

OUR COUNTRY, AND ITS CLAIMS UPON US.

AN ORATION

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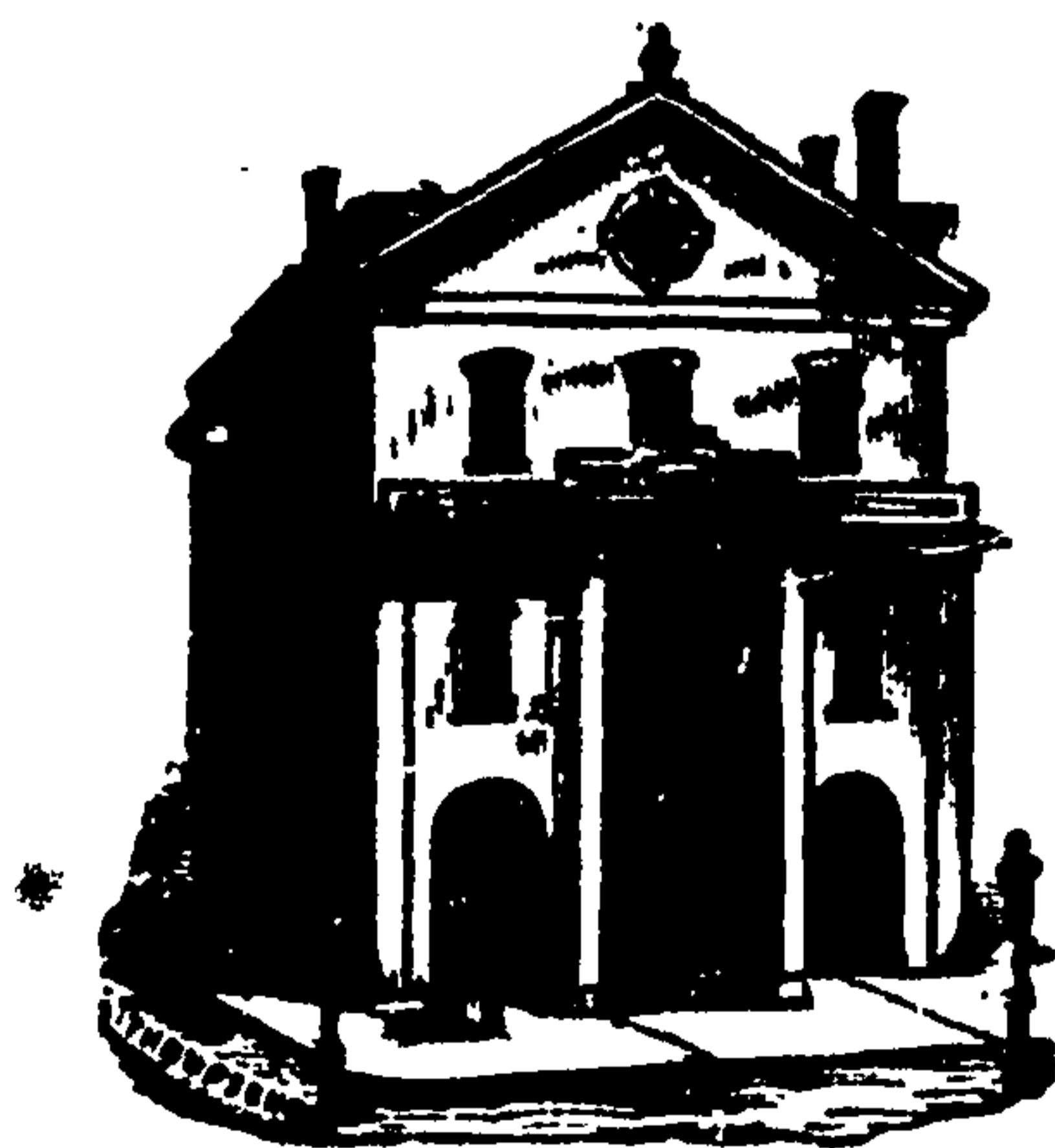
MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

AND

CITIZENS OF PROVIDENCE,

JULY 4, 1863.

By REV. JOHN G. ADAMS.



PROVIDENCE:
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1863.

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CITY OF PROVIDENCE.



RESOLUTIONS passed by the City Council July 13, 1863.

RESOLVED, That the thanks of the City Council be, and they are hereby, tendered to Rev. JOHN G. ADAMS, for the able and eloquent Oration delivered by him at the late municipal celebration of the anniversary of American Independence.

RESOLVED, That the joint Committee appointed to make arrangements for said celebration be, and they are hereby, authorized to request a copy of said Oration for publication, and to cause not exceeding five hundred copies of the same to be printed in pamphlet form, for the use of the City Council.

Witness:

SAMUEL W. BROWN, CITY CLERK.

ORATION.

FELLOW CITIZENS:—

The day which invites us to assemble here, is one of the most eventful in human history. Familiar as it may have become to us, its solemn significance to our nation and to our race can know no diminution. Especially significant is its coming now; as it finds us, not in the sunshine of sweet peace, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of our industrial vocations; but overshadowed by the heavy clouds of war; our land darkened with armed hosts, who have gone out from quiet homes and places of labor, to do their duty as defenders of our nation in the field of exhaustive and sanguinary strife. If we meet as civilians here, it is a martial atmosphere that we breathe, and the stirring trumpet-notes of the encampment or battle-ground seem to be calling us to the observances of this occasion.

And what can be more appropriate as a theme for the brief time here allotted us, than that of **OUR COUNTRY, AND ITS CLAIMS UPON US?** I can have little thought of

any other, as I comply with the generous invitation given me to appear as a speaker in this place, to-day.

The well-known words with which our Declaration of Independence opens, serve to give us the true explanation of this day and the events it commemorates. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The American Colonies had come to the full and bold utterance of these words, on the Fourth of July, 1776. The idea thus embodied was not in reality a new one. It had been in the world for long ages. The few, comparatively, of our race had spoken and had heard it; and the world had opposed, and persecuted, and put to death those who had sought most sincerely and righteously to maintain it. Through ages of light and of darkness this truth had but little growth or power in the human mind. But it was there, and it was not to die there. It lived through all the world's change, commotion, revolution, and the sei time had now come when it should have a clearer and stronger expression and demonstration than our old or new worlds had yet known. This Declaration of our fathers signified *the inestimable value of man*,—of every man,—to himself, to his fellow-man, to his God. It asserts the doctrine of human equality; not that all men are born with the same intellectual and moral aptitudes, nor that they should possess an equal amount of property, nor that all should be invested with the same civil privileges; but the religious doctrine that all are of one blood, children of one Father, protected by one Providence; made to aid, to

bless, and to build each other up in truth, justice and righteousness, henceforth, while the world stands. I can make nothing less than this of the word and spirit of this immortal state-paper. It means human equality and human rights, in their broadest and most rational sense. As in the words of Alexander Hamilton; "All men have one common original; they participate in one common nature, and consequently have one common right. No reason can be assigned why one man should exercise any pre-eminence over his fellow-creatures, unless they have voluntarily vested him with it." Or, in the language of Jefferson: "These are our grievances, which we have just laid before his Majesty with that freedom of language and sentiment which becomes a free people, claiming their rights as derived from the laws of nature, and not as the gift of the Chief Magistrate. Let those flatter who fear; it is not an American art. They know, and will therefore say, that kings are the servants, not the proprietors of the people." And in the thoughts expressed to Bryan Fairfax by our illustrious Washington:—"What is it we are contending against? Is it against the paying of a duty of three pence per pound on tea, because burdensome? No; it is the right only that we have all along disputed.

* * * If I were in any doubt as to the right which the Parliament of Great Britain had to tax us without our consent, I should most heartily coincide with you in opinion, that to petition, and petition only, is the proper method to apply for relief; because we should then be asking a favor, and not claiming a right, which by the law of nature, and by our constitution, we are, in my opinion, indubitably entitled to." These strong and healthful words have one meaning; and

that is, the significance of man,—his inalienable rights and powers. It was this conviction—based on a principle—that carried our fathers through the Revolution, and gave to us that Constitution which was afterwards the work of their hands. The object of this Constitution is explicitly declared:—“To form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.” This signifies, not despotism nor oppression, but republicanism and freedom. If it meant the formation of a more perfect union, it could not have contemplated the continued and peaceable union of two systems radically opposed to each other. If it intended to establish justice, it could not have looked to the protection of an institution that regards and uses men mainly as chattels and things. And if to promote the general welfare and the blessings of liberty, it could not have designed the growth and strengthening of a sentiment that would justify the building up of one class upon the subjugation of another. These incongruities cannot stand in the strong light of the Constitution on which the Republic was based by its immortal founders. We have, I think, a statement of the whole truth in the excellent language of our historian, Mr. Bancroft, as he speaks of the intent of the framers of the Declaration, on which our Constitution is based. “The Declaration, avoiding specious and vague generalities, grounds itself with anxious care, upon the past, and reconciles right and fact. The heart of Jefferson in writing it, and of Congress in adopting it, beat for all humanity; the assertion of right was made for the entire world of mankind, and all coming generations

without any exception whatever; for the proposition which admits of exceptions can never be self-evident. And as it was put forth in the name of the ascendant people of that time, it was sure to make the circuit of the world, passing everywhere through the despotic countries of Europe; and the astonished nations, as they read that all men are created equal, started out of their lethargy, like those who have been exiles from childhood, when they suddenly hear the dimly remembered accents of their mother tongue."

I think, then, that we may accept this idea. I do not see how there can be, with Americans, but one mind respecting it. What party politicians and demagogues may have done to modify or obscure it, from time to time, is one consideration. What our fathers thought, and what we have reason to believe that they meant, in these, their grand national declarations, is another. We stand on their platform to-day; and that is broad and firm enough for us all.

Our Country, then, signifies MAN; his equality, his true sonship, brotherhood, ability and earthly destination. It means democracy; not the democracy of numbers merely, nor of political parties struggling for supremacy and the spoils of the victors; but a democracy having in view a common good—"the greatest good of the greatest number." It means intelligence, industry, thrift; it means education and religion for the masses; it means

"Men who their duties know, but know their rights,—
And knowing, dare maintain them."

It means this for one people; means it for all nations of mankind.

Could we, as a nation, have had our healthful growth and progress in this great idea, a different record from that which the past brings us, would be before us to-day. We should not witness this wild disorder of our political elements ; we should not hear this martial drum-beat and this tramp of armed hosts from one end of the land to the other. We should not mourn and lament because of this fratricidal war.

I need not detain you with any elaborate presentation of the causes which have led to this rebellion ; of the gradual ascendancy of the slave-power in our land since the days of the Declaration ;—ascendancy by the acquisition of new territory, by compromises, by readiness on the part of the North to yield to the demands of the South ; of the threats of disunion early made ; of the rise and suppression of Nullification under the administration of President Jackson ; of the battles of the giants in our Congress upon the principles which that rebellious movement involved ; of the admission of Texas, thus widening still more the Southern domain ; of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, awakening the old question as to the extension of slavery into the territories ; of the new demand of slavery to go wherever it might will to go, in our land ; of the incoming of an administration pledged to the maintenance of this olden ground, the constitutional rights of the slaveholder, but the transientness of slavery and the permanence of freedom. These are, or ought to be, to most of us, familiar themes. Gradually, but surely, the crisis came. That possessed one, so significantly laid in 1831, having taken unto himself other spirits of greater virulence, and indulged in basest communion with them,

was ready for the revolt. He had prepared himself for the disastrous work,—had laid his plans for the uprising; had in part counted the cost,—although, as we believe, with blinded eyes; had seduced men accounted loyal who were administering our government, to join in his treachery, and so to dispose of our national means and forces as to afford special aid to the insurgents in case the rebellion should come. It came; and that first gun from Sumter opened our civil war;—opened it from the South, not from the North; and *it is upon us*, as we assemble to keep our national festival to-day. For two long years has this conflict gone on, sacrificing the noblest life-blood of our nation; bringing desolations worse than death to millions of hearts, and taxing to an extent almost incredible the material resources of the people. The rebellious ones are still defiant; and our government still persists in maintaining its own cause,—in employing all its powers for the overthrow of the revolters, and the redemption of the nation from the evils with which they would overwhelm us.

What, then,—and this is the time and occasion for proposing the question,—what are the claims of our country upon us? I make this inquiry to-day, fellow citizens, not as a sectionalist, not as a political partisan, but as an American, standing upon the old platform of our national Declaration, and as a firm believer in the call of God upon us to see that this doctrine which we have proclaimed to the world, is cherished, maintained, and perpetuated on this American continent.

It is our imperative duty, then, to sustain our national cause, because of ITS JUSTNESS before God and

in the sight of all men. "Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just." And if this be not a just one on our part, I am unable to call up any instance in human history where contention for a principle or cause could be deemed justifiable. Of the Constitutional right of secession I would not argue now, as time forbids it, and because I believe that there is but little if anything to say which will not strengthen the conclusion that no such right exists. It is the moral aspect of the deed that I would now consider. Regard the unreasonableness, the recklessness, the wickedness of this rebellion. Civil war, with all its horrors, thus invoked and persisted in! And wherefore? They who demand and introduce such a calamity ought to be able to give such reasons for it as would justify them before the nations. Our revolutionary fathers had the strongest reasons for their uprising. Their statement of grievances, made against the British government, stands acknowledged as just, at this hour. This statement has been read in our hearing, to-day. But no such reasons can be offered for their mad course, on the part of these seceding ones. On the contrary, we find, that instead of being oppressed and injured by the North, they have had, from time to time, its ready acquiescence in almost every demand made by them for new favors. Facts declare, that before the Declaration of Independence was adopted, one of the most significant passages in the original draft was stricken out because of the sensitiveness of Southern slaveholders respecting it. In the formation and adoption of the Constitution, the South asked a provision for the recovering of her fugitive slaves, and obtained it; also, a representation in Congress for three-fifths of her whole slave population, and

obtained it ; also, the right to continue the slave trade for twenty years, and obtained it. These were the compromises ; the two first remaining in force until the breaking out of the rebellion, the last,—that relating to the slave trade,—expiring in 1808. Then came the acquisition of Louisiana, especially advantageous to Southern interests ; then that of the Florida Territory, involving the enormously expensive Seminole war ; then Texas, with its vast resources ; so that at the beginning of the present rebellion, there were in the Union, present and prospective, nine slave States, acquired at the expense of more than five hundred millions of dollars, of which more than four-fifths had been paid by the free States. This, surely, is not evidence of the unfriendliness of the North towards the South. Nor does this unfriendliness appear in the Missouri Compromise ; nor in its final repeal ; nor in that agreement of Northern men to a more stringent law for the recovery of fugitive slaves ; nor in the decisions of the Supreme Court, (composed of judges from both sections of the Union,) specially favorable to the slaveholding interests of the South. Nor is it discernable in the facts that the South has had a controlling power in our national legislation and administration of the government, in one or more of its branches, ever since the adoption of the Constitution ; and that for more than seventy years but three Presidents were elected who did not receive the electoral votes of the slave States. These, surely, are not grievances in view of which this terrible outbreak can be justified.

Different and contradictory reasons have been stated by political leaders in the seceding States, for discontent

on their part. Now the Fishing Bounties are thought to be unequal; then the Navigation Laws; then the Tariff. In reference to the two first named, we may remark, that if the South failed to reap from them equal advantages with the North, it was because their industrial and commercial interests were on different foundations. These results were inevitable. But the North was not blamable because of this. No protection which these laws guaranteed to the South was withheld. And as to the Tariff, we hear of this as lately as November 1860, in the House of Representatives of Georgia, from Mr. Stevens, now the Vice President of the Rebel Confederacy:—"The Tariff no longer distracts the public councils. Reason has triumphed. The present Tariff was voted for by Massachusetts and South Carolina. The lion and the lamb lay down together: every man in the Senate and House from Massachusetts and South Carolina, I think, voted for it."

But the main reason alleged by the South in justification of its act of secession is, the opposition of the North to slavery. And what was this but a sentiment of natural growth, a conviction deepening in the public mind, as the two systems, freedom and servitude, in their practical operations confronted each other? It was not any more wonderful that the North should have an increasing attachment to free institutions, than that the South should become more and more wedded to the evil of slavery, "first endured, then pitied, then embraced," as the evil has been. The trouble of our Southern States came of the nature of their institutions. These have not been favorable to the upbuilding of the

people ; to the education of the masses ; to free labor, and free thought. The few have ruled, and the many have been subjected. While the South has been studying to maintain its slave system, the North has outstripped her in all the elements of national greatness and power. The tide of European emigration setting into the Northern and Western States, has given them a vast preponderance over those of the South, so that there has seemed to the disquieted leaders there, no other alternative but to surrender as rulers of the nation, or retire by themselves, where they could exercise that control of the subservient ones to which they had been so long accustomed.

The root of secession is, opposition to that principle upon which our Declaration of Independence is based. As John Adams wrote to Gen. Gates in 1776 :—“ All our misfortunes arise from a single source, the resistance of the Southern Colonies to Republican Government. * * Popular principles and axioms are abhorrent to the inclinations of the Barons of the South.” As Dr. Smythe, a prominent citizen of Charleston, has so candidly admitted :—“ It is not the election of a Republican President, nor the non-execution of the Fugitive Slave Law. The real difficulty lies far back of these things. It consists in the atheistic, Red Republican doctrine of the Declaration of Independence ; and until this is trampled under foot, there can be no peace.” As the declaration of the causes of separation, adopted by South Carolina, concludes :—“ All hope of remedy is rendered vain by the fact that the public opinion of the North has invested a great political error with the sanctions of a more erroneous

religious belief." And as the Richmond Enquirer of this very year declares :—"For Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, we have imperatively substituted, Slavery, Subordination, Government. And this is the true reason why we have been left without the sympathy of the nations, until we conquered that sympathy with the edge of the sword. The establishment of the Confederacy is a distinct re-action against the whole course of the mistaken civilization of the age." This, in the nineteenth century, and on this American ground once consecrated to Freedom and Human Progression! This brazen falseness—this frantic attempt to prove darkness light, and to turn back the onward marches of the nations! Could the imbecility or madness of any European or Asiatic despotism say more? The Declaration is right, and this detestable spirit of rebellion against it, wrong. Hence the claims of our nation upon us in this perilous hour.

The North did not invoke this war. With a few exceptions, the great body and soul of the North were unionists—unionists with slavery or without it; willing to allow slavery its legal rights according to the olden enactment. There had been no wrong committed to justify this rash and murderous procedure. It was the result of plans long in prospect by restless spirits, and now sprung upon the nation under pretence of what might possibly occur in consequence of a Presidential election. "What right has the North assailed?" significantly asked a prominent Southern man, from whom I have already quoted, in the Georgia Convention in January, 1861 :—"What interest of the South has been invaded? What justice has been denied? and what

claim founded in justice and right has been withheld? Can either of you, to-day, name one governmental act of wrong, deliberately and purposely done by the government of Washington, of which the South has a right to complain? I challenge the answer!" And well he might. Secession was unmitigated rashness. There is not a solitary sunbeam of the fraternal in it. When new compromises were suggested in the "Peace Convention" (that school where some of our free-state men learned more in a few weeks than they had seemed to have realized for years before), the revolted were protracting their debates, while their friends in the seceding states were mustering their forces for a more effective action in the work of desperation and death. They did not seek the redress of their grievances, real or imaginary. They did not desire friendly conference nor mutual conciliation. It was revolt, separation, civil war.

I stand not here to accuse the South of all blame, nor to excuse the North from its share of it in some of the controversies which have been going on between them. We are all human, and are affected by human frailty in our words and actions. But this I mean to affirm, that if the responsibility of this dreadful war rests anywhere, it is upon those who, after having been blest, as have these seceding ones, by a national government like ours, could raise their traitorous hands in the work of its destruction. This we deem an unspeakable wrong; not our wrong doing, but a wrong done to us on the part of our brethren. And more,—a wrong done to themselves; one of the greatest they could have committed. Because, nothing can be gained for them, in this contest, better than that which they might have

secured without it, through the rightful workings of our government, and the progressive spirit of our free institutions.

The past and present testimony of Southern men themselves, places this matter in its true light. Said Gov. Randolph, in the debates of the Virginia Convention on the United States Constitution,—“I believe that, as sure as there is a God in heaven, our safety, our political happiness and existence, depend on the union of the States; and that without this union, the people of this and the other states will undergo the unspeakable calamities which discord, faction, turbulence, war and bloodshed have produced in other countries. When I maturely weigh the advantages of the Union, and dreadful consequences of its dissolution; when I see safety on my right and destruction on my left; when I behold respectability and happiness acquired by the one but annihilated by the other, I cannot hesitate to decide in favor of the former.” And in the same strain do we hear Mr. Stephens speaking in a Southern assembly, before he identified himself with secession. “It may be that out of it (the Union) we may become greater and more prosperous, but I am candid and sincere in telling you that I fear, if we rashly evince passion, and, without sufficient cause, shall take that step, that instead of becoming greater, or more peaceful, prosperous and happy—instead of becoming gods, we will become demons, and at no distant day commence cutting one another’s throats.” Language cannot be more expressive than this. They cannot have greater strength, greater security, or a nobler name for the present or future, by thus tearing themselves away from their sister free States, and setting

themselves up as a Confederacy in the eyes of the world, with slavery, and not freedom, as the basis of their political vitality and perpetuity. Such fanaticism is lamentable to the last degree; and against its monstrous inroads we protest, and stand up to preserve our government from them. We are right in this course. To take any other, would be shame and ruin to us. The denunciations of a world would be upon us. We are forever bound to defend our dearest interests against those who would imperil them. We have love enough for our present Constitution and laws to stand by them to the last; honor enough for our old and venerated flag of the Union to keep it floating high and free! The right, then, is ours. And this is the best that can be said of any cause. "The right" is the true soul's word, always. It is man's greatness and strength. It is the stability of the eternal throne.

"They are slaves who dare not be
In the right, with two or three."

We are in the right with great numbers, and ought to prevail.

And how shall we prevail? I answer plainly:—by having a whole heart in this conflict. We must be thoroughly and persistently earnest in our work with this rebellion. Tampering with it is suicide. While the people exercise their right, as, thank God, they may, under our government, of criticising, honestly, candidly and fraternally, ways and means proposed or employed to maintain the ascendancy of the government and triumph over its opposers, they are bound to give that which they have constituted their government their strongest and most constant support. Our President

is no usurper, but the chosen of the people. He is where they have placed him. So long as he holds, unimpeached, this place, we owe him our unqualified loyalty. We cannot doubt his patriotism. Let us consider the weight of care and responsibility resting upon him. He is the Constitution; he is the Government. If we set him and his administration aside, we acknowledge no government; we are invoking anarchy. Cries of peace, and professions of peace parties in this emergency, are either the delusion of fanaticism, or the madness of treason. There can be no peace but through the triumph of the right, in this conflict. And, then, we have no strength to spend in this fuming and air-beating. The enemy has his grapple upon us for life or death. *He* means division, distraction, anything that will weaken and destroy us. What do *we* mean? He spurns all offers of any parties, only as these may be favorable to his desperate intentions,—favorable to the dissolution of the Union. New political parties, new issues made through the ballot-boxes, will not answer now. So far as we can see, it is only by the terrible weapons of war that we can work out our national salvation. Therefore, to denounce the war as unjust on the part of the government, to oppose lawful conscription and appropriations made to sustain it, to uphold, in any wise, those who are willing to connive at such measures, is but taking part with the adversaries of this Union, and calling their evil good. To pause, and ask for peace, now, is to say to the revolters, “Have your own way; rule and ruin!”—to the hosts of the patriotic dead who have fallen in this strife, “Your hopes of triumph were delusive; your heroic sacrifices have been made in vain!”—to the millions of our bereaved and mourning, whose hearts the war has made

desolate, "Your precious gifts and unutterable griefs are alike unavailing,"—to the spirit of Freedom, "Depart!"—to the Spirit of Tyranny and Anarchy, "Come and reign over us with increased power and dominion!" Considerations like these are enough to stir the life-blood in the most sluggish veins. We need the consecration of all our powers;—a determination, and if it must be, a desperateness, in this righteous cause which our seceding countrymen themselves have evinced in an *un*righteous one. We need the enthusiasm which made the charges of Cromwell's Ironsides invincible; the impulse of a holy sentiment; soldiers that have a higher motive than their "monthly pay;" and above all, leaders who have no small jealousies or competitions to attend to, no political party interests to subserve, no reserved rights to come between them and duty to their country; but leaders whose force of moral character will commend them to their soldiers; who know and feel the greatness of the mission with which they are charged; and who mean so to use the abilities God has given them as to make it successful. To no other leaders but such as these should the conduct of this war be entrusted.

Our earnestness, to be effective, must be something more than spasmodic. It ought to be continuous, untiring. The North, notwithstanding the great sacrifices which it has already made, has taken the war too easily, if not indifferently. We are told that it has been growing rich out of this contest, that some of its great cities were never so increased in wealth before; that greater expenditures, greater extravagancies among many of our people, have not been known in our past history. If this be so, we need awakening

Better would it be for us that our means were narrowed down nearer to the line of our actual necessities ; that the store and market prices of our Northern cities were such as those we have had reported from Richmond and Charleston, than that our fullness should have the tendency to stupify our perceptions of right, or incline us to pocket our patriotism. This will not do, if we mean to break down or to live down this rebellion. If we have increased wealth, then the more need is there of increased action in the use of it. But wealth alone will not answer the call of our country now. *Men* are demanded. Our business is to muster forces into the field,—all the forces we need, all that we may need for years to come, or until the rebellion is ended. Every man of the requisite ability should be in readiness to do something that will tell directly upon the prosecution of this war. The power of the North is adequate to all the emergencies that are upon us. It can grind the rebellion to powder. But it must go about the work in earnest ; and not stop too long to read stock-rates, speculate as to new investments, nor build too many dwelling-palaces, warehouses or factories. When the cry comes, as now, “ The Philistines be upon thee ! ” let not our Samson be found shorn of his locks, nor sleeping.

Political partyism ought to sink in this emergency, and but one party be known to us all,—that of American patriots. We have reason for gladness that so much of this favor has been ours. May it be more and more increased. Our republicanism, or democracy, or whatever else of partyism we may have, ought to center here,—in love for our country, and undying interest in its behalf. Our countryman, Mr. Douglas, said, on

the breaking out of the war, "There are but two parties now, patriots and traitors." It is so. All the parties of the past and present are in the ship together, and the great questions are, "Sink or swim? Survive or perish?" If we go down as a nation, woe to all our parties; if we triumph, all parties will have reason for rejoicing.

Again; let us have constancy and trust in this conflict. We shall, if we rise to a right view of it. The most momentous question with us now, is not, *when* will the war terminate, but *how*? Nothing is written more plainly in past history, than that human progress is God's order among the nations, and that this progress implies great cost. I cannot believe, as some pretend and teach, that war is the normal condition of mankind, and peace only the occasional lull between its outbreaks. I can utter no such sentiment while I have a Bible to read, or a Christian temple to stand in. There is no hope for a perpetual blessing through peace, on this earth, in this view; and Christianity in its actual work with man, is only a pleasing prophecy or dream. But it is not so. Men were made to be righteous. This is God's call upon them; and through all these terrible conflicts, they will yet know and obey this law of their being. Deliverance is possible—is practicable. Peace is; prolonged peace, improved peace, increasing peace. Nations need not perish in corruption, but grow, and prosper, and be blest from age to age. This is reason, scripture, the philosophy of God, and of humanity. But the cost at which these blessings are to be secured, has already been made evident in the history of our race. This cost has been, untold material treasures, sums that will never be computed by mortals; prayers,

sufferings, agonies, lives of the truest and holiest the world ever knew. Freedom has made its way thus far with man through conflict and storm, and still her voice speaks to-day:—

“I shun

No strife nor pang beneath the sun,
When human rights are staked and won.

I knelt with Ziska's hunted flock,
I watched in Toussaint's cell of rock,
I walked with Sidney to the block.

The moor of Marston felt my tread,
Through Jersey snows the march I led,
My voice Magenta's charges sped.”

If the world has freedom and peace at last, it must pay the price for them. We must, for the good which we would have; for the blessing of a true government—a true republic—a true democracy—a national being that shall come up to the letter and spirit of our grand old national Declaration.

Our Revolutionary fathers appealed to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe as witness of the rectitude of their intentions in making their avowal before the world. We have accepted that avowal, and He who sitteth in the heavens will hold us responsible for a righteous adherence to it. And in this conviction, we may find the heart and strength we need through all this strife. Whether it be brief or protracted, let us feel that it is *our strife* all the way through, and that by our fidelity only, in all its emergencies, will our triumph at last, be made sure. There may be much for us to endure, but let us not think of despondency, while we can think of

God, and hope in his name. It cannot be that he has given such wondrous power to the cause of human right and freedom and progress on these shores, in the past, in vain; that He has called us to liberty in behalf of all the nations, only to have our hope and theirs extinguished for the present and for the ages to come. It cannot be that the Declaration of Independence was but the rhetoric of political and moral fanaticism; that Lexington, and Trenton, and Valley Forge, and Yorktown are unmeaning names in history; that the martyrs of our first Revolution fell for naught; that Washington stands up in his stateliness and grandeur, an illusion before an admiring world. It cannot be that all this growth in physical, mental, and moral power, all this extension of territory, all this accumulation and reach of resources, all this heritage and fruitage thus far, are meaningless;—all these smiles of a gracious Providence but preludes to his unrelenting and withering frown upon us, as he gives us up to destruction! We will harbor no such gloomy forebodings. If we who would perpetuate these blessings are ready for duty;—and this we must ever have in the account, as heaven is true,—if we rest in God's right to sustain us, history will prove that we are now only passing through, it may be, the darkest and most hazardous defile we have ever entered in our onward course as a nation; but one which will bring us out into wider and more glorious fields of national occupancy and improvement than we have ever possessed before. The Almighty has his meaning in this judgment, whatever our surmises or doubts, our hopes or fears may be. Let us trust. With Him all things are possible. He can level the mountains, cast up the valleys, make the

crooked straight, and the rough places plain. The march of humanity is onward. Woe to the forces that dare to impede it! Woe to the hosts that would throw themselves across its hard yet triumphal pathway! They will only prove

“How weak, how powerless is each arm,
Against Omnipotence!”

We may be hopeful, then, in view of the future. This crisis means something more than uprising, contention, destruction. It means change, advancement, education out of old errors and wrongs, into new views, practices, and institutions. “That civil war is an evil,” says Milton, “I dispute not. But that it is the greatest of evils, that I stoutly deny. It doth indeed appear to the misjudging to be a worse calamity than bad government, because its miseries are collected within a short space and time, and may easily, at one view, be taken in and perceived. * * * When the devil of Tyranny hath gone into the body politic, he departs not but with struggles and foaming, and great convulsions. Shall he, therefore, vex it forever, lest in going out, he for a moment rend and tear it?” Afflictive and terrible as is this crisis, there is an improved state of things beyond it;—new knowledge, experience and life. We are not more surely making change and improvement in the methods of our warfare in our army and navy, such as will serve to put all nations on new bases of national defence, than realizing other new revelations of equal importance to us all. We are learning what a heavy taxation this evil of slavery has been to us; how it has ruled, and at last culminated in this direful outbreak. We are learning—our most conservative

and long-suffering ones are, by this time—that “Compromises” offered to this Moloch, Secession, however humiliating to us, have been only spurned, while separation and destruction of the Union has been the ruling determination on the part of the revolting ones. We are learning—the most conservative too—that all fears of injuring the “peculiar institution” of the South may as well be laid aside; that, as it has had no mercy on the nation, whatever there may remain to it of Constitutional justice, it deserves no tender mercy at the nation’s hand. We are learning that if the South would be truly prosperous, it must in process of time be *Northernized*; that “cotton” need not be “king,” but a truly democratic institution and power, built up and sustained by free labor, and not holding its rights by denying others theirs; that Virginia may be as prosperous as Pennsylvania, Kentucky as Ohio, South Carolina as Massachusetts or Rhode Island, if the visible and unmistakable means of prosperity are employed alike by all. We are learning to live without legalized slavery at our national capital; and have become more than ever inclined to keep it from our territories. We are becoming reconciled to the loss of the Missouri Compromise in view of the gain of the Missouri Emancipation. We are welcoming the loyal black man out of that chatteldom where he had no rights to be respected, to his place in the army of freedom, where he may realize his rights and manfully strive to maintain them.

We are thus learning; and the change consequent of this learning is inevitable. We never can have just the old order of things again. God has seen to this in advance of us. And we do not desire this order. We

ought neither to pray nor to hope for it; but rather for a good in the future answering somewhat to the tremendous sacrifice we are now making. We may seek the preservation of all the good belonging to this past. We may have the same Constitution, in substance, but a better interpretation of it; such as the fathers of our nation intended by it, and such as the discriminating minds of all the world must know that it means, wherever its testimony shall come to them. Let us, then, be hopeful.

“March at the head of the ideas of your age,” said Louis Napoleon, “and then these ideas will follow and support you. If you march behind them, they will drag you on. And if you march against them, they will certainly prove your downfall.” Well said. What we have really gained as a nation, has been by adherence to the principles upon which this government was founded. What the South has lost, has been in consequence of falling behind them. Notice the contrast between the spirit of 1776 and that of the South in 1861. That erasure made from the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, to which I have once alluded, was in accordance with these principles. It asserts that George III had waged war with human nature, had violated its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to a more miserable death in their transportation thither; that he had suppressed every legislative attempt to prohibit or restrain this execrable traffic in human flesh; and to add to these evils, was then exciting these very people to rise in arms against us; “thus

paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another." In the Preamble of the Louisiana Ordinance of Secession, is the statement of the full conviction of those who drafted it, that "slavery engrafted on this land by France, Spain, England, and the States of North America, is the most humane of all existing servitudes ; that it is in obedience to the laws of God, and recognized by the Constitution of our country, sanctioned by the decrees of its tribunals ; that it feeds and clothes its enemies and the world, leaves to the black laborer a more considerable sum of comfort, happiness and liberty than the inexorable labor required of the free servants of the whole universe ; and that each emancipation of an African, without being of any benefit to him, would necessarily condemn to slavery one of our own blood and our race."

We wonder not that a degeneracy like this would make war upon what it calls "the mistaken civilization of the age ;"—"mistaken," because flashing its light in upon this darkness and corruption ! "Slavery," says De Tocqueville, "is one of those institutions which lasts a thousand years, if no one asks why it exists ; but which it becomes impossible to maintain from the hour that the demand is made." The principles upon which our free institutions are based, are ever insisting upon this demand. And we are bound to "march at the head of" them.

I do not make pretensions, fellow citizens, to the knowledge of any special remedy for this hitherto and

still vexatious evil of which I speak. I must leave the development of this good, so much desired, to "the logic of events," to God, and to the good minds and true hearts of this American people. We are just as competent to work out this problem involving the white and black races, their relative social, industrial and political relations on this continent,—or our good part of it,—on the principles of Freedom, as we are to do any other work which God in his wisdom and justice requires of us as a nation. Our inventive powers have yet large fields for action ; and here is one of the most inviting and honorable. Our material, mental and moral resources are sufficient to the accomplishment of this work, in time, if we have *the will* to perform it. Heaven help us all to that !

And now, as we are uniting with millions of our loyal countrymen in the celebration of this ever welcome festal day, let us be thankful as we realize the connection of *our own city and State* with this imperative call of our nation upon us. As true hearts and united hands made Rhode Island honorable in other days of peril and strife ; as she was foremost among the sister Colonies in expressing, by law, her opposition to human bondage, and in her declaration by law, also, that "personal liberty is an essential part of the rights of mankind ;" as she lighted the first beacon-fire of the Revolution, and in that strife, on hardest battle fields, won just and highest renown ; so, in these times of sternest trial, has she come up to this new consecration to the cause of our national Union. Among the first to respond to their country's call for defenders, were the thousands who have left our homes to lay down their lives, if

need be, that thus their nation's life and honor be secured. Our sacred dead would we have in holy remembrance to-day :

“ Those great spirits that went down like suns,
And left upon the mountain-tops of death
A light that made them lovely.”

They are ours still ; they are Freedom's evermore ! While we mourn for them, our sorrow shall not be weakness, but an inspiration to new life and a nobler duty. We can continue to give, to sacrifice, to suffer and endure. We have all strong arms and trusting souls. Our venerated seats of learning, our churches, our work-shops, farms, houses of merchandise, monied institutions, our hopeful homes, are they not all pledged to their country's weal ? Narrow, compared with sister fraternities, as are the boundaries of our State, they are wide enough to give her heart freest pulsation in the good cause of the Union. This heart will beat true, while her cities, towns, and villages and rural homes are aglow with a loyal devotion, and this, her chief city, crowning the head of her broad and beautiful inland waters, sheds out the diamond lustre of its patriotism far over the land and the sea !

Let us then, fellow countrymen, heed well the lesson of this golden hour : *LIBERTY as the inalienable right of every man—of every race* ; as the strength and glory of the State ; as the grandest hope of all the nations. Unto this liberty have we been called. Youthful America chants its praises in this Christian temple to-day. Its sacred cause has been committed to our hands, and woe be to us if we are disloyal to its claims ! Let us study its divine significance ; let its spirit per-

vade the hearts of our people. Let it inspire the citizen in his daily rounds of toil and duty; let our homes be sanctified by its holy inbreathings upon them; let mothers teach it to their lisping children; let youth and beauty seek its communion; and venerable age find new vigor in the rehearsal of its doings in the days of old! Let song continue to proclaim it; and banners bear it onward; and statues rise to its honor; and learning do it reverence; and religion give to it her purest devotions. So shall the blessing of the Highest be ours through all this dark conflict, and in the now unseen issues thereof. The cloud shall be lifted, the problem solved; "the paradoxes of the evening shall become the truths of the morrow." We shall better understand our deluded and alienated brethren now in arms against our common country, and they will better understand us. We shall prove that not subjugation of the rebellion only, but the liberation of the people, has been our work with them, all through this terrible war. We shall have new conversions to the right; we shall silence the mean reproaches with which foreign nations have assailed us; we shall acquire new faith in self-government. Our enterprise shall have new life in new resources; our politics—what they most need—a higher tone and meaning; our educational interests a far wider sphere; our religion a truer utterance and a more regenerative power. Gladness and praise shall go up in our morning orisons, and linger in our evening vespers.

"The mighty West shall bless the East, and sea shall answer sea;
And mountain unto mountain call, 'Praise God, for we are free!'"