

HOUSE....No. 82.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 10, 1854.

The Committee on Finance, to whom was referred the Order instructing them to inquire into the expediency of increasing the Salary of His Excellency, the Governor of the Commonwealth, have considered the same, and

REPORT:

According to the provisions of the Constitution, "as the public good requires that the Governor should not be under the undue influence of any members of the General Court, by a dependence on them for his support, that he should in all cases act with freedom, for the benefit of the public, that he should not have his attention necessarily diverted from that object to his private affairs, and that he should maintain the dignity of the Commonwealth in the character of its chief magistrate, it is necessary that he should have an honorable stated salary, of a fixed and permanent value, amply sufficient for those purposes, and established by standing laws; and it shall be among the first acts of the General Court, after the commencement of this Constitution, to establish such salary by law accordingly."

The Constitution was adopted in the year 1780, and in the same year the General Court established the salary of the Governor at the sum of £1,100, or \$3,666.67, thereby giving a practical illustration of what the wise and patriotic men of those times regarded as an "honorable salary" for the supreme executive magistrate of the State. In the midst of the revolutionary struggle, when the resources of the State and of the nation were crippled and the finances exhausted—when all proper economy seemed to have been not only allowable, but imperatively demanded—our fathers were still watchful of what was due to the honor and dignity of the Commonwealth. They evidently regarded this provision of the Constitution as involving an important principle, tending directly to promote the public good, and to secure a faithful and independent discharge of the executive duties; and the men who carried the country successfully through those trying times were not men who could compromise their principles under any circumstances.

The salary of the Governor, as established in the year 1780, continued without change till 1843, a space of sixty-three years, when it was reduced to \$2,500, at which sum it has remained to the present time.

In the opinion of the committee, this sum is not such as is contemplated by the spirit of the Constitution, or such as comports with the honor or dignity of the Commonwealth. They have, therefore, unanimously reported an Act in accordance with what seems to them to be just and proper.

It will be observed that the act is prospective in its operation. The Constitution of the United States provides that "the President shall, at stated times, receive for his services a compensation which shall neither be increased nor diminished during the period for which he shall have been elected." A similar provision in regard to the salary of the Governor is introduced into the Constitutions of the several States of the Union, with very few exceptions. Although there is no constitutional barrier in the way of an immediate increase of the salary of the Governor, so far as Massachusetts is concerned, the ground on which this provision is so generally adopted in the Constitutions of the other States, cannot be overlooked nor disregarded; and the committee are unwilling

to propose a measure, which, in their judgment, would make, or follow, a bad precedent, though it might be agreeable to their own feelings, and to the feelings of the members of the Legislature generally, to raise the salary of the present chief magistrate. It is due to His Excellency, the Governor, to say, that the committee have reason to believe, that the present movement upon this subject, was made without any consultation with him, and without his knowledge ; nor do they think that his friends will have cause to consider the course proposed to be adopted, as wanting in confidence or respect towards him. The committee believe, that in accepting the office to which he has been elevated, His Excellency must have been perfectly aware that he was making a pecuniary sacrifice ; and they have no reason to doubt, but on the contrary, believe, that he would concur in the views expressed in this report as to the time at which the act should take effect. The committee would add, in conclusion, that they do not regard this as at all a political question. Political parties may change, and it is impossible to foresee what party may be in the ascendancy ; but so long as Massachusetts maintains the high position she now occupies, not only in the sight of the Union, but in that of the civilized world, the responsibilities, as well as the honor and dignity which attach to the office of the Governor of the Commonwealth, cannot change, unless the change be from less to greater.

For the Committee,

SAMPSON REED, *Chairman.*

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty-Four.

AN ACT

Establishing the Salary of the Governor of the Commonwealth.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :

1 SECT. 1. The Governor of the Commonwealth shall
2 receive for his services, an annual salary of four
3 thousand dollars.

1 SECT. 2. The said salary shall be paid in quarterly
2 payments, out of the treasury of the Commonwealth,
3 on the first days of January, April, July and October,
4 in every year, and in the same proportion for any part
5 of a quarter.

1 SECT. 3. All laws inconsistent with the provisions
2 of this act are hereby repealed.

1 SECT. 4. This act shall take effect from and after
2 the first day of January next.