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W. H. D. Callender,

James H. Bell,

Ohio Statesman.

LETTER

FROM

HON. C. L. VALLANDIGHAM,

To the "Young Men's Democratic Association"

of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

GENTLEMEN: From your President and

Secretaries, as also from individual

members, I have, within the past three months

received repeated cordial invitations to

address your Association. While a compliance

in person would be most agreeable to

me, I do not believe that either time or

circumstances are propitious just now for

negative political agitation. But I avail myself

of your kind request, to present, very

respectfully, in writing, a few thoughts upon

the present position, and duty of the Demo-

cratic party. At the present crisis, con-

jecture in part, and in part suggestion; for

he would be a bold man, and ought to be

omniscient as well the future as the present,

who should attempt to lay down, in these

times, when the changes with the diversity,

suddenness and marvelous

contrariety of the representation, a fixed

rule of policy upon any public question.

Yet with this qualification, and speaking for

myself only, I venture to address you with

becoming freedom and candor. I do not,

indeed, conceal from myself, the apprehension

that we are rather at the beginning than

at the end of a great revolution, and that

the free institutions of America are now

more upon trial than at any period during

the past four years. If, indeed, the agencies

of force were at once to give place to the

arts of peace, and placed liberty regulated

by law, and peace, and order, and the

melancholy forebodings of the more

thoughtful among us might yet prove to be

the vain fears of men who much learning

in history and an enlarged study of human

divine. In any event, I beg that it be an-

ounced that upon all questions of vasci-

ation up to this point, I am "paired off"

with the Secretary of State, Mr. Seward.

But as to the present and future, and the

new and stupendous questions which every

day will now be developed, a public posi-

tion must be determined, not by his mis-

takes where all have erred, but by his

capacity, his integrity and his patriotism.

The war has passed on to the Democratic

party, and it is upon either side, which

position, almost without excuse, even admit-

ted the rancor of a civil war and the heat

of partisan discussion, ought any longer to be

tolerated. No man in the Democratic party

in the North or West, of responsible or re-

cognized position, was for disunion or se-

cession for its own sake. But if any such

was, false to the Government of the

Confederacy, else his place would have been

in the ranks of his armies. Some, indeed,

not many, of the ablest and most sincere

and honest among us—men who, to-day,

changing their opinions, are the worst

of traitors, and I speak of such as are not

in their conviction—believed that only through

temporary recognition of Southern indepen-

dence, could the Federal Union be re-

stored. Such, too, had been the declara-

tions before and in the beginning of the

war, of many distinguished men in the Re-

publican party, some of them still high in

position, expressed in language the most

emphatic, going even to the extent of per-

manent separation. The record of these

declarations remains; but to quote them, or

to name the authors, is needless. The argu-

ment stands sufficient of itself.

It is not that the Democratic party op-

posed the civil or the peace war and dis-

union, which it was conducted, that it

excluded them from the confidence of the

may be proposed. If the policy which the

President may recommend shall appear,

upon a calm and deliberate scrutiny, best

adapted in general to secure a speedy, com-

plete, cordial and lasting pacification upon

the basis of the Federal Union of the States,

it is in my judgment, and just that the

Democratic, waiving all minor points of

detail, lend to him a liberal, earnest and

patriotic support in carrying it into execu-

tion. Upon the other hand, if the such as

can not make that sound policy which con-

ducts to peace, or, worse if possible, that

peace which hangs like a black and heavy

pal over Hungary, Ireland, Poland, then

it will be the duty of the Democratic party,

with determined firmness and fearlessness,

to interpose such constitutional and legal

opposition, through the press and in public

assembly, as may be just and efficient, till

either the President shall be impelled to

change both his Cabinet and his measures

to which they may have advised him, or

the people, peaceably through the ballot,

shall be enabled to secure pacification and

Union by a change of Administration and

policy. I repeat, I say, in part or in

whole, of the Cabinet, in advance of the

election; because, remembering the pecu-

liar circumstances under which the office

fell to the President, his advisers, "the Min-

ions" are rather to be held responsible than

himself.

As to the hitherto vexed question of Sla-

very, allow me to say for myself, that from

the very first to the last, with consistency

and persistence, I opposed all agitation of

the subject; not for the sake of the insti-

tution—I repeat it, not for the sake of the

institution, but because I had been taught by

the Fathers to believe, and did truly believe,

that it could end in civil war and dis-

union, temporary or eternal—whether right

unecessary—yet in ten years, if our Fed-

eral system survive, the rights of every

State will be restored to all their

rights within the State, and the South

along with all her citizens, the same

position of equality and influence which she

held fifty years ago. This is a lesson of

history, the law of human nature, and

no narrow, suppressing spirit of revenge, or

of bigotry and sectionalism, in the form of

test oaths and leasing, restraining, denying

regulations without number, can stay the

inevitable result—no, not even though it

should succeed now in controlling the civil

and military power of the Federal Govern-

ment, and,

"Dressed in a little brief authority,

Fast such a trial as before High Heaven,

As make the angels weep."

But to return: as to the time and manner,

as well as the results of abolishing slavery,

and of all that shall be done with the

power and responsibility are alike

with the Administration, and again it will

be for the Democratic party, guided by

the light of its ancient principles and looking

only to the public good, simply to accept or

reject.

The question of the political and social

status of the negro, is essentially and totally

distinct from the issue of African servitude;

and any man may have been or be yet radi-

cally anti-slavery, without being a friend

to negro suffrage and equality. Party split

or pressure, indeed, has driven many into

support of the doctrine, contrary to both im-

pulse and conviction; but now the issue is

changed. Outside of slavery, the negro,

where admitted to reside in a State, ought to

be the equal of every other man in all legal

rights and remedies, just as is the female

to the male. But political rights and social

usage are questions which each State and

ronage or influence in the Federal Admin-

istration, and therefore without any special

organization or agency authorized or per-

mitted to prescribe a common line of pol-

icy and prompt united action upon the new

questions daily arising; and with the most

vigorous and vehement central authority

against it ever known, wielding alike the

climor of patriotism and the power of reli-

gion, acting in politics, upon military prin-

ciples and through military instrumental-

ities, and to the whole power of the purse

and that, upon the entire wealth of the

country, and the whole power of the sword

and that sword the entire fighting popula-

tion of the country, adding a supervision

and constraint over press, speech, person,

railroad, highway, steamer and telegraph,

all the modes of action and of locomotion

and every vehicle of thought, such alone

as the fabled Balaesus might be supposed

able to exert, with every appliance of both

Church and State, and of social and indus-

trial organization combined against it. It is

rather amazing that the Democratic party

did not perish, than wonderful that it

should exhibit signs of partial paralysis.

To-day, indeed, it lies a powerful but inert

mass, yet needing only a new life blood,

a fresh vitality, the "promethean fire," to be

infused into it. There are those yet among

the living who were actors, especially in

the "Old Days," and many, younger than I,

who, when the party was in its prime, were

power in the country, exerting all the en-

ergy without any part of the terrorism of

the late Administration. "Oh, for an hour

of the old days!" It is to remain in its

place, more vigor, more courage, if you

please, in grappling with great questions