Ashley, J.M.

The rebellion—its causes and consequences. Speech at College Hall in the city of Toledo. Tuesday evening, November 26, 1861.

Toledo, 1861.
The Rebellion—Its Causes and Consequences.

A SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

HON. J. M. ASHLEY,

AT

COLLEGE HALL IN THE CITY OF TOLEDO,

TUESDAY EVENING, NOV. 26, 1861.

TOLEDO:
PELTON AND WAGGONER, STEAM PRINTERS, BLADE OFFICE,
1861.
Hon. J. M. Ashley:—

Dear Sir:—The undersigned request you to address the citizens of Toledo on the subject of the present rebellion, at College Hall, at such time as suits your convenience, prior to your leaving for Washington.

Toledo, Nov. 19, 1861.

R. C. Lemmon, A. W. Gleason, Valentine Braun, D. A. Pease, Alex. Reed, Horace Thatcher, WM. Kraus, Charles Kent, M. R. Waite, W. Baker, James Myers, Jonathan Wynn,


Gentlemen:—In reply to your favor of the 19th inst., inviting me to address the people of this city on the subject of the present rebellion, I will name Tuesday evening next, Nov. 26th.

Respectfully,

To R. C. Lemmon, Esq., and others.

J. M. Ashley.
THE REBELLION—ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES.

Mr. President and Gentlemen:

In response to an invitation from a number of my fellow-citizens, I appear before you to-night to present, as briefly as I can, my views of the rebellion, its causes and consequences. And here let me say that the remarks which I propose to make will be in the main but a recitation of historical facts. Facts are stubborn things, and I prefer to use them in examining the question upon which I am to speak to-night, rather than resort to declamation. I do it as a duty, and to demonstrate to you beyond all dispute that the cause for which we are fighting is the cause of Justice, and Union, and Constitutional Liberty. If I could not do this I would ask no man to join the army, for I could not ask a man to enter the army to fight for injustice and oppression. I need hardly say to you that we are in the midst of a rebellion unlike any which in our history has preceded it, or indeed in the history of the world. There have been many rebellions and revolutions since the establishment of civilized governments, but this is the first attempted revolution having for its avowed object the extension and perpetuity of human slavery. All rebellions which have preceded this have been professedly to secure the rights and liberties of the people. Therefore of all rebellions this is the most causeless and criminal which the history of the world records.

The seeds of this rebellion were first sown so long ago as the year 1620, when a Dutch ship entered the mouth of James River in the then infant colony of Virginia, and committed the infamous crime of selling twenty black men as slaves.—The British Government fostered and protected the seed then sown, guarded and protected it by law and added yearly to it more than a hundred fold by fresh importations up to the date of the establishment of our independence.—The leading men of the revolution saw and, like true men, acknowledged the inhumanity, the injustice and the crime of slavery. Jefferson said, when speaking of this question, that "he trembled for his country when he remembered that God was just," and in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence he charged as one of the grievances of which we justly complained at the hands of the mother country that enforcing slavery upon us. These are his priceless words:

"He has waged a cruel war against human nature itself, violating the most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur a miserable death in transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain, determined to keep open a market where men shall be bought and sold. He has prostituted his negative by suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or restrain the execrable commerce, and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished dye, he is now exciting these very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people on whom he also obtruded them; 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."

That this truthful count in the indictment against Great Britain was stricken out of the Declaration I regret, as all liberty-loving men have regretted, but that it was stricken out, and at such a time and under the circumstances tells you better than I can tell you of the danger which imperils the life of a nation that fosters and protects a privileged class.

Since the establishment of our independence the existence and growing strength of this slaveholding privileged class has been a source of anxious solicitude on the part of leading patriots and statesmen, not only in the North, but
also in the South. To the careful study and investigation of the question which has caused the present rebellion I have given the best years of my life, and with most men who have impartially examined it, I have been satisfied for nearly ten years that the day was speedily approaching when the question was to be settled by the American people whether slavery, to use the language of President Lincoln—"4 should be put where it the people would rest in the belief that it was in the course of ultimate extinction," or the United States become a slaveholding empire.

That I have been disappointed in some of my conclusions touching the final disposition of this question and the ultimate action of the slave masters themselves, I am frank to admit. Certainly ten or twelve years ago I did not suppose it possible that the old democratic party to which I then belonged and which I venerated for its great leaders and liberal principles could ever be divided and destroyed as it has been by the slave power, and I felt confident until after I took my seat in Congress for the first time that whatever disposition might be made of this question it would at last find a peaceful solution. Before the close of the 36th Congress I changed my mind and came reluctantly to the conclusion that nothing but the direct interposition of Providence could save us as a nation and people from a bloody and perhaps servile war. In the first speech which I made in that Congress, speaking of the slaveholding conspirators, I said that

"Their professed devotion to law and order—the decisions of courts and their fidelity to the Constitution and the Union simply meant that they would obey such laws as they desired enacted, submit to such decisions of courts as they could dictate, and be faithful to the Constitution and the Union so long only as they were entrusted by the people with the administration of the Government and the interpretation of the Constitution." And I added:

"When this ceases, as I trust and believe it will on the 4th of March, 1861, their fidelity to law will cease, their love of the Union will cease, and their new-born veneration for that "august tribunal" of which we have heard so much of late—the Supreme Court—will also cease; and they will be, if their threats are put into execution, in open rebellion against the Government, and enemies of the Constitution and the Union."

No careful observer of events could have failed to foresee for the past few years that both in the North and in the South public opinion has been gradually but surely undergoing such a change on the subject of slavery, that sooner or later the question would have to be met and fairly settled. All compromises in the shape of the most humiliating concessions made by the North to the South had failed to satisfy the imperious demands of the slave power, and I need hardly add that the present rebellion and attempted revolution was inevitable without absolute submission on the part of the North. The change of public opinion throughout the two sections is in itself a revolution. On the part of the loyal citizens it has been a revolution of peace and good will by the mode pointed out and prescribed by the Constitution, a revolution by means of the ballot-box. On the part of the conspirators and rebels it has been from the first a revolution of force and fraud, and now ends in an appeal to arms.

It is, then, as I shall show you, a contest that has for its motive power on one side liberty, and on the other slavery. It presents a question to which there can be but two sides, and he who is not for liberty and the Union is against them. Politicians and even Cabinet Ministers may declare, as they have done and are doing, that there is no connection between slavery and this rebellion, but I tell you and hope before I take my seat to prove to those of you who do not now acknowledge it, that slavery is the germ from which this rebellion sprang—the motive power and main spring of its action—and that, but for slavery, there had been no such rebellion in the United States to-day.—Most of you understand this, I trust, already—the leading men of Europe understand it, and I believe the time is close at hand when compromising editors and politicians will be unable longer to deceive any respectable number of the people.
For more than thirty years the slave masters of the South have been plotting treason and preparing for this rebellion. In the convention which passed the ordinance of secession in South Carolina, this was openly proclaimed and the boast repeatedly made that for thirty years they had been looking to the consummation of the treason they were then enacting. I will read you two or three extracts from the speeches made by their leading men in that convention.

Mr. Rhett said: "It is nothing produced by Mr. Lincoln's election, or the non-execution of the fugitive slave law. It is a matter which has been gathering head for thirty years."

Mr. Parker said: "It is no spasmodic effort that has come suddenly upon us, but it has been gradually culminating for a long series of years."

Mr. Inglis said: "Most of us have had this subject under consideration for the past thirty years."

Mr. Keitt said: "I have been engaged in this movement ever since I entered political life."

This testimony ought at least to be good as against the conspirators and their northern allies.

If their own statements are to be credited, from the day Gen. Jackson crushed the South Carolina nullification rebellion of 1831-2 to the outbreak of the rebellion of 1861, the slaveholders of the rebel states have been conspiring to destroy this Government. To the truth of history I appeal to make good their own declarations and to sustain this charge.

During the second administration of Gen. Jackson, the hostility of Calhoun to that great and good man became open and undisguised, and when Mr. Van Buren was nominated for the Presidency in 1836, by the friends of General Jackson, Mr. Calhoun and his friends, although claiming to be democrats, opposed his election, and South Carolina, under his lead, voted for Mr. Mangum of North Carolina, then, and for many years thereafter, a whig U.S. Senator from that State. This defection of Calhoun and his friends alarmed all the Northern Presidential aspirants and the whole race of small politicians who always hang upon their skirts for the sake of place and power. This alarm must have become almost a panic, for even Mr. Van Buren, who was triumphantly elected in 1836 and desired a re-election, became quite as anxious as Buchanan and that class of Northern Presidential candidates to conciliate Mr. Calhoun and the small but powerful class of whom he was the chosen representative.

Gen. Jackson said when he put down the nullifiers of 1832, that their next effort to break up the Union would be on the slavery question. That prophetic prediction is now a historical fact. The Northern Presidential aspirants of both the old parties and all the leading politicians understood this matter well, and under the pretext of saving the Union, they united in declaring that such concessions as the South asked ought to be granted. These concessions were agreed upon by politicians on the plea of saving the Union, so when Mr. Van Buren was inaugurated he seized that occasion to give in his adhesion to the demands of the slaveholding conspirators by declaring that if Congress passed any law designed to interfere with slavery in the District of Columbia he would veto it. This shameless pledge, unasked as it was by any democratic convention, or, indeed, by any body of men, publicly, startled the thinking men of the nation who saw in it a bold and unscrupulous bid for the united vote of the slave interest. This movement was not without its desired effect, for Mr. Calhoun returned nominally to the democratic party, supported Mr. Van Buren's administration and South Carolina voted for him in 1840, when he was defeated by Gen. Harrison.

The Artherton "gag," as it was justly termed, a rule known as the 21st rule, was adopted by the House of Representatives on demand of the slave power. This rule refused to allow any petitions from the people on the subject of slavery to be received by their own representatives and completed the humiliation of the North during the administration of Mr. Van Buren, and opened wide the gate which lead to the fatal road down which we have been travelling as a nation and people at a frightful pace ever since.

The death of General Harrison in one short month after his inauguration and the accession of John Tyler, then Vice President, to the Presidency, afforded
an opportunity which was eagerly embraced by the slaveholding nullifiers, to take possession of the Government and administer it for their exclusive benefit. That John Tyler proved a traitor to the party which elected him, is recorded in history. That he is a traitor to his country to-day, will be recorded in history. This weak and unscrupulous man became the willing tool of the slaveholding conspirators and permitted them to dictate and control the policy of his administration.

On the death of Abel P. Upshur, of Virginia, who succeeded to the office of Secretary of State after the resignation of Mr. Webster, John C. Calhoun, the admitted chief and ablest of the slaveholding conspirators, was called by Mr. Tyler from his seat in the Senate of the United States to take Mr. Upshur's place. You who are familiar with political history will remember that when Mr. Calhoun went into that office he astonished and shocked the moral sense of the civilized world by declaring that he only accepted the position in order that he might the more certainly consummate the schemes of the slaveholders, which were first to secure the annexation of Texas, then Cuba, Mexico and Central America, and thus extend and strengthen the slave power so that it might control the country while it remained united, and when they ceased to control it, that they might have power successfully to divide it. He did not hesitate to make public and defend his scheme of annexing Texas to secure it to slavery. In his dispatches to our Ministers in England and France he declared this to be the policy of our Government. That Mr. Calhoun was a bold and able man all admit, and he went at his work with a directness of purpose that places in unenviable contrast the dodging and cowardly conduct of Northern statesmen who, while professing to represent the interests of free labor and the rights of man, sacrificed them with out scruple at the bidding of the slave power. John Quincy Adams warned the nation before Mr. Calhoun became Secretary of State of this scheme. But the North was so absorbed in the pursuit of wealth and new enterprises that it did not heed the warning of that able, pure and far-sighted statesman, and by the votes of Northern men claiming to represent free labor Texas was annexed with slavery, and this part of Mr. Calhoun's scheme to strengthen and perpetuate the rule of a privileged class and increase their influence in the Government was consummated on the night of the 3d of March which closed the memorable administration of John Tyler.

By the management of Mr. Calhoun the question of the annexation of Texas was made to enter largely into the campaign of 1844. It decided the fate of candidates in the Baltimore convention of that year and defeated Henry Clay because he yielded to the importunities of slaveholders and wrote the never-to-be-forgotten Alabama letter. Although I had not then attained my majority by more than two years, I attended the democratie convention which met at Baltimore in 1844 and witnessed the political movements by which the slaveholders triumphed in that convention. I confess that I did not then fully comprehend how or why Mr. Van Buren was there defeated when every Democratic State Convention in the United States, with but three or four exceptions, (and those the smallest States,) had instructed their delegates to vote for the renomination of Van Buren and Johnson, the old ticket defeated by Harrison and Tyler in 1840, and indeed I may say with truth that I never fully comprehended it until after the Presidential election of 1852. After making the matter a subject of diligent search and inquiry, I became satisfied that the slave interest was the power behind the throne and that that must be a spurious Democracy which sustained and defended the righteousness of human slavery.

In 1850 the country had forced upon it the so-called compromises of that year. The action of Southern Conventions and the position assumed by Southern statesmen and parties in many of the States in 1852 and the action of the Democratic and Whig National Conventions of 1852, when viewed in the light of history, and the first acts of Pierce's administration confirmed me in my convictions—which until then had only been suspicions—and I declined longer to act with the party of my choice.

There is a historical incident of importance connected with the canvass of the
The year of 1844 to which I wish to call your special attention as throwing some light on the present movement. In order that we may understand the matter clearly, I invite you to go back with me and look into the Democratic National Convention of 1844 and also the Tyler Convention composed of Government officials and slaveholding conspirators. Both of these Conventions assembled on the same day in the city of Baltimore.—The Democratic National Convention was regularly called by the Democratic National Committee. The Tyler Convention was called by the direction of Mr. Calhoun. Although I then thought, as everybody seemed to think, that the Tyler movement was a great farce and a good joke, the sequel will prove that it was one of the most important and wily moves of the conspirators. This Convention nominated John Tyler for President and adjourned without making any nomination for Vice President. In the regular Democratic Convention there was a bitter contest over the adoption of the rules. Hon. R. M. Sanders, of North Carolina, moved the adoption of the rule known as the two-thirds rule. The honest Van Buren men opposed, and the conspirators and their allies supported, the motion and finally carried it. The Convention was thus placed completely in the power of the conspirators, although they were largely in the minority.

You know the history of that Convention. Mr. Van Buren had written a letter against the annexation of Texas, and for that he was defeated in a Convention where nearly four-fifths of the delegates were instructed to go for him. Thus you see how formidable these conspirators were so long ago as 1844. After three or four days balloting, in which these men with consummate tact so divided their votes between Cass, Buchanan, Woodbury and others, as to prevent a nomination and also blind the country, as they did, to their true purposes, the Convention at last yielded, utterly worn out, and the conspirators succeeded by threats and promises in fairly driving the Convention, a majority of whom had voted to nominate Mr. Van Buren, into the nomination of Jas. K. Polk and forcing them to adopt such a platform as they dictated.

This accomplished, the master spirit who moved the main springs of both Conventions now set himself to work to secure beyond all doubt an endorsement from Polk of their proslavery schemes. For this purpose a distinguished Southerner was dispatched on a secret mission to Knoxville, Tenn., to see Mr. Polk and present him the alternative of adopting their policy or being defeated, which was substantially this, that unless he (Polk) gave in his adhesion to their schemes an electoral ticket with John Tyler at its head would be formed and voted for in all the States, securing by the patronage of the Government and the influence of the conspirators enough votes in each of the States to hold the balance of power, and by dividing the Democratic vote, as they could, Mr. Clay would obtain a plurality and thus be elected. Mr. Polk saw this clearly and, as subsequent events proved, yielded to their demands.—On the return of the messenger to whom I have referred, Mr. Tyler withdrew from the canvass and the whole power and patronage of his administration were openly used to secure the election of Mr. Polk, who, with all this combination to favor him, was barely elected, and would have been defeated without it.

I have thus shown you that the farce, as it was called, of nominating John Tyler was not so great a farce after all, but that it was one of the shrewdest and most successful moves ever made by a desperate minority on the political chessboard in this country.

One of the first acts of Mr. Polk after his accession to power was to comply with the programme of the nullifiers who demanded a new organ in place of the Globe, which was edited by Francis P. Blair, the bosom-friend of Jackson and the enemy of the nullifiers. For this purpose the Madisonian, the late Tyler organ, was purchased, its name changed to the Union and Mr. Ritchie, the editor of the Richmond Enquirer, then, as now, the organ of the conspirators, was selected as its Editor-in-Chief. Mr. Calhoun and all the nullifying conspirators, who were driven from the Democratic party by Gen. Jackson, were now received into full fellowship, and from that day to the meeting of the Charleston-Baltimore Convention these
men dictated and controlled its policy.

The cession to Great Britain of one-half of the territory of Oregon together with the beautiful island of Van Couver, in violation of the Democratic platform of 1844 and the public pledge of Mr. Polk who, with the entire party, declared our title to the whole "clear and undisputable," the war with Mexico, the acquisition of California, and the offer by this Government to Spain of two hundred millions of dollars for the Island of Cuba were acts which, if standing alone, ought to have alarmed the country as to the ultimate designs of the slave power, but when taken in connection with all the acts of the Polk administration ought to have aroused every patriot in the nation as one man to resent and prevent their treacherous schemes.

The election of General Taylor in 1848 was a severe and unexpected blow to the hopes of the nullifiers. That stern old patriot could neither be intimidated nor persuaded to favor their schemes and the celebrated batch of compromises known as the "Omnibus Bill," were defeated in the House of Representatives by his influence. Unfortunately for the country in this important crisis of our history General Taylor died and Mr. Fillmore became the acting President. Under his administration the compromise measures which had just been defeated under Gen. Taylor were revived and passed in separate bills. I need not now refer to the means resorted to to secure the passage of these odious and obnoxious acts, or to the motives which prompted Northern men to give them their support—sufficient it to say that these acts bore their legitimate fruit and justly destroyed both the men and the parties that supported and endorsed them.

On the 7th day of May, 1849, at the city of Jackson, in the State of Mississippi, a meeting of slaveholding conspirators was held upon the suggestion of Mr. Calhoun. The scheme to form a Southern Confederacy there took form and shape and the secession party was formally organized. The programme then laid down the conspirators of 1860-61 have attempted to carry out.

Mr. Calhoun died about the close of the long session of the ever-memorable compromise Congress. Immediately after his death, Jefferson Davis and his confederates in the Senate and House of Representatives met together in the city of Washington and agreed upon a Constitution for a Southern Confederacy.—That Constitution was in the main just such a Constitution as the traitors have adopted at Montgomery, Alabama, except that the Constitution agreed upon in 1850 specially provided for the acquisition of Cuba, Mexico and Central America, while the Montgomery Constitution is silent on these points. At the meeting to which I have alluded Mr. Davis was selected by the conspirators as the first President of the new Confederacy.

I intend in a moment or two to quote largely from General Quitman, of Miss., because, after the death of Mr. Calhoun, he was regarded by me as the ablest and boldest man in the South who was engaged in the then contemplated rebellion. He was a politician of the strictest Southern-rights school, a defender of every filibustering conspiracy, a professed believer in the doctrine of the Divine right of the stronger to enslave the weaker and an open advocate of a Southern Confederacy. He was the intimate friend of Calhoun and the most active and untiring of the secession leaders. It is now over two yeas since his death, but the present and future policy of the conspirators so far as can be judged is exactly what he urged.—Let me now read to you some important extracts from a few of the many letters written and received by him more than ten years ago. These letters speak for themselves and develope fully the policy of the conspirators. Gen. Quitman, on the 28th of September, 1850, only 18 days after the passage of the compromises of that year, thus writes to ex-Governor McRea, of Miss., then a member of Congress:

"I have not acted without first looking at the ground before me, and I take the privilege of communicating to you in confidence, thus early, a hasty programme of our future movements. First, then, I believe there is no effective remedy for the evils before us, but secession. * * * * * * * "My idea is, that the Legislature should call a convention of delegates, elected by the people, fully empowered to take into consideration our federal relations, and to change or annul them, to adopt one organic law to suit such
new relations as they might establish, to provide for making compacts with other States, and that in the meanwhile an effective military system be established, and patrol duties most rigidly enforced.

"In the meantime every patriot should leave no point untouched, where his influence can be exercised to the faithful, strengthen the weak, disarm the submissiveness; send a fiery cross through the land; and every gallant son of Mississippi to the rescue."

You will see by this that while the North was being humiliated and demoralized by shamelessly surrendering to the demands of the slaveholders, they were secretly plotting for the overthrow of the nation.

On the 29th of September of that year, (only nineteen days after the passage of the compromise measures which we were told was to be the last, and that the South would never again exact any additional guarantees for slavery,) Gen. Quitman, in writing to Gov. Seabrook, of South Carolina, said:

"Without having fully digested a programme of measures which I shall recommend to the Legislature, it may be of service to you to know that I propose to call a regular convention, to take into consideration our federal relations, with full powers to annul the federal compact, establish relations with other States, and adopt our organic law to such new relations."

"Having no hope of an effectual remedy for existing and prospective evils but in separation from the Northern States, my view of State action will look to "secession."

On the 17th of December, 1850, Gov. Seabrook, in answering Gen. Quitman, said:

"I candidly confess to you that I am advocating the immediate action of the legislature in order to suggest the first Monday in December next for the time, and Montgomery, Alabama, as the place of meeting of Congress. I am rejoiced that the House resolved to suggest to our Southern States the propriety of meeting in Congress at Montgomery on the 2d of January, 1852."

"For arming the State $350,000 has been put at the disposal of the Governor."

I shall be happy to know that the time and place of the proposed Congress will be agreeable to Mississippi.

"If our movement be seconded by her, I have good reason for the belief that Alabama, Florida and Arkansas will soon follow the patriotic example."

Gen. Quitman thus writes to Col. John S. Preston of South Carolina on the 29th March, 1850:

"The plan proposed by the address of the Central Committee, which I have forwarded to you, is, that the Committee demand redress for past aggressions, and guarantees against future assaults upon our rights; and in the meantime to provide for meeting our sympathizing sister States in a Southern Congress. The proposed redress is:

1st. A repeal of the law suppressing the slave trade in the District of Columbia.

2d. Opening of the Territories to the admission of slaves.

3d. The permission of slavery in California south of 36° 30'."

"The guarantees to be amendments to the Constitution explicitly protecting slavery from hostile interference by Congress or States, and to restore equal taxation direct and indirect."

"In case the address and guarantees be refused, the States to make formal propositions to her Southern sisters for a separate confederacy, and to unite with any number of them sufficient to secure national independence."

"I concur with you in the opinion that the political equality of the slaveholding States is incompatible with the present confederation as construed and acted on by the majority, and that the present union and slavery cannot co-exist."

Gov. means of South Carolina, thus writes to Gen. Quitman on the 15th of May, 1851:

"There is now not the slightest doubt that the next Legislature will call the convention together at a period during the ensuing year and when that convention meets the State will secede."

"We are anxious for co-operation, and also desire that some other State should take the lead, but from recent developments, we are satisfied that South Carolina is the only State in which sufficient unanimity exists to commence the movement. We will therefore lead off even if we are to stand alone."

Col. Gregg, of South Carolina, in writing to Gen. Quitman on the 15th of May, 1851, thus encourages the secession party who were straining every nerve to elect Jefferson Davis Governor of Mississippi on the direct issue of secession:

"Let them (the secessionists) contend manfully for success, and if beaten in the election they will form a minority so powerful in moral influence, that when South Carolina secedes, the first drop of blood that is shed will cause an irresistible popular impulse in their favor, and the secessionists will be crushed. Let the example be set in Mississippi, and it will be followed in Alabama and Georgia—Imparting and receiving courage from each other's efforts, the Southern rights men will be ready to carry everything before them, in all the three States the moment the first blow is struck in South Carolina."
"Experience has fully demonstrated that united action cannot be had; the frontier Slave States are even now indicating a disposition to cling to the Union at all hazard of their slave institution. They will not in my opinion unite in an effective remedy, unless forced to choose between a Northern and Southern Confederacy."

On the 9th of June, 1861, Gov. Seabrook, of South Carolina, thus writes to Gen. Quitman:

"The course of the convention will depend somewhat on our sister Southern States. If they affirm the right of secession and the non-existence of a power to prevent a State from exercising it, * * * Should South Carolina strike a decisive blow, may she confidently rely on the undivided support of her present friends in your State?"

And again on the 15th of July of the same year Gov. Seabrook thus discourses to Gen. Quitman:

"If this scheme fail, what then?" Let the State proclaim to the world that at time to be designated, say six months, she will withdraw from the Union. If Mississippi be not prepared to follow her example, a simple annunciation on her part, that any hostile attempt direct or indirect, by Congress, to prevent her (South Carolina) from exercising the rights of an independent nation, or to keep her in the Confederacy, would be considered by your Commonwealth, a subversion of the fundamental principles on which the States Confederated, and consequently a full release for her obligations in the Union?"

You see by these quotations that this conspiracy is of no recent date. Ten or fifteen years ago, Gen. Quitman conceived and confided to others the scheme which the rebels of 1861 have attempted to enact, and I lay these facts before you for your serious reflection and to prove to you that the destruction of our Constitution and Union has been seriously contemplated for many years, and that, too, without reference to any of the pretended grievances now complained of by the South.

In 1851 open and avowed disunion candidates were nominated and run for Governors in the States of Georgia and Mississippi, and one or two other Southern States. In Mississippi, Jefferson Davis, who was then a democratic U. S. Senator from that State, resigned his seat in the Senate, went home to Mississippi, and became the disunion candidate for Governor, on an open and avowed disunion platform. Senator Foote, also a democratic Senator from that State, resigned his seat and became the Union candidate. Davis was defeated by a small vote, as were also the open disunion candidates in all the states except in the State of South Carolina, which elects her Governor and State officers by the legislature.

In 1852, General Pierce was elected President over Gen. Scott. In this contest the Whig party breathed its last, because false to the principles of freedom. The success of the so-called democratic party with Pierce as its chief was almost as fatal. It lingered along in a sickly condition until 1860 when it too, gave up the ghost.

Jefferson Davis was selected by President Pierce for his Sec. of War, although it was well known to Mr. Pierce, and to the whole country, that Mr. Davis was an avowed secessionist, and had just been defeated for Governor of Mississippi, on that issue. Davis, by his position, was enabled to advance the schemes of the conspirators, by appointments, by favoritism in the army, and by his counsels in the Cabinet. And in 1856, had Fremont been elected, Davis would have attempted to have seized the government. Unfortunately, for the country, Buchanan was elected President, and a majority of the Cabinet he called around him were either avowed secessionists, or willing instruments in the hands of the conspirators. By this act of Mr. Buchanan, the old democratic party was completely demoralized by the domination of the disunion element in its counsels so that at the Charleston-Baltimore Convention, it was permanently disrupted and the organization divided and destroyed.

The long and bitter contest for the Speakership of the House of Representatives, at the opening of the 36th Congress, was the death struggle of the slave power to keep possession of the Legislative department of the Government, during the residue of Mr. Buchanan’s term of office, so that in case of defeat in the Presidential election of 1860, which the conspirators had then resolved upon—unless they could dictate the candidate at Charleston, they might by having control of the House Committees, as they had of the Committees in the Senate, be fully prepared for every movement necessary to consummate their treason.
It is now conceded by those whom it is admitted ought to know, that the conspirators discussed and agreed upon a plan for a provisional government last winter at Washington, that their plan was to seize the Capitol and public archives, and prevent by force the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln at the seat of government; and by thus getting possession of the National Capitol and inaugurating Mr. Davis at Washington, they hoped to secure an early recognition of their Government by some of the resident Foreign Ministers, many of whom they believed then and still believe favorable to their schemes.

And here let me mention in passing a fact worthy of note. The Foreign resident Ministers at Washington, are mostly from the aristocratic and wealthy European families, and sympathise and associate with that class everywhere.

A majority of the Southern Senators and Representatives while professing to be democrats are, if possible, more aristocratic than these foreign ministers. The result is, that their social intercourse at Washington, is almost exclusively with Southern members who do not hesitate openly to denounce all Northern men as cowards, paltoons and money-getters, who can be bought as cheap as their own slaves.

The great body of the Northern Senators and Representatives are poor, and owing to the short time they remain or expect to remain in Congress, they do not, with but few exceptions, care to form the acquaintance of foreign ministers. So you see that our government at home has not only been controlled but our foreign policy cunningly shaped by Southern men and the minds of the resident foreign ministers prepared, not only for this rebellion, but for its success, and this is the secret of the ill-disguised sympathy of so many resident foreign Ministers with the rebels.

This infamous conspiracy was defeated by unlooked for dissensions in their own ranks and by no sagacity, foresight or precaution on the part either of Mr. Buchanan or the representatives of the people.

Fortunately for the cause of the Union but unfortunately for the conspirators, dissensions arose in the Cabinet on the question of re-enforcing Fort Sumpter. Major Anderson, a loyal and patriotic citizen of Kentucky, with about seventy men forced this unexpected question upon the President and Cabinet. You all remember that Major Anderson was in command at Fort Moultrie, that his position was such that a land attack by the rebels could not be prevented. He had no orders from his government to remove to Fort Sumpter and could obtain no reinforcements, although he asked for them. So he assumed the responsibility in the face of a government which he must have regarded as false to its highest duties, and whose commands he also knew he must obey.

The conspirators had approached Major Anderson in every conceivable manner—they had feasted and flattered him; but he could not be seduced from his allegiance. He was watched and could make no movement. The public arms and property of the Government in the city of Charleston they would not permit him to touch, and he saw that if any movement was made to save the honor of the Government, it would have to be done by strategy and on his own responsibility, a responsibility which you and I most heartily thank him for having assumed. (Applause.) He was invited to dine with a number of the chief conspirators on Christmas last and accepted. After dinner toasts and speeches were the order of the evening. All the power of the conspirators was exhausted to induce the Major to become a traitor, but to no purpose. Report has it that he feigned intoxication so well that he was conveyed in a carriage to his head-quarters at Ft. Moultrie. The rebel conspirators returned to concoct new schemes to seduce this loyal and patriotic soldier, and while they were thus conspiring—in the darkness of the night, he quietly gives his orders and a few small boats are made ready—all the provisions and munitions they can carry are put on board and after spiking the cannon in Fort Moultrie, he, with his little band of brave spirits, step on board their boats, and with muffled oars pull off to Fort Sumpter, and when the conspirators awoke in the morning the National flag is seen floating from that supposed impregnable fortress. (Loud applause.) When the rebels saw this, they were amazed and
swore more terribly than the army in Flanders. The telegraph soon brought this glorious news to Washington and I need not tell you how it made glad the hearts of all true Union men. Party was thought of no longer. The rebels telegraphed to Mr. Buchanan and demanded an order for Major Anderson’s immediate return from Fort Sumter to Fort Moultrie, and to our shame be it said that many northern men united with the rebels in seconding their demands. Among this class of men none were more offensively conspicuous than Senator Bright, of Ind.

On the simple proposition of reinforcing Major Anderson and preserving the national honor, a division arose in the Cabinet,—a majority voting with the President not to reinforce. You will agree with me, I know, when I say that every man who so voted was either a rebel conspirator or a tool in their hands. When this disgraceful decision was made Gen’l Cass, to his honor be it said, refused onger to remain in the Cabinet of a President who proved himself to be either a traitor or a coward, and perhaps both. (Applause.) This unexpected resignation of Secretary Cass, was soon following by the resignation of the traitor Cobb—and subsequently by the resignation of Floyd and Thompson—owing to the disclosures made by a confidential clerk of the theft of the $800,000 of Indian bonds. Happily for the country, Dix and Holt, Stanton and King, loyal and true democrats, were called to fill these unexpected vacancies in the Cabinet, and thus the scheme to seize Washington City and inaugurate their rebel government there, was defeated, because the patriot Holt was Secretary of War, and a majority of the Cabinet were now true to the Union. (Applause.)

Being thus unexpectedly foiled, the conspirators abandoned their design of seizing Washington and preventing the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, and resorted to every expedient to deceive the country and throw the people off their guard as to their real intentions. For this purpose the most noisy and unsuspicious did not hesitate to declare in the House and at the public hotels, that Mr. Lincoln was the constitutionally elected President, and should be inaugurated if it had to be done over their lifeless bodies.

Mr. Breckinridge also united with them in declaring publicly that he would not only count the electoral votes as prescribed by law, (you will remember that the secession papers, North and South declared that they would not be counted,) and proclaim Mr. Lincoln the constitutionally elected President, but that he intended to take his seat in the Senate of the United States, to which he had just been elected by the loyal State of Kentucky, and swear to support the constitution and the constitutional government, and I saw him with uplifted hand take that oath.

This deception blinded many of the Northern representatives and people, who unitedly praised Mr. Breckenridge for his patriotism and loyalty. How worthily it was bestowed, let his subsequent conduct in the Senate and elsewhere, and his present position speak.

At last, the 4th of March came, and Mr. Lincoln was peacefully inaugurated on the eastern portico of the national Capitol in the presence of thousands of loyal citizens and friends.

The conspirators now resorted to new stratagems to deceive and mislead the government. They approached Mr. Lincoln as Union men, professing devotion to the Constitution and great anxiety for the success of his administration. But they all, with one voice, united in declaring that any attempt on the part of the government to send soldiers to any part of the South to protect the National property, would precipitate them all into a revolution. The President was told that he must not attempt to reinforce Fort Sumter—that he must not send troops to protect the Norfolk Navy Yard with its millions of property, that troops must not be sent to Harper’s Ferry to guard the National Armory, and if he did, the whole State of Virginia would be driven into a revolution. For six long and weary weeks these men deceived and prevented the government from doing as I think it would have done, but for them. I need not tell you how I protested against the government listening to the counsels of these men—much less heeding them. You know the result—the Norfolk Navy Yard was lost, Harper’s
Ferry was lost, and the very Capitol of the nation was imperiled.

The Cabinet under the advice of Gen. Scott, voted to withdraw Major Anderson from Fort Sumpter, and thus surrender it to the rebels.

On the part of some of our best military men, this course was urged because the Buchanan administration had permitted the Fort to be so environed with armed batteries, that it was said reinforcements could not be put into the Fort with less than 40,000 men. In this trying emergency, everything now depended on the decision of the President, and nobly did he meet the responsibility. You and I honor him for his decision. He said, "Never by an order from my hand, while I am President, shall the Stars and Stripes be struck to a rebel foe!" (Long applause.) This impulsive and patriotic declaration of the President, in my judgment, saved the life of the nation, and whatever blunders he may have committed, or shall hereafter commit, this brave and noble act ought and with me, shall excuse a multitude of mistakes.

When asked what he proposed to do, he answered, that "the world will expect to provision our soldiers, while in the faithful discharge of their duty, and I intend to notify the authorities at Charleston that the troops in Ft. Sumter will be fully provisioned by sending an unarmed vessel to the Fort." The vessel was dispatched and when within sight of the Fort she was fired upon from the rebel batteries, and compelled to put to sea. Thus day after day all hope of a peaceable solution of our difficulties was dispelled, and when all hope of reinforcing the Fort seemed to be given up and Major Anderson only had one or two days' rations of salt pork for his handful of men, at the expiration of which time the rebels knew he must surrender, they opened their fire upon that patriotic band, and they were compelled to surrender. This act sealed the doom of the traitors. The North here-tofore divided, were now united, and every patriotic Union man gave up party for country.

I need not detail to you the stirring events which followed. The call of the President for 75,000 men, the alacrity with which hundreds of thousands of all parties patriotically volunteered to defend the Constitution and the Union. Until then, I did not know how full the nation was of the old leaven of 1776.—Until then I had no idea of the immense moral power of the bayonet.

The President called Congress together on the 4th of July, and asked for 400,000 men and $400,000,000 of money to put down the rebellion, and we gave him 500,000 men and $500,000,000. How the citizens in the loyal states have responded to the call of Congress and the President, you know. Never in all the history of the world, from the days of Alexander and Cesar to Napoleon, has any nation of eighteen millions of people been able to put an army of 500,000 men into the field armed and equipped as we have, in five months.—This fact of itself is a guarantee of our success if the Government but does its duty.

The conduct of Breckenridge, Bright and others, in the Senate, of Burnet and others in the House after the new administration came into power, is proof positive, that these men were either in sympathy or complicity with the traitors who were conspiring to destroy the government, at the very moment they, with uplifted hand, were swearing to support and defend it.

I might quote by the hour from speeches of the leading rebels since the outbreak of this rebellion to sustain the position which I have so elaborately fortified by fact after fact; but I am sure you will agree with me, that it is unnecessary. I will only detain you long enough on this point to make two or three short quotations which I think it important to submit in this connection. The first is from Alexander H. Stephens, the Vice-President of the rebel government. Mr. Stephens, I suppose you all know to be one of the fairest and most conservative men in the entire South, and a man of the first order of talents. In speaking of the principles on which the Southern Confederacy was formed this summer, he said:

"That its foundations were laid—that its corner-stone rested on the great truth that Slavery subordination to the superior race—was the Negro's natural condition; that the Confederacy was founded on these principles, and that this stone, which was rejected by the
first builders, had, in their new edifice, become the chief stone of the corner."

The foundation stone upon which Washington and the patriots of the revolution built, is rejected by the leaders in this rebellion, and if Mr. Stephens speaks truly, the foundation upon which the conspirators build, is Slavery. Yet in the face of such statements and all the facts I have enumerated, politicians and newspaper editors attempt to deceive and mislead the people by declaring that slavery has nothing whatever to do with this rebellion.

Senator Brown, of Mississippi, a colleague of Jefferson Davis, openly declared that he not only demanded a Southern Confederacy, but that he wanted "Cuba, Mexico and Central America for the planting and spread of Slavery, so that like the religion of our divine Master, it may spread to the uttermost ends of the earth."

Mr. Clay, of Alabama, declared in a speech at Montgomery, last winter, that, "A cordon of Free States must never be permitted to surround the God-given institution of Slavery—the beautiful tree must not be thus girdled that it may wither and die."

And the leading organ of the conspirators for May of this year, DeBow's Review, not only declares "that the foundation of the new Confederacy had for its cornerstone, slavery," but defended and justified the enslavement everywhere of the entire laboring population, declaring "that the social condition of England and the world would be infinitely better if the laboring classes were domestic slaves."

Are these startling facts new to you? they are old familiar acquaintances of mine, and I have repeated most of them over and over again, many times in this Congressional District. Do you ask in wonder how such unholy combinations could be made against the very life of the Nation without exciting the open hostility of every patriot and true Union man in the Republic? I answer that it has been and is mainly the fault of Northern politicians who have either been ignorant of the existence of such reasonable movements, or with a guilty knowledge have kept them from the people.

It is not, however, improbable that the great body of Northern representatives have been entirely ignorant for the past twenty years of these acts, although often acting and voting with the conspirators and in aid of their ulterior designs. This could not well be otherwise so long as the two sections should adhere to their present policy, or rather their want of policy in selecting and continuing their representatives at Washington. The South selects her best men, men of talents and ability who are true to her interest and retains them so long as they are faithful. They thus become acquainted with the entire workings of their government. The North sends with the rare exceptions an entire new set of men every two or four years. Many of these men are not only without ability, but what is still more lamentable, men who, under the pretext of party necessity, sacrifice the interest of their own constituents. If rejected by the people at the close of one term for their treachery, a pro-slavery administration has always provided them with some compensation for their services, and thus from year to year the North has been used and disgraced, simply because of inefficiency or want of fidelity of the representatives.

The South understands this matter better. She selects men who are not only true, but able; and retains them in position until they become familiar with the workings of every department of the government, and in time the not only become representative men but absolutely control, as they have done for years, the entire legislation of the country, although their section largely in the minority.

The North will have to change this custom and adopt such a one as prudent and common sense dictate. Statesmen are not extemporized out of the able men in a day. Our greatest Genres worked their way up gradually from the ranks and our safest and best Raroad men commenced at the foot of the ladder. All American statesmen, worthy of the name, have come up from the ranks of the people, and the South has produced the largest number, simply because she has pursued the policy of retaining her representatives until education and experience, they become Statesmen. Do you suppose that Northern conspiracy against the government could have been as succe
fully inaugurated and put into execution as this Southern conspiracy has been—that we could have held Northern Conventions, elected Northern State Governors on the direct issue of dissolving the Union or compelling the South to adopt such a National Constitution as we might dictate without the entire South being familiar with every movement, and unitedly prepared to resist it? In addition to all this, do you believe the South would ever have been guilty of voting for Northern men who were her open and undisguised enemies; that they would ever placed them as we have done, in the most honorable and responsible positions in the Government. I ask you if you believe it possible for the North, with all her boasted knowledge to have done as the South have done for the past twenty years without every Southern representative, not only understanding every movement, under whatever party name or pretext they might have been disguised; but that their entire population would also have understood it and directed their representatives boldly to meet the issue at the very threshold and defeat it, not by compromising with it, but by meeting the question like men, and by an early and proper exposure of the designs of the conspirators, nipped their treason in the bud?

But this secession movement has been openly advocated for years and its champions have been placed by Northern votes and Northern Presidents not only in the Cabinet, but in the most honorable and responsible positions of the Government. If able and true men pointed out the danger, as did John Quincy Adams, their voices would be drowned by the din of commerce and the cry of demagogues, who either for the sake of party or office, or the promise of office, would in proportion to their ignorance, denounce with increased vehemence, all such statements as unqualifiedly false and only made to injure their party. For the sake of party and the hope of securing some petty office for two or four years, ignorant and corrupt men have usurped in the name of the people the management of political conventions, and the great interests of the country have been made subordinate to the ambitions of men whose whole lives gave assurances of their unfitness for responsible positions.

Because of this state of things, the North, although superior in point of wealth, population and intelligence have been made the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the South. Do you ask when this state of things shall forever cease? I answer that it will cease as this rebellion will cease, whenever a united people earnestly wills it, and not before.

That the over prudent, the timid and the indifferent, with the trickster and demagogue will join with cowardly hunkerism in condemning the manner in which I am treating this subject. I do not doubt, and I do not object. In my opinion, this is no time for honied phrases, and I have therefore called things by their right names. This is a war about slavery and you and I know it. The South declare that our unconstitutional interference with slavery is the cause of this rebellion. For this we are indicted at the bar of public opinion and required to plead "guilty" or not "guilty." Instead of responding promptly, and manfully, and truthfully, "not guilty," all Hunkerdom holds its breath for fear of offending its Southern brethren, and demands that we shall plead to anything else than that with which we are charged in the rebel indictment. Will any lawyer tell me how we are to defend ourselves? What shall be our reply to this charge? We may plead all our sins of omission and commission, but that will not do. Silence on the only distinct charge made in the indictment against us is an admission of our guilt. It is all any rebel can ask. It is substantially saying to the world that the South is right and the North is wrong. Therefore for one I plead "not guilty," and "put myself upon the country."—Suppose, instead of the charge of improper interference with slavery, the North were charged in the rebel indictment with unconstitutionally interfering with the rights of the South on the question of the Tariff, or Pacific Railroad, or the question of representation, or any one of the many questions which have divided political parties in this country? Would prudent but timid friends be found then, as now, uniting with the political trickster and the
demagogue in seconding the demand of Hunkerism that we should not only not plead to that with which we were charged but that we should not even dissent or publicly allude to the matter at issue? How can a statesman, who is guided by the principles of justice or even by political expediency, demand of any rational people anything so irrational or idiotic as debate and answer to charges without any reference to the subject matter of the charges?

If this rebellion had resulted from a conspiracy on the part of the great body of Railroad corporations, or Banks, or Manufacturing interests in the United States, because the General or State Governments had refused to comply with their demands, do you suppose there would have been any such hesitation on the part of the Government as to their duty as there has been towards the present rebels? The old Bank of the United States had a capital of only fifty millions of dollars, and yet General Jackson thought its continued existence dangerous to the liberties of the people, because he knew it subsidized the public press, controlled party conventions, and, with it's gold, corrupted statesmen and divided the nation's chosen guardians and counsellors. He thereupon crushed it out, and the nation applauded him.—The number of rebel slaveholders in the United States does not exceed 250,000 men, women and minor children, all told. Of this number not more than 200,000 are voters, and yet they claim that that their capital in slaves is worth two thousand millions of dollars. If fifty millions of dollars in the hands of a bank was dangerous to the liberties of the people, how much more dangerous is two thousand millions of dollars in the hands of slaveholders, who are enemies to the Government? For the protection of this property, as they claim it to be, they have demanded special legislation and constitutional guarantees which the people would not grant, and because of the refusal, this small but powerful class have made this war upon the Government. Suppose the great majority of the bankers of the United States (and the bank stockholders are really a more numerous class than the rebel slaveholders) were to combine and demand an amendment to the Constitution, granting them perpetual charters, with the right to suspend specie payment whenever, in their opinion, the interests of the banks demanded it, and suppose the people should refuse to give them such a dangerous grant of power, and, because of this refusal, they should unite in a conspiracy to destroy the Government by making war upon it as the rebel slaveholders are now doing, what would you, as practical men, do if they, instead of the slaveholders, were the rebels? I know what you would demand, and it would be done—the leading conspirators would be arrested and their property confiscated to pay the expenses of putting down the rebellion, and thus make it impossible for them to get up another such rebellion. I would do the same with the Railroad conspirators, who have more wealth and more men interested with them than all the slaveholding rebels—I would do the same with any combination of men, under the same circumstances. The Banking, Railroad and Manufacturing interest of of the United States each separately controls more wealth than all the conspirators now engaged in the rebellion, and their institutions are of more importance to commerce—to civilization and good government—than all the slaveholders, whether loyal or rebel; and yet, if any one or all of these interests were to combine against the Government, what would be their fate?—Would there be any division among us on the question of conducting the war against them? Why then, as practical men, should we hesitate as to the course to be pursued towards rebel slaveholders?

The truth is, prejudice has blinded us as a nation so that we will not see our duty, and this is the secret of our inefficiency and our reverses. How many men are there before me who would hesitate at confiscating the entire wealth of all the corporations in the country—whether Banks, Railroads or Manufacturing—if they were combined and in rebellion against the Government and you believed such action was necessary to save the nation's life? If you would do this, would you not also confiscate and deprive the present slaveholding conspirators of every slave they possessed, if you believed it necessary for the