Indian lands, and the Northern presses opposed to General Jackson, under the pretence that he was disposed to aid this State in depriving the Cherokees of their rights, have made my defeat a common cause of triumph.

For the purpose of defeating the re-election of Gen. Jackson, it has been stated, that he has refused to enforce the non-intercourse law, and thereby enabled the authorities of this State to oppress the Cherokees, and take possession of their lands. Although this charge has been made in all the papers opposed to Gen. Jackson, it is utterly false. At no time whatever has the Cherokee territory been so perfectly secured from intrusion from the whites, as under the operation of the present laws.

It may be also proper that I should notice a charge which has been made directly against myself, by the same papers, together with those in this State which have advocated the election of my successor, in relation to my conduct towards the Missionaries, who were residents among the Cherokees. By the law now in force, no white person, however respectable, has the right to intrude upon the Cherokee territory. Those white persons of good character, who were residing among the Indians, when that law was passed, had the special privilege granted them to continue their residence. In order, however, to prevent the abuse of this privilege, by enabling such persons to thwart the policy of the General Government, and to oppose the execution of the laws of this State, a condition was imposed upon them, that they should take an oath to support its Constitution and laws.—Whatever punishment the Missionaries have suffered, has been sought for by themselves, by the open and direct violation of a law which was intended for their benefit. Not an act has been done for the purpose of oppressing them. They have not been asked to take an oath contrary to their conscientious opinions; nor have those who are now in the Penitentiary been offered a pardon upon condition that they would take any oath whatever, but simply on the promise of their removal from the territory.

There has been one act of my administration which I regret to perceive has been misunderstood by some of my friends. It has been supposed that in directing the Agent of the State to continue to arrest Indians for trespassing upon the gold mines, after the decision of a Judge of the Superior court, that they could not be punished for so doing, it was my intention to oppose the judicial authority.—The law imposed upon me a particular duty. That duty terminated when the judicial authority commenced. It was not intended by my orders to the Agent, not so understood by him, that he should arrest any Indian who had been discharged by the Court, unless for a repeated offence. The Judicial and Legislative departments are in collision, and not the Executive and Judicial.

I regret that I have not been able to command my own feelings sufficiently, on this occasion, to offer what I was desirous of doing, in vindication of my administration of the Executive De-

partment, from the numerous misrepresentation
of our political adversaries.

Permit me, gentlemen, to offer for your ac-
ceptance, this sentiment—

Honor and success to those servants of the
people, who have the firmness to execute what
judgment directs and conscience approves.