

the one side, they have been careful to give full weight to all the obligations, which are due from the people of Massachusetts to the people of the United States ; as resulting from the federal compact. On the other, it has been their study not to forget the duties, which a powerful and independent state owes to itself and posterity ; on occasions, when great, constitutional, principles are, deliberately, violated. On occasions of this kind, in the opinion of your Committee, the duty of a people is as plain, as it is imperious. The beginnings of manifest usurpations are never to be neglected ; since silence, on the part of the people is, always, taken as acquiescence by the advocates of usurpation. What power seizes, without right, to-day, it holds, tomorrow, by precedent ; and the day after, by prescription. A wise people, therefore, will always canvass every new pretension of power at the threshold ; being assured that the liberties of a people have nothing to fear from vigilance, and every thing from apathy. Nor, in the opinion of your Committee, will a wise people refrain from such an examination because the nature of the usurpation, or the circumstances of the period, may, in the judgment of some, render farther measures untimely. Much is gained to liberty, by a distinct assertion of the constitutional principles, on which it rests. And a people may lose by being ignorant of their rights, but never by understanding them.

In entering upon this investigation, your Committee have not omitted to consider the reasons for present acquiescence, in violations of the Constitution, drawn from the particular embarrassments, resulting from the war, and the encouragements, which the enemy may receive from any evidence of discontent, at the present moment, among the states ; or among the people. They have given this suggestion all the attention it appeared to merit. But, in their opinion, this objection has the less weight, inasmuch as the

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