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Miscellaneous.

SPEECH OF HON. S. S. COX, OF OHIO, IN VINDICATION OF GEN. McCLELLAN, FROM THE ATTACKS OF CONGRESSIONAL WAR CRITICS.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JAN. 31, 1862.

Mr. Chairman: I obtained the floor on yesterday to give a prompt answer to the elaborate attack made by my colleague (Mr. Greeley) on Gen. McClellan. I was not aware that my colleague could plead the impulse of the moment for his speech; but I give more significance to his labored effort because it betokens a plan—and in which my colleague plays his role—to get rid of the gallant Major General, in whom repose the hopes and the confidence of the people. If his speech had been made by a Democrat, it would have been said that it was an attempt to aid secession; to cripple our credit at home and our honor abroad; to undermine the popular faith in the power of the Government to conquer peace and restore the Union. It would have deserved, according to the precise now of seclusion, a prison in a sea bound castle.

I do not understand, nor will I attempt to analyze, the motives of my colleague. If I were to judge of his intent by the effect of his speech, he would discharge the Army in their efforts, and the people in their payment of taxes. His speech will aid the rebellion, not so much because it was spoken by him as because it seems to be a part of a plan, outside and inside of this House, to beguile distrust and sow discord. I do not know, sir, how much weight will be attributed to my colleague's military science. If his facts are no better than his conclusions, and I will demonstrate that neither are correct—his speech will only go for what it is worth—the scolding of an unwillful Congressman.

My colleague began with the cry that generals are nothing; that if any general was incompetent, to take him away. He read from the Richmond Dispatch to show the errors our generals had committed. The article read was so full of slander and falsehood that he himself corrected a part of it. He charged the Commander in Chief with caustically holding back our eager soldiers for months. He charged him with directing to them the victory which was in their hands. He said that no man living was fit to command over three hundred thousand soldiers.

Mr. Greeley: I said six hundred thousand. Mr. Cox: I have read the gentleman's speech in the Globe, and I am right. He further said that it was not only anti-republican and unwise, but alarming in the last degree. He found fault with his plan—as he claimed to know it—to attack the enemy's whole line at once at all points. He said that this was unwise. He did not approve of the general's "nice and precise adjustment of military affairs" and before the army moved. He wanted the army to overwhelm the enemy without waiting for orders from Washington. He then undertook, by a statement of facts as to the affairs at Romney, in Missouri, and Kentucky, to depreciate the character of the Commander in Chief. He demanded that the Army should move in all hazards, unrestrained by a single hand. He thought he saw in the accession of Mr. Stanton a streak of sunlight for him (Mr. Stanton) was like a man who had just been rebuffed as a military people would about equal that of the Chinese; and then my colleague wound up his speech by the figure of an anaconda, which he tried to coil around the neck of the President. This is the analysis of my colleague's speech.

On the very eve, sir, of the most important movements, and when our Army in one section has already given earnest in carrying out successfully one part of General McClellan's scheme, we have this most inopportune display of impatience against the Commander in Chief. I would rather have heard it from any other than an Ohio member. Ohio gave McClellan his first commission. I remember to have seen him when he came with alacrity to her capital to accept this mark of our Governor's trust. How well he repaid the confidence, Western Virginia can answer; and if all his plans had been carried out by subordinates with a vigor equal to their wisdom, my colleague would have less trouble and more glory in that campaign.

France: If he had been a Democrat, he would have not been so fearful of every movement abroad. Chouteau said he loved the old Democracy, because they had a gay and festive disdain of foreign dictation. Mr. Greeley: That is the party of which I was a member. Mr. Cox: Then my colleague has been a renegade to his ancient faith. I am sorry for it. We would be unworthy of our own house over our heads because we may fear that a neighbor will come some night to despoil it. Mr. Greeley: My colleague objects to the organization of an Army with one head. He wants a many-headed arrangement, with, I suppose, distracting councils. Utterly unconscious of the absolute necessity of unity of movement by our armies, under one direction, my colleague, to strike at Gen. McClellan, would change the military system which has obtained from the time war began or armies were levied. My colleague has a military wisdom beyond all human comprehension. Because our Army is large we must, on this logic, disperse its proper organization. There is the more need of one executive head to so vast an Army as this Army of half a million. My colleague, in this attack upon the general in command, meant to attack also the President, or he meant nothing. He knew that the President was General McClellan's superior officer; that all that Mr. McClellan had done or not done was approved by the President. He was however gracious enough to say that the President would not set up his opinion in military matters in antagonism to his general-in-chief; and he would, no doubt, for all that commend the good sense of Mr. Lincoln as I do. But if the President in thus acting was sensible, what sort of sense is it for a member of Congress, whose life has been passed in hurrying the public desk, (laughter) and whose thoughts have been less upon the eagle and more upon the dove, to set up his opinion against that of the general in command? If it were not bad sense, it would be nonsense. Why did not my colleague, if his motive was good, go to the President, and with his array of maps, telegrams, facts of omission and commission, lay before the President his military conceptions? Why does he have them delivered here, before the nation? Was it to display his military erudition? Or was it to gratify what he thinks was the popular prejudice against the military? The military administrator, regardless of consequences?—Why did he not go to Gen. McClellan and verify his facts before he used them for the public service? Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman had been a skillful commander, or had, like the gentleman from New York, (Mr. Roscoe Conkling) the humane motive for investigating the confessed blunders at Ball's Bluff, in which many brave men were lost, I could tolerate this mischievous line of debate.

But, sir, my colleague compels me to examine into his merits as a military critic particularly, and the propriety of military "movements" here in Congress and elsewhere by civilians. My colleague will admit that he is not a military man by education, nor a soldier, like Fallstaff, an instinct (laughter). His profession was that of a legislator. (laughter) His studies do not fit him to discuss military subjects. We do not go to a blacksmith to have our watch repaired, nor to the private of military horse-shoe. We do not go to a carolus for chess. (laughter) nor to the Western Reserve for cotton. I can well imagine how a fine scholar, as is my colleague, might, like Beaumarchais, be the prey of military vanity, and mount upon the wings of speculation, and hourly converse with kings and emperors, and weigh their counsels, and call their victories, if unjustly got, into a strict account, and in his fancy define their ill-placed states.

But, sir, criticism on the art of war, to be valuable, must be the prerogative of military study and experience. What has been the experience and study of my colleague? The country was thoroughly disgusted with the military Congressmen played at Ball's Bluff. (laughter) The gentleman who is remembered with fond remembrance in the House adjourned to go over to see our army lauded upon Richmond. Not one of us ever got there, and the whole of our Army in one section has already given earnest in carrying out successfully one part of General McClellan's scheme, we have this most inopportune display of impatience against the Commander in Chief. I would rather have heard it from any other than an Ohio member. Ohio gave McClellan his first commission. I remember to have seen him when he came with alacrity to her capital to accept this mark of our Governor's trust. How well he repaid the confidence, Western Virginia can answer; and if all his plans had been carried out by subordinates with a vigor equal to their wisdom, my colleague would have less trouble and more glory in that campaign.

As to the advent of the new Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton, whom my colleague holds as a "streak of light" in the gloom. I do not believe that he will delight in such halting, coupled with such railing at his friend, the general. It is too much like the "all hail" of the witches to Macbeth. (laughter) There lurks a sinister object in this congratulation. It was intended, as a depreciation of McClellan; as if the errors and incompetency of the late Secretary of War ought to be shared by the general. I, sir, as much and more sincerely than my colleague welcome the new Secretary. His advent is the harbinger of a better day, when the general's energy can be seconded by the determination and intelligence of an accomplished civilian and an honest man.

But my colleague would hazard the Army into a movement now, "at all hazards," because foreign nations may soon interfere—do not understand this logic. He would have us risk everything for fear of trouble from abroad. We may have foreign war; but this nation should not hazard its own existence from a servile fear of England or

France. If he had been a Democrat, he would have not been so fearful of every movement abroad. Chouteau said he loved the old Democracy, because they had a gay and festive disdain of foreign dictation. Mr. Greeley: That is the party of which I was a member. Mr. Cox: Then my colleague has been a renegade to his ancient faith. I am sorry for it. We would be unworthy of our own house over our heads because we may fear that a neighbor will come some night to despoil it. Mr. Greeley: My colleague objects to the organization of an Army with one head. He wants a many-headed arrangement, with, I suppose, distracting councils. Utterly unconscious of the absolute necessity of unity of movement by our armies, under one direction, my colleague, to strike at Gen. McClellan, would change the military system which has obtained from the time war began or armies were levied. My colleague has a military wisdom beyond all human comprehension. Because our Army is large we must, on this logic, disperse its proper organization. There is the more need of one executive head to so vast an Army as this Army of half a million. My colleague, in this attack upon the general in command, meant to attack also the President, or he meant nothing. He knew that the President was General McClellan's superior officer; that all that Mr. McClellan had done or not done was approved by the President. He was however gracious enough to say that the President would not set up his opinion in military matters in antagonism to his general-in-chief; and he would, no doubt, for all that commend the good sense of Mr. Lincoln as I do. But if the President in thus acting was sensible, what sort of sense is it for a member of Congress, whose life has been passed in hurrying the public desk, (laughter) and whose thoughts have been less upon the eagle and more upon the dove, to set up his opinion against that of the general in command? If it were not bad sense, it would be nonsense. Why did not my colleague, if his motive was good, go to the President, and with his array of maps, telegrams, facts of omission and commission, lay before the President his military conceptions? Why does he have them delivered here, before the nation? Was it to display his military erudition? Or was it to gratify what he thinks was the popular prejudice against the military? The military administrator, regardless of consequences?—Why did he not go to Gen. McClellan and verify his facts before he used them for the public service? Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman had been a skillful commander, or had, like the gentleman from New York, (Mr. Roscoe Conkling) the humane motive for investigating the confessed blunders at Ball's Bluff, in which many brave men were lost, I could tolerate this mischievous line of debate.

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And his face unblanching? My colleague quoted that fight to show that a battle could be fought and won without McClellan's orders, and in spite of orders. That was his point, if any. Now I happen to know that there was nothing in General McClellan's orders to forbid that movement on Fredericktown. As I understood the case, it was fought by Colonel Ross, who was sent by General Grant, of Cairo, to follow after Jeff. Thompson. He overtook him unexpectedly, and fought well. General Grant approved and complimented his action. I wish that my colleague would cultivate some faith in Gen. McClellan, I glory in according to him the fullest and noblest of all reigns. His record includes the salvation of all, embracing in its comprehensive faith, all that Davis, Jeff. Thompson, Wigfall, and all that crowd of conspicuous sinners. (laughter) He believes that Zollioffler is now in glory; he can even see Humphrey Marshall entering as my colleague from Cleveland once said John Brown—the pearls gates of Paradise—and that too without the enlargement of the gates or the lessening of Marshall's bulk. He can, with his eye of faith, and in his universal benevolence, see the Fallstaff of Kentucky, this mountain of success, humbly squeeze through the celestial doors (laughter) and landing the golden pavement of the New Jerusalem. (laughter) He cannot exercise a little faith, just the certainty of success. General Lander's skill, and sagacity of our accomplished young general.

Oh! if there is one thing more beautiful than another, it is that truth which we receive in another dark hours of trial and death. It is said that reason was the first-born, but faith inherits the blessing. Reason is apt to be fallible short-sighted, eager and unsteady, and in a way of contradiction; while faith is gentle and docile, ever ready to listen to the voice, by which alone truth and wisdom can effectually reach here. God has created two lights—the greater and the lesser. The greater is the sun, the lesser, to rule his contemplative night—faith; but faith shines only so long as she reflects something of the illumination of the brighter world. Where a man has no faith he has no light of reason.

There are some things in which a man must exercise his trust. The American people, unlike my colleague, have read the lives of our heroes. They know his military studies, his travel and observation, his practical railroad life, his mode of dealing with men and bodies of men, his prudent reserve, his unflinching patience, his readiness to trust a cause, his willingness to sacrifice. They know that the enemy would have been glad to have had him at the head of their own forces. They know that he has never blundered; that he is safe in a retreat, and that he is never in a hurry to retreat. They know that his military genius; that his knowledge of topography, engineering, and field strategy, his intimate acquaintance with our own resources, and his quick appreciation of our strength and weakness.

Knowing this and reposing upon this, now that the night is upon us, they will keep their eyes upon the stars. If true, criticism of the gentleman here can shake that faith. The attack of my colleague is like that of a pug with a straw against a giant.

My colleague is not satisfied with anything short of an advance at every hazard. He is not satisfied with the President, for he defers to McClellan; not satisfied with any commander in chief, for no one can supersede him; not satisfied with our own army, not satisfied with what is to be done. He would discourage all our efforts, and make a man weigh like an ass a lance on an anxious and soldiers' propriety. His policy would disorganize the Army, and realize his theology by making a hell on earth (laughter) without giving us the satisfaction of seeing a future in our own hands. He would have us retreat, and he would have us fight. He would have us retreat, and he would have us fight. He would have us retreat, and he would have us fight. He would have us retreat, and he would have us fight.

First, he carries us to Missouri, and says that that fact is a matter which we must be prepared to meet. He would have us retreat, and he would have us fight. He would have us retreat, and he would have us fight. He would have us retreat, and he would have us fight. He would have us retreat, and he would have us fight.

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