

To Be or Not to Be—That is the Question.

A convention is now in session at Wheeling, engaged in formulating a Constitution for the people of Virginia, West of the Allegheny Mountains, whom it is proposed to organize into an independent State. This is a measure altogether independent of the Legislature now in session at that place.

There is a remarkable confirmation of this statement, put in a more general way, in the address of Cromwell to the Little Parliament, on the 4th of July, 1853. He says: "You very well know it pleased God, much about the midst of this war, to winnow (if I may so say) the forces of this nation; and to put them into the hands of other men of other principles than those that did engage at the first. By what ways and means that was brought about, would ask more time than is allotted me to mind you."

Thus Cromwell continues Macaulay as to the fact that this war displaced the military men, though he attributes the "winnowing" to moral causes simply, the winning of some principle as the motive of fighting. Certainly, in the absence of any such moving principle among our officers of a military training the present crisis bears witness to the fact that this history is not so far as they conduct the war as all, they have carried it on—we surely do them no injustice in saying so, but the contrary, as they would acknowledge—they have carried it on as strictly as a professional duty, but without enthusiasm of particular purpose.

We have faith in our destiny. God will raise up a leader from among the people. Our Cromwells and Hampdens, like our Washingtons, will be found at the right time. Bright's Case in the Pennsylvania Legislature, was fully ventilated in the Legislature, and we think the discussion led to a great deal of good. The patriotism of the members was warmed up by the debate, and the half-loyal ones were smothered out of their holes.

Our members took part in the debate, and did themselves great credit. It is impossible to paraphrase their speeches, however much we might desire, but we will not deny our readers an extract or so. Mr. SHAWMAN made a very animated speech, from which we take the following paragraphs: "I say, sir, that this is not the hour for mere technicalities. I contend that when our government is in danger, when the great question is presented to the people of this country whether we shall have a government or whether we shall not, this is no moment for such technicalities. Sir, when the capital of the country, named after its father, is beleaguered by those malignant rebels who have their pickets in eight miles of the capital of our common country—this is a time to indulge in such technicalities, such technicalities I say if it is not."

Mr. Williams' speech is marked by his usual eloquence and power. We have room but for the following extract: "It will not do, however, as I have already suggested, for gentlemen who believe in the doctrine of instruction to say that they may not instruct in the case, because it is a judicial one. I think I have already shown that it is not a judicial case at all. The Convention might as well conclude its labors, and go home, and make up their minds to resign task on to old, effete, Eastern Virginia, until it consents to take the manly ground square on the side of a Free State. Virginia has studied tactics in what we call the war, and she has learned that she cannot stand in the line of an independent slave State. The question then resolves itself into the inquiry contained in the quotation at the head of this article. To be or not to be. A slave constitution is not to be. A Free State Constitution is to be. The Convention may take its choice."

The Rebel's Mail

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