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of
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SPEECH OF GOV. GALUSHA— 1815¹.

Gentlemen of the Council, and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives, – We are assembled at a highly interesting period; a period succeeding the most surprising events that ever burst upon the view of an astonished world. The storm of war, which had overspread the whole civilized world, and threatened almost universal ruin, has, by the overruling hand of Omnipotence, been suddenly hushed to silence. The great commotions, by which Europe was shaken to its centre, have, for a moment, subsided. The important contest in which we were deeply engaged with one of the most potent nations of the earth, has been happily terminated; and instead of the horrors of war, we are surrounded with all the rich blessings of peace. While we behold, most conspicuous, the hand of that Being, who “enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them;” and while our hearts glow with gratitude for the signal displays of His beneficence, in protecting and conducting us safely and triumphantly through our late struggle for the support of our dearest rights and national independence, let us look to Him for wisdom to direct us in our deliberations, and aid to such a discharge of our legislative duties, as shall conduce to the highest interest of our constituents, and the best good of the Union.

A time of peace is a time for cool and deliberate reflection, when all the angry passions, which are too prevalent in war, ought to be quelled, and when the sufferings and dangers to which we have been exposed, together with the causes of those dangers and sufferings, should be carefully sought, and critically examined, for the purpose of avoiding future evils, and ensuring future safety. Notwithstanding the European powers now seem tranquil, yet the unexpected and extraordinary changes, recent in that devoted country, justify our fears that new wars may soon arise from some unseen cause, and put our rights and liberties again in jeopardy. During the calm, then, we ought, by an indissoluble union, to be prepared for any storm that may arise.

I do not design to enter upon an investigation of the causes, progress and termination of the late war with Great Britain. Permit me, however, to observe, that no neutral nation was ever more cautious of giving offence to belligerent powers, than were the United States; and no nation that had the least confidence in its strength to oppose, ever suffered so long, such flagrant abuse of its rights, without resorting to arms. But when the love of peace could no longer restrain its votaries from assuming an attitude to defend their sacred rights, and the nation’s honor, the constituted authorities of our country declared a war which has progressed and terminated in such a manner, as has wholly disappointed the proud expectations of our enemy, and, in the view of the world, shed a lustre on our national character, which I hope no future disgrace may tarnish.

The nations of Europe, after suffering an almost incalculable destruction of property, after drenching the earth with blood, and clothing their field with carnage, have sunk down under governments no less despotic, with immense additional burdens. Aided by protestant powers, the Pope is again restored, and Spain again groans under the terrors of the Inquisition. France is degraded to a state of wretchedness, unparalleled, except in Poland; for, notwithstanding the pledge of kings, that, when Napoleon was secured, France should remain unmolested in the enjoyment of her liberties and independence, yet, when that object was accomplished, royal faith was violated, and the strongholds of the kingdom put in possession of foreign mercenary troops who stripped the inhabitants of their wealth, and spread devastation and terror through that opulent, polished, and late powerful nation; while their stupid monarch sits quiet on his throne, without the least exertion to preserve his own honor, or any seeming concern for the interests and the happiness of the people over whom he nominally reigns.

If from beholding the unhappy state of Europe, we turn our eyes to ill-fated Asia, there we behold despotism and misery reigning triumphant. Even in that vast and populous territory, which has been subjected to the British government, so far are oppression and superstition from being exterminated by England’s boasted love of liberty and religion, that the chains of cruelty, ignorance and idolatry are riveted by the hand of that nation which is almost worshipped for its professed Christianity. Idols and idol priest are supported by the British government of the Indies, and a revenue drawn by that government from the collection of a tax levied on those

¹ From printed *Assembly Journal* of 1815, p. 12.

deluded pilgrims, who go to worship, and frequently to sacrifice themselves in blind devotion to their lifeless gods.

I do not mention these things thinking that they have any immediate connection with the business of this legislature; but, that we, by reviewing the wreck of nations, and the horrors of despotism, may the higher prize, and more carefully guard the rights, and firmly support the principles of a free, equal, and happy government. Of all the nations of the earth, the United States, alone, are left to support a government whose basis is equal liberty, and whose sovereignty is the will of the people. While, then, we behold a world in chains, and consider that we belong to the same mass of being of which other nations are composed, ought we not to be jealous of our rights, and suspicious of usurpers?

From what has already appeared, is it uncharitable to say, that the same restless ambition, which has subverted former republics, and which ever grasps at power regardless of right, now rankles in the very bosom of our country. Then, as faithful guardians of the people's rights, ought we not carefully to watch over our own hearts, check every inordinate desire, and be vigilant and active, lest the subjects of that aspiring ambition should overturn the fair temple of liberty, and ride into unlimited power, over the crumbling monuments of freedom erected at the expense of the blood of our heroes? Our rights and independence cannot be too well guarded; for though few will openly declaim against a republican form of government, as being the most happy, while the people continue tranquil among themselves, and undisturbed by foreign wars – yet, many have presumed to affirm, that is too weak and too tardy in its operations, to protect its citizens against domestic insurgents, or foreign invaders. But we have seen, by experience, the fallacy of such assertions; for in the late contest, the strength of our government has been amply proved, even at a time when party spirit prevailed to as high a degree as an enlightened populace would admit.

Although, in the first stages of the war, owing to a long interval of peace, which it was the interest and happiness of our government to cherish, until safety forbid, we were destitute of such experienced officers and disciplined troops, as seemed requisite to meet the well tutored hosts of one of the most formidable nations in the world, whose perpetual wars keep her in constant readiness for any new military enterprise; and notwithstanding we suffered some disasters through the failure of a few, who did no honor to their commissions, yet, in a short period, was our army as officered and disciplined, that whenever the enemy came in contact with an equal, and often an inferior number of our troops, he was compelled to yield the palm of victory, and either surrender, or retire from the scene of action, confused, disgraced, and abashed. Witness our illustrious victories near the shores of Erie. Even our militia have trampled on the fading laurels of British prowess. What was the state of Proctor in the West? Let Harrison reply. Where is that formidable army that invaded from the North? Let Prevost inform. Where are the boasting legions, flushed with European victories, that assailed the South? Let England answer with a sigh; let Jackson point to their relics; while the faithful page of history records their doom!

Our naval victories have been no less conspicuous. On the ocean and on the lakes, our flag has waved triumphant over Britain's wounded pride, and expiring naval glory. In the Mediterranean, the brave Decatur, and his gallant fellows, with but a part of their little squadron, have, in the space of a few days, humbled the Dey of Algiers, and compelled him to accept a peace dictated by the victors. This several of the great naval powers of Europe have frequently attempted in vain.

Who, then, but with a blush can speak of the weakness of our government to withstand foreign invasion.

And has it not proved equally adequate to the suppression of insurrection? Has not every former faction been crushed in its first overt acts of opposition? And where is that most formidable of all factions, which threatened the dismemberment of the Union, or the total subversion of our constitution and government? Although it was long disseminating its poison, and originating its plans, it perished at last in embryo. Happy for its supporters that it ended in resolutions and declamations; for had their threatened hostilities actually commenced, they would have been trampled in the dust by the very people that they were endeavoring to allure to ruin.²

² Referring to the Hartford Convention.

I do not make these remarks with a design to revive and strengthen those party prejudices, which unhappily exist among us, but to increase our confidence in that government which we have adopted, and to excite our energies to counteract every attempt to overthrow it, for I well know that a republican government rests, principally, on the union of the people. A union formed and maintained, for the support of rational liberty, both civil and religious, is an object so dear to me, that I have not failed to recommend it on all suitable occasions; and hope ever to recommend it by corresponding example.

I rejoice that we have been so far united, that the constitution of this, as well as that of the United States, has survived the violence of the storm, and defied the threatening surges of the times. When the citizens of this State saw an attempt at such an alteration in their constitution, as would remove the election and accountability of many of their officers, at a greater, and truly dangerous distance from them – without distinction of party, they rallied round the standard of their liberty, and in the exercise of their sovereignty, secured the happy form and principles of a government, whose peculiar blessings they had long enjoyed.³

I am far from believing that any human government is so refined as to admit of no improvement; yet, amendments should be made in a time of general tranquility; when the passions and prejudices of the people are at rest; when they can enter upon the most cool and deliberate investigation; and then should they proceed with the utmost caution; for, when a right is once surrendered, it is seldom regained but by wading through scenes of blood, and even then, too frequently, the most desperate efforts are in vain. The struggles of France, in her first revolution, to emancipate herself from the galling chains of despotism, are an awful lesson to the world; and should teach us the danger and folly of neglecting our rights, even while in the most quiet possession, lest, by our supineness, we lose those inestimable blessings, which we have been able to obtain through the difficulties and dangers of war – for the aspiring and ambitious are ever ready to grasp the rights and privileges of the people, the moment they are within their reach.

Not having of late been engaged in the business of legislation, and fearing that I have already trespassed upon your patience, I shall not attempt, at this time, to point out such alterations and amendments in our laws as the change of times and other causes may require.

The education of our youth is an object of such importance, that it cannot fail of exciting your attention, and receiving your fostering care.

In the full and prosperous tide of commerce, I trust you will not neglect our infant manufactures, which, if rightly improved, cannot fail to increase our wealth and real independence.

I shall at all times rely on your cordial support, in the faithful discharge of the arduous duties that devolve upon me. And having endeavored to impress your minds with a due sense of the responsibility, that rests on the representatives of a free people, I entertain the highest confidence in your wisdom and integrity, to perform every legislative duty, and especially to supply the various offices within your jurisdiction, by the appointment of such persons as are lovers of justice and suitably qualified to fill their several stations so as shall conduce to the safety and happiness of individuals, as well as the honor and interests of the State.

All such communications as I may receive, for your consideration, either from the general government, from sister States, or any other source, will be seasonably laid before you.

I shall, gentlemen, cheerfully concur with you, in every measure calculated to promote the welfare of our constituents; and it is my ardent desire, that a spirit of harmony may prevail among us – and that the blessing of that Supreme Being, who presides over the affairs of states and nations, may attend us in all our deliberations.

JONAS GALUSHA

³ The allusion here is specially to an amendment proposed by fifth Council of Censors of 1813 -14, (composed of Federalists,) that the Judges of the Supreme Court should hold their office during good behavior, though removable by a concurrent vote of two thirds of each house of the legislature. This, and all the proposed amendments, the Convention of 1814 rejected by a vast majority. – See *Thompson's Vermont*, Part II, p. 125.