Richmond Dispatch.

BY COWARDIN & HAMMERSLEY.

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THE NATIONAL CRISIS.

Letter from Vice President Breckinridge—Letter from Judge A. B. Longstreet—Military Movements in Virginia—The Southern Confederacy—The Defences of Charleston Harbor—Fort Pulaski—The Servants in the Field, &c., &c.

LETTER FROM VICE PRESIDENT BRECKINRIDGE.

Hon. John C. Breckinridge has written a letter to Gov. Magoffin, of Ky., in which, while favoring the compromise propositions of Mr. Crittenden, he expresses himself as utterly hopeless of their being adopted. He concludes as follows:

The immediate question now presented is, peace or war. Whether the right of a State or States to dissolve connection with the federal system be a reserved right, or one growing out of the Constitution, or the right of revolution, the great fact lies before us, that the act has been done; and we are not permitted to doubt that in a few weeks seven or eight States, containing a larger population than the thirteen Colonies at the epoch of the Revolution, will have withdrawn from the Union and declared their independence. Under whatever name disguised, a collision of arms with them will be war.

The dominant party here, rejecting everything, proposing nothing, are pursuing a policy which, under the name of "enforcing the laws" and "punishing traitors," threatens to plunge the country into all the calamities of civil war.

The Federal Union cannot be preserved by arms. The attempt would unite the Southern States in resistance, while in the North a great multitude of true and loyal men never would consent to shed the blood of our people in the name and under the authority of a violated compact. A serious collision upon existing issues would destroy whatever hope may yet remain of preserving or restoring the Union. An attempt to hold it together by the bayonet would exceed anything yet recorded in the annals of human madness and folly. It would bring on a war of unexampled ferocity, in which every vital principle of the Union would disappear forever. If the South should succeed in maintaining her independence, the feuds and animosities engendered by the contest between the sections would be transmitted to succeeding generations, while, if she should be subjugated, the Government would become in form and in fact consolidated, and would soon reach the usual historical termination in a military despotism. But her subjugation is impossible without extermination; and that is impossible.

And yet the danger of civil war is imminent, unless it shall be arrested by prompt and energetic action. If, before the passions of men become aroused, and a series of untoward events drift us into strife, Kentucky and the other border States shall calmly and firmly present a united front against it, I believe it may be arrested. Fifteen States are potent to prevent war. This, too, would strengthen all the true men in the Northern States who resist the atrocious policy. Upon this question let us annihilate party. The force party believe that Kentucky and other Southern States are seriously divided on this subject—Unless this can be quickly shown to be a delusion, it may become the parent of a brood of woes.

The wisdom of the Legislature will doubtless provide whatever is needful; yet, at a time like this, it becomes the duty, as it is the right, of every man to express his opinions; and, as one citizen of the Commonwealth, I give my voice for a State Convention. It is only by the direct action of the several States, in their sovereign capacity, that anything effectual can now be done; and, for one, I desire that Kentucky may have an opportunity to determine, in the most solemn manner, her judgment of her rights, and her attitude in the present condition of affairs. She has not been an inactive nor ingloorious member of the Confederacy; she is not in the presence of great and startling events, and it is not her nature to sit in listless apathy, borne along by rapid currents, without the power to direct her course. Let her have the opportunity, through her chosen representatives, of deciding upon the prospect of reuniting all the States in a constitutional Union, or, if that shall be impossible, let her be in a position to determine her own destiny.

This letter has grown longer than I intended, although I have adhered pretty closely to my original purpose, rather to present facts, and my impressions of them, from this standpoint, than to enter upon elaborate discussion. I need not say to you, my dear sir, that I have uttered nothing in an obtrusive spirit, but rather, reluctantly and sorrowfully. My suggestions in regard to the action of Kentucky are offered in a spirit of loyalty to the State I love and will ever obey. They are clearly right, or very wrong. If right, the pleasure will be mine to have said a timely word; if wrong, I will know how to bear without a murmur all the consequences of an honest but terrible mistake.

Very sincerely, your friend,
JOHN C. BRECKINRIDGE.

Hon. *B. Magoffin*, Governor of Kentucky.

THE LETTER FROM PRESIDENT LONGSTREET.

The following is the letter written by Judge Longstreet, President of the College of South Carolina, and published in the Charleston papers. The "calamity" of which he speaks—firing the first gun—has already occurred:

I pray the authorities and people of South Carolina to put aside passion, and hear patiently and thoughtfully what I have to say upon the present critical position of our beloved State. The chances are that I am wrong in my views; for, so far as I have been enabled to collect the popular sentiment in this quarter, at least eight out of ten of the wisest heads of the land are against me, and I have reached that period of life when the wisdom of age begins to give place to its weaknesses. But the correctness of opinions is not to be estimated by number, or by age, but by the standard of reason; and to this standard I would respectfully invite all who differ with me. This much is certain, that almost every man with whom I have conversed upon the points of difference between us, shows manifest excitement—the poorest accompaniment of reason and argument that could be selected from the armory of mind.

It seems to be generally understood (and approved of,) that if the Harriet Lane attempts to enter this port she will be fired into; and, if rumor is to be credited, this is to be done without parley or explanations. If I have not lost my senses, this is the most dangerous, shallow, ill-advised measure which could possibly be adopted of just at this time. Thus far the war between South Carolina and the Federal Government has been constructive; the first gun fired makes it actual. Thus far South Carolina has maintained a purely defensive position; this measure is openly aggressive, and is to draw the first blood from a citizen of the United States; and, for aught that we know, from some champion of the cause of South Carolina. The character in which the Harriet Lane approaches us, we do not know, and cannot know, if she comes with sealed instructions.

This thing is to be done just as four States are hastening to our embrace as fast as they can come, and when it is almost certain that all the slave States will be united with us in one grand Confederacy in less than three months; and after our warmest supporters among them have implored us to wait for concert of action with them, when the Northern States are still obedient to the Federal Government, and likely to be while Buchanan remains in office; when that Government is reeling, and in two months' time may become impotent for good or evil, when South Carolina is the peculiar object of Black Republican vengeance, and when they want only a tolerable pretext to visit her with a war of extermination before the other States can in due form come to her help; when all the help she can hope for is impotent at sea.—Her aggressive step will alarm the States which are at the point of secession, and perchance kindle dissension in their bosoms; certainly enkindle their ire against her. It will unite the North and the world against her. It will verify the dismal predictions of the submissionists, and blast the reputation of the secessionists. It will precipitate South Carolina from the highest pinnacle of fame to the lowest depth of humiliation. When I think of the probability of it, my soul is so heavily burdened with the awful responsibility of the act, that I can hardly bring my thoughts to decent order, or my pen to decent style. If nothing else would stay the act, I would cheerfully surrender the power of speech and of hearing for the balance of my life to avert it. What do the advocates of this desperate measure promise themselves from it? "It will unite the Southern States." Are they not united already? Do not the rankest cowards say there must be resistance? Does one of them disapprove of the step which South Carolina has taken, save as to time? And has she not, up to this time, repelled the objections to her haste? Her people forced her to quick secession; and here they were satisfied with dispatch, and perfectly willing to await the action of her sister States. Their representatives have been in no hurry. Why, then, just as we are about to reap the best fruits of our labors, are we going to become rash indeed, and fling them away for the apples of Sodom? May God save us from this measure! Take away the apology of "uniting the South," and the act stands before the world without excuse.

You cannot say that the Harriet Lane comes with a warlike intent; and if you could, firing into her is not going to defeat her intent, or advance the independence of South Carolina the thousandth part of a hair's breadth. But it will furnish your enemy with an admirable apology for filling your harbor with armed ships, turning Sumter upon Moultrie, laying waste your city, and lining your coast with Republican hirelings. *Hirelings!* Aye, when the war opens, it is to be between the bright and gallant sons of South Carolina and these hirelings. Woe to the people who bring on such a conflict, but from dire necessity!—Is it necessary? No, no, no! It is not only bootless, desperate, but wholly unnecessary. Mr. Buchanan says he does not mean to attack any State for seceding. All the Black Republican presses say the same thing. But they mean to collect the revenues. This, to be sure, is war in disguise, but practically it is harmless, and we will be able to keep it in disguise until the proper time for us to strip the monster of its veil.

The Black Republicans think and hope that when their Collector is sent here, the State will deal with him in some way that will justify open war upon her. To fire into the vessel that brings him is exactly the thing which they want. Hence the vessel that is coming is named, her dispatches are hid from public view—they may be peaceful or belligerent, (something seemingly peaceful will be put into them for future uses,) the Collector is named. Now, for God's sake, people of South Carolina, do not fall into this trap. Let the Collector come, let him land, treat him politely, introduce him to Mr. Colcock, and tell him you hope the Collectors of the two sovereignties will settle their respective claims in the spirit of courtesy and kindness. Do this, and the President of the Republicans will be beautifully check-mated. All the time consumed in these courtesies will be bringing on your allies. The end of it will be that the revenues will be collected out at sea.

Be it so: let them have them; let your commerce go on until our Confederacy is formed. Before that time, floating custom-houses will be strung all along our Southern coast, and we will have a Confederacy of the cotton-growing States. Even then, I would not precipitate the war. The new Confederacy will certainly be acknowledged by France and England, and they will enter into treaties of commerce with us, by which they will obligate themselves to push the floating custom houses aside, and open a glorious traffic with us.—Thus, by a little delay, and the forfeiture of the customs for a few months, we gain everything we desire, without the loss of one drop of blood—without spoiling our harbors, and without interrupting our commerce for a single hour. And now for the ticklish point: Suppose they come to strengthen the posts!—If the salvation of the world depended upon it, could you prevent them from so doing! It you could not, why would you waste blood and treasure in attempting to do it? Is it any disgrace not to initiate a hopeless conflict!—Any nation would be excused for declining such a conflict; but no nation could be excused for beginning it. What must be thought of the nation who would begin it on the water, without a gun-boat or a sailor to sustain it? And what sort of a beginning of it will it be, to fire a few useless shots at a mere Government cutter? Provoke open and unequal war to prevent the strengthening of a fort which is already too strong for us!

Here is the beginning and the end of the plan proposed: Fire a few worthless shots at a vessel—set Sumpter to firing upon Moultrie—hold Moultrie till some hundreds of our sons are buried in its ruins—then desert it, and wait the wrath of the United States upon our devoted city! If all the forts were crammed full of men, they would not attack the city unless first attacked. If we were sure they would, we cannot prevent it; why, then, in the name of God, bring on a war of such fearful consequences? If you mean to hold Fort Moultrie, I implore you to let the first shot come from the enemy. *Burn that precept into your hearts, if you despise all else that I have written.* But I would abandon it now, if demanded, putting it just as Anderson left it.—But no, it must be held, desperate as is the tenure, or we shall be called cowards. Fools may so call you—no wise man will. "It must end in a war," says one, "and we'd as well bring it on at once." It never will end in a war, if the South will be prudent, and we must let no Southern State begin it. And if a Southern State is to begin it, let her not begin it on the water. A. B. LONGSTREET.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SECRETARY THOMPSON AND PRESIDENT BUCHANAN.

The following is the correspondence which passed between President Buchanan and Secretary Thompson, on the resignation of the latter:

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8, 1861.

SIR: It is with extreme regret I have just learned that additional troops have been ordered to Charleston. This subject has been frequently discussed in Cabinet Council; and when on Monday night, 31st of December ultimo, the orders for reinforcements to Fort Sumter were countermanded, I distinctly understood from you that no order of the kind would be made without being previously considered and decided in Cabinet. It is true that on Wednesday, January 2d, this subject was again discussed in Cabinet, but certainly no conclusion was reached, and the War Department was not justified in ordering reinforcements without something more than was then said. I learn, however, this morning, for the first time, that the steamer Star of the West sailed from New York last Saturday night with two hundred and fifty men, under Lieutenant Bartlett, bound for Fort Sumter. Under these circumstances I feel myself bound to resign my commission, as one of your constitutional advisers, into your hands.

With high respect, your ob't serv't,
J. THOMPSON.

His Excellency *James Buchanan*,
President of the United States.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 9, 1861.

SIR: I have received and accepted your resignation, on yesterday, of the office of Secretary of the Interior.

On Monday evening, 31st December, 1860, I suspended the orders which had been issued by the War and Navy Departments, to send the Brooklyn with reinforcements to Fort Sumter. Of this I informed you on the same evening. I stated to you my reasons for this suspension, which you knew, from its nature, would be speedy removed. In consequence of your request, however, I promised that these orders should not be renewed "without being previously considered and decided in Cabinet." This promise was faithfully observed on my part. In order to carry it into effect, I called a special Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, 2d January, 1861, in which the question of sending reinforcements to Fort Sumter was amply discussed both by yourself and others. The decided majority of your opinions was against you—At this moment the answer of the South Carolina "Commissioners" to my communication to them of 31st December was received and read. It produced much indignation among the members of the Cabinet. After a further brief conversation I adopted the following language: "It is now all over, and reinforcements must be sent." Judge Black said, at the moment of my decision, that after this letter the Cabinet would be unanimous, and I heard no dissenting voice. Indeed, the spirit and tone of the letter left no doubt on my mind that Fort Sumter would be immediately attacked, and hence the necessity of sending reinforcements there without delay.

Whilst you admit that on Wednesday, January 2d, this subject was again discussed in Cabinet, you say, "but certainly no conclusion was reached, and the War Department was not justified in ordering reinforcements without something more than was then said." You are certainly mistaken in alleging that "no conclusion was reached" in this your recollection is entirely different from that of your four oldest colleagues in the Cabinet. Indeed, my language was so unmistakable that the Secretaries of War and the Navy proceeded to act upon it without any further intercourse with myself than what you heard, or might have heard me say. You have been so emphatic in opposing these reinforcements that I thought you would resign in consequence of my decision. I deeply regret that you have been mistaken in point of fact though I firmly believe honestly mistaken. Still it is certain you have not the less been mistaken. Yours, very respectfully,
JAMES BUCHANAN.

Hon. *Jacob Thompson*.

THE DEFENCES OF CHARLESTON HARBOR.

Such measures have been adopted to prevent all vessels of an offensive character entering the harbor of Charleston, that even those belonging to that city cannot get out without aid. All the buoys have been removed, and some, if not all of the beacons, taken down.—All lights are extinguished at night, except that upon Fort Sumter, which, for the purpose of navigation, might as well be a hundred miles off, and the light-ship has been withdrawn. From Cummin's Point to the lighthouse, a distance of several miles, sandbank batteries have been erected and well manned, and vessels laden with paving stones and other heavy substances are placed at important points to sink, so that any vessels of an opposing character that might presume to prowl in would be stopped. If the Star of the West attempts to carry her living cargo to the help of Fort Sumter, she will be at once sunk by the South Carolina troops stationed along the entrance of the harbor, as a determination exists among them not to allow of reinforcements arriving at that fort. Pilots have been firmly charged not to pilot vessels-of-war into the harbor, but no restrictions are placed upon vessels of commerce and trade. When the steamship Columbia was ready for sea, although she belonged to the city of Charleston, so completely had all marks of the channel been obliterated, that it cost the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars to get her clear of the harbor. It was estimated that the value of the vessel and cargo, which consisted of cotton, rice, domestic produce, &c., was not less than $450,000, and yet this large amount was "locked up" for some time, rather than allow chances for the vessels of the enemy to make their way up to the fort or the city.

On Saturday last it was estimated that about thirty-two vessels from foreign ports, viz., Great Britain, France, Spain, Sweden and Germany, were in the harbor, shipping cotton and other Southern produce, the medium of purchase being gold taken by the very vessels that were there in the act of loading. There are also in the harbor twenty-two Northern and Eastern vessels that were all standing idle, not being able to get cargoes. The large cargo brought by the Columbia was mostly for a foreign country, and purchased with foreign gold.

FROM CHARLESTON—THE INSECURITY OF THE HARBOR WORKS.

The Charleston Mercury of Wednesday has an article on the harbor defences, from which the following is an extract:

War is imminent. Gen. Scott has control of the United States Government. War is his trade, and war is now his counsel. The sword is his arbiter, and to the sword he now looks. Information has passed throughout the whole country, from New York to New Orleans, that 250 men are ordered to the Charleston harbor for the purpose of reinforcing the United States command at Fort Sumter.

What is our power to resist this act of war, and what is our danger of failure in the attempt?

Fort Moultrie is directly under the guns of Fort Sumter. We venture little in the assertion that its power to maintain a struggle against Fort Sumter is quite inadequate.—The attempt will but make her a slaughter-pen of our best citizens. To what point or points, and to what power, are we to look for means of adequate and effectual warfare and defence? Are our redoubts on Morris' Island and on the east end of Sullivan's Island, at this moment adequate for the complete protection of our harbor against all attacks that can now be made upon us? If not, will it be said that Fort Moultrie can sink any vessel or war-steamer that attempts to come under her guns? Granted. But what, if such man-of-war, in attempting to enter our harbor, is brought to by the balls from our redoubts? What hinders her from turning tail, and going again to sea with her reinforcements? Will we not have opened war with the United States? And will not Major Anderson be empowered and compelled, as an officer of the United States Government, to open fire on Fort Moultrie!—And will he not do it? And can he not entirely dismantle her in 48 hours. Having completed his work, what will hinder the said man-of-war from again entering our harbor, and bearing her reinforcements to Fort Sumter!—Nothing, surely, but the strength of our redoubts, and their ability to sink her. Are they in a condition to do it, beyond a doubt!—We confess to have no accurate military information on the point. It may be so. But if not, is there time for delay? Five, ten thousand negro laborers can, and would have been had. Should these points not be made our chief reliance? Two hundred horses (which can be had) can remove a large body of cannon in a day. Two or five thousand laborers can throw up a large embankment in twenty-four hours. Is not this the time to do it? Why should not at least thirty cannon be placed at the east end of Sullivan's Island? It strikes us (not being military men) that this is our point, and not Fort Moultrie. But if this is not sufficient, why cannot all of our channels, except Maffit's channel, be blocked up for the time being? Is it not worth it, to maintain our power? Will it cost money to remove hereafter such obstructions? To be sure it will. But will it not cost many, many valuable lives, if it is not done? Unless, indeed, the redoubts we have spoken of are in a sufficient state of readiness to protect, beyond a doubt, the harbor from all and any attacks by sea. Will it not do more!—Will it not, for the time, tie our hands, and virtually subject us to the foreign policy and hostile power of the United States Government?

MILITARY MOVEMENTS IN CHARLESTON—FATAL ACCIDENT.

The Charleston papers of Wednesday furnish the following items of news:

On Monday night, shortly after 10 o'clock, as one of the sentinels at Castle Pinckney was going his rounds, he was approached by a person at the time unknown. The sentinel presented his musket in the act of challenging him, when the piece unfortunately went off, and the stranger immediately fell. On examination, it proved to be private R. L. Holmes, of the Carolina Light Infantry. The ball had taken effect in the left side, under the shoulder, traversing both lungs, and inflicting a wound, from the effects of which he survived only 20 minutes.

Up to one o'clock last night, when our reporter left the vicinity of Fort Sumter and Morris' Island, all was quiet in our harbor.—The guard boats were actively plying up and down the entrance, overhauling every unknown craft. The rumors that the Star of the West would make her appearance in our waters, kept the sentinels on the *qui vive*, and the cry of "all's well!" could be heard echoing over the waters from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter. At the latter post it is evident that the greatest vigilance is kept, and not even the smallest boat can approach the walls without the gruff hailing of the sentinels on the ramparts. In a former article upon the defences of Fort Sumter, we noticed the fact that the second tier of casemates had been walled up. We observed yesterday that the masonry closing two of these casemates, pointing towards Fort Moultrie, has been removed, the guns for those casemates being completely mounted.

Two additional companies of volunteers, who have entered the service of the State for six months, arrived in the city yesterday, and, without arms or equipments, were marched on board the steamer Excel, for secret service.

The first company, under command of Captain Spires, and Lieutenants George Robinson, F. C. Barber and Henry Key, numbered over one hundred strong, heal by-looking men, from Hamburg.

The second company, styled the "Cherokee Pond Volunteers," numbered eighty-two men, nearly all of them young farmers, eager for service. They were commanded by Captain Merryweather, and Lieutenants A. P. Butler and D. L. Shaw.

The Palmetto Guards, as well as a portion of the Irish Volunteers, were also out on duty during the night. The Lafayette Artillery and the German Artillery returned to the city yesterday from Fort Moultrie, making quite a handsome display as they passed through the streets.

Lieut. Pelot, of the Navy, has arrived in this city and tendered his services to the Governor, which have been accepted. Thus another son of South Carolina has nobly responded to the call of patriotism.

FORT PULASKI.

The Savannah News of yesterday gives us the following interesting particulars with regard to Fort Pulaski:

As against assault from the water, it is defended by an ample number of thirty-two-pounders, much better mounted, and in a much higher state of efficiency, than any one had supposed. Not simply the casemates, but the quarters at present occupied by the officers and privates, are bomb-proof—the arched ceilings, thirteen feet in thickness, and covered with a stiff bank sod. The open area within the fort is not paved; the earth covered with a yielding sod, formed by grass and mud thrown upon what was originally a sand-bank. If a bed had been artistically prepared for the purpose of receiving, capturing and utterly demoralizing a shell, it could not have been better devised. A shell falling upon it must be buried in the sand beneath from two to eight feet, and by the sod above will be stripped of the power even of throwing sand into the eyes; if, indeed, the fuse should not be extinguished, or the shell should explode. Those who were shelled upon Fort San Juan d'Ulloa during the investment of Vera Cruz, will remember that the second morning after the landing the attention of the enemy was specially directed to a sand hill occupied by Gen. Quitman's brigade, which was thus exposed to their eyes doubtless to draw their fire. The shells, to dodge which in their descent became after a while rather a pleasurable excitement, buried themselves in the sand; their fuses were generally extinguished, and the casualties resulting from their explosion, when they did explode, were but few. A very little work will place the interior of Fort Pulaski in such condition as to remove the men within it beyond the reach of even such casualties.

The Governor, whose entire action in this matter is, we repeat, beyond all praise, has placed at the disposal of Col. Lawton, in addition to the usual armor of each soldier, one breech-loading carbine, throwing, in the hands of an expert marksman, sixteen rifle balls a minute, Colt's revolver, and one sabre.

The ditch around the fort is being rapidly cleaned out under the orders of Col. Lawton—rice-field negroes having been placed at this work.

THE SERVANTS IN THE FIELD.

The Charleston Courier furnishes the following items:

A colored resident of Columbia, S. C., reached Charleston on Sunday evening, with a permit and letter of leave from a well known citizen of Columbia. The bearer, a free negro, had earnestly besought leave to follow one of the Columbia companies, now in arms, as a servant and attendant on one of the volunteers, who is of a family that once owned the ancestors of the servant. The dangers of the service were fully and forcibly stated, but the good and faithful servant persisted that he could go, and wished to go, with his "young master," and he is there accordingly.

At a meeting of the Planters of St. Helena, held at the Muster House on Saturday, the 5th inst., to take into consideration the exposed condition of the island, on motion of Dr. T. G. White, it was unanimously

Resolved, That the whole available plantation forces of the island be placed at the disposal of the Governor, to build or construct such forts and fortifications as are deemed expedient, under the superintendence and direction of a competent engineer.

Under the same preamble and resolutions, it was further determined to organize corps of Mounted Riflemen, for the protection of the coast.

THE "SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY."

Among the rumors from Washington may be placed this one, furnished by the correspondent of the Baltimore Sun:

The leaders of the Southern movement are consulting as to the best mode of consolidating their interests into a confederacy under a *Provisional Government*. The plan is to make Senator Hunter, of Virginia, Provisional President, and Jefferson Davis commander-in-chief of the army of defense. Mr. Hunter now possesses in a more eminent degree the philosophical characteristics of Jefferson than any other statesman now living. Colonel Davis is a graduate of West Point, was distinguished for gallantry at Buena Vista, and served as Secretary of War under President Pierce, and is not second to Gen. Scott in military science or courage.

A TELEGRAPH SUPPRESSED.

The telegraph agent in this city received yesterday a message from his colleague at Mobile informing him that the citizens of that place had taken possession of the telegraph there, and had stopped a dispatch in cipher from the Navy Department to the commandant of the navy-yard at Pensacola, and would not permit it to be forwarded.—*Washington Nat. Int.*

PUBLIC MEETINGS IN VIRGINIA.

A meeting was held in Gloucester county, Va., last week, at which resolutions were adopted requesting the County Court to levy a tax for the arming of a sufficient military body in that county.

In Shenandoah county, Va., on the 3d inst., a meeting passed resolutions, among which were the following:

That if the Legislature of Virginia think it advisable to appoint delegates to the contemplated Baltimore Convention, they are fetoly requested to do so; that in view of the pending difficulties, the Baltimore Convention, if held, meet as early as possible; that the Legislature instruct our Senators, and request our Representatives in Congress, to inquire whether the election of Abraham Lincoln was in accordance with the Constitution of the United States, and if not, to do all in their power to prevent the counting of the electoral votes; that we further urge all constitutional and honorable means to be used to settle the difficulties between the North and the South, and when these fail then we ask all Southern States to join as a unit in withdrawing from the Union.

LINCOLN HUNG IN EFFIGY.

On the "Hickory Road," Chesterfield, about two miles and a half from Petersburg, Va., is to be seen hanging in effigy the Hon. Abraham Lincoln, the man who, unfortunately for his pocket friends, never was destined to be the President of the United States. Over his head is a placard informing the public whom the effigy is intended for. Underneath the gallows is a platform and trap, and through the trap hangs the legs of the effigy. The affair presents an appearance as if Old Abe had died very hard.

WORKING MEN'S RESOLUTIONS.

In Baltimore, a meeting of working men, Wednesday night, passed a series of resolutions, among which are the following:

Resolved, That, entertaining the view that security to all interests and safety in the enjoyment of our privileges that we hold dear as freemen depend upon the maintenance of the laws, we therefore pledge ourselves to support the supremacy of the laws, national, State and municipal—satisfied that no good can emanate from a violation of law; but, on the contrary, a train of evils must necessarily follow.

Resolved, That we invoke from our fellow working men throughout the Union an expression of sentiment in relation to the troubles that assail us, and appeal to them to unite their voice with ours in pledges of fidelity to the Union.

Resolved, That while we in common with our country suffer by the present condition of the country, and that our situation may become more embarrassed if things continue as they are, we believe that generous hearts and open hands, sympathizing for us, willingly will come to our aid.

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

The following is the message of President Buchanan sent in to Congress on Wednesday last:

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

At the opening of your present session, I called your attention to the dangers which threatened the existence of the Union. I expressed my opinion freely concerning the original causes of these dangers, and recommended such measures as I believed would have the effect of tranquilizing the country, and saving it from the peril in which it had been needlessly and most unfortunately involved.—Those opinions and recommendations I do not propose now to repeat. My own convictions upon the whole subject remain unchanged.

The fact that a great calamity was impending over the nation was even at that time acknowledged by every intelligent citizen. It had already made itself felt throughout the length and breadth of the land. The necessary consequences of the alarm thus produced were most deplorable. The imports fell off with a rapidity never known before, except in time of war, in the history of our foreign commerce; the Treasury was unexpectedly left without the means which it had reasonably counted upon to meet the public engagements; trade was paralyzed; manufactories were stopped; the best public securities suddenly sunk in the market; every species of property depreciated more or less; and thousands of poor men, who depended upon their daily labor for their daily bread, were turned out of employment.

I deeply regret that I am not able to give you any information upon the state of the Union which is more satisfactory than what I was then obliged to communicate. On the contrary, matters are still worse at present than they then were. When Congress met, a strong hope pervaded the whole public mind that some amicable adjustment of the subject would speedily be made by the Representatives of the States and of the people which might restore peace between the conflicting sections of the country. That hope has been diminished by every hour of delay; and as the prospect of a bloodless settlement fades away, the public distress becomes more and more aggravated. As evidence of this, it is only necessary to say that the Treasury notes authorized by the act of 17th (seventeenth) December last were advertised according to the law, and that no responsible bidder offered to take any considerable sum at par at a lower rate of interest than twelve per cent. From these facts it appears that, in a Government organized like ours, domestic strife, or even a well-grounded fear of civil hostilities, is more destructive to our public and private interests than the most formidable foreign war.

In my Annual Message I expressed the conviction, which I have long deliberately held, and which recent reflection has only tended to deepen and confirm, that no State has a right, by its own act, to secede from the Union, or throw off its Federal obligations at pleasure. I also declared my opinion to be, that even if that right existed, and should be exercised by any State of the Confederacy, the Executive department of this Government had no authority, under the Constitution, to recognize its validity by acknowledging the independence of such State. This left me no alternative, as the Chief Executive officer under the Constitution of the United States, but to collect the public revenue and to protect the public property, so far as this might be practicable, under existing laws. This is still my purpose. My province is to execute, and not to make the laws.

It belongs to Congress exclusively to repeal, to modify, or to enlarge their provisions, to meet exigencies as they may occur. I possess no dispensing power. I certainly had no right to make aggressive war upon any State; and I am perfectly satisfied that the Constitution has wisely withheld that power even from Congress. But the right and the duty to use military force defensively against those who resist the Federal officers in the execution of their legal functions, and against those who assail the property of the Federal Government, is clear and undeniable.

But the dangerous and hostile attitude of the States towards each other has already far transcended and cast in the shade the ordinary Executive duties already provided for by law, and has assumed such vast and alarming proportions as to place the subject entirely above and beyond Executive control. The fact cannot be disguised, that we are in the midst of a great revolution. In all its various bearings, therefore, I commend the question to Congress, as the only human tribunal, under Providence, possessing the power to meet the existing emergency. To them exclusively belongs the power to declare war or to authorize the employment of military force in all cases contemplated by the Constitution; and they alone possess the power to remove grievances which might lead to war, and to secure peace and Union to this distracted country. On them, and on them alone, rests the responsibility.

The Union is a sacred trust left by our revolutionary fathers to their descendants, and never did any other people inherit so rich a legacy. It has rendered us prosperous in peace and triumphant in war. The national flag has floated in glory over every sea. Under its shadow American citizens have found protection and respect in all lands beneath the sun. If we descend to considerations of purely material interest, when, in the history of all time, has a Confederacy been bound together by such strong ties of mutual interest?—Each portion of it is dependent on all, and all upon each portion, for prosperity and domestic security. Free trade throughout the whole supplies the wants of one portion from the productions of another, and scatters wealth everywhere. The great planting and farming States require the aid of the commercial and navigating States to send their productions to domestic and foreign markets, and to furnish the naval power to render their transportation secure against all hostile attacks.

Should the Union perish in the midst of the present excitement, we have already had a sad foretaste of the universal suffering which would result from its destruction. The calamity would be severe in every portion of the Union, and would be quite as great, to say the least, in the Southern as in the Northern States.

The greatest aggravation of the evil, and that which would place us in the most unfavorable light both before the world and posterity, is, as I am firmly convinced, that the secession movement has been chiefly based upon a misapprehension at the South of the sentiments of a majority in several of the Northern States.

Let the question be transferred from political assemblies to the ballot-box, and the people themselvss would speedily redress the serious grievances which the South have suffered. But, in heaven's name, let the trial be made before we plunge into armed conflict upon the mere assumption that there is no other alternative. Time is a great conservative power. Let us pause at this momentous point and afford the people, both North and South, an opportunity for reflection. Would that South Carolina had been convinced of this truth before her precipitate action! I, therefore, appeal through you to the people of the country to declare in their might that the Union must and shall be preserved by all constitutional means. I most earnestly recommend that you devote yourselves exclusively to the question how this can be accomplished in peace. All other questions when compared with this, sink into insignificance. The present is no time for palliations. Action, prompt action, is required. A delay in Congress to prescribe or to recommend a distinct and practical proposition for conciliation may drive us to a point from which it will be almost impossible to recede.

A common ground on which conciliation and harmony can be produced is surely not unattainable. The proposition to compromise by letting the North have exclusive control of the Territory above a certain line, and to give Southern institutions protection below that line, ought to receive universal approbation. In itself, indeed, it may not be entirely satisfactory; but when the alternative is between a reasonable concession on both sides and a destruction of the Union, it is an imputation upon the patriotism of Congress to assert that its members will hesitate for a moment.

Ever now the danger is upon us. In several of the States which have not yet seceded, the forts, arsenals and magizines of the United States have been seized.

This is by far the most serious step which has been taken since the commencement of the troubles. This public property has long been left without garrisons and troops for its protection, because no person doubted its security under the flag of the country in any State of the Union.

Besides, our small army has scarcely been sufficient to guard our remote frontiers against Indian incursions. The seizure of this property, from all appearances, has been purely aggressive and not in resistance to any attempt to coerce a State of States to remain in the Union.

At the beginning of these unhappy troubles, I determined that no act of mine should increase the excitement in either section of the country. If the political conflict were to end in civil a war, it was my determined purpose not to commence it, nor even to furnish an excuse for it by any act of this Government. My opinion remains unchanged, that justice as well as sound policy requires us still to seek a peaceful solution of the questions at issue between the North and the South. Entertaining this conviction, I refrained even from sending reinforcements to Maj. Anderson, who commanded the forts in Charleston harbor, until an absolute necessity for doing so should make itself apparent, lest it might unjustly be regarded as a menace of military coercion, and thus furnish, if not a provocation, at least a pretext for an outbreak on the part of South Carolina. No necessity for these reinforcements seemed to exist. I was assured by distinguished and upright gentlemen of South Carolina that no attack upon Major Anderson was intended, but that, on the contrary, it was the desire of the State authorities, as much as it was my own, to avoid the fatal consequences which must eventually follow such a military collision.

And here I deem it proper to submit for your information copies of a communication, dated 28th December, 1860, addressed to me by R. W. Barnwell, J. H. Adams, and James L. Orr, "commissioners" from South Carolina, and the accompanying documents and copies of my answer thereto, dated 31st December.

In further explanation of Major Anderson's removal from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter, it is proper to state that, after my answer to the South Carolina "commissioners," the War Department received a letter from that gallant officer, dated on the 27th December, 1860, the day after this movement, from which the following is an extract:

"I will add as my opinion that many things convinced me that the authorities of the State designed to proceed to a hostile act, (evidently referring to the order, dated December 11, of the late Secretary of War.) Under this impression I could not hesitate that it was my solemn duty to move my command from a fort which I probably could not hold longer than forty-eight or sixty hours to this one, where my power of resistance is increased to a very great degree."

It will be recollected that the concluding part of these orders was in the following terms:

"The smallness of your force will not permit you, perhaps, to occupy more than one of the other forts, but an attack or attempt to take possession of either one of them will be regarded as an act of hostility, and you may then put your command into either of them which you may deem most proper to increase its power of resistance. You are also authorized to take similar defensive steps whenever you have tangible evidence of a design to attack you, or to commit any act of hostility against you."

It is said that serious apprehensions are, to some extent, entertained—in which I do not share—that the peace of this District may be disturbed before the fourth of March next.—In any event, it will become my duty to preserve it, and this duty shall be performed.

In conclusion, it may be permitted me to remark, I have often warned my countrymen of the dangers which now surround us. This may be the last time I shall refer to the subject officially. I feel that my duty has been faithfully, though it may be imperfectly, performed; and whatever the result may be, I shall carry to my grave the consciousness that I at least meant well for my country.

JAMES BUCHANAN.

Washington, Jan. 8, 1861.

[The enclosures were the correspondence between the Commissioners and the President, with the exception of the final reply to the Commissioners already published.]

A COUNTRY SLEIGH RIDE.—The following graphic account of a country sleigh ride we find in an exchange uncredited; but whoever the author may be, we are confident "he has been there and spent the evening:"

"What pleasure in a night sleigh ride! Good gracious! Six steaming, spanking horses and a driver as furry as a polar bear, his nose just visible above the dasher. Two or three dozen girls and boys, muffed to their eyes, stowed away with the hot bricks under the buffaloes. The ambitious fight of pairs of lovers for the coveted 'back seat' where are curious eyes to overlook the young man who, tying his lady-love's tippet under her chin, ties his heart in with it; or tucking the buffalo robe closer about her shoulders, forgets to remove his arm after the operation.

"What pleasure, with the warm blood tingling in cheeks beneath eyes that flash like diamonds; what pleasure, when snow-powdered trees, fences, and houses fly past like magic to the merry sounds of musical bells—spelt with and without an e. What pleasure, when the country inn is reached, where your supper was bespoke the day before, and rolling out of your manifold wrappers, you lift to your lips foaming glasses of hot 'mulled wine.' What pleasure, when we gather round the table, laughing at each other's rosy faces, and discuss oysters and fowl, and more 'mulled wine,' till bones and empty glasses alone remain; we have a good old fashioned 'blindman's buff,' or an unceremonious dance in our comfortable winter dresses.

"What pleasure, when after being deliciously warmed and fed, we pile into the sleigh again, nestling close to the one we like best, and telling the driver to go the longest way home, look up at stars that never gleamed so brightly, and defy fate ever to make us shed a tear for anything."

RECOLLECTIONS OF EUROPEAN ARISTOCRACY.—Prince Paul, of Wirtemburg, whose death, recently, has already been ment