LETTER OF DR. BRECKENRIDGE TO THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

The subjoined views, in regard to the uneasy political condition of the country, cannot fail to command attention and respect:

To the Hon. John C. Breckenridge, Vice-President of the United States and Senator elect from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

For a period of nearly seventy years the people of Kentucky, even from the moment of their own existence as a free and separate Commonwealth, have bestowed, first upon your grandfather, and then upon your father, and then upon yourself, every mark of confidence and love it was in their power to bestow, and in no instance did they ever refuse to either of you any distinction that either of you were willing to accept, and in no instance did they ever complain that either of you had come short of what they expected from you. Such testimonies on the part of such a people, accumulated, until you now find yourself in a position for good or evil to the whole nation, scarcely inferior to that of any other person, increase all the ordinary responsibilities which rest upon you to the very highest degree, and add new ones the most affecting which can address themselves to a true heart.

Every man in this nation, still more, every man in the Commonwealth which has so signally honored you, will ponder these things just in the degree that they expect or hope any thing from you, in this season, which you have yourself, in the most public and emphatic manner, declared to be full of peril to the whole American people, and most peculiarly to the people of Kentucky. I know you will admit that every one of them has the right to address to you these noble reflections—warning you by them, in a manner at once earnest and confiding, that your people do not expect you to allow their destiny to be compromised, and yourself to be overborne and carried away by events and parties, but that they expect and desire that, let what may come, you should so counsel and act that Kentucky may do her part, as becomes her, for the safety and glory of the whole, and that when the worst comes, she may live or die according to her own free and separate sense of her duty and her honor. Nor is there one among them all, who, from a private station, and impelled only by the deepest interest in the country and in you, could more properly than myself address to you words of confidence and of hope, and urge upon you considerations connected alike with your own fame and the glory of your country, whose due weight may be easily overlooked amidst the passionate violence which to all calm men seems to prevail at Washington.

As to the dissolution of the American Union, the settled and deliberate conviction of Kentucky is, that it is no remedy for anything whatever, but that it is itself the direst of all calamities. Kentucky never had any existence as a Commonwealth, except as one of the States of the American Union. She never had a disloyal thought towards that Union, or towards any sister State; she never for one instant desired to enlarge her rights under the Federal Constitution, or to exercise any of those rights offensively, or to deny to others their equal rights under that Constitution. Wholly unable to comprehend how it can be to the interest of any State to secede from the Union, or how the right to secede can be considered anything else but purely revolutionary, she sees nothing in the past conduct of the Federal Government to justify secession if it were a constitutional remedy, nothing in the aspect of the times promising any thing but disaster to the country, to every seceding State, and most especially to herself, from the application of any such remedy, whether by war, by revolution, by the formation of new confederacies, or by the secession of individual States. As far as she can understand, it is mainly the unruly passions of unreasonable men, and the violent assertion of dubious, or, to say the least, extreme rights, and the madness of political parties in their struggle for power, that has brought the country to its present perilous condition.

The true remedy for such disorders is not in the breaking up of the Government, but in the due enforcement of the laws; and posterity will execrate to the end of time, whatever Government shall allow the lawless conduct of any portion of the people to run into secession, or to drive others into it. The lives of traitors ought not to weigh a feather against the peace or security, much less against the very existence of the nation; and their blood cements instead of weakening the foundations of society. Civil war itself within the Union, horrible as civil war always is, is necessarily temporary, and is consistent with the ultimate preservation of everything distinctive in our present nationality, and in all our institutions, general and particular; and a universal civil war at this time within the Union could hardly fail to end in the permanent establishment, for the whole country, of just what our fathers established from 1776 to 1789. But after the division of the Union upon the slave line, and the necessary breaking out of fierce and interminable war along a frontier extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the western border of Missouri, no man can foresee a state of case when peace can ever be preserved along that frontier as well as it can be in the Union, and every man can see that any future union of the divided portions of the Confederacy, if any union shall ever be possible, must be upon the very terms which now exist. The inevitable effect of the recent events at Harper's Ferry, taken altogether, must be to give a degree of security to the whole slave frontier within the Union which no part of it can ever have out of the Union, and the handful of white men and negroes whose follies and crimes were consummated, would probably be the last, as they were the first, to try such an attempt. The whole case ought to be, to every reflecting man, a demonstration of the inestimable value of the Union, both as it sets bounds to the passions of men, and as it enables us to punish crime by due course of law, instead of by private or public war.

Kentucky is, through choice, a slave State. When forming her first constitution in 1792, when forming her second constitution in 1798, and when forming her present constitution in 1850, the whole subject was carefully considered by her people, and each time, decided in the same manner; and it is probable that at the present moment there is less disposition amongst her people to make any change on that subject than at any former period. Two facts of great importance must not, however, be overlooked. The first is, that no considerable portion of the people of Kentucky have ever held extreme views in favor of slavery, while a very large proportion of the people have tolerated without preferring it, and, while the common opinion of the people has always been that the relative growth of the white over the black race would be greater continually, and at some future, perhaps distant period, slavery would become an insignificant element in the condition of the State. The second fact is, that Kentucky has all along been exposed, on a frontier of seven hundred miles of river border, to greater evils and losses than all the slave States which have no free frontier put together; yet she has never

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