

BY A. S. CAMP & CO. No. 16 Dearborn Street.

Ex-Gov. Brown's Letter.

We take great pleasure in laying the eloquent and patriotic letter of the Ex-Gov. NEILL S. BROWN, of this city, before our readers; and ask for it an attentive perusal by men of all classes and parties. It is alike the production of a clear and comprehensive intellect, and a disinterested and patriotic heart.

LETTER FROM EX-GOV. NEILL S. BROWN.

NASHVILLE, Dec. 10, 1860.

GENTLEMEN: Your esteemed favor of the 7th inst. has been received, requesting my opinions and views upon the present condition of our public affairs.

I wish I were able to answer you, as becomes the magnitude of the question. However, the part I have been called to perform in politics, has been on a beaten track and in the line of precedents. We are now summoned to survey a field new to us all. We are in the midst of a revolution, at which the wisest of us may well stand aghast. I share with those who lament most this state of things, and am ready to share with those who are most willing to ascertain and apply a just remedy.

Our cherished Union is in danger of dissolution. We are required as American citizens and patriots, by all that is dear to us and our children, to look the peril in the face and meet it as best we can. I am a Union man, and have been since my first lessons upon the origin and history of our government. And if there has been any one thing on earth which I have worshipped more than all others, it is the American Union. All my ideas of our strength, progress and glory as a nation, have been concentrated in the Union and its preservation.

It was the Union of the American colonies that achieved our independence. It was this same Union under the articles of confederation, that maintained a languid national existence, until dire necessity prompted "the formation of a more perfect Union by the establishment of our present constitution. This last event was, in my opinion, the greatest political achievement in the whole history of the human race. It was the act of a free and enlightened people, inaugurating for the first time their existence among the nations of the earth. It gave them a power over themselves which they had never enjoyed before.

It was this Union, which they had not been able to exert. It supplied revenue to pay their debts; to build a navy; to erect light-houses; to construct forts; to maintain an army; to conquer the wilderness and to extend and protect the march of settlement. Under this same Union our population has increased in seventy-one years from three to thirty millions. The States have multiplied from thirteen to thirty-three.

Our territory has extended from the Atlantic beach, on down far away over the paths of the buffalo and the wild eagle, to the shores of the Pacific—acrossing our land a vast panorama, with all its varied beauties. Our immense mercantile marine, now rivaling that of the mistress of the seas, derived its origin from the same source, and owes its unparalleled growth and expansion to the same benign and fostering power. I might ask what would have been the condition and prospects of Tennessee to-day, but for the Union? Would it have been a State at all? or a battle ground between the pioneer and the red man of the forest? Or, if a State, would it have contained its present population, wealth and resources—its smiling fields and prosperous cities, towns and villages? Would we be the owners of the vast territory beyond the Mississippi? Would the valleys of the South now teem with cotton, rice and sugar, which we so largely into the consumption of the world? Would we have the full command of the great father of waters, and the flourishing emporium at its mouth? These are speculations which we cannot solve with certainty, but instead of possessing all these with the boundless fruits yet in store, I do not believe we would have been a live nation to-day but for this same Union.

It would be impossible to estimate the individual wealth which owes its acquisition and accumulation to our present government. Though wrought out by private effort, combined with good fortune, it was in the soil of the Constitution and laws that it grew, as the plants in the garden where they are reared. Much is due, also, in this respect, to the power of the government to protect the fortunes of the trader or adventurer in foreign countries, and the fidelity with which that power has been exerted in a standing testimonial in its behalf.

But there is another point of view in which the value of the government may be regarded, which though less striking to the eye, has been for far more important to us and to the world—and that is, its influence upon the arts and sciences—upon religion, civilization and liberty. Within the period of our history, I maintain, that no nation has ever accomplished so much in these respects. Look at our schools and colleges all over the land! Look at our newspaper press and its vast extent! It has been estimated that there are more newspapers in one single State than on the whole continent of Europe—and that there are more books sold in a certain number of States than in the whole of Germany. This results from the combined free spirit of enterprise and general prosperity, inspired and largely produced by the government itself. The fine arts, too, have been illustrated by our people to an extent, flattering to our national pride. This has been the product of inventions, in all the useful and ordinary branches of art; and the traveler in distant portions of the earth will find here and there monuments of the genius of his countrymen, among the devices to abridge labor and to promote the comfort and happiness of the human race.

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tion. All these different departments of industry—of education—of the fine arts and of moral culture—find their chief spring in our form of government—in the union of the people and of the States—in its power to protect, and in the genial inspiration which breathes from it.

The influence of our form of government upon the destinies of other people and other States, may be ascribed to its leading its value. It has been looked to by the oppressed of every land, as the great exemplification of human liberty. Its name has been a watchword in many a bloody battle-field—on the hustings and in the Senate. The war cry of a "United Italy" has rung across the Atlantic from amid the crumbling monuments of antiquity, like the voice of political resurrection. We cannot contemplate such a heroic struggle without emotion, and we would arrogate but little in assuming that our own example has had no small share in producing the mighty inspiration.

Indeed, our Union is regarded by all the world, as up to this time, by ourselves also, as the embodiment of our liberty, as the source of our strength. Its dissolution would be viewed as the end of our career in the path of self-government. The American citizen, as he now roams over the earth, commands respect everywhere, like the Ancient Roman, respect of his country. The story of our independence has traveled beyond the boundaries of civilization, and tingles in the wild song of the Arab, as he watches his flock, or reads the story by night. Our government could not be destroyed without producing a pain that "flowed from the wounds of the human race."

But it was not my object in writing this letter, to pass a mere eulogy on the Union. There was a time, however, when such labor was pleasant both to the writer and the reader. Now, whoever attempts it, incurs the imminent hazard of sharp ridicule, and is fortunate if he is not placed in the sphynx class.

It is sufficient to say that without it, we would have been nothing. With it, we have become far more than our forefathers ever anticipated. We have a country possessing every variety of climate and soil, and adapted to every species of growth and pursuit; and we have a government, it seems to me, in its complete harmony with our natural advantages and condition, as if it had been the work of Divine Wisdom itself.

The General Government was made for general purposes, and is supreme within its sphere. It was not designed, as some insist, to interfere with local questions and local interests. These are exclusively the province of the States, and the people. The General Government revolves within its orbit in majestic grandeur—the chief luminary in the constellation. The States, within their spheres, have equal independence and dignity, and dispense their power for local purposes alone. Thus all the wants of society, general and local, are home met abroad, are accommodated, and in a manner that would have been impracticable by the General Government alone, or by the States alone. The form of government has been considered, however, by all classes of our statesmen, as approaching perfection itself. Scarcely a grave critic has been made upon the Constitution, even by the most morbid and dissatisfied; and I believe no serious movement has been attempted for several generations to procure amendments. In fact, the unparalleled success which has attended us up to this period, has been a standing exemplification of the wisdom of the framers and the perfection of their work.

The complaint, even now, is not that the form of government, and law, is not adapted to the present condition of the States, but that it is not adapted to the provisions of the Constitution. I believe that this complaint is well founded, and entitled to the gravest respect. I am not so strong in my love for the Union, as to be so right or wrong, for that would have a spirit of slavery. This government, or any other, ought to be broken up whenever it ceases to perform its pledges, or ceases to be habitually used as an engine of oppression by the strong against the weak. Result as it may, and cost what it may, a free people cannot and will not submit to be enslaved or maltreated, even under the forms of constitution and law. If an alien firm government has the right to exist, in the fullest sense, as I understand them, and would never consent to relinquish under any circumstances. Among these rights is that of holding slaves, which is fixed and settled by the constitutions and laws of all the Southern States, and recognized by the Federal Constitution itself. This species of property stands, in my opinion, upon the same basis, in every respect, as any other species of property held in the South or the North; and there is no power on earth, except in the States where it exists, that is authorized to interfere with it in any way, and with the single exception of the fugitive slave law, there is no general law, and cannot rightfully be any, to operate upon it, and that is for the protection of the rights of the owner. Such, I have no doubt, was the spirit and intention and expectation of the framers of the Constitution; and such, I have as little doubt, was the spirit, and intention, and expectation of the people of the different States, when they adopted it. Such I believe, too, is clearly deducible from the Constitution itself. It is a contract between all the States, and it is to be found in the fact that twelve of the thirteen States that adopted the Constitution, held slaves, and it would be to arraign their wisdom and common sense, to suppose them so indifferent to their own interest, as to leave it wholly unguarded—a mere special municipal institution, distinguishable in any respect in its rights from other property. In short, Congress has no power over the question of slavery in any way, either to propagate or to prohibit it, except to pass a fugitive slave law in such form as to render it efficient and to make it meet the manner in which it stands on the rights of this property in slaves stands on the same footing as any other property—no higher and no lower. Of course, I mean to justify that the owner of a slave has as much right to take him to a territory belonging to the United States, as he has any other property, and keep him there without molestation, during the whole territorial career, and can be made to yield to nothing, except the Constitution, when adopted by the people, should it exclude slavery. The morality or immorality of the institution has nothing to do with the subject, in the aspect I am now viewing it—and I appeal from every such question to the Constitution—to the contract itself. Whether it is right or wrong, is a matter of belief—or the result of some inscrutable dispensation of Providence, as others maintain—or the mere subject of cupidity and interest, and against all good morals, as urged by its enemies—cannot alter or affect its status under the Constitution. Without the compromises and guarantees on this subject in the Constitution, that instrument never could have been adopted, and this government never would have seen the light. To this decided, unqualified view of the rights of American slaves, the framers of the Constitution, and the people who conform, or, in my opinion, it will be impossible to maintain the Union. Such is the position of our Southern brethren, who are now preparing in haste and in earnest, for the dire alternative. They complain, and they have a right to complain, of the imperfect execution of the fugitive slave law as declared to be Constitutional by the highest judicial tribunals, and in which they have a special interest. They complain, also, and with reason, unanswerable, of the passage by Northern States, of what they call "liberty bills." These measures were intended and have the effect of compelling the fugitive slave law in its execution, and to make it unconstitutional, as they would if they were not, in so many words, nullified the fugitive slave act itself.

The election of Mr. Lincoln by a sectional party, upon the avowed principle of hostility to Southern institutions, is the immediate occasion of the great excitement now pervading the South. Serious apprehensions are indulged that the antislavery feeling has become so strong as to be able to elect a President, that no justice is to be had, no quarter to be expected under its domination, and therefore, it is unsafe any longer to keep true with it.

The simple selection of Mr. Lincoln, or any other man, forms no justifiable cause of fealty to dissolve the Union. He was Constitutionally elected, whatever we may think or say of the principles on which he was supported. What he will do, or try to do, remains to be seen, and until then how could we justify ourselves before the civilized world, or at the bar of posterity, for breaking up such a government as this, upon the mere assumption or apprehension that he will perpetrate, or attempt to perpetrate some great wrong. I must be permitted to say, that such a course upon such a subject, would be unmanly—wanting in true courage, and unworthy of any portion of the American people. It is not worth preserving. I would then be demonstrated that what we fondly call the Union, is but a dead body, after the spirit has fled, and all the power of galvanism will never be able to do more than impart spasmodic vigor to it.

But I have the most abiding faith in the success of such a conference, and the calm, firm and respectful presentation of its demands to the people of the North have justly won their patriotic hearts. The work is not wholly done from us. The bitterness of the present hour will bring back fresh to them, as to us, the glorious memories common alike to both. We are brethren at last, in spite of our quarrels. There is a personal kinship between us, which cannot be obliterated. There is a mutual dependence with us, and our interests which will tell in such a crisis. We may say, in our moments of ill-temper, that we can do without each other, but the nearer we approach the exigencies of a contest, the less will we be able to do so. The obligations of a wholesome reaction, and there will arise a sound public sentiment in the North, willing and capable of doing justice to the South, and peace may once more come over a distracted country. In this view of his action and the happy consequences, I have more than a hope—I have a strong confidence—founded on the necessity of the times and the known motives of human action. It is also, perhaps, the best of all the reasons already given, that the "liberty bills" will soon be repealed in many, if not in all of the States that have enacted them. These measures were passed in times of high excitement, and were more the result of passionate spirit than from motives of deliberate and permanent policy. It is not to be supposed that whole communities will persevere in maintaining such laws, when they see their country in danger by them—and especially when they begin to reap, along with the harvest of death to our common commercial prosperity.

As to the question of the right of taking slaves to the public territories, there is a direct line between Mr. Lincoln and his friends and the people of the South. They are expressly committed in their platform, to the doctrine of prohibition by Congress. This would be a grave issue, if we had any territory left upon which the question could arise. But in fact we have no territory upon which the question has not been settled in some form or other, and upon which the country now responds. So, whether a Southern man has a right to go into a public territory with his slave on his back, or an alien firm government has the right to prohibit him, on the other, is for the present an abstraction, and might, with safety, be set aside. The occasion may never arise to test it—and if it ever does, it is likely to be under other auspices than those of the Presidency of Mr. Lincoln.

But a large portion of our Southern brethren are less hopeful—have no confidence in any corrective to be derived from a change in public sentiment, and have become tired of all compromises. They declare immediate secession the only remedy, and they are prepared to do it with all its responsibilities. Their grievances cannot be greater than ours. Indeed, they are less, for redoubting, as we do, near the border, we lose five, perhaps ten slaves to the one that is lost by any of the Gulf States. We are in a position, too, to be more annoyed by constant apprehension from the facilities by which we may be assailed. Still we have the same grievances—have a common interest, and are bound together by a thousand kindred ties, which all are unwilling to dissolve. And now, all the theories of well-grounded hope, the promises made in the ordinary course of public opinion, and a corresponding change of policy, are all abandoned to take some stand. And for myself, I announce without hesitation, that I am opposed to dissent for any existing cause. Nothing has yet transpired that would justify us for a moment, before any rule of sound morals, or by any test of wise policy, in abandoning such a government as this. We have grievances, I have enumerated them, and we have remedies within the Union which we have not yet exhausted. It is our duty to ourselves and our posterity, and is due to the memory of our fathers, and our example to try all possible means in our power, before resorting to the denier right of rebellion, with all the horrors that may ensue from it. Our forefathers spent long years in painful argument with the mother country, before they took up arms. They had no voice in the British legislature, as we have in ours, and they resorted to non-resistance—to non-payment of taxes—to non-recognition of the seat of government to represent the grievances. Can we do less and be worthy of the name we bear? We have no right to demand a formal statement of our grievances, by our united voices, and demand redress. There would be a power in the petition we would then occupy, which if we fail, we would not have a precipitate line of action. It would be the power of moral justice, which states so more than individuals can disregard with impunity. We could then invoke with confidence the judgment of the world, nor fear to meet the verdict of posterity. Preliminary steps have already been taken for a convention in this Southern States. I cannot suppose that any State will decline such a meeting. It is due to our country, and to the honor of the South, that our views and sentiments, and in fact, our peaceable vindication of the rights of our great fundamental law—and I say in its spirit, and in the name of American liberty, the wrongs of the South can, must, and shall be redressed.

But the advocates of secession might turn on me and say: "No matter about this doctrine. You believe in the right of revolution, and we stand on that." True. The right of revolution belongs to all people, under all circumstances, and under every form of government, and no compact or agreement can be strong enough to take it away. But that right, de-

pend on force, and should be exercised only when all peaceful means of redress fail, and the oppression is intolerable. The appeal in such a case is always direct, to the God of battles. And that is just what this movement will be, if made—a revolution with all its contingencies, hazards and horrors. It will be dissolution of the Union, and the occasion is not unfit to ask amendments to the constitution, by which all disputed points upon the subject of slavery can be settled forever and beyond all further question. That might be, by establishing the Missouri line in the constitution, and extending it to the Pacific Ocean, and erecting a barrier against the interference by Congress with slavery either among the States or in the District of Columbia, or by express admission of the principle of non-interference with slavery in the territories. If the people of the United States have so far lost their love of country that they could not, in a spirit of conciliation, adopt such amendments, or any amendments necessary to heal the present breach and restore harmony, then indeed may it be truly said that the Union cannot be preserved. It is not worth preserving. I would then be demonstrated that what we fondly call the Union, is but a dead body, after the spirit has fled, and all the power of galvanism will never be able to do more than impart spasmodic vigor to it.

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But I have the most abiding faith in the success of such a conference, and the calm, firm and respectful presentation of its demands to the people of the North have justly won their patriotic hearts. The work is not wholly done from us. The bitterness of the present hour will bring back fresh to them, as to us, the glorious memories common alike to both. We are brethren at last, in spite of our quarrels. There is a personal kinship between us, which cannot be obliterated. There is a mutual dependence with us, and our interests which will tell in such a crisis. We may say, in our moments of ill-temper, that we can do without each other, but the nearer we approach the exigencies of a contest, the less will we be able to do so. The obligations of a wholesome reaction, and there will arise a sound public sentiment in the North, willing and capable of doing justice to the South, and peace may once more come over a distracted country. In this view of his action and the happy consequences, I have more than a hope—I have a strong confidence—founded on the necessity of the times and the known motives of human action. It is also, perhaps, the best of all the reasons already given, that the "liberty bills" will soon be repealed in many, if not in all of the States that have enacted them. These measures were passed in times of high excitement, and were more the result of passionate spirit than from motives of deliberate and permanent policy. It is not to be supposed that whole communities will persevere in maintaining such laws, when they see their country in danger by them—and especially when they begin to reap, along with the harvest of death to our common commercial prosperity.

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As to the question of the right of taking slaves to the public territories, there is a direct line between Mr. Lincoln and his friends and the people of the South. They are expressly committed in their platform, to the doctrine of prohibition by Congress. This would be a grave issue, if we had any territory left upon which the question could arise. But in fact we have no territory upon which the question has not been settled in some form or other, and upon which the country now responds. So, whether a Southern man has a right to go into a public territory with his slave on his back, or an alien firm government has the right to prohibit him, on the other, is for the present an abstraction, and might, with safety, be set aside. The occasion may never arise to test it—and if it ever does, it is likely to be under other auspices than those of the Presidency of Mr. Lincoln.

But a large portion of our Southern brethren are less hopeful—have no confidence in any corrective to be derived from a change in public sentiment, and have become tired of all compromises. They declare immediate secession the only remedy, and they are prepared to do it with all its responsibilities. Their grievances cannot be greater than ours. Indeed, they are less, for redoubting, as we do, near the border, we lose five, perhaps ten slaves to the one that is lost by any of the Gulf States. We are in a position, too, to be more annoyed by constant apprehension from the facilities by which we may be assailed. Still we have the same grievances—have a common interest, and are bound together by a thousand kindred ties, which all are unwilling to dissolve. And now, all the theories of well-grounded hope, the promises made in the ordinary course of public opinion, and a corresponding change of policy, are all abandoned to take some stand. And for myself, I announce without hesitation, that I am opposed to dissent for any existing cause. Nothing has yet transpired that would justify us for a moment, before any rule of sound morals, or by any test of wise policy, in abandoning such a government as this. We have grievances, I have enumerated them, and we have remedies within the Union which we have not yet exhausted. It is our duty to ourselves and our posterity, and is due to the memory of our fathers, and our example to try all possible means in our power, before resorting to the denier right of rebellion, with all the horrors that may ensue from it. Our forefathers spent long years in painful argument with the mother country, before they took up arms. They had no voice in the British legislature, as we have in ours, and they resorted to non-resistance—to non-payment of taxes—to non-recognition of the seat of government to represent the grievances. Can we do less and be worthy of the name we bear? We have no right to demand a formal statement of our grievances, by our united voices, and demand redress. There would be a power in the petition we would then occupy, which if we fail, we would not have a precipitate line of action. It would be the power of moral justice, which states so more than individuals can disregard with impunity. We could then invoke with confidence the judgment of the world, nor fear to meet the verdict of posterity. Preliminary steps have already been taken for a convention in this Southern States. I cannot suppose that any State will decline such a meeting. It is due to our country, and to the honor of the South, that our views and sentiments, and in fact, our peaceable vindication of the rights of our great fundamental law—and I say in its spirit, and in the name of American liberty, the wrongs of the South can, must, and shall be redressed.

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