

R E M A R K S

OF THE

HON. HORACE BEMIS,

OF STEUBEN COUNTY,

IN ASSEMBLY, ON THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 27, 1863, IN COMMITTEE
OF THE WHOLE, ON THE

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The annual message of his Excellency, the Governor, I say with all deference to him and to his party, is a singular public document. It is not more singular in what it contains than in what is omitted from it. Devoted largely to national subjects, it is without one earnest condemnation of the gigantic rebellion which is now so fearfully threatening the life of the Federal Union. It contains no rebuke of the false and heretical dogmas by which the right of secession is sought to be defended and justified before the public opinion of the world.

It contains no generous recognition of the dangers which surround the administration of the government, and not one line or syllable rising in dignity above the range of partisan debate. Mr. Chairman, the message is singular in another omission for which I can find no excuse. Devoted to assaults upon the Federal Administration, captiously criticising its policy and acts, it is painfully and significantly barren of suggestions of a policy or line of action to facilitate the accomplishment of that dearest wish of every patriotic heart—the preservation of the union of the States.

What the people, I think, most desire to know of their public servants is, how best, practically, to overthrow the armed power of the rebellion. I believe the day has gone by when sane men can be induced to believe that there is any possible means of natural self-preservation, except by victory over a strong military power achieved as all such results must be by superior force; and while his Excellency attacks the Federal

Administration for every attempt to strike the rebellion at what we deem its vulnerable and exposed point, we hear no suggestions as to the means of attack he would recommend, and the doubt becomes almost painful whether human ingenuity could devise any means by which the party, whose exponent the Governor is, would consent to have the rebel cause materially injured.

I am aware, Sir, that this is strong language, but when the people of the State shall read the speeches made on this floor by Democratic members,—when they shall review the downward tendency of Democratic logic for the last ninety days, and to put the case mildly inquire by what coincidence it is that the election and message of his Excellency have been followed by the outcroppings of treasonable sentiments in almost every part of the North, the doubt suggested, if deemed unkind, cannot be called unnatural.

It is not one of the least noticeable features of the message that the Governor cunningly, and in smooth and courteous language, adopts the ideas of his party, which humble members fail to clothe so gracefully. There seems to be two classes in the loyal states; or rather two classes assuming to be loyal, who look upon the great rebellion very differently. One class see in it a gigantic and repulsive crime against the dearest interests of humanity—a crime the consequences of which are not limited to one continent but assault the whole race of Adam—a crime, the consequences of which are not limited to one generation, but which perpetuates itself and strikes at generations unborn. They see that

crime invoked and committed without justification. They find in it no element of palliation. They speak of it in no ambiguous or conditional manner. Their simple wish is that a crime so great, a danger so imminent may be assailed by every force and power which the government can command.

The other class of men, in languid utterance, sometimes call the rebellion wrong, but generally qualify their mild rebuke of its untimely appearance by the most unmeasured abuse of political opponents, who, whatever may be their faults in other respects, are loyal to the Government now.

Sir, I am not going to deny the loyalty of the violent partisans upon the other side of this House. I am going to give my testimony in favor of their loyalty (although I think it a little peculiar). I have no doubt, from my experience with them, that they would be willing the rebellion should be put down, provided it would not injure the party, or materially lessen the chances of his Excellency, or Gen. McClellan, or whoever the coming man may be, for the achievement of the presidential chair.

But this class of our people do occasionally go so far in their condemnation of the rebellion, as to concede that guilty parties in it ought to be punished; but they all have a somewhat novel way of balancing up the scales of justice. They not uncommonly suggest that it might be well to hang Jeff. Davis, but are entirely certain that Greeley or Beecher, or some other northern "abolitionist," ought to be required to *pair off* with him. They insist upon attributing our national danger—not to those in rebellion against the Government—not to those who pointed hostile cannon against Fort Sumter, and boast of having humbled the flag of the nation—but to their political adversaries, and especially to the people of the New England States.

The Governor, in his message, seems to adopt a class of views which seem to me not only unjust and untrue, but unpatriotic. He seems to cultivate no ill feeling towards the rebel states, but seems to desire to fan the flame of sectional hatred, in such a manner as to involve loyal states and result in a "*divided North*." On the subject of "*Causes of the War*," the Governor says:

"CAUSES OF THE WAR.

"Affrighted at the ruin they have wrought, the authors of our calamities at the North and South insist that this war was caused by an unavoidable contest about slavery. This has been the subject, not the cause of controversy."

In this sentence, we have an adoption of the unjust partisan charges against the people of the North; and though we may have deemed it more desirable to have put off the discussion which these charges involve, until peace was restored to our country, devoting every energy to upholding the Government in the hour of its trial, it seems to be the policy of opposition to bring on this discussion at once, and we cannot let the declaration of the message in that respect go to the world unchallenged.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. HUTCHINGS), told us last evening, that we were passing or had passed the military stage of this crisis, and was

coming upon what he is pleased to call the intellectual stage of the controversy. I deny that we have passed the military stage of the rebellion, and I trust we will not, until a complete and permanent victory crowns the Federal arms, but I will concede, that we are forced to discuss the early history of the country, and reflect upon the tendency of a vast number of public and party acts.

Notwithstanding the assumption of the Governor, and his confident way of speaking of the "authors of our calamities," as if the affiliation and companionship of his party furnished exemption from suspicion, and gave a Papal right of censorship over the opinions of others, and absolved the faithful from all obligations of courtesy and respect. I shall to-night insist upon, and try to prove several propositions, which may not accord entirely with the claim set up on behalf of the Democracy.

I have an impression which may seem strange to the Governor's party friends on this floor. I deny that a record of nationality of sentiments, can be made out and sustained upon the single ground of abject submission to the behests of slavery. I deny too, that slavery is the only subject upon which sectional sentiments can be maintained, and geographical parties formed.

It is not long since the democratic party were accustomed to quote largely from Washington's Farewell Address, and I trust that they have not all so far forgotten his admonitions, as to be unable to recall them at this time, and I desire them to do so in connection with this message.

Mr. Chairman, we are not, in that almost sacred paper, told to beware of hostility to slavery, or are its lofty and patriotic utterances confined to denouncing those who might fail to properly pronounce the shibboleth of slavery.

No, Sir, that address flows with a brighter Unionism, and inculcates a higher Nationality.

I beg the indulgence of the committee while I read a few of its suggestions:

"In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs, as matter of serious concern, that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by *geographical* discriminations, *Northern* and *Southern*, *Ailantic* and *Western*, whence *designing men* may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts."

In view of these perternal warnings of the Father of his country, I desire to consider this message and some of the subjects that seem to be allied to it and inseparable from it; and in doing so desire, for the moment, to forget that such a thing as slavery ever existed, and ask Democratic gentlemen to consider it out of the argument. It is the more easy to do this since the first sectional agitation between the North and the *South*, under our present Constitution, had no reference to the subject of slavery, but was one purely of dollars and cents. The animosity sprung up upon the adoption of the Tariff of 1824, and culminated almost in se-

cession upon the augmentation of duties in 1828. Slavery was neither the "cause," the "subject," or even the pretext of the cultivation of sectional sentiments and ideas at that time, yet the fires of sectional hatred raged then for almost three years with as genuine a display of Southern chivalry as if the real African had been in the case, and had the vacillating, timid and imbecile Buchanan been in the Presidential chair then, the problem would then have assumed the proportions of a gigantic rebellion, and I suppose might have been patronized by the semi-secessionists of the North as the great revolution.

I say to gentlemen who are so bitter upon abolitionists, as little as I admire *them*, I tell you that I will not discuss the question started in the pregnant sentence, quoted above from the message, whether slavery is the *cause* or *subject* of the controversy. I will say it is the *pretext* for the controversy as ANDREW JACKSON said it would be. I insist that the message itself is open to the charge of fostering the idea upon which sectional and geographical parties are built up, and is in spirit as wide from the pure and high nationality of Washington as the utterances of any abolitionist at least. Be penitent, gentlemen, of the opposition; and though you may deem this an offensive expression, give me a fair chance to make the argument, then deny its force if you can.

Says the Governor, after attempting to throw the blame of the present controversy upon the North, especially upon New England, which he characterizes as the extreme North equally with the extreme South:

"The great Central and Western States, which have the largest share of the population and resources of our country, will not accept of either class of purposes. This is the significance of the late elections. Their determination is to defend the rights of States, and the rights of individuals, and restore our Union as it was"

Here is a purpose evinced of classing states as their "*purposes*," seem to correspond with their *geography*. Here is a suggestion containing the germ of the whole evil, but it is, I suppose, brief, to leave it to his partisans and defenders on this floor and elsewhere to work up the idea. It will be recollected that the Governor made a speech on the 1st of September last in this city, upon receiving his nomination. You will recollect that his Excellency found himself surprised there, very much as ARAMUS WARD did when he made up his mind to be surprised with a serenade, and contracted with the leader of the band to overwhelm him with that unexpected honor. In that speech the Governor first advanced his distinction between the Eastern and Western States, and fixed upon one class the offensive name of *debtor states*, and upon the other the irritating name of *creditor states*. To what end is it sought to draw these distinctions? Has it any wise purpose, any honest purpose, or any patriotic purpose? No, Sir, it can have none of these purposes, but means simply and plainly this: a "divided North," to the end that the whole tremendous energy of a loyal east and loyal west—one kindred and one brotherhood, keeping step together to the music of the Union—may not

move too strongly against the rebellion, and crush it before some pale and sickly compromise may be hatched up that is to offer a premium to future treason, and, (God save the mark!) preserve the Democratic party.

But let me not forget to inquire how the defenders of the message, here and elsewhere, are cultivating the suggestions of sectionalism, the effect and apparent object of which is to further divide and distract the public mind, and light the fires of sectional animosity where they have been unknown before. They seem to take to the idea of assailing New England with very little urging, and seem to make assaults upon those sister states of the Union with a satisfaction similar to that with which many of them boast of rebel victories.

I will read a few extracts from those standing in close fellowship with the party, and speaking by party authority.

The gentleman from New York (Judge DEAN), and I trust none will question the party orthodoxy of his utterances, said in his speech, on this floor on the evening of the 12th:

"I do not stand here to discuss the question of slavery in Massachusetts. *The State has improved in its character, and I am glad of it; for no State in the Union needed it more or needs it now, so much.*

* * * * *
Yes, Mr. Chairman, while we respect New England for what she rightly is, this is no time to eulogize her for her extreme opinions; for the country cannot forget that the agitation of these opinions has been the pregnant mother of our national troubles." [Renewed Applause.]

Thus is Massachusetts decried as needing reform more than any State in the Union—more than South Carolina who fired upon our proud flag in her harbor, and whose hostile cannon first sounded the signal of that awful carnival of death which has carried mourning into millions of homes and hearts—more than those States which have followed her from the Union in her causeless crime. How in the name of justice does Massachusetts and New England deserve this censure; is it because her sons have been among the first on every battle-field to maintain the flag of our country. I have no time here to defend New England, nor does she need any at the hands of so humble a son of her soil. Her position in every conflict between right and wrong is her defense. She stands today as proudly as she stood in the revolutionary conflict which made us a nation. Foremost in the field, and foremost against the ideas of despotism then, she is to-day moving with the same preëminent heroism, sagacity and devotion to uphold the utterance of her great statesman and orator—"UNION and LIBERTY, now and forever, one and inseparable." In a speech delivered before the Democratic Union Association, so called, of the city of New York, that intensely Democratic city, which presents an undivided party front on this floor, the Hon. S. S. COX takes up the idea of the Governor and illustrates it by a most bitter assault upon New England. I hold in my hand a copy of the speech, and, Sir, I claim that the party in this state cannot escape the responsibility of its utterances. It was, I see, received with great satisfaction by the faithful in that

meeting, which satisfaction appears to have been manifested in the usual way, as it is interspersed with "great cheering," "cheers," "loud applause," and occasionally a "tiger."

Mr. Chairman, I propose to quote a few of those utterances to show what the Democracy of this great state are indorsing, and to show the results that legitimately follow the suggestions put forth in the message we are considering :

"Do you wonder that, at public meetings West, it is resolved that the Mississippi Valley shall no longer be tributary to Yankee cupidity and folly, and that men madly cry out : "New England fanaticism and speculation have made Disunion! New England stands in the way of Re-Union! Perish New England, that the Union may live!" (Great cheering, and a voice, "We've had enough of her.")

Again, the Speaker says :

"It is no evidence of smartness that New England should array against her the ideas of the rest of the Union. She showed no smartness in allowing this war to begin, when she could have prevented it. She has shown none in her estimate of the formidable character of the rebellion. She has shown none in her Morrell tariffs and her schemes of emancipation. Is it smart to build factories and destroy the very sources of the cotton which runs them? Is it smart, to overtax, for her own benefit, a more powerful section, as she has the West? *If she is not driven from the Union, she will be humiliated in it.*" (Cheers.)

The speech alluded to, contains ten solid pages of abuse of New England, her people and her record, of which the above selections are fair samples, and are, I trust, enough to arrest the attention of the hearer, and induce every one not steeped too deeply in partisan hatred, to reflect if these charges are true, wise or just. Ask yourselves too, gentlemen of this House, if these charges and this bitterness can result in a united Northern sentiment, strong in the holy purpose of restoring the Federal Union. Must it not result in a *divided North* in the interests of the rebellion; and are those who engage in this work of stirring up sectional hate, ignorant of the tendency of their acts? No, you cannot believe otherwise than that it has a direct purpose, of bringing about a state of feeling in the loyal parts of the country, assuring the humiliation of the Administration, and thus for a political end, destroying the executive energy of the Government, in the face of the terrible peril which surrounds us, and which ought to hush every feeling of partisanship, and induce the recognition of that higher and holier than party allegiance, allegiance to our common country.

But of all this abuse of New England, which must have consumed the hours of the speech, as it fills up its pages, we look in vain for any condemnation of the rebellion; and in this respect, it is like the message of the Governor, eminently Democratic. It is true, an allusion is made at the end of the speech to South Carolina, and it is here that we learn that this master of the language of bitterness and denunciation, can also be as gentle as a summer breeze. He turns to New England with a severity, that for the moment almost makes us expect to find the granite of her hills, and the marble of her proud monuments dissolving; and then turns to South Carolina, and finds the language of the smoothest prose he can master in his gentlest mood, too

rough and uncouth, to address this rebellious sister in the family of States.

His whole condemnation of South Carolina in her rebellion, is confined to half a dozen stanzas or verses, a few of which I will read. They may have been very good verses, Mr. Chairman, when they were written, but quoting them in this connection, I believe the Speaker has succeeded in "sounding the bass strings of humility."

"O, Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,
We can never forget that our hearts have been one;
Our foreheads both sprinkled in Liberty's name,
From the fountain of blood with the finger of flame!
You were always too ready to fire at a touch;
But we said "She is hasty—she does not mean much."
We have scowled when you uttered some turbulent threat;
But Friendship still whispered—"Forgive and forget."
Go, then, our rash sister! afar and aloof,
Run wild in the sunshine away from our roof;
But when your heart aches and your feet have grown sore,
Remember the pathway that leads to our door!"

(Applause.)

So our "rash sister" is to run wild a spell longer, and we are to "let her run;" and while she is out, it may be, under her Palmetto tree, like Tam O'Shanter's wife,

"Gathering her brow like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

We, good dutiful Democrats, are to fill up the time, by abuse of those elder sisters of the family of states, that are not quite so rash. I hope my Democratic friends will just imagine, this rash Carolina, in the trying moment of her anger, accosted by some of those lachrymose Democrats, who believe in soothing rebellion with *soft doggerel*, and the reading of those verses began to her.

If the poet has truly described her disposition it would probably result in a case of *globus hystericus*, with all the attending symptoms.

Mr. Chairman, this cultivation of sectional feeling among the people of the loyal states at this time is, in my judgment, something that ought not to be done, and cannot be in any way which will allow those who engage in it to escape the censure of this and of future generations. But I must leave this topic of the discussion, as inviting as it is, and turn to another, to which the message and the whole bearing of the Governor's party seems to challenge us. They seem to say to us, in regard to the fearful peril that surrounds us; the Republican party did this. They seem to say to this genius of evil that has been invoked by sectional conflicts and the dissemination of false doctrines,

"Thou canst not say I did it;
Never shake thy gory locks at me."

Will history, fairly and impartially stated, exempt the Democratic party from all blame in this matter? Will it justify them in becoming the censors and judges of the actions of others, and putting the Republican party upon the defensive? No, Sir, it will not. Individual men of all parties, by thousands, may be and are innocent of this ruin. I take no pleasure in asserting here that the Democratic party is largely to blame for this state of things, but I do say that the very idea of secession was conceived in a

Democratic brain, and that the monstrous birth of secession was in the Democratic household and that its infancy was nursed by Democratic hands, and when it attained in 1861, '62 and '63, the power to strike at the life of the nation, it struck with the sinews and strength of fully one-third of the Democratic party of the nation.

I advise Democrats who are disposed to make party capital out of the ruin that is gathering around the altar of every patriotic hope, not to make charges against parties, and, in the name of their party, with such a record, attempt to divide those sections of the Union which are, as yet, free from the effect of sectional doctrines.

I beg the indulgence of the committee while I read a few pages from the history of the country bearing upon the origin of those ideas of alienation which have culminated in the crime of the age—the slaveholders' rebellion. In 1812, John C. Calhoun wrote to Commodore Stewart:

"That we are essentially aristocratic I cannot deny, but we can and do yield much to Democracy; this is our sectional policy; we are from necessity thrown upon and solemnly wedded to that party, however it may occasionally clash with our feelings for the conservation of our interests. It is through an affiliation with that party in the Middle and Western States we control under the Constitution the Government of these United States, but when we cease thus to control this nation through a disjointed Democracy, or any material obstacle in that party which shall tend to throw us out of that rule and control, *we shall then resort to the dissolution of the Union.*"

Here in point of time we have the earliest evidence of the conception of this class of ideas. Here we have foreshadowed, more than fifty years ago, the whole elementary doctrine of secession, and yet I hear no condemnation of it from the other side. No diligent Democrat has searched this out from among the records of the past; but, Sir, had it been of New England origin, had such a stain been upon the records of Massachusetts or her public men of the last generation, we should have had it served up to us in all the forms which would have offered to give it publicity before the public mind. Was this thought of anti-slavery parentage? Was it provoked by the dissemination of anti-slavery dogmas in the North? No, Sir, it belongs to a date older than abolitionism. It belongs to a period when New York was yet a slave state. And when sixteen years later it was sought to carry this suggestion into practical effect, there was not yet even enough of abolitionism to make it the pretext for "firing the Southern heart."

As I said a few moments ago, the discontent of the South which rendered it possible for Mr. Calhoun and others to enlist any considerable portion of the southern people in the adoption of this logic of ruin, arose upon the enactment of the Tariff of 1824, and became a serious matter when the duties adopted by that tariff were augmented in 1828. Then it was that upon an idea entirely foreign from African slavery, the American people for the first time learned that a danger existed in the southern portion of our country that might easily involve us in ruin. Out of the heated debates of that period arose the famous contest between Hayne, of South

Carolina, and Webster, of Massachusetts; the one representing the destructive logic of secession, and the other the high and lofty principles which underlie the Federal Union.

I trust that in the desire to traduce Massachusetts, that proud period of her history will not be forgotten.

Remember, that there was a time in her history when one of the grandest moral and intellectual battles of the age was fought, and that her favorite son was the champion of the Union, and all the hopes that cluster around that Union; while a Southern Democrat—one of the "Southern brethren" was the keen and subtle logician and apologist for the heresy of secession, and all the dangers which the last three years has demonstrated.

I insist, gentlemen of the committee, that I have not begun too far back in this record, because I intend to show, and believe I shall be able to show, that from the time the doctrine of nullification became a subject of public discussion there has not been one instant of time when the heresy has been abandoned, or when the Democratic party has not embraced within its fellowship, a greater number of determined enemies of the Union, than the North has ever produced of that class of persons who can fairly be called abolitionists. Do not understand me as denouncing that party. I do not claim, nor will I concede that such ideas debauched the whole party. No sir, Democracy has had its day of glory—its proud record of the leadership of *Andrew Jackson*, and I will refer to some of the utterances of that noble man, and fairly credit them to the Democratic household.

In April, 1830, a remarkable dinner party was held at Washington to commemorate the birthday of THOMAS JEFFERSON. Gathered there were President *Jackson*, Calhoun, then Vice President, several members of the Cabinet and many foreign Ministers, and men of rank as statesmen, and politicians of the Democratic faith.

The feature of this party was, that out of the twenty-four regular toasts of the occasion, John C. Calhoun had prepared eighteen, and that they in various forms set forth the rights of the states in such a manner as to aid in building up the argument of nullification, and turning the logic of the party into a sectional channel. The intent was to give an impetus to the formation of a sentiment which should enable the theory of Mr. Calhoun, contained in the letter of 1812, to be put into practice; and also to fix the origin of secession upon Jefferson, whose birthday they celebrated. The first volunteer toast was of course given by the President, and was a brief but immortal sentence—"The Federal Union—it must be preserved."

This, Mr. Chairman, was the glorious sentiment of a genuine Democrat, and deserves to be, as it is, a perpetual record, graven upon the monument to him who uttered it.

When South Carolina took action to nullify and abrogate certain laws of the United States, and other states threatened to follow her, some of the friends of Andrew Jackson were timid, and

Mr. Letcher of Virginia called on him to suggest some compromise, which drew forth a reply that ought to be remembered now, and treasured up for all time in the hearts of those who love their country and its prompt and bold defenders. Said the old hero: "*Compromise with traitors! No. I will not even negotiate with them. Unless Calhoun instantly desists from his traitorous course, he shall be tried for treason, and hung if found guilty.*"

Mr. Chairman, this was not alone a quick and impulsive response of a just and good heart; but it evinced the highest and most intelligent statesmanship.

Contrast this with the cowardly utterances of modern Democrats, who, at a time like this, cannot lay aside the armor of mere partisan warfare and put on the armor of the whole country—who cannot throw off the allegiance of party, to give effect to that high and paramount allegiance which we owe to the country.

Sir, I do not believe in spirit rappings, for if such a thing were possible, the spirit of Andrew Jackson would rap the knuckles of those bitter partisans who disgrace the Democratic name, and in its name hold out the pale and sickly banner of a dishonorable compromise to armed and defiant rebels.

I said a few moments ago, that the idea of the separation of the South from the North had not been lost sight of at any time for the last thirty years. This rebellion is not the creature of a mere angry impulse, but the fulfillment of a settled, determined policy. The abolitionists did not provoke it. The determination existed before abolitionism was known. The malignant monster, disunion, was allowed to warm itself by the Democratic hearthstone, where it was born, and when it was ready to strike its blow at union, truth and liberty, it found its friend at the head of the household, and its ministers avowed secessionists in the cabinet councils of the nation.

I say here that *James Buchanan* made up his cabinet largely from avowed disunionists, and thus brought on the debasement of his party and the peril, if not the ruin, of the country. I shall read an extract from one of that cabinet to show that years before he was called to that high post he was on record as a secessionist, and was indoctrinated with the sentiment of disunion taught by Calhoun before Abolitionists had an existence as a party.

In 1850 JACOB THOMPSON wrote to General Quitman:

"When the President of the United States commands me to do one act and the Executive of Mississippi commands me to do another thing, inconsistent with the first order, I obey the Governor of my State. * * * To Mississippi I owe *allegiance*, and because she commands I owe *obedience* to the United States. But when she says I owe obedience no longer, right or wrong, come weal or come woe, I stand for my legitimate sovereign; and to disobey her behests is, to my conscience, treason."

This is not exceptional. Other members of that cabinet uttered similar sentiments and were prepared to become, as they did, upon any pretext, the betrayers of their country.

If political parties are to be assaulted with the

bitterness they have been on this floor, how are these bitter assailants to clear the Democratic record of this stain? Is there nothing in it to induce humility? Are there no misgivings in the minds of gentlemen who voted this cabal or imbeciles and traitors into power? I voted for *James Buchanan* (God forgive me) and I never speak of it except penitentially.

I have only heard one thing apologized for on the other side. The gentleman from New York seemed to think he ought to apologise for having voted on this floor, in the Assembly of 1861, in favor of sending troops to the capital of the country to defend it from armed rebels.

I am satisfied, Mr. Chairman, that the gentleman from New York (Mr. Hutchings) and myself differ very essentially as to what political acts ought to be atoned for.

T. C. FIELDS (interrupting). Can I ask the gentleman from Steuben one question?

Mr. BEMIS. Certainly. What is it?

T. C. FIELDS. Did you not, about four years ago, in a public debate at your village, defend slavery as a divine institution?

Mr. BEMIS. No, sir; it was twelve years ago. (Laughter). The gentleman from New York may think there is something in my political past that I wish to deny; but let me say that I ought to be considered as exempt from a suspicion of desiring to conceal anything, since I have just voluntarily confessed the most humiliating act of all—voting for Buchanan. (Laughter.)

But I will tell the gentleman all about the debate that he may desire to know. I don't think I seriously defended the divinity of slavery. The discussion was upon the duty of observing the then recently enacted fugitive slave law. And I am proud to say that then, as now, loyal to the Constitution and to my country, I was in favor of observing it fully, faithfully and honestly.

Mr. Chairman, I had intended to pay my respects fully to the speech of my friend from New York (Judge Dean), but he must excuse me if I am forced to speak more briefly than I had intended to in answer to his eloquent address. The gentleman alluded to the Hartford Convention, complaining that the Tweddle Hall Convention had been compared to it. I do not wish to say anything harsh of a convention attended by him, and so many patriotic gentlemen of his party; but it, and the suggestions of the Peace Democrats everywhere, strikingly resembles the utterances of the Hartford Convention. I have here a copy of the most pointed resolution of the Hartford Convention, which I propose to read; and I think you will find it directed against the Administration of Madison very much as the Administration of Lincoln is assailed. I think you will find in it the same tender regard for the Constitution which the gentleman himself, the Governor and most of the peace men of that party now manifest.

Here is the resolution:

Resolved, That it be and hereby is recommended to the legislatures of the several states represented in this Convention, to adopt all such measures as may be necessary effectually to protect the citizens of said states from the operation and effects of all acts which have

been or may be passed by the Congress of the United States, which shall contain provisions subjecting the militia or other citizens to forcible drafts, conscriptions or imprisonments not authorized by the Constitution of the United States.

That opposition to the war of 1812 which has blasted the good name of the Hartford Conventionists with the present generation, is the prototype of the present peace party, and gentlemen can now learn by a contemplation of this subject the light in which the future will regard their acts.

The gentleman forgot, in his encomiums on the Tweddle Hall Convention of 1861, to tell us that while he and the Governor, and many other eminent gentlemen were there, that two of their fellow delegates have been Generals in the rebel service since that time.

Sir, I believe the Hartford Convention never was entitled to the same unenviable distinction. It had no Smith or Lovel to go from its deliberations, and from full fellowship, to the field and fight under the standard of the common enemy.

Mr. Chairman, there are other resemblances between the present opposition of the Government and that of the days of 1812 to 1814. The gentleman from New York (Judge DEAN) has made the case of the Rev. Mr. Benedict a sort of speciality on this floor. He has told us in the tone of most doleful complaint, that he was arrested simply for preaching from Christ's Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the peace makers." This is now new thing; there was, in 1812, a class of clergymen in the country who used to preach in the same way. Let me read you a few specimens. One doctor of divinity said in a sermon:

"The Union has long since been virtually dissolved, and it is full time for this part of the disunited States to take care of themselves."

Another said, after the rivers of the west had been reddened with the blood of our people, and said it rejoicingly:

"These western states which have been violent for this abominable war of murder—those states which have thirsted for blood God has given them their own blood to drink."

I presume, Sir, these revered men were preaching from the Sermon on the Mount. But the text they might have made the occasion of their cruel treason is not material, and it cannot sanctify the sentiments of those who are against their Government in the hour of its peril that they speak from the pulpit.

There are a few more points of the gentleman's speech that I must notice, though I have already trespassed on the patience of the House. He (Judge DEAN) says:

"We are asked, Mr. Chairman, before condemning or discarding, to give this Emancipation Proclamation a fair trial. Has it not been done? Is it not now nearly five months since it was issued, and is slavery abolished in Virginia beyond the lines of our army? Is it abolished in any other state, or has the relation between master and servant been changed?"

This is a singular claim to make. How have they given the Proclamation a fair trial?

Has the gentleman forgotten that he prefaced his speech with the declaration that up to the 22d of September, the date of the Proclamation,

he himself went out to the villages and hamlets to raise men and money to prosecute this war against rebellion, and that from that date he stopped, refused to give the Administration his influence to obtain men or money. Was this giving it a fair trial? Can any sane man claim that those who withhold what is due to the government, are giving it a fair trial?

The results from the Proclamation are decided. We are told that it cannot abolish slavery—that it has not got beyond the lines of the army (within which the gentleman expresses his willingness it should be abolished.) And yet by a strange perversion of logic men here boast of their abandonment of the cause of the government on its account.

I do not wish to speak harshly, but I will say, that no earnestly loyal man, ever did, or ever will desert his Government upon a pretext so shallow, unless his whole mental and moral nature are perverted by a love of the institution of slavery.

I have often heard the expression from the other side, "*nigger on the brain*," and I believe that love of slavery, induces that disease in a much more malignant form than hatred of slavery.

Why is it that they are willing that any interest of the South should be assaulted to save the Union, except slavery? As property, has it any more sanctity than the right of property in any other respect. I say, for the sake of the argument, concede that, the rights of property attaches to this institution, can it have any special divinity of rights, that exempts it from the operation of the law of war?

No, Sir; he who deserts the sacred cause of the Union, upon a pretext so light, must have worn his allegiance very carelessly.

The gentleman from New York, makes one curious threat, to which I must call the attention of the committee.

He says:

"We are no longer a significant—a down-trodden minority, but a powerful party—a majority in the State. The Executive of the State of New York, has as much right within its boundaries to arrest without warrant—to hold subject to his will—to suspend habeas corpus, as has the President in any State or Territory. Do gentlemen who are justifying such measures, propose them as examples for Governor Seymour to imitate? If it is an "Executive" power—if the Executive is the sole judge of the necessity for its exercise—then the Executive of a State as its Commander-in-Chief occupies the same position on this subject as the President. If, then, Abraham Lincoln is the sole judge of the "necessity," and if he can suspend the writ three hundred miles from where he sits, HORATIO SEYMOUR HAS SIMILAR POWER WITHIN THE LIMITS OF HIS OWN STATE, and he too may judge of what is a "disloyal practice." You Republicans, will soon learn that this is a game at which two can play."

Is it not obvious that the cases are not parallel? We have no rebellion against the authority of Governor Seymour, as there is against the authority of the Federal Government.

If we had, Sir, a causeless rebellion against the power of the state, threatening its very life, inviting anarchy to devour the prosperity of our people, I would sustain the Governor in the exercise of the power of preserving the state.

But when this is put forth as a mere threat, to distract and divide the people of the state, and to insult the loyal people, I ask the gentleman to remember, that threats from his side on this floor, have not been a good investment. We are used to hearing threats, and I am happy to say, used to disregarding them.

We remember, and gentlemen on the other side may as well remember, that we were threatened on this floor, that if we elected the man of our choice to the Speaker's chair, he should never be inaugurated. That if we exercised what was as clear a right as can exist, we should do it amid scenes that we would forever regret.

Sir, we did maintain our rights; and I caution

gentlemen not to hope that the time will ever come when threats of violence will influence the loyal Union men of this state.

We shall go on in the discharge of what we deem our duty to the state and Federal Government; we shall co-operate with loyal men of all parties, and I trust we will never despair of the hope of again looking upon our country, safely passed the dangers of the times, and proudly holding her rank among the nations of the earth. I trust, too, that when the storm shall have subsided, no cowardly compromise with treason will tarnish our history, and remain as a perpetual offer to induce a future rebellion.