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# SKETCH

OF THE

# LIFE OF MARTIN VAN BUREN,

COMPILED FROM THE MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES.

MARTIN VAN BUREN, was born on the 5th day of December, 1782, near the village of Kinderhook, in the State of New York. His father, Abraham Van Buren, during the resistance which was made to the efforts of Great Britain to force the inhabitants of the colonies into the condition of vassals, took an early, and decided stand in favor of his country, and against foreign aggression. The war of the Revolution found him a firm and uncompromising patriot, and to the day of his death, which happened in 1814, he remained true to his ancient principles, and he died, as he lived, a Christian and a democrat.

Both the father and mother of Martin Van Buren were of German descent.—Both are said to have been remarkable for strong and sound minds, though neither had the advantage of a liberal education.

In the youthful days of the subject of this sketch, schools were few and far between, and to the poorer class of citizens, and among whom the family of Mr. Van Buren were ranked, a good education was next to an impossibility. Those who were able so to do, sent their children to New York, or to some other of the larger cities or towns, to be educated, while their less fortunate neighbors were dependent upon chance for a teacher during the winter months. Toiling to assist in providing bread for his younger brothers, Martin Van Buren only went to school such days during the winter, when, from the severity of the weather, out door work was rendered impossible. It was in the log cabin school house of the village, dignified with the title of the "*Kinderhook Academy*," that Martin Van Buren learned to read and to write. The remainder of his education was self taught, and as he pored, night after

night, after his long day's work was done, over his hard lesson—hard because he had none to assist him—he early gave evidence of that perseverance and industry which has so eminently distinguished him in after life.

The father having, by frugality and industry, amassed a little property, he yielded to the inclination of his son, and allowed him to study law. While preparing for the bar, he supported himself, and paid for his tuition by writing in a law office. Preparing for the law, and studying in the same office, were several young men of wealthy parents, and numerous were the jokes and sneers which were cast upon the "*Dutch boy*," as they, in derision, called Mr. Van Buren; and many were the wonders of these wiseacres, when the subject of this sketch would be enabled to pass an examination. To them it seemed an impossibility that one who made so little pretension, and who was compelled so many hours during the day to labor for a subsistence, could ever master the intricacies of the law. They little knew the many hours of laborious study which were taken from the time usually allotted to rest, and still less did they know the indomitable spirit of the friendless boy, the object of their sneering sarcasms. Some of these men lived to see that same friendless "*Dutch boy*," by his own merit, raise himself, not only to the head of his profession, but from station to station, until in 1831 he was rejected by Clay's influence in a factious Senate, as Minister to England, to which station he was appointed by Gen. Jackson. Those Senators who voted to reject Mr. Van Buren, in the fond hope that it would prove his ruin, all lived to see him placed, by the voice of the people, as

Vice President of the United States—at the head of the very Senate who had thus sought to stab his reputation; and four years after, many of them saw him, by the voice of the same people, made President of the United States.

During the latter part of the time Mr. Van Buren was preparing for the bar, the fierce political conflict between the federal and democratic parties, and which resulted in the election of Thomas Jefferson to the Presidency, was at its height. Although but a boy in years, Mr. Van Buren, true alike to the instinct of his nature, as well as to early training, took a decided stand in favor of democracy. The federal party, then, in truth, had the wealth and talents of his native county. But little talent either for debate or in writing, existed in the democratic party of that county, and as young Van Buren possessed the faculty of both writing and speaking in an eminent degree, he was, on all occasions, pushed forward as the leading champion of the democratic cause. At the youthful age of 18 years, Mr. Van Buren so entirely possessed the confidence of the democratic party, that he was unanimously chosen to represent his native town in a district Convention composed of the counties of Rensselaer and Columbia, called for the purpose of selecting candidates for the Legislature.

At the age of 21 years, Mr. Van Buren was admitted to the bar, and commenced the practice of law in his native village of Kinderhook. He had not only to contend with poverty, and against vindictive feeling, engendered on account of the part he took in politics, but he had also to contend against the most talented and eloquent members of the New York bar. Difficulties such as these, were sufficient to damp the ardor of any man not well schooled in adversity. But life, to Mr. Van Buren, had been but a succession of struggles against difficulty after difficulty, and he persevered and triumphed. Talents and industry such as he possessed, could not fail of commanding business, and a few years saw him take rank as one of the soundest and ablest lawyers in New York. Business flowed in upon him, and those who sneered at the "Dutch boy," in the days of his trial, now were proud to claim the talented man as a townsman.

The aristocracy of Columbia county, fearing his commanding talents—his influence with the people, and, above all, his able defence in favor of democracy, sought in vain to woo him from his principles. They pointed out to him the station in "good so-

ciety," as they called it, to which he might aspire; the splendid fortune which, in a few years, would certainly flow in upon him, through the aid and assistance of the federal leaders, if he would *only* change his political creed, for they were more able than the democrats, who were poor, to advance his fortunes and to raise his reputation. The answer of Mr. Van Buren was such as might have been expected from a man governed by principle. He made money, more than sufficient for his frugal wants—old friends he could not desert for new ones, and in his politics, being governed by *principle*, he could not change them if he would—he would not, if he could.

In 1808, Mr. Van Buren was appointed, by the democratic Legislature, Surrogate of Columbia county, the duties of which station he filled with the strictest fidelity, until the federal party got the ascendancy in the Legislature; then, for the crime of being a democrat, he was hurled from office.

In 1812, Mr. Van Buren, then just eligible on account of age, was a candidate for a seat in the New York Senate. His opponent, EDWARD P. LIVINGSTON, was not only highly talented and popular, but possessed a powerful and influential family connexion, and added to which, were many apostate democrats, among whom was Aaron Burr, and others, whose plans of establishing a National Bank Mr. Van Buren had assisted in thwarting. The contest was a most spirited one, as can be seen from the fact of twenty thousand votes having been polled, and yet, with all the combined influence of federalism and Burr's popularity against him, Mr. Van Buren was elected by a majority of 200 votes. He was the youngest man that ever took a seat in the New York Senate.

The same federal feeling—which sneered at Mr. Van Buren in youth,—in manhood sought to reduce, and, failing in that, to prostrate him,—to this hour has never forgiven him, but still pursues him with an unrelenting hate. They themselves opposed the last war, yet, knowing that that war is now popular, they boldly aver that Mr. Van Buren opposed it also. In making this charge, they have not shown their usual sagacity, for, though a serious one, it is easily disproved, and thus is it done.

In 1813, Daniel D. Tompkins, the democratic, as well as the war Governor of New York, was nominated for re-election. Mr. Van Buren was a member of the Convention which nominated him, and was chosen as chairman of a committee to draw up an address to the people of New York. That

address was written by him, and from it we make the following extracts :

"Fellow-Citizens—Your country is at war, and Great Britain is her enemy. Indulge us in a brief examination of the causes which have led to it; and brief us from the necessary limits of an address it must be—we yet hope it will be found sufficient to convince every honest man, of the high justice and indispensable necessity of the attitude, which our government has taken—of the sacred duty of every real American to support it in that attitude, and of the parricidal views of those who refuse to do so.

[Here follows an eloquent summary of the causes which led to the war—of the preliminary efforts, the embargo, non-intercourse, &c., to induce the belligerent nations to do us justice, without a resort to that alternative—and of the series of aggressions on the part of Great Britain, which rendered it, in the language of the address, a measure of "high justice and indispensable necessity."]

"By this last act [the disavowal of the British government of the arrangement of Mr. Erskine, and the formal re-enactment, by that government, of the orders in council, the doors of conciliation were effectually closed.] the American people—a people rich in resources, possessed of a high sense of national honor, the only free people on earth—had resolved in the face of an observing world, that those orders were a direct attack upon their sovereignty; that submission to them involved a surrender of their independence—and a solemn determination to adhere to them, was officially declared by the ruler of the British nation. Thus situated, what was your government to do? Was there room for doubt or hesitation as to the hostile views of England? No. Lest such doubts might prevent a rupture, to acts of violent injustice, were continually added acts of the most opprobrious insult. While the formal relations of amity remained yet unbroken—while peace was yet supposed to exist—in cool blood an unprovoked attack is made upon one of our national ships, and several American citizens basely and cowardly murdered. At the moment your feelings were at the highest pitch of irritation in consequence of the perfidious disavowal of Erskine's agreement, a minister is sent, not to minister to your rights—not to extenuate the conduct of his predecessor—but to bear your Executive—to add insult to injury; and to fling contempt and reproach in the face of the Executive of the American nation, in the presence of the American people.

"To cap the climax of her iniquity; to fill up the measure of our wrongs; she resolved to persist in another measure, surpassed by none in flagrant enormity—a measure, which of itself was adequate cause of war—a measure which had excited the liveliest solicitude, and received the unremitting attention of every administration of government, from the time of Washington to the present day; the wicked, the odious and detestable practice of impressing American seamen into service; of entombing our sons within the walls of her ships of war; compelling them to waste their lives, and spill their blood

in the service of a foreign government—a practice which subjected every American tar, to the violence and petty tyranny of a British midshipman, and many of them to a life of the most galling servitude—a practice which never can be submitted to by a nation professing claims to freedom; which never can be acquiesced in by government without rescinding the great article of our safety, the reciprocity of obedience and protection between the rulers and the ruled.

"Under such accumulated circumstances of insult and of injury, we ask again, what was your government to do? We put the question not 'to that faction which misrepresents the government to the people, and the people to the government; traduces one half of the nation to cajole the other—and by keeping up distrust and division, wishes to become the proud arbiter of the fortune and fate of America,'—not to them, but to every sound head and honest heart in the nation it is that we put the question—what was our government to do? Was she basely and ingloriously to abandon the rights for which you and your fathers fought and bled? Was she so early to cower to the nation which had sought to strangle us in our infancy, and which has never ceased to retard our approach to manhood? No—we will not for a moment doubt, that every man who is in truth and fact an American, will say that WAR, AND WAR ALONE, was our only refuge from national degradation—our only course to national prosperity.

"Fellow-citizens, throughout the whole period of the political struggles, which, if they have not absolutely disgraced, have certainly not exalted our character, no remark was more common, no expectation more cheerfully indulged in, than that those severe and malevolent contentions would only be sustained in time of peace; that when the country should be involved in war, every wish and every sentiment would be exclusively American. But unfortunately for our country, those reasonable expectations have not been realized, notwithstanding every one knows that the power of declaring war, and the duty of supporting it, belonged to the General Government—notwithstanding that the constitutional remedy for the removal of the men to whom this power is thus delegated, has recently been afforded; notwithstanding the re-election of the same President by whom the war was commenced, and a majority of Representatives, whose estimate of our rights, and whose views are similar to those who first declared it; men who, by the provisions of the constitution, must retain their respective stations for a period of such duration as precludes a continued opposition of their measures without a complete destruction of our national interest—an opposition at once unceasing and malignant, is still continued to every measure of the administration.

"Fellow-citizens, these things will not do—they are intrinsically wrong. Your country has engaged in a war in the last degree unavoidable; it is not waged to the destruction of the rights of others, but in defence of our own; it is therefore your bounden duty to support her—you should lay down the character of par-

tisans, and become patriots, for in every country 'war becomes an occasional duty, though it ought never to be an occupation. Every man should become a soldier in defence of his rights; no man ought to continue a soldier for offending the rights of others.' In despite of truths so self-evident, of incentives to a vigorous support of government so pressing, yet we have to deplore the existence of a faction in the bosom of our land, whose perseverance and industry are exceeded only by their inveteracy; who seek, through every avenue, to mislead your judgment and to inflame your passions.

"When your government pursues a pacific policy, it becomes the object of their scorn and derision; the want of energy in your rulers is decried as a matter of alarming consideration; the injuries of your country are admitted, and the fact is triumphantly alleged that the administration cannot be kicked into a war. When they are impelled to a forcible vindication of our rights, the cry of enmity to peace—of a wish to war with England to serve France—is immediately resounded through the land. When war is declared, public opinion is sought to be prejudiced against the measure, as evincing a disposition unnecessarily to shed your blood and waste your treasures. When it is discovered that that declaration is accompanied with a proposition, a just and equitable proposition to the enemy, on which hostilities may cease, and peace be restored, that proposition is derided as evidence of the most disgraceful pusillanimity.

"No falsehood is considered too glaring—no misrepresentation too flagitious to impose on your credulity, and seduce your affections from your native land."

"Least general allegations might fail to effect their unholy purposes, and consummate their dark designs, specific charges are resorted to—calumnies which have again and again met the detestation of an enlightened public, are periodically brought forward, new dressed, and with new authorities to give them credence with you. Among the most prominent of those charges, is that of enmity to commerce, on the part of the republican administrations. Never was there a calumny more wicked. Enmity to commerce! We ask, and we ask emphatically, where is the evidence of it? What is the basis on which they rest their claim to public confidence?—It is that the administration is engaged in a war which they claim to be unpopular. What are causes for which this war is waged, and which have hitherto embroiled us with the nations of Europe?—They are the violation of our commercial rights, and the imprisonment of our seamen! The administration, then, are jeopardizing their interest with the people; they furnish weapons of offence to their adversaries; they brave all dangers, for the maintenance and support of our commercial rights; and yet they are enemies of commerce! Can such base sophistry, such contemptible nonsense, impose on the credulity, or pervert the understanding of a single honest man?

"But to crown this picture of folly and of mischief, they approach you under a garb which at once evinces their contempt for your understanding, and their total want of confidence in your patriotism; under a garb which should receive the most distinct marks of your detestation; they are **THE FRIENDS OF PEACE!**" While our enemies are waging against us a cruel and bloody war, they cry "peace." While our western wilds are whitening with the

bones of our murdered women and children—while their blood is yet trickling down the walls of their former habitations—while the Indian war-whoop and the British drum, are in unison saluting the ears, and the British dagger and the Indian tomahawk suspended over the heads of our citizens—at such a time, when the soul of every man who has sensibility to feel his country's wrongs, and spirit to defend her rights, should be in arms—it is that they cry **PEACE!** While the brave American tar, the intrepid defender of our rights and redeemer of our national character—the present boast and future honor of our land—is impressed by force into a service he detests, which compels a brother to imbrue his hands in a brother's blood—while he is yet 'tossing upon the surface of the ocean and mingling his groans with those of the tempest, less savage than his persecutors, that waft him to a returnless distance from his family and his home'—it is at such a period, when there is no peace, when there can be no peace, without sacrificing every thing valuable—that our feelings are insulted, the public arm paralyzed, and the public ear stunned by the dastardly and incessant cry of **PEACE!** What, fellow citizens, must be the opinion which they entertain of you, who thus assail you! Can any man be so stupid as not to perceive that it is an appeal to *your fears*, to *your avarice*, and to all the baser passions which actuate the human heart? that it is approaching you in the manner in which alone, those puny politicians who buzz about you and thicken the political atmosphere, say you are accessible—*through your fears and your pocket!* Can any American citizen be so profligate as not to spurn indignantly the base libel upon his character!

"Suffer yourselves not to be deceived by the pretence, that because Great Britain has been forced by her subjects to make a qualified repeal of her orders, our Government ought to abandon her ground. That ground was taken to resist two great and crying grievances, the destruction of our commerce, and the imprisonment of our seamen. The latter is most important, and in proportion as we prefer the liberties and lives of our citizens to their property. Distrust, therefore, the man who would advise your Government at any time, and more especially at this time, when your brave sailors are exciting the admiration and forcing the respect of an astonished world; when their deeds of heroic valor make old Ocean smile at the humiliation of her ancient tyrant—at such a time, we say again, mark the man who would countenance Government in commencing our sailors' rights for the safety of our merchant goods.

"Next to the cry for peace, the most potent spell which has been resorted to, to alarm your fears and pervert your understandings, is the alleged distress of the country. Fellow-citizens, it has been our object, it is our wish, to treat you fairly, to appeal to your judgments, not your passions; and as we hope our address to you hitherto has been marked by that character—it is to your consciences, then, that we appeal upon this subject.

"Is not this clamor most unfounded, most ungrateful? If you doubt that it is so; if you hesitate to believe that it originates exclusively with the ambitious and designing, spend one moment in comparing your situation with that of the major part of the civilized world.

"Fellow-citizens, should those political wittlings, who are not only ignorant themselves of the leading points of controversy in our disputes with the belligerents, who are uniformly assailing you as men destitute at once of spirit and of judgment, should they point to the wars which agitate and have convulsed Europe, as arguments against the prosecution of that just and necessary one which has been forced upon us, we know that you will in-

dignantly repel the unfounded suggestion. The wars of Europe are waged by the monarchs to gratify their individual malice, and to satiate their lawless ambition. Ours is in defence of rights which must be defended, or our glory as a nation will be extinguished—the sun of our greatness will set forever. As well might it have been said during the revolution, that war should not be waged, because wars had desolated Europe. The same rights you then fought to obtain, you must now fight to preserve—the contest is the same now as it was then—and the feelings which then agitated the public mind, which on the one hand supported, and on the other sought to destroy, the liberties of the country, will be seen and felt in the conduct of the men of this day.”

Who, after reading these extracts from the pen of Martin Van Buren, dare reiterate the stale and false charge that he was opposed to the last war with England? In addition to the proof to be found in the extracts given, we assert as a fact, easily proven by the journals of the New York Legislature, that Martin Van Buren supported every measure—and there were many—brought forward in that Legislature to assist the General Government in successfully carrying on that war, and some of the strongest of which, he himself matured and brought forward. At the close of the war, Mr. Van Buren, still being a member of the New York Senate, introduced, and advocated until it was passed, a resolution giving the thanks of the Legislature of New York to Major General ANDREW JACKSON, his gallant officers and soldiers, for their wonderful and heroic victory at New Orleans.

In February 1815, the Legislature of New York, then democratic in both branches, elected Mr. Van Buren Attorney General of that State, as well as Regent to the University. In the spring of 1816 he was again elected to the Senate, and the project of uniting Lake Erie and Lake Champlain with the city of New York by canal, found in him its ablest and most untiring advocate, and for which he was publicly thanked by De Witt Clinton; and in Hosack's memoirs of that distinguished man, Mr. Van Buren is particularly named as one of those by “whose personal and almost miraculous exertions” the bill was passed.

In 1821, Mr. Van Buren was elected a Senator of the United States, by the Legislature of New York, and, at the end of his constitutional term, was re-elected. His efforts in that body in favor of granting pensions to revolutionary soldiers, and in favor of the abolition of imprisonment for debt, placed him at once in the front rank of debaters. From one of his speeches, on imprisonment for debt, the following extract is made:

“Mr. VAN BUREN said he would now consider the character and effect of the imprisonment

now allowed. What are its advantages? It is justified as a means to compel the debtor to disgorge concealed property. Mr. VAN BUREN had already shown that as to him who has property to disgorge, and can therefore secure the privilege of the limits, the measure is wholly inoperative.

“Upon those who have no property, it is not only wholly ineffectual, but very oppressive. It is punishing first and inquiring afterwards. It is inflicting severe chastisement for a supposed injury to an individual, constituting the injured party both judge and jury. It partakes of the character of the RACK, putting its victim to the torture, without knowing whether he has anything to confess or not. It is said that to repeal the old law, would deprive the creditor of one of his securities. As the bill now stands, with its operation confined to contracts which are made after the fourth of July next, it cannot be said to deprive the creditor of any security which he possessed, at the time of entering into the contract. It can therefore only be objectionable, if objectionable at all, because it will prevent the taking of future securities of that character. Mr. VAN BUREN said, that with him the greatest merit of the bill was that it produces that effect. He agreed fully with a distinguished writer, who says, that he who trusts, with a design to sue, is criminal by the act. What is it? Strip the transaction of the drapery of courts, officers, and forms of proceeding, which are but the instruments of the law, to give effect to the contract as made between the parties, and suppose the contract to express all that by the law, as it stands, it implies. It would then provide that if the debtor failed on the appointed day to pay the debt he had contracted, it should be lawful for the creditor to tear him from his family, and to restrain him of his liberty, by confining him within prison walls, whether his inability to pay arose from misfortune or fault, and whilst so confined to leave him to be sustained by his own resources, or if he had none, by the charity of his fellow-citizens, until he should be discharged by their humanity, or the humanity of the laws of his country. Suppose a contract thus actually written out—what would a Christian community say to such a bargain? In what portion of this country would the man who had dared to enter into it, venture to expose his person to the hisses of his fellow-citizens? And still this is but the unvarnished statement of a transaction, which, when disguised by the intervention of courts, and consecrated by immemorial usage, receives the vigorous support of some of the best and wisest men that our country produces. Sir, said he, I am for breaking up contracts of this character. I would dissolve this alliance which is supposed to exist between the counting house and the jail. I would compel men to conduct their dealings on higher and better principles, and to look to better grounds of reliance than to bailiffs and turnkeys. I would have them depend upon the character or property of those with whom they deal; and rest assured the best results would flow from the establishment of such a system. It cannot be necessary to state, that in all dealings upon credit, the terms of the contract will

be greatly controlled by the nature of the security. What must be the terms of those bargains which mainly depend upon a security of this description? Can they be otherwise than the operations of gripping avarice upon helpless poverty, or of cupidity and cunning upon improvident and dangerous speculations? They must, in the nature of things, be of this character. If this system be abolished, those who desire credit will pursue a different course to obtain it. They will seek to inspire confidence by industry, probity, and punctuality. By this course they will be sure to obtain it, and the credit they thus obtain will elevate their character, increase their happiness, and benefit the community.

"It is further objected that the alteration of the system will impair credit. Mr. VAN BUREN had already stated what species of credit it must necessarily be, which would be thus impaired, and how little objection exists against putting a check upon such credit. But what reason is there to believe that this apprehended effect upon credit would be produced. In this, as in all other cases, speculation must yield to fact, or you are led into error.

"The suggestions of experience must be listened to. How stands the fact? What is the condition of the credit most prevalent in the country; that on which nine-tenths of the every day business of the country rests? It is bank paper. And what security does the holder of a bank note ask or receive, when he takes it? The right to imprison the drawer? No! he never thinks of it.—He will sell his estate, and take in payment the notes of associated individuals, without its ever occurring to him that the right to imprison the drawer is not secured to him; but if he sells a horse, or a cow, and takes the note of a single individual, he deems it a matter of vital importance, that his lien upon the body of debtors should be protected by the strongest statutes.—When you pay an annual premium to secure your houses against the flames, or your vessels against winds and waves, do you think of the right to imprison? No. But when we dole out a miserable pittance of their cargo, this hankering after corporeal security possesses us. Such are the miserable contradictions into which we are led by the blind force of habit. But suppose a check is put to credit. Is it certain that such a result would be an evil? Mr. VAN BUREN thought not. He thought, on the contrary, that much of the distress which has prevailed, and in some places continues to prevail, arose from the unrestrained credit which has been given in this country. It has led to extravagance in every form. In the manner of living, in buildings, in equipages, in dress and ornaments; in every thing, you have seen its pernicious influence. The frugal habits of our ancestors who dealt in the property they actually had, has given way to the prodigality of those who deal in the ideal capital, which credit has given them, and the consequence has been that we have lost that independence our ancestors possessed.—Without enlarging upon the subject, he was satisfied, that a check to credit, so far from being objectionable, was desirable. We have seen that we cannot check the improvidence of the debtor; let us therefore endeavour to restrain the cupidity of the creditor. In every point of view, therefore, in which he had been able to consider the subject, Mr. VAN BUREN was decidedly in favor of the bill, and he trusted it would receive the approbation of Congress and of the country."

To show the character that Mr. Van Buren sustained while in the Senate, we publish below an extract from the National Intelligencer, of August 26, 1823, then, as now, the organ of the party to which Mr. Van Buren was opposed. The extract is taken from a long electioneering article in the Intelligencer, in favor of Mr. Adams and against Gen. Jackson, and the name of Mr. Van Buren is introduced, because he was the "master spirit" of Jacksonism and of the democratic party, whose war upon the coalition Administration of Adams and Clay, made him an object of fear and dislike to them. Yet even in traducing, and in an attempt to destroy his influence, the editor of the Intelligencer, an avowed enemy, was forced to admit the purity of his life, and the splendor of his talents:

"Once more we are obliged, and for this time reluctantly, to introduce by name to our readers, the Hon. MARTIN VAN BUREN, the distinguished Senator from the State of New York; the "master spirit" who can, when he sets himself about it, accomplish more than any other man can dream of.—The fascinating address of this distinguish'd citizen, added to his powers of persuasion, his highly respectable talents, and imperturbable temper, make him not only the most adroit, but also the most powerful politician of the present day. As a gentleman, we have heretofore had occasion to say, we have great respect for him. Even under the greatest excitement of temper, he never forgets the courtesy which becomes him; or, if he does, we have never seen it. In the walks of private life we know of no exception taken to his character."

About the time of Mr. Van Buren's election to the United States Senate, the question of calling a State Convention to alter the Constitution of the State of New York was extensively discussed, and found in Mr. Van Buren an able and untiring advocate. The proposed alterations, were to make more free, the right of suffrage. He was the early friend, and the ablest champion of the proposed extension of the right of voting. As early as 1820, when the question of calling a convention to revise the Constitution, had been but little discussed, if discussed at all, we find Mr. Van Buren presiding as President of the day at a fourth of July celebration, and on being called upon for a sentiment, gave the following:

"The elective franchise—existing restrictions have proved to be as impolitic as they are unjust. It is the office of wisdom to correct what experience condemns."

This sentiment, so true in itself, and so happily timed, is said to have been the signal gun which roused the friends of the people to action. The question was broadly discussed before the people, and the same Legislature which elected Mr. Van

Buren to the United States Senate, passed a law calling a Convention to revise the Constitution of his native State. So great were Mr. Van Buren's exertions in favor of this measure, and so well were they appreciated, that, though living in Albany at the time, and though he had, during the previous session of the Legislature, been elected a United States Senator, yet, as a compliment to the man, as well as to his efforts in favor of popular rights, the democracy of the county of Otsego, and in which he had never lived, nominated, and elected him as a member of the Convention to alter the Constitution of his native State. Unlike other offices, members of the Convention, if citizens of the State, were equally as eligible, if elected from another county, as from the one in which they lived. Grateful for the unsought compliment, Mr. Van Buren accepted the trust, and in August, 1821, took his seat as a member of that Convention.

Under the Constitution, as it then stood, persons who were entitled to vote for Representatives, were to be over the age of 21 years, to have resided within the county for the six months immediately preceding the election—to possess a freehold of the value of 20 pounds, or else have erected a tenement within the county which would rent for forty shillings, and to have paid taxes. To vote for a Senator, or Governor, in addition to the other requirements, the freehold must be over the value of one hundred pounds, over and above all debts charged thereon. Negroes possessing these qualifications were as much entitled to vote as whites. Failing in their efforts to defeat the proposed Convention, the federal party next turned their efforts to the securing of a majority of its members, for nothing did they fear more than an extension of the right of voting. Their most talented and popular men were brought forward as candidates, and so close was the vote, that when the Convention met, it was doubtful which party had the majority, for both claimed it. The federal members, in the arrogance of their supposed power, were unwilling to alter the Constitution at all, in respect to the right of suffrage.

The first vote in Convention upon which the parties divided, the federal leaders found, to their surprise, that the democratic party had a small, yet an available majority. With a party so eminently distinguished for changing their creed, it was nothing new for the federal leaders to go to the other extreme, and they became at once the advocates of *universal suffrage*—that is, to allow every male, black or white, with-

out reference to their age, color, or to where they lived, to exercise this right. Their object in this was apparent. Every State Constitution, when first made, or when altered, before it can take effect, must first be submitted to the people, and be by them either approved or rejected. Had the federal leaders been enabled to carry their point, none could doubt but that a Constitution thus formed, and under which such immense frauds could have been committed, would have been rejected by a prompt and a decisive vote. The *real* friends of the extension had to guard equally against secret and open attacks. To make no matter, if possible, more difficult, some few of the democratic members were disposed to listen to the crocodile whinings from the federal party, of love for the people, and to go with them for universal suffrage, or at least, for an extension of it to blacks.

The result was a compromise, and blacks who possessed a property qualification of the clear value of two hundred and fifty dollars, and had been rated and paid a tax thereon, were allowed to vote. This property qualification acts as an almost entire prohibition, for but few, very few, blacks own that amount of property. The restrictions on the vote of *white* men were taken off, and, by the new constitution of New York, white men, who have lived in the State one year, and paid a State or county tax, or labored on the highway, or served in the militia, have the right to vote—extending free suffrage even further than allowed by the constitution of Ohio. The new constitution was submitted to the people, and by them adopted by a large majority. At that time no man had higher praise for his efforts in the cause of the people than Martin Van Buren.—Every effort of his gigantic mind was brought into requisition to thwart the various plans of federalism to defeat the right of the poor man to vote; and yet the same party, at the present day, charge upon Mr. Van Buren sentiments the very reverse of those he held, and place him, and the democratic party in that Convention, of which he was the acknowledged leader, as the foe to the right of the poor white man to vote. The documents brand this assertion, however, as false, and the same party who now justify the putting down, *at the point of the bayonet*, the right of suffrage in Rhode Island, will forever have to bear the stigma of resisting, in the most determined manner, the same thing in the Convention called in 1821 to revise the constitution of the State of New York.

While a member of the United States Senate, Mr. Van Buren's conduct was such as to meet the entire approval of the people of New York, and so endeared was he to them, that at the expiration of his term of service, and on the decease of the then Governor, De Witt Clinton, he was elected in November 1828, by a majority of more than *thirty thousand votes*, over Smith Thompson, his highest competitor, Governor of his native State.

Thus have we rapidly traced Martin Van Buren from the poor and friendless boy, working by day and studying his lesson by fire-light at night, and struggling, not only unaided and alone against natural difficulties, sufficient to appal the stoutest heart, but added to which he had to fight and to struggle against malignant federalism, which first sought to seduce, and failing in that, to overthrow him, by the combined aid of wealth and power. True to the principles early implanted into his breast, and to his own generous feelings, his heart remained uncorrupted, and his own indomitable perseverance enabled him gloriously to triumph. As was said of another distinguished democrat, "the people loved him, because he first loved them," and the bitter abuse of his opponents only raised him the higher in their estimation.

Mr. Van Buren was only suffered to occupy the gubernatorial chair of New York for a few months. Gen. Jackson, whose knowledge of men was as great as that of any man living, when taking his seat as President, on the 4th of March 1829, believing Mr. Van Buren pre-eminently qualified for the place, offered him the post of Secretary of State, that being the most honorable station in the cabinet. By the advice of his friends, he accepted; and from that moment, his history becomes the history of his country.

Neither Gen. Jackson, nor any of his cabinet had ever, previous to the time of his inauguration, been connected with an Administration, as cabinet officers. Diplomacy was considered a profession which required long and laborious service to understand, and without being regularly trained, no man was considered competent to conduct a negotiation. Mr. Jefferson had been the Secretary of State under Gen. Washington; Mr. Madison had filled the same post under Mr. Jefferson; Mr. Monroe, under the administration of Mr. Madison, and John Quincy Adams had filled the same high station under Mr. Monroe. Under Mr. Adams, whose whole life had been spent in the diplomatic service of his country, Mr. Clay, who had made him President by

by a foul coalition in 1824, was brought in to the line of succession to the Presidency, by being made Secretary of State under Mr. Adams. Thus, will it be seen; that all the Secretaries of State which had preceded Mr. Clay from the days of Mr. Jefferson, brought the experience of the President, who had filled the same office, to their aid.

Unfortunately for himself, and doubly unfortunate for the country, Mr. Clay exhibited in his dealings with foreign nations, that fickleness of purpose which so characterizes him as a politician. This bungling diplomacy lost to the country the immense benefits of the colonial trade, which had been offered him on terms highly advantageous to the country, and which he neglected to accept. Discovering his error, too late, he tried in vain to recover it. Disgusted with a man who was of one opinion one hour, and of a different one the next, the same government which had offered the terms which he refused, refused them when he was willing to accept.

Mr. Van Buren, when he took charge of the State Department, determined to try a straight-forward system of dealing between nations, and which diplomatists had in but few countries ever practised. In the strong and energetic language of Gen. Jackson, it was "*to ask of foreign nations nothing but what was clearly right, and to submit to nothing that was wrong*," and never was a system more eminently successful.

The attention of Mr. Van Buren was early called to the regaining of the colonial trade which had been lost by the prevaricating policy of Clay and Adams. The very terms which Great Britain refused to Clay and Adams, were granted to Jackson and Van Buren; and to this day, do our citizens enjoy that trade which has opened new fountains of wealth to our enterprising citizens.

During the war in Europe, when Bonaparte, by his armies, ruled the greater part of that continent, our vessels, which then enjoyed the carrying trade of the world, were plundered and confiscated, under the pretence of appearing on coasts and harbors when in a state of blockade—and many of our merchants and citizens by the loss sustained, had been plunged into the deepest poverty. Mr. Clay, as Secretary of State, was bound to seek reparation and justice for injuries done. If ever he made the attempt he failed, as signally as he did in securing the colonial trade.

Mr. Clay had been Secretary of State for four years, and in vain may the public records be searched for the single act which



either redounded to his credit, or the advantage of the nation. Mr. Van Buren succeeded him, and occupied the same station for the two years following; and if the records be searched, it will be found that, never since our government was first founded, had an equal amount of labor been done, or so many treaties, advantageous to the country, been made and ratified.

In addition to the settlement of the colonial trade with Great Britain, a treaty was made with France, by which that nation agreed to pay our citizens for spoiliations committed on our commerce, and which for twenty years before she had refused to settle. Denmark too, had plundered our merchants, and with that power, was a treaty made, by which she engaged to pay for spoiliations a sum *four times greater* than she ever before was willing to refund.—Spain—proud, self conceited and jealous Spain—followed next, and not only did that proud Monarchy pay for her depredations, but she signed a treaty which gave our citizens advantages in trade with her ports, then allowed to no other nation.—Portugal, too, owing to the straight forward, manly skill of Mr. Van Buren, paid our citizens for injuries done years before. In addition to the treaties, compelling foreign nations to do justice to our wronged citizens—and which brought peace and plenty to many a hearth, where but a few weeks before, poverty and want had reigned supreme—other treaties were made with Mexico, Columbia, Austria, Russia, and Turkey—which opened not only new markets, but new seas to our commerce, where the star-spangled banner never before floated. All this was accomplished by *Martin Van Buren*, during the twenty-seven months which he remained in the office of Secretary of State, and conducted our relations with foreign governments. During this time, while the “star-spangled banner” was to be found in every port, and the sails of our vessels were whitening every sea, that flag was sufficient protection to an American in any part of the world.

In the month of June, 1831, Gen. Jackson yielded to the solicitations of Mr. Van Buren, and accepted his resignation as Secretary of State, and soon after appointed him Minister to Great Britain. The treaty which concluded our last war with England, had left many of the differences between the two countries unadjusted, and Mr. Van Buren was deemed by Gen. Jackson the most proper person to bring all the remaining vexed questions to a final and a speedy adjustment. With reluctance he accepted the trust. Immediately upon his

arrival in England, negotiations were opened with the British Minister; and while every thing seemed to favor the idea of their being brought to a speedy close, on terms equally honorable and advantageous to the United States, a factious federal Senate rejected his nomination, and he was of course recalled. The reason assigned by Clay, Webster, and their compeers in the Senate for this act, was a sentence contained in Mr. Van Buren's instructions to the then Minister to England, relative to the colonial trade, and which, it was contended, compromised the honor of the country. Gen. Jackson, with the manly frankness so peculiar to that gallant old soldier, proclaimed himself the author of the objectionable paragraph, and that it was the only one which he had written or dictated, though he approved and endorsed the whole. Yet Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and their aiders and abettors in the Senate, rejected Mr. Van Buren, for an act of which another—and one too whose word was never doubted—took the blame.—When the facts of the case were laid before the people, Gen. Jackson was not only justified in writing the objectionable paragraph, but the people endorsed it, not only as strictly true, but as right and proper.

As soon as Mr. Van Buren received the news of the blow aimed at his fair fame, and that political malice had rejected him, he returned home. As with one voice, the nation rose up in indignation to reverse the verdict of the Senate. The delegates to the democratic State Convention, which every second year meets in the Capital of Ohio, responding to the unanimous voice of their democratic brethren, nominated Mr. Van Buren as the candidate of the democracy for the Vice Presidency. Like wild-fire the word ran throughout the Union, and by acclamation other States responded to the nomination. Mr. Van Buren was elected Vice President, and Mr. Clay was defeated for President at the same time. The 4th day of March 1833, saw Martin Van Buren take the oath of office, which made him constitutionally the presiding officer of the very body which had rejected him; and thus was the fair fame of Martin Van Buren vindicated by the people, and thus was Clay and his compeers rebuked for their attempt to destroy him.

So low did that factious Senate sink the respect once due to that body, that Col. Benton, in his place in the Senate, and in commenting upon the course of Clay and his compeers, said, “the time was, when rejections by the Senate was fatal to character, but now they are passports to favor!”

The day that saw Martin Van Buren inaugurated President, proved the truth of Col. Benton's remark. He had been rejected as Minister to England, and Mr. Taney had, by the same men, been rejected as Secretary of the Treasury. Mr. Van Buren was sworn into office as President of the United States by Mr. Taney, who was then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, the highest judicial officer of the country. Thus had retributive justice been dealt out, and thus had Clay and Ewing, and his other satellites, been rebuked.

So admirably well did Mr. Van Buren perform the duties incident to his new station—with so calm and unruffled a temper did he preside over the deliberations of the Senate, and so impartial were his decisions, that even party malice and bitter partizan feeling gave way, and praise was extorted from his enemies.

The Democratic National Convention, which met in the city of Baltimore, in May, 1835, and which was composed of delegates from most of the States and Territories of the Union, nominated Mr. Van Buren, without a dissenting voice, as the democratic candidate for President. He was elected, and on the 4th of March, 1837, was inaugurated as President of the United States.

The spirit of speculation had for some years previous to this time run wild in the country. Prices had been paid for real estate, in some cases more than twenty times the real value, and from one end of the country to the other, men seemed determined to grow rich by diving deep into the speculating mania, instead of pursuing the slower but surer means of industry. The banks of the different States, aided and encouraged by the Bank of the United States—the so-called *regulator of the currency*—had thrown out their paper promises to pay, without the means of redemption, and these being received by the Government in payment of the public lands, had added fuel to the flame of speculation which was running wild before. Gen. Jackson, with keen-sightedness, for which he is excelled by no man living, saw the ruin which was approaching, and determined, if possible, to stop it. In 1836, the celebrated specie circular was issued, by which all payments for public lands and for duties on goods imported into the United States were to be made in gold and silver. This circular had the desired effect of stopping the sale of the public domain to any but to actual settlers, and of the immense importation of foreign goods into the United States

To guard against future evils arising from this system of plunder—for it can be called by no gentler name—Mr. Van Buren recommended the passage of the Independent Treasury bill, which, towards the latter part of his Administration, became the law of the land.

No great measure, ever before acted upon by the people, is so little understood as this self-same Independent Treasury bill. The efforts of the federal party have been unceasing to mystify its provisions; and it is a fact, which should be borne in mind by persons seeking the truth, that notwithstanding the fierce assaults which have been made upon it by the whig press of Ohio—notwithstanding these sheets have teemed with speeches and long editorial and abusive epithets, but one solitary federal press in Ohio ever published the law. That paper was the "Ohio State Journal," and, in a very short time thereafter, the editor, who published it, was driven by the federal leaders from the control of its columns.

The writer of this article professes to have studied the Independent Treasury bill, and to be well versed in its practical details, and in noticing the charge usually made against it, that of being beneficial to office holders, he avers, and challenges denial, that so far from being beneficial to office holders, that the very reverse is true for it imposes upon them a vast amount of additional labor, without one cent of additional pay.

Divested of all the falsehood which federalism had sought, and in many cases with success, to surround it, the Independent Treasury bill stands forth, a simple proposition to divorce the government from banks, which have shown themselves to be utterly dishonest, and which have signally failed in answering the purposes for which they were used. That union between the government and the banks, was a foul and an adulterous one, advantageous to neither and certainly prejudicial to both.

The details of the law were well conceived, and until it was repealed, answered all the purposes for which it was enacted, and while in operation, not one single cent of the public money was either used by the officers or lost to the people. Thus easily are the safeguards of the bill explained, so far as they are applicable to the Government Land offices, and it is presumed they apply equally as well in the collection of the revenue as in the selling of land.

A person under the provisions of the Sub-Treasury wishing to enter land, goes to the Register of the Land office and pro-

cures from him a description of the land, the number of acres, and a statement of the price he is to pay for it. This paper, called an application, he takes to the Receiver to whom he pays the money. For this money he takes two receipts, one of which he keeps, and the other he hands to the Register. On the back of the receipt given to the Register, the Receiver is obliged briefly to state, not only the amount of the purchase money, but the kind of funds which he received; if in bank notes, stating the names of the banks which issued the notes, and the amount for which it called—and if paid in bank notes and in gold and silver, the Receiver briefly states the amount received of each kind. When the purchaser receives the patent for his land, he restores to the Register the duplicate receipt which, until that time, he retains. The Register, on the authority of the Receiver's receipt which is placed in his hands, marks the land as sold, and charges the receiver with the money. At the end of every month, the Register forwards, with other papers, the Receiver's receipts—marked as aforesaid with the amount of purchase money—to the General Land Office in Washington city.

Before these receipts are sent off, the Register, under oath, is obliged, once in every month, and oftener if required by the Secretary of the Treasury, to count the money in the hands of the Receiver, and to furnish the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Treasurer of the United States, with a written account, not only of the amount, but the kind of funds in his possession, carefully giving the amount in gold, in silver, and in notes on each of the different banks. As a check on both the Register and Receiver, the Secretary of the Treasury is empowered to send an agent, at any time, to examine and count the funds, and under oath to make to him a statement of the same. As a further check, the Register is bound, at the end of each week, to make out three several statements of the land sold during the week, which he hands to the Receiver to transmit, one to the Secretary of the Treasury—one to the Treasurer of the United States, and the other to the Commissioner of the General Land Office. In like manner is the Receiver bound to make three statements similar to those of the Register, and which he hands to the Register, who transmits them to the same officers. The transmission of the statement of the Receiver, by the Register, and *vice versa*, is for the purpose of ensuring punctuality in making them out.

The Register, knowing as he always

does, the exact amount of land sold, is required, as soon as the money in the possession of the Receiver amounts to three-fourths of the amount for which the latter officer gave bond, is required to suspend all sales, until the Receiver exhibits to him evidence that he has either deposited the money according to law, or that it has been drawn from his hands by warrants from the Treasury.

When the Receiver makes a deposit of money, he takes duplicate receipts therefor, one of which he retains, and the other he mails to the Treasurer of the United States. These receipts carefully specify the kind of funds deposited—the amount in gold, the amount in silver, and the amount in notes of the different banks.—When a Treasury warrant is drawn on the Receiver, the person who receives the money, receipts for it on the back of the same, and in that receipt he also specifies the kind of money received, with the same particularity that is observed in other cases. These warrants, so receipted, are returned to the office where they were issued.

By the law it was an offence punishable by confinement in the Penitentiary for the Receiver to use funds belonging to the United States. Should he attempt to do so, he could not well fail of being found out, for the evidence in different shapes of the precise kind of money he received was to be found in the proper offices at Washington, as well as the kind which he paid out—and at any moment was he liable to have the money in his possession examined, and that too without one moment's warning.

Previous to the passage of this bill, the money received in payment of public lands, had been used for the purpose of speculation. That law at once cut off all hope of that kind, and hence the fierce denunciation of stock gamblers, land speculators, and other leeches on the public, who prefer to live by their wits, rather than by work. No man, honestly seeking the truth, can take up that law, and, after a careful examination of its provisions, and the instructions of the Secretary of the Treasury, say that there is anything wrong in it. The great objection to the law, in the minds of those who were foremost in its opposition, was because, in cutting the connexion between the Government and banks who had proved faithless to their trust, it also took from the speculator the means of gambling in State Stocks, and using the money of the people to monopolize the public land, and make the honest settler pay double price for it. The great

sin of the Independent Treasury law, had this extent. These facts will also explain why it was, that its provisions were so carefully kept from the public eye by the whig leaders.

Among the many charges made against Mr. Van Buren, in connexion with the Independent Treasury, was, that he was attempting to grasp alike the *sword and the purse* of the nation. By the Constitution, the President is the commander-in-chief of the army and navy, and with these, his enemies said, he wished to seize the treasure of the people. In making this charge, they sedulously kept concealed the fact, that neither the President or any of his officers, could draw a single cent from the Treasury without an express appropriation by law. At the very time that they were making these charges, a difficulty was apprehended with Great Britain, relative to the north-eastern boundary of the United States.—Congress was about adjourning, and so great was the confidence reposed in the sterling honesty and discretion of the President, that a bill, was introduced into the United States Senate placing at his command TEN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, and WITH POWER TO RAISE AN ARMY OF FIFTY THOUSAND MEN. *This bill passed the United States Senate without one single dissenting voice, and the House of Representatives by nearly a unanimous vote;* and thus did the very men who were railing out against Mr. Van Buren as a dangerous man, *absolutely place both the sword and the purse of the nation in his hands—* and thus did they give him the power to make war at pleasure, a power which never before was given to any man, not even to Washington, the beloved father of his country.

Despite their foul slanders, these men well knew that Martin Van Buren was a man in any emergency to be trusted. Cool, sagacious, and inflamed with an ardent love of his country and of her free institutions, they had, in the whole course of his life, a sufficient guaranty that power, in his hands, would never be abused. The result showed their wisdom. Great Britain, finding the United States prepared to resist aggression, lowered her lofty tone, and withdrew her arrogant demands. Though the power to do so was given him, yet not one dollar of that ten millions was expended, nor one single soldier out of the fifty thousand which he was authorized to raise, was ever enlisted. They had the same confidence in Mr. Van Buren, which Mr. Madison had during the war, when he selected him, from among the many able and

profound lawyers in the United States, to act as Judge Advocate when Gen. Hull was tried for treason to his country; in surrendering the American army at Detroit, to the British. The mention of the trial of Hull reminds us of an anecdote, which we will here relate, as illustrative of the reckless disregard of truth, with which the federal press assail Mr. Van Buren. Otway Curry, the editor of a federal paper in Xenia, Ohio, and who, during the campaign of 1840, ranked as one of the greatest of hard-cider poets, and who, since that time, has represented the district of which Union county forms a part, in the Ohio Legislature, published during the last summer, a long article against Mr. Van Buren, charging that Hull escaped conviction, because of the neglect and incompetency of Mr. Van Buren as Judge Advocate. Had the editor consulted the history of his country, he would have found that Hull *was convicted of treason*, and that he was *sentenced to death*; but in consideration of his revolutionary services, President Madison pardoned him. In making the charge, the editor hoped to injure Mr. Van Buren, but failed. The conclusion is a fair one, as Hull was convicted, that Mr. Van Buren performed his duty well; for, according to Mr. Curry, had he failed in doing so, the verdict of the jury would have been, not guilty. Thus does malice frequently have an effect opposite to that intended.

During the contest of 1840, there was one charge made against Mr. Van Buren, which, among the unthinking, produced its effect, and which the whole course of his life, as well as his acts, private as well as official, brand as entirely destitute of foundation in truth. The charge is, that Mr. Van Buren is an enemy of the working men, and of their interests. In a campaign where reason and argument had their usual effect, the friends of Mr. Van Buren could have pointed, and that too with pride, to his whole life, as furnishing an ample refutation of this base libel. It is not our intention to devote paragraph after paragraph to prove false the base slanders of the whig press and of stump speakers, but we will merely state one fact, which brands this charge as basely false. From the moment of Mr. Van Buren's entrance into public life to the present hour, his warmest—his most efficient and untiring supporters, have been the working men. In the stormy political conflicts, it was they who rallied around, defended and supported him, against the fierce assaults of the stock gamblers, the water lot speculators, and the rest of that tribe of non-producers

who live by their wits, upon the labor of others, and who are now, as they have ever been, his natural and implacable enemies. The reason why this is now, and has ever been the case, is most obvious. The principles of Mr. Van Buren favor not that state of things upon which non-producers thrive and fatten. Like Mr. Jefferson, he has "sworn, upon the altar of his country, eternal hostility to every kind of tyranny over the mind of man;" and he is always prompt in his opposition to those laws which build up princely fortunes for the few at the expense of the many—and which makes hewers of wood and drawers of water of the working million, for the benefit of those who toil not.

The following extracts from a letter, written in answer to one addressed by a committee of working men of Philadelphia to Mr. Van Buren, while President, serves to show not only his feelings towards the mechanics, but how carefully their interest was guarded while he occupied the Chair of State:

"In the distribution of wealth, resulting from the union of labor and capital, it is too often the case that an undue portion falls to the share of the latter. The discontinuance of partial legislation, which I have always advocated, would be an important step towards correcting this iniquity.

"It has been my design to keep these objects constantly in view. So far from being in favor of reducing the wages of labor, or attempting to render the services required disproportionate to the rewards received, it cannot be unknown to you that what is called the ten hour system, originally devised by mechanics and laborers themselves, has, by my direction, been adopted, and uniformly carried out at all the public establishments; and this mitigation of labor has been accompanied by no corresponding reduction of wages.

"I also caused it to be distinctly intimated in the month of March last, to the officers of such of these establishments as might contemplate a reduction of wages, that, in my opinion, the present uncertain state of things, which, it is believed, results from circumstances that cannot be permanent in their operation, does not present a just and proper basis for a reduction of wages.

"I am far from wishing to contribute in the slightest degree to the embarrassments and depressions of the laboring classes. It is, on the contrary, my most earnest and constant desire, that their industry should every where, and at all times, be amply rewarded, and that the blessing of plenty should be liberally diffused among those who contribute most to their production."

In the contest of 1840, Mr. Van Buren was defeated for the Presidency. The remembrance of the demoralization of that campaign—when hard cider debauchery, coon-skins and log cabins were made to take

the place of reason and of arguments—is still too fresh to render necessary a recapitulation here. The people well remember the promises made by the federal leaders, and they remember, too, how these promises were broken. They too remember—for they cannot forget it—how studiously all the high-toned federal measures of the whig party were kept out of view, and how bitterly it was denied that they formed any portion of the whig creed; and when they got into power, it is also remembered, how soon those measures were brought forward by the federal majority in Congress, and acted upon. It will also be recollected how all the plans of the federal leaders were thwarted—how discord and confusion were thrown upon their councils—and how, in the hour of his triumph, Gen. Harrison was borne to his grave.—Other and heavy strokes have fallen upon that party. Death has been in their midst, and many of their leaders have been hurried from earth to that bourne from whence no traveller has ever returned. The Vice President—and upon whom the Presidency devolved when Gen. Harrison died, and who, in 1840, the federal leaders rallied to the support of "without a why or wherefore," and whom they called "*honest John Tyler*"—has been the object of unceasing attack and the vilest vituperation. The democratic party, though defeated in that contest, have again rallied in defence of their principles, and State after State have again ranged themselves under the democratic banner, and on the democratic platform.

Immediately after his defeat, Mr. Van Buren retired to his native village, where, in the improvement of his farm, he has spent the last three years. Believing that, as he fell with democratic principles, he should rise with them, he has been placed, by his friends, as a candidate again for the Presidency in 1844. None who witness the enthusiasm which his name excites, and who have marked the almost unanimous nomination which he has received in the different States, can doubt but that again he will be the chosen one who, in the coming contest, is to bear the standard of democracy, and none doubt his triumphant election. If his life be spared—and, judging from the temperance of his habits, and the soundness of a constitution free from all the evils arising from excesses in early life, he will yet have many years allotted to him on earth—his election in 1844 is regarded as an event certain to happen; for

"Truth, crushed to earth, will rise again,  
The eternal years of God are hers;  
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,  
And dies amid her worshippers!"

# MR. VAN BUREN'S TARIFF OPINIONS.

The Tariff opinions of Mr. Van Buren having been much misrepresented, we are induced to give the following extracts from his Indiana letter for the purpose of setting this matter at rest.

"My views in relation to the *Protective System*, were called for by the Shocco Springs meeting in 1832, and freely given. A conviction that the establishment of commercial regulations with a view to the encouragement of domestic interests, is within the constitutional power of Congress, was on that occasion distinctly avowed. But, holding this opinion, I at the same time denied the propriety of exercising this power in a manner calculated to OPPRESS any portion of my fellow-citizens, or to advance the interests of ONE SECTION of the Union AT THE EXPENSE OF ANOTHER. I, on the contrary, affirmed it to be the duty of those who are entrusted with the administration of the Federal Government, to direct its operations in the manner best calculated to distribute as EQUALLY AS POSSIBLE its burthens and blessings among the several States and the people thereof. In addition to the declaration of these general views, I suggested more specific rules for the action of the government in this particular, by the observance of which I believed those views would be most likely to be carried into fair effect.

"More than ten years have elapsed since that communication was made; and during that entire period, the people of the U. S. have paid large amounts of duties, avowedly imposed for the encouragement and protection of domestic manufactures, with gradual reductions according to the provisions of the compromise act of 1833. The unbiased sentiment of the country, in respect to what is under such circumstances the proper rule for legislative action upon this subject, has, I think, by the course of events and the progress of opinion, been brought to the conclusion, briefly expressed in one of the resolutions of your convention, viz: 'A discriminating tariff for revenue purposes only, and which will incidentally PROTECT AMERICAN INDUSTRY.'

"But as experience has shown that the terms employed by your convention are not always used in the same sense, it is due as well to the subject and the occasion as to myself, that I should give you, without reserve, my own understanding of them.

"Adequate revenue, for the support of all Governments, must be derived from some source. It has no where been found an easy task to preserve equality in raising it, and at the same time to overcome the general repugnance to the payment of taxes in any shape—a repugnance arising more from an apprehension that their avails will not be wisely applied, than from an unwillingness on the part of the people to sustain their government by the necessary contribution. All must agree that taxes should be imposed with fair and full reference to the advantages derived, from the existence of good government, by those who pay them. Those advantages may in general terms be justly described as resulting from an ample security in the enjoyment of our personal rights and rights of property, with adequate safe-guards against internal commotion and foreign aggression. In respect to the immunities of the person, and civil and religious freedom, the interest as well as the immediate advantages of all are equal. Not so with the other privileges secured to us by our free government. The unavoidable disparity in the pecuniary condition of our citizens makes the degree of benefit they respectively derive from the maintenance of an efficient government over property and the rights of property, essentially

different. The modes of raising revenue allowed, and adopted by the State governments, are generally graduated by this disparity. If the results are not always equitable, the fault, it is believed, will in most cases be found in their action upon the principle, rather than in the principle itself. The right to raise revenue for its support, by the imposition of duties in lieu of direct taxation, is, by the constitution, subjected to the exclusive control of the Federal Government. This right, subject to the limitations imposed by the grant, was given to it for that purpose, and has been freely exerted by it since its establishment. It would afford me much pleasure to be able to say that the exercise of this power has borne as equally upon all classes of the people, however unequally their pecuniary conditions, as the taxes imposed by State governments. But this cannot with truth be said. Nor is the inequality unavoidably resulting from the Federal mode of collecting taxes a new discovery. It was foreseen and objected to when the power was conferred, as an evil inherent in the system, which could not fail to show itself in its operation, and the injustice of which no form of legislation, however it might be made to mitigate, could ever be able to remove. The advocates of the system were notwithstanding reconciled to it by a belief, no doubt sincerely entertained, that the inequalities which it was feared would result from the collection of duties upon imported articles, would be prevented by the fact that the consumption would be in proportion to the means of the consumer. It was upon this ground that the principle was defended. That this expectation has not been realized, is undeniably true. There are but few, if any, who cannot, in their immediate vicinity, point out numerous instances in which *poor men with large families are actually obliged to pay more for the support of the Federal Government, than others who are in affluent circumstances, but are richer without, or have smaller families*; and few, if any, countervailing examples are to be found. At the same time, the great body of wealth invested in incorporated or associated companies, and in bonds and notes, entirely escape Federal taxation. The mass of the people seem, nevertheless, to prefer this mode of collecting the revenues. Paying their taxes in the form of an increased price upon the commodities they buy, their contribution loses, in their estimation, much of the odium that would be attached to it, if severed from the price of the article and converted into a tax by name, as it is in fact. It also wears the appearance of a voluntary contribution, although its payment is for the most part unavoidable as a compulsory imposition would be. It is supported, too, by the odium which was attached to the imposition of direct taxes many years since, for purposes which were not approved by the people, and by the fact that in most of the States the taxes are direct; rendering it for that reason desirable to substitute some other mode of raising revenue for the Federal Government. These and other considerations have given to the imposition a preference in the public mind which would render the imposition of direct taxes in time of peace exceedingly odious, and have produced as great a degree of unanimity in favor of a tariff for revenue as can ever be expected upon a public question. Of the great mass of opponents to a protective tariff,

there is not, so far as I know, a single State or district that has taken ground against a revenue tariff.

Let us now for a moment look at the advantages which the manufacturing interest, above any other, derives from a tariff imposed for revenue only. The first tariff bill, passed in 1789, and all those that followed it between that period and the war, were, in fact, notwithstanding the recitals in some of them, revenue bills.

The average amount of the imposts under them, commencing at 12½ per cent., was gradually increased from that to 15 and up to 20 per cent. At the latter average it stood from 1800 to 1808, and until the commencement of preparations for war. Twenty per centum, upon an average, appears, in the judgment of those best acquainted with the subject here and elsewhere, to be the rate best adapted for revenue. It is the amount also to which it was the design of the Compromise Act to reduce the Tariff, and one which ought certainly not to be exceeded, except when absolutely necessary for revenue, and likely, from the state of the country, to effect this object. The rate to which all parties appear willing to go under the existing condition of the Treasury, and to continue it until that condition is sufficiently improved to justify a reduction, is, I believe, an average of 25 per cent. To this duty is to be added the charge, upon imported articles arising from the costs of transportation from Europe, consisting of freight, insurance, the expenses of agencies, or profits to successive holders, and cash duties, which are estimated by those who understand the matter better than I do, at not less than 10 per cent.—making, if the average rate of duties is 25 per cent., an amount of charges upon imported articles, before they are placed in our market upon a par with similar articles manufactured here, equal to 35 per cent., and if the average duty is 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. If the foreign article is notwithstanding brought in, and a competition entered into with home manufacturers, these duties and charges operate, whilst the competition lasts, as a protection to the domestic manufacturer, equal to their sum—giving him by so much the advantage, in the sale of his commodities, over the importer; and if the effect of these charges is to prevent the importation of such articles altogether, they then give him an entire monopoly of the home market. These are the direct advantages which result to the manufacturing interest from the raising of revenue by the imposition of duties upon imports, instead of direct taxation.

Let us next consider whether the other great interests of the country derive any, and if any, what direct advantages, from this mode of collecting the public revenue. I do not profess to be as well acquainted with the progress and probable results of our fiscal operations, upon trade and labor, as those who, by their pursuits in life, have enjoyed greater advantages for acquiring this kind of information, I give you, in answer to your inquiries, the best views that I am able to take of the subject. If I fall into errors, they will certainly be unintentional, and as certainly be corrected by those who are better informed. And first, as relates to THE AGRICULTURAL, THAT GREATEST OF ALL INTERESTS. It is certainly true, that in the formation of our tariff, duties varying in amount are also imposed upon the same articles which constitute the staple productions of the country, when imported from abroad; but it is not equally true that the effect of that imposition, in respect to the protection thereby afforded to the domestic production of them, is for the most part nominal. When we look at the comparatively small amount of duties received at the treasury upon the importation

of the important articles, beef, pork, flour, various kinds of grain, cotton, rice, tobacco, wool, &c., &c., contrasted with that collected upon the importation of manufactured articles, we cannot but be sensible that this is so. The farmer and planter, it is true, enjoy, and to a great degree without competition with foreign producers, our own market for the sale of most of the fruits of their labor; but it is a security derived chiefly, if not altogether, from natural causes, for which nobody pays, and which derives but little aid from legislation. It is, on the contrary, to the nature of our climate, the enterprise and industry of our citizens, the character of our soil, and extent of our territory, with other facilities for the easier and cheaper growth of agricultural products here, that the agriculturalist is chiefly indebted for his protection against foreign competition. To foster the interests of commerce and navigation, has been the object of the Federal Government; and much has certainly been done to accomplish it, through the instrumentality of salutary laws and treaty stipulations. Respect has also been very generally had to these interests, and more particularly that of navigation, even in our revenue bills, by low duties, or exemption from duties, upon articles necessary and useful to them; but it will not, I believe, be contended in any quarter, that the prosperity of either of these great interests is essentially advanced by a protective or a revenue tariff. THAT THE GREAT BODY OF THE MECHANICS AND LABORERS IN EVERY BRANCH OF BUSINESS WHOSE WELFARE SHOULD BE AN OBJECT OF UNCEASING SOLICITUDE ON THE PART OF EVERY PUBLIC MAN, HAVE BEEN THE GREATEST SUFFERERS BY OUR HIGH PROTECTIVE TARIFFS, and would continue to be, if that policy is persisted in, is to my mind too clear to require farther elucidation.

If these views are correct, and in all essential particulars I cannot doubt their being so, it is apparent that the manufacturing interest derives an advantage from the collection of the revenues of the federal Government through the custom houses, instead of their being obtained by the mode of taxation adopted by the States, incomparably greater than any other of the important interests of the country—indeed, than all of them put together.—That this advantage consists in a preference in the American market over their foreign competitors, of not less than 30 per cent. when the revenue standard is reduced to an average of 20 per cent., and liable to be increased, as before stated: That it is enjoyed by virtue of a tariff, the collection of the duties imposed by which, whilst it subjects all to taxation, invariably and almost inevitably bears with equal severity upon a very large, and unhappily, in general, a necessitous portion of the people—a protection the indirect advantages of which to other interests, even under a tariff for protection, are as much the subject of doubt and disputation as they ever were; but for which those concerned in other pursuits have, for a long series of years, paid in advance, and received their equivalent in promises, of the performance of which they are not, and do not seem likely to be soon satisfied.—This advantage to the manufacturer is not, it is true, the object of, but only incidental to, a tariff for revenue. Still it is not, on that account, the less beneficial to him.

The position assumed by your convention, and in which I fully concur, is, that the incidental protection thus derived, is all the legislative favor which can at this day be conferred upon the manufacturer without great injustice to other interests. The expediency of the adoption by Congress, at any time, of temporary measures of retaliation, when likely to be effectual in counteracting foreign legislation

injurious to American interests, is a question involving different considerations.

"We have it from quarters entitled to respect, that the most considerate of the domestic manufacturers are satisfied with this measure of protection; that, tired of having their peculiar interests embarked in political contests, resulting at one time in an excess of duties which tempts to an undue and ruinous increase of capital in their business, and, at others, under the deep and excited feelings which perpetual controversy engenders, in sudden and great reductions, equally injurious; that, conscious of the extent to which, for more than a quarter of a century, they have engrossed the time and attention of the National Legislature and of the people, and of the millions upon millions which have, during that time, been collected from the latter, avowedly to facilitate and give special advantages to the particular pursuit in which they are engaged, not only to the exclusion of, but at the immediate cost of those of others; and sensible, as the most observing amongst them must be, that the period has passed away when the tariff designed for protection can be kept up in this country, without doing more injury to every interest, by the convulsions and revulsions which it cannot fail to produce in public opinion, than it can confer benefit on theirs—they would themselves prefer that the protection secured to them by the legislation of Congress should be confined to that which is incidentally derived from a revenue tariff. So far as certainty in their condition—a matter of inestimable importance—is concerned, it is the only course by which even an approach to its accomplishment can be hoped for.—To all present appearances, the acquiescence in a tariff for revenue, now so general, may, in the absence of special excitement, endure for a period as long as is commonly embraced in calculations of business. It cannot, however, have escaped the attention of the manufacturers, that, although no State or district of country may yet have taken ground against this mode of raising revenue for the support of Government, there are not wanting thousands of vigorous intellects, in every section of our extended country, who, penetrated by a deep sense of the inequality and consequent injustice of its operation, are applying all the energies of their minds to the overthrow of the system itself. They cannot be ignorant, either, of the fact, that a prejudice against direct taxation, springing, in some degree at least, from a supposed abuse of the power in times past, may yield to time and reflection, or may be supplanted by a new and stronger antipathy. And what could be more likely to awaken popular aversion, than the sight of a great and affluent interest in the country, standing out amid the general gloom, pertinaciously exerting its influence in the councils of the nation, not only to save itself from the misfortunes which had overtaken all other classes, but to secure its own aggrandizement by new and unjust impositions on a community already borne to the earth by the adverse course of events. Individuals and their families may be (and in other countries are) permanently billeted on the public coffers; but all experience has shown that, with us at least, it is not in the power of the Government to secure permanent advantages to the business pursuits of one class over those of all others. The very patronage which is thus unduly received, has a tendency to relax the exertions, and to dissipate the prudence of its recipients; and if the spirit of monopoly is not in this way defeated, it is sure to be brought down, in the end, by the controlling power of an excited and enlightened public senti-

ment. I do, therefore, sincerely hope that the position which is attributed to a portion, at least, of the manufacturing interests, does, in fact, exist, and that it will soon become general. Whether it be so or not, the principle advanced by your convention is, without doubt, the true one for our future government.

"When the convention speak of a discriminating tariff for revenue, I understand them as referring to discrimination below the maximum rate of duties upon imported articles, not designed to increase the protection already afforded to domestic manufacturers, but to carry out views of policy different in their character, and which may properly be embraced in such a measure.

"OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL POWER TO MAKE DISCRIMINATIONS, I HAVE NO DOUBT. Equally clear it is that the practice of making them has existed from the commencement of the Government, and constitutes a feature in every principal tariff bill which is to be found in our statute book. They are, indeed, dispensable to the successful operation of every revenue bill, whether the design be to guard against smuggling on the one hand, where the nature of the article is such as to afford facilities for that practice; or, on the other, to prevent loss to the treasury, by the imposition of duties higher than the value of the article will bear, and thus prohibiting its introduction into the country. *If it be at any time deemed necessary or conducive to the safety of the country to encourage the manufacture at home of the articles necessary to its defence in war, nothing can be more proper than to do so by discrimination in favor of their domestic manufacture, inasmuch as the object in view is to promote the SAFETY OF ALL AT THE EXPENSE OF ALL.* Discriminations have constantly been made in favor of articles imported for the use of philosophical or literary societies, for the encouragement of the fine arts, or for the use of seminaries of learning, specimens in natural history, animals imported to breed, &c., &c., &c.—all founded on the same principle in respect to the universality of the benefits designed to be secured at the common expense. But, above all, is the power to make these of inestimable importance, as the only means of relieving the poorer classes from the unequal operation of this mode of collecting the public revenue, and of partially realizing Mr. Jefferson's beautiful idea of a wise and frugal government—one which shall "restrain men from injuring one another, and shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned." The man of wealth, when he pays a tax in the form of impost, which enures incidentally to the advancement of a special interest in which he is not concerned, is in a degree reconciled by the reflection, that, if the amount paid was not collected in this form, it would be assessed upon him in another—by which the amount of his contribution in comparison with that of his less affluent neighbors, would be materially enhanced. BUT TO THE POOR MAN, NO SUCH CONSOLATION IS AFFORDED. The system which operates thus favorably to his more fortunate neighbor, increases his taxes in an inverse ratio to his ability to pay. Every additional month that he has to feed, adds to the contribution he is obliged to make for the support of Government. It is only by discriminations in favor of articles necessary to his comfort, that the injustice to which he is exposed can be mitigated. It is therefore a power, the constant and faithful exercise of which is, in my judgment, demanded for considerations of justice, humanity, and sound policy.

MARTIN VAN BUREN."



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