

“Out of his own mouth,” etc. [California, 1860].

[Duplicate - Do not bind]

“Out of His Own Mouth,” etc.

Since Gen. Shields has so emphatically and roughly denied the charge of sympathy with the South, made against him, it is said, on the authority of Senator McDougall, it may be proper to inquire how far the grave accusation may be justified by his own acts and utterances. The following letter, written to the Jackson (Amador county) Breckinridge Club, and published in the *Sonora Democrat*, explains the position of General Shields. He may be loyal, but these are strange sentiments for a loyal man to utter. We copy the letter.

Letter of Gen. James Shields to the Amador Breckinridge Club

San Francisco , Cal., Oct. 10, 1860.

Gentlemen :—Accept my thanks for your polite note inclosing resolutions of the Jackson Breckinridge Club, inviting me to visit Jackson and address the people on the political topics of the day. I may as well say at once that I mean to take no active part in the present political contest in California. I am here to try to recruit my health, and to do this at all, I must abstain from public excitement. Besides, I must frankly state that I am sick and tired of public life; and the present condition of the Democratic party is not calculated to remove this feeling. But as total silence on my part, in the midst of party distraction, might subject me to a charge of indifference, I beg leave to assure you and the members of the Club, that so far from being indifferent, I am at this very time deeply and seriously concerned about the condition of the country. I do not speak of danger to our institutions—because I would only be laughed to scorn by the light and frivolous, and vain and selfish, if I did—but of general political demoralization, which is rendering the struggles of parties in this country almost as shamefully selfish as the wretched struggles of degenerated factions in Mexico. In this state of affairs, which I see no way just now to improve, and cannot help but think critical, I have carefully and thoughtfully considered the course which duty enjoins me to take, and here it is in a few words:

1st. *I will never help to impose a Northern man on the South as President, unless I am reasonably satisfied that he is acceptable to a majority of the Southern people.*

2d. If the political contest degenerates into a sectional struggle, which the present derangement as well as the prospective rearrangement of the political parties seem to point to, my part will be taken with the South. My reasons: *The South is acting in self-defense. It is struggling solely and simply to preserve its own institutions, but not to disturb the institutions of the North, while the struggle in the North is not to improve Northern institutions, but to interfere with the institutions of the South. The insolent injustice and inequality of such a struggle will decide me without hesitation to act with the South.*

3d. I would personally prefer Stephen A. Douglas to any other man in the United States for President, if he were acceptable to a majority of the Southern people, or what is very much the same thing, was the accepted candidate of the united Democratic party; but, to my great regret, he is not, and, therefore, I cannot support him in this canvass, and in this I consult my views of duty and not my personal preference; this casts me with John C. Breckinridge, who, if he can do nothing more, may rally enough to reconstruct the Democratic party. These are my views frankly given; but as I have no feeling on the subject, I urge them on no one, and would keep them to myself, but that my character obliges me to let my friends know how I stand.

Yours, sincerely, James Shields .

Comment is unnecessary. The man is neither a "liar" nor a "scoundrel" who reads the above letter and then accuses Gen. Shields of "sympathy with the South."

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