





STATE OF THE UNION.

SPEECH OF HON. J. M. LEACH,

OF NORTH CAROLINA,

Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 7, 1861.

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three—

Mr. LEACH, of North Carolina, said :

Mr. SPEAKER: Infinitely the most momentous question of the age, and probably the most important one in the future history of the world, is presented for consideration to us, who sit around the council-board of the nation—the Representatives of the freest Government and the greatest people on the face of the earth.

And, sir, I am sorry that I can bring but little of the *prestige* of public service or public station to give force and consideration to anything I may be able to say.

It is a question of *union* or *disunion*—a question that involves peace, happiness, prosperity, and greatness, on the one hand; and war, bloodshed, misery, and ruin, on the other. This Congress of the American nation is about to make a solemn decision, and deliberately record its action as such, upon that question and political principle which underlies the entire frame-work and superstructure of our great constitutional fabric—*man's capacity for self-government*.

Thirty million of our people—to say nothing of the nations of other lands—are looking on with intense anxiety and in breathless suspense, to see what will be the result of our action, and whether we shall meet the just expectations of the country, and of the civilized world. The throbbings of the great American heart with alternate emotions of hope and fear, are felt from one end of this Union to the other.

We are in the midst of a revolution, as yet, thank God! bloodless; but how long, considering the mighty events that are hurrying us rapidly onward, it may remain so, no one can tell. We should meet the issues that are pressing upon us, and grapple with the difficulties and dangers that so oppress the country, recognizing them as they really exist and deal with them as facts in a practical way, by the full exercise of our best reason, and in the true spirit of an enlarged patriotism.

And the first general question presented for solution in this alarming crisis of the country is, can our sectional difficulties and troubles be settled by the Representatives of the American people now in Congress assembled? Can the Constitution and the Union be preserved, and peace and harmony restored to a distracted land? And can this adjustment and settlement be made upon a fair basis, honorable alike to all sections, upon principles of justice and equity? Sir, I maintain that it can and ought to be done. And as an American citizen, glorying in that proud name, and as a Representative on this floor, in the name of my patriotic constituency, in the name of the law-abiding and Union-loving people of North Carolina, in the name of the whole country, I demand it. Sir, I envy not the man—now that the clouds of our public misfortunes, warmed with the lightnings and freighted with the thunders of threatened dissolution, have thickened to a tempest, and the voice of our country's calamity is calling us to her relief—I envy not the man, be he in public or private station, from the North or from the South, who shall gaze on the tempest with indifferent eyes, heed not the importunate voice, or, with a cold heart, turn a deaf ear to the appealing call. I thank Heaven I do not envy such a man. My feelings would incline me rather to bestow upon him my pity, mingled, perhaps, with a less amiable sentiment.

The imperilled condition of this great country; the threatened dangers of civil war, with all its untold horrors, renders it a duty bounden and imperative upon every member on this floor, in the exercise of the loftiest patriotism, to rise superior to party platforms, political organizations, and sectional rancor, to the true dignity of the great questions at issue; and from the high stand-point of the Constitution and its guarantees, survey the difficulties and differences in dispute between the two sections with firm resolve and patriotic endeavor to settle and adjust them, as wise statesmen should do, in the same spirit of mutual forbearance, conciliation, and compromise in which our fathers—inspired with the genius of great deeds, after months

of labor, toil, and anxious consultation, invoking Heaven's blessing upon their efforts—formed and established for themselves and their posterity that great chart and glorious bulwark of civil, political, and religious liberty, *the Constitution of the United States*. Sir, those Representatives who, either from a supine indifference to the troubles that environ the country, or from feelings of disloyalty to the Constitution, shall fail to meet the question in this spirit, will be held, in my judgment, not only to a painful responsibility at the forum of conscience, but will deserve and receive the execrations of millions living and millions yet unborn, to say nothing of a fearful retribution hereafter, when the motives and actions of men shall be weighed at the gates of eternity!

Such, Mr. Speaker, are the responsibilities that attach to us, who are charged and intrusted with those grave matters of such weighty and solemn import by anxious and confiding constituencies, whose patriotic appeals for the perpetuity of the Union, and urged with earnest importunity, are coming up to us daily in the various forms of prayers, memorials, petitions, letters, resolutions of primary meetings, and immense Union demonstrations held all over the land; all looking to the one great object of the settlement of our sectional troubles—the restoration of peace, and the salvation of the Union.

And this responsibility of settling our difficulties rests mainly upon you, gentlemen of the Republican party, who are now dominant in both Houses of Congress, and who have recently attained power and are about to assume the administration of the General Government. And you should come to the rescue promptly; for it is in vain to talk about delay until after the inauguration of your President. I greatly fear it will then be too late. The excitement of the country is becoming too intensified to wait longer. The people are growing impatient, and are everywhere asking, why nothing is done? It would be regarded as a great piece of folly to wait until the dwelling is burned down, and then to call out lustily for the firemen and the engines; or, after the patient is dead, to call in the physician to ascertain the nature of the disease. "Folly made drunk" could not more fatally err. No, sir, unless there is an immediate return to the obligations of the Constitution, and a recognition of the equality of all the States, and a guarantee of the rights of the South, by the people of the North, in view of the rapid progress that revolution has already made, peace cannot, I fear, be much longer maintained, or the Union much longer be preserved.

Why, sir, the first great difficulty in the way to an amicable adjustment of our differences, is the sad and startling fact that the broad ægis of the Constitution no longer spreads its peaceful and protecting shelter over *thirty-three States*; but *six* have already, with erratic eccentricity, shot madly from their orbits, and from the system in which they have heretofore revolved so harmoniously. They have left the great sisterhood, and are essaying to set up for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, let us so legislate as to bring them back; not by menace, not by waging an unnatural war upon them, but by kindness, by expostulation, and by reason; by appeals, such as have never yet been made in vain to American citizens—in the name of their beloved country.

I have, therefore, felt it to be a paramount duty, during the whole of the session, to utter no word, do no act, give no vote, that might have the slightest tendency to widen the breach, increase the excitement, inflame the passions, or add to the rancor of our unfortunate sectional hostility, but rather to allay this excitement, calm those passions, and harmonize the conflicting interests of all sections; and, with this leading idea as the guide of my actions, I have given votes which, under other conditions, and circumstances of less exigency, I might not have given.

Sir, with the view of understanding more clearly the precise nature and character of the questions at issue, I desire to glance briefly at the causes, gradually increasing and multiplying, which have finally produced the present alarming crisis, and distracted state of the country. And I shall do so, disclaiming any purpose of crimination of any party—for the questions for consideration involve the whole country in too much danger to allow any party feelings to enter into their discussion—but with the hope of endeavoring to apply to them the tests of truth and logic, so as to ascertain whether there cannot be found a remedy and a redress for all the grievances, real or imaginary, with which the country is so much afflicted.

For more than twenty years the subject of slavery has been actively agitated in both sections of the Union, and often by wicked men and unscrupulous demagogues, who, by means of such agitation, by inflaming the minds of their respective constituencies, and arraying those sections against each other, have frequently succeeded

in getting into power, and, by its abuse, have sent out all over the land, in the form of speeches, circulars, and pamphlets, misrepresentations of the real feelings, opinions, and sentiments of the people of one section towards those of the other; and the country has passed through several crises seriously threatening its integrity, brought on and fostered by such continued agitation. And at last, the Democratic party, flushed with successes, and feeling secure in power, in an evil hour of folly and madness, *repealed the Missouri compromise*—that solemn compact enacted and agreed upon by the great statesmen of the last generation. By this most unfortunate and mischievous legislation of the great Democratic party, “the scepter departed from Judah,” and it lost alike its *prestige* and its power. It is all but universally admitted, in every quarter and by every party, that it is to the repeal of the Missouri compromise mainly, together with the corruption and reckless extravagance of the present Administration, that the Republican party owes its complete organization, and on account of which it has acquired its present strength and achieved its victory in the late presidential contest.

After the disruption of the Democratic party at Charleston, under the lead and dextrous management of Mr. Yancey—a well known and distinguished disunionist—and the nomination of Mr. Breckinridge subsequently by the southern wing of the party, it will be remembered by many thousand whom I addressed during the presidential canvass, that I predicted, in common with others who took an active part in that contest, that the defeat of Mr. Breckinridge, which every body anticipated, and the election of Mr. Lincoln, the other sectional candidate, would be seized upon as a pretext for destroying the Union. This was denied in unqualified terms, and I never saw or heard of a man in the whole State who favored the breaking up of the Union in the event of his election, however much it was to be deprecated.

And this brings me to the consideration of the doctrine of secession, and its dangerous consequences. I will not consume my time by arguing the question of the right of secession further than to say that, in my judgment, there can be found no warrant for it in the Constitution; and no foundation for it, as derived in any way from that instrument. If a State has a constitutional right to secede, then the Constitution of the United States would be subject to the will and control of every State in the Union. It would be the mere creature, not only of all the States, but also of any one of them; for it could be destroyed at any time by any State. It seems to me that the mere statement of the proposition carries upon its face its own refutation. It is a solecism to speak of the *constitutional right of secession*; for it means *revolution*. I regard it as a dogma, not only indefensible, but dangerous.

I cannot see how secession, even if constitutional, can afford any remedy for the grievances of the South; and it is certainly a matter of profoundest regret that the cotton States, following in the lead of South Carolina, have seen fit to withdraw from the Union. I submit that this action of the cotton States was precipitate, unjustifiable and unwise; and that in acting thus, they have shown themselves wanting in respect to their sister slave States; especially when it is remembered that but for this withdrawal, and the consequent retiring from these Halls of their respective delegations, there would have been a decided majority in *both Houses of Congress* against the incoming Administration—with the power, therefore, to have controlled the legislation of the country. This should have been considered; and all honorable and peaceful means should have been exhausted before taking a step involving such tremendous issues, and fraught with such fearful consequences.

But has the South no cause of complaint of northern hostility to its interests, and of northern aggressions? Sir, I maintain it has; and that there is not a member on this floor who does not know it, and in his conscience feel it. And it is a sad comment upon the patriotism of the times, and most discouraging to have to witness, from day to day, the stoical indifference and stolid obstinacy of northern members, while the disintegration of States is going on, and the Union is being dissolved.—Representatives of the North, these troubles have been brought on by your gradual but persistent encroachments upon the rights of the South, as manifested in your personal liberty bills; your exclusion of the South, with their slave property, from the Territories, in derogation of the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Dred Scott case; your denial of property in slaves upon the quibble that they are “persons” only; and this, too, when you know that slavery existed in twelve of the original thirteen States at the time of the formation of the Constitution, and that it is recognized in that instrument, and when, but the other day, your leader, [Mr. CORWIN,] so distinguished as a statesman and a lawyer, said in his speech:

"He looked upon that as property which, owing a man labor, could be converted into value in goods or money. That he called property. He did not mean to say that man had property in man; but there was a relationship existing between a slave and his owner which was recognized by the United States; in this, to wit: that every State recognizes the right of a master to establish his claim to a runaway slave. That relationship which existed between a man who owes labor and him to whom it is due was called slavery."

Your threatened interference with slavery in the District of Columbia, and in the forts, arsenals, and dock-yards; your "irrepressible conflict" dogma, of eventually striking down slavery in the States—as promulgated not only by Mr. SEWARD, but before him, by your chieftain, Mr. Lincoln—urging upon the opponents of slavery to arrest its further expansion, and "place it where the public mind can rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction"—for such are his identical words; your triumph as a sectional party on the *one idea* of hostility to slavery in the election of sectional candidates, who, on account of their sectional views, failed to receive one electoral vote in fifteen of the States of the Union; thus organizing and bringing into power a sectional party, in utter disregard of the warning voice of the Father of his Country, who, "though dead, yet speaketh"—ay! sirs, in that immortal State paper, his Farewell Address, George Washington speaks to you in fervid eloquence and earnest remonstrance to abandon your sectional organization and become national by coming to the rescue of the nation in this its hour of wail.

Thus have I briefly summed up the main grievances, either existing or threatened, of which the South complains. I have done so, I trust, with no improper feelings, and in no spirit of menace, but with the view of presenting those grievous complaints and wrongs which my section of the country has been subjected to for years, and the State I have the honor in part to represent has borne with patience and fortitude on account of her loyalty to and love of the Union. And I trust she will bear and forbear yet longer; will "watch and wait," and still hope; demanding, however, with calmness but firmness, and in the name of equality and justice, her rights *in the Union*, and under the Constitution and its guarantees.

Representatives of the North, I appeal to you, and I ask you, if those grievances are not real? Do they not exist, and should they not be redressed? You know in your consciences that they are real; that they do exist; and you feel in your hearts, as fair-minded men, that they ought to be redressed. You have the power to do it; will you exercise it? I have the highest authority for saying that the grievances alluded to do exist, and that the complaints of the South are just. I get this corroborative testimony from ex-President Fillmore, a patriot and a statesman; and, although residing in the North, he is a just and a righteous man, and fair to all sections. In reply to a letter from Mr. Dix, notifying him of his appointment as peace commissioner to Charleston, he holds the following patriotic language:

"This is certainly an honorable and patriotic mission, and, did I believe it could do any good, I should not hesitate a moment to undertake it. But you will pardon me for saying frankly that, in my opinion, our southern brethren require no assurances beyond that of the meeting, and the address and resolutions, to convince them that the members of that meeting, and those they represented, *now are, and at all times have been, willing to do them justice*, and have done their utmost to maintain their constitutional rights; and to go there and inform them merely of this fact, which is all we can do, is, in my opinion, a work of supererogation.

"What they want, and what I want, is some *assurance* from the Republican party, now dominant at the North, that they, or at least the conservative portion of them, are ready and willing to come forward and repeal all unconstitutional State laws; live up to the compromises of the Constitution; execite the laws of Congress honestly and faithfully, and treat our southern brethren as friends. When I can have any such *reliable assurance* as this to give, I will go most cheerfully and urge our southern brethren to follow our example and restore harmony and fraternal affection between the North and South.

"At present, our labors should be here. Let us put ourselves right, and then we can, with more confidence and justice, appeal to them.

Will you not remove those disturbing elements of sectional strife and discord that are working out, unless soon arrested, with such fatal certainty, the destruction of the Union?

Sir, the immense value of the slave property of the South, and the consequent immense value of the products of slave labor, make her people naturally sensitive to any aggressions upon it, or any interference with it, that tends to jeopardize its existence, or render it less secure, or in any way depreciate its value. The annual export of the great staple of the country, of cotton alone, produced by slave labor, amounts, in value, to nearly two hundred million dollars—two-thirds of the entire exports of the country; and the working up of the raw material, in Great Britain alone, affords constant employment to four million operatives. And this is exclusive of the great amount annually consumed in the manufactories of your own Northern States, employing many thousand laborers.

I will not detain the House by giving the statistics showing the great value of slave labor in the production of sugar, tobacco, rice, and the cereals. The South thinks slavery is right; you think it wrong. The South thinks the system is a hu-

mane one, and that the Southern portion of this Union presents the highest type of civilization; you think differently. Let it be so without quarreling.

Nature, Mr. Speaker, through the agencies of soil and climate, has given to different portions of the earth's surface a monopoly in the production of valuable staples and commodities that enter so largely into the commerce of nations. To China, the production of the *tea-plant*; to India, the growth of the *poppy*; to France, the product of the *vine*; and to our own country, the production of that great and indispensable staple of *cotton*, that controls the commerce of the world. And while other nations and countries nurture and protect, with jealous watchfulness and concern, *their national monopolies*, it is reserved to our nation alone to present to the balance of the civilized world the singular folly and suicidal policy of bringing into power a dominant party, organized in direct hostility to that section of our common country, and that form of labor which actual experience has shown, can alone produce *our great monopoly of cotton*.

The gentleman from Maryland, [Mr. HARRIS.] in the course of a very able speech, in demanding farther guarantees in connection with slavery, stated the value of the slave property of his State at \$10,000,000. Sir, I find, from a synopsis of the census, which I took the trouble to procure, and which is before me, that North Carolina owns the vast number of 348,377 slaves, worth \$300,000,000. Think you, gentlemen of the North, that she will allow herself to be disturbed, in any way, in the enjoyment of this immense property? If you do, you have mistaken her spirit, and you are ignorant of the character and nature of her noble people. I ask Representatives of the North, and, for my present purpose, I appeal to the *delegation from Massachusetts*, as just men, and willing to be controlled in your action and votes by the golden rule, as laid down in the Scriptures of eternal truth and justice, whether, if the South had the power to control the legislation of the country, as the North has, and should exercise that power by any legislation, jeopardizing, or depreciating, or rendering insecure, in any way, \$300,000,000 worth of the property of the calculating men of your State, nay, sir, one-tenth portion of that amount, would you, gentlemen, and would your people, meekly and quietly submit to such flagrant wrongs? *You know you would not.* And do you suppose for a moment that my constituents, that the people of North Carolina, *the birth-place of American liberty*, the happy homes of brave men and fair women—do you suppose that *they* will tamely submit to such odious discrimination, such inequality and injustice? Never!

No, gentlemen, you ought to recede, and accommodate and adjust this matter; and give to the South such assurances of friendship and such guarantees as shall satisfy the reasonable demands of her people, and as will lead to a settlement and pacification of our sectional troubles. And, as men true to the Union and all sections, I invoke you to do it.

And this bring me to the territorial question, the great "bone of contention;" and which, if amicably adjusted, will doubtless lead to the happy issue of a full and complete settlement of all our difficulties. Sir, after the able and conclusive argument of my friend from Tennessee, [Mr. QUARLES.] upon this question, it would be an unwarrantable consumption of time, and trespass upon the patience of the House, for me to enter upon the territorial question at length and in detail. I will content myself with merely glancing at some of the most prominent facts and statistics, which I find in the report of the Commissioner of the Land Office. At the date of our treaty of independence, in 1783, the now slave States had an area of territory of 638,016 square miles; and those States now designated as free, an area of territory of 169,662 square miles—there being a balance in favor of the slave States of 468,354 square miles. But in a spirit of generous feeling and fraternal respect, Virginia ceded to the General Government 239,558 square miles, and allowed to be extended over it the ordinance of 1787, which excluded slavery from it forever; thus changing the aggregate balance of territory; making the area of free territory 409,220 square miles, and reducing that of the slave territory to 398,458 square miles; out of which munificent donations have since been carved the great States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Again, sir: by the treaty of the 30th of April, 1803, made at Paris by our Government and that of France, we purchased the Territory of Louisiana, containing an area of 1,136,496 square miles, extending from the mouth of the Mississippi to the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude and to the Pacific ocean. This was all slave territory at the date of the purchase; and the third article of the treaty provides *in terms for its protection, as property, by the Government of the United States*.

But in 1820, we partitioned this immense territory between the North and the South, on the parallel of 36°30' north latitude, known as the *Missouri Compromise Line*, thereby giv-

ing to the North 977,602 square miles, the South receiving only 158,894 square miles, leaving a balance of 818,708 square miles, in this division of a territory all slave, in favor of the North as against the South. By the purchase of Florida, and the annexation of Texas, the South acquired a total territory of 333,624 square miles. And by the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, we made a joint acquisition of 665,486 square miles. Of this, the North has already acquired California, containing 188,981 square miles, leaving 476,505 square miles undisposed of in New Mexico and Utah. Since our independence, a period of seventy-seven years, the South has acquired 392,520 square miles, and the North 1,406,141 square miles. Thus slave territory has been increased about thirty-three per cent., and free territory over one thousand per cent. In 1,217,160 square miles thus acquired by the North, slavery existed by law at the date of the acquisition, and from which it has been abolished. And in the 392,520 square miles, which has been acquired by the South, slavery existed at the date of acquisition, and it still remains as slave territory. Now, sir, is it not fair and equitable, that of the remaining territory at least, acquired by the common blood and common treasure, the South should have dedicated to its main institution this small portion? Can any fair-minded man object to it? Do not reason and justice and equity demand it?

But, Mr. Speaker, while the slavery question is of necessity the most prominent in this debate, and the one to which all our troubles are most usually ascribed, yet, in my judgment, there are abuses and corruptions which have gradually crept into the administration of the Government, the tendency of which has been to shake the confidence of the people in the purity of the men in power. They have seen the expenditures of the General Government swelled in a few years to an almost fabulous sum. This, sir, as every member on this floor knows, I have, in conjunction with my friend from Tennessee, who sits by my side, [Mr. QUARLES,] used every effort in my power to correct. And to his efficiency in this regard, members will unite their voice with mine in bearing witness. By our joint labors we, two, have reduced the expenditures about one million dollars, which your journals will show. And in those efforts, my friend well remembers, we have in every instance co-operated. Sir, we have seen homestead bills passed through this House giving away our public lands, when the bill to pension the old soldiers who defended our flag, which I introduced at an early day in the last session, cannot even be considered; although I have persistently, both at this session and the last, used every means known to parliamentary usage to call it up and put it on its passage. We have seen millions voted away to Pacific railroads; and lastly, sir, we have seen all efforts made by myself and others to reduce to the old and economical standard the pay and mileage of the members of this House and the Senate fail. This bill to reduce compensation and mileage was introduced by me, last session, and I have tried again and again to get a vote on it. These things, sir, should be at once corrected; they tend in a great degree to produce distrust in the minds of the honest and intelligent masses. But I beg pardon of the House for being led into this digression.

There are many true men at the North ready and anxious to do full justice to their Southern brethren; and it affords me pleasure to say, Mr. Speaker, (Mr. NIBLACK, of Indiana, in the Chair,) that you are of that number. I read your able and patriotic speech with unqualified pleasure, and endorse with heartiness its manly and patriotic sentiments. One of the obstacles that I conceive to be in the way of an adjustment of our difficulties is the erroneous idea that the South is asking of the North concessions. Sir, the South is perfectly satisfied with the Constitution; and the complaint is, that it has been violated and disregarded to the manifest injury of the rights secured to them by its provisions. The South, therefore, asks for nothing that the Constitution does not entitle them to. They simply ask that the provisions of the Constitution should be sacredly regarded and carried out, as its framers designed it should be, for the protection of those well-defined rights that have been outraged and disregarded. The South wants a re-affirmation of her rights under the Constitution, in such language as will admit of no dispute hereafter. The Southern States do not even claim the full extent of their rights as guaranteed to them by the Constitution; for, by virtue of the Dred Scott decision, in the Supreme Court of the United States, the South would have a right to take her slaves into all the Territories of the Union, and in claiming therein for this property the protection of the General Government. As an abstract right, she is entitled to this, but is willing to waive this right and accept the Crittenden proposition as a measure of compromise thus surrendering to the North nearly three-fourths of all the territory of the country; surrendering all that great territorial area lying north of 36°30', and retaining

that only lying south of that line. Now, sir, I repeat it: is there a conscientious fair-minded man on this floor, or in the nation, that will say this is not a fair settlement, or that the South is asking too much? And yet this territorial question is, as I have before stated, the main difficulty that has brought all our troubles upon the country. Settle this, and peace returns to all our borders.

The Crittenden scheme proposes further, that Congress shall have no power to abolish slavery in the States where it exists; that it shall not interfere with the transfer of slaves from one State to another, or with slavery in the District of Columbia while it exists in Maryland or Virginia; nor shall it be interfered with in the dock-yards, forts, and arsenals of the country. These are the points embraced in the Crittenden resolutions, and it is asked, for the more perfect observance of them, that they shall, as an amendment, be incorporated into the Constitution, when ratified by conventions of three-fourths of the States. And, sir, in my opinion, if this Congress adopts them, they will be ratified by more than six-sevenths of the States, and probably by all. What the South so much wants, is such remedies as will make a final settlement of these sectional quarrels, and take away, now and forever, all pretexts for further discussion and agitation,

“A consummation devoutly to be wished.”

The Crittenden measure *will effectually do this*. The proposition submitted by the chairman of the committee of thirty-three [Mr. CORWIN] will not, in my opinion, do this. Even the border slave States will not, in my opinion, be satisfied with it. It does not, as a whole, meet the just expectations of the South, and is not a fair compromise, and will not put an end to this ceaseless agitation, either in the North or in the South. I would greatly prefer, with some modifications, the border States proposition. I would readily vote for some of the propositions embraced in the majority report; there are others that I cannot, in justice to my own opinions, and to those I have the honor of representing, support. Representatives of the North, I beseech you to rise to the dignity of the occasion, and with a lofty patriotism and Roman firmness, come up like statesmen to the support of the fair and just peace measures proposed by our country's greatest living statesman, who is crowning the close of his eventful life in the patriotic and glorious effort of trying to save his country. Come to his rescue and the rescue of the Union, with resolved energy and determined will, that shall neither tire nor relax, until soothed to repose by the glorious spectacle of a reconciled and peaceful land! It is fitting that Mr. CRITTENDEN, the friend and former coadjutor of the immortal Clay, should be the pacificator in this trying crisis of our country. HENRY CLAY! charmed name in this hour of the Union's wail!

Sir, in former crises, the destiny of the country sat upon the *white plume* of the gallant Clay, as it was seen proudly to wave, conscious of victory, amid the tempestuous storm of the contest. *His* name needs no encomium from my poor tongue; neither epitaphs nor inausoleums would add to his fame:

“No marble monument he needs
To crumble and decay;
The memory of his mighty deeds
Can never pass away!”

What is now wanting is such guarantees as shall satisfy the border slave States and induce them not only to remain in the Union, but to exert their good offices as mediators and peace-makers between the extremists of both sections; and by conciliation and kindness, and assurances to their sister slave States that their rights will be protected in the Union, endeavor to influence those States to return to the Union, and rally again under the common flag of our common country. By this, and other means readily suggested to every intelligent mind, together with forbearance, and a strict maintenance of peace by the present and incoming Administration, I believe, sir, in that event that the cotton States, although they will soon establish some sort of provisional confederacy, would return to the Union.

But if a coercive policy is adopted, all is lost. If this Congress cannot, and will not, settle our difficulties, and if it shall refuse to ratify and adopt such measures and propositions as will no doubt be submitted to its consideration by the peace conference now assembled in this city—a body of men unsurpassed for their wisdom, experience, great talents, and known patriotism—then, I trust the Representatives here will be, at least, willing to remit the whole question in dispute back to the people, to whom this Government belongs, and from whom parties and politicians—who so often forget that they are but the agents of the people—derive all their power. Let the Crittenden-Bigler proposition be submitted to the voters of this Union,

and my life upon it, it will be adopted amid the firing of cannon and wild demonstrations of joy in every State of the Union. The hearts of the people are right! It is the heads of the politicians that are wrong! But there must be no attempts at coercion. I am for settling our troubles by the ballot, and not by the bullet—for peace, and not for war. And failing to carry any of these measures looking to a settlement—in the name of the Union, of humanity, of peace, and liberty, let there be called a Convention of the United States!

Waiving the question of whether the General Government has the constitutional right to coerce a State, would it not be the height of folly and madness and wickedness to attempt its exercise? Why, sir, the first gun fired for such a purpose would rally every slave State of the Union together in defense of their common rights, and the last hope would fade away of a reunion of all the States. Every man who is for coercive measures—whether on this floor or elsewhere—is, though he may not so regard it, to all practical purpose, a disunionist as unmitigated and thorough as William L. Yancey; because coercion and disunion are convertible terms; and the one necessarily the cause of the other. If we have to part, while it may be in sadness and in sorrow, still, in Heaven's name, and for humanity's sake, let it be in peace; for, remember that—

"Peace hath its victories, no less renowned than war."

And this holds doubly true when such a war is waged on brethren of the same blood and a common lineage. But if, flushed with victory, in the pride of power, and in contempt of reason, humanity, religion, you shall determine to wage a civil war against your southern brethren, it will be such a war as has never before ensanguined the earth. At the horrid idea, humanity shudders; religion weeps; liberty bleeds at every pore! Sir, burnt cities, towns, villages, and hamlets; desolated fields; poverty, crime, violence, and lawlessness; sanguinary hearth-stones, widowhood, orphanage, and hecatombs sacrificed to the demon of carnage, will mark its ravages, and attest its horrors! May a merciful God avert it!

Mr. Speaker, in this connection, I call the attention of the House and of the country to the following extract from a leading article on the distractions of our country, published recently in the London Times, the great political paper of England, and doubtless reflecting the sentiments and opinions of a large majority of her Majesty's subjects. It reads as follows:

"For our own part, whatever opinion Americans may have of English policy, we beg to assure them that in this country there is only one wish—that the Union may survive this terrible trial. Should Providence decree it otherwise, we earnestly pray that the separation may be an amicable one. Civil war, in a flourishing country and among a kindred people, can never be contemplated with ut horror by a nation like ours; and we trust that neither the violence of the people nor the weakness of their leaders will bring this calamity on the American Union."

So think and reason our trans-Atlantic neighbors.

I repeat it, sir, the only way to bring back our erring sister States is to give them guarantees that their rights will be regarded and protected in the Union. I would afford those States every mail facility; I would give up the unwise and expensive policy of sending to the southern ports of entry floating custom-houses to collect the duties on imports; but would, for the present, suspend the revenue laws, as applying to those ports. In a word, would leave those States without any excuse or pretext for remaining out of the Union. If I were a northern Representative, as I am a southern one, I would unite with my northern colleagues, and with the Representatives of the border slave States, in all honorable efforts to bring back the Cotton States. It would be generous and noble to do so. We might thus unite and bid them return to the old paternal family mansion; and then the people of those States would hurl the politicians from power and take their own government into their own hands, and come back. And when they came, we should bid them, with a smile of welcome, to enter; and we should receive them, with open arms, to fraternal bosoms; point them to the proud flag waving over us; and exclaim, in kindest accents:

"A union of hearts, a union of hands,
And the flag of our Union forever."

I tell gentlemen that it is in this spirit, and by this means, and this alone, that the Union can be preserved and perpetuated, in its integrity, to us and to our posterity.

But I am asked, what will North Carolina do in this terrible crisis? Sir, she will do her duty; her whole duty. There is not, in this great Confederacy, a State that is more loyal, or attached by stronger ties, or a more unalterable love to the Union. She will, in the exercise of her usual conservatism and moderation, calmly appeal to you again and again to do her justice and restore to the country peace and harmony. No precipitation nor rashness will mark her counsels or her action. She will exhaust all peaceful and constitutional remedies to settle our troubles. She will do everything that can be done to save the Constitution and the Union, except to tarnish her name, or sully her honor. This she will never do—never! Above all things, she desires the preservation of this Union. And as one of her loyal sons, if my poor life would avail anything to save it, I declare, before Heaven, I would willingly sacrifice it. If, however, nothing should be done; if no guarantees whatever should be made; if civil war should ensue, and you should attempt her subjugation, or that of any of her southern sisters, by arms, she will prove to the world, in that dread arbitrament of the sword, that she has lost none of the prestige nor valor of her former days. In such an event, I shall feel it my duty to take my place in the rank and file with my countrymen, the brave and loyal sons of North Carolina, where we will defend as best we may her honor and her rights, and the sacred hearthstones of her virtuous people, leaving the justice of our cause and the consequences to God. I say this in no vaunting spirit; for I should feel myself an unworthy descendant (if I may be pardoned the allusion) of those of you fought and bled, and still fought, on the storm-swept and fire-girdled heights of King's Mountain, and other battle fields of the Revolution, if, in the hour of my country's peril, I should be found skulking from danger, instead of rallying to her support, and mixing in the strife.

But, sir, relying with a firm faith and humble trust in the providence of God who raised up our own Washington as an instrument to achieve for us the priceless boon of civil and religious liberty, and who in His mercy and goodness has showered upon this favored land so many blessings, I believe that He will not permit wicked and ambitious men to bring the blight of war and ruin upon our country; but that, by His protecting hand and wondrous goodness, the Union will be preserved and perpetuated—

"Till the wave in the bay
Where the Mayflower lay,
Shall foam and freeze no more."

Mr. Speaker, the Union of these States was formed more than seventy years ago, by great and good men, whose highest hopes were that it might be imperishable; and I trust that seventy years hence, when this generation shall have passed away; ay, sir, through countless ages yet to come, this same Union, (now undergoing a baptism of fire,) dispensing its blessings to hundreds of millions of free and happy people, and resplendent in greatness, will still be marching onward in its brilliant career of progress and prosperity, its destiny unfulfilled and its glories undimmed—

"Till wrapt in fire the realms of ether glow,
And Heaven's last trump shall wake the world below!"



