

Can we hope, in this day of fierce passion, that our voice, crying for peace, will be heard? Will any sketch of the horrors of civil war that we can give have any influence with those who are rushing on to destroy each other? We fear not. States which should have been with us, and whose voice would have increased the potency of our demands for peace, have been seized with the prevailing madness, and have rushed to arms. Still, we feel bound to make our voice to be heard, with the hope that our words will have some influence at some day when men shall behold the wasting and the desolation that their madness has produced.

All the slave states except four are arrayed in hostility to the general government and are demanding that the confederation, which they have formed, shall be recognized as a separate sovereign nation. The process by which they have attempted to form themselves into a distinct nation has been, for each state by itself, to declare all connection with the general government terminated, and then unite in forming a confederation among themselves.

Our present purpose does not require us to discuss the propriety of the acts of these states, yet it may be proper for us to say that they find no warrant in any known principle of our government, and no justification in the facts existing when they seceded.

While these states claim that their sovereignty as a nation shall be recognized, and have collected armies to make good their claim, the government of the United States insists that the ordinances of secession are utterly void, and that the Constitution and laws of the United States are still in force within the seceded states just as they are within any of the other states, and to maintain this position armies are rapidly gathering on the borders of the seceded states.

If there could be any intervention by which the shedding of blood and the desolation of civil war could be avoided, the practical good sense of the American people might discover some mode of adjusting the difficulties which would be alike honorable and beneficial to both the contending parties. But while one side demands the recognition of its sovereignty, and the other insists that such recognition is a constitutional impossibility, it is manifest that there can be no arbiter but the sword, unless the people themselves, acting upon and through their representatives, state and national, shall interpose, arrest the strife, and enforce a settlement without bloodshed. If any terms of adjustment would be satisfactory to both parties, which would fall short of the recognition of the sovereignty of the seceded states, and still satisfy them, and short of the obedience of the seceded states to the Constitution and laws of the United States, and still satisfy the people of the United States, it is the duty of each party to notify the other of such terms as would be satisfactory so that an attempt at adjustment might be made.

But we repeat, if the recognition of the sovereignty of the seceded states continue a *sine qua non*, and if the government continues to disclaim the constitutional power to make such recognition, there is no peaceful solution of the difficulty possible, other than such as the people themselves may, by their action, produce.

It is proper for us to say that, in our opinion, the Constitution delegates to no one department of the government, nor to all of them combined, the power to destroy the government itself, as would be done by the division of the country into separate confederacies, and that the obligation exists to maintain the Constitution of the United States, and to preserve the Union unimpaired.

It has been suggested, in quarters entitled to the highest respect, that the independence of the states which have seceded might be acknowledged by a national convention, adopting an amendment to the Constitution for that purpose, as such an amendment would have the support and acquiescence of the seceded states. But we leave that for the decision of the people and their representatives, when they shall feel the imperative necessity of such a settlement.

We now turn to the consideration of what ought to be done for the purpose of quieting apprehension within the few slave states which still adhere to the Union established by their fathers.

We ask no concession of new or additional rights. We do not fear any immediate encroachment upon our rights as slave states. The amendment to the Constitution, proposed by the last Congress, gives assurance that at present there is no danger that our rights will be assailed. But we are few in number, and the preponderance of the free states is continually increasing. The security to our rights now afforded by the sense of justice in the minds of the free states may be lost by a change of popular feeling in the future. One great object in constitutions is to protect the rights of minorities.

In the Constitution, there are general grants of power to the Congress of the United States, which might be perverted to our injury contrary to the spirit of the instrument, and still the letter of the grant be claimed to authorize the injurious legislation. Such are the power "to regulate commerce between the states," and the power of "exclusive legislation over the District of Columbia" and over "forts, dockyards and arsenals in the several states." It would not now be claimed by Congress that these grants authorized an interference in the sale of slaves between

the people of different states, nor would it be claimed that they authorized the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, while Maryland and Virginia remained slave states, nor the like abolition in forts and other places within slave states. But what will be claimed in the future, we cannot know. So, also, in relation to the territories belonging to the United States. While we are aware that all the territories, then unorganized, were organized by acts of the last Congress, which contain no prohibition of slavery, and while we know that this was the action of a Congress in which the free states had the control at the time the acts were passed, still these are but acts of Congress, subject to repeal or alteration as public feeling may change under temporary excitement.

It is but just that the rights of the slave states, now in a small minority of the whole states, should be guarded in the particulars mentioned by such constitutional guarantees as shall render them secure against future legislation in times of excitement. Our distinguished fellow citizen, Hon. John J. Crittenden, for the purpose of securing by constitutional guarantees rights already possessed, presented to Congress certain propositions to amend the Constitution, which met with general approval and were satisfactory to us and to our people, and those propositions, as originally offered, or any that are equivalent, would be now satisfactory and would quiet apprehensions that exist, to some extent, in the minds of real friends of the Union and of the people. Whether any such constitutional guarantees would have the effect of reconciling any of the seceded states to the government from which they have torn themselves away, we cannot say, but we allow ourselves to hope that the masses in those states will, in time, learn that the dangers they were made to fear were greatly exaggerated, and that they will then be disposed to listen to the calls of interest and of patriotism, and return to the family from which they have gone out. One effect of giving such guarantees, certainly, will be to prove to the world by the frank recognition of the rights of the few slave states adhering to the Union, that the states which have seceded have abandoned the best government in the world, without any good or sufficient cause.

It may be urged that there are not now a sufficient number of states acting in the Union to ratify any such constitutional amendments as will furnish the guarantees we require. But it is to be remembered that there is no time fixed by the Constitution for such ratification, and if they should be ratified by the free states, then at the end of the present civil war, terminate as it may, either in the restoration of the seceded states to the Union, or in the establishment of their separate national existence, there will be the number of states required for the ratification.

Fellow Citizens of the United States, you are about to be engaged in a war, in which the horrors that ordinarily attend that state are likely to be aggravated by the fact that you are of the same family and have long lived together in intimate intercourse and in friendly relations. The kind feelings that once existed have been changed to bitterness, soon to degenerate, it may be, into deadly animosity. We desire to remind you that you are contending about a question of principle upon which we would willingly believe that you are, on each side, convinced that you are right. It is no longer a question of party politics, no longer a question about the right to hold slaves in territories, or to retake them when they escape; the question now to be settled is, whether we shall live in the same Union as formerly, or whether our fathers formed a government upon such principles that any one state may, at her own pleasure, without the consent of the others, and without responsibility to any human power, withdraw from her connection with the government and claim to be sovereign as a separate nation. It will be readily seen that this, as a question of principle, is not affected by the number of states that have withdrawn. It would have been well if this question could have been solved in some other mode than by a resort to war, but it may be that nothing but a divine interposition now can determine it by other means. A war upon such a question ought not to produce any higher exasperation, or excite any greater degree of animosity, than is incident to all wars. In the meantime, let the spirit of humanity and of the high civilization of the age, strip this war of the horrors that generally attend such civil strife.

Our states desire, and have indicated a purpose to take no part in this war, and we believe that in this course, we will ultimately best serve the interests of our common country. It is impossible that we should be indifferent spectators; we consider that our interests would be irretrievably ruined by taking part in the conflict on the side where the strongest sympathies of our people are, and that our sense of honor and of duty requires that we should not allow ourselves to be drawn into a war in which other states, without consulting us, have deliberately chosen to involve themselves. Our safety and our dignity as among the most powerful of the slave states demand of us that we take this position.

If the time shall come when our friendly mediation may arrest the further progress of the strife, our most earnest and strenuous efforts shall not be wanted to bring about peace, and it is by such efforts that we hope to serve the interests of our country.

And now, in conclusion, we make our solemn appeal to the people of the United States. This is your government—its preservation is your preservation—its overthrow is your ruin, and you are the rightful arbiters of its fate.

We hope you will take the subject of this address into your own consideration. Act with the energy and decision of a free people. In you, and you alone, we have confidence. You have the intelligence and the power to rule this

fearful crisis. Make known your will in some emphatic form that shall give it authority with your representatives everywhere.

May we not earnestly hope that you, the people, the whole people, without regard to parties or sections, will be able to command a settlement of the national difficulties, and will see the propriety and necessity of having a cessation of present hostilities so that the measures of pacification, which your wisdom may devise, can be calmly considered by your constitutional authorities.

We venture to suggest for your consideration and action, two specific propositions as most likely to lead to pacification:

1. That Congress shall at once propose such constitutional amendments as will secure to slaveholders their legal rights and relieve their apprehensions in regard to possible encroachments in the future.

2. If this should fail to bring about the results so desirable to us and so essential to the best hopes of our country, then let a voluntary convention be called, composed of delegates from the people of all the states, in which measures of peaceable adjustment may be devised and adopted, and the nation rescued from the continued horrors and calamities of civil war.

To our fellow citizens of the North, we desire to say, discard that sectional and unfriendly spirit, manifested by teaching and action, which has contributed so much to inflame the feelings of the Southern people and justly create apprehension on their part of injury to them.

To our fellow citizens of the South, we desire to say: though we have been greatly injured by your precipitate action, we would not now reproach you as the cause of that injury, but we entreat you to reexamine the question of the necessity for such action, and if you find that it has been taken without due consideration, as we verily believe, and that the evils you apprehended from a continuance in the Union were neither so great nor so unavoidable as you supposed, or that Congress is willing to grant adequate securities, then we pray you to return promptly to your connection with us, that we may be, in the future, as we have been in the past, one great, powerful and prosperous nation.

Indications have already been afforded that a Divine power is ready to interpose and prevent brethren from slaughtering each other. While the bombardment at Fort Sumter continued, no life was lost. When a Providential interposition was no longer needed to prevent the effusion of blood in civil strife, several lives were lost in the performance of a mere ceremony. We would invoke the presence and aid of that Power to preserve our fellow citizens, on both sides, from slaughter, and we would commit the interests of our distracted country to His hands, who can bring forth peace and order out of strife and confusion, when man's wisdom utterly fails.

JOHN J. CRITTENDEN, of Kentucky, President.

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