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SPEECH

OF

HON. ALFRED ELY,

OF NEW YORK,

DELIVERED IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 18TH, 1861.

25114

The House having under consideration the Report of the Select Committee of Thirty-three—

Mr. ELY said:

Mr. SPEAKER: We have passed the threshold of a momentous era in the history of this country, and are now standing in the presence of events that will cast their shadows upon our future for all coming time. Every man, however humble or obscure, upon whom is devolved the duty of casting a vote that may tend to give shape and color to these events, should feel that a grave responsibility is resting upon him. In the midst of a crisis, upon which depends nothing less than the future existence of the noblest and most beneficent government ever instituted by man, ordinary party issues dwindle into insignificance. I shall not, therefore, in what I have to say, review the issues of the late presidential contest, but endeavor to address myself to the consideration of questions which, by the rapid progress of events within the last ninety days, have been placed in the foreground of our political landscape.

The present condition of our country demands of us a careful and candid examination of the nature of that political structure which we call our Federal Government, and of the duties and obligations which it imposes upon its citizens.

The great mistake under which one portion of our people appear to be laboring is, that they fail to perceive that the General Government, within its sphere, is as much a unity as the government of Massachusetts or South Carolina—of England or of Russia. They seem to forget that we are not still living under the old Confederation; and to regard the General Government as though it were still dependent for the enforcement of its decrees upon Executive machinery of the States. The fact is, that we are not living under a confederation at all; but under a central government, limited in its powers, it is true, but within its legitimate sphere, having the same absolute right to execute its functions that a State government has within its sphere; a government which acts directly upon individual citizens, and not upon States, and is provided with all the machinery for enforcing obedience to its authority and its laws.

"All former confederate governments," says a distinguished foreign writer on American institutions, "presided over communities; but that of the Union rules individuals; its force is not borrowed, but self-derived; and it is served by its own civil and military officers, by its own army and its own courts of justice."

The General Government does not demand its supplies at the hands of the State governments. Congress has, in the language of the Constitution, "power to levy and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises."

The General Government does not call upon the States to assist in executing the laws of Congress. It has its own courts of justice, and its own ministerial and executive officers. It does not call on the State governments to deliver up offenders against its laws, but it puts forth its own hand, and seizes and punishes them without so much as saying "by your leave" to the State governments. The power of the courts of the United States to act on individual citizens of the several States, constitutes a principal difference between our Government and the confederations proper which have existed in the Old World. They have too often been formed by independent states that had no honest intention of

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obeying the central government; and which, while they readily gave up the nominal right of command to the federal head, cautiously reserved the power of non-compliance to themselves. History calls to us, from the fate of such confederations, to take warning. I might multiply proofs that ours is a government of the people, and not of the States. But I will only refer to the emphatic declaration in the preamble to the Constitution itself: "We, the people of the United States, do ordain and establish this Constitution."

Another mistake is, that some of us have come to imagine, of late years, that the line of "Mason and Dixon," familiarly so called, divides the nation into two rival sections; and that we must contrive in some way to keep these sections equal in regard to population and political power. This, however, is impossible. The Constitution knows nothing of sections. At the time it was adopted, the people of no section thought of asking guaranties that no other section should outstrip them in the race of population, or in the contest for political power dependent thereon, as it must be in a popular government. This idea of preserving the political equality of sections is an insidious and dangerous one. Every man in this country is a citizen of the United States, and to that government he owes allegiance. He has certain duties to perform also with reference to his State government; but he owes no allegiance to any "section." I, sir, owe allegiance to the United States and the State of New York, but none to "the North." The citizen of South Carolina owes allegiance to the General Government, and to his own State government, but none to "the South." Our Government is neither a compact between States, nor a league between sections. We are one nation and one people.

From the adoption of the Constitution to the present time, that section of the Union now complaining of its waning power, has controlled the policy of the General Government. It has furnished the Chief Magistrate for forty-nine out of seventy-two years, and the few northern men who have filled that office, with two or three exceptions, have owed their elections mainly to southern votes. By the aid of a minority of the northern Representatives, acting in concert with them, they have had almost uninterrupted control of both branches of Congress. The Supreme Court has been so constituted, that the South has always had a majority of the judges. Ever since southern statesmen began to regard slavery as an element of political power, the General Government has been made an active agent in extending and spreading it.

Notwithstanding all this, the Union is now to be dissolved, on the ground that it has proved intolerably oppressive to southern rights and southern interests. Six States have already revolted; renounced their allegiance to the Federal Government, and are now in open rebellion against it, upon the plea that the rights of slaveholders cannot be maintained, nor their interests protected in the Union. And we of the North, are called upon to save the Union, by making concessions and giving new guaranties to the South. Concessions are not now demanded, it is true, by those States which stand in open rebellion against the Government, for they ask no compromises, and will accept none. But they are demanded by other States, which have not yet actually joined in the rebellious movement, but threaten to do so, unless concessions are speedily made. I do not say that all the people of the South, or all their Representatives, make the granting of concessions by the North a condition of continued fidelity to the Union. On the contrary, it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge, that some southern representatives, while eloquently pleading on this floor for concessions to conciliate the feelings of their people, have nobly proclaimed their determination to stand firmly by the Union and the Constitution, as our fathers made them, whether their requests are granted or refused. To such gentlemen I can listen with the most respectful attention. To such appeals I feel like yielding anything that can be yielded, without a sacrifice of principle.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure I do not misinterpret public sentiment at the North, when I say that our people are ready to redress any real grievances of our southern brethren, if satisfied of their existence. They are willing to go further, and yield something to mere prejudice; something to quiet apprehensions which they know to be wholly groundless. But here the question arises, what can we concede that will have a tendency to settle existing difficulties? Many Republican members of this House have manifested a disposition to go to the extremest verge of their principles, to meet southern gentlemen on some compromise ground. Many southern Representatives profess, and no doubt feel an anxious desire for an amicable and honorable adjustment of the pending controversy. And yet, the most yielding of our Republican friends have been unable to come

to an agreement with the most liberal of our southern brethren, upon any measure which they can give us a reasonable assurance will reconcile any one to the Union, who is threatening to renounce his allegiance to it under any contingency. And why? It is because the grievances of which the South complain, are so shadowy and unsubstantial that it is impossible to grasp them. It is because the leaders of this rebellious movement are actuated by a mad ambition, and not by a sense of wrong and oppression. It is because the people of the South are excited by imaginary dangers, founded upon the grossest misrepresentations of the principles and objects of the Republican party. Sir, it is extremely difficult to cure imaginary evils, or dispel imaginary dangers, by legislation.

Now, sir, what are the grievances, of which the South complains?

1st. They say the fugitive-slave law is violated, and its execution interrupted. This is not true to any considerable extent. Fugitive slaves are arrested in the free States, and taken back to their masters every day. It is exceptional cases only, of attempted rescue, that attract public attention. The present fugitive-slave law is certainly obnoxious to our people, but it has been more faithfully executed than any other law equally obnoxious, which ever had a place upon our statute books. The true way of securing its more faithful execution is to relieve it of its obnoxious features, and in this I will cheerfully concur.

Some of the northern States have passed personal liberty bills, which are said to be in derogation of the constitutional rights of the South. To this I reply in a word: if unconstitutional, they are void; and it is in the power of any citizen who feels himself aggrieved by them, to have their constitutionality tested in the United States courts. No State ought to pass unconstitutional laws, it is true; but inasmuch as they are void and harmless if unconstitutional, they afford but a lame and impotent justification for an attempt to break up the Union. These laws have been long in existence. If they constituted no cause for a dissolution of the Union under Democratic administrations, what has so suddenly aggravated their enormity now that a Republican administration is about to be inaugurated? Besides, these laws were not enacted by Congress, and the General Government is not responsible for them. But so long as the Union remains, the power of the General Government may be invoked to defeat and render them harmless if they transcend the limits of the Constitution. But destroy the Union, and you not only lose this check upon the legislation of the free States to prevent the execution of the fugitive-slave law, but you lose the fugitive-slave law itself, and all pretence of authority to pursue your fugitives in the free States.

2d. It is alleged that the southern States are denied "equal rights in the Territories," and this is put forth as the "head and front of our offending." I shall not stop now to discuss the question whether, if you were actually excluded from taking your slaves into the territories, you would have any just right to complain. The fact is, you are not excluded. Never, since the foundation of this Government, have slaveholders had such unlimited privileges in the Territories as now. They have the full benefit of the Dred Scott decision, unversed and untrammelled by subsequent legislation. However erroneous Republicans may think that decision is, they have no power to compel the court to reverse it; no power to defeat or circumvent it by legislation. In a minority in both branches of Congress, we are at all events, for the present, powerless to disturb it. There is not a foot of territory now belonging to the United States to which this decision does not recognize your right to take your slaves, and not a foot south of 37 degrees north latitude, in which your right is not further guaranteed by stringent territorial legislation. As I have already said, never before was your right of taking your slaves to the Territories recognized by the General Government to such an unlimited extent. From the foundation of the Government slavery was excluded from all that great and fertile region lying northwest of the river Ohio, and east of the Mississippi. From 1820 until 1854, it has been excluded from all our Louisiana purchase north of the parallel of 36° 30'. But since the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, according to the decision of the Supreme Court, it is licensed to go everywhere in every rood of our territorial domain. The truth is, we own no territory anywhere to which you desire to emigrate with your slaves; hence no concession or guarantee of your right to take them into any Territory we now possess would be of the least practical utility to you. The only contest there ever has been in this country between freedom and slavery for supremacy in a Territory

was in Kansas, and that has long been settled. The settlement of that controversy has left nothing to contend about, because there has been no Territory to which you desired to take your slaves. How, then, are we to settle existing difficulties by conceding rights in the Territories of which you would not avail yourselves? If we propose to re-establish the Missouri Compromise line, and extend it through all our territorial possessions, will that satisfy you? No; it gives you less by half a degree than is secured to you now by the territorial law of New Mexico, to say nothing of the rights you claim under the decision of the Supreme Court. What more can we offer you? You will never take a slave north of that line into Nebraska, Utah, Washington, or Decotah, if we expressly concede your right so to do.

Will the admission of New Mexico as a State, as recommended by the committee of thirty-three, satisfy you? If I had any evidence that it would, I might consent to vote for the measure, strong as are my objections to it, on practical grounds. It may involve no sacrifice of Republican principle—I do not think it does. But the people of that Territory are wholly unprepared to assume the duties and responsibilities of a sovereign State, and do not even desire to assume them. These objections to the expediency of the measure I cannot waive without some better assurances than I have yet received that it will satisfy somebody, and have some tendency to arrest the march of rebellion.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that no overture that has yet been made, short of the "Crittenden proposition," has received the least favor from any body threatening to secede, is evidence of the shadowy and unsubstantial nature of the complaints upon which the secession movement is based. And what is it in that proposition, that commends it to secessionists? It is that by an *irrevocable* article of the Constitution, it proposes to recognize, establish and protect slavery in all the territory we may ever acquire, for all coming time, in the only direction in which we ever can expand. It is that it prospectively establishes slavery in *foreign* territory, which we do not own, and have no right to assume that we ever will own. This fact, that nothing short of a transfer of the slavery question to *foreign* territory will satisfy seceders, or those inclined to secede, proves that they have no real ground of complaint as to the territory we now possess.

If nothing short of such a concession as this will save the Union, then, indeed, is the case hopeless. The proposition is infinitely worse than the Breckinridge platform—worse than the proposition which the northern democracy at Charleston and at Baltimore chose rather to break up their party than accept. It is worse, inasmuch as it proposes to incorporate into the *Constitution*, as an *irrepectable* article, precisely the same principle which the Northern democracy refused to incorporate in a *party platform* merely. And it is worse in the still more important feature, of applying to territory hereafter to be acquired, as well as to that which we now have. But for the character of the distinguished statesman who was induced to stand god-father to this monstrous proposition, I could not believe that it was offered for any other purpose but as an insult to Republicans.

3d. Again, the South complains that public sentiment in the northern States is becoming more and more opposed to slavery; and upon this assumption is based an apprehension, that the North may in process of time become strong enough to amend the Constitution so as to enable the General Government to interfere with slavery in the States.

Mr. Speaker, so far as public sentiment is concerned, it will be found extremely difficult to regulate and control it by constitutional amendments. But so long as that public sentiment does not manifest itself in overt acts of aggression against the rights of their neighbors, what cause have they to complain? There are many things which the strongest government on earth cannot do. To control the consciences and opinions of men is one of these things.

It is true that our people do not love or respect the institution of slavery. They believe, with Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison, that it is morally wrong—unjust and oppressive to the enslaved race. They know that it is deleterious to the welfare of the dominant race, wherever it prevails. They know that it degrades, debases and impoverishes the laboring white man, while it renders the wealthy proprietor imperious, arrogant, and impatient of the salutary restraints of government and law. Of this they have had emphatic evidence in the events of the last few months—events that certainly do not tend to increase their respect for the institution. This is no new phase of public sentiment at the North. From the foundation of the Government the northern people always have been opposed to slavery—they always will be opposed to it. If the South

regards this as an evil, it is one for which, in the nature of things, there can be no remedy. It is at least as harmless to them in the Union, as out of it.

But while the conscience, the sentiment and the judgment of the northern people have always condemned slavery, they have never proposed to interfere with it in States where it exists. On the contrary, they have uniformly disclaimed any right, intention or desire so to do. I think it may be safely assumed, that this doctrine that the slave States have the exclusive right to manage and control the institution of slavery within their own limits, is more universally recognized throughout the northern States at this time, than during any former period of our history. The thorough discussion which the slavery question, as a political topic, has undergone within a few years past, has had a tendency to enlighten the minds of the people on this point, and produce almost entire unanimity of opinion. The most radical abolitionist will now scarcely venture to dissent from the proposition. Only a few days ago every Republican Representative on this floor recorded his vote in favor of a resolution emphatically affirming this doctrine, and disclaiming, on the part of his constituents, any intention or desire to interfere with slavery in the States.

But we are told that we are not sincere, and that we would, if we had the power, abolish slavery in the States. To guard against such a contingency, the committee of thirty-three have proposed an amendment to the Constitution. Translating its ambiguous phrases into plain English, this proposed amendment provides, that *no amendment of the Constitution having for its object any interference within the States, with the relation of master and slave, shall originate with any free State, or shall be valid without the assent of every one of the States composing this Union.*

Is it really apprehended that the people of the free States may amend the Constitution in the point which it is here proposed to guard? Let us see how imminent this danger is? To ratify any amendment of the Constitution, three-fourths of the States must concur. There are now fifteen slave States, and if there never should be another one added to the Union, we must have forty-five free States, or sixty States in all, before we can amend the Constitution in accordance with these groundless fears. Look upon the map, and where do you find the Territory for the formation of twenty-six new States, even if we should stretch out our arms, and grasp all that lies between us and the Isthmus of Panama?

Mr. Speaker, when we adopt the principle that any part of the Constitution is to be made perpetually unchangeable, we advance, at a single step, a long way on the road to despotism. It is a principle full of danger to the liberties of the people. I acknowledge the force of the argument advanced by the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. ADAMS,] that the local institutions of a State ought not to be changed without the consent of its own citizens. But is the institution of slavery so peculiarly sacred, that no one not interested in it shall even *propose* an amendment to the Constitution affecting it? Shall we hedge it round with guards and guaranties that we withhold from all other institutions? The proposition comes more than a century too late. It shall never be said of me, that I voted to deprive the people of the State of New York of the right of proposing such amendments to the Constitution as they may deem proper. I will never fail to raise my voice and cast my vote against such a dangerous measure—never, never.

It is said that the people of the South really entertain apprehensions that the Republicans are about to commit some monstrous outrage upon their rights, and therefore we ought to give them some constitutional guaranty that we will not do what we have never proposed to do—what we have always disclaimed any intention or desire to do, and what, in fact, we have no power to do, under the Constitution as it is. Who is responsible for these groundless apprehensions? Who but unscrupulous political leaders at the South, who have wilfully misrepresented our principles and our purposes to their people? Knowing that we have no power to interfere with slavery under the Constitution, if they have succeeded in creating a belief among their ignorant masses, white and black, that we would abolish slavery as soon as we came into power, would any constitutional guaranties that we could now give disabuse their minds of this error? If from your own misrepresentations your slaves have received a vague impression, that with the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln the day of their deliverance would begin to dawn, we are not responsible, and no concessions that we can make will remove that impression. You have “sown the wind,” and if com-

pelled to "reap the whirlwind," the fault is not ours, and the remedy is not in our hands. You may do something to remedy the false impressions which your own unfounded and indiscreet statements have produced, by retracting them and conceding their injustice; by telling your people that Mr. Lincoln is a law-abiding man, who will scrupulously respect all your constitutional rights, without in the remotest manner interfering with the relation of master and slave in your midst, and not a "John Brown Abolitionist;" that Mr. Hamlin is a *white man*, and not a "free negro," or a "mulatto," as some of your leaders have alleged. You can do still more to allay these groundless fears, by quietly submitting, like good citizens, to the administration of Mr. Lincoln, until time and experience shall demonstrate the falsity of the charges that you have industriously circulated against him and his party among your people.

Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied with the Constitution as it is. I do not say that it is perfect—no mere work of human hands can be. But I am opposed to tinkering with it, especially in these exciting times. If it is ever to be revised and remodeled, it should be when the public mind is calm, and in a mood for deliberation—not when excitement and passion rule the hour.

But if the door is to be thrown open to constitutional amendments, are additional guards to be thrown around no other rights or interests than those pertaining to slavery? Are no other institutions in peril than the peculiar institution of the South? Sir, that great institution which is the parent and protector of all our institutions—the Government itself—is in imminent peril. It is in peril from a construction put upon the Constitution by the Southern States—a purely "sectional" construction—which is now working out its pernicious results in disrupting the bands of the Union. If the Constitution is to be amended so as to guard the perpetuity of southern institutions against remote and improbable dangers, I insist that it shall at the same time be so amended as to guard the perpetuity of the Government itself against this ruinous heresy of secession. It is idle to patch up a Constitution which binds nobody. If we are to amend that instrument, therefore, let us begin by expressly giving it some binding force, which the South now denies to it. Before we make any concessions to States which have seceded, or are threatening to secede, by way of constitutional modifications, let us at least demand from them an acknowledgment and a guaranty that it imposes upon them obligations which they cannot throw off at pleasure.

Sir, if this rebellion at the South were based upon any real grievances inflicted upon that section by the General Government, or the Northern States, I should have high hopes of its speedy settlement; for I believe that the people of the North would hasten to redress them. God forbid that I should interpose any obstacle to the full and complete redress of any wrong, of which the people of the South have just cause to complain. Representing, as I do, in part, the great State of New York, with her three and a half millions of intelligent and enterprising citizens; with her vast and varied productions; her immense commerce, extending its ramifications to every State of this Union, and thereby giving to her a greater interest in its preservation than any other State, I should prove unworthy of the trust reposed in me, if I could withhold my consent to any just and honorable concession that would tend to avert the dangers now impending over us, and restore harmony to our distracted country. With the great Senator of that State, to whom all eyes have been turned in this hour of peril, I am in favor of conciliation, if you can point out any fair and honorable way of conciliating men who have no substantial ground of complaint.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is as much a feeling of pride and punctilio, as a sense of wrong or danger, that requires to be conciliated in the border slave States. Something may be conceded to feelings of this kind—and I do not abandon the hope that a ground of compromise may yet be discovered, upon which we may meet the people of those States, and stand together under the protection of the stars and stripes, without a feeling of wounded pride on the one side, or a sacrifice of principle on the other. Notwithstanding my objection to tampering with the Constitution in these times of excitement, I will not say but that I might consent to vote for submitting some amendment of that instrument to the people for their ratification or rejection, if I could see in that course a reasonable prospect of harmonizing our difficulties. But I think the most appropriate body to revise the Constitution, and propose amendments thereto, would be a convention of delegates elected by the people of all the States, expressly for that purpose. If we had power now to call such a convention, I would vote for



the measure if demanded by the people of any of the southern States, or if it would be accepted by them as a peace-offering. I have confidence in the wisdom and discretion of the people, and should not fear to commit the whole subject to their hands.

But, Mr. Speaker, while I would do anything that is just, and right, and honorable, to conciliate the discontented, I would at the same time maintain the honor, the dignity, and the integrity of the Government by enforcing its authority and the execution of its laws. I would not "coerce a State," in the true sense of that term, but I would coerce *citizens* to obey the laws and respect the rights of the Federal Government. Whatever else I conceded, I would never concede the right of any one to resist the laws and trample upon the authority of the Government with impunity.

Mr. Speaker, the policy of treating this rebellious movement with this kind of indulgence and "concession" has been tried by the present Executive; and what has been the result? The fullest license to resist the Federal law, trample upon the Federal authority, seize the Federal property, and insult the Federal flag, has been conceded by the Executive from the beginning of the movement. The result has been a progress unparalleled in the annals of revolution and rebellion. Never before has rebellion been treated with so much indulgence by any government. Never before did rebellion so thrive and flourish. Our Executive met it at the threshold with the theory that it was not to be opposed by force—that "coercion" was not to be resorted to. Union men at the South, with great unanimity, and many at the North, recommended and approved this policy; while those who doubted its wisdom had no power to counteract it. While the General Government has been quietly submitting to every indignity that could be hurled against it, gentlemen have been declaiming upon this floor against Federal coercion, as if that were the great evil of the times. Rebellious forces seize our forts, arsenals and magazines, our custom-houses, mints and depositories of public money; and yet professed Union men can see nothing so much to be dreaded and deprecated as coercion. If the Executive attempts to introduce a few additional soldiers and supplies into any fort on our southern coast, it is denounced as an act of "coercion." When the Government property in this capital, including its official archives, is boldly threatened with seizure, the concentration of a few Federal troops at this point is deprecated as an act of "coercion," to which even Union loving men at the South, it is said, will reluctantly submit.

Mr. Speaker, while I would not condemn the Executive for treating froward States with all reasonable forbearance, surely there is a point at which "forbearance ceases to be a virtue." I see little reason to hope that this rebellious movement will not continue to progress as it has progressed, until the Federal Government shall manifest some disposition and some power to assert and maintain its authority in the enforcement of its laws and the protection of its property. If there is not enough of virtue and patriotism in the people to sustain the constituted authorities in such a course, then, indeed, is our Government already broken up, and our boasted Union a myth and a delusion.

I do not think, Mr. Speaker, it would be wise or expedient for the General Government to interfere with the internal affairs of seceding States, so long as no portion of their citizens are invoking its aid or protection. But I think it is bound to defend the forts and collect the revenues in all their ports and harbors with a strong hand, leaving the damnable heresy of secession to work out its own condemnation among the people by the ruinous consequences it will surely bring upon them. Let this be done, and let it be understood that the Federal Government is ready and able to extend its protection to loyal citizens of the seceding States when they shall invoke it, and we may hopefully await the result. There are thousands of Union-loving men in those States, who are compelled for the time being to yield to an over-ruling necessity, and submit in silence to a reign of terror inexorable and supreme. By and by, when the heavy hand of oppression shall have laid its full weight upon them, when intolerable taxation shall have consumed their substance, when anarchy and confusion shall have destroyed all security of life and property, they will begin to yearn for that peace and prosperity which they enjoyed under the best Government ever devised by the wisdom of man. Then they will increase in numbers from a common sympathy in distress, and take courage from desperation. Then we may look for a counter revolution, which will hurl from power and consign to infamy the usurpers who now, clothed with a little brief and illegitimate authority, are leading them on to destruction.



Mr. Speaker, some gentlemen who are neither secessionists nor enemies of the Union, entertain the opinion that the safest and best solution of our difficulties will be found in a peaceful separation of the States of this Union. In my judgment this is a great delusion. You may agree to separate in peace to-day, and to-morrow the seeds of war and strife will begin to germinate. The causes which produce perpetual irritation while we remain together, will not be removed by separation, but will be intensified in a tenfold ratio, and soon become a fruitful source of actual violence and war. He who thinks that we can amicably arrange all our difficulties when our relations shall be changed to those of aliens and foreigners with respect to each other, has neither studied history or human nature to advantage. The invariable tendency with contiguous nations having no natural boundary between them, is to strife and war. When we superadd a difference of institutions and a conflict of interests difficult to harmonize under a common Government, this tendency must be greatly increased. Look at the history of England and Scotland. Until united by an accident, they were perpetually at war. Since that event they have been perpetually at peace. History teaches us that hostile nations have often been united for the purpose of putting an end to war and strife. But who ever heard of dividing a nation with a view of promoting peace and good will between the dis severed sections?

You charge that the members of the dominant party at the North are sympathizers with John Brown, and in their hearts approve of his insane and criminal raid to Virginia. If this be so; if the people of the North really approve of such invasions of your territory for the liberation of your slaves, it must be confessed that the Union, and the obligations it imposes, have had a powerful influence to restrain them. During its existence of seventy-two years there has been but this solitary instance of a northern man setting his foot upon your soil with any such purpose. If there is any truth in your charges, you must owe your security entirely to your political connection with us; to that Union and that Constitution which you are now madly threatening to disrupt and destroy.

While we utterly deny your charges in this respect, and assert that not one in a thousand of our people ever had the slightest disposition to interfere with your domestic institutions; that the great body of the northern people would cheerfully take up arms to defend you against lawless invasions from any quarter, so long as we remain fellow-citizens of the same nation and a common Government, we cannot answer for your security when you shall become aliens and foreigners. When the ties of political brotherhood shall have been broken, and the obligations imposed by the Federal laws swept away, no man can say how soon the groundless charges which you now make against our people may become fearful realities.

Our northern people are neither fanatics nor filibusters; but they are men of like passions with ourselves, and if you will persist in making them aliens, you will make them *alien enemies*. Divide this Union by Mason and Dixon's line, and when the causes of irritation which now disturb our harmony shall have culminated, as too soon they will, in open war, John Brown raids across the border, now abhorred by our people as criminal and treasonable, will become legitimate belligerent enterprizes. If these two sections of our Union should ever become separate and belligerent powers, (which God forbid!) it is no disparagement to your courage or your military prowess to say that you cannot withstand the hordes that will come down upon you from the populous North, to overturn your institutions by the power of the sword. As the Goth and Visigoth swarmed forth from the great northern hive to overrun all southern Europe, during the middle ages, so will the teeming millions of the North swarm forth to overrun your fair land, when that dreadful day shall come. God grant that it may never come! God grant that reason may resume her sway over the minds of men, now drunk with passion, and that with returning reason, they may return to their allegiance to the best Government that heaven ever vouchsafed to man! God grant that our glorious Union may yet be saved without the effusion of one drop of American blood, or the sacrifice of a single principle essential to render it a blessing to the people of every portion of your common country, and to their prosperity forever.



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