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T O
HON. REVERDY JOHNSON,
O N T H E
Proceedings at the Meeting,
H E L D A T
Maryland Institute, January 10th, 1861.

BALTIMORE, January 11th, 1861.

To the Hon. Reverdy Johnson:

My Dear Sir:—These are perilous times, and, among others of our distinguished and respected citizens, you have assumed to offer your advice in regard to them. This is proper, and but a part discharge of the duty which you owe to the State of your birth. As one of your fellow-citizens I have, in common with thousands of others of them, to regret in what you had to say last night at the meeting at the Maryland Institute there was no plan for the composing of our difficulties suggested by yourself. You seem on that occasion, judging from the published report of your speech, to have fallen into the worn-out road of mere eulogy on the value of the Union, without in any manner, proposing any mode by which it can be reconstructed, it having been already disrupted. Entertaining for you a sincere respect, indeed, I may say a warm and habitual personal attachment, and having the utmost confidence in your love of your State, I deeply regret that you did not on that important occasion, which you are capable of doing, lift yourself above the mere rhetoric of the ordinary political declaimer and point out some plan of reconciliation for the adoption of those who value the CONSTITUTION which made the UNION. I also regret, that before you undertook to enlighten your fellow-citizens as to the history of the country you had not better qualified yourself for the task, by refreshing your memory by a reperusal of it. It is my purpose in this communication to recall to your recollection a few memorable facts which appear to have entirely escaped it. In doing this, my only purpose is,—in the hope that its fulfillment may do good in this trying crisis—to show that the conduct recommended in the speeches delivered at the meeting to which I have referred, is almost identical with that pursued by the adherents of the Crown in the days of the revolution, and in direct opposition to that of the whigs of that period.

In the eulogium which you thought proper to deliver on Massachusetts you say, and truly, that in the great struggle for independence the first blow was struck in that State. But you also say, that "*the bones of her citizens almost literally whitened the soil of every State, and the stripes and stars when in their hands were ever the certain pledge of victory or death.*" I suppose you mean by this statement to convey the idea, that her sons have

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fallen in the contests for freedom and independence waged on the soil of almost all the States. If you do, then, sir, you are entirely without authority for the declaration. There is *no* history that gives the *slightest* warrant for the assertion. On the contrary, all history,—as is the fact,—testifies that, not even a single company of soldiers ever left Massachusetts, or any of the other New England States, to fight the battles waged for independence on Southern soil. None of them ever proceeded farther South, in the great struggle of the Revolution, than Long Island, and even there, they were saved from utter destruction by the steadiness, skill and courage of the “old Maryland Line,” under the command of Genl. Smallwood. The shame of treason, in the war of 1812, is indelibly stamped upon her forehead. You, sir, are old enough to recollect that, during the last war with Great Britain she refused to allow her troops to go beyond her own territorial limits, and that in her bosom was hatched the treasonable project, (treasonable because during war,) of separating the New England States from the rest of the confederacy and *re-uniting them with old England*. Moreover, that on the occasion of the annexation of that Texas which she is now so anxious to compel by force to remain in the Union, by her Legislature declared such annexation *ipso facto* dissolved the Union, and that Massachusetts was from that day out of the Union. All this, sir, you ought to have known: and if you did know it, your eulogium of her at the expense of gallant States—you must pardon me for saying it—is wholly unjustifiable.

Mere clap-trap declarations are to be expected from the designing and weak, but are unbecoming a man of your gravity and well-established character for sound sense and patriotism. We ought not to be surprised that knaves who wish, for their own selfish purpose to mislead others less informed than themselves, or, that simpletons, who are incapable of understanding the importance of the principles involved in the present controversy, should indulge in frivolous objections to the present attitude of some of the Southern States; but, when a similar line of policy is adopted by those to whom we have a right to look for counsel and direction in times of difficulty, we cannot but feel mortification and pain.

The meeting at which you performed your part has been held, and those who composed it are again dispersed among their fellow-citizens. I beg to inquire of you, sir, how it tended, in any way, to settle the present difficulties? It suggested no plan of adjustment. It neither recommended negotiation with, or the forcible coercion of the seceding States. I defy any man, after he shall have read with the greatest care the proceedings, to say what it is the meeting wished to have done. *Parturient montes, nascitur ridiculus mus*. True, it is, they distinctly enough declare devotion to the Union. But, the integrity of the Union has not only been threatened, but its ligaments have already been torn asunder and war declared, if, indeed, the slaughter has not actually begun.

What said the meeting on the all-important question, whether, with their consent and approval, *Southern cities should be demolished and conflagrated, and Southern homes made desolate by the slaughter of fathers, and of brothers, their natural protectors!*

Nothing! absolutely nothing! So far from there being any expression of a tender solicitude for, or the exhibition of a sympathetic apprehension for the safety of Southern fathers, of Southern matrons, maids and children, there was, touching these matters, a silence as profound as that of an Egyptian mummy. Unless, sir, I have greatly mistaken both your head and heart, you cannot coolly and approvingly contemplate the massacre of our countrymen and the desolation of their firesides. And yet, your presence at, and participation in the proceedings of such a meeting, will be joyously hailed by every northern fanatic as another pledge given for the humiliation and *subjugation* of your southern brethren. If these people understand at all any part of the teachings of Jesus, it is His saying, that he who is not for us is against us; and rest assured, sir, that however contrary the fact may be, and however repugnant to your real sentiments it may be, your indorsation of the stereotyped resolutions of the meeting, as a *panacea* for the distressing ills which afflict the country, will procure for you the approbation of the most rabid republican in the land. The "Republican" party, swollen with the consciousness of power, for the first time by them possessed, insolently scorn all thoughts of conciliation and peace, and in their arrogant demonstrations of warlike purposes, confidently point to those in the South who think they fulfill their whole duty to the common weal, and establish their claim to statesmanship, by joining in pens to the Union, as part and portion of the Hosts which are to subdue, into slavish submission, any southern State whose people are old-fashioned enough to think CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTY has a real and substantial value.

This delusion, on their part, is the real and only difficulty in the way of a speedy and satisfactory adjustment. And it grieves me, sir, to know, that instead of the meeting at the Institute contributing in any wise to dispel the infatuation of these people, if it have any *practicable* effect at all, it will be to strengthen into conviction their present belief, that the people of Maryland are with the North, and not with the South, and that as against the latter, they are ready to co-operate with the North in compelling, at the expense of both blood and treasure, a submission of the South to the yoke of a galling servitude.

A most lamentable fatality appears to characterize, at this time, everything done by those in authority in Maryland. It was but the other day, in a manifesto issued by the Hon. Henry Winter Davis to the voters of the fourth congressional district, that the ground was taken that Maryland had suffered no wrong at the hands of the North! Has Mr. Davis forgotten the murder, at the very portals of the halls of justice, of Mr. Kennedy, of Washington county, by a Pennsylvania mob, because, and for

no other reason, that he was in that State looking after a runaway. Had the horrid details of the brutal murder, *under the very eyes of the Governor of Pennsylvania*, of Mr. Gorsuch, one of the most venerable of the citizens of Baltimore county, also escaped his recollection? Or, to speak of an event more recent, has his memory no trace of the case of Mr. Myers, of Carroll county, who was *decoyed* over the boundary line into Pennsylvania, tried for kidnapping, because he had reclaimed a runaway, convicted by an abolition jury, and who would now be in the penitentiary had not Governor Packer granted him a pardon? Such insensibility to the wrongs of Marylanders is in fit keeping with a proposition, *at this time*, from a representative of a *southern* constituency, to render their slave property of still less value, by requiring of them, after they shall have incurred the trouble, risk and cost of capture of a fugitive slave, to submit to the additional outlay, of a trial by jury, in the place whence he shall have escaped and to which he shall have been returned. This is demanding southern rights with a vengeance.

But, sir, my purpose in addressing you on this occasion is, to point out in some degree, the similarity of the acts occurring at the dawn of the Revolution with those of the present day.

And here let me remind you, sir, that although the first struggle in the Revolution was on the soil of Massachusetts, *that at that time neither Maryland, nor South Carolina* were joined in any union with her, nor were they under any *legal* obligation to assist her in her difficulties. Their commercial interests were in no way connected with hers, and they rested under no sense of favors bestowed by her, for she had bestowed none on either of them. Whatever aid, therefore, they extended to her in her time of need, proceeded from that generous appreciation of the conduct of those who were struggling for their rights which had been outraged by special legislation of the British Parliament. The interference of South Carolina in behalf of Massachusetts was manifestly against all her *pecuniary* interests; her interference was a pure, *unselfish* sacrifice, in the cause of human liberty.

When the tea, on which a duty had been imposed by Parliament, was brought into the port of Boston, it was thrown overboard by a portion of its merchants and other people, *disguised* as Indians. The contemporary history of the event also informs us, that nearly all, if not entirely all, of the merchants supposed to have participated in this *daring* achievement very soon thereafter "clandestinely" signed a petition, asking that they should not be punished for the act, and promising to pay the value of the tea, with the objectionable duty added. In the lapse of time, this performance has come to be considered, in all Plymouth Rock celebrations, as a wonderful affair, and when alluded to in a speech, never fails to add to the self-sufficiency of all genuine Bostonians. South Carolina, *at the time* it occurred, supposed the act to be one of heroism and sacrifice,

and, accordingly, her magnanimous soul was moved to active sympathy for those who had performed it. She sent forth to Massachusetts, rice and other necessaries of life to sustain her in her need. She is repaid for her sympathy *then*, by Massachusetts urging, the devastation of her hospitable homes and the massacre of her people *now*!

You are, sir, I believe, a native of the ancient city of Annapolis. Into that place, in the year 1774, a vessel—the Peggy Stewart—brought a large quantity of tea “on which the owners of the vessel made haste to pay the duty.” How, sir, did the people of that day treat this act of submission? Recollect, sir, this was nearly two years *before* the Declaration of Independence had been made. The people regarded the act of the owners of the vessel, as likely to call in question the fidelity and honor of the Province; and *without disguising* themselves as Indians as was the case in Massachusetts, they compelled the owners of the vessel to ask forgiveness in the most humiliating language; nor did their resentment stop there; the penitent owners were required to go on board of the vessel, and, whilst her sails and colors were flying, in the presence of a large multitude, they themselves set fire to the packages of tea, all which, together with the vessel and every appurtenance thereof, was consumed. The manner in which was performed the two acts of burning the tea, illustrates what at that time was the difference between the tempers of the people of Maryland and Massachusetts; the one, open and above-board, the other indirect and unreliable.

I am sure that if some of the “Union-savers” hereabouts, had been consulted on the occasion of the destruction of the Peggy Stewart, they would have advised a “masterly inactivity,” and talked long and dolefully, of the power of Great Britain just as they do now, of the wonderful length of the border line of our State; but enough, for the present, of this.

Of one thing there can be no doubt, and that is, that South Carolina has spoken in plain language, and in this particular, if in none other, her convention resembles the great congress of the colonies of 1774. At that time there were, as there ever will be, obstinate and short-sighted persons in authority, who could not see where laid the real cause of grievance of the colonies, and who thought the repeal of the stamp act would remove all cause of complaint, just as we have among us persons who think the repeal of the so-called personal liberty bills ought to satisfy the South. But CHATHAM lived in that day, and he clearly foresaw and predicted, that if the work of coercion was persevered in, the Crown would lose its brightest jewel. His counsels were disregarded, but his prediction was, to the everlasting regret and chagrin of his contemners, verified. His words on that occasion ought to be carefully weighed *now*, by those who so inconsiderately urge war on the people of the South. Speaking of the demand of the colonies, he said: “They do not ask you to repeal your laws as a *favor*; they

claim it as a *right*, they demand it. They tell you they will not submit to them: and I tell you the acts must be repealed. But repeal will not satisfy this enlightened, spirited people. It is not repealing this or that act of parliament: not the annihilation of a few shreds of parchment, that can restore America to your bosom. *You must repeal her fears and resentments*, and you may then hope for her love and gratitude." The advice of this great man was unheeded, and whilst, to use the language of Burke, "the western horizon yet blazed with his descending glory," ships and armies were sent to subjugate the colonies, just as is now proposed to be done in the case of South Carolina and other seceding States.

South Carolina is now menaced by a military force in her harbor, and rash men clamor for its immediate and large increase, apparently regardless of the disastrous consequences which must inevitably follow such a proceeding.

What was the language of that modern Solomon and pure patriot, Benjamin Franklin, when asked by Lord Howe as to the propriety of keeping a military force in the presence of Boston during the period of her discontent? I ask you to ponder it well. "The army at Boston," said Franklin, who saw the imminent hazard of bloodshed, "*cannot possibly answer any good purpose, and may be mischievous. No accommodation can be properly entered into by the Americans, while the bayonet is at their breast. To have an agreement binding, all force should be withdrawn.*"

The case of Charleston now, is almost identical in its circumstances with that of Boston in 1774. A ministry, bloated with pride and arrogance of power, turned a deaf ear to his counsel of wisdom; and, I much fear, unless persons of influence like yourself, endeavor to prevent it, our Federal authorities will follow the bad example set them by that headstrong and unwise government. Nothing but the stern reality convinced the British ministry that the feeble, and as they foolishly supposed, cowardly people of the colonies, could successfully resist the colossal power of England. Indeed, even among the colonists were to be found those, whose fears subdued their judgments, and cooled the ardor of their patriotism. It was asked, with an air of confidence, by some of them—"Are we ready for war? Are we a military people? Where are our stores, our soldiers, our generals, our money? We are defenceless; yet we talk of war against one of the most formidable nations in the world. It will be time enough to resort to measures of despair when every well-founded hope has vanished."

It was for that "King among men," Patrick Henry, to answer questions like these, and he did answer them as became the perils of the occasion, and the inspiration of his own great nature. "They tell us," said he, "that we are weak: but shall we gather strength by irresolution? We are not weak. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country,

are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. We shall not fight alone. A just God presides over the destinies of nations; and will raise up friends for us. The battle is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave." What was the result? A just God did raise up armies for them. Then but three millions were in the whole country, while now, more than three times that number are in the Southern States, and among them hundreds and thousands of tested and approved proficiency in military science. Think you, sir, that such a people can be subjugated. As in the revolution, their fields may be devastated, their houses given to the devouring flames, and themselves driven to the swamps for shelter, but mistake it not, for as sure as there is a God in heaven, they will reappear in triumph under other Marion's, Sumter's and Pickens' to whom their sufferings will give rise. Whole hecatombs of lives may be sacrificed in the mad and wicked attempt to crush the South; but never will that gallant people bow their necks to receive the badge of seridom. The only harvest to be reaped from a ruthless war on our brethren will be one of death, ill-will, discomfiture, and everlasting shame and dishonor. Unless all history be delusive in its teachings, this will be so.

If we are to judge by the doings at Washington, the CONSTITUTION, which ought to be the *supreme law* of the land, seems to have been rudely pushed aside, and in its stead has been erected an irresponsible MILITARY DESPOTISM, claiming the right to declare and wage war. If the people North, South, East or West, tamely submit to such an overthrow of the Constitution, they will no longer be worthy of the name of freemen.

And how is Maryland behaving under this accumulation of evils? We are told to wait and watch; to do nothing at present. For a long time we were urged to follow the *lead* of Virginia. Well, Virginia is speaking, and with an *unanimity* and force that shows the fires of patriotism have not died out in the Old Dominion. But how was it in the times of the Revolution? Did Maryland wait on Virginia? No, sir, not at all. In regard to the proposed Congress of 1774, we are told by history, "that so universal was the zeal of her people, so rapid their organization, that their provincial convention met in Annapolis on the twenty-second of June, and before any message had been received from Salem, they elected delegates to the Congress. With a modesty worthy of their courage, they apologized to Virginia *for moving in advance*; pleading as their excuse the inferiority of their province in extent and numbers, so that less time was needed to ascertain its sentiments." And when, as is the case now, the then Governor refused to co-operate with the people, "they invited a voluntary offering, to the amount of ten thousand pounds, for the purchase of arms and ammunition: and taking the sword out of the hands of the Governor, they elected their own officers to defend Massachusetts and themselves." Let the conduct of Marylanders of that day be contrasted with that

of those of this. Look upon that picture, and then upon this. Hyperion to a Satyr. If Maryland is to exercise any influence whatever in restoring the Union, or in determining its destiny, she must speak and act; and she can do neither effectively, unless her people be organized under the forms of law, either in the Legislature or in sovereign convention. Although the task would be a very easy one, I have not thought it worth while to show, by reference to the history of the formation and adoption of the federal constitution, how utterly opposed your expressed views are to those of its framers and ablest advocates. But, in my opinion, any further discussion *at this late day*, of the mere abstract right of secession, would be just about as productive of any useful purpose, as would be the discussion of the right of the American colonies in 1776 to secede, as they did, from a union with the mother country. The undeniable *fact* is, that several States *have* seceded, and it is equally certain that, in a few days, others of them will do likewise.

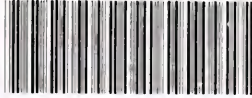
Let me, my dear sir, by that love which you cherish for the Union founded by our fathers, and your devotion to constitutional liberty, adjure you to employ, earnestly and at once, all your powers, to induce the federal government to withdraw its forces from the waters of South Carolina, and to commence the work of negotiation and reconciliation. Her people are our kith and kin—"all of one nature, of one substance bred"—and should not be dealt with as though they were aliens and enemies. And, if it be found on a fair experiment that we cannot live in friendship with each other, then, let us agree to part in peace. Let us not be unmindful that much of that renown and glory of which we are justly so proud, is due to the valor, patriotism, and wisdom of the sons of Carolina, exhibited in every era of our political existence. History has taken note of the fact, and no ebullition of passion can wipe out the record. The advice of FRANKLIN should be now followed by the President. It is exactly adapted to the present emergency. His declaration will be found as true and as full of wisdom now, as it was when made:—"No accommodation can be properly entered into while the bayonet is at the breast. To have an agreement binding, all force should be withdrawn." He who claims to be wiser or more patriotic than Franklin, may scoff at the suggestion, but you, I am sure, will give to it the consideration to which it justly entitled. I have written hastily, but at the same time feeling as ardent a love for the *Union*, and its preservation *under the Constitution* as you or any other Marylander.

With sincere esteem, I am,

Your friend and serv't,

JOHN C. LEGRAND.

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