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A MAGNIFICENT ARGUMENT

The Union Forever.

A KENTUCKIAN SPEAKS.

LETTER FROM HON. JOS. HOLT.

WASHINGTON, May 31, 1861.

J. F. SPENCER, Esq.—My Dear Sir: The recent overwhelming vote in favor of the Union in Kentucky has afforded me great gratification to all true men throughout the country. That vote indicates that the people of that gallant State have been neither seduced by the arts nor terrified by the menaces of the revolutionists in their midst, and that it is their fixed purpose to remain faithful to a government which, for nearly seventy years, has remained faithful to them. Still it cannot be denied that there is in the bosom of that State a band of agitators, who, though few in number, are yet powerful from the public audience they have enjoyed, and who have been, and doubtless will continue to be, unceasing in their endeavors to force Kentucky to unite her fortunes with the rebel Confederacy of the South. In view of this, and the well known fact that several of the seceded States have by fraud and violence been driven to occupy their present false and fatal position, I cannot even with the encouragement of her late vote before me, look upon the political future of our native State without a painful solicitude. Never has the safety and honor of her people required the exercise of so much vigilance and of so much courage on their part. If true to themselves, the stars and stripes which, like angels' wings, have long guarded their homes from every oppression, still will be theirs; but if, chasing the dreams of other men's ambition, they shall prove false, the backbone of our nation can but faintly predict the doom that awaits them. The Legislature, it seems, has determined by resolution that the State, pending the present unhappy war, shall occupy a neutral ground. I must say, in all frankness and without desiring to reflect upon the course or sentiments of any, that in this struggle for the existence of our Government, I can neither practice nor profess, nor feel neutrality. I would as soon think of being neutral in a contest between an officer of justice and an incendiary array in an attempt to fire the dwelling over my head, for the Government whose overthrow is sought, is for me the shelter not only of home, kindred and friends, but of every earthly blessing which I can hope to enjoy on this side of the grave. If, however, from a natural horror of fratricidal strife, or from her intimate social and business relations with the South, Kentucky shall determine to maintain a neutral attitude assumed for her by her Legislature, her position will still be an honorable one, though falling far short of that full measure of loyalty which her history has so constantly illustrated. Her Executive, ignoring, as I am happy to believe, alike the popular and Legislative sentiment, has by proclamation forbidden the Government of the United States from marching troops across her territory. This is in no sense a neutral act, but one of aggressive hostility. The troops of the Federal Government have as clear a Constitutional right to pass over the streets of Kentucky as they have to march along the streets of Washington, and could this prohibition be effective, it would not only be a violation of the fundamental law, but would in all its tendencies be directly in advancement of the revolution, and might, in an emergency, imperil the highest national interest. It is rejoiced that the Legislature so promptly refused to endorse this proclamation as expressive of the true policy of the State. But I trust that from even this to the ballot box, and from an abundant consolation in the conviction that the people have rejected the policy of the State, and that the House of Representatives of Kentucky, in its session of Legislative resolve and of Executive proclamation.

But as it is well understood that the late popular demonstration has rather solemnly and decidedly rebuked in Kentucky, I propose inquiring, as briefly as possible, whether, in the recent action or present declared policy of the Administration, of the history of the pending revolution, and in the objects it seeks to accomplish, or in the results that must follow from it, if successful, there can be discovered any reason why that State should sever the ties that unite her with a confederacy in whose councils and upon whose battle fields she has won so much fame, and under whose protection she has enjoyed so much prosperity.

For more than a month after the inauguration of President Lincoln, the manifestations seemed unequivocal that his Administration would seek a passive resolution of the unhappy political troubles, and would look to time and amendments to the Federal Constitution, adopted in accordance with the spirit of the Union, and in the result that must follow from it, if successful, there can be discovered any reason why that State should sever the ties that unite her with a confederacy in whose councils and upon whose battle fields she has won so much fame, and under whose protection she has enjoyed so much prosperity.

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The result is known. With-

out the slightest provocation, a heavy cannonade was opened upon the fort, and borne of its helpless garrison for hours without reply, and when, in the progress of the bombardment, the fortification became wrapped in flames, the besetting batteries, in violation of the usages of civilized warfare, instead of relaxing or suspending, redoubled their fire. A more wantonly wicked war was ever commenced on any Government whose history has been written. Contemporaneous with, and following the fall of Sumter, the siege of Fort Pickens was still actively pressed, the property of the United States Government continued to be seized wherever found, and its troops by fraud or force, captured in the State of Texas in violation of a solemn compact with the authorities that they should be permitted to embark without molestation. This was the requisition which the long-stay State made to these men who through long years of peril and privation, had guarded its frontiers against the incursions of the savages. In the midst of the most active and extended military preparations in the history of the nation, an announcement was made by the Secretary of War of the seceded States, and a band of tannin and insolent bravadoes by the Southern press. That Washington, the seat of the Government, was to be invaded and captured, and that the flag of the Confederate States would soon float over the dome of its capital. Some threateners there followed an invitation to accept letters of marque and reprisal, to prey upon the rich and unprotected commerce of the United States.

In view of these events and threatenings, what was the duty of the Chief Magistrate of the Republic? He might have taken counsel of the revolutionists and trembled under their menaces; he might upon the fall of Sumter, have been seized and carried to some remote spot, and there have remained a prisoner of the rebels. He might have taken the oath of allegiance to the Confederate States, and thus have become a traitor to his country. He might have taken the oath of allegiance to the United States, and thus have become a traitor to his country.

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