

WEDNESDAY.....NOVEMBER 17, 1846.

From the Observer and Reporter of Nov. 14.

On Thursday last we were present, and witnessed at Ashland, one of the most gratifying scenes which we ever attended. The Whig Ladies of Tennessee had procured to be made a most costly, superb and magnificent Vase, to be presented to Mr. CLAY. It was wrought with exquisite art, under the direction, (we understand,) of two gentlemen of great taste and judgment, Messrs. GOWDY & PEABODY, of Nashville, with classic devices and inscriptions, suited to its subject, and admirably adapted as a companion to the beautiful Vase which had previously been presented to Mr. CLAY by the Gold and Silver Smiths of New York. Dr. MCNAIRY, a distinguished citizen of Nashville, accompanied by his son Henry, was charged by the Ladies of Tennessee, with the office of presenting the Vase to Mr. CLAY. This gentleman, desirous to avoid any unnecessary public display, in the delivery of the Vase, invited some thirty gentlemen to dine with Dr. MCNAIRY and witness the ceremony. Just before going to dinner, Dr. NAIRY rose and addressed Mr. CLAY as follows.

MR. CLAY :—

I wait on you to-day as the organ of fair and honored constituency. I am, Sir, in short, the representative of a large circle of ladies, citizens of Tennessee, who, in imitation of the mothers of the Revolution—stand inseparably allied under every vicissitude, with the great party in our country, whose principles and political name date their American birth from the beginning of the war that redeemed our freedom. Some of these, rich in the recollections of events, have been from first to last, the living witnesses of your illustrious career. Others, less advanced in years, have studied with delight the records which chronicle your fame; and all unite in a sentiment of profound veneration for a patriot who with the mind to conceive and courage to execute the severest councils of wisdom, has, in the midst of a time-serving generation, uniformly turned all political deception, and proved himself ever more true to his country than to the whisperings of guilty ambition. In the better days of the Republic, and before the despotic influence of party disciplined the hearts of men to deeds of fatal ambition, the voice of a thinking and self-judging people would, in return for such exalted patriotism, have long since awarded you, with acclamation, the last and highest honors of the Nation.

That grateful consummation—so recently denied to your unrivalled merits—would have saved us the expense and sufferings of a war into which Executive usurpation has unhappily plunged the country. It would have rebuked faction and crushed that reckless spirit of innovation, which has at last rashly overthrown many of the most ancient and successful usages of Government, and triumphantly substituted the visionary and dangerous “experiment” of party for well tried and long established maxims of policy. It would have dignified and elevated our national character abroad, whilst at home, it would have protected and encouraged the industry of our artisans, and laborers, and secured a prosperous stability in all the diversified interests of a great and growing people.

If those of our fellow citizens whose misguided confidence has deprived us of those blessings, shall repent an incautious decision, and turn by times to the “rescue,” it may yet be well for us all, and well for those who must soon succeed us in this goodly political heritage. But should the evil continue and increase, it will be your enviable consolation to know that you are at least guiltless. In public and in private life your hands have been fearlessly uplifted in solemn warning to your countrymen of every party, and your unheeded prophecies have, most of them, already ended in history. The balance must be fulfilled sooner or later, and then, if not before, a just posterity will crown with undying applause the memory of a statesman who was ever foremost at the breach, when the Constitution was assailed, and, who nobly preferring his duty to the lust or the allurements of power, virtuously proclaimed, in the face of a temporising world, that he would “rather be right than be President.”

I am charged, sir, by my fair constituents, to bear you these faithful commendations, and at the same time, to present you in their names with this beautiful and splendid vase of pure silver, wrought by AMERICAN hands, and rich in American emblems.

They pray you accept and treasure it as a small but sincere token of their deep and unfeigned veneration for your character, and their gratitude for all the great and signal services you have rendered your country.

Happy, Sir, in the commission which brings us together, and of the opportunity it gives me to express the personal feelings of an old and constant friend, you will indulge me, I know, until I add for myself a fervent hope that you still may be spared to us for many years, and that the evening of your days may be as full of blessings, as your long life has been full of devotion to the prosperity of this Republic, and, to the rights of man, and the cause of human liberty.

To which Mr. CLAY replied as follows :

DR. MCNAIRY :—

It is no ordinary occurrence, nor any common mission, that honors me by your presence. To be deputed, as you have been, by a large circle of Tennessee Ladies to bear the flattering sentiments towards me, which you have just so eloquently expressed, and to deliver to me the precious testimonials of their inestimable respect and regard, which you have brought, is a proud incident in my life, ever to be remembered with feelings of profound gratitude and delight.

My obligation to those ladies is not the less, for the high opinion of me, which they do me the honor to entertain, because I feel entirely conscious that I owe it more to their generous partiality than to any merits I possess, or to the value of any Public services which I have ever been able to render.

If, indeed, their kind wishes, in relation to the issue of the last Presidential election had been gratified, I have no doubt that we should have avoided some of those Public measures, so pregnant with evils to our Country, to which you have adverted. We should have preserved, undisturbed, and without any hazard, peace with all the world, have had no unhappy war with a neighboring sister republic, and, consequently, no deplorable waste of human life, of which that which has been sacrificed, or impaired, in an insalubrious climate, is far greater, and more lamentable, than what has been lost in the glorious achievements of a brave army, commanded by a skilful and gallant General.

We should have saved the millions of treasure which that unnecessary war has and will cost—an immense amount—sufficient to improve every useful harbor on the lakes, on the ocean, on the Gulf of Mexico and in the interior, and to remove obstructions to navigation in all the great rivers in the United States.

We should not have subverted a patriotic system

of Domestic Protection, fostering the industry of our own People and the interests of our own country, the great benefits of which have been practically demonstrated by experience, for the visionary promises of an alien policy of free trade, fostering the industry of Foreign People and the interests of Foreign Countries, which has brought, in its train, disaster and ruin to every Nation that has had the temerity to try it. The beneficial Tariff of 1842, which raised both the People and the Government of the United States out of a condition of distress and embarrassment, bordering on bankruptcy, to a state of high financial and general prosperity, would now be standing, unrepealed, in the statute book, instead of the fatal Tariff of 1846, whose calamitous effects will, I apprehend, sooner or later, be certainly realized.

All this, and more of what has since occurred, in the Public Councils, was foretold, prior to that election. It was denied, disbelieved, or unheeded; and we now realize the unfortunate consequences. But, both philosophy and patriotism enjoin, that we should not indulge in unavailing regrets, as to the incurable past. As a part of history in which it is embodied, we may derive from it instructive lessons, for our future guidance, and we ought to redouble our exertions to prevent their being unprofitably lost.

I receive, with the greatest pleasure, the splendid and magnificent vase of silver, which the Ladies of Tennessee, whom you represent, have charged you to present to me. Wrought by American artists, tendered by my fair countrywomen, and brought to me by an ever faithful, ardent and distinguished friend, it comes, with a triple title, to my grateful acceptance. I request you to convey to those ladies respectful and cordial assurances of my warm and heartfelt thanks and acknowledgments. Tell them I will carefully preserve, during life, and transmit to my descendants, an unfading recollection of their signal and generous manifestations of attachment and confidence. And tell them, also, that my fervent prayers shall be offered up for their happiness and prosperity, and shall be united with theirs, that they may live to behold our Country emerged from the dark clouds which encompass it, and once more, as in better times, standing out, a bright and cheering example, the moral and political model and guide, the hope, and the admiration of the Nations of the Earth.

I should entirely fail, Dr. McNairy, on this interesting occasion, to give utterance to my feelings, if I did not eagerly seize it, to express to you, my good friend, my great obligations for the faithful and uninterrupted friendship which, in prosperous and adverse fortune, and amidst all the vicissitudes of my chequered life, you have constantly, zealously and fearlessly displayed. May you yet long live, in health, happiness and prosperity, and enjoy the choicest blessings of a merciful and bountiful Providence!

After these addresses the company adjourned from the drawing to the dining room, where a most sumptuous and bountiful dinner was served up, in the best Kentucky style, to delighted guests, among whom were, besides the distinguished guests from Tennessee, Mr. CRITTENDEN, Gov. LETCHER, Capt. RUSSELL and Mr. STEVENSON, of Frankfort, the Baron BULOW and Capt. BRAUNS, of Germany, Judge ARNOLD, of Canada, Mr. MIDDLETON, of Va., and about twenty other gentlemen, from Lexington.

After the desert was removed, some allusion was made to the recent Whig victories, and Mr. Clay remarked that, although it was not customary at his table to drink toasts, he would, on this occasion, so far deviate, as to propose one, and requested the gentlemen to fill their glasses. Several of them, appearing to anticipate that it would relate to those victories, he said stop, stop, Gentlemen, I must propose one, if possible, still nearer my heart: I propose “The Ladies of Tennessee.” It was drunk with the greatest enthusiasm. And, after a suitable pause, Mr. Clay observed: Now, gentlemen, I will offer another sentiment which I hope will be agreeable to you: “The recent signal triumphs of the Whigs—begun, may they continue and never end.” It was received with a general burst of feeling. The company then returned to the drawing room, and, after coffee, retired.