

Campaign Document, No. 9.

SPEECH OF HON. ROBERT C. WINTHROP,

AT THE

Great Ratification Meeting in Union Square, New York,

SEPTEMBER 17, 1864.

I THANK you, fellow-citizens, for this friendly and flattering reception. I thank your honored President for the kind words in which he has presented me to you. I feel glad in being here under the lead of one who, as the gentleman who called the meeting to order well said, has added new honor to a name that was already associated with so much true and tried patriotism, with so much of spotless integrity, and with so much of financial and commercial wisdom. You know me, men of New York—if I may presume to imagine that you know me at all—as a member of the old Whig party of the Union, as long as that party had any organization or existence. (Cheers.) And I cannot help recalling the fact, on this occasion, that among my earliest political efforts, nearly thirty years ago, was a speech in this city against the Democratic candidates of that day. (Applause.) I fear that my faculty of making a speech, or certainly an open-air speech, is somewhat impaired by the lapse of years; but such as I can make is heartily at the service of the Democratic candidates of to-day. I could not find it in my heart to refuse

the request of your Committee of Arrangements, seconded as it was by an old and valued friend, whom I knew so long ago as the tried and trusted friend of Daniel Webster, that I would at least be present as a witness of this great demonstration. Nor, being here, can I refuse to respond to the call which has been made on me by your honored President, and to bear my humble testimony to the cause in which you are engaged. It was promised me that I should see the greatest meeting ever held in America; and no one can doubt, I think, that the promise is fulfilled. It is, indeed, a glorious sight, this vast assemblage of American citizens, unsuspected by patronage, unawed by power, in the great commercial metropolis of the Union,—itself one of the noblest products of that Union,—all rallying beneath a common banner, all animated by a common resolve; that banner, the Stars and Stripes—that resolve, to do all that in us lies for the rescue of our country from the dangers by which it is encompassed. (Cheers.) You are assembled in Union Square, and I am glad to know that you all intend to

stand square on the platform of the Union. (Laughter and applause.) You are assembled on the anniversary of the day on which the Constitution of the United States received the attesting signatures of its framers; and I rejoice to be assured that you are all resolved to uphold the authority and vindicate the supremacy of that Constitution. (Applause.) Yes, my friends, in yonder city of Philadelphia, which we are glad to remember, in this connection, was also the birthplace of George B. McClellan, (Cheers,) on the 17th day of September, 1787, that sacred instrument was perfected, which has secured union and peace to our land for more than seventy years past, and which, if this day's ratification shall be successfully carried out, may still, I fondly hope and believe, secure union and peace to our land for seven times, or even for seventy times seventy years to come. (Applause.) You are assembled, too, on the anniversary of the day, when the noble candidate, whose nomination you are about to ratify, completed his great work of rescuing the capital of his country from the Confederate hosts by the glorious victory of Antietam. You have not forgotten those memorable days of September, '62, when the fate of our Republic seemed just trembling in the scales, when almost all men's hearts were failing them for fear, and when the gallant McClellan, forgetting the unmerited indignities to which he had just been subjected, — forgetting everything but his country's dangers and his own determination to stand or fall with its flag, — and responding without a murmur, or a moment's delay, to the personal appeal of the President, gathered up the scattered fragments of his brave but broken army, reorganized their shattered battalions as by the waving of a magician's wand, drove back the invaders across the Potomac, and once more secured the safety of Washington and of the Government. (Loud cheers.) I would not disparage the successes which have been achieved on other days and under other com-

manders. We all remember, with grateful admiration, the splendid victories which have been won, on the land and on the sea, by Meade and Grant and Sherman, by Porter and Kearsarge Winslow and the heroic Farragut, and by so many others of our generals and admirals. All honor to the heroes of Vicksburg and Chattanooga, of Gettysburg and Atlanta, of Mobile Bay, and of the blessed waters, whatever they are called, which at last engulfed the Alabama; and all gratitude to the soldiers and sailors, by whose brave hearts and stout arms those victories were achieved! But none of them have eclipsed, or even dimmed, the brilliant record of the Army of the Potomac and its leader during those eventful days which ended at South Mountain and Antietam. For that gallant leader it is glory enough that it may be said of him, as the result of that brief but almost miraculous campaign, that, born in the birthplace of the Constitution, he was privileged, by an auspicious and beautiful coincidence, to commemorate its seventy-fifth birthday, by saving the capital of his country. But who of us is not ready to accept the omen, that it is still reserved for him who saved the Capital on that day, to save the country itself at this? (Loud applause.)

And now, fellow-citizens, you have not forgotten that this was the last military service which General McClellan was permitted to perform in the defence of the Union. You have not forgotten that only a few weeks afterward he was summarily deprived of his command and sent into that retirement from which no patriotic offers of his own, and no persistent solicitations of his friends, have prevailed on the Administration to recall him. But the day is at length at hand when the people of the United States have the Constitutional opportunity and the Constitutional right to revise and reverse the decrees of the Administration; and most heartily do I hope that this one of their decrees, if no other, will be revised and will be reversed. Most

heartily do I hope, that disregarding all consideration of parties and platforms, and with the single and simple view of restoring Union and Peace to our distracted land, the people of the loyal States will resolve, by their votes in November next, to take up upon their own shoulders this leader whom the rulers have rejected, and to bear him triumphantly into that same White House from which the rejection has emanated. That, as I understand it, is the proposition before this meeting; and for one, certainly, I gladly avail myself of the earliest opportunity which has been presented to me to express my approval of it. Young men of New York, and of the nation, will you not take it in special charge, and see to it that this is done? The candidate whom we support is eminently a young men's candidate, — the youngest in years, I believe, that was ever nominated for the Presidency; but who has won laurels in the field, and shown a discretion and a wisdom in civil affairs, which would have done honor to the oldest. It ought to be the pride of Young America not only to see that he has fair play and a generous support, but to secure him an opportunity of showing what young men can do, and are destined to do, in the high places of the land, as well as on the field of battle. (Loud applause.)

And yet let me not seem for a moment, fellow-citizens, to put the great issues of the approaching election on any personal grounds. The question before us is not about candidates, but about our country; not about the relative claims or merits of Abraham Lincoln and George B. McClellan, but about the nation's welfare and the nation's life. (Three cheers for McClellan.) In whose hands will that precious life be safest? That is the question; and I do not forget that it is a question of opinion, on which every man has a right to form, and every man has a right to follow, his own opinion. I do not forget, either, how many honest and excellent men,

in my own and in other parts of the land, with whom I have heretofore delighted to take counsel in private and in public affairs, have come to different conclusions from my own. But I have not been able to resist the conviction, my friends, that the best interests of the country, and the best hopes of restoring the Union of the country, emphatically and urgently demand a change of administration at the approaching Presidential election. (Cheers.) I cannot resist the conviction, — or certainly the deep and earnest apprehension, — that, if the policy adopted and pursued by President Lincoln and his supporters during the last two years is to be persisted in for four years to come, we shall find ourselves plunged irretrievably into the fearful and fathomless abyss of disunion. I can enter into no detailed discussion of that policy on this occasion, nor can it wisely be discussed on any occasion, in the hearing of our Southern enemies. I can only say, that in my humble judgment it has been a policy calculated to divide and weaken the counsels of the North, and to unite and concentrate the energies of the South; and, beyond all question, it has accomplished that result, if no other. Why, my friends, the all-important end of reëstablishing the Union has been almost shut out of sight, so mixed up and complicated has it been with schemes of philanthropy on the one side, and with schemes of confiscation, subjugation, and extermination on the other. Instead of the one great Constitutional idea of *restoration*, we have been treated to all manner of projects and theories of *reconstruction*. There would almost seem to have been a willingness, in some quarters, to vie with our enemies themselves in discarding and destroying the old Constitution of our fathers. At one time we have had solemn propositions for annihilating whole States, whole systems of States, and blotting out their stars from the national banner. At another we have heard open declarations from the high places of the

land, that we never again were to be permitted to have "the Constitution as it is and the Union as it was." Good Heavens, what else are we fighting for? What other Union are we striving to establish? What other Constitution are we struggling to vindicate? What other Constitution are our rulers and legislators solemnly sworn to support? We might expect such declarations from Rebels in arms against the Government; but who can listen to them from loyal lips, without recalling the warning words of a great English statesman and orator, when he bade us "look with horror on those children of their country who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parent to pieces, and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds and wild incantations they may regenerate the paternal Constitution and renovate their father's life"! Heaven save us from any such regeneration and renovation as that. (Great applause.)

Fellow-citizens, we all know that it was the success of the Republican party, with its sectional organization and its alleged sectional objects, which furnished the original occasion, four years ago, for that atrocious and ungodly assault upon our Government, which inaugurated this gigantic civil war. ("That's so!" Applause.) We all know that the secession leaders of the South, who had so long been meditating the movement in vain, exulted in the election of Abraham Lincoln at that day, — as I fully believe they will exult again, if he is re-chosen in November, — because it supplied the very fuel which was needed for kindling this awful conflagration. That assault upon the Government can never be characterized in terms of too severe condemnation; and, if railing at the rebellion or its authors would do any good this evening, — if it would be anything better than baying at yonder moon, — I would join with you in denouncing it until the vocabulary of condemnation was exhausted. But

we all know that the whole North rose nobly up, as one man, without distinction of party, to repel that assault; and that they have sustained the Government, — Democrats, Republicans, and Conservatives alike, — with all their hearts and hands, pouring out their blood and money like water, from that day to this. And the loyal States will continue to sustain the "powers that be" in all their constitutional action, until the end of their term, whatever may be the result of the pending election — not all of them, by any means, as approving the policy of the Administration, but all of them as recognizing its rightful possession of the authority of the Government. But no considerations of loyalty or of patriotism call upon them to go further. ("No," and cheers.) No considerations of loyalty call upon us to prolong the supremacy of a party whose art and part it has so eminently been to extinguish almost every spark of Union sentiment in the Southern breast, and to implant there in its stead a desperate and defiant determination never to be reconciled, never to submit or yield, never again to come under rulers, whom, reasonably, or unreasonably, they have learned so thoroughly to hate. No considerations of patriotism call upon us to renew the official term of an Administration, whose peculiar policy, by inspiring this spirit of desperation and hatred, has rendered the victories of our armies a hundred-fold harder to achieve, and has robbed them of so many of their legitimate results after they have been achieved. For never, my friends, do victories cost so much, and come to so little, as when they are wrung from a foe who has been goaded and maddened to despair. This sort of goading and maddening process may answer well enough for increasing the sport at a bull-fight, but it has certainly involved us in at least one Bull Run. ("Good," laughter and cheers.) And I fear the day is still distant when it will secure us

that sort of victory which we can reasonably hope to see followed by Union and Peace.

Nothing could be further from my purpose, in these remarks, than to cast the slightest imputation upon the patriotism of President Lincoln, or anybody else. No one can doubt that he wishes to write his name on the roll of history as the restorer of the American Union. It is a title which might satisfy the most exalted ambition. He may well be excused for his eagerness to remain in office until he has accomplished the work. He may almost be pardoned for wielding the enormous patronage and power which belongs to the Executive in a war like this, for securing his own nomination and his own election, if he really believes that he can accomplish it. And those who are of opinion that he is just about to succeed—whether within sixty days or ninety days—before Christmas or after—are right to give him their support. We would all support him if we were of their opinion, for we want the country saved, no matter who is to have the glory. But President Lincoln is evidently looking forward to another title in the history of the future. He desires to be enrolled as the great Liberator of the African race—a glorious title, also, if it could be legitimately obtained. But I greatly fear that in aiming at the second, he has lost the first. No man, I think, can help perceiving, that he is so embarrassed and entangled by his proclamations and commitments and pledges in regard to slavery, as to be almost incapacitated for bringing this terrible struggle to an early and successful termination. He has contrived to weave a Gordian knot, which he himself is unable to untie, and which the bravest and sharpest swords seem thus far powerless to cut asunder. No one can have forgotten, certainly, that recent and most extraordinary manifesto “To Whom it may Concern,” in which in reply to the very first suggestions of peace, he felt obliged to insert

a condition which discomfited his best friends, and rendered all such efforts hopeless.

Fellow-citizens, we need a change of counsels. (“That’s true.” Applause.) We need a change of counsellors. We need a return to the policy on which the loyal States first rallied so unanimously to the suppression of the rebellion. We must go back to the principles embodied in the resolution adopted by the Congress of the United States, not far from the 4th day of July, 1861, and worthy to have been adopted on that hallowed anniversary itself,—adopted in the Senate on the motion of Andrew Johnson, and adopted in the House of Representatives on the motion of the lamented Crittenden. That terrible repulse at Bull’s Run had then just taught us wisdom. Would to heaven that we had not so soon forgotten that lesson! If we had never departed from that resolution—if “ease had never recanted vows made in pain”—I firmly believe that Union and Peace would have been our blessed portion at this moment. You all remember that resolution. It embodied the simple policy of a vigorous prosecution of the war for no purpose of subjugation or aggression, in no spirit of revenge or hatred, with no disposition to destroy or impair the constitutional rights of any State or any section, but for the sole end of vindicating the Constitution and reëstablishing the Union. (Cheers.) That was the policy which would have divided the South, and which ought to have satisfied and united the North. Let me rather say that it was, and is still, the policy, which steadily pursued, under the lead of men against whom the whole Southern heart and mind and soul have not become hopelessly embittered and poisoned—under the lead of men, too, who are not ashamed to avow that readiness for reconciliation which is the highest ornament of the Christian character, and without which we cannot rely on the blessing of God—this, I say, is the policy which thus pursued will again, if anything earthly ever will, unite both

North and South in the bonds of Constitutional fellowship, and exhibit our country and its flag once more in the face of all the world, with "a star for every State, and a State for every star." And what a glorious day that will be, my countrymen, for us and for all mankind! If to yearn for it, and pant for it, and pray for it, be a subject for reproach, as exhibiting too great a willingness for peace, I am the guiltiest man alive. (Cheers.) And how can we hasten that day more effectively than by supporting the candidate who is the very impersonation of the policy I have described? Our noble candidate has enforced and illustrated it a thousand-fold better than any one else can do, in his memorable despatch from Harrison's Landing, in his brilliant oration at West Point, and still more recently in his admirable letter accepting the nomination we are assembled to ratify. (Three cheers for General McClellan.) These are the true platforms for the hour; and not for the hour only, but for all time. ("That's so.") We need no other, and some of us, certainly, can recognize no other. ("They're good enough.") I rejoice to see so many of their noble sentiments and golden sentences emblazoned on the countless banners and illuminations around me. Let us cherish them in all our memories and write them on all our hearts.

Yes, my friends, if anybody is disposed to cavil with you about your platform, tell him that Gen. McClellan has made his own platform, and that it is broad enough and comprehensive enough for every patriot in the land to stand upon. Tell him that you should as soon think of holding Gen. McClellan responsible for not taking Richmond, when he was so rashly interfered with, and so cruelly stripped of his troops on the right hand and on the left, as you should think of holding him responsible for any equivocal, or any unequivocal, words of Chicago Conventions or of any other conventions, which malicious partisans may attempt to pervert to his injury. Tell him that you should

as soon think of the brave Army of the Potomac having been frightened from following their gallant leader to the field by the Quaker guns on the roadside, as of his supporters for the Presidency being scared from their position by any paper pellets of the brain, wise or otherwise, which ever came from the midnight sessions of a Resolution Committee in the hurly-burly of a National Convention. (Cheers.)

General McClellan, I repeat, has made his own platform, which ought to be satisfactory to everybody. His letter of acceptance, especially, ought to be hailed with delight and with gratitude even by those who are too far committed in other directions to give him their support. (Applause.) It is worth an army with banners to the cause of the Union. It has the clarion ring to rally a nation to the rescue. It speaks, too, in trumpet-tones to our deluded brethren in rebellion, warning them that there is to be no cessation of hostilities upon any other basis than that of Union, but proclaiming to them that the door of reconciliation and peace is open on their resuming their allegiance to the Constitution and laws of the United States. And, certainly, my friends, that letter of acceptance has turned the flank of his revilers as handsomely as the gallant Sherman has turned the flank of Hood at Atlanta. (Laughter and applause.) It has taken away every pretext for those indecent and unjust insinuations against the patriotism and loyalty of all the opponents of the Administration, which have fallen from so many ruthless partisan pens, and from so many reckless partisan tongues. It has destroyed every pretence for the imputation, that there is a party at the North, ready for a precipitate and ignominious abandonment of the great struggle in which we are engaged, and willing to entertain propositions incompatible with the restoration of the Constitution and the Union. The Union — "the Union at all hazards" — is as distinctly the whole import of George B. McClellan's letter of the 8th of September, as "the Union

in any event" was of that Farewell Address of George Washington, whose promulgation is so nearly associated with the day on which we are assembled. "The Union, — it must be preserved" — is as clearly the maxim of McClellan in 1864 as it was of Andrew Jackson in 1832. A Democratic President saved the Union then, and I believe a Democratic President can save the Union now. Let us rally, then, to the support of that great principle of unconditional Unionism, which is common to Washington, Jackson, and McClellan. Let us go for the flag, the whole flag, and nothing but the flag. (Cheers.) Let us vindicate the rights of free opinion, of free speech, of a free press, and of free and unawed elections (loud cheering), even in a time of civil war, and show to all the world that we are, and still mean to be, a

free people. (Voice — "We mean to be.") Let us bring no railing accusations against the patriotism of others, and let us treat all which are brought against our own patriotism with the contempt and scorn which they deserve. Let us furnish all the men and all the money which are required for the aid of our gallant defenders in the field, and bear the welfare of our soldiers and sailors ever uppermost in our hearts. And as we throw out our McClellan banners to the breeze, let the word still and ever be, alike to friend and foe: "The Union is the one condition of peace. We ask no more. But the Union must be preserved at all hazards."

Mr. Winthrop closed amid loud applause, followed by "three cheers for the speaker."

HENRY CLAY.

EXTRACT FROM A SPEECH OF THE HON. HENRY CLAY, IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, ON THE SUBJECT OF ABOLITION PETITIONS, FEBRUARY 7, 1839.

"SIR, — I am not in the habit of speaking lightly of the possibility of dissolving this happy Union. The Senate knows that I have deprecated allusions, on ordinary occasions, to that direful event. The country will testify, that, if there be anything in the history of my public career worthy of recollection, it is the truth and sincerity of my ardent devotion to its lasting preservation. But we should be false in our allegiance to it if we did not discriminate between the imaginary and the real dangers by which it may be assisted. Abolition should no longer be regarded as an imaginary danger. The Abolitionists, let me suppose, succeed in their present aims of uniting the inhabitants of the Free States as one man, against the inhabitants of the Slave States. Union on the one side will beget union on the other. And this process of reciprocal consolidation will be attended with all the violent prejudices, embittered passions, and implacable ani-

mosities which ever degraded or deformed human nature. A virtual dissolution of the Union will have already taken place, whilst the form of its existence remains. The most valuable element of union, mutual kindness, the feelings of sympathy, the fraternal bonds, which now happily unite us, will have been extinguished forever. One section will stand in menacing and hostile array against the other. The collision of opinion will be quickly followed by the clash of arms. I will not attempt to describe scenes which now lie happily concealed from our view. Abolitionists themselves would shrink back in dismay and horror at the contemplation of desolated fields, conflagrated cities, murdered inhabitants, and the overthrow of the fairest fabric of human government that ever rose to animate the hopes of civilized man. Nor should these Abolitionists flatter themselves, that, if they can succeed in their object of uniting

the Free States, they will enter the contest with a numerical superiority that must insure victory. All history and experience proves the hazard and uncertainty of war; and we are admonished by Holy Writ, "that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." But if they were to conquer, whom would they conquer? A foreign foe? one that had invaded our shores, insulted our flag, and laid our country waste? No, sir; no, sir. It would be a contest without laurels, without glory, — a self, a suicidal conquest, — a conquest of brothers over brothers, — achieved by one over another portion of the descendants of common ancestors, who, nobly pledging their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, had fought and bled, side by side, in many a hard battle on land and ocean, severed our country from the British crown, and established our national independence.

The inhabitants of the Slave States are sometime accused by their Northern brethren with displaying too much rashness and sensibility to the operations and proceedings of Abolitionists. But, before they can be rightly judged, there should be a reversal of conditions. Let me suppose that the people of the Slave States were to form societies, subsidize presses, make large pecuniary contributions, send forth numerous missionaries throughout all their own borders, and enter into machinations to burn the beautiful capitals, destroy the productive manufactories, and sink into the ocean the gallant ships of the Northern States. Would these incendiary proceedings be

regarded as neighborly, and friendly, and consistent with the fraternal sentiments which should ever be cherished by one portion of the Union towards another? Would they excite no emotion, occasion no manifestations of dissatisfaction, nor lead to any acts of retaliatory violence? But the supposed ease falls far short of the actual one, in a most essential circumstance. In no contingency could these capitals, manufactories, and ships rise in rebellion and massacre inhabitants of the Northern States.

"I am, Mr. President, no friend of slavery. The Searcher of all hearts knows that every pulsation of mine beats high and strong in the cause of civil liberty. Whenever it is safe and practicable I desire to see every portion of the human family in the enjoyment of it. But I prefer the liberty of my own country to that of any other people; and the liberty of my own race to that of any other race. The liberty of the descendants of Africa in the United States is incompatible with the safety and liberty of the European descendants. Their slavery forms an exception — an exception resulting from a stern and inexorable necessity — to the general liberty in the United States. We did not originate, nor are we responsible for, this necessity. Their liberty, if it were possible, could only be established by violating the incontestable powers of the States, and subverting the Union. And beneath the ruins of the Union would be buried, sooner or later, the liberty of both races."

WATCHWORDS FOR PATRIOTS.

Mottoes for the Campaign, selected from General McClellan's Writings.

If it is not deemed best to intrust me with the command even of my own army, I simply ask to be permitted to share their fate on the field of battle. — *Despatch to General Halleck, August 30, 1862.*

By pursuing the political course I have always advised, it is possible to bring about a permanent restoration of the Union — a re-union by which the rights of both sections shall be preserved, and by which both parties shall preserve their self-respect, while they respect each other. — *General McClellan's Report.*

I am devoutly grateful to God that my last campaign was crowned with a victory which saved the nation from the greatest peril it had then undergone. — *General McClellan's Report.*

At such a time as this, and in such a struggle, political partisanship should be merged in a true and brave patriotism, which thinks only of the good of the whole country. — *General McClellan's West Point Oration.*