

8557
6057

COTTON, NOT SLAVERY, THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF THE REBELLION.

SPEECH OF HON. AMASA WALKER, OF MASSACHUSETTS.

ON THE INDEMNITY BILL.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEB. 18, 1863.

MR. SPEAKER: A great deal is said in this House and elsewhere on the causes which have led to the rebellion now in progress in the United States. No subject, perhaps, is more dwelt upon, and none, in truth, is more deserving of attention. To know the cause of our existing difficulties or disturbances is to learn the nature of that difficulty, and when we have ascertained its nature the remedy is easily found.

But it often happens in all great revolutions or changes in national affairs, that while many causes may have conspired to bring it about, there is one paramount to all others, one without which all other causes in operation would have been insufficient to produce the grand result. If I mistake not, this is eminently true in regard to the great struggle in which the American people are now involved; for while it cannot be denied that many previously existing circumstances had created disaffection in the southern States, it is to my mind clear and palpable that it is to one cause, mainly, that we owe this outbreak.

It may be expected that I shall say that slavery is that one great cause. No, sir; it was not slavery but cotton which brought about the rebellion.

My object at this time will be to show, as briefly as I may, the truth of this statement and the lesson which it teaches. But I cannot do this without first examining the position which this wonderful article, cotton, holds in the commerce of the world. It has been called king. Regarded as an article of commerce, and as one of the principal necessities of mankind, it well deserves the title; because it is that commodity from which clothing is made, in whole or in part, for almost the entire human race.

UNIVERSAL DEMAND FOR COTTON.

There are only four articles of any considerable importance used in the manufacture of clothing. These are wool, silk, flax, and cotton; two animal and two vegetable productions. The first of these, though quite indispensable in the high latitudes, is only partially available in the lower, and can be used but little in the tropics. Silk, while an article from which beautiful and elegant fabrics can be made, is not adapted to general use, and being, like wool, an animal product, cannot be furnished in sufficient quantity or at so low a rate as to be made available for the greater part of mankind. Flax being a vegetable production, and its culture adapted to a great variety of soils and climates, might doubtless be produced in any desired quantity; but, like silk, it would but partially meet the wants of that large portion of the population of the globe where snows and frost prevail a considerable part of the year.

After looking at these several commodities then, we find that an article is needed which shall as nearly as possible, combine the peculiar properties and advantages of all of them; one that can be cheaply and bountifully produced, and that may most readily be converted into clothing having, at pleasure, the warmth of wool, or the elegance or lightness of silk or linen. Cotton we find to be just that article combining in a most wonderful degree the advantages of wool, silk, and flax. The earth has one thousand million inhabitants, and each and every one of these need cotton. There is no exception. Not, indeed, that human beings cannot possibly exist without it, but their welfare and happiness are promoted by its use.

While cotton is one of the greatest necessities of mankind, we find its successful culture confined to a very limited portion of the earth's surface. I say successful culture, for although it may be raised in India, Egypt, and other countries in similar latitudes, yet the quality is so inferior, the quantity to the acre so limited, and the labor so ineffective, that the countries in question do little more than supply their own wants.

It is reserved to the States of the American Union lying in immediate proximity to the Gulf of Mexico to furnish the world with the article in such quantities and of such quality as to meet the general demand. In these States chattel slavery exists, and by its labor the great staple of the country is produced. The culture of the article began prior to the Revolution, but it did not become an article of foreign export till 1784, when eight bales were shipped to Liverpool. These were seized by the custom-house officers, on the ground that they could not be of American product.

INCREASE OF PRODUCTION AND ADVANCE OF PRICE.

No very great extension of the cultivation of cotton was realized until 1792, when Eli Whitney, a man from Massachusetts, invented the cotton gin; but from that moment it increased with wonderful rapidity. The value of the export of cotton was:

In 1821.....	\$20,900,000
In 1830.....	29,000,000
In 1840.....	63,000,000
In 1850.....	71,000,000
In 1860.....	191,000,000

This amount, it will be observed, is over and above the amount consumed in the United States. The whole product in 1850 was 2,096,706 bales; in 1860, 4,669,770 bales. Mark especially the great increase from 1850 to 1860, of one hundred and thirty per cent.

But the more striking and noticeable fact is, that while the production had increased at this enormous rate, the prices also had advanced twenty-five per cent. According to the financial report of 1861, the average price of cotton from 1840 to 1850 was but 8.2 cents per pound; while from 1850 to 1860 the average price was 10.5 cents per pound; a difference, it will be seen, of a little over twenty-five per cent.

The difference between the value of the entire crop of cotton, including all consumed at home and exported, is still more remarkable. In 1850 it amounted to but \$117,619,947, while in 1860 it was \$308,865,280; showing an increase of value of nearly two hundred per cent., owing, of course, to the increase of quantity and the advance of price.

Here, then, is the singular fact, unparalleled perhaps in the commercial history of the world, that while the production was increasing at a rate so prodigious, the price was constantly advancing. This is contrary to all the ordinary laws of trade. As production increases, prices fall; but in this case, instead of a decline, we find a great advance of price.

What did this remarkable phenomenon prove? Why, that the consumption of cotton was advancing at a greater ratio than the supply. The slaveholders, the cotton lords of the South, saw this, and well understood the consequences which it involved. They saw in this a clear indication that they had before them a brilliant career of prosperity; that they were in possession of a power that could be made to influence the world.

THE COTTON-GROWERS ALARMED.

But in the midst of these splendid visions of affluence and influence, one circumstance gave them great uneasiness. Mr. De Bow, the great statistician of the South, in the first volume of his Commercial Resources, informed the public, in 1853, that there were at that time about "one hundred thousand free white persons engaged in the cultivation of cotton." This could not but greatly alarm the slaveholders, especially in connection with the fact that the number of those free laborers was constantly augmenting in all the cotton States, but especially in Texas, where there was already a large and successful colony of Germans, increasing rapidly by immigration from the fatherland. By this fact, it was becoming manifest to the world that cotton could be cultivated by free white labor, and the old and carefully cherished fallacy that it could only be raised by negroes was being exploded. White men not only did work in the cotton-fields as safely as the negro, but found it more profitable than any other branch of agricultural industry. This the slaveholders saw must inevitably lead to a large and continuous influx of free labor from Europe and

the North, and the formation of a powerful free State within the limits of Texas would be the certain consequence.

The enormous rise in cotton, too, while its production was so largely increased, showed the slaveholders that, with all their concentration of force in that particular branch of industry, they could not increase the quantity so fast as the demand for it increased. It also proved to them that the natural increase of slaves was not in proportion to the actual increase in the consumption of their great staple. "If," said the wily statesmen of the South, "the slave population, then the price of cotton will continue to rise; if the price continues to rise, free labor must be drawn to its culture, and Texas will swarm with a non-slaveholding population, unfriendly to the existence of slavery and dangerous to its continuance. Texas has already large German settlements engaged in raising cotton, which will be constantly increased by immigration. All Europe will be poured in upon us to engage in the cotton culture, and slavery will in a short time be brought into actual competition with and be surrounded on all sides by free labor. That will be fatal to slavery. This raising of cotton by white labor must be stopped. But how? The cotton market must and will be supplied—that is certain. If we, slaveholders, cannot raise a sufficient quantity, non-slaveholders will. What, then, can be done? We must obtain a larger supply of slaves. But we have exhausted the home market already, and carried the price of field hands up from twelve to fifteen hundred dollars. We cannot go further in that direction, and there can be but one remedy, and to that we must resort. We will open the slave trade, and procure a supply of laborers from Africa, as we can readily do at from two to three hundred dollars per head. In this way we can get all we need, and keep the entire command of the cotton market."

THE SLAVE TRADE MUST BE OPENED.

So reasoned the slaveholding statesmen of the South, and they reasoned correctly. There was for them no alternative. The slave trade must be opened. But how could it be done? "The civilized world," say they, "will indeed be against us, but that we do not care about, for the civilized world must depend on us for cotton, and we can set their mawkish sensibility at defiance; but the northern States of the Union will never consent to the project, will never give legal sanction to such a measure. They will not agree that we shall flood the country with negroes, and Africanize a great part of the continent. It is hopeless for us to attempt it while connected with them, and therefore we must set up for independence." This was clear and conclusive. To quote directly from the words of A. H. Stephens, vice president of the confederacy:

"It is as plain as anything can be, that unless the number of African stock be increased we might as well abandon the race with our brethren of the North in the colonization of Territories. If there are no more slave States, it is not because of abolitionism, but simply for the want of people to settle them."

"We cannot make States without people, and slave States cannot be made without Africans. It is useless to wage war about abstract rights, or to quarrel and accuse each other of unsoundness, unless we get more Africans."

Mr. Clemens, of Virginia, said in the Congress of the United States:

"The only mode by which slavery could ever expand was to reduce the price of negroes and have a new source of supply. This is, in fact, the REAL DESIGN of the coast States."

SECESSION A NECESSITY.

What was the result of this course of reasoning? The dreadful alternative of secession. It was no fear from abolitionism that led to this desperate step. The leaders in the rebellion have had the frankness to avow that they had no apprehensions from the aggressions of the North. Jefferson Davis and his associates knew as well as every gentleman in this House knows, that there was no disposition on the part of the North to abolish slavery. They knew that at the election of Mr. Lincoln there was not, of all the voters in the free States, probably five per cent. who were in favor of abolition. They knew very well the pro-slavery character of political parties at the North, and how easily they had always made them subservient to the interests of slavery. They knew their own power over Northern politicians, and how readily they could manage them. They never for a moment apprehended any interference with slavery as an existing institution; but they did fear, and with good reason, that the opening of the slave trade would be an atrocity so shocking

to those instincts of humanity which all men have, except those made callous by slaveholding, it could never be accomplished while they were connected with the free North. And so, sir, they resolved to cut loose from the Union, and form an independent government, whose "chief corner-stone," in the language of Mr. Stephens, "should be slavery." This they boldly and honestly avowed, and upon this they stand to-day. This is the issue for which they are struggling with a heroism and devotion worthy of a better cause.

This project of the South certainly appeared to most of us as wild and chimerical. We would not believe them in earnest. We thought they only intended to bluster and threaten, until, as usual, we should compromise by letting them have their own way; but their position in relation to the cotton market admitted of no compromise, no delay. They must strike then or never; another decade would place them in hopeless competition with the labor of free men. Besides, they knew their own prowess, and they calculated but too safely on sympathizers at the North, where they had always found a mercenary party, and believed they always should. They knew they would be united themselves, and believed that we should be divided, and thus they dared to make the dreadful appeal to arms.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if this view of the matter is the true one, as I think none can deny, it shows us what our duty is, and what we must expect in this contest. Gentlemen here talk about "compromise and concession," but what compromise can there be with insurgents fighting for such an object? None at all; and the southern leaders, whose frank avowal of even their most diabolical designs we cannot but admire, tell us, in the plainest language, that if we would give them a *carte blanche*, they would not propose any terms whatever on which they would re-enter the Union. No, sir, they will never do it. They will be as good as their word. Nay, more; they will bring the North to the most humiliating terms, and rule it as with a rod of iron, unless their armies are overthrown. That is our destiny; that is the work before us. Not a very flattering prospect, I admit, in the present posture of affairs, but not the less our certain and inevitable destiny.

Sir, I repeat what I have already declared, cotton is the immediate cause of this war. Had the slave labor of the South been devoted to the raising of sugar, tobacco, rice, and common agricultural products, there would have been no adequate motive or occasion for secession. But as that labor was devoted, especially in the Gulf States, where the movement was consummated, to the cultivation of cotton, the case was entirely different. In that commodity they enjoyed a monopoly, and were determined to keep it.

THE GREAT ISSUE.

If the rebellion succeeds, the fields of Texas and Mexico are to be cultivated with labor imported from the shores of Africa; if it fails, those same fields are to be tilled by the free labor of the Northern States and Europe. The question we are now deciding is, whether the vast regions on our southern borders shall be peopled by the best races of Europe, drawn hither by voluntary emigration, or by the most degraded races of Africa, brought here in the holds of the slave-ship. That is the grand problem in our future destiny. One or the other must take place, and it is for us, the men of the present hour, to determine which it shall be. It is the most stupendous issue ever presented in the annals of the world. Slave labor or free labor for half a century! Civilization or barbarism for unborn millions!

Those do the leaders of this rebellion great injustice, who suppose they were actuated by the groveling considerations which have usually been attributed to them. They afraid of losing the control of the politics of the nation? They were never more powerful than when they met at the Charleston convention in 1860; and, had they chosen, might have perpetuated their political ascendency indefinitely. That they knew very well; but they chose to divide. They had started larger game; they had determined to strike for independence and empire, a slave oligarchy, and the cotton market of the world. And they have done so like men in earnest, men who are not to be diverted or turned aside by any cry of compromise or concession. How sublimely ridiculous it must seem to these determined spirits to hear their craven sympathizers at the North crying out for "the Constitution as it is, the Union as it was!" What union, what constitution will they ever consent to? And yet this is the motto under which the opposition to the Government, in this hour of its peril, are attempting to rally their forces. This, with the stale cry of "abolitionism," is the whole stock in trade of a party that aspires to rule the destinies of the nation.

MISTAKEN CALCULATIONS.

Again, sir, this view of the subject shows how mistaken were the calculations of those who assumed at the outbreak that the rebellion was the work of a few discontented, factious politicians at the South, resolved to rule or ruin, and with whom the great masses of the people had little sympathy; of those who expected to quell the insurrection with seventy-five thousand troops in "thirty days!" This total misapprehension of the rebellion and its cause has been a source of great disaster to the Government and immense advantage to its enemies. If the real designs of the rebels had been comprehended, if the earnest and frank avowals of its chief leaders had been regarded, the whole contest would have assumed a widely different aspect, and would either never have been entered upon by the Government, or have been prosecuted with a vigor and energy proportionate to its magnitude and the immense issue at stake.

The Federal Government for a twelvemonth did not make war, only simulated it; did not intend to conquer the South, and it has not done it; did not wish to injure the rebels any more than could be possibly avoided, and it has injured them but little. Such a policy has been as destructive and cruel as it was mistaken and foolish. It has cost the lives of thousands and tens of thousands of our noblest and bravest men, who have perished miserably on the field of battle and in the camp and hospital. When the South struck for slavery, the North should have struck for freedom. No other issue could be made with any hope of success. The South acted under all the inspiration which a struggle for independence and nationality could give; and it was indispensable that the North should have an object equally inspiring. But, unfortunately, no such issue was announced. The Federal Government at the very outset declared that its only purpose was to restore the Union, and leave all existing institutions intact. It declared especially and repeatedly that it had no intention to disturb slavery, but only to bring it again under the guarantees of the Constitution. It made this announcement at home, it gave this assurance abroad. Now, there was nothing in this calculated to arouse the spirit of the nation. At the call of their country, brave men were found ready to take up arms and follow its flag to the field of carnage; but where was the enthusiasm so prominently developed at the South? There was little of it.

In the nineteenth century men fight for ideas, not constitutions; for principles, not parchment. The day has long been gone by when men can be excited to that heroic and devoted self-sacrifice demanded in a long and bloody struggle, by anything less than an unmistakable issue for some great principle connected with human progress and the elevation of the race. The Federal Government made no such issue.

THE "DEATH WOUND" OF SLAVERY.

And here I desire to say a few words to correct a very common misapprehension in regard to the termination of slavery. It seems to be confidently assumed by those who desire such a result, that slavery "has received its death-wound," and that, whatever the result of the present struggle, human bondage in this country must cease.

Now it is quite otherwise. If the South is able to gain its independence and pursue its own chosen career, slavery will be made as perpetual as the great national despotism formed to preserve it. Nay, more, it is to be indefinitely and illimitably extended; because, as I have insisted, the opening of the slave trade is the most important part in the programme of the confederacy. The South abolish slavery when it has the whole matter in its power? By no means; and let those who lay the flattering unction to their souls that such is to be the case, dismiss the delusion forever.

So far from it being true that the rebellion will result in the freedom of the slaves of this country, if it succeed, it will depopulate Africa itself to furnish the slave shambles of America. The plans of the secessionists are upon the most gigantic scale. They contemplate nothing less than a complete monopoly of the cotton market, not only for the present but all future time. If their independence is secured, all Mexico, all Central America will soon be theirs; just as soon as they can have a slave population wherewith to occupy those vast regions. Africa will be drawn upon without stint or measure to supply the labor necessary for the execution of their scheme. The price of cotton will be reduced so low by the use of these imported laborers, controlled and managed by the skill, power, and capital of white masters and overseers, that

the slaveholders may bid defiance to all competition. They will have the finest soil and climate for the growth of cotton, and all the accessible markets of the world.

The people of the North, and they only, have the power to destroy slavery on this continent. If they are true to their own interests, and the common instincts of humanity, they will do it; if not, it will remain and be firmly established.

ABOLITION AND EMANCIPATION.

But it may be said that this is the language of abolitionism. No, sir, it is the language of emancipation, and between the two there is a broad and generic difference which few persons seem ready to understand or willing to recognize. The abolitionist demands the freedom of the slave because it is his right, because his interests and best good will thereby be secured. He looks directly to the welfare of the slave, and professes to act from principles of humanity and justice. The emancipationist, on the other hand, demands the extinction of slavery because the interests of the white race require it. He acts from what he regards sound policy. He insists that as there are twenty-eight million whites, and only four million blacks, whether it be for the good of the latter to be made free or not, it is certainly for the interests of the white man that he should be so. He insists that free labor shall not be compelled to compete with slave labor anywhere; that the whole territory of the nation shall be given to freemen, instead of having the larger and more fertile portion of it cultivated by human chattels. This is the difference between the two classes so often confounded; and while the number of abolitionists is, and always has been very small, the party of emancipation is doubtless to-day in a numerical majority in all the free States.

It answers the purpose of the Opposition to confound the party of emancipation with the original abolitionists of the North, and they are constantly ringing changes upon "abolition and abolitionists," while they must and do know very well that the distinction, so far as motive and principle are concerned, is very broad and clear. Abolitionism originated in a desire to promote the welfare of the negro; emancipation in a stern resolve that the interests of the white man and the Union of the States should not be sacrificed to perpetuate and extend slavery. One is founded on philanthropy, the other on patriotism. One existed long anterior to the rebellion, the other has been created by it. General B. F. Butler was not an abolitionist before the war, but he is an earnest emancipationist now. The same is true of thousands of our leading generals and statesmen, as well as the masses at the North.

THE FLOOD TIDE OF EMANCIPATION.

But it may be said in reply that the North was not prepared for the great issue of freedom. True. The work of secession began on the 26th of December, 1860, by South Carolina. It went on gradually for several months, until seven States were declared out of the Union. There was at the North a general and a deep conviction, at least among politicians, that the breach might be healed, and conciliation and compromise had many advocates. But when, on the 12th of April, 1861, the rebels opened their guns on Fort Sumter, and compelled its surrender, and when, especially after the terrible disaster of Bull Run, on the 21st of July, the people were awakened to the magnitude and solemnity of the contest, the tide of public sentiment in favor of a vigorous and uncompromising prosecution of the war rose to a great height, and all ideas of a peaceful settlement of the affair were given up. Political parties were overturned. We were all Democrats, all Republicans. General Fremont was appointed to the command of the army of the West, and entered upon his duties with wonderful activity and energy. The civil war in Missouri assumed the most terrific proportions, and was prosecuted by the rebels with the greatest ferocity. Under these circumstances, General Fremont issued his proclamation of freedom to the slaves of rebels. That proclamation struck a cord which vibrated through the nation, and, for the first time, all classes and parties joined in a general expression of approbation. Leading Democratic or Opposition papers in New York, Boston, and other cities, gave their spontaneous and hearty approval to the measure, and there seemed to be but one opinion on the great question. This was the spring-tide in the patriotic sentiment of the nation.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at its flood, leads on to fortune."

This was that very tide at its flood; this was the happy yet critical moment in the history of the rebellion.

THE TIDE EBBS.

The people were now ready for the issue of freedom. But, alas, the proclamation of General Fremont, to the surprise and regret of all except border State men and sympathizers with treason, was not sustained by the President. It was disowned and repudiated. This was the first overt concession to the rebels. It virtually admitted the principle that slavery was too sacred to be touched. It was a retrograde step that encouraged all disloyal men, North and South. It turned the tide, which has continued to ebb and ebb from that period to this, and left us where we are to day. It began the great work of national demoralization, and it has gone on until the very men who were ready at that moment to sustain the proclamation of Fremont, now clamor most vehemently against the proclamation of emancipation which the President, at a late hour, has seen fit to issue.

This is the true state of the case. There never was but one good and sufficient reason for this war, and that was to put down slavery; for slavery had rebelled against the Government, and the Government would only be restored by crushing it.

Mr. Speaker, had the proclamation of Fremont been sustained, or had the Government, at that early period, declared to the country and mankind that slavery should cease as fast as the national armies advanced, that loyal men should be compensated for their slaves, and the disloyal be deprived of theirs by confiscation, what a different attitude would the cause of the Union have assumed in the eyes of Europe! What universal acclamation would have hailed the event! What an outburst of hearty and generous sympathy from all the friends of freedom and human progress in all quarters of the globe!

Had the Government promptly announced its stern determination that the cotton markets of the world should be supplied by the labor of freemen instead of slaves, that the fertile fields of Texas should be consecrated to the cultivation of free labor cotton, and the oppressed people of Europe invited to share in the profits of its production, what a shout of applause would have arisen throughout the civilized world, and how eagerly would the Teutonic and Celtic races have rushed to the field of conflict and the scenes of their future labors! Had this been done, no pirate Alabamas would have left the waters of the Clyde to prey upon our commerce. Had such a course been taken, the people of the United States would this day be rejoicing in the suppression of the rebellion, the extinction of the great curse of human bondage, and the restoration of the national unity.

OUR CONDITION AND PROSPECTS.

And now, sir, a few words as to our condition and prospects. Clouds and thick darkness are round about us, but let no man falter or despair. We shall secure success as a nation when we deserve it—when we oppose to the rebellion a principle in direct antagonism to that for which the rebels are contending. We shall achieve victory when our war-cry is, "God and liberty." My firm belief is that Providence does not intend that the people of the free States shall have any further responsibility for or complicity with slavery; that He does not design that we shall prosper in our attempt to fight ourselves back into an alliance with slaveholders; that He is determined to cut us off from all connection with the guilt of slavery, either by the independence of the South, or the utter extinction of the institution by the power of our own arms. Of nothing do I feel more certain than the entire impossibility of restoring national unity, except by the utter overthrow of slavery.

With this deep conviction, I hail with great pleasure the proclamation to which I have just alluded; and it is my firm belief that if the North, in one united phalanx, will come out earnestly and heartily in its support, the great contest will yet be closed successfully; we shall again be one people, with more self-respect than ever before, and enjoying more fully the respect of mankind.

I do not despair of my country or its cause. I have the honor to represent, in part, a State which was the first to enter the field in the great contest now going on, and which I am sure will be the last to leave it.

She has already sent some ninety thousand men into the public service, by land and sea; and, if need be, to exterminate the curse of slavery, and make

the national domain free soil for free men, she will send ninety thousand more.

So far as my own particular constituents are concerned, I do not hesitate to declare that they cordially indorse the proclamation of emancipation; that they are in favor of the most vigorous and persistent prosecution of the war, and utterly opposed to all compromises and concessions whatsoever.

INDEMNITY TO THE EXECUTIVE

Now, Mr. Speaker, with this general and somewhat extended view of the immediate and chief cause of the rebellion, I think we are prepared to appreciate the position of the Executive at its commencement, and realize the embarrassments in which he was involved. A rebellion for such a cause as I have described must of necessity assume a most violent and desperate character; and, if successfully opposed at all, must be met with energy and decision. The capital swarmed with persons inimical to the Government, treason lurked in all the Departments, and traitors blustered in the streets, defying the civil power, and communicating all its plans and designs to the enemy.

Under such circumstances, what ought the President of the United States to do? Stand still and allow the work of destruction to go on without an effort to prevent it? Stand still and permit treason to accomplish its horrid work? Clearly, the President should do no such thing; and, in the faithful discharge of his constitutional duties, he commenced the arrest of those who by their overt acts gave evidence of their intention to aid in overthrowing the Government. These he incarcerated in the forts and prisons of the Republic. The voice of the nation ratified his doings. There could be no objection, and amongst earnest and loyal men there was no objection to this procedure on the part of the President. Numerous arrests were made. Many officers, of course, were employed in making these arrests, and they acted as, under such circumstances, executive officers must act, according to their discretion. That they might err in judgment in certain cases is very probable; that they might incarcerate innocent persons is very possible; but there is no good reason to believe that this was the case to any considerable extent. Mistakes might occur, accidents might happen, amid the hurry and excitement incident to a state of war; but that there was any intention to interfere with the liberty or rights of any loyal citizen, no man who understands the character of the President will believe.

We are called upon by this bill to indorse the Executive, and grant indemnity to him and those acting under his orders. Does any honest man doubt that we ought to do this? Nay, more, does any one doubt that every consideration of duty, every sentiment of honor, every dictate of patriotism, demands that we should pass this bill? Should we not shield from injury those who, in the darkest hour of our adversity, were called upon to discharge the most painful but imperative duties? Certainly. No generous heart can feel any other than sincere sympathy for public servants who, in the exercise of their appropriate functions, may have incurred penalties or laid themselves open to malicious prosecutions from those who, if they had their legal deserts, would not now be in a position to annoy and harass loyal officers of the Government.

Sir, we have heard the President denounced as a "tyrant!" Abraham Lincoln a tyrant! Never was there a greater misnomer. There is nothing of the tyrant about him. His idiosyncrasies are not in that direction. If in this matter he has erred at all, the verdict of impartial history will be, as I fully believe, that he was too lenient towards political offenders.

I confess, Mr. Speaker, that I have little charity for those who are carping at the action of the Government towards those whose conduct has exposed them to the suspicion of sympathy with treason. True men are seldom suspected. When a Government is just and humane, when it has no desire, as it can have no motive, to persecute, when it is even reluctant to arrest and punish the treacherous and disloyal, there is little danger indeed that any innocent person will be oppressed; and if, perchance, amid the turmoil and confusion incident to civil war, a few such should suffer, it is a matter for which we may well feel regret, but to prevent the possibility of which we should never imperil for a moment the existence of a great nation.

With such views, I have no hesitation in giving my hearty support to the bill, as eminently proper and strictly just.

Towers & Co., Printers, cor. Louisiana Avenue and Sixth street, Washington.