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Catching at Straws. The eagerness of the public mind to seize on anything giving promise of relief from the present political imbroglio, is evinced by the importance attached to a single expression at the close of Gov. Pickens' message to the South Carolina Legislature, which reads as follows:

"The act passed to provide an armed military force may involve an expenditure of \$50,000, and provision has been made for raising \$100,000 more for the purchase of arms and munitions. I can never see how it is possible to provide for the purchase of arms and munitions, and at the same time to provide for the maintenance of the military force, until we have secured a peace settlement to our difficulties, and if so, every effort should be made to procure a peace settlement to our difficulties, and if so, every effort should be made to procure a peace settlement to our difficulties."

What the "peace treaty" may be, is a question the public is anxious to have answered as soon as possible. If it is based on the result of certain propositions supposed to have been made to the President, by the South Carolina Commissioners, we shall soon know more about it.

Groceries as a Prophet. Some people think Groceries a wondrously wise man, a sagacious politician, &c. Here is an evidence of it. The following is an extract from the Tribune in October last:

"It will be pleasant and instructive to see what a quieting effect like that of oil poured upon the waters of the political elements. They (the Southern people) have not the slightest intention of giving any practical effect to those resolutions, or of offering any resistance to the act in regard to administration of Lincoln, out of which some of our papers are trying to create a panic. The election over, they will hang to a shank of a sudden. fatal to all their future prospects. The avowed disunionists will shrink into a timid faction about as numerous as the influential one. The Southern Abolitionists, while the great bulk of the Southern politicians will be too busy in looking forward to new combinations, and in schemes for re-establishing their lost influence as the North, to have any time or thoughts to spare for disunion projects. After the storm we shall have a calm."

This is the sort of stuff with which the people were industriously plied before the election; not only by GARRETT but by the whole Republican press. They were cheated with the delusion that the South was not in earnest, and that the election of LINCOLN would calm the disunion agitation. False before the election, the Republicans are equally false since their purpose has been accomplished. Having led the country into a fatal snare, they seem determined to afford no opportunity of extrication, and to admit of no settlement of the difficulties they have brought upon the country except by the sword: Will the people submit to be swindled first and butchered afterwards for the gratification of the Republican party?

What they are Asked to Yield. There is some virtue in a man or party yielding something to which he or they possess an undoubted right, for the sake of preserving the public peace. But we can't see that a party is making very enormous concessions when it yields a mere claim to something which it does not, and cannot, legally call its own.

When the Republicans are asked to consent to the extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific, with an understanding that slavery shall not exist north of the line and shall be protected south, they exclaim against it as a humiliating concession—an abandonment of the principles of the Chicago platform—a giving up of the fruits of their victory. Now, this is decidedly cool, considering that the Supreme Court has decided that the Southern has a constitutional right to take his slaves into any Territory, and Congress has no right to prohibit him. The South is willing to give up that right in all Territory north of 36° 30'—to yield a substantial right which they possess under the Constitution as expounded by the Supreme Court—and the Republican party of the North is not willing to abandon a naked, arrogant, unsustainable claim to prohibit slavery where the Supreme Court has determined they have no right to do so. Talk about surrendering the right to prohibit slavery in the Territories—why the Republican party had better establish that right before they make a merit of abandoning it. They are asked to do nothing more than yield an unfounded claim. If any man supposes that he has a good title to a piece of property, and resorts to legal proceedings to establish his claim, and the courts decide against him in favor of some other claimant, he ought, as a good citizen, to give up and submit quietly. But suppose he is a turbulent and dangerous neighbor whom the successful man feared, and for the sake of compromising all difficulties and avoiding disturbances, the man generously offers to divide the disputed possession with him, upon condition that he shall allow him to retain peaceful control of the other half, we should think the defeated party very unreasonable to insist upon having the whole. This is precisely the position of the Republican party with reference to the Territories, and the proposition to divide them by the Missouri line. The Supreme Court has decided that Southern slave property into any or all the Territories, and that Congress cannot prohibit the exercise of this right, but for the sake of peace they are willing to abandon all the Territory lying north of a certain degree of latitude. To this very fair and reasonable proposition the Republicans, like the turbulent man who lost his lawsuit, insist that they must have everything, and that the party who has vindicated his legal right to the whole, shall have nothing. This is Republican modesty for you. When the Republican talk so indignantly about the humiliation of abandoning their rights for the sake of preserving the South, they had better show that these rights have any value to them. We have

already shown that what they object to yielding is merely an unfounded claim, judicially disallowed.

Defeat of the Crittenden Resolutions—Mr. Corwin's Report.

The defeat of the Crittenden resolutions in the United States Senate by the solid vote of the Republican Senators, indicates a determination on the part of the Republican party to make no concessions for the sake of preserving the Union, and also a conviction that it would not be safe to submit the question to a direct vote of the people. If the Republicans were as confident as they pretend to be of the firmness of the North against any proposition to settle the secession difficulties by compromise, they could lose nothing by taking the sense of the people. On the contrary, they would gain renewed courage to persevere in the work of pushing their sectional doctrines to extremities, by demonstrating that the Republican ranks remained firm in the face of the terrible consequences of the election of a sectional President. But as they decline to put the issue of Union by compromise, or disunion with civil war, to the test of a popular election, and prefer to assume that the people sustain their course, when the truth could be easily ascertained by an election, we must conclude that they apprehend the verdict would be against them.

The House Committee, of which Mr. Corwin is chairman, has submitted a report together with the following propositions for settling existing difficulties:

The repeal of all laws in the States tending to oppose or embarrass the execution of the acts of Congress for the recovery of fugitives from labor, for the purpose of affecting the restoration of mutual respect and confidence between the States of the Union. They revise the laws now in force for the recovery of fugitives from labor, so as to render them less objectionable to northern sentiment, and thus remove any excuse for the enactment of "Personal Liberty" Laws.

The amendment of the Constitution of the United States, whereby any power to interfere with slavery in the States is forever denied to Congress, till every State in the Union, by its individual State action, shall consent to its exercise.

The settlement of the Territorial question and its withdrawal from party politics by admitting New Mexico into the Union as a free State forthwith, and subjecting the northern portion of the remaining territory to such law as the Constitution and Congress may furnish for its government.

These are the main recommendations contained in the report submitted by Mr. CORWIN, as Chairman of the Committee of Thirty-three. They propose to accomplish nearly the same objects as the Crittenden resolutions, while they possess the advantage of proposing but one amendment to the Constitution, and that of a character to which there can be no objection. Instead of running the Missouri line to the Pacific, as Mr. Crittenden proposed, this report offers to dispose of the disputed Territory at once by admitting New Mexico, lying south of that line, as a slave State, and subjecting the northern portion to the control of Congress. No doubt this plan of settlement will encounter the same vehement opposition from the extreme Republicans as the Crittenden resolutions.

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON.

WASHINGTON, January 15, 1861. Yesterday Mr. Polk, of Tennessee, made a speech in the Senate on the crisis, and to day Mr. Green, of Missouri, made one on the same subject. Both these gentlemen are anxious that the Union shall be preserved, if that can be done in such manner as to save to the South her rights under the Constitution; but if this cannot be accomplished, then they are in favor of peaceful secession, with the hope that, at some future period, when the feverish excitement of the present shall have subsided, a reunion may be effected upon a new and permanent, more enduring basis.

Both of the gentlemen named are in favor of the Crittenden propositions, if they can be carried. I fear that the Crittenden propositions cannot be carried, because the ultra Republicans are not disposed to favor them. The next propositions that seem to meet with any kind of favor are those contained in the bill offered by Senator Bigler yesterday. It is understood that Messrs. Cameron, of Pennsylvania, Ten Eyck, of New Jersey, Dixon, of Connecticut, Anthony, of Rhode Island, and Grimes, of Iowa, on the Republican side of the Senate, will support Mr. Bigler's bill, because it provides for a reference to the people directly and speedily. In the House quite a number of Republican members will support it also; so that its success is considered almost certain. It will not do to put the evil day off much longer; the issues involved in this struggle must be met promptly, or all is lost. Surely every good man in the nation would be rejoiced to see the dark clouds of secession and ultimate dissolution give place to the bright sun of hope for the future welfare of our country, and for that reason I feel warranted in presuming that the people of Pennsylvania, and of the North generally, will hail with delight the propositions of Senator Bigler at such a trying hour as the present.

The stories that have found their way into the public prints about the arming of the different departments of the government in this city, with a view to preserve them from threatened sudden assault, have been greatly exaggerated. It is nevertheless true that precautions have been taken to guard the public buildings from any attempt that might be made, from any quarter, to seize them in the event of surprise from those who contemplate such a surprise, if, indeed, any such thing is meditated. About one hundred and fifty stand of muskets have been placed in the Patent Office building for its defence. What precautions have been taken to preserve the other public buildings I am not informed of. That the Government have some well-grounded suspicions on this subject does not admit of a doubt, else arms would not be supplied for the use of those who are charged with the safe-keeping of the Department of the Interior. The government is very active just now, in all the Departments, in arranging matters, in view of the imminent danger of a collision between the North and the South, or rather the Federal authorities and the Republic of South Carolina. All the operations of the Government are being conducted with the utmost secrecy, in order that what is done may be effective when the time comes. New overtures have been made by South Carolina, to our government, but of what nature it is impossible to find out just now. A few days must develop the plans of the Administration with regard to what shall be done at the South. The task which Mr. Buchanan has to perform is one of extreme delicacy. Desirous of avoiding the shedding of blood, whilst imperious necessity and stern duty require that the property of the government must be defended and preserved, it requires no ordinary sagacity to arrive at a correct conclusion as to what line of policy should be adopted

in such an emergency as surrounds him at present. That he will do his whole duty I never had a doubt, but what that duty is I am at a loss to divine.

The Pacific Railroad bill is up in Senate to-day, with a pretty fair show for its passage. While I write, Gen. Lane, of Oregon, is making a speech on the bill. He is in favor of extending the road to Oregon, as far as the Columbia river. Mr. Bragg, of North Carolina, is in favor of referring the bill to a select committee of five Senators, to examine it with care, before it is presented to a vote, but the friends of the measure, who appear to have a majority in the Senate, are opposed to the reference, because they fear if it should be referred it will be strangled in committee.

Quite a number of changes are about to be made in the Departments. The heads of Bureaus and clerks who sympathize with the secession movement will have to give place to those who are satisfied with the Union as it was before the secession movement began. The Administration find this course necessary in consequence of the fact that all the secret objects of the government, touching the state of things in the South, are telegraphed South as they transpire, and thus the government is thwarted when it should be free. A number of resignations have already taken place in the Department of the Interior, in anticipation of the determination on part of the authorities to make the changes indicated above.

The resignations of Southern men who hold positions in the army and navy continue to come in daily. Some of these hot-headed gentlemen may be very sorry for their precipitancy before six months roll round.

PENNA LEGISLATURE.

SENATE. THURSDAY, JAN. 17, 1861. Senate called to order by the Clerk. Mr. SMITH called to the chair. Prayer by Rev. Mr. Hay. The SPEAKER laid before the Senate a communication from the Governor announcing the appointment of Eli Sifer as Secretary of the Commonwealth. Also, a communication from Eli Sifer, announcing the appointment of Samuel E. Thomas as Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth. The standing committees reported a number of bills as committed.

BILLS IN PLACE. Mr. YARDLEY, a supplement to the act incorporating the Spinneraville and Goshenhoppen turnpike company. Mr. FINNEY, an act authorizing the settlement of the account of E. C. Wilson.

Mr. HISSAND, a supplement to an act, entitled "An act to encourage the manufacture of iron by coal, coke and other mineral substances." Mr. NICHOLS, a supplement to an act incorporating the Gap mining company. Mr. PENNEY, an act to incorporate the Andresco oil company.

ORIGINAL RESOLUTIONS. Mr. BLOOD offered a resolution that three thousand copies of the reports of the banks made to the Auditor General be printed for the use of the Senate; which was agreed to. Mr. CLYMER offered a resolution calling upon the Auditor General for information as to the amount of taxes, levied upon the Delaware, Delaware and West Branch canal companies, and if no taxes have been assessed, the Auditor General is required to communicate to the State whether, in his opinion, said corporations are liable to taxation; Agreed to.

Mr. HALL moved that when the Senate adjourns to-day, it adjourn to meet on Monday next, at 11 o'clock, which was agreed to. Mr. FINNEY moved that the Senate proceed to nominate a candidate for State Treasurer, which was agreed to. Mr. CONNELL nominated Henry D. Moore. Mr. CRAWFORD nominated J. O. James. Mr. PENNEY nominated Daniel Negley. Mr. GREGG nominated Robert Baldwin.

BILLS ACTED ON. Mr. BLOOD called up the supplement to the act for the relief of Nancy Lord, Nancy Wilkinson and others, which passed finally. Mr. YARDLEY called up the supplement to Spinneraville and Goshenhoppen turnpike company, which passed finally. Mr. CONNELL called up the bill in relation to saving fund and trust companies, which was slightly amended, and passed finally. There being no further business before the Senate, the action of Mr. IRISH, adjourned till Monday morning at 11 o'clock.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Pursuant to adjournment, the House met at 7 o'clock, and was called to order by the SPEAKER. The unfinished business was taken up. This was the consideration of a resolution to authorize the printing of the Inaugural Message of Gov. Curtin in pamphlet form. Mr. BARNESLEY argued that this was the best way to give publicity to the document; and the question being taken, it was agreed that 7,000 should be printed in English, and 2,000 in German. The special order of the evening being the further consideration of the Senate resolutions on the State of the Union, was taken up. Mr. GORDON having the floor, continued his argument in favor of the present laws of Pennsylvania, alleging that neither the 95th nor 96th sections of the kidnapping law contained anything contrary to the Constitution of the United States. The 96th section did not conflict in the least with the slaves laws, but only prevented the State from being turned into a slave mart for the South. The sole object of repealing these sections was to show unnecessary humiliation. Mr. GORDON spoke for nearly an hour, assuming the most ultra ground on the question of slavery.

Mr. BALTHAZOREW of Schuylkill county, and one of the members of the Pennsylvania delegation, his unwillingness to yield an inch to the South. Mr. ABBOTT followed, opposing the repeal of any of the statutes of Pennsylvania. Mr. BYRNE advocated the repeal of the act of 1847, and also the obnoxious sections of the Penal Code. He was in favor of the Union, and the whole Union; but it must be a Union of peace and good will.

The House then adjourned. MORNING SESSION. THURSDAY, JAN. 17, 1861. The House met at 11 o'clock, and was called to order by the SPEAKER. Leave of absence was granted to certain members.

PETITIONS. Mr. COLLINS moved to postpone the special order of the day; which was agreed to. Sundry petitions were presented. Among them was one from citizens of Bedford county, praying for an extension of the Missouri Compromise; also, one in favor of the erection of a boom at Jersey Shore; also, one praying that the intermarriage of black and white citizens may be made a criminal offence; also, one from citizens of Bucks county, praying that colored citizens may not be allowed to enter the Commonwealth with the intention of settling therein.

ORIGINAL RESOLUTIONS. Mr. ARMSTRONG offered a resolution granting the use of the Hall to Rev. Mr. FAAS; for the purpose of delivering a lecture on the Union, on this (Thursday) evening. This was agreed to. Mr. BECK offered a resolution tending the sympathies of the House to the bereaved family of the late William C. Lawrence, late Speaker of the House, regarding his death, and his life, and requiring his members and officers of the House to wear the badge of mourning for the usual time.

Mr. BECK asked the indulgence of the House, and proceeded to deliver a eulogy on the deceased—referring to his private life, his professional career, and his political services. The resolution passed unanimously—the eyes and nose being called by Messrs. ACKER and RIDGWAY.

Mr. BUTLER (Crawford) voted "no," giving reasons. He had been brought up as a member of the Society of Friends, and would not conform to the usage of wearing crapes—a practice which he could not conscientiously approve, and would not endorse, even in the event of the death of a member of his own family. He had as a gentleman, as a Speaker, and as a member. Finally, however, at the request of certain parties, he withdrew his vote. Mr. SELTZER offered a resolution, as follows: Resolved, That we fully approve the bold and patriotic act of Major Anderson in withdrawing from Fort Mifflin to Fort Sumpter, and the determination of the President to maintain that officer in his position; and that we will support the President in all constitutional measures to enforce the laws and preserve the glorious Union.

On the final passage of the resolution, the yeas and nays were required by Mr. ACKER and Mr. COWAN, and were as follows: Yeas—Messrs. Abbott, Ackers, Alexander, Ashcom, Austin, Barnsley, Bartholoew, Bizer, Blouchard, Blisler, Boyer, Brewster, Burns, Butler, (Carson), Butler, (Crawford), Burleigh, Butler, Dunbar, Dunlap, Goring, Graham, Harvey, Hoy, M'Connell, Galt, Gibson, Goehring, Gordon, Guthrie, Harvey, Heck, Hill, Hillman, Hood, Hodges, Huba, Irwin, Kline, Koch, Lawrence, Leitch, Lichtenwalter, Lowther, M'Donoghue, M'Ginn, Mantol, Marshall, Meigs, Morrison, Nelson, Phillips, Shopper, Smith, (Berks), Smith, (Philadelphia), Stuhns, Stoneacker, Strang, Taylor, Teller, Thomas, Tracy, Walker, White, Williams, Wilson and Davis, 49 yeas—38 nays.

So the question was determined in the affirmative. Mr. DUNCAN offered a resolution approving of the high and patriotic ground of Gov. Hicks, of Maryland; and pledging to Maryland the sympathy and brotherhood of Pennsylvania in her efforts to sustain the Union. On the final passage of this the yeas and nays were required by Mr. SELTZER and Mr. WILSON, and were as follows: Yeas—Messrs. Abbott, Ackers, Alexander, Ashcom, Austin, Barnsley, Bartholoew, Bizer, Blouchard, Blisler, Boyer, Brewster, Burns, Butler, (Carson), Butler, (Crawford), Burleigh, Butler, Dunbar, Dunlap, Goring, Graham, Harvey, Hoy, M'Connell, Galt, Gibson, Goehring, Gordon, Guthrie, Harvey, Heck, Hill, Hillman, Hood, Hodges, Huba, Irwin, Kline, Koch, Lawrence, Leitch, Lichtenwalter, Lowther, M'Donoghue, M'Ginn, Mantol, Marshall, Meigs, Morrison, Nelson, Phillips, Shopper, Smith, (Berks), Smith, (Philadelphia), Stuhns, Stoneacker, Strang, Taylor, Teller, Thomas, Tracy, Walker, White, Williams, Wilson and Davis, 49 yeas—38 nays.

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