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ADDRESS

OF

HON. WILLIAM BIGLER,

DELIVERED AT

NEW HOPE, BUCKS COUNTY,

SEPTEMBER 17, 1863.

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# ADDRESS OF HON. WM. BIGLER.

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GENTLEMEN: The people of the United States, once so prosperous and happy, are now afflicted with civil war—a gigantic strife among themselves; and we, a portion of them, are here to-day to inquire, one of another, how this sad change came to pass, and what can be done to rescue our country from this dire calamity. It is befitting that we should thus assemble and counsel together on the anniversary of the adoption of the great charter of our liberties, the Constitution of the United States, which instrument gives us the right to do these things without the consent of Mr. Stanton; for it provides that “Congress shall pass no law abridging the freedom of speech or the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” We are assembled, then, under the auspices of the Constitution, and shall speak by its authority. I intend to speak to you freely and fearlessly, though, I trust, with proper discretion. And as for a “petition for redress of grievances,” we intend, when the right time comes, to vote ourselves a “redress of grievances” by dismissing our present agents at Harrisburg and Washington, and selecting others more worthy and competent; for if the agency of these men in the affairs of State has not become a grievance, then no people were ever afflicted by one. Free speech, free press and a free ballot never were more essential to the institutions of the country than now; and we condemn and reprobate all attempts on the part of those in authority to restrain or in any wise embarrass the free action of these vital agencies, so indispensable to the healthful operation of our representative system, and without which our boasted plan of self-government would manifestly become delusive and fraudulent. Discussion, unrestrained discussion, of all political topics is essential to an intelligent use of the ballot; and it is through the ballot that each elector, high or low, is enabled to reflect his sentiments and leave the impress of his will on the policy of the Government, and it is in this way that we become a self-governing people. Whoever fears or neglects in times like these to exercise this high prerogative in accordance with his own sentiments,

scarce deserves the name of man, much less of freeman. And I may as well say at this point as at any other, that whatever else the Democrats of Pennsylvania may bear and endure, they have solemnly determined to resist, with all the means they can command, any and every interference with the lawful exercise of the right of suffrage, come whence that interference may.

An election is soon to take place in this State, to be followed next fall in all the States by one of still greater importance; and as the administration of Gov. Curtin is a mere reflection and a true reflection of that of Mr. Lincoln, and as the issues and considerations that will enter into both these political struggles will be mainly the same, I shall treat them as necessarily connected.

Of our candidates, Geo. W. Woodward and Walter H. Lowrie, I have little to say. It is quite unnecessary to tell Pennsylvanians who they are, and no man's endorsement can add to the high reputation for integrity and ability so freely accorded to them by all fair-minded men.

I spurn to defend Judge Woodward against the petty falsehoods invented by his political enemies, or to notice the vile aspersion on his good name, so characteristic of the times. He has a reputation for integrity and unsurpassed ability that will take care of itself. And as for the part he may act in our national troubles, as Governor of the State, did I not know him to be as true a friend of the American Union as was Jackson, or Clay, or Webster, or Crittenden, or Douglas, or as now is James Guthrie, Lewis Cass, or Millard Fillmore, he could not get my support or vote. On this point my faith is unbounded. I know he will wield every power and influence he can command to bring and retain States together under one common Government.

But, let us pass on. The men in authority are now to answer for their stewardship; they are soon to be before the bar of the country to be approved or condemned, and as the custodians of the public welfare, it is not only our privilege, but our duty, to inquire into their actions and purposes. This we intend to do

without fear, favor or partiality, but in a spirit of generosity. We shall remember that "to err is human, to forgive, divine;" and in passing upon their case, we shall practice all the forbearance that shall be consistent with truth and justice.

We all remember the high-sounding promises made by these men when they were engaged in the pursuit of power and place—their pretensions to honesty and economy in the use of the public money—their professions of fidelity to the Constitution and the laws, as also their false allegations against the policy and practices of the Democratic party, and especially their sarcastic ridicule of "Union-Savers." Now, gentlemen, although these men have been in power less than three years, it is conceded on all hands that, on nearly every practical point, they have already falsified their past promises, and magnified the evils and wrongs which they so unjustly charged upon us.

They were shocked with the corruptions in the Democratic party, and appealed to the people to hurl it from power and place; but it is now manifest—indeed it is demonstrated by themselves—that in the brief period during which they have had possession of the public coffers, there has been more corruption, more downright stealing and swindling, than occurred under all preceding administrations since the foundation of the Government. So proficient are the present school of pilferers, that they have put to shame the very best efforts of all their predecessors. If all that was so unjustly charged against the late administration were true, it would sink into contemptible insignificance compared with the magnificent swindling with which these "reformers" have already convicted each other.

As for testimony on these points, we have it in volumes, as furnished by themselves. They here give us the case of a "house divided against itself;" and I presume that Mr. Lincoln would say, as he did on another memorable occasion, that it cannot stand—that it must become "all one thing or all the other"—all robbers or all honest men.

But to the proof. Mr. Van Wyck, one of their leading spirits, in the course of an elaborate speech of specifications against the pilferers, on the 7th of February, 1862, declared that "the mania for stealing seems to have run all through the relations of government, almost from the General to the drummer boy. From those nearest the throne of power to the merest tide-waiter, nearly every man who deals with the Government seems to feel or desire that it would not long survive, and that each had a common right to plunder while it lived."

Then, again: "As a general thing, none but favorites gain access there, [to the Departments,] and none other can obtain contracts which bear enormous profits. They violate the plain provisions of the law requiring bids and proposals, on the false and shallow pretext that the public exigency requires it."

Mr. Dawes, another Republican member of the same Congress, made the following sweeping accusation:

"Mr. Speaker, horse contracts have been so plenty that government officials have gone about the streets with their pockets filled with them, and with which they make presents to the clergymen of their parishes. Some of these contracts have served to heal old political sores. The hatchet of political animosity is buried in the grave of public confidence, and the national credit is sacrificed between malefactors."

Mr. Hale, in manifest tribulation and alarm at the magnitude of the corruptions about the Government, exclaimed in the Senate: "I declare, upon my responsibility as a Senator, that the liberties of this country are in greater danger to-day from the corruptions and profligacy practiced in the various departments of the Government than they are from the enemy in the open field."

So much for the National administration.—Now that of the State. The *Pittsburg Gazette*, a leading Republican organ, presents the following frightful accusations and reproaches against Gov. Curtin:

"We have endeavored to show that he imposed upon the soldiers by farming them out to his friends, and then denying that he had employed them. We have exhibited the record to establish the fact that he had approved a bill, acknowledged by him to be wrong, which robbed the treasury of many millions of money; that as the condition of his approval he had taken an agreement for the State, which he abstracted and secretly surrendered to the parties who had given it; and that, when interrogated by the Legislature, he confessed the fact, and offered as his apology a reason which is shown to have been untrue."

I have no comment to make upon developments so startling. It is painful enough that such facts should have gone into the history of our great State.

These men also complained of taxation as the result of Democratic policy, and promised to do better when they should attain to power. But they have already saddled the country with a system of taxation heretofore unheard of, searching and oppressive in its operations beyond that endured under the rottenest power in Europe—so much so that the people of the United States are doomed hereafter to endure an unbroken career of taxation; from the cradle to the grave they are to be hunted down by relentless excise officers and importunate tax collectors. They used to complain of an annual tax of a million and a half to pay the interest on the State debt; but Pennsylvania's share of the interest on the actual and contingent debt they have created will already exceed twenty millions per annum, if it falls upon the North alone. Now, gentlemen, I think I have shown that these men have falsified their promises to practice honesty and economy in the use of the public money.

But, suppose their stewardship be tested by the stern logic of results, and it be demanded that they give back the country as it was before the election of Mr. Lincoln. Give us back the Union; give us back peace; give us back our good name among the family of na-

tions; give us back our high credit; give us back our brothers, our sons, our husbands, our fathers, who have fallen by the scores in this fratricidal war. How reasonable the demand, and yet how vain! As for our fallen friends, peace to their ashes! They have fought their last battle, and gone to "that bourne whence no traveler returns." Oh that I were sufficiently gifted to contrast in letters of living light the condition of the country as it then was and as it now is! From the first dawn of the morning sun until the last ray kissed the summit of the Pacific mountains, it shone upon a community of States under a common Government, at peace with each other and with all mankind—with a name and a flag that commanded the respect of all the other powers of the earth—with a commerce that extended to every sea and every port—with a happy, frugal and flourishing people within each State, in the busy pursuit of the arts of peace, surrounded by all the blessings and felicities incident to a good government and high civilization. But now how changed the scene! We witness State arrayed against State; brother against brother; father against son, and son against father; men of a common descent, race, blood, flesh and bone—of similar habits and like aims, professing the same religious belief—engaged in a deadly strife with each other; the Union broken and dissevered; the land drenched with fraternal blood; the devastation of the sword where had flourished the arts of peace; and misery and lamentations abounding amongst the people. What a sad change! And what an awful responsibility it imposes somewhere! Whoever has this to bear, let him call on the rocks and mountains to fall upon him and hide him from the wrath of an outraged people.

And now, gentlemen, permit me at this point to congratulate you on this, that whatever else may be said, no fair-minded man will allege that these dire calamities would have befallen the country had the Democratic party remained in authority at Washington. Their causes would have been adjusted or removed. Sneeze who may at the idea, I tell you impartial history will so write it down. Our present afflictions are the consequence of the temporary overthrow of that patriotic organization so long the practical conservator of the Union of the States and the peace of the people. If my sole object were to remind you of the virtues and good works of that party, and of its claims to your confidence and gratitude, what more would it be necessary for me to say—what more could be said? The sad consequence of its downfall, witnessed on all sides, speak its virtues in stronger impressions than language can make.

But it will be said in defence of the men in authority that secession caused all these evils; and we agree that secession has had a criminal part in bringing upon the country these dire calamities, for which its authors merit the severest chastisement; and when the men now in authority show that they had no agency in superinducing secession—that they endeavored, in good faith to arrest and avert it—the strength of the plea will be cheerfully acknowl-

edged. But dropping this inquiry for the present, I do not see that secession in the South affords any sufficient apology for the corrupt use of the people's money in the North; or for robbing the public treasury; or stealing the public property; or for violating the laws; or depriving loyal citizens of their constitutional liberty; though it may be and it is an apology for the expenditure of large sums of money.

Secession is a vile heresy, utterly unwarranted by the Constitution. I condemn the theory and abhor the practice. I said to its advocates often, that, if attempted, it would involve the country in ruin, and that, so far as they were concerned, it would magnify rather than mitigate the evils of which they complained, and be especially criminal until those alleging grievances had first sought redress at the fountain of political authority, in the manner prescribed in the Constitution, to wit: by a convention of States, emanating directly from the people—the remedy practiced by our fathers under similar circumstances, and the only one left to us in case of conflict amongst the States.

But, gentlemen, while we thus condemn and reprobate secession and secessionists, how can we hold blameless those men of our own section who persistently indulged in those practices which all could see would inevitably stimulate and promote that bad cause? And it is necessary, at this point, to inquire into the agency that Northern men have had in this work. That the primary causes of our present afflictions had their foundation in infidelity to the great compact, the anniversary of the adoption of which we this day commemorate, no fair public man will dare to dispute. I can spend but little time in recounting the history of these things; a glance at it will answer my purpose. What I shall allege is too well known to be denied.

When experience had developed fatal defects in the original Articles of Confederation amongst the States, and they were brought into serious collision with each other about the regulation of foreign commerce and internal duties, Washington, and Madison, and Franklin, and Sherman, and Hamilton, and their compeers, assembled at Philadelphia as representatives from the several States to revise and remodel the original compact; in their own words, "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 themselves and their posterity." To this work they devoted themselves with the utmost diligence and with unalloyed devotion to the country; and when completed, they embodied the result of their labors in a written Constitution, nicely defining the relations which the States were thereafter to bear to each other and to the Federal Government. This instrument, after solemn deliberation, was ratified by the people of the several States, and became the fundamental law of the land. This work was not accomplished without encountering serious difficulties. The ratio of slave representation, the rendition of fugitive

slaves, and the termination of the slave-trade were matters of serious difference, which were finally adjusted by proper concessions on all sides. It is a fact worthy of note at this point, that the slave trade was terminated in 1808 by the votes of the Southern States, against the voice of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut, whose representatives voted to continue it twelve years longer. The acquisitive New Englanders may have hated slavery sincerely enough, but they seem to have loved the profits of the slave trade a little more.

At this time all the States were slaveholding save one; and this new covenant between the States settled the slavery question in all its phases, leaving each free to continue or abolish the institution; and each being a separate, social, and political organization, it was held that each, to the fullest extent, would be responsible before God and man for its action for or against the perpetuity of the institution. On this question the separation was complete. There was to be no interference by the States, one with another, either by word or deed. Pennsylvania abolished slavery. She had all the right to do that in peace and without reproach, and no other, that Virginia had to retain it.

But, gentlemen, notwithstanding this complete settlement of the slavery question by Washington and his compeers, there soon sprang up a band of reckless agitators—men who, having probably parted with their own slaves for a full consideration, became exceedingly conscientious about the institution. The work of gradual emancipation, then in progress in some of the Northern States, gave these men a pretext for the enunciation of their peculiar dogmas. They were extremely zealous, officious, and meddlesome, often interposing their offices where they had no business. At a later day they made war on the Colonization Society—an institution intended for the benefit of the poor African—supported largely by Southern men, and at one time presided over by Henry Clay. Its operations were too slow for this fast school of fanatics; nor could they brook the “injustice” of sending the African back to his native country. Immediate and unconditional emancipation was their theory; and to this end they sent colporteurs to all parts of the country with pamphlets and documents abounding with doctrines so false and incendiary that the Southern people became alarmed lest insurrections and murders should be the result. The consequence was that the slaves were held in greater restraint, denied privileges theretofore enjoyed, and the good work of the Colonization Society seriously retarded. The people of the South rebuked these meddlesome agitators, repelling their reproaches with indignation and in the most offensive terms they could command. Thus was inaugurated that fatal war of crimination and recrimination, the first signs of which were so alarming to the Father of his country. George Washington, with the eye of a true philosopher, foresaw that the inevitable result of such sectional controversies would be the alienation of the North and South from each other; and hence that elo-

quent and pungent admonition, in his Farewell Address, against these evil practices and against the organization of geographical parties. At a later period, Jackson and Clay and Webster united in an effort to restrain these wild fanatics.

But all these warnings were without avail. Nothing could suffice to check these agitators in their destructive career. The more manifest the evil consequences of their practices, the more persistent and desperate they seemed to become. They railed against the institution of slavery generally, its wickedness and its barbarities, reproaching slaveholders with all manner of crimes against the laws of humanity and civilization. Being often reminded that it was the constitutional right of each State to have the institution or not, and that the people of the South were only doing what we of the North had expressly agreed they might do, and that, therefore, their reproaches were cruel and unjust, they seemed to become indignant at the Union and the Constitution, and commenced to bestow upon these sacred institutions invectives at once vile and profane, all teaching infidelity to the Constitution, and hostility to the Southern people. “I say, let us cease striking hands with thieves and adulterers, and give to the winds the rallying cry, ‘no Union with slaveholders socially or politically,’ and up with the flag of disunion!” was the scandalous sentiment of William Lloyd Garrison. This is the man who recently, in public meetings, boasted his efforts of twenty years to break up the American Union, and has been allowed to go scot free by this *impartial* administration, whilst Mr. Vallandigham, who never uttered a disunion sentiment in his life, for a manly difference of opinion with the administration, on matters of policy, was arrested at the dead hour of night, dragged before a military tribunal, convicted and banished the country, in utter violation of the laws and of the Constitution.

If further evidence of the mischievous sayings and doings of his school of agitators were necessary, I could furnish it in abundance from the speeches of Phillips and Giddings and Spalding, and Henry C. Wright, and Addison, and scores of others.

The war of words of which I have spoken soon led to the organization of antagonistic parties in both sections. Those of the South were called “Fire-Eaters,” and those of the North “Abolitionists.” As matter of convenience and brevity, I shall hereafter term them Radicals—the Radicals of both sections. And, gentlemen, permit me to say right here, by way of parenthesis, that, in my deliberate judgment, it was the Radicals who brought the country to its present sad condition—that the Radicals of both sections have control of it now—that the Radicals never will extricate it from its present afflictions. Sooner or later, in some way or other, that will be the work of the conservative Democracy.

The fanatics endangered the Union and the peace of the country in 1820, and again in 1850; but both were saved by the patriotic statesmen of those days. But the organization of a sec-

tional party, with its candidates for President and Vice President from the same section, was the culmination of the bickerings and wranglings to which I have referred, and the fatal day for the American Republic. It was not the fact that the individual, Mr. Lincoln, had been elected President that caused that profound agitation which was witnessed in the South, after the election of 1860; but it was the circumstance that the dogmas of the Abolition party and their reproaches of the Southern people and Southern institutions, had been endorsed by a majority of the Northern people. And here I condemn Mr. Lincoln and his party leaders for not attempting to assuage these fears and passions. I condemn them for not endeavoring to save the country by peaceful means, when they could have saved it without the sacrifice of honor or principle. After the election of Mr. Lincoln, had he, in view of the alarming indications in the South, turned his face toward that noble band of Southern patriots who were resisting the tide of secession, and said: "Go on, gentlemen, you are right; and when I come into the Presidential chair I shall act as the President of the whole country, and not alone of that section that elected me; the Constitution shall be my guide, and on all points of dispute as to its meaning, I shall accept that meaning at the hands of the Supreme Court—the tribunal authorized to define its intentions"—had Mr. Lincoln said even this, secession would unquestionably have failed in a number of States now claiming to be out of the Union. But he allowed the storm to progress without interruption.

Gentlemen, it seems to have been the fatal mistake of these men to imagine that they came into the possession of the Government surrounded by no more than ordinary responsibilities—as though they had in no way contributed to imperil the country, and could await events with profound complacency. To the Southern radicals attaches the crime of an open attempt to break up the Union, and they must pay the penalty; but men cannot be held blameless, who, long before the overt act of rebellion occurred, enunciated the doctrine that the Union was so imperfect that it could not stand on the conditions of the Constitution—that it must change one way or the other, or fall. Mr. Lincoln himself did this; and for this, if for nothing else, he owed the country an explanation and an apology after his election. At a Republican Convention in Springfield, Illinois, in June, 1858, he enunciated the following startling sentiment:

"In my opinion, it (the slavery agitation) will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other—all slave or all free."

What a frightful significance is embodied in these few words. In my humble judgment, this is the most harmful sentiment to the cause of the Union ever enunciated by any public

man in America. The Union, as framed by Washington and his compatriots, too imperfect to stand! it must change or fall! How suggestive and encouraging to all, in this or any other country, who wished it to fall! Mr. Lincoln anticipates its change; but the secessionist responds, "No, rather let it fall; for it shall not change in the manner you desire."—Scarcely less harmful is that other idea that the States must all become slave or all free. The secessionist rolled this sentiment under his tongue as a precious morsel. It was a torrent of water on his wheel. He knew perfectly well that the idea that the States might all become slave was preposterous, and had only been used by Mr. Lincoln to conceal the enormity of his own doctrines. Hence the sentiment was pointed to, day after day, in the South, as evidence strong as Holy Writ, that sooner or later the institutions of the South were to be assailed, regardless of the Constitution.

About the same time Mr. Seward presented the dogma of an "irrepressible conflict" and of a "higher law," by which the institutions of the South could be overthrown. Mr. Lovejoy said, subsequently, "There can be no Union till slavery is destroyed." Mr. Greeley said, "The Union is not worth supporting with the South." Mr. H. M. Addison said, "I detest slavery, and say unhesitatingly that I am for its abolition by some means, if it should send all party organizations in the Union, or the Union itself, to the devil." Mr. Henry C. Wright declared, "By all her regard for the generations of the future, her reverence for God and man, the North is bound to dissolve the present Union with kidnappers and murderers, and form a Northern Republic on the basis of 'No Union with slaveholders.'" Mr. Sumner, Mr. Beecher, Mr. Cheever, and scores of men of that school, are, as we all know, in the habit of dealing in similar execrations against the South and against Southern men. These things, together with State statutes, intended to restrict, if not unlawfully to embarrass, the rendition of fugitive slaves, and the enunciation of doctrines denying to the South equal rights with the North in the common territories, with many inauspicious events, such as the John Brown raid into Virginia, and the publication of the *Helper* book, served to stimulate Southern passions and prejudices, and to precipitate our present calamities.

But enough of the sayings and doings of men of ordinary position in the Republican party. Those of Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward will suffice. They give us the doctrine of two social systems or civilizations established by the Constitution, utterly incompatible with each other; and, consequently, according to Mr. Lincoln, the Government cannot endure permanently. This heresy is now the chief argument of the impracticable rebels against the reconstruction of the Union. Very recently the *Richmond Examiner* declared "the North and the South are two distinct and incompatible civilizations; they never again can be joined together under one Government;" and the *New York Evening Post*, an organ of the Northern radicals, at

a later day, announced that "there is no doctrine of science clearer than the incompatibility of these two systems." How true it is that extremes meet! Here we have the radicals of the North and the South embracing the same false doctrines. The lion and the lamb have lain down together.

But now, gentlemen, I do not wish you to understand that the Government is not to be sustained because it is in unskillful hands. By no means. Nor do I desire to inflame the passions of the people, or damage the efficiency of any one in authority; but I present these facts and thoughts to the end that we may read the future of the men in authority by their past, and to show you that, because of their doctrines, prejudices and passions, they are hopelessly incapable of practising a policy calculated to redeem the country. And I think it just to say, in addition, that men whose teachings have contributed so largely toward the ruin of the country are not at liberty to stand back upon their dignity, when the country is bleeding at every pore, and sneer at the mere suggestion of peace—"dishonorable peace," as they term all ideas of settlement—as though it would not be more honorable in them to offer, and in the rebels to accept, such terms as would save the country, rather than to continue "this cruel war"—as though it would be dishonorable in them to offer terms of amnesty and settlement to their fellow-radicals of the South, whilst chastising them with the sword—as though it would have been dishonorable to receive Mr. Stephens as a peace commissioner, (if it was really in that capacity that he proposed to visit Washington.) Why, gentlemen, had Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward exerted themselves as zealously and as diligently at the right time to put down secession as did this rebel Stephens, it is my solemn belief that the Union never would have been seriously disturbed.

The Emperor of Russia, with all his power and pride, thought it no dishonor to offer terms to the rebellious Poles. The United States, when in better hands, thought it a dishonor to send a peace commissioner with its army into Mexico. "It is the practice of savage nations only to compel defeated foemen abjectly to sue for peace." The powers of the conqueror never are so imposing as when lit up by the rays of mercy.

As for honor, where distinct nations or races are at war with each other, the idea is all well enough, and no man would hold it higher than myself; but it can have but little application where a country is at war with itself—where the same people fight each other. The United States are at war with the United States. What concerns the honor of one section cannot be entirely separated from that of the other. Any settlement will be honorable that saves the country, and the sooner made the more honorable. I honor the late President, Mr. Buchanan, for his earnest and ceaseless efforts to avert the calamities of secession and war. I shall honor Mr. Lincoln for any efforts which he may make, whether successful or not, to terminate this fratricidal strife; and I am

quite sure he never can be disgraced by any efforts to that end.

Immediately after the election in 1860, the gathering storm, portentous and terrible, was obvious to all who had eyes to see; and here was the point at which the men now in authority could have accomplished a great work for this nation by concession and compromise.—But they persistently refused to do this; and for that they must answer to the country. They must not imagine that if they succeed in putting down the insurrection in the South, that, therefore, they will be held blameless before the world. I maintain, gentlemen, and I think the facts will sustain me, that these men could have averted rebellion and civil war by honorable means; and as they will surely not give back the country in any better condition than that in which it was before the war began, they must answer for the vast sacrifices of that war—crime enough to sink any party or set of men to eternal oblivion.

I was then your representative in the Senate, and was so convinced of the danger to the country that in December, 1860, I declared in that body the opinion that, "Without compromise and settlement our destiny is inevitable—dissolution, civil war and anarchy are before us." I promptly joined that small body of men, headed by the lamented Crittenden, who had determined to save the country, regardless of sectional, party or personal considerations.

I should like to talk to you at some length about the efforts to compromise and settle in the winter of 1860--1; but I must necessarily be brief. Of the various propositions brought before Congress to adjust our troubles, there was none that gave promise of an effective and final settlement except that presented by Mr. Crittenden. It was in the nature of an equitable partition of the territories rather than quarrel longer. It was believed that with this basis, all else that was necessary could be attained. It came from the South, and was generous to the North. We then had about 1,200,000 square miles of common territory, and it proposed to give us all north of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes north latitude, being about three-fourths of the whole, or 900,000 square miles—quite all that any impartial umpire could have awarded us. The reasons pressed upon the dominant party in favor of the acceptance of this proposition, so far as related to the territories, were these: first, if it be a material interest about which we are contending, here is a Southern proposition that gives the North three-fourths of it; second, if it be the application of a political principle, it applies the doctrines of the Chicago Platform to three-fourths of this common territory. They were also reminded that, although they had legally elected Mr. Lincoln President, they were nearly a million in the minority at the polls; and being so largely in the minority, if they secured the application of their principles to three-fourths of the common estate, they could justly boast of a great victory before the world, and enjoy their political triumph in peace.

For a time these views seemed to have influence with the more conservative of that



party; but the radicals, ever vigilant and always impracticable, were soon on the spot, denouncing the proposition as destructive of the Republican party, and in direct contravention of that sacred instrument, the Chicago platform! They held that the people had passed upon this question at the polls, and that slavery was forever interdicted from all the territories. In vain were these men reminded that a million more men had voted against Mr. Lincoln than for him, and that the decision they claimed could by no possibility have been made. Equally vain was it to point to the imperilled attitude of the Union. They were joined to their idols, and determined to rule or ruin. To meet these objections, absurd as they were, the real friends of the Union and peace determined, after consultation, to go to the people for relief, especially as the impracticables base their action on the decision of the people. It was to that end that I myself submitted for the consideration of the Senate a bill, not as charged, to amend the Constitution in an irregular way, but to give the people in the several States and Congressional districts the opportunity to decide whether the Crittenden proposition should be submitted for the ratification of the States, as provided by the Constitution, or not; in other words, to instruct their representatives to vote for or against its submission. Nothing could be fairer or safer; it was simply going to the fountain of political authority for advice in times of serious trouble—just what our fathers did and doubtless intended we should do. Gen. Cameron and others at first declared their determination to support this proposition; but they could not stand out against the vehement denunciations of the radicals. I verily believe that, had this bill prevailed, the Crittenden proposition would have been accepted by an overwhelming majority North and South; but it fell, at the hands of the radicals, as did all other efficient means of settlement. I envy not the position of men who not only persistently refused, as representatives, to offer or accept any effective means of averting our present calamities, but in addition denied the people the opportunity of settling the question for themselves; and for this great wrong they must answer to their constituents.

But ever since that time, wily politicians of the Republican party, hoping to mitigate these crimes against the country, have been alleging that some Republican members did vote for the Crittenden proposition, and others against them. Not only this, but the Hon. John Brough, the Republican candidate for Governor in Ohio, has recently asserted that the Crittenden proposition had been tendered to the Southern by the Northern members of Congress, and rejected. Why, gentlemen, Mr. Brough is utterly mistaken; he must be the dupe of some lying newspaper. No statement could be more destitute of truth than this; it is "baseless as the fabric of a vision." The reverse is much nearer the truth, and I intend to prove it. But I have reason to thank Mr. Brough for the statement, for he thereby admits the admissibility of the proposition, and that it ought to have

been accepted by the Republicans. The truth is, it was offered by the Northern Democrats and Southern Senators to the Republicans, and by them rejected. I challenge Mr. Brough or any other man, to show where any Republican member of Congress spoke for or voted for the Crittenden proposition. I aver that they invariably and unitedly opposed it. It never was considered in the House of Representatives; and I am too familiar with what occurred in the Senate to be mistaken on any essential point. The Republicans of that body opposed it without any exceptions. Their opposition took the usual form of amendments and postponement. On the 14th of January, 1861, they cast a united vote against its consideration, and they did the same thing on the 15th. On the 17th they voted for Mr. Clark's motion to strike out the Crittenden proposition and insert certain resolutions agreeable to themselves. On this vote the yeas were twenty-five, and the nays twenty-three, so Mr. Clark's amendment prevailed, and the Crittenden proposition was defeated. This is the vote on which the cotton State Senators withheld their votes, and of this which I shall have occasion to speak hereafter. Gen. Cameron, as though alarmed at what had been done, immediately moved a reconsideration of the vote. This motion came up for consideration the next day, being the 18th, when Gen. Cameron (to his shame be it said) voted against his own motion, and was sustained by every member of the Republican party. The final vote was not taken until the 3d of March, when every Northern Democrat and every Southern Senator then present voted in the affirmative, and every Republican in the negative. The truth is, the radicals of that body showed no inclination to settle; they sneered at the attitude of the South and at the suggestion of real danger.—It is well known that when the Peace Conference was in session these men exerted themselves to have it filled with impracticable radicals. Mr. Chandler and Mr. Harlan were detected in this unworthy effort.

But more and worse. After these impracticable radicals had succeeded in so diluting the proceedings of the "Peace Conference" as to destroy their influence on the Southern mind, and they were referred to a committee of the Senate, composed of Messrs. Crittenden, Seward, Thompson, Trumbull and myself—Mr. Seward, in that committee, in a spirit of sarcasm and ridicule, because even that much had been done toward settlement, moved to strike out those proceeding and insert certain futile words of his own. He afterwards did this in open Senate. When Mr. Crittenden remonstrated against his course, he replied with that profound complacency for which he is so remarkable:—"Why, gentlemen, this excitement is totally unnecessary; the troubles you are so alarmed about will not last ninety days."

Why, gentlemen, this class of men were as determined against any compromise as were Messrs. Wigfall and Iverson. Mr. Wade, with whom I served in the Committee of Thirteen, seemed to become distressed and indignant at

the slightest indications of settlement. About the same time it was that Mr. Greeley was encouraging the "wayward sisters to depart in peace," for the sole purpose, as it now appears, of inaugurating a war of extermination against slavery, for I suppose no one will deny that the overthrow of slavery and not the restoration of the Union is now the real object of the Greeley school of fanatics.

But it is now said that the Southern members Congress could have adopted the Crittenden Compromise had they desired to do so.—No allegation could be more preposterous. Why, everybody knows that the Southern members were largely in the minority in both branches of Congress; how then could they adopt anything without Northern aid? But everybody knows, besides, that the Constitution requires a vote of two-thirds in both branches to submit amendments to the Constitution; not having a majority in either branch, how could the Southern members cast a two-third vote in both? The truth is, that with the vote of every Southern Senator and every Northern Democrat, it would still have required some eight or nine Republican votes to have submitted the proposition as an amendment to the Constitution, and not one was given on any occasion. But, suppose the allegation was true, what could it have availed to have adopted any measure by a mere party or sectional vote? Such action would have been about as effectual as the "Pope's Bull against the comet," or Mr. Lincoln's proclamation freeing the slaves in the heart of the revolted States. The Republican was the dominant party in the North, and no adjustment could prevail in the States without their active support, and this was perfectly understood in the South.

But I am aware that the circumstances of six or eight Senators from the cotton State withholding their votes on Mr. Clark's amendment has been made the basis for this latter allegation. Now, gentlemen, see how plain a tale will put down this fabric, behind which these men seek to conceal their own deformities. It is true that these cotton State Senators did withhold their votes on the 17th, thereby allowing Mr. Clark's amendment to prevail over the Crittenden proposition; but it is equally true that when Gen. Cameron's motion to reconsider this vote came up the next day, those Senators, or as many of them as were present, repented their error of the day before; and cast their votes for the reconsideration, and it was carried by their votes; and thus, by their action, the compromise was placed in precisely the same position which it occupied the day before. But if it was a grave error in the cotton States Senators to withhold their votes from the Compromise in this single instance, what can be said for the Republicans who stood up against it on that and all other votes?

It is also said that the Southern Senators would not have accepted Mr. Crittenden's proposition had it been tendered them by the dominant party. I never saw any sufficient reason for this allegation. With few exceptions they were openly for it. Mr. Iverson and

Mr. Wigfall were against any settlement, but their influence was quite limited. Mr. Slidell and Mr. Mason were in the habit of dismissing the subject by saying the other side intended to do nothing. Mr. Hunter voted for it in the Committee of Thirteen. Mr. Brown, of Mississippi, when the danger became imminent, frequently declared to me his willingness to accept it. Mr. Mallory was openly for it, and I read a letter from him, dated about the time of the secession of Florida, addressed to Mr. Russell, his former Secretary, in which he said that Florida would come back into the Union on the basis of the Crittenden resolutions.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Toombs, in the Committee of Thirteen, both declared their willingness to accept and sustain it, if the Republican side would unite with them in good faith. Mr. Toombs said so in open Senate, as will appear on page 270, *Congressional Globe*, first part, Thirty-fifth Congress.

The following statements made by Mr. Douglas, in the course of an elaborate speech, on the 3d of January, 1861, is conclusive on this point:

"If you of the Republican side are not willing to accept this nor the proposition of the Senator from Kentucky, pray tell us what you will do? I address the inquiry to the Republicans alone, for the reason that in the Committee of Thirteen, a few days ago, EVERY MEMBER FROM THE SOUTH, including those from the Cotton States, (Messrs. Davis and Toombs) expressed their readiness to accept the proposition of my venerable friend from Kentucky as a final settlement of the controversy, if tendered and sustained by the Republican members. Hence the sole responsibility of our disagreement, and the only difficulty in the way of an amicable adjustment, is with the Republican party."

These remarks were made, as I well remember, before a very full Senate—in the presence of nearly, if not quite all, the Republicans and Southern Senators, and no one dare to dispute the facts stated.

Mr. Pugh, on the 2d day of March, in the course of a very able speech, remarked:

"The Crittenden proposition has been endorsed by the almost unanimous vote of the Legislature of Kentucky. It has been endorsed by the Legislature of the noble old Commonwealth of Virginia. It has been petitioned for by a larger number of electors of the United States than any proposition that was ever before Congress. I believe in my heart, to-day, that it would carry an overwhelming majority of the people of my State; aye, sir, and of nearly every other State in the Union. Before the Senators from the State of Mississippi left this chamber, I heard one of them, who assumes, at least, to be President of the Southern Confederacy, propose to accept it, and to maintain the Union if that proposition could receive the vote it ought to receive from the other side of this Chamber."

Mr. Douglas, at the same time, said in reply:

"I can confirm the Senator's declaration

that *Senator Davis himself, when on the Committee of Thirteen was ready at all times to compromise on the Crittenden proposition. I will go further, and say that Mr. Toombs was also ready to do so.*"

But if this testimony were not in existence at all, do we not all know that the great State of Virginia endorsed this proposition and submitted it to the other States as a basis of a final adjustment and permanent peace? It was this basis on which that State called for the Peace Conference which assembled soon thereafter.

It was also endorsed by almost the unanimous vote of the Legislature of Kentucky, and subsequently by those of Tennessee and North Carolina.

When the struggle was at its height in Georgia, between Robert Toombs for secession and A. H. Stephens against it, had those men in the Committee of Thirteen, who are now so blameless in their own estimation, given us their votes, or even three of them, Stephens would have defeated Toombs, and secession would have been prostrated. I heard Mr. Toombs say to Mr. Douglas that the result in Georgia was staked on the action of the Committee of Thirteen. If it accepted the Crittenden proposition, Stephens would defeat him; if not, he would carry the State out by 40,000 majority. The three votes from the Republican side would have carried it at any time; but Union and Peace in the balance against the Chicago platform were sure to be found wanting.

But all attempts at settlement failed. Secession and war suddenly followed; and upon Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward devolved the duty of directing a bloody strife, which they could much more readily have averted. I have never united in complaints against the administration for a want of vigor in the prosecution of the war. I think it has been managed with decided vigor and some ability; but the political policy necessarily connected with the war has been, in my judgment, the worst for the Union that the wit of man could devise, tending directly to unite the Southern and divide the Northern people. This would seem to be an inexcusable error, for the division in Southern sentiment could not have been understood by the administration. It never was more apparent than in the large vote against secession in Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia and Louisiana. Indeed, at the beginning, the opponents of secession were in a decided majority in most of these States, and commanded a large majority in all those now claiming to be out of the Union. In these struggles the Unionists maintained that the then incoming administration contemplated no interference with the local institutions of the slaveholding States, and that it was the true policy of those States to remain in the Union and contend for their rights and equality under the Constitution. The secessionists reasoned to the contrary; and it was for the administration to sustain one side or the other. For a time we had reason to hope that the Union men would be sustained; that the war

would be conducted on the principles of the resolutions adopted by the House of Representatives, in July, 1861; and that in case of a decided defeat of the rebel army in the field, (which originally represented only the secessionists and the *de facto* government,) the Unionists would rise up and overthrow Davis and his associates, and bring the revolted States back to their wonted allegiance. This was my hope, and almost my only hope for the Union, after war began; but this hope was blasted by the unwise measures of Mr. Lincoln and his cabinet. Their policy sustained the rebels and broke down the Unionists. One after another, in rapid succession, came the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia; the act of confiscation, (harmful only in some of its parts;) the message of the President for compensated emancipation, a measure totally unwarranted by the Constitution; his proclamation freeing the slaves in the revolted States, WHETHER BELONGING TO LOYAL OR REBEL MASTERS; and next the admission of West Virginia as a State of the Union, in utter violation of the fundamental law of the land; interspersed by impolitic orders, sayings and proclamations of the generals in the field; and thus, step by step, the men of the South who had defended the North and contended for the Union—chagrined, disheartened and humiliated—were literally driven into the ranks of the secessionists. But for these impolitic measures the war would probably have terminated ere this.

I never had much faith in war as an agency of Union. It looks to me very like a paradox. I thought it should have been avoided at any reasonable sacrifice, and I exerted myself to the utmost to attain that end. Nevertheless, when war began as a means to save the Union, I wished it success in that good work; and there were times in the course of its progress when I thought that, with the proper political policy on the part of the administration, the desired end might have been attained. But this always failed. That policy would have conducted the war as though slavery had not existed—have looked steadily for help to the enemies of secession in the South, and not to the negro or the cause of the negro. Such policy would doubtless have divided the Southern people, and possibly overthrown the *de facto* government at Richmond. But even with this bad policy, if, at a recent date, after the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, and the defeat of Lee's army at Gettysburg, the President had, in the attitude of a victor, addressed himself to the people of the Southern States, assuring them that the government at Washington had no pleasure in their misfortunes and sufferings—that it did not seek their humiliation or subjugation, but simply desired to maintain the Government as it had descended from the fathers, and that so soon as resistance to the authority of the Government within any State ceased, its equal rights and dignities with the other States should be promptly recognized and abundantly guaranteed, visiting the penalties for resistance, whatever they might be, upon the leaders—it is quite probable, indeed

there are many things which justify the impression, that we should now witness decided, if not successful, movements in the South against the rebellion. But instead of this, men from Louisiana, who sought the countenance of the Government in an effort to bring that State back into the Union, were dismissed with an intimation that slavery must first be abolished.

Not only this, but it seems now to be a grave question at Washington what kind of a war it has been on the other side—whether a war of States, as alien enemies outside of the Union, or a wide-spread insurrection within the several States. If the former, then, when defeated, the rebel States could only resume their functions in the Union on such terms as the conqueror might grant; if the latter, then, when resistance ceases within a State, it would resume its functions as heretofore. I do not intend to discuss these points, for I do not concur in either of these positions; but it seems to me clear that those who have denied the right of a State to go out of the Union by its own action, cannot now hold that the States are alien enemies, though the secessionists may do so. But of this I am very certain: if it be announced, as signified by Mr. Whiting, an intimate friend of the President, that the revolted States can only resume their functions in the Union on such terms as the Administration may prescribe, it would become a fresh and powerful incentive to renewed efforts and continued resistance in the Southern States, leading them probably to the adoption of a guerrilla mode of warfare, by which means the strife might be prolonged for an indefinite period.

But what do all these impolitic steps mean? Are there to be no efforts for settlement and Union? Is subjugation or extermination to be the word? Why, Mr. Lincoln told us in his inaugural: "If you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical questions of intercourse will be upon you." Mr. Lincoln never uttered a wiser sentiment. It shows that before the war began, he anticipated the necessity of stopping it to adjust its causes. He manifestly then contemplated a war for the Union only, not for subjugation or extermination; and thus he could see that the Union could only be restored by negotiation and settlement—that subjugation or extermination would not give back the Union. Both are against the Union; and there was great philosophy in his sentiment, and had he adhered to it, and adhered to the resolution of Mr. Crittenden, adopted by Congress in 1861, he would doubtless have done his country a vital service. But the counsels of the radicals prevailed; and, gentlemen, I fear they always will prevail.

I do not care at this time to discuss terms of settlement; but I am exceedingly anxious that Mr. Lincoln should recur to that wise paragraph in his inaugural. God knows, we have had "much loss on both sides and no gain on either," and now we should like exceedingly to have "the identical questions of

intercourse?" and settlement. We have had losses enough, blood enough, taxes enough, drafts and conscriptions enough. We now want peace—such peace as will save the country—as will give us the Union as it was, or a Union as similar as possible. Give us at least peaceful agencies with the sword, if we have not fought enough to make it patriotic to attempt to cease. At least let the olive branch and the sword go into the South side by side, as they did in Mexico, if the fratricidal strife cannot entirely terminate.

But, gentlemen, whilst shedding rivers of blood and spending countless treasure to put down rebellion in the South, let us not forget that liberty is as dear to us as Union—that Union without liberty would be a barren achievement—"a word of promise to the ear, to be broken to the hope." Let us rather adopt the great sentiment of Webster, "Liberty and Union, one and inseparable, now and forever;" for liberty and Union are now both imperiled. The great principles of civil liberty, for which Hampden and Sydney suffered in England nearly two centuries ago, and the love of which brought our ancestors to this country, are imperiled by the incidents of this cruel war.

Whilst repelling the heresy of secession, let us beware lest we become the victims of others quite as intolerable. In the midst of a bloody struggle with secession another issue has sprung up quite as startling—the issue of popular liberty on the one hand and Executive power on the other. From the beginning I have feared this tendency as an incident of war, even in prudent hands. Indeed, I shall never forget the remark of a sagacious citizen, at the beginning of the war, touching its tendencies. He said it would give us dissolution or despotism; and unless the people were unusually vigilant in guarding their rights, it would give us both. The States would be separated, and both sections become subject to despotic rule. The startling sentiment has lingered on my mind ever since, and the recollection of it has been often renewed by the encroachments upon constitutional liberty by the Cabinet at Washington.

Not only is an open, manly dissent from the policy of the administration held to be disloyalty to the Government, but Mr. Lincoln, in his Albany letter, has enunciated the extraordinary doctrine that "the man who stands by and says nothing, while the peril of his counsels is discussed, is to be suspected—much more so he who speaks for his country with *ifs* and *buts*." In the name of Heaven, has it come to this? Cannot a man speak or think his sentiments without being suspected of disloyalty to the Government? "Much more so, he who speaks with *buts* and *ifs*!" I have thought and spoken much, as doubtless you all have; and yet, as God is my judge, I have never had a thought in favor of disunion; I never uttered a sentiment in favor of that wicked work; and yet I should despise myself, were I capable of so far sacrificing my own judgment as to agree with Mr. Lincoln in his policy. I have differed with him, not because I was less for the Union than he, but because

my clear convictions were that the Union never could be saved on his political policy. So feeling I must so speak, come what may.

But to return. If any man has practiced crime against the government, let him be arrested, tried and convicted, and punished according to law, but not kidnapped and incarcerated, and denied the writ of *habeas corpus*, to which writ even the criminal is entitled, and to deny which is to place the liberties of every citizen at the disposal of a single man. Gentlemen, we shall not act our part as freemen if we fail to resist these aggressions by all the influence we can command. The Constitution expressly guarantees freedom of speech and of the press, yet everybody knows that private citizens have been arrested and imprisoned in numerous instances in utter disregard of this clause. The freedom of the press has been abridged by a system of *espioinage* and Cabinet and military orders. The Constitution also provides that in all cases of criminal prosecution the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial. This has been denied in many cases. Indeed, the whole of the Sixth article of the Constitution has been treated as a dead letter.

But the most alarming heresy of the times is that which measures authority by necessity; in other words, which determines the authority of the President by the opinion he may entertain as to what measures will best enable him to suppress the rebellion. Whatever in his opinion will best enable him to do this, the war power, it is contended, authorizes him to adopt. Away go your Constitution and laws "at one fell swoop!" A member of Congress happens to differ with the Executive, and forthwith the President concludes that it will best enable him to suppress the rebellion to have the refractory fellow kidnapped for a while, and so he is promptly called upon by a military provost. As many members as complain of the act are disposed of in the same way, until Congress is composed only of "loyal" friends of the President, and the Legislative department is absorbed by the Executive. An opinion of a judge is unsatisfactory to the President, and forthwith Mr. Seward rings that potential bell, now so familiar in foreign courts, and the judge is sent to prison on the unanswerable plea that it will best enable the President to put down the rebellion; and so on till the Judicial department is merged in the Executive, and the President clothed with dictatorial powers. I do not charge Mr. Lincoln with any such purpose; I hope better things; some fear it; but surely all hope that no such design has ever entered the brain of any one in authority; and on this we all agree that whosoever first seriously entertains the idea will merit all the chastisement that man can visit upon man, and all the punishment reserved for the damned hereafter. Should we now acquiesce in these false doctrines, some time hence, when a worse man than Mr. Lincoln becomes President, he might attempt, under the authority of these precedents, to usurp the Government and declare himself a dictator.

Now, gentlemen, I think I have shown you that the men now in authority have failed to redeem their oft-vaunted promises of honesty and economy in the management of the Government; that they had an important part in sowing the seeds of discord between the North and South which culminated in secession and rebellion; that their doctrines served to stimulate and cherish jealousies and hostilities between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States; that by reason of their fanatical feelings against slavery, they are utterly incapable of conducting a war for the Union or of adjusting our National troubles; that they have evidently subordinated the war to the question of slavery, rather than the restoration of the Union, thereby dividing the Northern and uniting the Southern people; that they have broken down the safeguards of the Constitution, and thereby imperilled the liberties of the citizen. It is, therefore, a duty we owe to the country—the whole country, to the cause of the Union, and to the cause of liberty—to dismiss them from the administration of the Government at the earliest day the Constitution will permit.

I shall not defend the Democratic party against the assaults of its old or its new enemies. It has a history which speaks for itself, and gives abundant assurance of the wisdom and patriotism which will characterize its policy in the future. No one can foresee what action may be wise or necessary on the numerous alternatives and exigencies which the times are so likely to present. This much, however, may be safely said; that at all times and in every emergency, it will stand up for the great principles of civil and religious liberty, as set forth in our present form of government—for our representative and judicial systems; for the plan of self-government through the ballot; for free speech and free press; for law and for order; for the just rights of the States, and above all and without faltering will it contend, with all the means it can command, for the Union of all the States as it was, and the Constitution with only such modifications as may be necessary to make that Union more perfect and permanent.

As for myself, notwithstanding all that is past, my hope is still in the wisdom and sense of justice not yet extinguished in the popular heart. For relief I should now go where I sought to go before the bloody strife began—to the hearts of the people. I would take their advice as to proper terms of settlement and peace, preparatory to the ratification of such terms under the forms of the Constitution. I am, and ever have been, and shall be, for the Union, and shall never voluntarily yield it.—Gloomy as the future seems, I have still hope that, with wiser counsels, and the beneficent smiles of Him who directs the destiny of nations, the government and the Union may be saved. Let us hope for this and pray for this. Possibly the ordeal through which our government is now passing may fix its foundations still deeper and firmer, and leave its blessings to unborn generations.



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