

E 458

.3

.B22

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00006148669







THE
LEAGUE FOR THE UNION.

SPEECHES
OF THE
HON. GEORGE BANCROFT,
AND
JAMES MILLIKEN, Esq.



PHILADELPHIA:
WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN,
No. 606 CHESTNUT STREET.
1863.

the hearty coöperation of every loyal citizen of the country in sustaining and defending the government, in order that, throughout a fratricidal war, it might assert—as it had through many years of peace asserted—the principles of civil liberty.

It was evident to all present that there was a necessity for unity of purpose and of action on the part of the whole people. All felt that we could no longer stand idly by, and permit the growth of unfruitful counsel and divided sentiment. We must act together, and act promptly. The want of encouragement from the people, the *masses* at home, if you will permit the expression, had so disheartened the Administration, as to leave it somewhat paralyzed. The plan adopted was that of a League, an organization having for its sole object the bringing together of those citizens who would pledge themselves to *unqualified loyalty to the government of the United States, and unwavering support of its efforts for the suppression of the rebellion.* The association could have no higher political aim; and anything other than this, such as bringing into life a new political party, or of advocating or endorsing, inconsiderately or blindly, the theories of the old political parties, was entirely ignored. Those present at that meeting gave expression to the belief, that any effort to take advantage of the association, through which to use it for the aggrandizement of political parties, would result in its demoralization and final ruin; and it

was resolved that "*The League*" should have but one object—that of the perpetuity of our government. Such was the formation of the parent League of the United States, and our action was but the sounding of a key-note. It was but the electric touch that made the great heart of the nation beat with hope and confidence. The purity of the principles then and there enunciated found a hearty response in the bosom of every patriot; and most happy am I to-night, to find that the reverberation of that voice finds a responding echo here in your beautiful mountain home. (Great applause.) As the brittle threads of the spinners' flax, when twisted and securely held together, serve to make a cable which will hold in safety the mighty ships of the ocean, so also will the power and influence of each individual, when bound together in a league, serve to hold fast to its moorings the ship of State. (Applause.)

Gentlemen of the League, you should not be unmindful of the fact, that those whose responsible duty it is to administer the affairs of the government in the present crisis, look to you to sustain them. They take courage and hope from what you have already said and done; and when you hesitate, or fail to discharge your full duty, may they, too, not have reason to hesitate, to become discouraged in their efforts for the preservation of our political system? The might and power of this government rest with the people, and they have but to

will to what extent it shall be exercised. Keep ever before you the great truth, that what the people would have this government be, that, with the aid of Providence, they can make it; but if they withhold the expression of their opinions and their aid, it must, of necessity, drift into anarchy or despotism.

The soldiers that have gone forth to do battle in our most righteous cause, have a right to expect an encouraging word from those at home. They ask that they may be supported, and that the moral power of the whole people may be exerted on the side of the government; and nothing so cheers them on to duty, or so rewards them for their toils and privations, as the knowledge that the people are alive to the dangers that threaten that government, and in earnest in their efforts for its preservation. Imagine, if you can, the feelings of the soldier who has staked his life and his honor on the issue, when he turns his eyes homewards, and discovers a divided sentiment among the people, or an apathy as to the cause in which he has so largely embarked. Will that condition of affairs be likely to make him more brave, or to excite feelings of pride for his country and his countrymen? Will such ingratitude not sting more keenly than the serpent's tooth? Is there any one within the sound of my voice who, when that brave band of soldiers which so recently left your village and neighborhood, return again,

with all their honors heaped upon them, would dare meet them face to face, and say to them, "While you were absent, I did nothing"? or, that "I consorted and acted with the opposers of the war and of the government"? No! there is not one that would dare do so; for in that hour of our country's greatness, in that hour of exultant pride at the heroic achievements of your sons, your brothers, and your neighbors, will come the full shame and disgrace of those who now hesitate, and who now withhold the influence they so well could exercise. Then, too, will come the disgrace and shame of those in your midst who are now plotting treason under the cowardly disguise of perpetuating a political party. (Applause.)

With those who oppose the government, and those who render reluctant aid to its measures, it has become a settled policy to argue upon certain speculative theories in reference to the causes of the rebellion. This is but a ruse to divert attention, to distract, and to divide. Our duty in this hour is to deal with *the war*, and not with *the causes* of the war. What would you think of the crew of a ship who should refuse aid to the captain when she was about to founder in a storm, because they had not agreed in their reckoning during their voyage? Or what would you have thought a few nights ago, when an alarming fire was raging in your village, of the individual who had refused to aid in

subduing the flames, because, forsooth, he had not been fully informed of, or did not quite understand, the causes of the fire; or because he had believed it to be the result of gross carelessness? Why, such a man would have been driven out from among you as a disgrace to your society; and yet you have among you, as I am informed, those who act in that manner towards our government. You cannot certainly hold fellowship with such men, and I can, therefore, readily understand the additional aims and objects of this association.

The duty of the citizen to his government grows and increases with the perils that environ it. "The pride of personal opinion is one of our stumbling blocks"—I quote from memory some recent writer—"but we should not be unmindful of the fact that each forms but one of the great family, and that the public safety and quiet demand of us that we should cheerfully concur in all measures looking to a restoration of law and order, even where our private judgment may not approve. There cannot be good government without self-denial on the part of the citizen. It is through this that he has a right to claim protection of his government against encroachments upon his liberty; but discontent will, in time, undermine the stability of the State, and lose to him all liberty and government."

No good citizen will ever lose faith in our national institutions. As the dangers increase

he will renew his courage. "As the storm grows dark his confidence in the light of the morning will revive. He will hope and labor on, through all difficulties and trials, for the sake of his country. He will ever feel himself a sentinel on the watchtower of liberty, with a high and holy duty to perform. He will make of patriotism more than a sentiment; it will become with him a principle of action, of noble effort, and of constant hope and confidence." It will be to him his guiding star, his creed at his lying down, and at his rising up.

Turning our attention for a moment from our individual duties, and desirous that we may more firmly feel the security of our position, we may now inquire what those who are decrying the efforts of our League organizations propose as a remedy for the dangers and perils that now beset our government. We hear from them a cry of peace, with their reasons therefor based only upon the calamities of war, which they picture so vividly in the abstract. But what have been to the people of the north the distresses from which they are said so much to suffer? Beyond that melancholy one of loss of life, and of friends dear to us as life—the responsibilities for which God knows, and we know, do not rest with our government or ourselves—I answer, none. Never was there a people in the enjoyment of such prosperity. It would seem, indeed, that a kind Providence held us in his special keeping. The land

produces most abundantly, and the laborer meets with a full reward for his labor; the manufacturer and the merchant are content with their profits and their gains. But we are told that this prosperity is not real—that it is fictitious. So, I grant you it will be, if our government fail to maintain itself, or fail to assert its authority everywhere throughout the republic.

The prosperity of the people is inseparably bound up with the present issue, and our commercial and financial condition must of necessity rise or fall with the success or failure of our cause. Fortunately for us, however, the people have decreed that the cause shall not fail. The assurance that goes up from this and from kindred associations has been accepted at home and abroad, as an earnest of what our future must be. The cry of peace, therefore, is prompted by no feelings of real concern for the welfare of the government or of the people. It has neither reason for its utterance nor argument for its basis. What plan have we submitted to us for a permanent peace, but a further prosecution of the war? Are we to ask that our armies shall lay down their arms, and that our soldiers shall return to their homes? And if so, what then? How will that bring us peace? Will the failure of our government, and the failure of the principle, that a republican government can possess sufficient inherent power to preserve itself when assailed by foes from

within, bring with it peace? That principle having failed at our hands, does any sane man believe that we of the north could frame a government that would be permitted to work out its destiny in peace? No! no!! no!!! The failure of our arms, and, thereby, the failure of our government, would be a failure of civil liberty throughout the world; and we, as a people, permitting such an event to happen, would be lending our aid to turn civilization into barbarism. There is, therefore, a necessity that the war shall go on, for the sake of peace, for the sake of our institutions, for the sake of humanity. It was not ours to begin, neither can it yet be ours to stop. We have a name and a fame to preserve, and principles to perpetuate. Who is there that could be induced to take down from its high position, where it now floats so proudly aloft, the American flag, and mutilate it, by erasing ten or more stars from its beautiful azure field? (Cries of "No one!") When an American citizen can be found capable of that act it will be time enough to whisper peace, without presenting to us a plan of peace. (Applause.)

From the earliest history of our government up to the present hour, the politicians of the southern States have at all times resisted and opposed those principles of government which have looked to the material prosperity of the whole people, as the main bulwark of the nation. Their plans for the dissolution of the Union were laid long since, and

their jealousy of the growth of free labour has never been concealed. This last it was that gave them most concern. As their schemes were, from time to time, necessarily deferred, the statistics of each new census furnished them new cause for alarm and complaint. They watched the growth of the free North with serious apprehensions, until finally a great political contest decided that the executive power of the government should for a time be wielded by a direct representative of free labor. This was all that was done, and it was met by an open rebellion; and because of the assertion of this principle by a majority of the whole people, would you have the war to cease, and the principle to be abandoned?

Gentlemen of the League, there can be no doubt of the ultimate success of our cause. I never had a doubt of it; and viewing it, as we all must, in its moral aspect, I see much that is hopeful and encouraging. It would be vain and unbecoming in me to attempt to penetrate or predict the designs of Providence; but who can now fail to perceive that this great calamity has been permitted for our good? Are we not daily realizing the conviction that the institution which has ever been a hinderance to our civilization and our progress, and which has been made "the chief corner-stone" of the rebel government, must be brought to ruin by the success of our cause? The statesman, the philanthropist, and the

108

economist, both of the Old World and of the New, foreseeing the evil tendency of that institution, and alive to the fearful responsibility for its growth and for its continuance, sought in vain for some plan through which to remedy its present, and to avert its future, evil. They abandoned, without hope, every scheme proposed, and gave themselves over to feelings of deep concern for the hour when this continent should witness a war of races—a war of an enslaved race against a free one. Books had already been written pointing out the calamities that must befall our posterity. Who shall longer doubt that the wisdom of an All-wise Providence is nearest to us when our scope of vision fails? This war was not, as we have seen, instituted for the suppression of slavery, nor is it now prosecuted for that purpose; but I can readily believe that those who did inaugurate it for the purpose of perpetuating slavery, begin to see the handwriting upon the wall, which tells them that they and their institution have been weighed in the balance—that they and their institutions are politically doomed.

It must be so. History teaches that the onward path of all great nations has been through seas of blood, and ours, it proves, will not be permitted to escape that terrible ordeal. As the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church, so will the bones of our heroes be the foundation stones of a monument of freedom, everlasting as the hills.

It is but a question of time as to when we shall have peace. But when we do have it, it must be a permanent one—a peace that all the world shall know is based upon the principle, that while in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty—of freedom—man is capable of self-government. (Applause.)

But I cannot take my seat without a word more personal. You of this county have done much for the cause of your government. You have sent your full share of brave soldiers to the field, and have contributed most liberally from your means. You have given to the State our present patriotic and most praiseworthy Governor, (cheers), who has rewarded you by the honour he has won for himself, and the fame that he will leave behind him for this his birthplace and his home. As an humble citizen, I must thank you for all this good in the past, and for the cheering promise that this crowded room gives for the future. (Tremendous applause.)

SPEECH BY MR. BANCROFT,

AT THE NEW YORK UNION MEETING, APRIL 20, 1863.



Hon. George Bancroft was first introduced, and spoke as follows:

Two years ago the purposes and acts of the rebellion forced the faithful citizens of the United States to rise in arms, and prove that we are a people—that we possess a country. Every hour of the long and terrible conflict has raised it in importance; the eyes of the whole civilized world rest upon us; the industrial classes of Europe bend toward us in sympathy and hope as to their champions; and the question is found to be, not merely whether the United States shall be stricken from the family of nations, but whether the vital principles of freedom shall be preserved. (Applause.) The imperative call of duty cheers us on to the struggle more than ever; for unless we succeed, the power of the people which pervades all history as a prophecy, is beaten down, and there is no other Western hemisphere where the struggle can be renewed. We have no choice; we must persevere. If we would build up

the home of humanity—if we would safely transmit the regenerating principles that give life its value—we must persevere. The result cannot be doubtful. The resources of the rebellion are nearly exhausted, while our own prosperity has hardly been impaired; we must press onward with united zeal, and “win the victory of endurance born.” (Cheers.)

We meet to-day without reference to party, to pledge ourselves to one another for the vigorous prosecution of the war, until right shall triumph. But while we reserve to ourselves the utmost liberty of judgment, both of men and measures, it is but an act of simple justice and historic truth, to say that the rebellion found not even a plausible excuse in the administration which last came into power. No sooner had the elections passed over, than those who succeeded made every effort to allay excitement. A party had been formed that seemed pledged to prohibit the introduction of slavery into the Territories, and yet the men of that party, after deliberations, not in an unauthorized and insignificant peace congress, so-called, but in the constitutional halls of legislation, joined in organizing the Territories of the United States, without the restriction in the fundamental law of any one of them, leaving the event to the action of natural causes. A motion was even made and countenanced, by intimate friends of the incoming President, to bring a vast territory, under the name of New Mexico, into

the Union as an independent State, without any such restriction, and at a time when the municipal law of that Territory sustained slavery with an extravagant hyperbole of intolerance. Nor were the friends of the present President wanting in giving assurances that his administration would be as little marked by hostility to slavery as if the chair had been occupied by Madison or Henry Clay. Moreover, the Generals of the President's appointment were loud in professing their readiness in the midst of war, to pause in their career and assist in suppressing any possible rising of slaves.

But yet, under all these circumstances, so infatuated was slavery, that it still passionately pursued its purpose, and for the sake of founding a Confederacy on a basis on which no enduring government can rest, aimed a blow that was intended to be fatal to the country and to the liberty of man. The war was, under every aspect, forced upon the northern States; it was a war from which they could not escape. Had they proved cravens, they would have stood before the Powers of the earth of their own day, and before all succeeding generations, as men who betrayed their country, and were recreant to freedom itself. (Applause.)

Our coming together on this occasion means, that no exertion shall be wanting to annihilate the rebellion by the united and untiring exertion of the wealth and strength of the nation. It means that

those who are in arms against our flag, shall not at the same time receive at our hands the belligerent rights of alien enemies and the constitutional rights of citizens. It means that whoever may be at the head of our armies, the undivided sympathy of the country is to command unity in council and add vigour to every blow. (Applause.) It means that with one heart we entreat the President to disregard all considerations of so-called party necessities; to adopt the measures but for the public good; to turn a deaf ear to all selfish importunities of politicians of every party, and ever to remember that it would be a sin against the country, against his own happiness now, against his name with posterity, to lift an unfit man to office, in civil life or in the field. (Applause.) It means that all the generous feeling of the country goes forth to cheer on the noble statesmen of Missouri, who are now struggling to shake off the terrible evil which alone holds that State back from one of the first places—perhaps from the very first place in the Union—for agriculture, mining, mechanical industry, for wealth and population. It means that our earnest sympathies embrace the freemen of the South, who, trained in the school of poverty, are now compelled by tyrannical power to fight for results that are in direct conflict with their own chances of happiness and advancement. It means that we are eager to go to the assistance of our friends in our mountain regions, and to give

them security in the natural fastnesses of American freedom.

Nor are we deterred from rendering a loyal support to the government, by the thought that the war in its results will weaken slavery, or even work its overthrow. Civil war has always, in God's providence, been a means for rescuing men from bondage. Who is there to deplore the probable result that States, where, in times past, labor has been despised, should come to own the true nobility of the working man, and restore the fields and the workshops to the free? Take Virginia, for an example. Her soil is fertile, her air salubrious; her springs renovate health; her mountains glisten with precious ores. There, in her many chambers, where nature has heaped up stores of gold and silver, of gypsum and iron, of salt and copper, an evil spirit has cast over her its spell, and she sleeps in almost hopeless lethargy. Who will mourn if the time has come when her long and deep slumber shall be broken? Who will grieve if the procession of the Star Spangled Banner, borne onward to the songs of liberty, shall wake her from her trance of centuries? Then let her clothe her beautiful limbs in the robes of freedom, and open her hundred hills to the hands of self-directed enterprise and skill. (Applause.) The present bitterness will pass away, and the next generation of her sons will meet ours in affection, and they will own that from this desperate strife

has sprung the blessed regeneration of their lovely land.

Nor is union required by our domestic affairs alone. There is reason to believe that here in New York, men, falsely usurping the name of democracy, have been willing to invite the interposition of the aristocracies of Europe. These men must be made to know that they stand alone. (Cheers and cries of "Good!") A nation which has always professed zeal for free trade, aims at a monopoly of the international carrying trade for themselves, by sending out ships built in their own shipyards to prey upon our commerce. It is here in New York, more than in any place in our land, that the government should be able to count with certainty upon a unanimous support in its efforts to maintain, against any foreign power, the rights and the dignity and interests of the country. (Applause.) So then the love of the Constitution, the love of liberty, the love of country, a proper sense of overhanging dangers, a just appreciation of our resources, conspire to demand the patriotic union of the people as our security at home, and our only protection against wrongs from abroad. (Applause.)

