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The Kent News.

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The Kent News:

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EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

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Statement of a Union Officer.

Capt. Swearingen, of the Federal army, who was wounded at the battle of Fredericksburg, and was taken prisoner, has lately returned home. The Philadelphia Inquirer has a statement from him. We quote the following:

He suffered much for sixteen days in Fredericksburg, before being taken to Richmond. While in Fredericksburg he was quartered in the house of Mr. Yerby, with a number of rebel officers, where he received every attention bestowed on those with whom he lay; not even the slightest distinction could he observe between the care extended to him and that extended to the officers of the rebel army. He has every reason to be grateful to Mr Yerby and his family for their uniform kindness to him. While in Richmond he also received the kindest treatment at the hands of nearly all with whom he came in contact. Many of the citizens there voluntarily proffered him their hearty sympathies, and even, in many instances, pecuniary assistance, while he was confined in the hospital.

The only Union officers that were released on the twenty-fifth February (by the last flag of truce) were those captured at Fredericksburg, so that many who were captured more than eight months before are yet in confinement.

Capt. Swearingen represents business in Richmond as being very dull. Every thought, every word, every action of the people seemed to have reference to the state of the country. Although a dark pall, as it were, seemed to have been thrown over the city, men everywhere being disappointed and melancholy in appearance, yet it was but the look of fact approaching desperation. When roused into conversation they would talk proudly and defiantly of "fighting to the last breath," "death in the last ditch," &c.

The reports of most exorbitant prices paid for necessaries of life are not exaggerated. Pork $1 25 per pound; flour, $20 to $25 per barrel; potatoes, $5 and $6 per bushel; butter, $2 per pound; apples, $40 to $45 per bushel; whisky, $25 per gallon, and of a poor quality at that figure; boots $45 to $80, and shoes $35. They suffer greatly from the want of drugs. The most bitter complaint is that drugs are made contraband of war, and they contend that the practice is contrary to all usage in civilized warfare. The captain says that the United States "greenbacks" command a premium of one hundred and fifty per cent. over Confederate money, and are eagerly sought after.

The captain also informs us that he met no one in the city of Richmond or elsewhere that in the least favored the "retaliation" proclamation of Jefferson Davis. There are many residents of Richmond incarcerated in the prisons of that city for expressing their love for and loyalty to the old Union—the "Union as it was"—whose necessities are shamefully neglected by the authorities. Some measures, he says, should be taken for the release of these men, or at least for their relief. They at present number over two hundred.

GEN. BUTLER ON JEFF. DAVIS'S PROCLAMATION.—The Washington correspondent of the Cincinnati Gazette tells this story:

Gen. Butler has told friends here the course which he should have pursued with reference to the proclamation of Jeff. Davis against him, had it reached New Orleans while he was still in command. He would have sent a rebel general and several other officers then in his hands to Ship Island with orders that upon the receipt of authentic intelligence by the officer in command there that a hair of Butler's head or any of his officers had been touched, these rebel prisoners should all be hung at once. And, adds Butler, Jeff. Davis knows me well enough to believe that what I promised I should perform. He knows that a Massachusetts man who dared to vote sixty-four times for him at the Charleston Convention would dare to do anything.

ETERNAL shame on those, who, to make an end of the war, would make an end to the Republic.—*Prentice.*

Speech of Hon. Thomas Swann

BEFORE THE

Union League of Philadelphia.

We make extensive extracts from this able speech, delivered in Philadelphia last week by a distinguished Baltimorean, and commend them to the careful perusal of our readers. Mr. Swann seems to comprehend fully the momentous subjects of which he speaks, and their great importance at the present time is regarded as a sufficient cause for appropriating to them so large a share of our space. He said:

I am here as an humble member of a party which claims the Union as the leading and paramount object of its organization. I can attach myself to none other while this war continues; and wherever I find men holding council together under that glorious old flag which has so long and triumphantly floated over us, whether they be Whigs, or Union Democrats, or conservative Republicans, I greet them as brothers. It would, indeed, fill to the brim the cup of our National humiliation if, in the midst of the dangers that every where threaten us, we should exhaust our strength in petty sectional differences, with a powerful enemy almost at our very gates When the National life is in peril, it is no time for party warfare. We must look with a single eye and move in an unbroken phalanx to the discharge of duties imposed on us as patriotic and loyal citizens, enjoying the noblest birthright God, in his providence, has ever vouchsafed to a free people. * * *

In the adoption, gentlemen, of a war policy, when the South insisted upon its right to secede from the Union, and a resort to force to bring back to their allegiance the States in rebellion, this Government has done no more than was demanded by its obligations under the Constitution. Its right and duty to defend the National existence against threatened danger will hardly be denied by any one. If a single State or any combination of States can, of their own motion, set up for themselves and establish Governments of their own, in direct conflict with the Federal power, this Union is not worth contending for. The assumed remedy of Secession for the redress of grievances by disaffected States is nowhere recognized as a feature of our system. The Constitution prescribes the only mode in which organic changes can be effected in our political organization. That is too clearly defined to admit of cavil. It provides, in addition, that the laws of Congress passed in pursuance of the Constitution shall be the supreme law of the land, and that the judicial power of the United States shall extend to every case arising under the laws of Congress. By what license then does a State undertake to usurp the functions of the judiciary, in deciding upon its own rights and asserting independence of the paramount authority? Is there any warrant in the Constitution for such usurpations on the part of a State? If we admit the supremacy of the States, as claimed by our Southern brethren, what improvement have we made upon the old articles of confederation which our forefathers wisely superseded by the present Federal Constitution, with the express intention of strengthening the arm of the central power. The doctrine of Secession is not only without sanction, but leads to the wildest confusion in the working of our political system. If this Government is without power to control its integral parts, it fails in the very object of its creation.

It has always been a source of regret to me that the issue of Secession was not tested in 1832, when South Carolina proclaimed her ordinance of nullification, and set at defiance the authority of the Federal Government. General Jackson was fully prepared to meet it at that time, and I will venture to assert that had the struggle commenced it would have been the last of this unwarrantable heresy. [Loud cheers.]

Had Mr. Buchanan met it with the firmness of Jackson, two years ago, when it was decreed that this Union must cease with the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, we might have been saved the calamities of this wasting war. But the issue must be decided now, and I cannot permit myself to doubt that it will establish for all future time the principle that the American Union has both the right and power to maintain and transmit to those who come after us its undivided sovereignty, and that any claim of a State to set up for itself can only be justified as a revolutionary right of the Constitution, and not deduced from any of its express or implied provisions. [Loud cheers.]

I am one of those who believe, and have always believed, that the breaking up of this Union must be attended with ruin to all the sections—North, South, East and West. Our country is one of reciprocal support and obligation. Its strength consists in its unity. The great West and Northwest find their best markets on the Atlantic seaboard; and the products of the South depend for conversion and value upon the manufacturing facilities and superabundant labor of the North. A glance at the map will show that this Union is not susceptible of subdivision. No State or combination of States can maintain a separate and independent existence (other than that which the Constitution recognizes) within its limits. No nation was ever bound together by the same natural and artificial ties. * * *

It must be evident to the revolted States that the limited means at their disposal, with their ports effectually sealed against foreign aid and comfort, cannot much longer sustain them in a wasting war of such fearful proportions, no matter what encouragement may have been derived from the errors of the past. The armies in the field are expected to restore this Union, and never will they be disbanded until this object is accomplished. [Cheers.] The contest is an unequal one both as to resources and population. It can terminate but in one way. It would indeed excite the wonder of the future historian if, in the face of such glaring disparity, he should be called to record the triumph of Southern arms, and the breaking up of our glorious Union.

It is not my purpose to discuss here the causes which led to the late Democratic triumphs in New York, Pennsylvania and other States; but I may refer with pleasure to the assurance, coming from my section of the country, that whatever differences may exist as to subordinate measures of State policy, this Union must be preserved in its integrity, and any attempt to alienate a single State or a single acre of our legitimate domain would be received and treated as an insult to the whole nation. [Loud cheers.] Gentlemen, I belong to the old Whig school of politics, and I never hear even a speculation upon the possibility of dissolving this Union that I do not shudder at the utterance. I trust in God that I may never live to behold the horrors of such a separation. It will be no picture of sunshine and peace, come when it may.

The distempered dream of a Confederacy North and a Confederacy South has no charms for me. I will attach myself to neither. The reminiscences of the past bind me to every part of this glorious land alike. I know no sectional lines. I owe my allegiance to the good old Union as it came to us from our fathers. I recognize none other. When that Union falls—if fall it must (which God in his mercy avert)—I will cast a last look upon the torn symbol of our former greatness—its Stars and Stripes dimmed and drooping, it may be, in the night of darkness and despair; and prepare to sink without hope into the malstrom of anarchy and ruin which stands ready to engulph us. [Loud cheers.] Nor is the destiny of a whole people to be disappointed by the threatened arm of foreign intervention, come in what form it may. The Powers of Europe would maintain but a sickly struggle at best with the march of free institutions on this continent.

Their interference, singly or united, would be the inauguration of a conflict which would draw within its circle the whole civilized world. It would be the signal for the enfranchisement of the human race, and the uprooting of despotism, wherever it was found to exist. I cannot persuade myself that the capacity of man for self-government has proved a failure. I cannot believe that this Republic, so great and powerful in the first century of its existence, has performed its mission of usefulness among the nations of the earth. But from whatever quarter this intervention may come, whether from England or France, or the Powers of Europe combined, depend upon it, the American people will not shrink from the responsibility which it imposes, but looking with unwavering faith to a destiny greater than has yet attended the march of republican institutions, will continue to fight on till the last opposing arm shall have disappeared from the glorious pathway on which we have entered, and the broad sunlight of our National triumph shall reveal to us an unclouded future. [Loud cheers.]

The power of the Government to prosecute this war to a successful termination is not a problem of less difficult solution in regard to its material resources. A cry has gone forth that we are on the brink of universal bankruptcy. Now, gentlemen, I have only to say, as the result of the closest examination and comparison, that it would be difficult to find that nation whose ability to maintain its credit, present and prospective, is greater than our own. [Cheers.]

On the 1st of July, 1864—should the war continue so long—our aggregate National debt will have reached a limit not much exceeding one thousand seven hundred million of dollars. The internal tax bill, already in full operation, is admitted to produce one hundred and fifty millions, the interest upon this assured aggregate indebtedness in July, 1864, being, say, in round numbers, one hundred millions, and the internal tax one hundred and fifty, we have a surplus of fifty millions to be annually applied to the liquidation of this debt. But the rate of interest upon our existing indebtdness does not average six per cent, nor are we paying interest on a large class of notes used as currency which enter into this calculation. This is the extreme view presented of our financial condition on the 1st of July, 1864, presuming the war to continue until that time. The market price of gold has been taken as the only reliable standard of value in the relation which it bears to the National currency. Thus a premium of sixty per cent. on gold, according to this doctrine, reduces the actual value of a Treasury note to forty per cent. of its nominal par value.

A fallacy so absurd need hardly to be discussed. A legal tender note circulates at its full par value in the purchase of every article of prime necessity. This country, like all others situated as we have been, would find it simply impossible to adhere to the precious metals as its only basis of credit. Both England and France have recognized this principle. During the Peninsula war, the premium on gold went up in England as it has done here. It ceased to be a standard of value when it became an article of merchandise. The credit of a nation depends more upon its undoubted resources, upon its staple productions, than upon its gold and silver. If by the exchange or sale of these we are enabled to pay our debts, and to meet the demands of taxation, we have a basis of credit even better than the precious metals. When, therefore, we show that the loyal States engaged in this war have already proved their ability, almost without an effort, to pay into the public Treasury an admitted annual levy of one hundred and fifty millions of dollars (but which I assume to be nearer two hundred and fifty,) it is hardly to be presumed that the credit of this Government is likely to sink under an aggregate of two thousand millions of indebtedness. It is because we are unaccustomed to taxation that we distrust our ability to carry on this war.

It might, indeed, create alarm, if, like the States in rebellion, we were engaged from year to year in piling up a debt, without adequate revenue from any source, to meet the annual burthen which it entails, or to inspire confidence in its ultimate redemption. Happily, the able financier at the head of the Treasury Department has made the imposition of a sufficient tax to cover every possible contingency the prominent and leading feature of his financial system.

The credit of the country canaot fail in the face of such safeguards as these. But our resources are hardly yet drawn upon; and there are productions of American growth—of universal consumption both at home and abroad—which, at rates of taxation not greater than exist elsewhere, may be made to produce the interest upon our entire national debt. Our public domain furnishes another representation of substantial wealth, which, in the process of gradual development, would pour into the public treasury its timely support. I need not refer to these and other similar facts, going to show the undoubted resources of this country, and its ability to put down the rebellion, should it continue for the next five years, and the public indebtedness should reach four thousand millions, (about the present indebtedness of Great Britain,) instead of the amount stated by the Secretary of the Treasury, or even double that amount. [Cheers.]

In is not difficult to foresee how parties are likely to array themselves during the progress of this war. In the State of Maryland, ignoring the past, we have raised the banner of the Union and rallied to its support. [Cheers.] The Union men of that State comprise a formidable combination from the ranks of all other parties. It is time that party lines and party distinctions should be done away with. If our platform were less simple it might be less satisfactory to many who are ready to sacrifice everything to the support and maintenance of the Union. We are unconditional Union men, because we believe in the Union as the rock of our safety, and the intelligence and disposition of the people to protect alike the rights of all. Maryland was the first to place herself on the unconditional Union platform, and she will be the last to desert it. [Cheers.] She believes in the power of States to redress all grievances *within the Union.*

She desires to see that platform extended until it shall have superseded every other political organization. We say with the illustrious Jackson, "the Federal Union, it must be preserved." [Cheers.] It is no time for the organization of parties to throw obstacles in the way of a vigorous prosecution of the war. We must know where we stand and who are our friends. If men forget the duties of patriotism and loyalty we have no sympathy with them, no matter under what banner they may claim to stand. The Union is our hope and our stand point. It is a subject for congratulation that a large party in this country, who a short time ago were the fierce advocates of a suspension of hostilities and a convention of the States, North and South, are now convinced that the Government of Jefferson Davis will be satisfied with nothing short of separation and independence. This I have never doubted from the beginning. Are you prepared, then, to divide this Union? Is there any man here to-night who would not see this war go on for ten years—twenty years—rather than that a single acre of our National domain should be wrested from us in such a struggle?

We are in the midst of a war brought about by causes over which we have had no control. The only practical question for our consideration is whether we will maintain the Administration in this effort to save the country, no matter how we may differ upon subordinate issues, or consent to a dissolution of the Union, with the ruin which it involves. This is the issue divested of all complication; and I say to you to-night without a moment's hesitation, that however distasteful it has been to me to witness the promulgation of measures which I believe to be destructive of the common purpose of re-uniting the country, I shall stand by the administration in all *necessary* measures in the vigorous prosecution of the war. [Cheers.]

Gentlemen, at no time since this rebellion broke out have we been justified in the belief that the Crittenden Compromise, or any other compromise, would bring back a spirit of loyalty on the part of our Southern brethren. On the contrary, it was proclaimed at a very early day, that if a blank sheet of paper were offered, they would not indicate the terms on which they would be willing to return to their allegiance. What alternative, then, is left to the loyal States, with their twenty-three millions of souls depending upon this Union for their domestic prosperity, and their protection against foreign insult and intervention? Are they to accept the degradation of a conquered people almost before they have put on their armor, and before the drain of taxation has remotely affected their ability to supply the means for carrying on this war?

What am I to do—a conservative man weeping tears of agony over friends and relatives falling in this unnatural strife, when day after day the telegraph wires announce the casualties of some bloody field? Am I to renounce my country—to behold without emotion the American flag trailed in the dust, and our fondest hopes of the future extinguished forever? Am I to forget, in the miserable heresy of State sovereignty, as interpreted by Secession leaders, to what Government I owe the duty of paramount allegiance? Never—never! [Loud cheers.] The experiment of a national convention to conciliate the South has been fully tested. A revolution based upon the theories of leading Democratic politicians in New York and elsewhere has swept this country with the fury of a whirlwind. It was the voice of conciliation and compromise. It was the potent uprising of what is called the peace party, based upon an assured reciprocity of purpose and desire on the part of the Rebel States. What has it accomplished but the rebuke and humiliation of its movers? Have they not been admonished by the united Southern voice—speaking through their recognized organs—that they were only wasting time in useless speculations; that "it was not the Democrats in their Congress, or Western politicians on the stump but their soldiers in the field, to whom they looked for peace." A distinguished champion of the Democratic party tells us now that this "war must go on," and that "the man who attempts to stop it must be overwhelmed."

It is not matter of surprise that the conservative men of the Democratic party should be aroused. "We tell you," says the Southern press, "there will be no Democratic party at all, and no whispers about the Constitution, but for the wholesome lesson at Vicksburg, and the bold philosophy at Fredericksburg. It is our Generals and soldiers who cause them to remember that they once had a Constitution, and gave them the heart to say so." Now, gentlemen, when we witness the obstinate persistence with which some still urge this favorite scheme of Convention, what are we to infer? Can language be more emphatic than that which comes to us from every quarter of the South—from her statesmen in council, from her soldiers in the field, and from her press almost without exception—that this war can only be terminated by a recognition of Southern independence and a dissolution of the Union? Is the object of the proposed convention to negotiate terms of a separation? If so, why not announce the purpose of the peace party at once to be a division of the country, upon the ultimatum of a prompt recognition of Southern independence. Let us know the worst, that we may do no injustice to those who still advocate the call of a convention.—The loyal men of the Democratic party see already the position in which they have been placed. It is due alike to themselves and the country that they should retrace their steps. Mr. Van Buren says in a late speech: "I never doubted that Jefferson Davis was opposed to a restoration of the Union; I never doubted that many leaders of this rebellion were opposed to a reconstruction of the Union.—Their existence politically certainly, and physically probably, depends upon the independence of the Confederacy. No man who has any regard for himself in the free States of this Union would undertake to support these men in a union with the slave States of the Union as political allies, or even associate with them as political brethren; that cannot be done." Mr. Van Buren further says: "We have no right mode of dealing with the enemy, except by taking the expression of the leading men as the sentiment of the enemy. What, then, is their view? That we must admit the independence of the South, and next concede that they had the right when they choose to secede from the Union. That I utterly deny. While God spares me life I never will acquiesce in any such thing. There is nothing in the Constitution to warrant it. It is the destruction of our existing power of Government, and must be resisted at all hazards."

This, gentlemen, is plain talk, coming from one occupying the influential status of Mr. Van Buren, and confirms me in the opinion that with the Democratic party hopelessly divided, as it must be now, there can be but two great parties during the continuance of the rebellion—the one for and the other against the Union [Cheers.] If we recognize the Union as paramount, all minor differences must be merged in its unqualified and unconditional support. The certainty of the rapid increase of the Union party and its ultimate triumph may be inferred from the utter insufficiency of any other to command the united popular support.

I am not here to-night, gentlemen, to discuss at large the measures of Mr. Lincoln's Administration. That will be the province of the future historian, and can be done with more freedom and impartiality when this war is over and the Union restored. I was not one of those who voted to place him where he is; but I should forget my duty as a loyal citizen if I suffered myself to lose sight of what was due to his high position in the present crisis of our National troubles. The divisions springing up in many of the loyal States, based upon opposition to particular measures of State policy, receives no countenance from me, or the party with whom I am acting. They are ill-timed, injudicious, and destructive of the best interests of the country. They should be discountenanced by all true friends of the Union. The weakest blow aimed at the President of the United States must recoil upon ourselves and the cause in which we are embarked. Whatever causes of dissatisfaction may exist in the border States, it is no time to falter now. Upon one point, at least, we must be united, and that is in saving the Union at every sacrifice.

It is one of the conservative features of our admirable system of government that every four years the people exercise the privilege of expressing, through the ballot-box, their views upon public men and measures. If radical changes are deemed indispensable, they can be made without disturbance to the well being and harmony of our institutions. In the support of this Administration in the vigorous prosecution of the war to save the Union, I do not pledge myself for those with whom I cooperate to any interference with the constitutional rights of the loyal States, without their consent, whether in reference to the institution of slavery or any other issue of leading interest which may now engage the public attention. We sustain the President because he is the representative of a great nation struggling for political existence—an existence which, as loyal men, we mean to maintain and establish beyond contingency, at whatever sacrifice. [Cheers.]

If he shall have proved faithless to the trust confided to him in any particular, his day of reckoning is not so remote that we may not pursue, without diversion, the paramount object of our solicitude, in securing to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of this glorious Union, and reserve to a more opportune occasion the expression of our displeasure.

Gentlemen, I have detained you, I fear, already too long. The subject is one upon which I never speak but with emotions of renewed patriotism and devotion to that common Union to which we owe everything. I cannot forget that this is the land of my birth. It was here that Liberty raised its first voice of triumph. It was here that God himself unveiled the bow of promise to a race of men who had left behind them, in another hemisphere, the storms of political persecution. It was here that self-government, sustained by the cheers and hopes of down-trodden millions, raised the glittering standard of its nationality, never to be lowered until the last glimmer of sustaining light had faded from the horizon. It was here that after centuries of human tribulation—the clash of contending armies—the weariness of man to recover back his lost liberties—the ultimate triumph of despotism—our fathers, landing upon these shores, recommenced the struggle for human freedom, and laid upon ground not to be shaken the massive foundations of this young republic.

And is this glorious mission ended? Is there any thing in the sacrifices we are now making, the exhausting drain upon our material resources, the blood that deluges the land, the shouts of triumph, or the groans of despair, as they come alternately from the victor and vanquished? Is there anything, I repeat, when we calculate the extent and power of this nation of more than twenty millions of freemen, to force upon us the conviction that the culminating limit of our destiny has been reached? No! No! No! gentlemen. From the frozen waters of the St. Lawrence to the golden-painted waves of the Gulf of Mexico, our flag still floats in undiminished lustre, the symbol of the same old Union that Washington sealed with the blood of the revolution, and placed in our hands for safe-keeping. From the Atlantic to the Pacific a shout goes up with increased emphasis—No! No! No! The glorious mission of human freedom must go on.—An empire greater than Rome ever compassed in the proudest days of the Antonines is destined to cover this land.

It is here that God has provided a home for the oppressed. It is here that human power and greatness is to be limited only by the measure of human capability. Foreign jealousy, internecine strife, will prove alike powerless to arrest its march. Let us cling to the Union, then, as the last great effort of free government—let us make a home for the downtrodden of every land, and let us cherish more and more, on occasions like the present, that noble sentiment of the greatest of American statesmen—"Union and Liberty, now and forever, one and inseparable." [Loud cheers.]

Hon. Jos. Segar is again a candidate for Congress in the first district of Virginia.