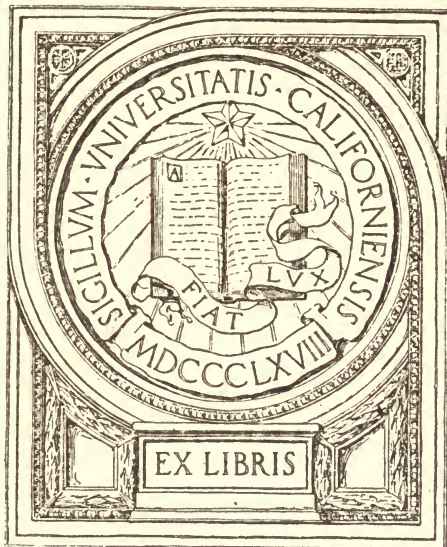
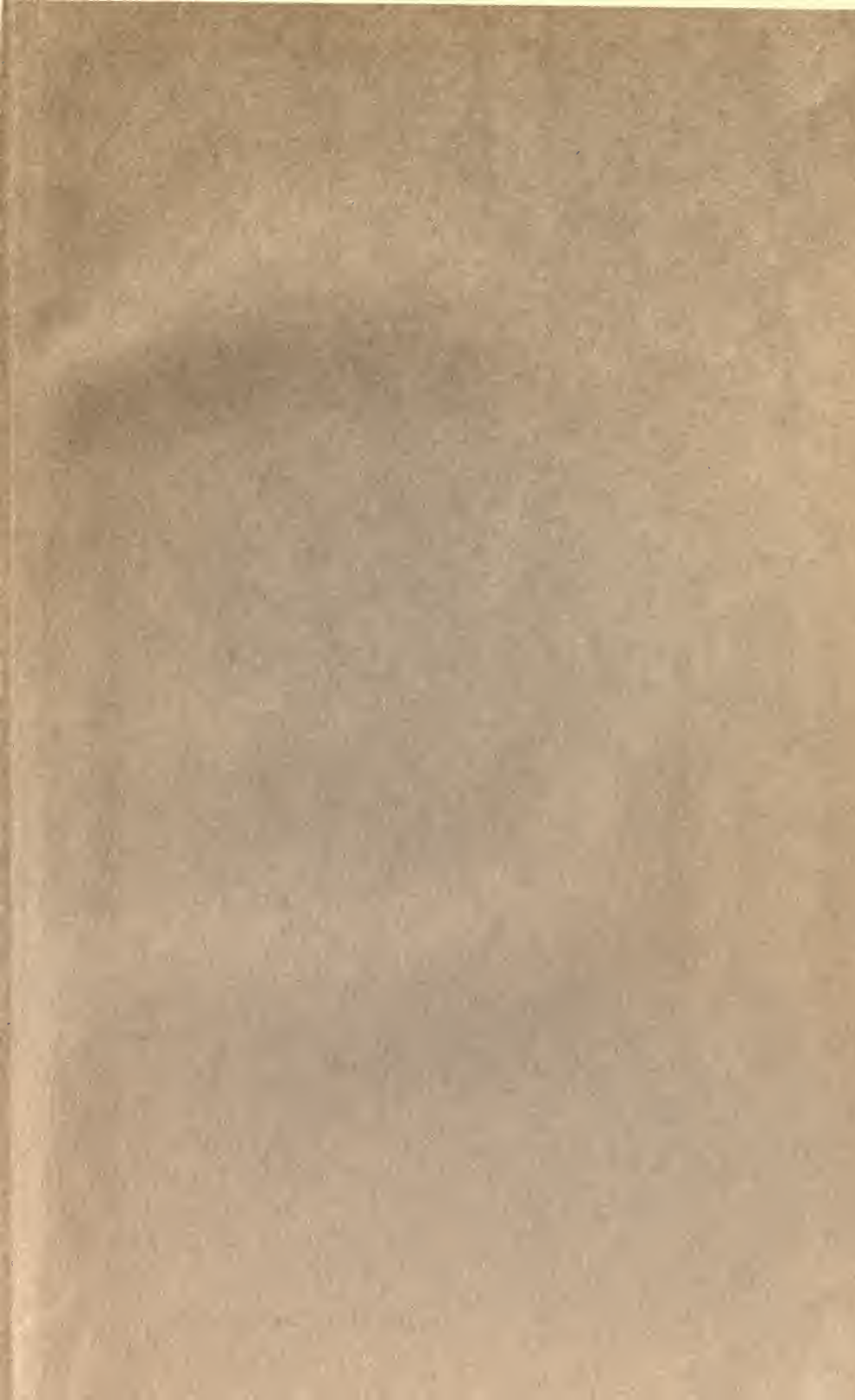




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JULY, 1918

Smith College Studies in History

JOHN SPENCER BASSETT
SIDNEY BRADSHAW FAY
Editors

NORTHERN OPINION OF APPROACHING
SECESSION

October, 1859–November, 1860

By LAWRENCE TYNDALE LOWREY

NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

Published Quarterly by the
Department of History of Smith College

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JOHN SPENCER BASSETT
SIDNEY BRADSHAW FAY

EDITORS

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
AFTER THE JOHN BROWN RAID.....	191
CHAPTER II	
RESPONSIBILITY FOR JOHN BROWN RAID AND FOR SOUTHERN SECESSIONISM	213
CHAPTER III	
THE POLITICAL CONVENTION OF 1860: A BREACH IN THE DEMOCRATIC RANKS	228
CHAPTER IV	
BEFORE THE ELECTION OF LINCOLN.....	242

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The four chapters included herein cover only the period from the John Brown raid through the presidential election of 1860. These are to be the opening chapters of a longer work—*Northern Justification of Secession, from the John Brown Raid to the Fall of Fort Sumter*—which I am preparing as a doctoral dissertation in Columbia University. My use of the word “Northern” in the title is not precise, as opinions are given only from New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, except in a few cases where outside opinions are approved in these localities. My reason for treating these States only is that another writer is soon to issue a monograph covering similar views in what was known as the Northwest, including the States from Ohio westward.

Although the incidents treated in this essay may fairly be considered as a distinct phase of my general subject, two difficulties have been encountered, for which I must ask toleration and patience of the reader: first, closing the discussion with what would be Chapter IV of the larger work gives the matter a rather abrupt ending; second, in this partial treatment full justice cannot be done to all the sources quoted, mainly because some of the republican newspapers later opposed the use of force to hold States in the union—as is foreshadowed in the latter part of this discussion—and almost all of the democratic journals came finally to an ardent support of the government in preserving the union. This will be shown with some fullness in later chapters of my larger work.

The use of italics and capitals for emphasis in the quotations in every case follows the original.

L. T. L.

Northern Opinion of Approaching Secession, October, 1859-November, 1860

CHAPTER I

AFTER THE JOHN BROWN RAID

The most influential abolitionist newspaper ever published in this country, *The Liberator*, was founded in 1831. Less than ten years after that, one of its readers, John Brown, told his family that the sole purpose of his life was to make war by force and arms on African slavery in the southern part of the United States.¹ In 1859, Brown planned to seize the national armory and arsenal in the little village of Harper's Ferry, Virginia, to arm all the negro slaves in the vicinity, and to help them gain their freedom. He, therefore, secured a fund of several thousand dollars from sympathizers in the North, with which he purchased a large supply of weapons. On the night of October 16, 1859, Brown, with eighteen heavily-armed followers, seized the armory and arsenal and took several prominent citizens of Harper's Ferry as hostages. By the morning of the 18th, militia companies from neighboring towns, aided by armed citizens and a small force of United States marines, had killed ten of the party of nineteen, and captured five, including Brown himself. The other four escaped. Of the citizens, militia, and marines, five were killed and nine wounded.

It would be impossible to describe the full effects of this event on the minds of the people of Virginia, and, indeed, of the whole South. The raid had been a total failure so far as freeing the slaves was concerned, since the few to whom weapons were given declined to use them against their masters, and were

¹ Most of the facts regarding the raid are taken from J. F. Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850*, vol. ii. See also, *John Brown, 1800-1859, a Biography Fifty Years After*, by Oswald Garrison Villard.

glad to be allowed to return unhurt to their homes. But how wide-spread was the conspiracy? Who had furnished the money and weapons? Who had inspired the attack? Were any prominent persons implicated? To what extent did the people of the North approve of such an expedition? These and numberless similar questions occupied the minds of the white men living in the slave-holding States. The "irrepressible conflict" so forcibly presented by Senator Seward had entered a new phase.

The news of this most spectacular of all attempts to liberate the slaves had not reached the farthest bounds of the nation before the press, the pulpit, and the platform were ringing with condemnation or praise of the band of would-be liberators. There was unanimity on this point only: the plan by which Brown and his followers had hoped to accomplish so much was foredoomed to certain failure; for it was an attack not only upon the State of Virginia, but upon the national government as well.

The only persons who offered unbounded praise were the abolitionists. Most of the republicans—of whom there were none in the far South and but few in any slave-holding State—condemned the whole scheme; but scattered throughout the North, especially in New England, were found other persons who honored the attackers as highly as abolitionists honored them. The members of the democratic party everywhere were as strong in their censure as the abolitionists in their approval, though many democrats, especially in the North, opposed slavery itself as much as anyone. But they did not approve of the methods used by abolitionists and by some republicans who wished to get rid of it in the States where it existed. Besides, all shades of opinion were held by persons belonging to none of the political parties mentioned.²

²The principal political beliefs of the time were, briefly, as follows: The republicans maintained that the national government had a right to interfere in the territories to prevent slavery, and that this prerogative should be exercised in the broadest manner; the democrats were divided: those who shared the view of Senator Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, in his "Freeport Doctrine," that Congress could not force slavery upon a territory against its will, were commonly known as anti-Lecompton democrats; and the Lecompton democrats—a name derived from

Few truths in American history are better known than the fact that in States in all parts of the nation, from Washington's administration to Buchanan's, threats had been made to secede from the union or to nullify laws of congress. Perhaps the chief instances of a threatened withdrawal were: the New England States at the Hartford Convention in 1814; Massachusetts alone, in connection with the annexation of Texas; and a number of southern States at the Nashville Convention in 1850. Among the leading examples of nullification and defiance were: the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1798-9; Pennsylvania's refusal to carry out orders of the supreme court in 1808; South Carolina's opposition to the tariff laws, 1828-33; Georgia's repudiation of United States Indian treaties, 1828-32; and Wisconsin's resolution, through her legislature in 1859, that the supreme court should be defied. As Charles Francis Adams pointed out in a recent lecture before the University of Oxford, "Evidence . . . is conclusive that, until the decennium between 1830 and 1840, the belief was universal that in case of a final, unavoidable issue, sovereignty resided in the State, and to the State its citizens' allegiance was due."³

Even as late as 1860, one of the most common ways of re-

those who supported President Buchanan's policy of admitting Kansas as a slave State under a constitution made at Lecompton, Kansas—held with the republicans that congress might interfere in the territories with respect to the status of slavery, but, as against the republicans, that under the constitution the interference should be to uphold slavery instead of to prevent it. A fourth and evanescent political division was known as the constitutional union party; it had no platform other than "The constitution, the union, and the enforcement of the laws." Most of the abolitionists, in 1860, voted with the republicans. The expression, "the opposition," in this work will be used to refer collectively to the chief opponents of the republicans; that is, to all the democrats together with the constitutional-unionists.

³C. F. Adams, *Trans-Atlantic Historical Solidarity*, p. 45. See the following by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge: "It is safe to say that there was not a man in the country, from Washington and Hamilton, on the one side, to George Clinton and George Mason on the other, who regarded the new system [i. e., the nation as established under the Constitution] as anything but an experiment entered upon by the States, and from which each and every State had the right peaceably to withdraw, a right which was very likely to be exercised." *The Americana Encyclopaedia*, in article "Confederate States of America."

ferring to the United States was to designate it as "the Confederacy," indicating thereby the belief that what we now think of as a nation was only a kind of league, or an alliance. Just after South Carolina had passed her ordinance of secession, for instance, a resolution introduced in the New York State Assembly at Albany, looking to the appropriation of ten million dollars to arm the State, contained the words, "the United States of the Confederacy."⁴ A considerable proportion of the newspapers in the North at some time during 1860 made use of the same expression.

There was no novelty, therefore, in statements in many Southern newspapers, during the weeks immediately following the John Brown fiasco, that the Southern States should consider the expediency of withdrawing from the union. They argued somewhat as follows: For thirty years the abolitionists have kept up an unceasing warfare upon our domestic institutions; even twenty years ago such persons were rare in the North, but they are now numerous, and their numbers are increasing with alarming rapidity; their emissaries in the South have scattered abolition literature among our slaves, in some cases urging them to murder their masters if necessary to effect their escape, and by means of the Underground Railway they have caused us to lose many thousands of dollars worth of property in slaves; they refuse to allow our servants to accompany us into Northern States, and deny that slave-holders have the same right to take their slave property into the common territories as Northern people have to take their property there; when our slaves escape into free States, they are seldom returned in accordance with the fugitive slave law, but are frequently aided in evading capture; we are abused and denounced in the strongest language because we are slave-holders; our territory is invaded and our peaceful citizens captured and killed; and now a great political party, which originated little more than four years ago, and which countenances much of the above, has grown to such proportions that it controls most of the Northern States: if it

⁴ New York *Weekly Day-Book*, January 5, 1861.

should gain the presidency a year hence, would Southern States not be justified in seceding? What would be the answer of the North?

To the "disunion sentiments" of the newspapers in the South were soon added messages of a number of governors in that section to their legislatures, and after the opening of congress on December 5th some of the more ardent Southern senators and representatives still further voiced the opinions of their constituents, to the effect that in certain contingencies their States should no longer remain in the union.

Northern replies to this can be divided into no precise categories, largely because the thinking on the subject was everywhere confused and in the same observers varied greatly from time to time. But immediately after the John Brown raid, republicans almost solidly denounced such expressions on the part of the South. Some denied strenuously that there was ground for complaint or for secession; others made light of the whole affair, ridiculing the South, and declaring that threats of dissolving the union were only repetitions for political effect of cries which they had frequently heard before; while still others sometimes more or less ironically expressed a willingness to see the dissenting States withdraw.

The editors of the *Providence Daily Journal* and the *New York Evening Post* are fair examples of republicans who were at this time unequivocally opposed to secession. The *Journal*, though not approving of John Brown, held throughout the month of December, 1859, that the South was altogether wrong in its position regarding a dissolution of the union, and on the following January 9th said that the North was firmly resolved to hold all the States in the union. The *Post* was convinced that the Southern members of congress meant nothing by their disunion speeches,⁵ and spoke of their proposals as advising "treason."⁶

⁵ January 11th.

⁶ January 14th.

Remarks by the republicans in the congress then in session were much along the same line.⁷

Representing those who were inclined to ridicule and defy the South was the New York *Tribune*, edited by Horace Greeley, and incomparably the most influential republican newspaper of the time. It claimed, and probably had, the largest circulation in the world,⁸ and was a tremendous factor in national politics throughout the administrations of Buchanan and Lincoln. It said in an editorial of January 5, 1860:

It is striking how gentle the fire-eaters⁹ have become since the Republicans have caused it to be understood that they do not think Virginia ought to have a monopoly of the hanging of traitors. It is perhaps as well, however, for them to understand that the future Republican administrators of Federal power will not try and execute the Democratic Disunionists, who may hereafter fall into their hands, with the indecent haste exhibited by Virginia in the case of John Brown.¹⁰

The *Tribune* soon¹¹ joined the *Post* in accusing of treason those who advocated disunion if a republican should be elected president. These ideas are also to be found in a number of other republican papers, for the news stories and the editorials of the *Tribune* were frequently copied by smaller journals.^{11a}

Admitting as true the doctrine of the "irrepressible conflict," other republicans were not averse to allowing the Southern States to withdraw, at least in certain contingencies. Next to the *Tribune*, perhaps the most influential republican paper in New York was the *Times*. Its editor, Henry J. Raymond, in a

⁷ *E. g.*, see speeches by G. W. Scranton and J. H. Campbell, both of Pennsylvania. *Congressional Globe*, January 11th.

⁸ On January 2nd it claimed a daily circulation of 39,000; semi-weekly, 22,500; weekly, 181,000; edition for California, 4,500; total, 247,000.

⁹ A name frequently applied by extreme Northern men to extreme Southern men.

¹⁰ Brown was hanged on December 2, 1859.

¹¹ January 19th.

^{11a} Several times in November and December the *Tribune* had expressed similar sentiments. The Pittsburgh *Evening Chronicle*, December 10th; Newburyport (Mass.) *Herald*, December 3rd; and the Pottsville (Pa.) *Miners' Journal*, December 10th and 17th, are among those holding southern threats in derision.

speech¹² at Troy, N. Y.,—after wondering whether or not the old feeling of good-will would ever be restored between the North and South—said if this could not be brought about, “then sever the Union as soon as you please. Nobody cares for a Union that gives us none of the blessings which the Union was designed to secure for ourselves and our posterity. (Applause.)” A month later he said in an editorial that it was perhaps not unconstitutional for one State at a time to withdraw (which was the method finally pursued) just so it did not covenant with others to do so.¹³ A republican ex-governor of Connecticut, Henry Dutton, was still more willing to see the South depart. He said in a letter at this time, “If I knew that by voting for Seward, or Chase, or Banks, or any other man whom I regarded as most worthy to fill the Presidential chair, the whole South would secede and dissolve the Union, I should not hesitate a moment to vote for him.”¹⁴

¹² December 28th. Reported in *Times*, January 2nd. Raymond had formerly been lieutenant-governor of New York.

¹³ January 30th. Its exact language was: “It may be that in adopting the Constitution of the United States, no State surrendered its right to withdraw when it pleased; or it may not be; but this much is certain, that in agreeing to abide by the provisions of the Constitution . . . each State has expressly agreed not to leave the Union in compact in concert with others. She may possibly have the right to go out alone, but she certainly has not the right to make preparations to have others go out with her. If Virginia thinks she can do better by going into business on her own account, it must be on her own account solely, and not in partnership with other malcontents.” At intervals, however, the *Times* seemed to agree with the *Evening Post*. Before this, in the same month, it said that secession was only another name for revolution, and on February 8th spoke of Sam Houston’s declaration that there was no abstract right of peaceable secession as “well-timed.”

See the Utica (N. Y.) *Observer and Democrat*, a strong democratic paper, which on December 13th criticized the Albany *Evening Journal*, republican, for saying on December 3rd, “When a Republican President is elected, those who wish to go out of the Union can do so,” and for then changing its position within three days and declaring that all republicans believed this union “must and shall be preserved.” The *Observer* expressed the hope that the *Journal* might prove its belief in the latter doctrine by ceasing its “unprovoked war upon the Southern States.”

¹⁴ Newark *Evening Journal*, December 16th. The Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, which supported Lincoln in 1860, but claimed in 1859 to be an “American” paper, agreed at this time with some of the most

There are numerous evidences that during these same months many persons in the North preferred a dissolution of the union to a continuation of slavery.¹⁵ The *Trenton True American* said, for example, (December 5th), "We see Northern fanatics and demagogues calling upon the South to withdraw, and telling it that 'the offer of a separation in serious earnest would meet the hearty response of millions.'" On January 24th, a letter¹⁶ was written to Senator Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, by D. Lee Child, of Wayland, in that State, in which he said, "If our Southern associates, or any portion of them, *will* take themselves off, I think they ought to have full permission to do so. I should consider it not a loss but a relief." He went on to say that formerly he was ardently, nay superstitiously, devoted to the union, but that he had changed his mind since seeing that it was a source of power to "slave-breeders," and had come to the conclusion that "no empire exists which would break up so readily as this confederacy." George S. Boutwell, a former governor of Massachusetts, wrote the same senator three days earlier that "the great question is not the existence of the Union, but the preservation of the institutions of freedom."¹⁷

The question of "coercion," or forcing a State to remain in the union against the will of its people, was little discussed at this time as compared with a year later. But there were some persons, chiefly democrats, who, like most of the religious press late in 1860, while disregarding the question of a constitutional "right of secession," thought that if an effort should be made on

strongly anti-republican journals. It questioned (December 21, 1859): "If the South, having a majority of the electoral votes, should exclude all save slave-holders from the Presidency, and should elect such a slaveholder by their exclusive votes, thus practically shutting out the North from a share in the National Government, would the North submit to it?" Its reply was: "This—*mutatis mutandis*—is what the Republican party proposed to do in 1856, and what it again proposes to do in 1860. Will the South submit to it? If so, then it is a community of doughfaces. There is no such thing as an equal partnership with the rights, privileges and profits all on one side."

¹⁵ Many of these were of uncertain political alignment.

¹⁶ Sumner manuscripts, Harvard Library.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the part of any State to withdraw, no physical force should be used to prevent it. One of the chief reasons for this was the belief that to compel a Southern State to continue as one of the United States was impossible, in view of the fact that both England and France might intervene to prevent the subjection of the South.¹⁸

Some others thought the nature of American institutions forbade coercion. "Where force is required to keep one-half the States in union with the other half, the thing desired to be preserved is no longer worth it. The union of these States must rest upon the common interests of all sections, and upon the consent of the several States."¹⁹ Former United States Senator George Evans, of Maine, said in a speech at Bangor that the union would never be preserved by force of arms, and that he trusted the North would "never be so crazy" as to keep the Southern States at all "if that prove to be the only mode by which they can be held. If they go, in God's name, let them go in peace."²⁰ Likewise, a New York committee²¹ in December, 1859, declared:

It is often said that the Union can and will be preserved, by force if necessary. Does anyone believe that a permanent union between two hostile powers can be preserved by force? How long before the required force would become a despotism? No generous heart would wish for, or tolerate such a union. Ours is a union of friendship as well as common interest, and like all other friendships, its very essence is free will.²²

¹⁸ Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-77.

¹⁹ Philadelphia *Dollar Newspaper*, November 16, 1859.

²⁰ Portland (Me.) *Eastern Argus*, November 16, 1859.

²¹ This committee was appointed at a meeting held in the Academy of Music, December 19th, which nominated General Winfield Scott for president and Sam Houston for vice-president. *New York Times*, January 12th.

²² The Albany *Atlas and Argus* and the Pittsburgh *Daily Post*, both strongly democratic, held opinions similar to this. Thus the *Post*, January 7th said: "No drop of blood must be shed in the effort to keep the Northern and Southern sections of these States under one government All thoughtful men are settled in the belief that if disunion must come, it must be peaceful, and, to some extent, deliberate. In any partnership or association, the consent of associates is essential to the continuance of the compact, and each partner has a sovereign control over his own property. . . . The Southern people have not presumed

The members of the "opposition"—besides those who demanded that there should be no coercion—may be divided roughly as follows: those who regarded secession as a majority of the republicans viewed it, firmly denying that such a right existed; a larger number who maintained that under certain conditions secession would be justified; and others who believed that the South had ample cause for withdrawing when it saw fit. There was so much shifting of opinion that it is at times impossible to place persons or newspapers in any fixed group. No attempt will be made, therefore, to distinguish precisely between those in the second and third divisions just mentioned, for the reason that so many seem to have been first in one, then in the other. All, however, were in favor of keeping the union intact, the plea of these two last classes being simply that if Southern States should secede, right or justice would be on their side.

The Rochester *Union and Advertiser* illustrated the attitude of those agreeing with the most numerous group of republicans when it said that Senator Iverson, of Georgia, might "talk of secession," but that there were enough Northerners who believed in the constitution to "put down or hang up" those who might "attempt to act it."²³ The Hartford *Weekly Post* believed that the South had "no cause to court disunion," and sternly reprobated South Carolina for its disunionism; but it held that the South might demand of the North a maintenance of all its constitutional rights, for an "infraction of those rights is of course in itself a dissolution of the Union."²⁴ Similarly, the Philadelphia *Press*, although having an "ardent sympathy for our Southern people, thus unwarrantably and insanely assailed" at Harper's Ferry, considered secession a "mad hope," and spoke of dis-

to tell us how to manage our internal concerns. The whole trouble, as we take it, comes from the fact that we are determined to manage theirs and our own also. . . . If the South resolves to leave the Union, she will go because the North denies her rights which were granted her when the original compact was entered into."

²³ January 12th.

²⁴ December 17th and 24th.

union movements as "treasonable."²⁵ In congress, the position of the anti-Lecompton democrats was almost identical, as may be seen in a speech by John Hickman, of Pennsylvania, in the house of representatives. He said: "If dissolution means that there is to be a division of territory, by Mason and Dixon's line, I say 'no;' that will never be. . . . the North will never tolerate a division of the territory." The same sentiment appeared in the remarks of Horace F. Clark, of New York, who resolutely denied the right of a State to dissolve the union whenever its people were "disaffected or in passion or alarm."²⁶

Some of the leading journals which later supported the constitutional union candidates were of the same temper. The New York *Evening Express*, for example, stated: "There can be no peaceable disunion, and. . . Southern rights can be maintained, and Southern wrongs redressed much better within the Union than out of it;" and the Charleston *News* was taken to task for distinguishing between secession and revolution: "What is the use, then," asked the *Express*, "of theoretic *chop logic* upon the difference between secession and revolution, when both *practically*, amount to, and mean, the same thing?"²⁷ The Boston *Courier* also denied the right of a State to secede, believing "the deliberate consent of the whole to be necessary to resolve into its original elements that 'Perfect Union,' to which all individually and collectively agreed." It concluded, however, that there was no longer any cause of serious division between the South and the North.²⁸

A number of things influenced the members of the "opposition" who believed that in certain circumstances States would be justified in a separation from the union, and who offered arguments to vindicate the position so strongly maintained in the South. Of these influencing causes, probably the most irritating to the slave-holders was the continuous expression of strong admiration for John Brown and his band. True, most

²⁵ November 15th, December 23rd.

²⁶ *Congressional Globe*, December 12th, December 21st.

²⁷ January 10th, February 11th.

²⁸ December 22nd.

people in the North indicated disapproval of the attack upon Harper's Ferry, but very many of these same persons expressed the highest regard for the personal courage and ultimate purpose of the invaders. This feeling, however, was confined almost altogether to abolitionists and republicans—even those who believed Brown's mind was affected frequently managing to commend him. The entire South considered reprehensible in the extreme such assertions as the following from republican papers appearing on and subsequent to the day Brown was hanged:

"From that gallows [Brown's] will rise ten thousand John Browns, to haunt and harass, by night and day, the cowardly and shameless defenders" of slavery.—Kingston (N. Y.) *Democratic Journal*, December 7th.

"Legally a criminal, morally he appears to have been as spotless as a lamb." "The great world wept over the dead body of John Brown."—Newburyport (Mass.) *Daily Herald*, December 3rd and 5th.

"He is an indication of the onward progress of Abolition feeling in the country; he is a genuine hero. God bless Ossawatimie²⁹ Brown."—Springfield (Mass.) *Republican*.³⁰

"Every republican naturally sympathizes with John Brown."—*Independent Democrat*, Concord, N. H.

"We honor him; we applaud him."—Winsted (Conn.) *Herald*.

"Today, the noblest manhood in America swings off the gallows of a felon."—New York *Tribune*.

"John Brown meetings" were held in various parts of the North to commemorate his exploits and render expressions of sympathy, while at some places salvos were fired in his honor. Not all republicans, however, approved of such proceedings. The *Hartford Courant*, for instance, admitted: "Brown was righteously hung, and. . . anybody who chooses to follow in

²⁹ A Kansas town in which he resided for a time.

³⁰ This quotation and the next three are quoted from the *Providence Post*, March 22, 1860.

his footsteps should be burned at the stake, over fagots of green wood."³¹

The Boston *Courier* sounded the keynote of those opposing praise of the raiders: "The insurrection at Harper's Ferry was something," it held; but it was "nothing in comparison with the outrageous and abominable comments which it has called forth from a portion of the New England press and the New England pulpit. These have awakened the deepest and most pervading indignation throughout the South; and it is perfectly natural that they should have done so."³²

To counteract the influence upon the South of these meetings commending the efforts of Brown, "union meetings" were held in many Northern cities in order to assure the people of the South that they had numerous friends in the North who were not "abolitionized," and that they meant to stand by the constitution, especially with regard to those provisions which allowed the holding of slaves and provided for the return of fugitives. Thus they hoped to preclude efforts to withdraw, and so to save the union. The participants in those meetings included a few republicans and all other classes save abolitionists. Most republicans claimed that the gatherings were only ruses to win votes for the democrats. Meetings held in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were typical. Of these three, the most moderate was in Boston, held in Faneuil Hall on the morning of December 8th. Presided over by ex-Governor Levi Lincoln, its vice-presidents included four other former governors of the commonwealth, and Mayor F. W. Lincoln, Jr., of Boston. The presiding officer, not overlooking various unjust aggressions which he believed the South had committed against the North, heartily scored Brown and his sympathizers—as did the resolutions passed by the meeting—promising at the same time fidelity

³¹ Taken from New Haven *Daily Register*, December 22nd.

³² December 7th. On the 3rd, the *Courier* suggested that its own State give Virginia twenty thousand dollars to help pay the expenses she incurred on account of Brown, and a week before that it declared that the public meeting in Boston sympathizing with Brown did the city injustice because most Bostonians did not approve of his course.

to the constitution and all parts of the union, but believing that nothing could be gained by disunion. Moderate speeches were made by several prominent men, including Edward Everett. The most vigorous address of the day was made by Caleb Cushing. The meeting at Philadelphia was held December 7th. Some of the more strenuous upholders of the democratic party thought the resolutions hardly strong enough. The latter, as well as the orators of the occasion, condemned in particular the personal liberty bills passed by certain Northern legislatures seemingly in contravention of the fugitive slave law. The resolutions were said to "embody the sentiments of a vast majority of the citizens of Philadelphia."³³

The most enthusiastic meeting of the three was in New York, held in the Academy of Music on December 19th. The strongly "pro-Southern" tone of some of the proceedings here may be seen from extracts from two of the principal speeches. The first was by General John A. Dix, who about one year later became post-master general of the United States. He said:

Let us change positions with our Southern brethren . . . they find emissaries from the North coming among them to sow the seeds of dissension in their families, to incite their slaves to insurrection, to break up their homes, destroy the value of their property, and put their lives in peril. Is there a man within reach of my voice who can find fault with them for any measure of resentment with which these aggressions are repelled? ("No, no.") Would we ourselves submit to them peaceably, if our places were reversed? ("No, no.") No, fellow-citizens, they are wrongs not to be patiently endured—wrongs under the sting of which even the horrors of disunion may be fearlessly encountered as an alternative, with which, if all else be lost, honor and self-respect may be preserved. (Applause.)³⁴

The other was by Hon. Charles O'Connor, a leader of the New York bar.³⁵ He declared:

³³ The *Christian Observer*, a Presbyterian weekly, December 15th. This paper, the editor of which was born and reared in New England, said, December 1st, that John Brown was "the most reckless midnight assassin known in this country." Many members of the religious press were strongly against Brown, e. g., the *Christian Register* and the *Recorder*, both published in Boston, and the *Philadelphia Presbyterian*. . .

³⁴ *Official Report of the Great Union Meeting*, Academy of Music, December 19, 1859. Pamphlet in Columbia University Library.

³⁵ The Worcester (Mass.) *Aegis and Transcript*, an intensely republican paper, referred to him (November 10, 1860) as "a man of great

If we continue to fill the halls of legislation with abolitionists, and permit to occupy the executive chair public men who declare themselves to be enlisted in a crusade against slavery, and against the provisions of the Constitution which secure slave property, what can we reasonably expect from the people of the South? . . .

I do not see, for my part, anything unjust, anything unreasonable, in the declaration of Southern members [of Congress]. . . . If the North continues to conduct itself in the selection of representatives in the Congress of the United States, as, perhaps, from a certain degree of negligence and inattention, it has heretofore conducted itself, the South, I think, is not to be censured if it withdraws from the association. What must we sacrifice if we exasperate our brethren of the South, and compel them, by injustice and breach of compact, to separate from us and dissolve the Union?³⁶

The republicans were inclined to scoff at the "union-savers." "Why hold meetings at the North?" they asked. "No one is in favor of disunion here; the traitors are all at the South." Replying to this question, the *Utica (N. Y.) Observer and Democrat* claimed that it was

just so before the American Revolution. The Englishmen's Government oppressed the *colonists*; but no one in Great Britain was in favor of a dissolution of the union, and those who remonstrated against the injustice and aggressions of England, and threatened if it were continued to dissolve the connection, were denounced as *traitors!* Tyrants are everywhere the same . . . our Northern Abolition-Republican tyrants believe the South cannot be *driven* out of the Union. Every man of sense, however, knows that here at the North is the place to save the Union. The wrong is here—so is the danger—and so must be the remedy. The North must stop its impertinent intermeddling with what is none of its business; and then, and not till then, we will have peace and fraternity of feeling between the States.³⁷

ability and high character for business, integrity, and social respectability." His fellows of Irish descent seem to have approved his course. A few weeks after the meeting, February 4th, the *New York Irish-American* displayed his portrait, saying, "Our people are proud of him as a noble scion of their ancient stock." On December 10th preceding, the *Irish-American* had called Brown a "blood-stained bandit," and condemned those who made him "the patron of a political creed antagonistic to the very existence of the Republic."

³⁶From *Echoes of Harper's Ferry*, by James Redpath, pp. 286-287. Not all of the speeches were of this tenor. Some of the speakers thought disunion unjustifiable in any case.

³⁷December 20th. This article was copied with evident satisfaction by the Keene (N. H.) *Cheshire Republican*, January 11th. Cf. *Hartford Times*, January 3rd: "When we at the North learn to mind our own business, and let the South manage theirs, *then*, and *not till then*, will *sober reflection* teach them [the South] their true interests."

A part of the North was denounced, both in and out of congress, for alleged outrages committed against the slave-holding States. Some blamed abolitionists and republicans³⁸ in general, while others believed only a few of them should be held responsible; that the "madness and fanaticism" of these few, however, were endangering the union; that "the continued assaults, the incendiary and blasphemous speeches" by this minority, and their attempts to stir up insurrection among the negroes, had led many in the South to believe the "endurance of such insults and wrongs" was "no longer tolerable."³⁹

A hundred quotations might be given from these critics showing that they believed the South was not uneasy without cause. For example, the New York *Herald*, James Gordon Bennett's paper, which claimed, and probably had, the largest daily circulation within New York City, pleaded thus: "Let the honest men of the North reflect that the war which Seward, Helper, Sherman, and the example of John Brown, are preaching, is a war against the lives, homes, and dearest interests of the men of the South, and then ask themselves the question as to what would be their course in case a similar vituperative, aggressive and destructive war were anywhere preached against them."⁴⁰ The New Haven *Daily Register*, after showing that great efforts were being made in the North to "create a general unfriendly feeling against the South," continued:

Is it not strange, Reader, that the stability of this Union should be endangered, from no greater cause than a neglect of what is sometimes called "the eleventh commandment," viz: "Mind your own business!" All the trouble grows out of a persistent interference in the slavery question, by people of the free States, who are in no way responsible for its existence, and in no way injured by it! . . . The South makes no attack on our institutions! it does not fail in fulfilling its obligations in the Union! it desires to live with us in peace, minding its own business, and not interfering with ours—if *we will permit* it! It seems to us the most wilful, the most blind, perverse and foolish conduct, that ever children were guilty of!⁴¹

³⁸ See next chapter.

³⁹ Philadelphia *Dollar Newspaper*, December 7th.

⁴⁰ January 21st. For Helper and Sherman, see Chapters II and III.

⁴¹ December 5th, December 13th. Cf. *Columbian Weekly Register*, New Haven, December 24th: "The Hartford Press . . . publishes

The opinion of the prominent New York *Journal of Commerce* was similar :

Having roundly abused them [the southerners] for minding their own business and refusing to take our advice, and, by way of convincing them of our sincerity and earnestness, encouraged the stealing of their negroes, and running them off to Canada or harboring them among ourselves, until the Southern people became indignant at the outrage, and threaten, if we do not let them alone, to separate from us, so that they may live in peace and quiet, we now,—i. e., the Abolition and Republican press and people of the North—turn round and charge upon them the evils which threaten the Union, and tell them that if they will only keep quiet while we stir up insurrection at the South, and steal or run off negroes, the Union will be in no danger.⁴²

Besides the editors there were numerous defenders of the South. In the national house of representatives, Daniel E. Sickles, a democrat from New York, remarked that "the Confederacy" was in the presence of the most serious danger that had ever menaced it; that the chief danger lay in the North, because there the weapons were made which threatened lives in Southern homes; and that the North was responsible for the existence of a great sectional party which menaced in its consequences, if it did not assail in its platform, the peace and tranquillity of the Union by its representatives proclaiming "war upon one portion of the Confederacy." He thought, however, that the South had vastly overestimated the ill-feeling of the North toward it.⁴³ Thomas B. Florence, a Pennsylvania democrat, said before the same body that the Southern representatives, in his judgment, were simply repelling aggression; for the

a list of Southern members of Congress, whom it calls disunionists—from the fact that they say their constituents will not desire to stay in the Union, when they become satisfied the North is determined to withhold from them their constitutional rights, or continue their systematic annoyances on the slavery question! The *Press* pretends to great surprise at such declarations, and would give it the force of opposition to the Union! when, in fact, it is only saying to such journals as the *Press*, 'your infamous conduct, in slandering our people, stealing our negroes, and canonizing John Brown, satisfies us that you will not let us live in peace with the North!' That's all."

⁴² This is quoted from the Bangor (Me.) *Daily Union*, December 28th. The opinion of the *Union* was (December 24th) that the people of the South had been "for years outraged in their property and political rights by aggressions of the most aggravating nature."

⁴³ *Congressional Globe*, December 13th.

South was on the defensive.⁴⁴ Similarly, John C. Lee wrote Robert C. Winthrop, from Boston, saying that while he thought the South had become insolent and insulting, yet he believed that it "had a right to complain of our impertinent interference with slavery."⁴⁵

During the latter part of 1859 and the early part of 1860, there was also evident another contention which persisted for more than a year; that is, that those Southerners who advocated the withdrawal of their States from the union were not necessarily as guilty of "disunionism" as those who had driven them to defend this position. "Disunionism is of two characters," said a constitutional unionist: "one, in words and wind, such as we have from 'the political democratic negro,' down South—an annoying, fretting, but harmless Disunionism; and the other, in *acts*—annoying, fretting, but *not harmless*—such as we have from the North." For example, "The runners of the Underground Railroad, North, are DISUNIONISTS. . . in acts. The contributors of the money for that purpose are DISUNIONISTS. . . The upholders of John Brown. . . are DISUNIONISTS. The aiders of and abettors of treason are traitors, as well as the traitor himself."⁴⁶ In answering the question, "Which are the disunionists?" a democrat asserted that the real disunionists were those who proclaimed the war and urged it on, and they were the men to be denounced by patriots, instead of those who said they would not "submit to such trampling upon their rights."⁴⁷ The *Utica Observer and Democrat*, after assuring the "calumniators of the South" that the people there were as loyal to the union as any in the nation, and that they would not secede until, exhausted by insult and aggression, forbearance had ceased to be a virtue, went on to say that the disunionists were not those who threatened, if the compact entered into was not observed, to withdraw from the confeder-

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, December 30th.

⁴⁵ February 7th. Winthrop manuscripts, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁴⁶ New York *Evening Express*, January 12th.

⁴⁷ Portland (Me.) *Eastern Argus*, December 23rd.

ation; and that if the South should leave, "it might with truth be said it had been *driven out of the Union.*"⁴⁸

Although from the adoption of the constitution there had existed among persons throughout the nation a belief in the right of a State to withdraw from its fellows, certainly among a majority of the people for a good many years before 1860 the word "disunionism" had carried a stigma. The effort, therefore, on the part of some persons, to free from the opprobrium of the term those whom they considered in the right, was but natural. Only five days after John Brown was executed, it was declared that in the South open and avowed disunionists had multiplied by hundreds in a fortnight. The chief complaint was that the North, instead of rejoicing that the South had escaped "the perils of a bloody, servile insurrection," expressed sympathy only with "those who came among them to rob and murder;" that in the place of fraternal feeling, they received "from the North only hate, denunciation, and injury;" and so, concluded this writer, the South had decided that a union which was fruitful of such an unfriendly attitude was not worth having.⁴⁹ As early as November 19th the Norwich, Conn., *Weekly Aurora* deemed it certain that the Southern people could not bear much longer the pressure that was applied to them; saying they would be cowards if they should continue to submit to the abuse and attacks of persons so encouraged at the North; and that they had a right to demand to be let alone, or they could not be blamed for seceding.

A further justification of disunionism was given by the *Pennsylvanian*—commonly known as the national "Administration organ" of Philadelphia—to the effect that "opposition and hostility to the Union, the laws and the Constitution. . . . commenced and has been fostered in the North. The South has been loyal. . . . But the North has within herself traitors, in-

⁴⁸ January 3rd.

⁴⁹ Troy (N. Y.) *Daily Whig*, December 7th. The *Whig*, however, held agitators both North and South guilty, but showed at the same time that in the North those who preached "the gospel according to John Brown" rode topmost on the popular wave.

cendiaries, and promoters of riot and anarchy. . . The issue is then with the North."⁵⁰ And the same journal said later: "If disunion sentiments have been engendered, if disunion threats have been made. . . the object is plainly, evidently to preserve rights, guard institutions, protect life, and insure peace."⁵¹ In the senate, also, Mr. Bigler, democrat, of Pennsylvania, said that if the South should denounce any Northern law or institution as many Northerners had denounced the South and slavery, the North would perhaps go to even greater lengths in repelling such humiliating interference.⁵² And the North was told that the people of the South could not and would not be "compelled to remain parties to a contract in which might overrides right."⁵³

There were those in the North, moreover, who were even less restrained in their justification of Southern disunionism. In many parts of New England even there were persons who gave up all thought of apologizing for those whom they conceived to be advocating with justice a withdrawal from the union. "The Southern people are not going to submit to these indignities any longer," proclaimed the Manchester, N. H., *Union Democrat* on December 27th; "They *are* disunionists, as we should have been long ago, under one half the provocation we have heaped upon them. . . if the Southern States should secede tomorrow, the judgment of impartial history will justify the act. The blame is not with those who strike, but with those who provoke the blow." The Boston *Post* quoted from a speech made in 1858 by Jefferson Davis before the legislature of Mississippi in which he advised that if an abolitionist be chosen president, Mississippi should provide for her safety outside of a "Union with those *who have already shown the will*, and would have acquired the *power*," to deprive her of her birthright; upon which the *Post* avowed that "if we loved Mississippi as we love Massachusetts; if our family, our children, our hopes, our everything were all there, as they are all here; if we believed that any polit-

⁵⁰ December 5th.

⁵¹ February 10th.

⁵² *Congressional Globe*, December 14th.

⁵³ *Pittsburgh Post*, January 10th.

ical party were in possession of the Federal Government to do what it may well enough be supposed in the South that republicans would do in relation to slave institutions . . . then would we do and say what we have quoted Jefferson Davis as doing and saying."⁵⁴ The Portland, Me., *Eastern Argus*, after showing the reasons for the disunionism of Southern members of congress, proclaimed that there was not one republican "possessed of a particle of manhood and the least sense of honor" who, if the case were reversed, would not be a disunionist in the same sense.⁵⁵ "We have not a word," it declared, "to say against the position of men, who calmly, deliberately announce that, when they have to choose between subjugation and dishonor in the union on the one hand, and secession from it on the other, they shall choose the latter, we say we have not a word of denunciation for that position, for Heaven knows if the same alternative were presented to us our decision would be the same."⁵⁶

But should an effort be made on the part of any State to leave the union, and that effort as many believed should result in civil war, what would be the position of those in the North who so stoutly upheld the justice of the Southern cause? Some of the bolder spirits did not hesitate to voice their opinion. The judgment of one Bostonian was that in such a case the battle would not be between the two sections of the country, but, as hitherto, between opposing forces at the North, and that the "battle-field would be the soil of New England,—not the territory of the South."⁵⁷ Just as Northern men and Southern men stood side by side in the struggle which established the union, so, it was said, they would stand again in any struggle "necessary in the maintenance of the rights secured to each member of the Confederacy by it."⁵⁸ Ex-President Franklin Pierce wrote Jefferson Davis that he did not believe a disruption of the union could occur without blood, but if fighting must come, it would

⁵⁴ December 23rd.

⁵⁵ December 19th.

⁵⁶ December 23rd.

⁵⁷ *Courier*, December 10th and 17th.

⁵⁸ Albany *Atlas and Argus*, December 6th.

not be along Mason and Dixon's line merely: "It will be within our borders, in our own streets. . . . Those who defy law and scout constitutional obligations will, if we ever reach the arbitrament of arms, find occupation enough at home."⁵⁹ And the "Republican-Abolition party" was warned that a war between the North and South was an impossibility until the democracy of the North was conquered by the sword.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Pierce papers, Library of Congress. Also published in Thomas Shepard Goodwin's *Natural History of Secession*, p. 308.

⁶⁰ Philadelphia *Pennsylvanian*, November 26th.

CHAPTER II

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE JOHN BROWN RAID AND FOR SOUTHERN SECESSIONISM

Before John Brown made his raid into Virginia, probably not more than fifty persons besides his family and armed followers knew where the blow was to fall, and perhaps not more than a thousand had reason to suspect that he intended to attack slavery by force in any part of the South.¹ It were folly, therefore, to accuse any considerable number of persons of direct complicity in the plot. There was much questioning as to whether the responsibility should be charged to the account of anyone save these few, together with the abolitionists, who, as nobody denied, had for years been preaching a war against slavery to be carried on in any way that might be successful. Edward Everett, candidate for vice-president on the constitutional union ticket in 1860, thought, however, that the attempt on Harper's Ferry was a natural result of the anti-slavery agitation, which had for years been carried on.² Some held "Kansas Screechers," Horace Greeley, Henry Ward Beecher "and Company," and "Northern agitators generally" to responsibility.³ But United States Senator Henry Wilson, a zealous Massachusetts republican, only ten days after the capture of Brown, in a public address in the city of Syracuse, New York, proclaimed that "The Harper's Ferry outbreak was the consequence of the teachings of Republicanism."⁴ If all republicans had agreed to Wilson's statement, this chapter would have been unnecessary. The Boston *Courier*,⁵ constitutional-unionist, however, arraigned Senator Wilson as an abolitionist, and thought a vast

¹ Rhodes, *op. cit.*, II, 391.

² In a letter to Robert C. Winthrop, November 13, 1859. Winthrop papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

³ *E. g.*, *Hartford Post*, October 29th.

⁴ Bellows Falls (Vt.) *Argus*, November 10th; *Hartford Weekly Post*, November 12th.

⁵ January 7th and 9th.

majority of republicans were by no means accomplices in the insurrection.

But most members of the "opposition" did not pass over the incident so lightly. In the first place, there was the Helper book: *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*, written by Hinton Rowan Helper, a native of North Carolina, who had lived in various places outside of that State for some years previous to 1860. The main purpose of the work was to show that slavery was fatal to the interests of the non-slaveholding white men of the South. The facts were in the main correct, but the arguments based on them and especially its recommendations for war upon slavery and slave-holders were in the highest degree offensive to the South. The book was first published in 1857, but it attracted little attention until 1859, when a great impetus was given to its circulation by the written approval of sixty-eight republican members of congress, and numerous other influential men of that party; and thousands of dollars were contributed toward the publication of a compendium of its contents for gratuitous distribution as a republican campaign document. Senator Seward, of New York, and Horace Greeley were two of its most prominent indorsers. Among the statements of the compendium which were most odious to Southerners were (p. 113): "We believe it is, as it ought to be, the desire, the determination, and the destiny of this [the republican] party, to give the death-blow to slavery"; (p. 204) "Not to be an Abolitionist, is to be a willful and diabolical instrument of the devil."⁶

⁶This compendium contained 214 pages. It recommended, in addition: "Ineligibility of Pro-slavery Slaveholders—Never another vote to anyone who advocates the Retention and Perpetuation of Human Slavery. No Co-operation with Pro-slavery Politicians—No Fellowship with them in Religion—No affiliation with them in Society. No Patronage to Pro-slavery Merchants—No Guestship in Slave-waiting Hotels—No Fees to Pro-slavery Lawyers—No Employment of Pro-slavery Physicians—No Audience to Pro-slavery Parsons" (p. 76). [To slaveholders] "Frown, sirs, fret, foam, prepare your weapons, threat, strike, shoot, stab, bring on civil war, dissolve the Union, . . . do what you will, sirs, you can neither foil nor intimidate us; our purpose is as firmly fixed as the eternal pillars of Heaven; we have determined to abolish slavery, and, so help us God, abolish it we will!" (p. 90).

The party program of the republicans emphatically denied any intention of taking aggressive steps against slavery in the States. But, whether they had intended it or not, more than two-thirds of the republican members of the house of representatives had thus sanctioned interference in the domestic affairs of the slave-holding States.⁷ The New York *Herald* considered their indorsement "one of the most extraordinary revelations of a revolutionary design on the part of the leading abolitionists and republicans that has ever been brought to light in this country since the treason of Benedict Arnold was detected at Tarrytown"; and described the signers, as "traitors to your duty as citizens, false to your oaths as rulers, and regardless of the rights of your brethren as men."⁸

Many held that recommending such a bad book was not less than treason. *The Impending Crisis* was dubbed a "hand-book of treason" in which the South was "doomed to the horrors of civil war, and the slaveholders . . . held up to execration as fit objects for extermination by the 'sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'"⁹ It was called a "monstrous document" which recommended "the most treasonable demonstrations against the South."¹⁰ Also, the compendium appeared almost simultaneously with the Brown raid, "as if it had been determined upon to carry its recommendations into immediate

⁷ Many republicans regretted that this had been done. For instance, in a letter written December 21, 1859, to Congressman John Sherman, W. W. Gitt, a New York republican, deplored this means of "spreading discord in the ranks of the party," and believed: "We can elect our candidates without offering any insult to the South." John Sherman manuscripts, Library of Congress.

Von Holst, sternly against slavery and always denying the right to secede, nevertheless says in his *Constitutional and Political History of the United States*, vol. vii, p. 15: "If the North was to be won over to views against the slave-holders in harmony with that [Helper's] tone, it was as inequitable as it was foolish to wish to preserve the Union under the present constitution. Whoever preached hatred of the slave-holders in this way must, in accordance with the requirements of logic, end in demanding the destruction either of the Union or of the constitution."

⁸ November 26th.

⁹ *Somerset Messenger*, Somerville, N. J., December 8, 1859.

¹⁰ Newport, N. H., *Argus and Spectator*, November 23, 1860.

effect."¹¹ Several newspapers agreed, after quoting some of Helper's most incendiary statements and giving the names of his congressional approvers, that with such an "array of treason against the State," it was not to be wondered at, that Southerners "should seek that respect out of the Union" which they could not enjoy in it.¹²

Such statements as this last, condoning Southern secessionism because of Northern support to Helper's suggestions, were by no means infrequent. The *Boston Post*, for example, contended that

The Black Republicans under various names have been engaged for years in an aggressive warfare upon the South and its institutions without a particle of provocation. . . . If the Black Republican members of the present Congress have declared that they will not co-operate with Southern members in doing the business of that body, that they will have no fellowship with them in religion, no affiliation with them in society, it is not surprising that some of the latter should arise in their places and declare that, in the event of a Black Republican president being chosen, the Southern States will concert measures to protect themselves against further aggression. The *real* avowals of disunion, made by members of Congress . . . come from the Black Republican side in the indorsement of Helper.¹³

Circulating "Helper's book of curses" which charged that slave-holders were "worse than common thieves," was offered as proof that the very sentiments and principles of the republicans led inevitably to a breaking up of the union.¹⁴ In thus holding it immoral and disgraceful to recognize an institution upheld by the federal constitution, the republicans were denying the principle of the equality of the States, "at the risk of an almost certain dissolution of the Union itself."¹⁵

There was an inclination on the part of some leading republicans to defend themselves against attacks made on them because of their having commended the opinions of Helper.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² E. g., *Cheshire Republican*, Keene, N. H., December 14th; *Scranton Herald*, quoted by *Republican* same day.

¹³ December 22nd.

¹⁴ *Dover (N. H.) Gazette*, February 18, 1860.

¹⁵ Speech by Hon. Robert Tyler, in Bucks County, Pa. Reported in *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, January 11th.

Senator Wilson, one of his most prominent indorsers, declared before the United States senate that he never saw a man who did approve of all the sentiments in the book, and that it was through mistake that the objectionable views of the author were retained in the smaller edition.¹⁶ In the house of representatives, however, John Cochrane, a democrat of New York, showed conclusively that the sixty-eight members had indorsed the entire Helper book and a "copious compend" in addition. It was Mr. Cochrane's opinion, therefore, that those whose names had been signed in approval of the work were largely responsible for events which merely carried out its teachings.¹⁷

In the judgment of many people throughout the nation, those who were capable of commending doctrines such as Helper's should certainly be classed with the abolitionists, for, indeed, the fiercest opponent of slavery could hardly conceive of more strenuous hostility to that institution than was presented in this book. It was therefore held by the upbraiders of the sixty-eight members of congress and the other public men who had given their approval, that the teachings of republicanism led inevitably to "rank abolitionism," and consequently to a dissolution of the union.¹⁸ Moreover, this conviction was strengthened by the fact that some prominent members of the republican party assumed that there was a "higher law" than the constitution, to be obeyed rather than that latter instrument in case of a clash between the two. Mr. Seward, at this time mentioned more freely than any other man of his party as a "presidential possibility," was a leading advocate of this theory, universally condemned by the democrats and by most other members of the "opposition." Certain it is that there were a great number of republicans whose views on the subject of slavery substantially coincided with those of the abolitionists. The republicans were not all abolitionists, said an opponent; but the abolitionists were all, or nearly all, republicans. They were

¹⁶ *Congressional Globe*, December 14th.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, December 20th.

¹⁸ E. g., Monmouth (N. J.) *Democrat*, December 8th.

not all Helpers and John Browns; but the Helpers and John Browns were all, or nearly all, republicans.¹⁹

Some were inclined even to identify these two parties: "All have heard of a distinction without a difference," said one, "and such a distinction cannot be more aptly illustrated than by the attempts that are made to draw a line between Black Republicans and Abolitionists. The parties are of the same complexion, and their designs are the same."²⁰ Another said: "The people begin to see that this war upon the South HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH. . . . The people are arousing to the alarming aggressions and terrible doctrines of these Republican-Abolitionists."²¹

By certain members of the two parties themselves further color was given to the claim that they were actuated by similar purposes. The famous anti-slavery enthusiast, Gerrit Smith, for instance, wrote from Peterboro, New York, that the republicans there were nearly all abolitionists.²² It is not strange, therefore, that in a "John Brown meeting" at Peterboro, presided over by Hon. James Barnett, a republican member of the New York legislature, resolutions should have been passed "unanimously and enthusiastically," advocating a course which was ardently defended by the abolitionists throughout the period under discussion:

Whereas, the dissolution of the present imperfect and inglorious Union between the free and slave States would result in the overthrow

¹⁹ *Columbian Weekly Register*, New Haven, December 15, 1860.

²⁰ *Utica Observer and Democrat*, December 13, 1859. The *Observer* further held that "the treatment of the South by a great party at the North is in violation of all laws of courtesy and kindness; of political and Christian duty; of good faith and constitutional obligation"; and it rebuked the republicans for accusing the Southern States of treason merely for their remonstrance against insult, and for their resulting declaration that if the North would not treat them "as friends and neighbors, members of one common family, bound together by a sacred constitutional compact," they would be compelled to withdraw from all association with the North. For, said the *Observer*, there could be no union between such persons and the people of the South.

²¹ *Hartford Daily Times*, February 20th.

²² To Charles Sumner, July 17, 1860. Sumner papers, Harvard University Library.

of slavery, and the consequent formation of a more perfect and glorious Union without the incubus of slavery; therefore,

Resolved, That we invite a free correspondence with the disunionists of the South in order to devise the most suitable way and means to secure the consummation "so devoutly to be wished."²³

The "opposition" press, moreover, teemed with quotations showing that many persons who, in 1860, were avowedly republicans, had before that date suggested secession as a means of settlement. The Concord, N. H., *Patriot*, for instance, gave²⁴ with grim pleasure a number like the following:

"There is not a business man anywhere, who, if he had such a partner [as the South], would hesitate to kick him out at once and have done with him."—Benjamin F. Wade, Senator from Ohio.

"Rather than tolerate national slavery as it now exists, let the Union be dissolved at once."—New York *Tribune*.

"If the power of this Union be used to protect slavery, then let the Union slide."—N. P. Banks, Governor of Massachusetts.

As has already been mentioned, however, during the months immediately following the Harper's Ferry incident, the republicans were almost a unit in opposition to the idea of secession. But certain of their opponents were not slow in giving expression to their belief that the change of front on the part of those who had recently seemed to consent to a dissolution of the union was not without motive. The "opposition" was quite free in admitting that the republicans were at this time very generally opposed to disunionism. "No one supposes that the Black Republicans desire to withdraw from the Union," acknowledged one democrat: "Their course is to abuse the South so that it cannot with self-respect stay in the Union, and thus throw the commission of the overt act upon that section." But the South would not be responsible, was the conclusion; for to suppose that the South would "remain with us unless this 'irrepressible' war upon their rights" was stopped, was to expect something

²³ *Pennsylvanian*, January 13th; Norwich (Conn.) *Aurora*, January 14th.

²⁴ January 25th.

of a partnership of States that would never be presumed of an individual partnership.²⁵ It was maintained, furthermore, that the South was fully as loyal as the North;²⁶ that the South longed for peace and quiet; and that if the republican party would abandon the irrepressible conflict, repudiate Helper's book, acknowledge the equality of the States, and stop its "eternal din and clatter" against slavery, quiet would be restored in a moment.²⁷ The republicans cry out "Treason! Disunion!" and are wonderfully devoted to the union; but suppose the South were stronger than the North and should say to the North, "We will plant slavery in New York and Massachusetts . . . an irrepressible conflict exists between the States. It is our mission to confer upon the benighted North the blessings of slavery." Then suppose the South should arm a band, invade Massachusetts, the South call the invaders brave and noble, and should commend a book urging violent attacks upon the North, "what would the North do under such circumstances? Would she say that the spirit of the Constitution was observed by the South; would she submit . . . or . . . protest against the continuance of the Union upon terms of inferiority and oppression?" The same writer concluded, "If the dark night of disunion ever settles upon this country, the abolitionized Republicans will have to answer for it."²⁸ The Providence *Post*, too, conceded that

The shrewd Republicans do not threaten disunion or consent to it. They cannot bear the idea of it. They abominate it. And they tell us that disunion shall not be. But how do they propose to avoid it? Why just as some men would avoid a duel. "I call you a liar, a villain, a scoundrel, a coward, a cutthroat; I spit in your face, knock off your hat, steal your coat, insult your wife. But don't talk of a duel to *me*. If you send me a challenge, I will meet you at your door, and blow out your brains." This, if we understand the case, is the *loyalty* of Republicanism. . . . [The South] only says, "You of the North have trampled on our rights; we ask you to desist; and if you do not, we propose to step out, and leave 'the Union' to your own keeping." It seems to us that this is far more honorable, and far more loyal, than the aggressive policy of the Repub-

²⁵ *Cheshire Republican*, Keene, N. H., November 23rd.

²⁶ *Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper*, November 16th.

²⁷ *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, December 9th.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, December 19th.

licans, which first robs the South of the benefits of the Union and then threatens it with subjugation.²⁹

The very basis of this "Republican abolition party" was war upon the South.³⁰ If their doctrine meant anything it meant disunion or a subjugation of the South. They might say that if the latter would only succumb to them, there was no need of a misunderstanding between the States; but that could never be. "Hence their strenuous efforts to make the world believe that the burden of disunion" would rest upon the South.³¹

As frequently throughout 1860, Northern defenders of the slave-holding States endeavored to establish their claim that the action of the majority party in the North indicated that the republicans were in fact less opposed to a separation than the South. They showed that in criminal law, it was a well-settled fact that the party assaulted was justified in killing, when, in fear of great bodily harm, he had retreated to the wall: "The reverse of this rule is, however, claimed by the Republicans of the North. They insist upon the right to assault the life of the South in every imaginable way, but deny to her the right of resistance or avoidance, and when absolutely pressed to the wall they say, 'Peace, be still, or our eighteen millions will annihilate you.'"³² It was then declared that the South had reached that extremity, and that the republicans, fearing the consequences, feigned to believe the South was wrong in order to conceal the cause: "The North, as now represented, is practically . . . in favor of disunion." The point was a simple one: the South, ruthlessly invaded in its rights, and its "very existence put in jeopardy," said it would not submit to the election as president of a well-known advocate of such injustice; "If there is treason or wrong in that, let the Black Republicans make the most of it. In point of fact, *they* are the trait-

²⁹ November 16th.

³⁰ Boston *Herald*, December 23rd. The *Herald* claimed on January 3rd to have a circulation more than double that of any other daily in New England.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² This, and the next sentence, are from the *Pennsylvanian*, January 21st.

ors—the *real* disunionists, who by an unparalleled course of revolutionary and unconstitutional action, are driving the country to disunion and ruin. The thing is too plain to admit of argument.”³³ And the republican members of the house of representatives were proclaimed “fit successors of their progenitors at Hartford.”³⁴

It has been stated above that few persons had either direct or indirect knowledge of the incursion into Virginia before that event occurred. But, aside from the causes of Southern discontent already mentioned, to what extent were the tenets of the republicans responsible for the raid? Most adherents of that party did not agree with Senator Wilson that the raid was a direct result of the doctrines taught by them; but opinions on the question may be found expressed by almost any member of the “opposition” press. “The whole tendency of the teachings of the Republican press and orators,” declared one, “has been for years toward insurrection and disunion.”³⁵ Efforts to implant and cultivate bitter political animosity against slavery could not fail “to incite suggestions of lawless and violent means for its extinction.”³⁶ The extremes to which the South was being driven in retaliation were the result of “disloyalty to the letter and spirit of the Constitution, so characteristic of the Republican party.”³⁷

Few men at the time were so influential as Senator Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, who, at the head of the larger faction of the democratic party, was Lincoln’s nearest competitor in the popular vote received in the presidential campaign in 1860. He was not the first to make such a statement as the following, found in his address to the senate on January 23rd:

I have no hesitation in expressing my firm and deliberate conviction that the Harper’s Ferry crime was the natural, logical, inevitable result of the doctrines and teachings of the Republican party, as explained and en-

³³ Norwich (Conn.) *Aurora*, February 4th.

³⁴ Pittsburgh *Post*, January 25th.

³⁵ *Republican Farmer*, Bridgeport, Conn., January 13th.

³⁶ *New Hampshire Argus and Spectator*, Newport, November 11th.

³⁷ Harrisburg *Patriot and Union*, March 20th.

forced in their platform, their partisan presses, their pamphlets and books, and especially in the speeches of their leaders in and out of Congress.³⁸

This bold declaration by the famous senator led many of his admirers to signify their agreement. For instance: "They [republicans] embrace within their party and organization, as a very considerable part thereof, a party who by their teachings, their principles, and their means, incited and aided John Brown in his recent foray into Virginia, and who unite in lamenting his fate as that of a martyr, who died in a righteous and just cause."³⁹

Nor were the democrats slow in pointing out which statements made by their opponents were sufficient to incite invasion of the slave-holding States. On the very day that Senator Wilson made the admission in Syracuse, the *New Haven Register* gave more than two columns of quotations from leading republicans and abolitionists showing that Brown was undoubtedly carrying out their dogmas. The *Utica Observer and Democrat* declared that the public must judge how far the republicans were guilty as accessories; for they preached aggressions upon the South as a duty of the whites, and insurrection as a right of the slave. Quotations were then given from Senators Seward, Wade, and Wilson, Representative Burlingame of Massachusetts, George William Curtis, and others, showing that they believed in aggressions upon the South, and were not "abolitionists," but republicans: "With such facts before us, it is undeniable that the disastrous and melancholy attempt at rebellion and insurrection by Ossawatimie Brown and his associates, is the legitimate consequence of the teachings and agitation of the slavery question by the Abolitionists and Republicans for years past."⁴⁰ It caused surprise that the moment a man actually commenced to carry out the program and principles of the republicans, some members of the party should denounce him as insane. Statements of republican leaders themselves, given in many papers of the time, "showed conclusively"

³⁸ *Congressional Globe*.

³⁹ *Democratic Standard*, Pottsville, Pa., January 28th.

⁴⁰ November 1st.

that they were among the "instigators, aiders and abettors of John Brown in his projected scheme."⁴¹

It is evident therefore that there existed a wide belief in the guilt of a large proportion of the Northern people in helping to incite fanatics to insurrection; and, as has been shown, the echoes of Brown's rifles had hardly died away before there were in all parts of the South suggestions looking toward a withdrawal from the Union. But the foray into Virginia was in itself simply an incident: those who sympathized with the South knew that the reasons for the recent outburst of secessionism were far deeper. A greater cause was the "bitter and intensely malignant hatred which the Republican press and orators" had been continually stirring up "against our Southern brethren."⁴² And in a speech before a democratic state convention at Reading, Pennsylvania, Hon. William Montgomery charged his opponents with "waging direct war upon the Southern half of our confederacy," and with treating the national compact with contempt and trampling it under foot.⁴³

Another accusation brought against the republican party—and neither party was guiltless of such accusations—was that they would not agree to abide by the decision of the supreme court of the United States in the Dred Scott case, which declared that granting citizenship to negroes, and prohibiting the entrance of slaves into any of the common territories, were unconstitutional. The "opposition" could not see the consistency in republicans proclaiming that they were in favor of the union when they refused to uphold the authorized expounders of its constitution.⁴⁴ One party or the other was wrong, it was agreed; and as the court had decided the matter in favor of the South, it became the duty of the North to submit. If they did not, on them would "rest the responsibility of all the disasters" which would surely follow.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Nashua (N. H.) *Gazette*, November 17th.

⁴² *Ibid.*, February 23rd.

⁴³ Pittsburgh *Post*, March 7th.

⁴⁴ Bangor, Me., *Daily Union*, December 26th.

⁴⁵ Hartford *Daily Times*, February 7th.

Believing as they did that the slave-holders had been thus imposed upon, many of their friends in the North continued to defend them in maintaining the possible expediency of secession. "We say if the South *has* any constitutional rights," asserted the Burlington (Vt.) *Sentinel*, "that they have been ignored or outraged, by all, or the majority of black republicans, and the South is beginning to wake up to the consequences (of which Harper's Ferry is but the initiation) and to say, 'our rights must be respected, if any we have, or the Union is of no value to us; if we have *no* rights, then of course the Union is not worth our troubling ourselves about!' This is the language of cool, thinking, conservative men."⁴⁶ It was admitted that if the union was divided Southern men would do it; but, was the claim, it would be strange if they did not; for "we have black-guarded them for years; we have passed laws nullifying a plain provision of the Constitution;⁴⁷ we have sent Old Brown and his confederates to cut their throats; and we are industriously printing and circulating incendiary matter calculated to stimulate more invasions;" hence, for their withdrawal, they "will appeal to the world for justification."⁴⁸

Thus, it may be seen that in the North there were many people who endeavored firmly to vindicate what they consid-

⁴⁶ December 23rd.

⁴⁷ Meaning the clause for the return of fugitive slaves.

⁴⁸ *Union Democrat*, Manchester N. H., January 24th. The *Democrat* explained a week later that secessionism was easy and irremediable when either section was ready for it. The *Pittsburgh Post* said again on December 21st that the republican party, "which has attempted, and is attempting, to trample on these [the South's] rights, is wholly responsible for the sentiments of disunion which exist in the South." It then asked another Pittsburgh journal if it expected people to be "villified, abused, have their rights trampled upon, and their persons and property rendered unsafe, and yet maintain relations of 'peace and amity'" with those who outraged all that was dear to them. December 23 it said: "If the South leave the Union, it is because the sectional feeling of the North has driven them therefrom."

The opinion of ex-President Franklin Pierce was analogous. On December 7th he wrote from Concord, N. H., to William Appleton and others, Boston: "Subtle, crafty men, who passing by duties and obligations, habitually appeal to sectional prejudices and passions, by denouncing the institutions and people of the South and thus inflame the Northern mind to the pitch of resistance to the clear provisions of the funda-

ered proper complaints by the South. What was the position of these friends with regard to the probable future course of the Southern States? If their threats should materialize, whose would be the fault? More than a year before the South Carolina ordinance of secession, the *Pennsylvanian* alleged that the policy of the abolitionists was to irritate the Southerners into resistance, forcing them to arm and attempt actual secession, then to use the federal power to coerce them on the plea of preserving the union and of suppressing insurrection and rebellion against the laws; that if abolitionists alone had praised Brown there might be hesitancy in giving voice to fears for the future, but that sixty-eight members of congress indorsed a book which openly warred on slavery everywhere; hence, it questioned whether, if all the Northern States should return republican majorities, the ties binding the two sections together would not be virtually dissolved and disunion pronounced thereby.⁴⁹ Several journals agreed: "If disunion ever *does* come, it will be due to the teachings—the agitations—of the New York *Tribune*, and its echoes of the newspaper press of the North."⁵⁰ And Senator Bigler, of Pennsylvania, asserted that the republican doctrine of an irrepressible conflict between the institutions of the States, their "constant resistance to the clear constitutional rights of the slave-holding States of the Confederacy,

mental law—who under plausible pretexts addressed to those prejudices and passions, pass local laws designed to evade constitutional obligations, are really and truly, whether they believe it or not, the men who are hurrying us upon swift destruction." Pierce Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴⁹ December 7th and 19th. Similarly, the New York *Herald*, January 12th, thought that the Northern incendiaries had succeeded in nothing but alienating the South from the North, and that if they should continue much longer they would cause "a practical, substantial severance of the Union; rendering the future secession of the Southern States a mere matter of form." The Boston *Post*, December 2nd, declared it was not right to make the South choose between dishonorable submission to fanaticism and opposition by resistance; and added, "If the Union were to be dissolved tomorrow, the South would be the victim of the violation of a public compact by an oppressive majority."

⁵⁰ Bellows Falls (Vt.) *Argus*, February 16th; Plattsburg (N. Y.) *Republican*, quoted by St. Albans (Vt.) *Democrat*, March 6th.

and the wanton outrages so frequently perpetrated by them upon the feelings of the people of those States," were perhaps the only means that could possibly produce dissolution.⁵¹

But through all the condemnation of those who were alleged to have produced the dissension, through the avowals of friendship for the assailed, ran a strong vein of determination to uphold the maxim of Andrew Jackson, "The Union must and shall be preserved." And how should this be done? The undertaking was two-fold: "1st, Against the sectionalism of the republican party; 2nd, Against the disunionism of the Southern States—the product, in a good degree, of that republican sectionalism."⁵²

⁵¹ *Pennsylvanian*, April 9th.

⁵² *New York Evening Express*, January 10th.

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL CONVENTIONS OF 1860: A BREACH IN THE DEMOCRATIC RANKS

When congress assembled on December 5, 1859, the house of representatives immediately set to work to elect a speaker. Barely less than a majority of the members were republicans; their candidate for speaker was John Sherman, of Ohio, one of the sixty-eight who had indorsed¹ Helper's *Impending Crisis*. The democrats far outnumbered any other faction of the "opposition," but were by no means numerous enough to elect one from their number without the help of the others who opposed republicanism. The nominations were made and balloting began at once, but, as was expected, no candidate could secure enough votes for election. As the republicans had almost a majority, under normal conditions they would have had sufficient votes, aided by a few from the smaller factions, to elect the man of their choice. But the insuperable obstacle to the election of Mr. Sherman was his commendation of a book which advocated the most extreme measures against slavery. An average of about one ballot a day was taken for almost two months without result. Before the end of January, many people in the North began to upbraid the republicans for refusing to permit the election of anyone save a man who had given his indorsement to a work which the Southerners regarded as a violent attack upon their constitutional rights.

The republicans accused the democrats of trying to bring about a dissolution of the union by not allowing a speaker to be elected by the most numerous party. The democratic press rush-

¹ Sherman showed in the House on January 20th that he did not sign the indorsement in person, but that, without reading the book, he had allowed a friend to attach his name, and indicated clearly that he did not approve of all of the book after reading it. In a letter dated January 16th, his brother, William T. Sherman, soon to become famous in the army, said to him, "I received your letter explaining how you happened to sign for that Helper Book. Of course it was an unfortunate accident." W. T. Sherman Manuscripts, Congressional Library.

ed to the defense of their members, and showed that the democrats could not prevent a choice if they desired, as they were in a decided minority; and at the same time told the republicans of the house that in trying to foist upon that body one of the sixty-eight who had countenanced what many considered a serious affront to the South, they were guilty not only of a "studied *design*," but of a "deliberate overt attempt," to cause the secession of a number of States.² The *Cheshire Republican*, (Keene, N. H.), after recounting the familiar charges against the republicans, added:

And then, as if this indignity were not enough, the Republicans have put forward for Speaker in Congress—the third office in the United States—a man who has indorsed with his own hand the very measures carried out by the invaders of Virginia. And they refuse any compromise. The South must take this man, who recommends insurrection and murder, or nobody. . . . It is under these irritating circumstances that Members of Congress from the South declare that *unless they can be protected in their Constitutional rights—that if a party is coming into power that wholly ignores these rights, and recommends an invasion of them—that if this party is determined to thrust upon them a Speaker, as a National representative of their policy, who indorses a forcible overturning of their institutions—rather than submit to the rule of such a party they will leave the Union and take care of themselves!* This is the feeling of the South, and they would be cravens if they possessed any other. This is the disunionism that the Black Republicans talk about as existing at the South. It is a disunionism resulting entirely from their own fanaticism, and disposition to infringe upon the rights of others.³

Finally, on February 1st, William Pennington, a New Jersey republican who was not one of the sixty-eight, was chosen speaker on the forty-fourth trial. This long dispute in the national house of representatives crystallized antagonism between the parties, and caused the presidential nominations to be awaited with more intense interest.

The democratic party had much reason to believe that the nominee of their convention, which was to meet at Charleston, South Carolina, late in April, would be successful in the November election. This hope was partly justified by the favorable

² *E. g.*, Reading (Pa.) *Gazette and Democrat*, January 28th.

³ January 25th. The Pottsville (Pa.) *Democratic Standard*, on the 28th, contained an editorial quite similar to this one.

local elections from Maine to Pennsylvania in the spring of 1860; though it was also evident that they could not win without a contest bitterly fought. The two leading parties were as hostile toward each other as political factions could well be, while the feeling between the North and the South was still more pronounced. Between the latter in the houses of congress there were "no relations not absolutely indispensable for the conduct of joint business," wrote Senator J. H. Hammond, of South Carolina, just before the meeting at Charleston. "No two nations on earth are or ever were more distinctly separate and hostile than we are," he remarked in the same letter.⁴

Denunciation of their opponents by the press on both sides, though lessened in volume, was by no means at an end. The question of slavery was agitated so rigorously by the republicans that it led one writer to say, "It is very evident that the breaking-up of the Union is the real aim and object of the anti-slavery party, and that nothing could so disappoint them as the settlement of the slavery question;"⁵ and another declared that the "Blacks" knew the South loved the union, but as they were determined to trample on its rights, in order "to cover up their iniquity and hide their corruption," they were crying through the land that it was "the South, *the South*," that was "doing the mischief—hallooing, 'Thief, thief!' with each a stolen negro under his cloak!"⁶ Without a recognition of slavery by the constitution there could have been no union, and now if the North should persist in its course, it would "throw off the South from any further constitutional obligations."⁷

The members of the "opposition" did not deny that they disapproved of the "sectionalism" of certain Southerners; though they commonly added some such statement as, "But truth and candor compel us to hold Northern fanaticism. . . respon-

⁴ J. B. McMaster, *History of the People of the United States*, vol. viii, p. 446.

⁵ New York *Herald*, February 24th.

⁶ "An Old Jeffersonian," in the *Cheshire Republican*, Keene, N. H., March 7th.

⁷ New Haven *Register*, February 25th.

sible for all its fearful consequences.”⁸ Senator Wigfall’s statement that he thought “nothing better could occur than a dissolution of the Union,” induced the Boston *Courier* to state, “So thinks Mr. Wendell Phillips. It is a comfort to find there are fools in Texas as well as in Massachusetts.”⁹

As may be inferred from what has been said, each political party would certainly uphold its principles through the approaching contest in the strongest possible manner. Although Senator Seward of New York was generally believed by republicans to be the man most likely to receive the nomination at their Chicago convention, the powerful New York *Tribune* threw its strength against him, and many weaker journals followed in its train. The adherents of Senator Douglas were firm in their censure of the Lecomptonites for trying to put forward a candidate who should uphold the doctrine of congressional intervention in behalf of slavery, the anti-Lecompton faction maintaining by their “popular sovereignty” theory that the territories should decide for themselves whether or not they should have slavery. The Lecompton democrats were by no means agreed as to whom they should put forward. The abolitionists made no nomination in 1860. The constitutional-unionists, who won to themselves the more numerous element of the old Whig party, nominated John Bell of Tennessee for president and Edward Everett of Massachusetts for vice-president.

The first national convention to assemble was the democratic, at Charleston, South Carolina, April 23rd. It had long been obvious that Senator Douglas would be among the leaders in the popular estimation of the convention. It was assumed by many, both democrats and republicans, that he was to be the nominee. The fact that some republicans made this assumption and seemed to manifest a desire for his nomination led certain of his democratic opponents to contend that this was conclusive proof that he was not the man for the time; for “The Black leaders certainly would not desire his nomination if they believed him to be

⁸ *Pennsylvanian*, March 26th.

⁹ March 24th.

the most formidable candidate that could be put in the field against them."¹⁰

It was known that the platform upon which his supporters would endeavor to secure his nomination would be in substance the same at that upon which Mr. Buchanan had been nominated in 1856 at Cincinnati, upholding "popular sovereignty." But during Buchanan's administration, the Dred Scott decision had been rendered, sustaining the position of the Lecompton faction, namely, that it was unconstitutional for congress to legislate against the introduction of slaves into any territory. Hence the South was anxious to take advantage of this supreme court decision in its favor, and incorporate the essence of it into the democratic platform. This effort found many approvers at the North, and as early as February 18th the *New York Weekly Day-Book* prophesied "an inglorious and overwhelming defeat" for the democracy if they should resort to the "compromising, double-dealing and popular sovereignty dodges;" and further, on March 17th, asserted that if the Charleston convention should place the question openly and fairly before the Northern people and the party should meet defeat, the South might then, if it thought the danger was pressing, "refuse to recognize an anti-slavery executive." "Again, on April 7th, the same newspaper, after striving to show that the Dred Scott decision fully justified the Lecompton position, reminded its readers that Virginia gave the Northwest Territory to freedom, and that the non-slave States secured most of the Louisiana Purchase and all of California. It was not unjust, therefore, for the South to protest against being shut out from the common territory still remaining. Even an article in the *Savannah Republican* from which the following is an extract was characterized¹¹ in the North as "in the highest degree discriminating and just": "*The South,*" said the republicans, "*is resolved, firmly and unalterably, and by*

¹⁰ *New Hampshire Gazette*, Portsmouth, April 21st.

¹¹ By the *Boston Courier*, March 7th. The article in the *Republican*, however, expressed the conviction that the North was not so bitter against the South as was represented, and that the slavery agitation was largely by politicians for personal gain.

the unanimous voice of all her citizens, never to submit to another Federal discrimination against her on account of her institution of slavery."

When the convention assembled it was quickly seen that the main fight was to center around the adoption of a platform. Of the committee on resolutions, seventeen of the thirty-three members were opposed to the position of Douglas, and, instead of agreeing upon a platform, the committee presented majority and minority reports. The majority declared that a territorial legislature had no power to abolish slavery in a territory; the minority practically reaffirmed the Cincinnati platform, but stated in addition that the democratic party was pledged to abide by the Dred Scott decision, as it had been boldly asserted by Douglas that this decision and his "popular sovereignty" doctrine were entirely consistent. His claim was that although by the dictum of the court the right of the master to his slave in a territory could not, under the guarantees of the constitution, be divested or alienated by an act of congress, it necessarily remained a barren right unless it should be protected by local legislation; or, in other words, that if the legislature of the territory should oppose slavery, a law of congress would avail nothing. The Douglas platform, however, was adopted by a vote of 165 to 138, whereupon the delegation from all of the Gulf States, together with those from South Carolina and Arkansas, formally withdrew from the convention, protesting against its action. By a rule of the convention two-thirds of the whole electoral vote was necessary to nominate. Several times Douglas received more than a majority of the total vote but never the required two-thirds. As it was manifestly impossible to reach any result, the remaining delegates adjourned on May 3rd to meet in Baltimore the 18th of June. The "seceders" meanwhile had formed themselves into a convention, but now terminated their proceedings by a resolution to meet again at Richmond on the second Monday in June.¹²

Before the meeting at Charleston the democratic factions had

¹² Based largely on Rhodes.

been so thoroughly occupied with assailing the common enemy that they had found little time to quarrel among themselves; but, from the beginning of the sessions of the convention, dissensions within the party were much in evidence. Some declared they would support no candidate but Douglas unless some one not already prominently named should be nominated.¹³ Others who had proclaimed their intention to support any person chosen at Charleston, veered strongly to the side of Douglas, and pronounced those who prevented his nomination to be a "rule or ruin" faction.¹⁴ Immediately after the adjournment the partisans of Douglas mightily rebuked the "seceders," declared that no other democrat could win, and said that by his nomination a complete victory was assured.

The importance of this convention for our purpose is chiefly that it was the entering wedge alienating the Southern democrats from those who had stood with them at the North. The Southern "bolters" were spoken of by some Northern democrats as undoubtedly designing to "destroy the Union."¹⁵ It was urged that a majority of the democrats should not permit themselves to be thwarted by a "factious minority,"¹⁶ and the demands of the "seceders" were called "preposterous and absurd."¹⁷ The Newport, R. I., *Advertiser*, which on May 3rd showed that the South had "often yielded to Northern pressure for the sake of peace and good neighborhood," and that every compromise into which the South had entered had "resulted in a sacrifice without an available equivalent," just a week later classed the "irritated secessionists of the South" with the "fanatical nullifiers of the North," holding that they agreed in nothing else than the destruction of the government. And there was rejoicing that the Southern "disunionists," even though aided by certain Northern "demagogues," were not able to defeat the "wishes of the people."¹⁸

¹³ *E. g.*, Philadelphia *Press*, April 30th.

¹⁴ *E. g.*, Luzerne *Union*, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., April 25th, May 2nd.

¹⁵ *E. g.*, Pittsburgh *Post*, May 9th and 17th.

¹⁶ Rochester *Union and Advertiser*, May 7th.

¹⁷ Utica *Observer and Democrat*, May 8th.

¹⁸ Boston *Herald*, May 5th.

The "seceders" were accused of "eating their own words" by repudiating the Cincinnati platform. Other forms of complaint made against those who withdrew were, that by demanding the intervention of congress in the territories they were committing themselves to the doctrine of the republican party itself;¹⁹ and that certain Southern leaders had long desired a Southern confederacy anyway, and that this was an auspicious time for the culmination of the plan. This plea was based largely upon a letter written some time before by William L. Yancey, of Alabama, in which he said, "At the proper moment, by one organized concerted action, we can precipitate the cotton States into a revolution." The separation of a portion of the Southern delegates would have claimed more consideration and sympathy if Yancey had not been a leader of the movement.²⁰

Still another argument, which, however, was made much more freely eight months later, was that, although the democrats of the North had long stood by the South in its fight for the maintenance of its just claims, now when their common opponent was in a majority in many States, certain enthusiastic Southerners asked more than should properly be granted. While it was conceded that the "Southern delegates at Charleston. . . believed not only that they were right, but that the safety of their institutions and the integrity of their principles were involved and could only be preserved by the course they adopted," their action was criticised as "strangely inconsistent, ungrateful and unjust, as well as suicidal."²¹ The democracy of the North "had sacrificed much," but as the republicans had already won the house of representatives and might win the senate and the executive also, if Southern leaders should turn their backs upon their Northern friends, the sacrifice would be vain.²² After the nomination had been made the latter part of June,²³ the Manchester, N. H., *Union Democrat*, admitting that its politi-

¹⁹ Nashua (N. H.) *Gazette*, May 10th.

²⁰ Reading (Pa.) *Gazette and Democrat*, May 12th.

²¹ Providence *Post*, May 2nd.

²² *Ibid.*, May 9th.

²³ *Infra*, pp.

cal sympathies were "almost wholly with the South," and that it believed the people of that section had never asked more than they were clearly entitled to until the meeting of the Charleston convention, declared that if the South could appreciate the "blind fanaticism, the unreasoning prejudice, and the knavish demagoguery" its Northern well-wishers had been forced to encounter, even though the protection of slavery in the territories might be constitutional, the South would not press a "theory" which so menaced the democracy of the North.²⁴ Some members of the "opposition," while considering the South the injured party, were convinced that the feeling between that section and its Northern friends had been changed; and that if the "interventionists" should fail and should attempt a dissolution of the union, it would not be permitted.²⁵

A few democrats did not at this time take a firm stand on either side of the controversy,²⁶ but most of those who did not support Douglas were ready to defend the "seceders." The convention had barely begun its sessions before it was announced that the voting down in committee of the Cincinnati platform at Charleston showed that the Southern elements were "determined to have a clear issue on the slavery question, as distinct as that which the black republicans" had adopted in their fraternization, and which was, in fact, the one great issue before the people.²⁷ On May 4th, the day after the convention adjourned, there was much commendation of the stand made by the Southern democrats.²⁸ For the South to present an unbroken column in de-

²⁴ July 3rd.

²⁵ *Providence Post*, June 29th.

²⁶ The *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, for instance, while manifesting no bitterness, merely hoped, May 4th, that the South would elect a more moderate set of delegates next time.

²⁷ *New York Herald*, April 26th.

²⁸ The *Hartford Times*, for instance, held it not at all unreasonable to accept the proposition of the Tennessee delegates to add to the Cincinnati platform a resolution to the effect that the rights of neither person nor property of any citizen of the United States could be destroyed or impaired by Congressional or Territorial legislation." On the 10th, the *Times* deemed the demands of the South not unjust to the people of any portion of the union; for they did not ask the North to take either a candidate offensive to them, or else nobody; but they did ask

fense of its constitutional rights was said to be the only way to stem the waves of anti-slaveryism; and it was soon asserted that the position of the "seceders" was "absolutely essential. . . to the safety, order and prosperity of Southern society;" and that the people of the South must have the same benefits from the government as the people of the North, or the union "must be . . . and should be overthrown."²⁹

The *New Hampshire Gazette*, Portsmouth, said:

The position of the South is right. Indeed, we do not see how anyone not inherently an Abolitionist can take a different view of the subject.

The whole question is very simple, and embraced in a small compass. The public Territories are common property, purchased by the common blood or common treasure of the nation. As such the North and South have equal rights in them while they remain in the territorial condition. This the Supreme Court has clearly affirmed, and this, and simply this, the Southern representatives in the Convention asked to have plainly avowed in the platform.³⁰

We have seen that Bell and Everett were selected as the candidates of the constitutional union party. The nomination occurred on May 10th. Their newspaper supporters were not numerous, but among them were some of much prominence.³¹

The republican convention at Chicago was organized on May 16th. In the East, the universal belief was that Seward would

that the North should not force an offensive candidate upon them: "It is of no great consequence to Vermont and Massachusetts, and eight or ten other States, who the candidate is. They will go Black Republican anyway."

²⁹ *New York Weekly Day-Book*, May 5th and 26th.

³⁰ May 12th. The Concord, N. H., *Democratic Standard*, May 19th, was glad that Southern senators had indicated that the South was resolved to stand upon the position taken at Charleston; for "this is the true and only policy which the South can pursue. . . . Her claim is undoubtedly right and just, and cannot be denied without a violation of the true spirit of the compact of Union and an outrage upon justice. She can take nothing less without the sacrifice of both her rights and her honor." But, said the *Standard*, her battle must be fought "in the Union. Then she will have friends and supporters, and, if need be, swords and bayonets in every State of the North, to fight her battle."

³¹ *E. g.*, the *New York Evening Express*, which on March 29th said that tens of thousands "never Democrats, and never wishing to be," knew not where to go or what to do, after the names of these nominees were announced supported them with vigor, holding that all other parties were "sectional"; the *Boston Courier*, declaring on April 2nd that

be nominated, and when, among others, the wires mentioned Lincoln, New England, especially, could scarcely believe he would be a serious contender. It knew little of his stalwart worth and discerning intellect, though everywhere those who knew him were convinced of his honesty of purpose. When he was nominated on the 18th the republicans of the West were wild with delight, while those of the East tried to make the best of what most of them regarded a poor selection. A few democrats knew more about the republican candidate than some of his own supporters knew. The Boston *Herald*, for instance, considered the nomination in many respects strong and difficult to defeat: "Those who flatter themselves that the Democrats are to walk over the Presidential course with ease will find themselves mistaken."³² But most of the "opposition" were sincere in deriding the nomination, agreeing that it was a "blunder and a fatal one."³³ Lincoln's views were said to be "as extreme and ultra as any Sewardite or Abolitionist" could desire; and it was feared that because he was honest and sincere, he would be more likely to carry his extreme views into effect.³⁴ If he should be elected, the train would be laid "to consummate a project of which Harper's Ferry was only a faint prelude."³⁵

When the Baltimore convention assembled on June 18th the Richmond meeting had already adjourned to await its action. After wrangling for several days, the Baltimore group split again and more delegates withdrew, joining those who had ad-

the "basis of the [constitutional union] party is devotion to the Constitution and the Union, and consequently, opposition to Republicanism," on May 11th accorded Bell and Everett the highest praise; the *Troy Whig* on the same day greeted the nomination with "honest admiration," adding, "Here was indeed a *National Convention*—the first and last of the year."

³² May 19th.

³³ The *Utica Observer and Democrat* called it "the most extraordinary nomination ever made . . . the result fills the [republican] party with ill-concealed disappointment and resentment, and destroys its last hope of success." Substantially the same opinion was expressed by the *Dover, N. H., Gazette*, May 26th, with the proviso, "If Mr. Douglas is nominated by the Democracy."

³⁴ *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, May 19th and 30th.

³⁵ *Ulster Republican*, Kingston, N. Y., May 30th.

journed from Richmond. The supporters of each side grew violent in their mutual denunciations, while some sought to steer between the two factions, or vented their spleen against the republicans. It was charged that a nomination made by either the "regulars" or the "secessionists" would partake more of a sectional than a national character.³⁶

As far back as January, the vice-president of the United States, John C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, had been suggested as the next president.³⁷ The convention of the "seceders" adopted the Southern platform and nominated Breckinridge as Buchanan's successor. After the withdrawal from the original Baltimore meeting, the remaining delegates nominated Douglas with but thirteen dissenting votes. "The Democrat party is destroyed," commented the *New York Herald*; "There is not the remotest visible ghost of a contingency for a reunion of the belligerent elements of this revolutionary convention." The *Herald* then predicted defeat and disgrace for its party, and presumed that the republican leaders were "parceling out the offices and spoils of the next administration."³⁸

The democratic party was now thoroughly disorganized. The assaults of its two branches upon each other were quickly renewed. Some of the Douglas adherents, however, showed no animus toward the other wing, conceding that Breckinridge was a "gallant and popular man;" but they supported Douglas because he was the nominee of the "original, or regular" convention.³⁹ Other Douglas supporters were almost as severe as the republicans in attacking those who sided with Breckinridge, declaring that the Baltimore secession was a "piece of humbuggery;" that its ultimate object was a dissolution of the union; that those who supported Breckinridge had gone out of the democratic party; and that it was just as bad to vote for Breckin-

³⁶ *Buffalo Evening Post*, June 23rd.

³⁷ *E. g.*, by the Pottsville (Pa.) *Democratic Standard*, January 14th.

³⁸ *New York Herald*, June 22nd and 25th.

³⁹ *E. g.*, *Hartford Times*, June 25th. The *Times* later supported Breckinridge.

ridge as for Lincoln, for, "in either case, Lincoln wins."⁴⁰ Some used even stronger language, speaking of the "abettors of treason against the Union, who marched out of the Convention," and believing Mr. Breckinridge "too sound a Democrat ever to accept such a nomination."⁴¹ And a Douglas ratification meeting held at Faneuil Hall, Boston, resolved, "That we are opposed to agitators and disunionists at the North—and secessionists and disunionists at the South."⁴²

Those who determined to aid Breckinridge gave as their reason that his was the only platform which guaranteed to each State its full privileges, and that his standard recognized the constitutional rights of all the people and States of the union—a platform national and not sectional—the only platform which was truly national.⁴³ This faction was milder in its opposition to the Douglas followers than the latter toward their former comrades.

With the democracy thus divided, it was almost universally admitted that the next president could not be from that party, though a few of the more optimistic ventured to claim eventual success for their respective candidates. Besides the republicans, the only persons who seemed to derive joy from the split in the democratic ranks were the constitutional-unionists, who thought that the situation offered every encouragement "to arouse the spirits and waken the energies" of their party.⁴⁴

Various possible solutions of the predicament in which the democrats found themselves were offered. A number deemed the unconditional withdrawal of both the Breckinridge and Douglas tickets the most practicable and successful arrange-

⁴⁰ The quotations are from the *Providence Post*, June 27th.

⁴¹ *E. g.*, *Pittsburgh Post*, June 25th and 26th.

⁴² *Boston Herald*, June 30th.

⁴³ *E. g.*, Concord (N. H.) *Democratic Standard*, June 30th. The *Norristown (Pa.) Register*, June 26th, sought to justify itself in supporting Breckinridge by declaring his election was the surest way to defeat the "treasonable doctrines" of the Chicago convention.

⁴⁴ *Boston Courier*, June 25th. The *Troy Whig* (same date) was persuaded that this party would carry a number of states.

ment that could be made.⁴⁵ Another suggestion was that the easiest way to end the conflict was by a "dissolution of the Confederacy."⁴⁶ But the greatest number sought to remedy the difficulty by a union of the two democratic factions. Innumerable editorials to this effect appeared within a week of the nominations, showing that it would be worse than nonsense to run two electoral tickets.

For the time being, at least, there seemed to be one bright spot in the turmoil of party strife. All of the presidential candidates and practically all of their supporters were now loud in their expressions of attachment to the union. This led at least one editor to assure the country that it might rest easy as to the future of the United States.⁴⁷ During the past winter disunionists were numerous, but with the "irrepressible conflict" inside the democratic party the nation was stronger than ever, and all hands were fighting to stay united.⁴⁸ It was insisted that the "perils of the Union" bugbear had served its purpose. The government was never so safe as now: and with everybody resisting the charge of disunion as a grievous calumny, it might be hoped that the union would "go over to another century at least."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *E. g.*, *Hartford Times*, June 28th.

⁴⁶ Letter from John Mitchel, *New York Irish-American*, June 30th.

⁴⁷ *Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper*, July 4th.

⁴⁸ *New York Herald*, June 30th.

⁴⁹ *New York Evening Post*, June 30th.

CHAPTER IV

BEFORE THE ELECTION OF LINCOLN

Among the reasons offered as to why the country should rest in peace with reference to the future was that "a taste of the fat things of public place" should "operate as soothingly upon the radicalism of the Republicans" as it had often done upon their opponents; and in this case the South would have no cause to secede.¹ The New York *World* quoted each of the four presidential candidates, showing that they were all thorough-going union men and always had been.² Breckinridge, the one most commonly accused of being a "disunion" candidate, was reported as saying: "Instead of breaking up the Union, we intend to strengthen and to lengthen it." So the *World* thought that for the nation to tear itself into pieces was an absolute impossibility. If the statements of the candidates were true, although each of four parties talked and acted as though the salvation of the government depended upon its own success, the country would be safe, whoever was elected.³

Shortly after the Baltimore conventions, however, Senator Sumner had made a speech in the United States senate on the "Barbarism of Slavery," parts of which one of his republican colleagues pronounced "harsh, vindictive, and slightly brutal."⁴ July 11th he delivered a lecture in the same tone at Cooper Institute, New York, which was characterized next day as "calculated to exasperate the South."⁵ A young congressman from South Carolina, Lawrence M. Keitt, published a "somewhat bombastic disunion letter" in the Charleston *Mercury* in reply

¹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, June 25th.

² June 27th.

³ Pittsburgh *Post*, July 21st.

⁴ Rhodes, vol. ii, p. 477.

⁵ This lecture seems to have encouraged some Northern democrats. For instance, in the Pierce papers, Congressional Library, is a letter from "H. Fuller, New York Hotel, dated July 12th, which says, "there is no possibility of defeating Lincoln—unless the . . . Democracy unite, or unless Sumner's violence produces a reaction."

to such attacks on Southern institutions; and the battle was on again. A few days after Keitt's letter was published the *World* still saw no reason to retract any part of the congratulations indulged in on the apparent oneness of sentiment as to the value of the union, as it believed Keitt would wield no more influence at the South than Wendell Phillips and other prominent disunionists at the North.⁶ But there was another element in the situation: nothing had resulted from the suggestions for democratic fusion, without which a republican triumph was almost certain.⁷

The Douglas adherents now began to suggest that Breckinridge should resign his candidacy.⁸ The reasons for such suggestions were several. Favorite charges were, that the upholders of Breckinridge had repudiated the principles—"popular sovereignty" especially—upon which he had been elected vice-president in 1856;⁹ that he was the representative of Yancey and the disunionists;¹⁰ that some of the Charleston "seceders" preferred a disruption of the convention with an ulterior view to a dissolution of the union;¹¹ and that the real object of the Breckinridge movement was, in fact, to defeat Douglas, elect Lincoln, and so pave the way for a Southern confederacy.¹² Some Northern democrats were even less moderate in their assaults, adding to the term "disunionists" such expressions as "frauds," "renegades," and "betrayers."¹³

The friends of Breckinridge came vigorously to the rescue. Their chief efforts were made in attempting to show that their candidate was not a disunionist. They branded such accusa-

⁶ July 25th.

⁷ *New York Times*, July 25th.

⁸ E. g., Wilkes-Barre *Luzerne Union*, August 1st; Providence *Post*, August 11th; Nashua (N. H.) *Gazette*, August 23rd.

⁹ *New York Irish-American*, August 11th; Manchester (N. H.) *Union Democrat*, September 25th.

¹⁰ *Utica Observer and Democrat*, July 10th.

¹¹ *Albany Atlas and Argus*, July 30th.

¹² *Suffolk Democrat*, Babylon, L. I., August 10th.

¹³ *Hartford Weekly Post*, August 18th; *Vermont Patriot*, Montpelier, July 21st; *Boston Herald*, October 23rd.

tions as "preposterous"¹⁴ and "malicious."¹⁵ The Breckinridge faction did not deny, however, that certain persons who advocated a possible withdrawal from the union stood with them in the presidential contest; but they made the counter-charge that many prominent disunionists sided with Douglas, and asserted that there would be no disunionism anywhere if everybody could secure justice in the union.¹⁶ They further insisted that the very reason for their desire to elect Breckinridge was to prevent disunion.¹⁷

Some of this faction, in addition to claiming that there were secessionists in the opposing wing of the democracy, held that the "sectionalism" of Douglas was almost as pronounced as that of Lincoln himself, because an overwhelming majority of the people in one-half of the nation considered him well-nigh as dangerous as a republican would be.¹⁸ They declared that his partisans were responsible for the disruption and probable defeat of the democratic party.¹⁹ The chief argument against him by his democratic opponents was as follows: "It is the duty of the

¹⁴ *Boston Press and Post* (semi-weekly edition of the *Post*), August 6th.

¹⁵ *Republican Farmer*, Bridgeport, Conn., October 19th. A number of journals which did not support Breckinridge denied charges of disloyalty imputed to him. *E. g.*, *Boston Courier*, September 8th: "No candid person could imagine Mr. Breckinridge himself to entertain any views inconsistent with true and generous patriotism"; *New York World*, September 7th: "No candid man, if intelligent, has ever for a moment distrusted Mr. Breckinridge's loyalty to the Union."

¹⁶ *E. g.*, *Pennsylvanian*, August 10th; Norristown, Pa., *Register*, August 21st.

¹⁷ *E. g.*, *Pennsylvanian*, August 28th.

¹⁸ Concord (N. H.) *Democratic Standard*, July 21st. The editor of this paper, Edmund Burke, was—according to the *Dover, N. H., Gazette*, November 3rd—"actually the head and front—the father—of . . . the Breckinridge party in New Hampshire." The *Granite State Monthly* (Concord), for March, 1880, has an article on Burke which shows he was a native of Vermont, was a prominent member of congress from New Hampshire for several terms, and that in the national democratic convention of 1852 the choice of Franklin Pierce as democratic candidate was due more largely to him than to any other individual. For correspondence between Burke and Pierce in 1852, just before and just after the nomination of the latter, see *American Historical Review*, Vol. X, 110-122.

¹⁹ Concord, N. H., *Democratic Standard*, August 11th.

Government to *protect* all property. . . the Constitution recognizes slaves as property. The Government officers, then, must protect the citizen in holding his property;" but Mr. Douglas holds that the territorial authority may take precedence over that of the nation; therefore Mr. Breckinridge and his friends sustain the doctrine of the government, while Mr. Douglas does not.²⁰

The Douglas men, however, were as zealous in defending their favorite as in assailing others. Some of them had but little disposition to complain at the "few democrats" who refused to take a stand for the Illinois senator.²¹ Others considered his chances so much superior to those of Breckinridge that this fact perhaps inclined them toward moderation. "A careful survey of the field," said one paper, "indicates that Mr. Douglas' prospects of an election by the people are comparatively certain."²²

But most of the "opposition" agreed that without some sort of union of the two factions the success of Lincoln was assured. The constitutional-unionists were convinced that all those who opposed Lincoln should unite on John Bell; the Douglas and Breckinridge adherents of course preferred uniting on their respective candidates; but not all the members of any faction approved of fusion on any other condition. Within a few days after the conventions, there were meetings in various places held for the purpose of ratifying the nominations, and at some of these gatherings disturbances occurred at which indignities were offered to one or the other candidate, intensifying the hostility, rendering fusion more difficult if not impossible.

Not a great many of the Douglas branch of the democrats were willing to unite.²³ Most of them declared they would not join forces with "Yanceyites,"²⁴ "seceders," "nullifiers." Others,

²⁰ Hartford *Times*, August 25th.

²¹ *E. g.*, *Cheshire Republican*, Keene, N. H., July 11th.

²² *Utica Observer and Democrat*, July 31st.

²³ Exceptions were, the Norwich (Conn.) *Aurora* and the Newport (R. I.) *Advertiser*, the Albany *Times*, desiring union, claimed political independence, though leaned decidedly toward Douglas.

²⁴ See *e. g.*, *Rochester Union and Advertiser*, September 7th.

while avowing their intention to do all in their power to defeat Lincoln, announced that their policy would be precisely the same toward Breckinridge, displaying greater energy, perhaps, against the latter.²⁵ Yancey was branded as "the American Catiline;"²⁶ and Douglas himself opposed compromise with "those who had bolted the nominations." In a speech at Erie, Pennsylvania, he said, "Lincoln and Breckinridge might fuse, for they agree in principle; I can never fuse with either of them, because I differ from both."²⁷

Realizing their weakness at the North, the followers of Breckinridge there were almost unanimous in favor of a union. Several newspapers, which seemed really to prefer Breckinridge from the first, waited for some weeks before taking a direct stand for him, hoping that the breach would be closed in the meantime.²⁸ A very few, however, of his most strongly pro-Southern supporters were for a time inclined to scout the idea of uniting the factions.²⁹

Little was accomplished by the advocates of fusion. In four States, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, arrangements were made by which all democrats might vote a union ticket, but, although it aroused some hope for a time, the scheme amounted to nothing except in New Jersey.³⁰ The method of the fusionists was commonly a gentlemen's agreement that if it appeared that Douglas would win in a State electoral college, then the fusionist electors of that State were to vote for him, but for Breckinridge if it appeared that he was to be the winner. In New Jersey it seems that the Douglas sup-

²⁵ *E. g.*, Dover (N. H.) *Gazette*, August 4th.

²⁶ Worcester (Mass.) *Daily Times*, October 4th.

²⁷ New York *Tribune*, October 3rd.

²⁸ The New Haven *Register* for instance, which did not declare for Breckinridge until August 31st, pleaded for union well into October. The course of the Hartford *Times* and of the New London, Conn., *Daily Star* was much the same. The *Hudson County Democrat* (Hoboken, N. J.), though preferring Breckinridge, never took a definite stand until fusion was assured.

²⁹ *E. g.*, the *Day Book* on July 14th declared "the National Democracy need no union or compromise with the followers of Mr. Douglas."

³⁰ See Harrisburg *Patriot and Union*, September 4th; *Ulster Republican* (Kingston, N. Y.), October 10th.

porters voted for their own three men on the fusion ticket, but refused to vote for the four representing the other parties in the agreement. The result in that State was three electoral votes for Douglas and four for Lincoln.³¹

It has been shown that the charge of disunionism was frequently made against the adherents of Breckinridge, but that during the weeks immediately after the nominations at Baltimore few persons were found to advocate a separation. From that time throughout the period preceding the presidential election, a part of the republican press was given to ridiculing the idea of secession as a hoax. Even in July, on the eleventh of the month, the *Tribune* dubbed the threats of a dissolution "as audacious a humbug as Mormonism, as preposterous a delusion as Millerism." And only four days before the election the New York *Evening Post* continued in the same strain, giving as its reason the weakness of the South: "Without any intention to disparage the bravery or the loyalty of our Southern brethren, we do not hesitate to express our belief that the little State of Connecticut could sell the secession States the arms and equipments they would require in case of disunion, and then send armed men enough down to take them back again without exhausting her resources as much as one year of independence would exhaust the seceders."

In the period preceding the election, the question of coercion was broached again. There was no lack of persons who considered seceders as traitors,³² and who advised that Keitt's "gascade of secession" should not be taken seriously; for if South Carolina should "undertake to repeat in 1861 the tantrums of 1833," she would be "treated as she was then—kindly but firmly."³³ A number of Douglas papers pronounced the coercion of a State proper and constitutional,³⁴ although a part of the same

³¹ E. D. Fite, *The Presidential Campaign of 1860*, pp. 223 and 233.

³² *E. g.*, Providence *Evening Press*, October 27th; Woonsocket *Patriot*, November 2nd.

³³ *Tribune*, July 25th.

³⁴ *E. g.*, Philadelphia *Press*, October 1st.

papers admitted that resistance was probably a matter of self-preservation with the South.³⁵

On the other hand, a few republicans at that time preferred to see the South withdraw without opposition, rather than resort to war.³⁶ For the government to allow this would be extra-constitutional; but, if they are bent upon it, "Let them go," said one editor, "unharmèd, unwhipt, unhung; and joy go with them, if this be possible. Were a single State or a dozen States to secede, with the approbation of their people, we see no better way than to suspend at once all federal laws within their jurisdiction, and put them on the footing of most favored foreign nations.³⁷ Even the *Tribune*, giving up for the time its policy of force, on November 2nd assured the South that

Whenever any considerable section of this Union shall really insist on getting out, we shall insist that they be allowed to go . . . so let there be no more babble as to the ability of the Cotton States to whip the North. If they will fight, they must hunt up some other enemy, for we are not going to fight them. If they insist on staying in the Union they must of course obey its laws; but if the *People* (not the swashy politicians) of the Cotton States shall ever deliberately vote themselves out of the Union, we shall be in favor of letting them go in peace.

The next day Editor Greeley commented as follows on a recent argument by Charles O'Connor:

Proving the right of secession on the part of the South, he [O'Connor] goes on to justify her, and declares that if she does secede she should be permitted to do so. On this point, at least, we are happy to agree with him, and when she goes we shall be happy to reprint the letter as presenting a sensible view on that branch of the subject.

Some of the above statements were perhaps made with the belief that the South was insincere in its avowals of a probable disunion, or that only the politicians favored it, and that they could not carry the people with them. For instance, at a republican meeting in Middletown, New York, State Senator Henry B. Stanton said that the "fire-eaters" had never meant what they threatened, and that they would not have dared to execute their threats, even if they had been in earnest.³⁹ The opinion was

³⁵ *E. g.*, Pittsburgh *Post*, October 18th.

³⁶ *E. g.*, Philadelphia *Daily News*, August 20th.

³⁷ *Watchman and State Journal*, Montpelier, Vt., November 2nd.

³⁹ October 12th. Reported in *Tribune*, October 17th.

often expressed that the purpose of disunion talk was merely to win votes,⁴⁰ or that it was only the periodical clamor of demagogues of both sections.⁴¹

One of the most plausible reasons why certain people in the North did not believe that there would be an attempt at secession was that just before the election the charge of disunion was commonly repelled by all the political divisions. According to the *New York Weekly Journal of Commerce*, there was no one who, on being confronted with the charge, did not avow "the most peaceful and friendly disposition."⁴² Even the Breckinridge men showed "a good deal of sensitiveness at the charge of being a disunion party."⁴³ Therefore the country was believed to be "perfectly safe" after the election.⁴⁴ Assurances were plentiful during September and October that no one need be solicitous about the safety of the country after November 6th, for then the talk of not submitting to a republican president would wane and die.⁴⁵ Some persons, in fact, held that the only thing necessary to quiet the South was the election of a republican president.⁴⁶

But others were not so sure that an era of peace would begin early in November, and some business men were very naturally tired of having their business go awry periodically on account of political troubles. They were anxious to put the question to a final test. If a convulsion was probable, it was high

⁴⁰ See *e. g.*, *Germantown (Pa.) Telegraph*, October 31st; *Worcester (Mass.) Palladium*, October 31st; *New York Daily Advertiser*, November 1st.

⁴¹ *E. g.*, *New York Shipping and Commercial List*, October 20th.

⁴² September 20th.

⁴³ *Tribune*, October 30th.

⁴⁴ *New York Shipping and Commercial List*, October 13th. The *Boston Transcript* (October 22nd) did not believe the South "would act except at the bidding of a palpable grievance"—which it had not, said the *Transcript*.

⁴⁵ *E. g.*, *New York World*, August 13th and 28th; *New York Evening Post*, October 31st and preceding dates; *St. Albans, Vt., Messenger*, November 1st; *Philadelphia Daily News*, November 2nd; *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1860, p. 501; *Springfield, Mass., Republican*, November 3rd.

⁴⁶ *E. g.*, *Worcester Palladium*, October 31st; *Kingston, N. Y., Democratic Journal*, same date.

time the experiment was made so as to settle the question once for all.⁴⁷

From the beginning of the canvass little doubt had existed on the part of the republican managers that their candidate would carry all the more important Northern States but Pennsylvania and Indiana. After these two States had gone republican by large majorities in their contests for governors in October, the "opposition" was well-nigh unanimous in admitting that Lincoln would be elected President the next month. When it was thus evident that what they had so long regarded as a possible disaster was actually upon them, appeals were made to the South not to take any precipitate steps. It was acknowledged that the times looked "somewhat ominous of trouble ahead," but it was insisted that propositions for disunion were premature: first, because Lincoln could not be otherwise than cautious; second, the best interests of the South might be preserved in the union.⁴⁸ The people of the North could not justify a dissolution, some of the democrats asserted, until all constitution barriers were swept away.⁴⁹ A policy of delay, at least, was asked by the *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*; for, it asserted, the election itself of Lincoln would not justify secession; but if he should attempt to put into practice the "irrepressible conflict which he . . . declared," it would then be for the States whose rights were assailed to determine how far they would submit.⁵⁰ If the South

⁴⁷ Speech by Hon. Thomas Williams, at Pittsburgh, September 29th, in *The Negro in American Politics*, pp. 29-30, pamphlet in Columbia University Library. Similarly, Germantown, Pa., *Telegraph*, October 31st; Providence *Journal*, November 6th; Boston *Journal*, November 6th.

⁴⁸ Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, October 18th, November 6th.

⁴⁹ *Columbian Weekly Register*, New Haven, November 3rd; but after this statement it added, that the idea of using force to keep them in the union was preposterous. Cf. Hartford *Times*, October 27th: "Secession . . . is not now essential to the preservation of the rights of the South"; Boston *Courier*, November 25th: "The election of any person whatever" affords no "cause for other than Constitutional opposition to his administration." The Providence *Post*, November 1st, contended that secession should not be demanded and could not be allowed.

⁵⁰ *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, September 22nd.

would wait a year or so, it would see that Lincoln could not carry out his program.⁵¹

But we have said that although the Breckinridge followers were more commonly accused of disunionism than any other group, they and all the other parties repelled the charge. Nevertheless, it is true that leading men in the South were outspoken in upholding the expediency of secession in case Lincoln should be elected.⁵² This was not denied by their Northern friends, who admitted that these Southerners wanted the union dissolved if a republican should be president. Why then, it was asked, was the charge of disunionism repudiated by the Breckinridge faction, to which most of these Southern men belonged? Because, was a reply,

no man, or set of men, are disunionists, who contend for Constitutional rights. Those who wish to override the Constitution and the laws are the disunionists. There are some of the Southern people who threaten resistance, in case they are denied their plain and just rights. They say they will resist an infraction of the Constitution, by which it is sought to degrade them; but this does not make them disunionists, for all they ask is their rights.⁵³

Such Southerners could not properly be classed as disunionists when Northern leaders declared there was a "higher law" than the constitution, and squared their action accordingly; for the "inevitable result must be, either the triumph in the end of those who abide by the Constitution, or of those who repudiate it. If

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, October 22nd.

⁵² Even at this, it was claimed by the *Providence Post*, October 30th, —and the *Post* was among those journals which were determined there should be no secession—that "During Mr. Polk's administration . . . more disunionism was preached in New England in three weeks than has been preached in the South in the last three months"; also, that as late as 1854, great meetings in Providence and other Northern cities said that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise would justify dissolution.

⁵³ Concord (N. H.) *Democratic Standard*, October 20th. The Manchester (N. H.) *Union Democrat*, October 30th and November 6th, gave as reasons why the slave-holding States wanted to secede: "There is a 'conflict' against them which is 'irrepressible.' We do not expect the slavery controversy to cease while the Union continues. We know it will not—they know it will not"; the whole course of the republicans "is insulting and aggressive. . . Our Southern friends feel it to be so, and know it will continue so."

the latter succeed, then it is useless to blind our eyes to the fact that a REVOLUTION is at hand—the TREATY between the two sections of the Union is CANCELLED.”⁵⁴

In some cases the North as a whole was blamed for estranging the South from the union. There was complaint because “the Northern people sold the slaves which they and the British people imported from Africa,” and then, “after pocketing the money,” they turned around and denied “the title of the purchasers.”⁵⁵ The trial of the South from Northern aggressions, it was said, were “far more aggravating than all that the colonies ever endured from England,⁵⁶ and ten-fold more than any people in Europe would endure from equals;” the men of the North “would themselves resist a title of such offenses.”⁵⁷

It was more usual, however, for the “opposition” to restrict their attacks to the republicans. It was “simply absurd to say that disunionism” was “confined to Southern fire-eaters,” contended one Douglas supporter; for “Northern sectionalism, as manifested by the Black Republican party” was as hostile to the union, in fact and in purpose, as Southern sectionalism was or ever had been. And there was this difference between the two, which was “greatly against the former”: Lincoln and his supporters were not complaining of wrongs done to them at their own homes and firesides; but, continued the writer, they

claim the right to make a code of laws for the South, not only in the States, but in the Territories, which shall control or prohibit slavery. Now, Yancey and Keitt and the worst of that class, do not propose any reform in the internal laws of the free States—they do not presume to tell us how we shall treat our apprentices or workmen, or how much we shall pay them for their labor—they do not prescribe for us any new regulations about our property nor anything of the kind. They are acting purely on the defensive against Lincoln, and Fred Douglass, and Seward, and Giddings, and all the rest who “revere the memory of John Brown, of Ossawatimie!”^{57a}

James W. Gerard, a prominent New York lawyer, in a speech

⁵⁴ *Troy Daily Whig*, November 5th.

⁵⁵ *Pennsylvanian*, October 18th.

⁵⁶ Similarly, *Jersey City American Standard*, November 3rd.

⁵⁷ *Pennsylvanian*, October 19th.

^{57a} *Pittsburgh Post*, October 10th.

at Cooper Institute, compared the republican party abusing the South to a husband thrashing his wife, "morning, noon and night. She applies for a divorce, and the husband says, 'I don't want to be separated from my wife. I only want to control her in her domestic relations.'"⁵⁸ The attitude and aims of the party were referred to as subversive of the constitution of the country⁵⁹ and of "our present organized Union of sovereign States."⁶⁰

The Southern people, however, were naturally irritated by these "constant goadings" and felt that they would rather go out of the union than support an administration whose principles were at war with their rights. But if the nation should come to an end in that way, it would be due to the "insidious work" of republican "sappers and miners" who had done so much to "shake the pillars of the edifice" that sustained the republic.⁶¹ This "war to the knife" against the South was "a policy so flagrantly at variance with the spirit of the Constitution, and so destructive of the very idea of a confederation of States, that the party adopting it" was "entitled to be considered the party of disunion and revolution with more justice than the most rabid secessionist of the South."⁶²

The republicans had never carried a national election. If Lincoln should be elected, what results might reasonably be expected to follow? Senator Wilson had declared that if his party should "take possession of the government," their power would

⁵⁸ New York *Weekly Day-Book*, October 13th. Mr. Gerard was a grandfather of our recent ambassador to Germany.

⁵⁹ Letter in Portland, Me., *Eastern Argus*, written anonymously at Gorham, Maine.

⁶⁰ Troy *Whig*, October 26th. On October 23rd, the *Whig* said that the only reason the South wanted to secede was that it was robbed of its rights in the union; and on November 6th: "Every Republican speech, every Republican journal attacks the South. . . . Our Southern brethren are 'slave drivers,' 'men stealers,' 'an oligarchy,'—no epithets are too bad for them."

⁶¹ Speech of Col. J. W. Wall, at Beverly, New Jersey; reported in Newark *Evening Journal*, October 30th. Even in June (28th) the Brooklyn *Eagle* had declared the objects of the Republican party were to "defy the Constitution, goad the South to resistance, and break up the federal compact."

⁶² New York *Herald*, September 29th.

be so used that slavery should "not exist on this continent."⁶³ Unless they betrayed the masses who supported them, said the *Providence Post*, it would not be difficult, accordingly, to determine what they would do if they held the reins of government. It added:

They would appoint none but enemies of slavery to office. They would withdraw all that protection of slavery which the South now derives from the federal government. They would insist that the United States mail should be used in disregard of the local laws of the States. They would prohibit slavery in the Territories and in the District of Columbia. They would stand as a wall of fire against the admission of any more slave States. They would repeal the fugitive slave law. They would change the Supreme Court. They would bring the powers of the federal government to bear upon slavery in the States, at least so far as to greatly increase the dangers and disadvantages which now surround that institution. They would, in short, pursue such a course as would almost instantly unite the South against the General Government, and make a separation of the States the only remedy for civil war.⁶⁴

Sooner or later, the South would be "insulted and attacked in her sacred rights in the institution upon which her prosperity, her very subsistence" depended,⁶⁵ and would be forcibly deprived of rights held under the constitution.⁶⁶ Thus the value of the Southerners' property would be reduced, their means of living diminished, and their very lives be put "in no questionable jeopardy."⁶⁷ Moreover, they would be virtually excluded from any real connection or sympathy with the government of the country.⁶⁸

Nobody accused the North of wanting to secede. One reason why it did not, as presented by Colonel James W. Wall, in a speech at Beverly, New Jersey, was that no Northern States had any provocation to do so; for no one could show where the South had "ever attempted to infringe upon a single guaranteed Constitutional right of the North. But the Congressional page" was "blistered all over with just such attempts by the North against the South."⁶⁹ The republicans did not threaten

⁶³ *Weekly Journal of Commerce*, October 18th.

⁶⁴ October 24th.

⁶⁵ *Pennsylvanian*, July 23rd.

⁶⁶ *Boston Courier*, November 2nd.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Utica, N. Y., *Observer and Democrat*, October 27th.

⁶⁹ Reported in *Newark Evening Journal*, October 30th.

to secede, showed an opponent: "*They only desire to subjugate the South;*"⁷⁰ and "to destroy," another added, "if resistance is offered, men of their own race . . . If the South can by secession, escape the doom threatened . . . would it be strange if they should do so?"⁷¹ The indignation of the South was, therefore, pronounced just, and of a kind which honest men could not condemn;⁷² for the Southerners saw that "to submit quietly" to the "gross assumptions and insults" of the republicans "would leave them little better than a conquered people."⁷³

The result of the local elections—the republican victory in Pennsylvania, for instance—was held as equivalent to an edict by the North to the effect that after the victory was completed "the Southern States must either submit or array themselves against the Union."⁷⁴ If the republicans should attempt to carry into action the principles openly avowed by "the itinerant orators and demagogues of the party," no other alternative would be left for the South "but a base, ignominious surrender of their constitutional rights as coequal States or secession from the Union."⁷⁵ Caleb Cushing, of Massachusetts, brigadier-general during the Mexican war, and attorney-general in President Pierce's cabinet—declared that the Southerners would not "passively submit to be conquered subjects of New England." If they did, "they would be recreant to the blood of Washington, of Henry, of Carroll, of Rutledge; they would be unworthy of the name of Americans."⁷⁶ They were not a "set of poltroons" who would "tamely submit to any outrage" that might

⁷⁰ *Providence Post*, September 8th.

⁷¹ *Pittsburgh Post*, October 30th.

⁷² *Pennsylvanian*, October 23rd.

⁷³ *Troy Whig*, October 30th.

⁷⁴ *Pittsburgh Post*, October 12th.

⁷⁵ "Citizens of Maine," writing in *Weekly Journal of Commerce*, October 25th. Similarly, the *Buffalo Daily Republic*, October 27th: "The events or contingencies which would warrant a Southern or Northern State in going out of the Union are numberless, and many of them are likely to be inaugurated should the country ever be cursed by a Lincoln Administration."

⁷⁶ From an address at Tremont Temple, Boston. Reported in *Weekly Day-Book*, October 6th.

be perpetrated upon them.⁷⁷ The coming election, moreover, might prove that the South, having lost all confidence "in a North insensible alike to the sanctity of the Constitution and the warnings of loving but wronged brethren," would avoid the threatened evil in the only way it could be done—by secession.⁷⁸ And the New York *Herald* thought the moment of Southern "submission or secession" was near at hand.⁷⁹

But to what extent would the South be justified in attempting to forestall such blows as so many of those who lived in the North predicted? As far back as August, a New Englander held that "the inauguration of Lincoln would inevitably lead to an attempt to destroy the system of labor existing at the South," believing that the Southern planters might "not await in quiet the blow now being aimed at their lives and fortunes."⁸⁰ Shortly afterwards, W. B. Lawrence, former governor of Rhode Island, wrote Governor Sprague of the same state, that if a republican were elected "with the avowed intention of creating a servile war" and doing the other things which the "opposition" averred that the republicans would do, "no humane man could object to their anticipating the fatal blow, not only by refusing obedience to the federal authorities, but by even invoking—as did our ancestors of the Revolution—foreign aid."⁸¹ It was time for the Southerners to take measures for self-defense when they saw the aggressive strides of a party whose leaders had indorsed a book which proposed to put weapons into the hands of their slaves, and which made "a virtue of assassination."⁸² Nor was it to be expected that people who had been stigmatized as "worse than cut-throats and villains" would "submit to every-

⁷⁷ *Democratic Standard*, Concord, N. H., October 27th. The *Cheshire Republican*, Keene, N. H., October 31st, was not surprised that some Southerners talked of resistance: "We think they feel and act just as any other section would feel and act with such threats continually meeting them through the pulpit and press."

⁷⁸ *Pennsylvanian*, October 16th.

⁷⁹ October 13th.

⁸⁰ Newport, R. I., *Advertiser*, August 29th.

⁸¹ New York *Herald*, October 6th.

⁸² Albany *Times*, October 20th.

thing.”⁸³ If the situation were to be reversed, and a president should be elected under whom no Northern man, “without dishonor, could accept a place in the administration of the government . . . the blood of Bunker Hill would be aroused,” and there would be “not only threats but their execution.”⁸⁴ And another writer in Rhode Island proclaimed that if a policy were about to be imposed on the voters of that State, the possible tendency of which was to “subject their property to destruction, and their wives and daughters to horrors, to which death itself would be infinitely preferable,” they would not quietly wait for an overt act, but would bestir themselves before the evil was consummated past all remedy.⁸⁵

Thus, we see that the outburst of secessionism in the South immediately after the John Brown raid was condemned by most republicans, but extenuated by most persons opposing republicanism; that the democrats and constitutional-unionists held republican teachings—and especially the indorsement of Helper’s book—largely responsible for the raid, and for disunionism in the South; that republican insistence on the election of Sherman for speaker of the house, although Sherman had commended *The Impending Crisis*, was considered by the democrats as a further insult to the slave-holders; that the refusal of most Southern democrats to accept in 1860 their party platform of 1856 led to a split in the democratic party which practically insured the election of Lincoln; and that many Northerners declared the South would be justified in refusing to await an “overt act” at the hands of the republicans. This was the beginning of a permanent breach in the democratic ranks, which was healed to some extent late in 1860, but widened after South Carolina’s secession ordinance, and again after the firing on Fort Sumter.

⁸³ Norristown, Pa., *Register*, November 6th.

⁸⁴ *Luzerne Union*, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., October 31st.

⁸⁵ Newport *Advertiser*, October 31st.

INDEX

- Abolitionists, 197 ff.
 Adams, C. F., 193.
 Adams, John, 1, 8, 41.
 Adams, Samuel, 1, 8, 9 f.
 Africa, 141, 152.
 Aiello, Matthew of, 146 ff.
 Albany, see Newspapers.
 Amendments to Mass. Constitution, 13-55.
 Apulia, 141, 145 ff., 153 ff.
 Arundel, Lord, 79.
 Bancroft Papers, 12.
 Banks, N. P., 219.
 Bari, Maio of, 143.
 Beaumont, John, 80, 98.
 Bell, John, 237 ff.
 Bertram of Andria, 155.
 Bibliography, 56, 61-68, 142 f.; see also Newspapers.
 Boston, 1-55; see also Newspapers.
 Boulogne, 74, 103.
 Breckinridge, John C., 239 ff.
 British Museum, 61-68.
 Brown, John, 189 ff.
 Buchanan, Andrew, 193, 232.
 Buffalo, see Newspapers.
 Calais, 74, 76, 88 ff., 108, 113, 122.
 Capua, 141, 145.
 Cecil, William, 97.
 Chalandon, F., 142 ff.
 Charleston (S.C.) Convention (1860), 228 ff.
 Chesterton, G. K., 73.
 Chicago Convention (1860), 237 ff.
 Child, D. L., 198.
 Cincinnati Convention (1856), 232 f.
 Concord (N.H.), see Newspapers.
 Clune, Mary C., 1-56.
 Cochrane, John, 217.
 Coinage debasement, 70, 75 ff., 85 ff., 94 ff.
 Commerce, 107 ff.
 Constitution of U. S., 197 ff.; of Mass., 1-56.
 Conventions: Mass. (1780), 1-56; Democratic (1856), 232 ff.; (1860), 238 ff.; Republican (1860), 237 ff.
 Courts of Duchy of Lancaster, of Augmentations and Revenue, of First Fruits and Tenths, Wards and Liveries, see Finances.
 Cromwell, Thomas, 73, 75, 101.
 Curtis, George W., 223.
 Cushing, Caleb, 204, 255.
 Davis, Jefferson, 210 ff.
 Declaration of Rights (Mass.), 13-21.
 Democratic national conventions (1856, 1860), 228 ff.
 Dietz, Frederick C., 57-135.
 Dix, John A., 204.
 Douglas, Stephen A., 192, 222, 231 ff.
 Dowell, "History of Taxation," 61.
 Dred Scott Case, 224, 232.
 Dutton, Henry, 197.
 Edward VI of England, 57-135; see Finances.
 Eunuchs, 147 ff.
 Evans, George, 199.
 Everett, Edward, 204, 213, 237.
 Exchequer of England, 67 ff.; see Finances.
 Falcandus, Hugh, 142 ff.
 Finances of Edward VI and Mary, 57-135: Annuities, 77 ff., 105 f., 121; Augmentations and Revenues, 63-68, 80, 107, 119, 129 ff.; Benevolences, 75; Bibliography, 61-68; Boulogne, 74, 76, 103, 122; Calais, 74, 76, 88 ff., 104, 108, 113, 122; Coinage debasement, 70, 75 ff., 85 ff., 94 ff.; Corruption, 78 ff.; Customs, 107 f., 119; Duchy of Lancaster, 63-68, 80, 107, 124 f.; Exchequer, 61-68, 107, 119 ff.; Expenditures, 69 ff., 81 ff., 89 ff., 103 ff., 121 ff.; Feudal Dues, 70, 119; First Fruits and Tenths, 63-68, 119, 134; Flemish loans and bankers, 75, 86 f., 96 f., 109; Forced Loans, 70, 75, 113 ff.; Fuggers, 75, 86 f., 96, 98; Ireland, 89 ff., 122; Monastic lands, 75 ff., 82 ff., 101 ff., 115; Prices, 70, 75, 106 f.; Revenues, 69 ff., 91 ff., 107 ff., 119 f.; Statistical Tables, 119-135; Subsidies, 69 ff., 75, 113, 119, 135; Surveyor's Court, 73; Taxation, 81 ff.; Tenths and Fifteenths, 69 ff., 100, 119, 134; Treasury of the Chamber, 63-68; Wards and Liveries, 63-68, 80, 126 ff.
 Fite, E. D., 247.
 Flanders loans, 75, 86 f., 96 f., 109.
 Florence, Thomas B., 207.
 Franklin, Benjamin, 7.
 Freeport Doctrine, 192 f.
 Frothingham, Louis A., 56.
 Fuggers, 75, 86 f., 96, 98.

- Gait, 146 ff.
 Gentile of Girgenti, 147 ff.
 Gerard, James W., 252 f.
 Gilbert of Gravina, 150-157.
 Girgenti, bishop of, 147 ff.
 Gitt, W. W., 215.
 Greeley, Horace, 213 ff., 248.
 Gresham, Sir Thomas, 96 f., 112.
 Gravina, Gilbert of, 150-157.
 Guisnes, 74.
 Hammond, J. H., 230.
 Hanseatic Merchants, 107 ff.
 Harpers' Ferry, 191 ff., 213 ff.
 Hartford (Conn.), see Newspapers; Convention, 193.
 Hawley, Joseph, 1-55.
 Helper's "Impending Crisis," 206, 214 ff., 228 ff.
 Henry VII of England, 69 ff.
 Henry VIII of England, 69 ff.
 Henry of Montescaglioso, 155 ff., 177 ff.
 Hickman, John, 201.
 Hildt, John C., 139-186.
 Historical Mss. Commission (Eng.), 63.
 Howe, John, 53 f.
 "Impending Crisis" (Helper's), 204, 214 ff., 228 ff.
 Ireland, 89 ff., 122.
 Italy, 139-186.
 Jackson, Andrew, 227.
 Jackson, Jonathan, 8.
 John the Neapolitan, 150 ff.
 Keitt, Lawrence M., 242 ff.
 Kingston (N.Y.), see Newspapers.
 Lancaster, Duchy of, see Finances.
 Lecompton Democrats, 192 f., 231 ff.
 Lee, John C., 208.
 Liberator, The, 191.
 Lincoln, Abraham, 238 ff.
 Lincoln, Levi, 203.
 Loans, see Finances.
 Locke, John, 22.
 Lodge, Henry C., 193.
 Lowrey, Lawrence T., 187-257.
 Maio of Bari, 143.
 Margaret of Sicily, 145, 149 ff.
 Mary of England, 57-135; see also Finances.
 Massachusetts. Constitution of, 1-55.
 Matthew of Aiello, 146 ff.
 Merchant Adventurers, 109 ff.
 Messina, 176-185.
 Molise, Count of, 151 ff.
 Monastic lands, 73 ff., 82 ff., 101 f., 115.
 Montgomery, William, 224.
 Montpelier (Vt.), 243.
 Morison, Samuel E., 9, 39, 56.
 Nashua (N.H.), 224, 235.
 Navarre, 145, 155.
 Newark (N.J.), 254.
 Newburyport, 196, 202.
 New Haven, see Newspapers.
 Newport (N.H.), 215, 222.
 Newspapers, opinions of, concerning slavery and secession (arranged by cities): Albany, *Atlas and Argus*, 199, 211, 243; *Evening Journal*, 197; *Times*, 245; Bangor, *Daily Union*, 224; Bellows Falls, *Argus*, 213, 226; Boston, *Christian Register*, 204; *Courier*, 201, 203, 212, 231 f., 237 f.; *Herald*, 221, 234, 239; *Post*, 210, 216; *Recorder*, 204; *Transcript*, 249; Bridgeport, *Republican Farmer*, 222, 244; Buffalo, *Commercial Advertiser*, 197; *Evening Post*, 239; Burlington, *Sentinel*, 225; Charleston, *News*, 201; Concord, *Democratic Standard*, 240, 244, 251, 256; *Patriot*, 219; Dover, *Gazette*, 216, 238, 246; Germantown, *Telegraph*, 249 f.; Harrisburg, *Patriot and Union*, 220, 222, 236, 238, 246, 250; Hartford, *Courant*, 202; *Times*, 205, 218, 224, 236, 239, 245 f.; *Weekly Post*, 200, 213; Keene, *Cheshire Republican*, 205, 216, 220, 229 f., 245, 256; Kingston, *Democratic Journal*, 202, 249; *Ulster Republican*, 238, 246; Manchester, *Union Democrat*, 210, 225; Monmouth, *Democrat*, 210, 225; Montpelier, *Vermont Patriot*, 243; Monmouth, *Democrat*, 217; Nashua, *Gazette*, 224, 235; Newark, *Evening Journal*, 254; Newburyport, *Daily Herald*, 196, 202; New Haven, *Columbian Weekly Register*, 218, 250; *Daily Register*, 203, 206, 223, 230, 246; Newport (N.H.), *Argus and Spectator*, 215, 222; Newport (R.I.), *Advertiser*, 234, 245, 257; New York, *Evening Express*, 201, 208, 227; *Evening Post*, 195 ff., 241; *Herald*, 206, 215, 226, 236, 241, 256; *Irish American*, 205, 241, 243;

Newspapers—Continued.

- Journal of Commerce*, 207; *Times*, 196, 199, 243; *Tribune*, 196, 202, 219, 231, 246 ff.; *Weekly Day-Book*, 194, 232, 237; *World*, 242; Norwich, *Weekly Aurora*, 209, 219, 222, 245; Philadelphia, *Daily News*, 248 f.; *Dollar Newspaper*, 206, 220, 241; *Pennsylvanian*, 209, 212, 221, 226, 244; *Press*, 200, 234; *Public Ledger*, 242; Pittsburgh, *Evening Chronicle*, 196; *Daily Post*, 210, 216, 222, 234, 240, 242; Portland, *Eastern Argus*, 199, 208, 211, 253; Portsmouth, *New Hampshire Gazette*, 237; Pottsville, *Democratic Standard*, 229, 239; Providence, *Daily Journal*, 195; *Post*, 220, 235 ff., 243; Rochester, *Union and Advertiser*, 200, 245; Savannah, *Republican*, 232; Springfield, *Republican*, 202, 249; Trenton, *True American*, 198; Troy, *Daily Whig*, 209, 238, 240, 252 ff.; Utica, *Observer and Democrat*, 197, 208, 218, 223, 234, 245; Winsted, *Herald*, 202; Worcester, *Aegis and Transcript*, 204 f.
- New York, see Newspapers.
- Normans in Sicily, 139-186.
- Norwich (Conn.), 209, 219, 222, 245.
- Northampton, 1-55.
- Northumberland, Duke of, 88 ff.
- O'Connor, Charles, 204, 248.
- Oman, C. W. C., 61.
- Palermo, 145 ff., 180 ff.
- Palmer, Richard, 145 ff.
- Parsons, Theophilus, 56.
- Paget, 73, 77, 98.
- Pekham, Sir Edmund, 99.
- Pennington, William, 229.
- Perche, Stephen of, 141, 157-186.
- Peter the Gait, 146 ff.
- Philadelphia, see Newspapers.
- Phips, Lieut.-Gov., 31.
- Pierce, Franklin, 211, 225 f., 244.
- Pittsfield, 37.
- Pittsburgh, see Newspapers.
- Pollard, "Hist. of Eng.," 69 ff., 103.
- Portland (Me.), 199, 208, 211, 253.
- Portsmouth (N.H.), 237.
- Prices, see Finances.
- Privy Council, Acts of, 62 ff.
- Providence (R.I.), see Newspapers.
- Quarrel, Odo, 158, 174, 176 ff.
- Raymond, Henry J., 196 f.
- Record Office (Eng.), 63-68.
- Reggio, bishop of, 147 ff.
- Revenues, see Finances.
- Richard of Syracuse, 150.
- Robert of Calatabiano, 161 ff.
- Rochester (N.Y.), 200, 245.
- Roderick of Navarre, 155 ff.
- Roger of Apulia, 145 ff.
- Roger, bishop of Reggio, 147 ff.
- Romald of Salerno, 143, 146 ff.
- Salem, 42.
- Salerno, archbishop of, 143, 146 ff.
- Saracens, 141-186.
- Schanz, "Handelspolitik," 61, 109.
- Secession, Northern Opinion of, 187-257.
- Seward, W. H., 206, 213 ff., 223, 231 ff.
- Sharington, Sir William, 78 f.
- Shelburne, Lord, 6.
- Sherman, John, 206, 215, 228.
- Sherman, William T., 228.
- Sicily, 139-286.
- Sickles, Daniel E., 207.
- Slavery, Northern Opinion of, 191 ff.
- Smith Gerritt, 218.
- Springfield (Mass.), 202, 249.
- Stamp Act, 6.
- Stanton, Henry B., 248.
- Stephen of Perche, 141, 157-186.
- Strong, Caleb, 8, 11.
- Subsidies, see Finances.
- Sumner, Charles, 198, 218, 242.
- Syracuse, bishop of, 145 ff.
- Taxation, see Finances.
- Thomas, "Ancient Exchequer," 61.
- Treasury of the Chamber, 63 ff.; see also Finances.
- Trenton (N.J.), 198.
- Troy (N.Y.), 209, 238, 240, 252 ff.
- Trumbull, James R., 56.
- Tudors, see Finances.
- Underground Railway, 194.
- Utica (N.Y.), see Newspapers.
- Virginia, secession in, 191 ff.
- Von Holst, H., 215.
- Voters, qualifications of, in Mass., 15 ff.
- Wade, Benjamin F., 219, 223.
- Wall, James W., 253 ff.
- Walter of the Mill, 185 ff.
- Wards and Liveries, see Finances.
- Whalley, 79 ff., 98.
- William I and II of Sicily, 142 ff.
- Williams, Sir John, 80.
- Williamson, William D., 41.
- Wilson, Henry, 213, 217, 222 ff., 253 f.
- Winthrop, Robert C., 208, 213.
- Worcester (Mass.), 204 f.
- Wriothsley, 63, 73.
- Yancey, William L., 235, 243, 245 ff.

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