

Inaugural address
of
Charles K. Williams
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Inaugural Address

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

The period has now arrived, when the representatives of the people are required to meet in General Assembly, to perform the duties necessary to promote the general welfare of those whom they represent. Having all the powers necessary for the legislature of a free and sovereign State, limited only by such restrictions as are imposed by the fundamental laws of the General and State Governments, there is no reason to doubt, that they will exercise that power to promote the design for which they are selected, the happiness and prosperity of the people, whose agents they are. I am happy to meet you at this time, and to co-operate with you in all proper and legitimate efforts to obtain this very desirable end.

On again entering upon the duties appertaining to the Executive Department, I should be wanting in that sensibility and gratitude which I deeply feel, if I did not return my sincere thanks to the people, who have again honored me with their confidence, and assure them, that I am sensible that an increased obligation is laid upon me to be vigilant in discerning their interests, to be active in endeavors to further that interest, and, in humble reliance on Divine aid, to exert all the faculties and abilities I possess to serve them faithfully.

The assembling of the representatives, elected by the people in their legislative and executive capacities, to consult for the common good, and to adopt such measures as that good may require, is one of those interesting events, which are often witnessed in a republican government, and in no other. The honesty of purpose, and integrity of heart which are, and have been, manifested in the deliberations and acts of the General Assembly of this State, afford a sure guaranty, that they will not easily be misled, nor very often mistake their duties or obligations.

If it is true, as I think it is without any doubt, that all political power emanates for the people, and their agents are responsible to them for the manner in which they discharge their trust, we can be at no loss to discern, that the real conservative principle of our government is in the right of suffrage, the frequency of elections, and the responsibility of the persons elected or appointed to discharge any public trust.

It is common and frequent to hear disparaging remarks of legislative proceedings; the propriety of their measures lightly spoken of, and their integrity doubted. Such remarks, however, do not always carry with them evidence of their correctness, or of the superior intelligence of those who make them, but more generally proceed from vanity, and from a mistaken idea that it is a mark of great discernment and wisdom to criticize and cast reflections on the members of a legislative body. The Holy Seer rebuked such boasters, when he tauntingly said, with bitter sarcasm, "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." I have not learned to estimate so lightly the intelligence and integrity of those selected to make or administer our laws. Although they frequently err, as no human tribunal is free from error, yet their errors are mostly found on the side of virtue and freedom — and they are not more frequent than are to be found among those who perform higher and more arduous duties, in other and more elevated public stations. In expressing this confidence, I assure you, it arises from long experience, and observation, in noticing how much less frequently they err, how ready they are to correct their errors, and how careful they are to refrain from doing any individual injury or injustice, and how ready they are to recompense those whom they may have inadvertently injured.

Having thus expressed to you my entire confidence in the wisdom and integrity of the legislative branches of our government, it renders the constitutional duty imposed on the Executive, "to propose such business as may appear to them necessary to lay before the General Assembly," easy, and of little practical importance, inasmuch as they are familiarly acquainted with the wants of their constituents, and of the proper means to redress any grievances they may labor under. But little is left for the executive authority, except to take care that the laws be faithfully executed, and to expedite the execution of such measures as may be resolved on by the General Assembly. Both duty and inclination must of necessity prompt to the performance of this part of the executive duty, as the laws, before they become such, generally receive his sanction and approbation.

There are certain subjects which occupy so large a space in the public estimation, that they force themselves irresistibly on the mind of any one, who has the prosperity of our republican institutions at heart, and appear to have been a necessary part of every annual executive message, as though they were directed by a rubric, the most prominent among which is the subject of education.

I need not say any thing in relation to Common Schools, as the benefit derived from them is so apparent. To them we are all indebted in the first instance, for such information and intelligence as we may possess, to enable us to discharge the duties we have assumed. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, equally receive the benefits derived from them, and there can be no danger of their failing for want of support and encouragement. Indeed, it may be deserving of consideration, whether any further pecuniary assistance would be beneficial.

The higher schools of learning, the Colleges and Universities, have equal, if not stronger, claims for our attention and patronage, and I cannot recommend them too strongly to your favorable notice. The statesman, the civilian, and the messenger of the Gospel of Salvation, who have received their education at the Colleges and University of this State, and been there trained for usefulness and distinction, have carried our name and fame to every part and portion of this Republic, and foreign nations have witnessed the labors of those who have been educated among us, and who have shown the brightness of our star, both in the west and the east. It is to be hoped that it will continue to shine, until others shall come to its light, and to the "brightness of its rising," and I hope that what you can do, you will do, to afford them encouragement, and give them the benefit of your patronage. I feel confident your constituents will not feel that you have imposed an unnecessary or useless burden upon them, by making an annual appropriation for their benefit, to be increased or diminished, as their exigencies and the developed resources of the State will warrant.

I must again mention the subject of the Militia, upon whom all free States should rely for defense; who may be employed for the protection, and cannot be employed for the destruction, of the liberties of the people. In these days, when so much is said on the subject of constitutional duty, and obedience to the laws of the United States, I am sorry that those laws, for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, have received so little countenance from the legislative acts of this State, and that all endeavors of its officers, to raise the militia to the standard of those laws, should have met with so little approbation for their fidelity to their duty in urging this subject for consideration. No returns have been made to the adjutant general of the United States since the year 1843, and we have to rely on the returns then made, for our quota of arms annually furnished by the United States.

I must also remind the Legislature that the amended Constitution of this State requires them to provide, "by a general law, declaring what officer shall act as Governor, when there is a vacancy in both the offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor."

I respectfully call your attention to the criminal code, and suggest whether some amendment of the same, relating to fines and costs of prosecution, might not profitably be adopted. The power of pardon, and of discharging any person from jail for not paying a fine and cost, is vested in the Governor. This should be exercised as an act of clemency, founded on the merits of each particular case, taking into consideration the merits of the individual. An idea seems to be prevalent, that the poverty of the person thus imprisoned, and his inability to pay either fine or cost, entitles him to the clemency of the Executive, and a remission of the sentence. It is obvious that this sentiment is erroneous. The Executive ought not to have the power of dispensing with the law, and has no means of knowing the circumstances of aggravation or palliation of each case, or to decide why one should be released from the consequences affixed by law to a conviction, and not another. I submit whether it would not be better to empower the court, before whom a conviction is had, in their discretion, when they impose a fine, to ascertain the ability or inability of the person convicted, and in case of such inability, to limit the time the person convicted shall remain in prison if he fail to pay the same, or the costs of prosecution; and whether, in all cases of imprisonment for non-payment of fine and cost, the sheriff might not employ, in some useful or active labor, the person convicted, until he had earned sufficient, at least, to pay the cost, if not the fine, and thus render our jails places of industry and useful labor, instead of the abodes of indolence, and its consequent vice and wretchedness; and whether he might not, in some cases, employ them out of the walls of the prison.

I would also suggest, whether, in all convictions for criminal offences, where exceptions are taken, and the cases passed to the Supreme Court, sentence should not be pronounced by the County Court, who have all the circumstances before them, but delaying the execution of the same until the judgment is affirmed, leaving to the Supreme Court only to fix the time for the commencement or execution of the sentence.

In pursuance of the provisions of an act entitled “an act to provide for compiling the laws of this State,” I appointed Charles L. Williams, Esq., of Rutland, to perform the duty therein required, who has made the compilation. The Secretary of State has procured them to be printed and bound, and five hundred copies are, or will soon be, subject to such distribution as the General Assembly may direct.

On the resolution of the General Assembly for appointing a Committee to consider and report upon the financial affairs of the State, I appointed John N. Pomeroy, Waitstill R. Ranney, and Timothy P. Redfield, Esqs, whose report will be laid before you, and I hope the Legislature will take some effectual measures to lessen the expenses of the State, and arrest the tendency to increased and extravagant expenditures, that they may thereby be better enabled to afford aid and encouragement to such institutions as will advance the honor and interest of the State.

The increasing vice of intemperance may require that we should profit by the wisdom of our ancestors, and adopt either their laws, or something equivalent thereto, which subjected common drunkards, who publicly annoyed the peaceable citizens of the State, to confinement in the house of correction. Until a very recent period, this was the law of the State.

It will be necessary for the Legislature, at this session, to divide the State into districts for the choice of Representative to Congress. The election is to be made on the first Tuesday of September next, and by the apportionment we shall be entitled to only three Representatives, instead of four, as we had before.

I trust you will, in all your deliberations, bear in mind that legislators are not only responsible to their constituents, but are also subject to a higher law, and higher power; and unless they feel and act under a sense of this subjection, the oaths, which they take at the commencement of their political service, would be but a mockery. To be just and fear not, and to act in subjection to this power, is the duty of every person whatever; and legislators and rulers cannot exempt themselves from this obligation. I should consider myself very unfit to take upon me the duties of the office to which I have been elected, if I did not feel that the oath I have taken laid me under an obligation to discharge the duties of it in the fear of Him, before whom the nations “are as a drop of the bucket; and are counted as the small dust of the balance,” and who “taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” It is with unpleasant feelings I have witnessed, that subjection to this law has been made a subject of reproach or ridicule, or that listening to the dictates of conscience, and seeking its direction, should be treated as fanaticism, or an exploded idea of by-gone times. The laws of our Maker, and the teachings of an enlightened conscience, instruct rulers to do not injustice, and all to be submissive and obedient to lawful authority, and cannot be made a pretext for oppression, or of resistance to the requirements of law. This sentiment is so general, that I deem it almost idle and superfluous to mention it. The people of this State are better acquainted with their rights and duties than is supposed by many. They entertain no idea that they are absolved from obedience to law, because it does not conform to their views and wishes. This latter sentiment, I have no reason to believe, pervades any considerable portion of our fellow citizens, and I mention it with a view to assert my disbelief of any such sentiment existing among many of the citizens of this State, and not to controvert or show its fallacy.

If it were practicable, it would be desirable that every act of a legislative body should be accompanied with such evidences of its necessity and utility as to ensure a ready acquiescence in the propriety and wisdom of its provisions, and thus commend itself to the hearts and affections of the people, and not require the coercive power of government to enforce it. But as obedience and submission must be yielded to the supremacy of the laws, and a resort to compulsory measures must be had, if necessary to ensure this obedience, it is incumbent on a legislative body to consult the general good, and not unnecessarily sacrifice the interest of one portion of the community to that of the other, nor wantonly injure the feelings and views of one, to conciliate and gratify those of another. When there is this conflict of interest and opinion, the voice of the majority must prevail.

In a republican government, having a written constitution, there are two tests to which all legislative acts must be submitted. One is public opinion, and the other is the provisions of the Constitution. The former may compel a repeal or alteration of any acts or laws passed by any legislature, and the latter will try their validity. To the formation of a correct public sentiment, and to influence it, the utmost latitude must be allowed of speaking and publishing the sentiments and views of every individual. The merits of public men and measures must be subject to be discussed freely, in order to obtain that remedy, if any is necessary, which the representatives of the people in their legislative capacity can alone give. Every attempt to repress this liberty of speech and of the press, and to silence an inquiry into the propriety or wisdom of public men and measures, whether by law or the exercise of patronage, by appeals to the passions, the fears, the avarice or ambition of individuals, must be futile and vain, and can obtain no permanent favor of the thinking and intelligent citizens of the United States. For myself, I can adopt the language of an eminent individual, that "to speak my mind and act as my conscience dictates, are two branches of liberty which I can never part with." I am sure the people of this country will never consent to part with this liberty, however much it may be desired by some, to avoid a scrutiny of the acts and merits of themselves and others; and no danger is to be apprehended from the abuse of this liberty, while men are under the superintendence and supervision of the law, and amenable to public justice.

To the other test all legislative acts are also subject, and it is the province of the judiciary department to determine, when the law and the constitution are antagonistic, that the former must yield, and the latter prevail. This power of the judiciary was formerly denied, but is not doubted at this day. It is the right and privilege of any one, affected by any act of the legislature in his person or property, to bring the act to the consideration of the judicial tribunals, who will pronounce it valid or void, as it conforms to or conflicts with the fundamental law. In order to ensure confidence in a judicial decision on this delicate and difficult subject, the citizen should feel that he can present his views, that he will be heard with patience, and not be embarrassed by any previous expression of opinion, not required, uncalled for, and extra judicial, and not a decision of the question submitted. No individual, or state, should be discouraged from resorting to this mode of trying the validity of any legislative act.

I need not speak to you of our attachment to the Union, or our reverence for the Constitution, or our unwavering obedience to all its requirements. A recurrence to our history will show, that we voluntarily and unhesitatingly sought admission into the Union, and ratified and confirmed its constitution, and have never, even when invited by those in whom we placed in confidence, asked for any important alteration in its provisions, and have manifested no wish to disturb the ration of representation; nor have we joined with others in any acts or measures which might be considered as tending to a violation of, or resistance to, its authority. We make no loud and vociferous professions of attachment to the Constitution, as such professions sometimes indicate that there may have been reason to doubt that attachment, and an uncalled for profession of faith and reverence for the Union and Constitution, might imply that we had heretofore been wanting in that reverence.

Allegiance to the government of the United States depends not upon our will; we cannot, while we enjoy its protection, absolve ourselves, nor can any state, or any combination of states, absolve us from that allegiance. And should any state, or any number of inhabitants within any other geographical limits, attempt it, the laws of the United States and its Constitution would still be in force within their territory, and would only be rendered ineffectual, by the want of ability and power, in the authorities of the Union, to enforce obedience. I have no reason to doubt but that the necessary power would be found, and the aid afforded, to compel a submission to law and authority. For this reason I have regarded, perhaps too lightly, all threats of a dissolution of the Union as futile, and have noticed with surprise, in the resolutions of public bodies, and in executive messages, a declaration, or even an intimation, that adherence to any acts or measures of congress, is to be the condition of their fidelity to the Union, as though this allegiance depended upon their will and pleasure alone.

I hope that the cry of danger to the Union, like the cry of danger to the Church in the country of our ancestors, in other times, is not to be made the pretext for arbitrary and oppressive measures, or humiliating and degrading submission.

In an extended territory, like that of the United States, the different sections will have different interests, and legislatures will be influenced by their local situations. Hence they will be liable to the imputation of being governed by sectional and not national views. This was the complaint against those laws which were enacted in

favour of a protective tariff, and which, at one time, came very near involving the county in a civil war. It should be remembered, however, that what advances the interest of one section, in a measure advances the interest of all. The protection, which has heretofore been extended to the manufacturing interest, has also benefited that of agriculture and commerce. An abandonment of this interest was truly a sectional, and not a national measure. We ought not to look with jealousy or envy, on the wealth which may have been accumulated, in consequence of this protection, when it has been so liberally expended in works of usefulness and benevolence, extending to every part of this republic. We hope that we shall again witness a resort to a protective tariff, and that the doctrine of free trade will be given up as a sectional and narrow feeling, not adapted to the wants of the whole Union. Sensible, however, that in our government a majority must determine what measures shall be adopted, even if our wishes should be disregarded, and a policy still more fatal to our interest should be pursued, we shall endeavor to seek redress in the Union, and not out of it.

There is another subject, connected with the action of this State, which I ought not to pass over in silence, inasmuch as our State has been most unjustly calumniated by those who have officiously intermeddled with our concerns. Some of the States in the confederate republic, our equals, and not our superiors, have undertaken to sit in judgment, and reprove and reprimand our legislative acts, as though we were accountable to them. Those of our own citizens, who have either approved or condemned any acts or proceedings of the Legislature, have but exercised the right of expressing their own opinion, and endeavoring to influence the opinion of others, which all undoubtedly possess; and so far as it evinces an anxiety to keep rulers and legislators within the pale of constitutional authority, or to protect the natural rights or liberties of man, or to procure the repeal or modification of any law, whether of the state or general government, it cannot be a subject of censure, but merits approbation. Those belonging to other States, and other governments, who have reflected injuriously on the legislation of this State, are not entitled to this charitable construction of their motives or acts. We are not bound to consult their wishes, or conform to their views, when we legislate for ourselves. It is no time for them to complain until we violate their rights.

These remarks are elicited from a consideration of the law of the Congress of the United States, on the subject of fugitives for labor, and the act of the Legislature of this State, relating to the writ of habeas corpus, and the view taken of them by others. Of the former, I have no disposition to enter into any discussion, and shall not speak of it in the language of reproach, and certainly not of approbation. I early learned, in the resolutions of the General Assembly of this State in the year 1799, in answer to certain resolutions transmitted to them by the State of Virginia, that "it belongs not to the State Legislature to decide on the constitutionality of laws made by the General Government, that power being exclusively vested in the judiciary courts of the Union;" and from that year to the present time, I have never seen any great practical good from passing resolutions on subjects not immediately connected with legislation, as the Representatives and Senators are usually sufficiently acquainted with the wishes and feelings of their constituents, without the aid of resolutions and instructions.

I may remark for myself individually, that whatever other powers Congress may possess, in order to insure domestic tranquility and promote the general welfare, to warrant the passing of the law in question, I have not been able to find it in that clause of the Constitution, in relation to fugitives from labor, and have rather coincided with the opinions of the learned chancellor of New York, and of a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, and of some of the distinguished statesmen of that portion of the Union who are the most sensitive on this subject, that no legislation by Congress was authorized or required. But upon this, as upon all other similar subjects, I have endeavored to conform my own views to judicial decisions, considering all decisions of the Supreme Court, upon a point directly in issue, as final and conclusive, though I have not yielded the same authority to the reasons which they may express for coming to such decisions, which are frequently given by the way of illustration or explanation only. I should have much preferred to see the authority in Congress maintained from the words of the Constitution, and not from cotemporaneous history, which I have never been able to find, and from acquiescence, when those who were the subjects of its provisions had no other way by to acquiesce, and had not the means or ability to try the validity of any acts passed by Congress, on any question of constitutional construction. I am not insensible that others, whose opinions are of very high authority, have different views. Those who think Congress are under any

constitutional obligation, by the article referred to, to enact laws to carry the same into effect, may be justified in passing this law, and will probably have to resort to other measures more stringent and effectual.

Those of the Representatives and Senators in Congress who neither voted for the law in question, nor proposed any alterations or amendments, I have no reason to believe, had any such views of constitutional duty or obligation. But I have no wish whatever either to discuss, agitate, censure, or approve the law in question, and will only add that it is no reason with me, either to withdraw my confidence from any administration, or any men who think differently, or to withhold it hereafter, if they were honest and upright in their convictions of duty. Unanimity, or a perfect coincidence of opinion is not to be expected in any legislative body, on every question before them, either of ordinary legislation or of constitutional rights or duties. Nor can I hesitate to express my approbation of the Executive, in carrying into effect, either this or any other law passed agreeable to the forms of the Constitution. Indeed, it would be an anomaly, and a dereliction of duty, for any Executive to refuse or to neglect to execute a law, which has passed the legislature, and received his official sanction. It is not, however, a matter of much importance what may be my opinion in relation to the law in question. It is sufficient on this occasion to say, that of the constitutionality of the act, both in the whole, and in its particular provisions, very great doubts have been entertained. The President of the United States withheld his approbation, until he had obtained the opinion of the Attorney General. Others, not convinced by that opinion, still continue in the belief that Congress had assumed powers not delegated to them, and had disregarded the principles of civil liberty, and the Constitution.

One branch of the Legislature of this State, without any apparent dissent, had pronounced the act a violation of the principles of civil liberty and the Constitution, and set forth the reasons for such an opinion. The other declared their disapprobation of the act, and urged its repeal, or such modifications as would protect the rights of our own citizens, thereby implying that those rights might be in danger. Not having any reason to doubt that they were sincere in the belief of these opinions expressed by them, the passing the law in relation to the writ of habeas corpus, and extending its provisions to persons claimed as fugitive slaves, cannot be made a subject of reproach. The law of this State is probably the first act of any Legislature, designed to give the person *claimed* as a fugitive from service, the way and the means of having his claim to freedom established by a judicial tribunal, and proffering the professional aid of the State's Attorney, to defend him from any unlawful seizure, not warranted by the law and the Constitution. Of the necessity, propriety, or expediency of such an act, it is not for me to decide. Never having heard that such an act was in contemplation, until the evening it passed, I nevertheless examined its provisions, and though I had doubts of its necessity or expediency, I had none of its constitutionality, and gave it my approval.

As early as the year 1786, this State found it necessary to provide against free persons being transported out of this State, and sold as slaves, and our permanent laws make such practices highly penal. I can see no good reason why an inquiry may not be had, on the return of a writ of habeas corpus, whether a person is arrested or imprisoned by *lawful authority*, or is about to be sent out of the State without such authority. Instances have not been wanting, where persons have assumed to act as commissioners without any authority, and where, in a summary manner, they have taken jurisdiction over a person not a fugitive, and not subject to their jurisdiction or authority. The habeas corpus act passed by the Legislature of this State, in the year 1814, met with the same objection and opposition as the act of the last Legislature, and yet no attempt was made to procure its repeal, and its provisions have since been incorporated into the Constitution of this State.

It is not, with me, among the objectionable provisions of the act of our Legislature, that it provides for carrying the subject, by appeal, to the courts of law, where, from the decision of the highest of this State, a writ of error will lie to the Supreme Court of the United States; nor would it have been objectionable if they had made the writ returnable, in the first instance, to the Supreme Court of the State. It is declared by the Constitution of this State, that "the writ of habeas corpus shall in no case be suspended; it shall be issuable of right, and the General Assembly shall make provision to render it a speedy and effectual remedy, in all cases proper therefore." It protects the citizen from all unlawful imprisonment, and it matters not how obscure the person illegally detained, or how high the pretended authority who claims to detain. Congress, in the plenitude of their power, cannot suspend it, nor can they direct how a trial shall be had in the same, before what tribunal, or at what time.

If, as I remarked before, the Legislature were sincere in their convictions of the unconstitutionality of the act of Congress, or even if they had any reasonable doubt upon the subject, they took the method least liable to objection, when they made provision to refer it to a judicial tribunal, whose decision was still liable to re-examination before the highest courts of this State, and of the United States. That there is nothing novel in referring to the writ of habeas corpus for relief against any act of Congress, supposed to be against the provisions of the Constitution, I may refer to the expressed opinion of Mr. Jefferson, whose authority will be listened to in some of the States which have manifested hostility to the law of this State. Writing to a distinguished foreigner, who was liable to be removed by virtue of an act of Congress called the "alien law," and inviting him to the State of Virginia, he says: "that should you choose it for your asylum, the laws of the land, administered by upright judges, would protect you from any exercise of power unauthorized by the Constitution of the United States. The *habeas corpus* secures every man here, alien or citizen, against every thing which is not law, whatever shape it may assume." Having the same high confidence in the intelligence and integrity of the judges of this State, I have no doubt, that in the administration of this law, they will not contravene the Constitution, either of the United States or this State; that they will not hesitate to inquire into any assumed authority of commissioners or others; will protect all within their jurisdiction from unlawful seizure and imprisonment, and remand any one, brought before them, who is held by lawful authority.

An interesting and important question, on the subject of fugitives from justice, is under discussion in the State of Maryland, in which they have directed *their Attorney General* to set such proceedings on foot as may bring the same before the Supreme Court of the United States for its adjudication. I mention it, only to show, that questions arising under the Constitution of the United States, on the subject of fugitives, whether from labor or justice, and of the powers and duties of the executive and legislative branches of a State government, are not of so easy solution, as to warrant the imputation of hostility to the Union, or Constitution, or treasonable disaffection to the Government, in any of those whom may entertain different and discordant views of these questions.

I do not look with disfavor on any attempt to try the validity of a law of Congress, or of a State Legislature, by appeals to the judiciary, while I wholly discountenance all attempts of forcible resistance; but I have not formed so low an opinion of the stability of the Union, or the authority of the General Government, as to suppose that either can be materially affected by any violent outbreak of popular indignation, or the indiscretion, even of large bodies of the people. Nor am I willing so to confound the distinctions between crimes, as to magnify them to the crime of treason, the highest which can be committed in a state.

Called out, in the early part of my life, with a detachment of militia to enforce the laws of the Union, I then witnessed instances of resistance to the authority and laws of the United States, by bodies of armed men; property seized under the authority of the United States rescued by violence, and by men armed for the purpose; soldiers fired upon, wounded, and some of them shot down in the discharge of their duty; professional ingenuity taxed to the utmost to screen the offenders, and to render the laws ineffectual; and although some of the offenders were convicted of murder and manslaughter in the courts of this State, yet I was taught by the courts of the United States, that no treason was committed. The integrity of the union was not destroyed or impaired by such violent and lawless acts, although they were constant, and continued for a long time. I was then taught a lesson of reverence and submission to the laws, which made a lasting impression on my mind. A resistance, and particularly a resistance by force, and by men armed, and by murderous assault, was not acceptable to me then, nor is it now; and I hope the majesty and supremacy of the law will ever be vindicated. But I have no fears that the government will be seriously affected by any such tumultuous and popular commotions.

It is not with pleasure that I have felt it necessary to say thus much on the laws of the United States and of this State: — a respect, both for the Union and for this State, would not permit me to say less.

I have received several communications from other States, and from constitutional conventions, which will be transmitted to you. A communication from the State of Virginia, and also one from the State of North Carolina, were so disrespectful and offensive to this State, that I deem it not consistent with the respect I bear the Legislature, to communicate them to you, except at your request, and the Governors of these States were so informed.

At the expiration of the political year which has just commenced, my official relation to the Legislature and People will cease, nor shall I again be a candidate for the office to which I have been elected. I have been called into the service of the State at a period of much excitement, and when her character and conduct have been most unjustly assailed. I hope that I have never been insensible to her honor or interest, or wanting in confidence in her integrity and wisdom. My thanks are especially due to the People and Legislature, who have reposed such confidence in me hitherto, and I assure them, and all my fellow citizens, as well those who have expressed a preference for me as those who have not, that I shall part with my official relations to the State and the people with the most respectful and kind feelings to all, and shall never be found among the calumniators of her institutions, her laws, her legislators, or her people, of whatever party or sect.

I assure you that I shall join with you in all laudable attempts to promote the general welfare, and hope, through the blessing of the Almighty, such attempts will be crowned with success.

Executive Chamber, Montpelier }
October 11, 1851.

CH. K. WILLIAMS.