

This fragment is the letter
written before 20 November
1861 and referred to as
"my wicked letter" in Harvey
to AG 20/11/1861

Cobden

11/11/1939

of voting, that Presidents may continue to be
chosen, not for their worth or ability, but from
their creating a party cry, or their pleasing the
lowest order of voters throughout the country.
Granting that W. Lincoln is an upright high-minded
man - see what a cabinet & what a set of am-
bassadors he has chosen, or been compelled to
choose. I look on Mr. Seward as a very base
man - clever enough, but without moral prin-
ciple, perhaps I wrong him. But I think him
a very unfortunate fellow to guide the State
through times like the present. - So, my dear
friends, it is such that we do not sympathize
in your trouble, nor because we see no justice
in your cause, that some of us here still question
whether it would not have been better to have
lopped off the South, at its own request, as a
rotten branch - to pursue its own destiny -
than, by attempting its subjugation, to endanger
the stability of the Greater Republic. This is what
T. & T. feels - & what I and many others, think, whose
sympathies are all in favour of the free constitution
of the North. I cannot believe that you are one people
with the South, save by the accident of language -
They cannot exist without slavery - that "Poor blind
Sampson", as Longfellow says, who will assuredly, one
day, in God's retributive justice, pull down the
fabric of their house. You had now, a quiet way
of getting free from the guilt & the danger of their
neighbours, they have not accepted the offer.
All we can say is, we hope you may not
repent of your present endeavour to "con-
quer a peace". - With which unpleasant
sentiment I conclude, subscribing myself
Yours affectionately, my house.

W. E. B. L.

Probably 1861 Nov.

Now as to your politics - I dare say, were
I at your side the water, I should think
as you do. But surely, there has been a
revolution in thought among you Northerners,
to judge by your papers at least within the
last few months. The language held ~~forth~~
the fall of Fort Sumpter is, if I remember
rightly, the reverse of what was advocated
by Northern papers previously. I remember
some cuttings from Boston papers, especially
that seemed to treat the loss of the South
as a good riddance. The severing of a population
diametrically opposed in feeling & interests
in the North I remembered best as with a
hopelessly burdensome "institution". We heard
too of some Northern states, such as Maine, pro-
posing to annex themselves to Canada, &
other such newspaper dreams which had a
cruel influence in disturbing people's
minds here. If all the population of all
the States (minus the rebellious minority)
be so completely one in feeling & interest that
they properly constitute but one Nation, it
then your theory of enforcing obedience to
the general government by coercion is all
right. Any sacrifice is proper to uphold
the national integrity. It may indeed be that
this is the case, as you patriotically say, and
if so, then you are right & we are mis-
informed. All our unclassicism wrong.
But, up to this time, we have been ~~wrong~~
accustomed - without any minority & that
of my generation at least - to look on

North & South as Cat and Dog - or as a couple united in an ill-assorted marriage - always spitting and barking at each other, & always trying to subvert & circumvent one another. The South, though the woman in the contest, was the cleverer of the two, from the unity of feeling & combination, & thoroughly did she humiliate the North, & keep him mortified through the mud, not once nor twice, but always. Then the individual interests of the two populations seemed opposed - the North crying for a tariff - the South for free trade, & really the only topic on which North & South seemed (to us) cordially to agree was in trying to get up a quarrel with England to bully or outwit her &c. Whenever there was a lull with England, then you were fighting (in word) among yourselves - so that it latterly became a badge of your Washington Govt. to keep in hot water with England, seemingly for no other reason than to keep North & South in good humors with each other. When I was in Carolina I remember dining at a planter's house, who gave "the Union white" as worth preserving" as his toast after dinner, & then followed a conversation as reasonable as what was lately talked, before the war. This was 11 years ago, & the breach has been widening since. I cannot see that any military settlements of the question is likely to heal the sore, unless indeed a war of extermination & a repopling of the subjugated states.

Now as I think that the word rebellion properly designates the secession movement. It is rather a revolt. What is the difference? Much, I think. A rebellion is when a mass of people

seize against its government, to throw it off. But, in the secession, no such disorderly Hawley proceedure took place, but States (that till now have been called 'Sovereigns') met in Legislature & by 'Conventions' according to the established forms of Republican law - & proceeded by vote, & act of the Legislature. Such revolt I think deserves to be treated as other than rebellion - & is much more formidable, in its results, than any rebellion could be. - The first result of the war will be a denial of individual State rights. We have already heard one of Mr. Lincoln's cabinet (the war minister?) declaiming against the 'individuality' of States - saying, that after the war, there would be no longer Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York &c. but that all would be Americans. A fine patriotic sentiment, say you! - A vast stride of centralizing, or increase of power to the Washington Cabinet, & decrease of influence of State Legislatures, say we! And here is the danger to the Republic? Is there no danger in forming a great, civil, any establishment, centering in Washington, for keeping up which perhaps there will always henceforth be an excuse. Most Republics of ancient & modern times have found this worst foe a standing army. Is there no fear to you from such? If you only think not, the cause of the intelligence and good breeding of your present volunteer troops. But are they a fair specimen of the recruits which would naturally grow out of the mass of a standing army? I fear not. The danger would be little, perhaps, if you can secure an honest administration at Washington. Indeed all will depend on that. But, as it is, since the Presidency of Mr. Fillmore your central government has been going down, lower & lower - sinking in respectability as well as in talent, until under Buchanan it had reached - let us hope, its lowest ebb. Is there no probability, under the present system



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