

their safety against foreign danger and internal contention, and that the perpetuity and efficacy of the present system cannot be confided in."

The first proposition for a general Convention to revise the defects of the old Confederation originated in this city, and was reported by Colonel Hamilton, as chairman of a committee appointed for that purpose, addressed to the Legislatures of Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, whose Commissioners had assembled in Annapolis pursuant to appointment. The Confederation as it then stood was treated as little more than a league formed by the original States for the common safety in time of war. There was no recognized power of coercion to compel obedience to the governing power indispensable to perpetuate the National life. It was in fact a union without the authority and functions of a National Government. The States, it is true, under the old articles of confederation were not *sovereign*; they were powerless as to the essential elements of sovereignty. They could neither make war, nor alliances, nor treaties. They could not hold communication with any foreign Sovereign, nor could they entertain propositions from any such source. They could exercise no powers offensive or defensive, for they had no recognized right to levy troops or equip vessels of war. But such was not the practical working of the system. The constant apprehension of a tendency towards consolidation, and the oppression of the weaker States, kept alive a spirit of jealousy which greatly embarrassed the early advocates of a National Government. The experience of our revolutionary struggle, the necessity for a limited concentration of power, not only to prevent collision between the States, but to make effective the powers delegated by the people with a view to the permanency of our system, resulted at length in the adoption of our present Federal Constitution:—"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The objects and purposes of the Federal Union were thus clearly defined. It was the establishment of a *National* system in the place of a mere league of States, with powers directly conferred by the people themselves. The States still existed as components of the National system, but not as unqualified, independent, absolute sovereigns. They had, by the act of their people, deliberately parted with their claims to sovereignty and paramount allegiance. In Congress was vested the power to lay and collect taxes and provide for the common defence and general welfare—to borrow