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Saturday. 8 Aug.

On Wednesday ev[enin]g last I called at Uncle Gray's on my way to Aunt Scott's to inquire if any thing had been heard from the travellers. I was disappointed to find that there had not. - Miss Shillaber was there, & I had the pleasure of attending her home. I then called at Aunt Scott's, and found her in fine spirits, & apparently much pleased to see me. - She entertained me with much lively talk & a fine glass of shrub ^[NOTE 12]. - // - Thursday was a day important in its political aspect. The mail of the morning brought intelligence of a clear & explicit repeal of the Orders in Council from the 1st August - subject only to be reviewed if our Government should not remove the non-intercourse ^[NOTE 14] & exclusion laws. - At ten o'clock in pursuance of a previous notification the inhabitants of Boston assembled in Faneuil Hall to take into consi[d-]eration the propriety of choosing delegates, & if it should be found expedient to choose delegates, who should meet such other delegates as might be chosen from other Counties in the State, whenever s[uch] delegates should have been generally chosen, for the forming of a State Convention to consult together "for the common good" - and further to take into consideration the subject of the late riots at Baltimore & to adopt such measures as might be thought adviseable for

preventing similar outrages in this town. - The second branch of business was first acted upon. Resolutions were reported by a committee of the "Friends of Peace, Union &c" who met in Faneuil Hall 15th July. They deprecated the principle & the effects of Mobs in the most decided & impressive manner

- expressed regret & astonishment that the executive of the U.S. had not interfered its authority to suppress the recent mob at Baltimore - and finally proposed a committee who should attend to forming a committee for the purpose of seeing that every citizen was armed, & of forming some plan of association, & appointing places of rendezvous in case of any alarm - The Resolutions were supported by M^r Otis in a speech, which was unpremeditated, & tolerably ingenious. - Major Eames & M^r Geo[rge] Blake objected to those parts of them, which implicated the execution of the U.S. & which intimated a necessity for arming. - They observed that the citizens were already armed & organized by law, & no new arming or organization could be necessary. - M^r Sullivan supported the Res[olution]s in a speech, which seemed to come from the heart, & evidently reached the heart of every one present. The question was put and carried unanimously. - // - A Proposi-

122

-tion was then offered from the Committee, which was composed of the Representatives & Senators from Suffolk, for choosing the delegates for a State Convention. - The Hon. M^r Dexter rose, & moved an indefinite postponement of the subject. - He supported his motion by a speech the most able, eloquent & impressive that ever I had heard. - He thought conventions illegal unless in ~~three~~ extreme cases, neither of which now existed - when a people is without a form of government & has one to form - when the rulers have usurped powers not given to them - when they have grossly & corruptly abused the powers received. In all other cases he thought the people only in their natural capacities could legally assemble to deliberate on public affairs, or to express an opinion concerning them. To choose representatives for such a purpose was not authorized by the Consti-

tution of the U[nited] S[tates] & of Massachusetts, & was contrary to the first principles of government. - He thought such assemblies illegal & that the Government had a right to put them down, & this he knew to have been in past time the opinion of the wisest, & most patriotic men that our Country could boast. - That Conventions were dangerous & hostile to regular government, history proved, especially in our own Country. In the Pennsylvania Insurrection - & in the Shays Rebellion Conventions “to consult on the public good” led the way to more violent procedure. - For what was a Convention

123

- It was a body designed to control the measures of the regularly established power - a co-ordinate government. - It would be generally composed of men of talents & zeal, who would possess the unbounded confidence of their constituents, & by virtue of that confidence would have unlimited power. - These men assembled, could not part without doing something - something of a bold & decisive nature would be expected from them by the people & they could not disappoint that expectation. - Very soon in the fervor of their zeal he would be considered as the best patriot whose proposals were most daring - some-one willing to rival the glory of his courageous colleague, would go beyond him in proposing yet bolder measures, & this new champion of liberty would soon be outdone by a new & more daring competitor. - The people keep pace with their convention-party - animosity is increased - the majority are ready to attempt whatever their convention proposes. Indeed they will urge on their delegates - they will force them to measures which they themselves would disapprove - insurrection soon starts up, & revolution & inter[ne]tine [*internecine*] war are the offspring of the at-first harmless convention. - If this effect should not follow at the first instance - yet the precedent would remain, & at the second or the third repetition

the consequence would be felt. - // - The crisis he said did not now exist where it was necessary to call a convention - it was not con-

124

pretended - the right of judging of this crisis was one which the people could not delegate - it was unalienable - they would always have it in their power to determine when the crisis arrived & then & not till then should delegates be chosen. - // - M^r D. considered the state of our national affairs in order to shew that the extreme case did not exist, which authorized the measure proposed. - We were indeed involved in an unnecessary war - he would not say it was unjust . But it was certainly one which the Congress by the express words of the Constitution had a right to declare. No man had a deeper abhorra[nce] of it than he had, ~~but~~ he believed it was undertaken at a very improper time, when we were without resources, & the property of this part of the Country peculiarly exposed to its ravages. He thought too that the injuries & outrages of France were suc[h] that if an adversary were to be selected it should have been France - But here was neither usurpation of powers not delegated nor a gross & corrupt abuse & perversion of those given - The measures taken might be imprudent - they might tend to ruin the Country - but this did not prove any thing more than an error of judgment. - There might be corruption - but could any one say that the whole majority in Congress was corrupt - if not

125

all, then how many were so? - was it in the power of any man to determine whether a few individuals only, or a greater part of the advocates of the measures complained of, had been guilty of direct breach of trust? - But however this might be the

oppression of the measures was not yet so great, as to render necessary such a resumption of power. The peaceful & constitutional remedy should be tried. - One evil to be apprehended from a convention was a separation of the States. - This could not be effected without blood - but if effected, what then should we gain? - Not one of our present evils would be remedied. - Numberless others would be added. We should then no longer enjoy the security arising from our being the only powerful nation on this part of the Continent. - There would then be two rival powers, bordering on each other. Wars must arise. In the very separation ^{^ there} would ^{^ be} cause enough of enmity. - We should be natural enemies. - Standing military force must be maintained in each section. The necessary result of this would be the substitution of military despotism for our present republican forms of government. - Thus would the ruin of this once happy country be the effect of a separation. - We should mutually weaken each other - should be

126

contemptible to foreign powers - & soon become their prey. - I heard the speech of M^r Dexter with emotions of the sincerest pleasure. I had long wished that he would step forward in this manner to moderate the mad violence of the Federal Party. - I looked upon him as the man who alone could save us from the desolation of civil war. - Standing in the midst of the most decided Federalists, I applauded the sentiments of wisdom & patriotism which issued from his lips. - When he pronounced conventions to be illegal, S. Higginson J[unior] Esq[uires] asked upon observing me applaud, "if I did not think they had a right to meet?" - Receiving an answer "that I did not" - he replied - "If that is true th[ere]

is an end of liberty - It is a vile doctrine.” - He probably did not distinguish between the meeting of a convention, & assembling of the people. I could not there explain, & have not since had an opportunity. - // - M^r Townsend, after M^r Otis had addressed the people in answer to M^r Dexter & proved as I thought the propriety of M^r D[exter]’s motion, rose to speak on the same side with M^r D[exter] - The question was loudly called for. But finally an adjournment was moved and carried.

127

- I never shall forget the sensations which the horrors of the Baltimore riot had excited in me at this meeting. - So irritable were my nerves, that I could not help feeling a continual apprehension, lest some violence should take place. - I reflected upon the possibility of some blood-thirsty democrat - perhaps some emissary from Baltimore - exciting 50 or 100 of the lowest populace to seize the Butchers knives in the market, & rushing in to the hall, to massacre the defenceless Federalists - I thought it not absurd to suppose that the democrats, in imitation of their French brethren, might by a previous concert have come armed into the hall, & would upon a signal given fall upon their unarmed rivals. - In the beginning of M^r Dexter’s speech a great tumult appeared in the crowd - numbers seemed pushing toward the door - I heard a cry as of distress from the part when it began - Surely thought I the time has come. - But my fears were soon relieved by the cry of “pick-pocket” - “thief” - “a pocket-book stolen” - Shortly after a bell rang in the market - a signal, thought I,

for the democrats to retire, before the armed troop rushes in to execute its purpose - At the same moment a great many seemed hastening out - probably to their dinners for it was one o'clock. - I thought it almost certain that an indiscriminate slaughter was soon to take place. But "all was peaceful - all was still". - On Friday at 10 o'clock the town again assembled. - M^r Townsend supported M^r D's motion in a speech of some length - the latter part of which was pointed & able. - Judge Dawes followed him with a string of ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~, which were loudly applauded. - Messrs Livermore, Whitman & Otis opposed the postponement - M^r Geo[rge] Blake & the mover supported it. - After M^r Otis's speech the question was put, & to my extreme disappointment the motion was lost by a large majority. - The question on the passage of the resolution for choosing delegates was then put, & its opponents having already tri[ed] their strength, & thinking it useless to vote, only six han[ds] were raised in the negative, of which I am proud to record that mine was one. - I left the Hall with a sorrowful & heavy heart, looking upon this measure as the first step in

the horrid & bloody path of civil war - // - I conversed with several upon the subject. They seemed to suppose that the Convention could not be the terrible engine it was described to be - observed that it would be composed of the most prudent and upright men - men with whom we might safely intrust our political safety - and defended its necessity on the ground of its being the only mode of correcting the misapprehensions of our government as to the state of public opinion here. -

