

JUDGE CLAYTON'S ADDRESS,

At the Free Trade Meeting, held in Athens, on the 4th of August last, for the purpose of appointing delegates to the Free Trade Convention at Philadelphia.

Mr. Chairman.—We have assembled for the purpose of taking into consideration the proposition of a meeting in Philadelphia, to hold a Convention in that place, with a view to memorialize Congress on the subject of grievances, resulting from the Tariff System. (Here Judge Clayton read the resolution of that meeting.) To complain by petition is allowed the meanest subject, in the worst of governments; and it has been frequently told us by the friends of the Tariff, in their keen and bitter sarcasms against our murmurs, that such is the course we ought to pursue, and not to break out into such a noisy clamour against the measures of our masters.—Humble and humiliating as it may be, for the sake of peace and harmony, this is the course the CONVENTION intends to pursue; and with such sentiments in view, all persons of all parties in this State, have been invited to attend this meeting. A confident hope has been indulged, that, forgetting our party strifes, we should, on this subject, cordially unite and make one firm and concerted effort, to be relieved from our intolerable burthens.

I look around upon this numerous and respectable assembly, with a fond expectation that such a temper has ben universally felt and answered. That we have grievances, of no ordinary character, none will deny.—That the Tariff system in this state is opposed by an overwhelming majority of the people, is equally true, and that they have long struggled through all their public functionaries, to have its effects either removed or mitigated. But in vain! Another effort is about to be made, in union with other suffering portions of this wide and extended empire, under a rational belief that such a voice cannot be heard with indifference. That its tone will, at least, command respect, which on all former occasions has been denied, if it cannot accomplish a higher object. It is not my purpose, even if desirable, to excite the feelings of this assembly, by a detailed relation of the numerous wrongs under which we suffer. There is a language, in our decaying towns, deserted fields, and rotting produce, that more effectually appeals to our passions, than any thing which could possibly fall from your speaker. In the withering aspect of the country, and the suffering condition of the people, there is no mistake, it is an unbending and stubborn reality, and, heaven knows, is excitement enough for our present purpose.

In a neighboring state, that excitement has proceeded to a most serious extent, and one which demands the most serious regard. In that state, there is but one opinion as to our oppressions, but they are divided as to the mode of relief, both parties, however, have determined to embrace the offered prospect of redress, in the contemplated Convention at Philadelphia. Heretofore one of those parties believed they had sued long enough, in the form of remonstrance, for their constitutional rights, and earnestly conceived that nothing was now left to them but the exercise of self redress. You all know to what a height this feeling has been carried, and that it has occasioned a tremor to pervade our political fabrick down to its deepest foundations. The other party, certainly not more talented or patriotic, have believed that the cup of peaceable expedients is not yet exhausted, and that they are willing, in the language of the declaration of independence, "to suffer as long as evils are sufferable," and to try every effort dictated by argument or persuasion to awaken the government to a sense of justice, to our long urged and repeated complaints. With this party, let it be distinctly understood, this meeting coincides, but I

would fain hope without any reproach to the other, for though we would prefer the milder course, no one can believe that any opposition to the ruinous consequences of the Tariff has ever, in the South, proceeded from any want of regard, yea, ardent affection, for the Union. This meeting believes it is right to use further remonstrance. It has heretofore been done, and that repeatedly, by the state alone, let us now try it in connection with our sister states. For the sake of the constitution, for the safety of the constitution, for every thing which is dear to the confederation, let us put our adversaries in the wrong if entreaty can do it, if peace and kindness, and charity, and brotherly love can remove their sense of interest from before their more generous sense of justice. This mode of appeal, though untried on the part of the sufferers, has achieved for our opponents every thing they wanted. The history of the Tariff system is as curious as it is unjust. Its friends, with a view to protection, made their first humble approach to Congress, greatly distrusting the merit of their claims, as early as the year 1812. But fortified with the reasoning, which usually conquers by a triumph over the sympathies of the heart, they went to Congress again in 1816, with a most feeling appeal to their liberality, averring they had established infant manufactories during the war, for the express purpose of relieving the country from the trying embarrassments which that event produced, and asked in a tone of the most subdued humility, whether it were possible the government would suffer institutions to go down, founded in such useful and patriotic motives, when the slightest aid would enable them to stand up against the competition of even the very enemy who had made these institutions necessary by their hostilities. Looking away from the true motive of these establishments, and influenced alone by the affecting character of the appeal, Congress fell into the snare, and the foundation of a system was laid that has threatened, in no doubtful terms, and continues to disturb, with no common force, the best and brightest government of the world. The system once established, awakened a spirit of avarice and a field of adventure, that recruited thousands to its support, who, realizing more than their fondest anticipation had promised, and stimulated by the pleasure of success, went once more to Congress in the year 1820, for an increase of protection. Strengthened by numbers, and seducing by the prospect of fortunes the virtue and patriotism of other adventurers, they found a listening year to this their thrice repeated application, and returned to the work with renewed and persevering zeal, manufacturing for themselves princely estates, and proselyting others to the cause, by various allurements, but in nothing so much as the glitter of their wealth. Four years after and it seems this pestilence revolved in an orbit of exactly that term, these greedy applicants made their periodical visit to the source of their light and life. By this time the effects of the system began to be most seriously felt in every part of the Union, and in none so disastrously as the Southern States. A spirit of opposition was aroused and a most formidable stand was made against any further encroachments of this monster whose appetites seemed to increase in proportion to the quality of its supplies. The contest though long and warm, was unsuccessful, and this cormorant surfeited as was believed, retired to its rest, and it was fondly hoped had come for the last time. But not so. Another essay was resolved upon, but the temper of the nation had been wrought up to such indignation by the exorbitance of their demands, and a proper sense of their cupidity had inspired such fierce resentments, that it was determined to vary the mode of approach. To this end, a CONVENTION of all the Tariff states was proposed to be held at Harrisburgh, in the very state where we propose a similar meeting, for the purpose of going to Congress, not only for a fresh increase of protection, but to fix down irrevocably upon the nation this system, and to give it a character commensurate with every variety of production, and a NAME co-extensive with the Union itself, that forever thereafter their demands should assume the shape of RIGHT, rather than that of GRACE.— This they believed could only be effected by a combination of effort, and a compromise of interest, and hence the East said to the West, protect our Manufactures, and we will protect your Agriculture. The Convention, as is well known, was formed—the principle just mentioned became the governing rule of their deliberations. With a selfishness, a stranger to every dictate of honor, and peculiar only to the most gaunt and satiated avarice, they for the fifth time in '28, appeared before Congress and boldly demanded a Tariff suited to their wishes, and in all respects corresponding with the details they had previously arranged. The result is but too well known, and passing by the strong feelings which the recollection of this event is calculated to inspire, we will only avail ourselves of the inferences which are suggested to our advantage. Our government is not intended to present two faces, if therefore, it was lawful for our adversaries to hold a Convention to establish the Tariff, it is equally so for us to do the same thing to effect its repeal. If they could be allowed to petition for favors, we may be permitted to implore a redress of grievances. If Harrisburgh, in Pennsylvania, was a suitable place to impose our fetters, Philadelphia, in the same state, may serve to break their rivets; and professing, as we do, to aim at nothing which will not strictly accord with the exercise of those peaceable and rightful means secured to us by the constitution, we shall consider any opposition to the measure, unwarranted in principle, uncalled for by consistency, and perfectly indefensible upon any ground but sheer dishonesty.

Independent, Mr. Chairman, of the actual suffering which this system has inflicted, (and who is there among us that cannot lend his testimony to this truth?) we have been most unkindly twitted, and taunted, and scoffed, and mocked, because we have dared to murmur at such unequal burthens; nay this is not all, we have been branded with treason, and bearded to our very teeth with the odious epithets of traitors, and all because we honestly believed and ventured to express that belief, that we were wronged, plundered and degraded. Relying more upon power than principle, upon force than fact, upon possession than argument, they have deigned to use no other language than that of ridicule and reproach, and these are the instruments with which they intend to break down our spirits, subdue our pride, vanquish our fortitude, make a conquest of our all, and drive us by the pangs of our moral and physical resources, into the most tame and unconditional submission.

Is such a consequence not worth our opposition? Is there any here, or even in the state, not prepared to contend for his rights? Is property nothing? Is liberty nothing? Is the constitution nothing? And above all, is our beloved Union nothing? Shall all these be risked for the want of zeal and inclination to assert and defend our rights? It cannot be. Let us be represented in the contemplated Convention, and instruct our delegates to use all peaceable and constitutional means to procure a repeal or modification of the Tariff, by an earnest appeal to the next Congress. They have once listened to the voice of their fellow citizens, thus formidably and collectively uttered, and we have a right to expect from their magnanimity and justice the same impartial attention. We have every reason to believe that there is a fast returning sense of respect for our injuries. We believe that the attempt, at Harrisburgh, to adjust all the conflicting interests of the *grower* and the *manufacturer*, relations which no human wisdom can harmonize, so as to make them deserve a like and equal protection from the Tariff, has sown along with the system the seeds of its final destruction, and that every day is developing the folly of that undertaking which seeks to repeal the laws of nature, and make all soils, all climates, and all conditions one and the same. We believe it is now only necessary to enlighten the people of the Union, by a collection of facts, and the just arguments they suggest, to induce them to restore an advantage obtained alone by fraud, sustained exclusively by deception, and productive only of folly.

There can be no misunderstanding of that strong and increasing feeling which has agitated every portion of the Union on this eventful question, and especially the Southern States. We are told by pamphleteers and other scribblers, at the North, that it is all perfect delusion under which we labour in reference to the injurious effects of the Tariff. That instead of a curse, it is a blessing, and this intolerable idea is acquiesced in by a few of our own people. Is it possible that large communities in every state are deceived on this subject? Is it possible that whole states, to the north, to wit: Maine & New Hampshire, do not understand their own interests? Can it be possible that the melleable dulness of the people from the Potomac to the Mississippi, is unable to comprehend this matter? Do the enlightened and sober states of Virginia and North Carolina, the ardent and generous states of South Carolina and Georgia, the liberal and discreet states of Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee, possessing every variety of interest, and actuated by every sentiment that is pure and honorable, clamour about this system without a cause? Is it possible they are deluded and grieving over imaginary evils, and venting wanton complaints against their very benefactors? Believe me, this is all rank assumption, and adds to the positive outrage of right, the disgusting insolence of pretended superior discernment. It is bad enough to suffer, but to be mocked in our calamity requires a forbearance, which nothing short of a love of Union could possibly exert, and if a higher pledge of devotion to that object is demanded at our hands, it can only be found in a voluntary political martyrdom.

In conclusion, I have but one more reflection to present, and I humbly conceive it deserves from every dispassionate mind the most attentive and well weighed consideration. Is ours a government of true wisdom? Does it lay claim to the character of moderation, forecast and prudence? Has it any of the ingredients of temperance, charity, and kindness? If it has, why look upon the scene that has been passing for the last six years in this Union, and which ever and anon displays such flashes of angry feeling, followed by the distant and muttering thunders of disunion, without one effort to appease or divert the threatening storm? Can the commotions existing every where, but more especially the heightened tempest of South Carolina, produce no serious concern? Are such talents, such disinterested patriotism, such high-minded chivalry, to be laughed to scorn, because their language of complaint is uttered in the conscious boldness of rectitude? It belongs to true wisdom, moderation, prudence and charity, to pause before it provokes such a spirit to acts of desperation. If they are right, they are entitled to respect; if wrong, all reason teaches that kindness and conciliation are due to their errors. A people thus excited, and as is well known, excited by reason of the loss of property which they verily believe is taken from them, not to advance the honest purposes of government, but to promote individual speculation, ought to be treated with great tenderness, when they remonstrate against such a course. And that government is acting with cruel and reckless severity, and is endangering its own existence, that threatens with indifference, or smiles with contempt, upon such growing and persevering dissatisfaction.

This awful consideration, aside from our own positive suffering, presents a motive of itself calculated to animate the bosom of every lover of his country, and prompt him with earnest zeal to an untiring expostulation with rulers to wake up from their false security, and to ponder upon that ill-fated legislation, and continued contempt of remonstrance, which has involved the country in the most perilous condition, and disturbed its peace with no common alarms.

We believe the proposed convention will be able to present a train of facts, and a force of reasoning which if not sufficient to convince the government of its error, will at least bring out its moral heroism to its last act of folly, and our misfortunes to their finished point of endurance.