

TO THE PEOPLE OF LANCASTER COUNTY.

Fellow-Citizens :—

THE election is near at hand, and I shall probably not have an opportunity to see you at public meetings and consult with you personally on the important questions now interesting the public. I have therefore concluded to address you through a short written communication.

The subject which absorbs all others is the wicked rebellion of the South. All intelligent men know, and all candid men admit, that it has been preparing for thirty years by slaveholders for the purpose of establishing an aristocratic empire "whose corner-stone should be slavery." The people of the free States, while abhorring slavery, never claimed the right nor the intention to interfere with it in the States where it existed. But they determined to prevent its extension into free soil. This was the position of the whole anti-slavery people of the North, except a few men called "Abolitionists," who claimed the right to abolish slavery in the States where it existed by local law. This was an absurd claim, and was never held or acted on by more than a few thousand people in the whole United States.

To charge the rebellion on that insignificant handful of men, is mere folly and falsehood.

Whenever you find men charging the war on the North and excusing the South, you may set them down as rebels in heart, who ought to follow their chosen leader, John C. Breckinridge, into the southern armies.

The great question is, how is the rebellion to be suppressed?

I suppose you will all agree that whoever proposes to end it by dividing the Republic and dissolving the Union is a traitor and a poltroon.

But the southern Congress have over and over again solemnly decreed that they will entertain no proposition for compromise that does not first acknowledge the independence of the Confederate States, and the dissolution of the Union. Nothing is left, therefore, but to subdue them by force of arms.

I have always contended that the rebels would not submit so long as they were allowed to possess their slaves who would raise their food and do all their hard work, while every white man was in the army. As a war measure, absolutely necessary for our salvation, (without any regard to justice to the slave) I have urged the emancipation of the slaves, paying the loyal men for theirs, not the rebels. Three months expenses of the war would have paid for all, and in six months the war would have ended. This was the chief heresy for which the secession convention that nominated Mr. Steinman objected to me. They praised the President and blamed me for not agreeing with him. They professed themselves willing to support the policy of that honest Chief Magistrate. Mr. Hiester, their chosen orator, chosen by them because he was an apostate from the principles of his father—said in his speech:

"Before going into the causes which have been instrumental in bringing about the present crisis, let us pay a deserved tribute to one who deserves the respect of the whole people, Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States. There is neither doubt nor question of his patriotism. We conservative men, earnest democrats, now rally to his support."

The Mayor of the city, chairman of the meeting, uttered the same sentiments, but denounced the Republican convention for having nominated "the most pestilent abolitionist that ever disgraced this district in the Halls of Congress." On the 22nd day of September, while the air was still vocal with the praises of the President uttered by the foul breath of this Rebel convention, Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation containing precisely the same principles which I had advocated. This "patriotic President" agrees precisely with the "pestilent abolitionist" on the great question of the

day, and if I am elected, I shall support the President to the full extent of my ability, in this, as I have heretofore done in all other measures adopted by him to put an end to this infamous rebellion. Gentlemen, come on! Help us to support the policy of this honest President "*who has the respect of the entire people.*" Drop the candidate who boasts that he voted for Breckinridge on principle. You who desire to be consistent cannot do otherwise.

The secession meeting denounced the law to confiscate the property of rebels. Their rebel friends have brought a burdensome public debt on the nation. The guilty parties must either pay for it, or it must rest a burden on the free States and their posterity. I am for taking all the property of the traitors and paying the whole of said debt. They have amply sufficient to do it. The friends of Mr. Steinman are for fixing it as a charge upon you and your children. Choose ye between us.

I regret the necessity which compels the Executive to resort to a draft to fill the ranks of our army. I hope it may yet be avoided. And I cannot well express my disgust at the conduct of those who censure and abuse a very excellent class of citizens who are conscientiously opposed to taking up arms for the destruction of human life. That belief is a part of their religion, and held sacred by the Constitution. But while they cannot aid in the field to suppress this rebellion, they can be equally useful in another sphere. They can go to the ballot-box and vote down the rebellion by voting against the Breckinridge ticket. Nor can they be justified before their country and their God, if they allow the abuse of vulgar men to deter them from exercising the elective franchise on the second Tuesday of October next. The latter remarks do not apply to those who have conscientious scruples about voting.

I cannot see how the Emancipation of the slaves can injure the industrial interests of the North. To be sure, it might be a temporary inconvenience. All thinking men who have examined the subject, such as Generals Hunter, Sickles, Clay, Fremont, Cochrane, and others, agree that if the South were freed, no liberated slaves would willingly leave it, but that all the people of color in the free States and Canada would flock to the South in search of a climate more congenial to their nature. Thus our towns, *and in a less degree* the country, would be straightened for want of laborers. But this vacuum would soon be filled by immigrants from Germany and Ireland, who would be more acceptable laborers than the blacks. The evil would be but very temporary, while the benefit to mankind would be the exaltation of a nation.

But is there not a higher aspect in which this subject of Slavery should be viewed, an aspect connected with morals and religion? Do you not believe that the Creator of all men inflicts national punishments for national crime, and is not the holding of four millions of human beings in bondage the deepest of national crimes? May we hope that we have already endured enough. I speak to conscientious men, and not to scoffers and infidels. Egypt, through repeated warnings, refused to let the people go, and was afflicted with terrible plagues, until the first born of every household was slain in a single night, and there was mourning throughout the land, from the monarch on the throne to the servant in the dungeon.

More than the first born of every household have fallen in this Republic, and the land is shrouded in sable weeds. Hasten, then, to do justice, and stay the sword of the destroying angel. Let the blood of the paschal lamb be found sprinkled on all your door posts.

THADDEUS STEVENS.

LANCASTER, September 30th, 1862.

Lancaster History

THADDEUS STEVENS