

Democrat and Sentinel.

THE BLESSINGS OF GOVERNMENT, LIKE THE DEWS OF HEAVEN, SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED ALIKE, UPON THE HIGH AND THE LOW, THE RICH AND THE POOR.

NEW SERIES.

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SPEECH
OF
GEO. W. WOODWARD,
AT THE
GREAT UNION MEETING,
Held December 13th, 1860, in Independence Square, Philadelphia.

The meeting was called by the Mayor of the city, at the request of the Select and Common Councils, and was held at noon, Thursday, 13th December, 1860, in Independence Square. Mayor Henry was called to preside, and a large number of gentlemen officiated as Vice Presidents and Secretaries. The meeting was opened with prayer by Bishop Potter. The address of the Mayor followed. The resolutions were read by John B. Myers. The speakers selected by a Committee of Councils, then addressed the vast concourse assembled in the Square, in the following order: Hon. Jos. R. Ingersoll, George W. Woodward, Charles E. Lex, Theodore Cuyler and Isaac Hazlehurst.]

We have assembled, fellow-citizens, in pursuance of the proclamation of the Mayor, that we may "counsel together to avert the danger which threatens our country." That danger is not recent or new. It has a history. And we must gaze at that; we must obtain a clear view of the actual state of the crisis, before we can give or receive intelligent counsel.

It was announced a few years ago that the conflict which had sprung up in this country between free and slave labor was irrepressible; that a house divided against itself could not stand; that all the States of this Union must become free or slave States.

The meaning of this was, and is, that all were to become free States, for the soil and climate of a majority of the States are such that it never can become the interest of the superior race to maintain slavery in them. Everybody knows this, and therefore the alternate form of the proposition was only to give it an appearance of the fairness and a little more theoretical effect.

The full scope and meaning of the announcement are, then, that citizens of the United States are to be totally divested of the property they now hold in four or five millions of slaves, of the aggregate value of many hundred millions of dollars, and that the habits and domestic condition of the people—their commercial relations, and their political rights, in so far as these interests are connected with the institution of slavery, are to undergo a revolution.

Was this prediction the voice of an unhonored prophet, but of a nation whom the people of the free States have just distinguished, in a single manner, by conferring on him the highest office they had to give. In so far as their words are to be considered as responsive to the announcement, they are a loud amen—column answer, so let it be.

Whilst it is not to be doubted that multitudes voted for the President elect with other views, and did not intend a distinct endorsement of his favorite proposition, yet as the record is made up, the prophecy and the prophet stand approved by a majority of the people of the free States. The inexcusable exclusion of slave property from the common territories, which the Government holds in trust for the people of all the States, is a natural and direct step towards the grand result of extinguishing slave property altogether, and was one of the record issues of the late election

This policy must be considered as approved also. Not that every man who voted for the successful nominee meant affirm, that a trustee for several co-equal parties has a right, in law or reason, to exclude the property of some and admit that of others of the parties for whom he holds—but so is the record. And whilst it is not to be taken as expressing the universal sense of the voters, it does undoubtedly, imply that vast masses of Northern people do heartily approve, both of the proposition to make all the States free, and of beginning by excluding slavery from the territories.

The South seems inclined so to accept the judgment. She holds the property that is to be shut out of the territories, and she is to be restricted, cribbed, and confined, more and more, until it is finally extinguished. Everywhere in the South the people are beginning to look out for the means of self-defence. Could it be expected that they would be indifferent to such events as have occurred? That they would stand idle and see measures concerted and carried forward for the annihilation, sooner or later, of her property in slaves? Such expectations, if indulged, were not reasonable. The law of self-defence includes right of property as well as of person; and it appears to me, that there must be a time, in the progress of this conflict, if it be indeed irrepressible, when slaveholders may lawfully fall back on their natural rights, and employ, in defence of their property whatever means of protection they possess or can command. I do not agree with them that the time has arrived yet; but it would be well for those who push on this conflict, in whatever form, to consider that they are hastening on that time, and that they have convinced one or more Southern States that it has already come.

Several States propose to retire from the Confederacy, and that justly alarms us. We come together to consider what may be done to prevent it, and we are bound, in fidelity to ourselves and others, to take the measure of the whole magnitude of the danger.

This irrepressible conflict has grown out of the Anglo-Saxon love of freedom. What that passion is, and how it was offended by the introduction of negro slaves, may be read in the chronicles of the American Provinces, and especially in the earnest, the eloquent, and repeated remonstrances addressed by the Colony of Virginia to the Crown and Parliament of Great Britain against their introduction.

But if the Anglo-Saxon loves liberty above all other men, he is not indifferent to gain and thrift, and is remarkable for his capacity of adaptation, whereby he takes advantage of any circumstances in which he finds himself placed. And, accordingly, by the time the Colonies were prepared to throw off the British yoke, and assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, it had been discovered that the unwelcome workers, against whose introduction such earnest protests had been made, could be turned to profitable account in the Southern States—that the African constitution was well adapted to labor in latitudes which alone could produce some of the greatest staples of life—and that the North, which could not employ them profitably, would be benefited by such employment as the South could afford. Considerations of humanity, also, as well as the rights of private property, entered into the discussions of that day. What was best for an inferior race thrust unwillingly upon a superior? That both should be free, or that the inferior should serve the superior, and the superior be bound by the law of the relation to protect the inferior?

If best for both races that the existing slavery should continue, then what was to be its relation to the General Government? How should it be represented in the Councils of the Nation? How far protected or discouraged by the power of the new Government? Should jurisdiction to abolish it be granted to the Government, or reserved to the States and the people of the States? These were great questions, and, like all the questions of that day, were wisely settled.

The Northern States abolished their slavery, and so gratify their innate love of freedom—but they did it gradually, and so did not wound their love of gain. They sold out slavery to the South, and they received a full equivalent, not only in the price paid down, but in the manufacturing and commercial prosperity which grew up from the productions of slave labor.

When the Constitution came to be formed, some of the Northern States still held slaves, but several had abolished the institution, and it must have been appar-

ent that natural causes would force it ultimately altogether upon the South. The love of liberty was as intense as ever, and as strong at the South as at the North, and the love of gain was common also to both sections. Here were two master passions to be adjusted under circumstances of the greatest delicacy. They were adjusted and the great questions of the time were settled, in the only manner possible. Concession and compromise—consideration for each others feelings and interests, sacrifices of prejudices, forbearance and moderation—these were the means by which the "more perfect Union" was formed.

And what a work it was! If the Union had never brought us a single blessing, the Constitution of the United States would still have been a magnificent monument to the unselfish patriotism of its founders. Not an alliance merely, but a close and perfect union between people equally ambitious, equally devoted to freedom, equally bent on bettering their condition; but separated by State lines, and jealous of State rights—one section seeking its prosperity under institutions which were to make every man a free man—the other under institutions which tolerated negro slavery.

Had the Constitution failed to work out the beneficent results intended, here was an instance of human effort to do good—an effort to restrain and regulate two natural passions, and to compel them to co-operate in blessing mankind—which would forever have challenged the admiration of all good and thoughtful men. But it did not fail, thank God; it has made us a great and prosperous nation and the admiration of the world, for the motives of the founders is swallowed in wonder at the success of their work.

But all this the "irrepressible conflict" ignores. The passion for liberty, spurring the restraints imposed, has burned out all memories of the compromise and the compact in those Northern communities, which, under the false name of Liberty Bills, obstruct the execution of the bargain. What part of the purposes of the founders are the underground railroads intended to promote? Whence come these excessive sensibilities that cannot bear a few slaves in a remote territory until the white people establish a Constitution? What does that editor or preacher know of the Union, and of the men who made it, who habitually reviles and misrepresents the Southern people, and excites the ignorant and the thoughtless in our midst to hate and persecute them? What has become of our glad and willing obedience to the Supreme Court as the final expositor of the compact?

Be not deceived. Let me not prophesy smooth things, and cry peace when there is no peace. Let the truth be spoken, be heard, be pondered, if we mean to save the Union. The conflict boasts that it is irrepressible. It allies itself with equal readiness to religion and infidelity. It enlists all our passions, good and bad. It makes common cause with the champions of freedom of the world over, and with the promoters of insurrection, riot and discord at home. With Freedom inscribed on the banner it bears, it tramples under foot the guarantees of freedom contained in the Constitution and laws.

How is it to be repressed? Governmental administration cannot subdue it. That has been tried for several successive periods, and the conflict has waxed hotter. Will the next Administration be more successful? Hoping for the best it can do, what right have you or I to anticipate that the honest man who has been elected will prove recreant to the maxims that made him President? Can trade and commerce subdue it? Look at the votes of Boston, Philadelphia, and Pittsburg. The manufacturers and merchants are the governing classes in these cities. They are intelligent and quick to discover their interests. They have weighed and measured the Southern trade, and then voted against the Southern people. But what if they had not—what if like the city of New York, they had voted against the conflict, only to be overruled by the country counties? Commercial cities cannot repress the conflict, if the people of the interior lend it their sympathies. No, no, there is reason in the boast that the States shall all become free. There is good ground to apprehend the extinction of property in slaves. All new England has decreed it. The great States of New York and Ohio have repeated, again and again, the decree. Pennsylvania seems to have sanctioned it. The Northwestern States stand for the present committed to it.

What hope is left for the Union? Is there a man in this assembly who deems that this conflict can go on and the

Union last? If there be, that man is beside himself; he has lost his wits. I will reason with such man. But, though few may believe that the Union can long endure the shock of the conflict, yet many people think that freedom—absolute, unconditional, universal freedom—is so great a boon, and negro slavery so great a reproach and evil, that the whole influence of a good man's life and conduct should be directed to promote the one and suppress the other—even though, as a consequence, the slave States should be driven out of the Union. This is the prevalent distemper of the public mind. "Who can minister to a mind diseased?"

Fellow-citizens, I profess no ability in this regard, but my mouth is open, and I will utter some of the thoughts that press up from the heart to the lips. When under the articles of confederation, which carried us through our Revolutionary war, States had grown jealous, unfriendly, disobedient; and the General Government had proved itself too weak to suppress conflicts that were arising, the people took the remedy into their own hands, called a Convention, and formed a stronger government. The call of the Convention, the election of deputies, the State Conventions which followed, all served to engage the public mind, and to direct it to the common danger, and the possible remedy. Thus the popular mind prepared itself to receive with approbation the Constitution that was formed, and impending dangers were averted.

History is said to be philosophy teaching by examples. Let us be instructed by this example. As we, Pennsylvanians, were the first to abolish slavery, let us be the first to move for the salvation of the Union. Under the amendatory clause of the Constitution, Congress is bound to call a general convention on application of the Legislatures of two-thirds of the States. Our Legislature will assemble next month. Let us petition them to demand the convention. Good examples, like bad ones, are contagious. Perhaps one and another of the Northern and Southern States may do the like until the requisite number have concurred, and then we will have a National Convention to consider the evils and dangers of the day, and to devise remedies which, it may be hoped, shall prove as salutary as those of 1787. And now, as then, the progress of these measures will awaken inquiry and thoughtfulness in the masses, will call of their minds from the petty politics of the pay, and from the mischievous agitation of slavery questions, to the grand problem of how we can render this glorious Union perpetual.

In what form and to what extent the power of the General Government should be increased is not for me to indicate, but with the confessions of President Buchanan and Attorney-General Black before us, that the Government, as now constituted, is unable to prevent or punish secession, or to suppress the proud conflict that disturbs our peace and boasts itself irrepressible, have I not a right to assume that the Government needs to be strengthened? Have I not a right to say that a Government which is all sufficient for the country fifty years ago, when soil and climate, and State sovereignty could be trusted to regulate the spread of slavery, is insufficient to-day when every upstart politician can stir the people to mutiny against the domestic institutions of our Southern neighbors—when the ribald jests of seditious editors, like Greeley and Beecher, can sway Legislatures and popular votes against the handiwork of Washington and Madison—when the scurrilous libels of such a book as Helper's become a favorite campaign document, and are accepted by thousands as law and gospel both—when jealousy and hate have killed out all our fraternal feelings for those who were born our brethren, and who have done us no harm? The traditions of the elders lingered in the generations which immediately succeeded the adoption of the Constitution, and their passion for freedom, just as strong as ours, was chastened into loyalty to the Union, and veneration for the rights of the States. The Constitution, which was strong enough, to govern such men, is too weak to restrain us who have outgrown the grave and moderate wisdom that excited no irrepressible conflict between brethren, but taught them to dwell together in unity. I would make it strong enough to restrain the madness of our day.

And let the people consider the motives for preserving the Union. They would be brought directly to these by the debates of the conventions and by the antecedent and subsequent debates. I can suggest only some of them. First, our name, and place, and power, as one of the nations of the earth. Are

these not worth preserving? In eighty years we have matched the greatness that Rome and England were centuries in attaining. What may be done in the next eighty?

I heard a sagacious statesman say, about three years ago, that in twenty years from that time, if we kept together, we would drive England from all the markets of the world as a first class trader. They were words of cheer, but there was the inevitable "if." In what markets we should rival England, or even the pettiest kingdom of the earth, after dissolution of the Union, that statesman and no other has ventured to predict.

See what prosperity would come to us of the North in the process of the grand rivalry predicted by that statesman. Manufactures and navigation have built up the greatness of England, and they would do the same for us as a nation, and for our section of the nation. Manufacturing has already made us great. In no one respect are the rise and progress of our country so remarkable as in its manufactures. The narrow-minded English statesman, who would not have us manufacture even a "hob nail," could he be carried alive through the factories of Philadelphia, Pittsburg or Lowell, would, to be consistent with himself, curse the false gods who had inspired his unreasonable wish, and hasten to die again. We shall never need to depend again on any foreign nation for a fabric that can be made of cotton, iron or wool. Thus far, at least, we have come. And what cities, and towns, and railroads, and canals have we built up in our progress! How much personal wealth and social happiness have we created—what additions to our population—what accretions in the value of our farms and minerals—what industry have we stimulated and rewarded—what commerce have we won! Think of these things, fellow-countrymen—on them over one by one—dissect and analyze each fact—trace its connections and consequences; and then, when you combine them all in one glowing picture of national prosperity, remember that cotton, the product of slave labor, has been one of the indispensable elements of all our future prosperity. I say it must be. The world cannot and will not live without cotton. There is not a man in all the Union that can clothe her family or herself without it. Nor can England do without our cotton. Her mills and ours would starve, if the negroes did not raise cotton. Maim it them and they will never raise another crop. They need the authority of a master and the eye of an overseer to compel and direct them to the duties to the cotton plant which must be rendered at the right season precisely, or the crop is lost.

And thus it happens, that the Providence of that Good Being who has watched over us from the beginning, and saved us from external foes, has so ordered our internal relations as to make negro slavery an incalculable blessing to us and to the people of Great Britain. I say to us; for I do not enter into the question whether the institution be an evil to the people of the Southern States. That is their concern, not ours. We have nothing to do with it. And to obtrude our opinions upon the people of sovereign States concerning their domestic institutions, would be sheer impertinence. But do you not see and feel how good it was for us to hand over our slaves to our friends of the South—how good it was for us that they have employed them in raising a staple for our manufacturers—how wise it was to so adjust the compromises of the Constitution that we could live in union with them and reap the signal advantages to which I have adverted? We consign them to no heathen thrall, but to Christian men, professing the same faith with us—speaking the same language—reading the golden rule, in one-sided and distorted shape, but as it is recorded, a rule to slaves as well as masters.

This allusion to the golden rule reminds me of an objection which will be urged to such that I have advanced. It will be said that slavery is a sin against God, and, therefore, that all reasons drawn from our material interest, for favoring or abetting it must go for nothing.

If it be a sin, I agree there is an end to my argument, but what right has the Abolitionist to pronounce it a sin? I say Abolitionist, because the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, in a sermon preached within a week, defined an Abolitionist to be one who holds that slavery is a sin. I accept the definition, and according to it many of our best Christian people must be accounted Abolitionists; for it is astonishing how extensively the religious mind of the North has admitted into itself the suspicion, not to say conviction, that slaveholding is a

sin. If a sin, then it is a violation of some Divine law, for sin is the transgression of the law.

Now, I deny that any such law has ever been revealed. The burden of showing it is on him who alleges, and when it is shown, I agree it shall rule out all that has been said or can be said for a Union founded on slavery. I bind myself never to raise my voice again in behalf of such a Union. But, so far from any such law being found plainly written for our instruction, whoever will study the Patriarchal and Levitical institutions, will see the principle of human bondage, and of property in man, divinely sanctioned, if not divinely ordained; and in all the sayings of our Saviour, we hear no injunction for the suppression of a slavery which existed under his eyes, while he delivered many maxims and principles, which, like the golden rule, enter right into and regulate the relation. So do the writings of Paul abound with regulations of the relation, but not with the injunctions for its suppression. If we go to the most accredited commentators, or consult divines really wise and good in our midst; or what is better, study and search the Scriptures for ourselves, we shall fail to find a law which, fairly interpreted and applied, justifies any man in asserting, in or out of the pulpit, that the negro slavery of the United States is sinful. What right, then, I ask again, has the Abolitionist to cheat tender consciences into hostility to an institution on which our Union is founded in part? Good people say we do not wish to disturb slavery where it exists by local law, but believing it to be sinful and inexpedient, we will not submit to its extension, nor assist to restore the fugitive to his master. Such people soon come to conceive that the more unfriendly they can feel towards slavery the more harsh speeches they make about slaveholders, the more they help on the irrepressible conflict, the better will they recommend themselves to God. In some churches anti-slavery sentiments have become essential to good standing. According to some ecclesiastical councils, it would seem that the great duty of the American Christian is to war with his neighbor's property; and if opportunity presents, to help steal and hide it.

Alas! alas! for the times upon which we have fallen.

We must arouse ourselves and reassert the rights of the slaveholder, and add such guarantees to our Constitution as will protect his property from the spoliation of religious bigotry and persecution, or else we must give up our Constitution and Union. Events are placing the alternative plainly before us—Constitutional Union, and liberty according to American law; or the extinction of slave property, negro freedom, dissolution of the Union, and anarchy and confusion.

Can any man, even though his mind has been poisoned by the sophisms of infidels and Abolitionists, seriously contemplate the alternative with composure and indifference? We hear it said, let South Carolina go out of the Union peaceably. I say let her go peaceably, if she go at all, but why should South Carolina be driven out of the Union by an irrepressible conflict about slavery? Other States will be sure to follow, sooner or later. The work of disintegration, once fairly established, will not end with South Carolina, nor even with all the slave States. Already we see it announced, on the floor of Congress, that the city of New York, tired of her connections with Puritan New England, and the fanciful interior of her own State, will improve the opportunity to set up for herself, and throw open her magnificent port to the unrestricted commerce of the world.

Let us be wise in time. Our resolutions are soothing and encouraging in their tone, and this vast assemblage is symptomatic of returning health in the public mind; but popular meetings and fair-spoken resolutions are not going to save the Union from destruction. The people must act, and act promptly and efficiently. Let them show the South that the heart of the great State of Pennsylvania is sound still. It is said that the late elections do not commit Pennsylvania, unalterably, to the mischievous conflict. I am unwilling to believe it. I hope it is so. I hope the events of the winter and our future elections will prove it. Then let Pennsylvania appeal to the South to stand by us a little longer, till we have proved, not by fair words, but by deeds, that we will arrest the irrepressible conflict; that we are not ready to give up constitutional liberty for licentious liberty; that we will not sacrifice all the memories of the past, and all the hopes of the future, for negro