


## C. L. VALLANDIGHAM

ALLEMENT LAIRD VALLANDIGHAM, American Democratic politician, and during the Civil War leader of the "Copperheads," was born at New Lisbon, O., July 29, 1820, and died at Lebanon, O., June 17, 1871. He was educated at Jefferson College in Pennsylvania, studied law, and was admitted to the Bar in 1842, and after practicing his profession for a short time in Columbus, O., removed to Dayton in the same State. He sat in the State legislature, 1845-46, and edited the "Dayton Empire," 1847-49. During this period he became well known not only as an able lawyer and an eloquent speaker, but as an extreme pro-slavery advocate. After several unsuccessful congressional contests he entered Congress in 1858, and served there until 1863. In Congress, he made some singularly audacious attacks upon the administration for its conduct of the Civil War, on Dec. 5, 1862, offering a series of resolutions directed against the war, and in the following January delivering an impassioned speech (here annexed) condemning it. After the expiration of his congressional term, Vallandigham delivered many bitter and violent speeches in Ohio against the administration, and in May, 1863, was arrested by General Burnside for having declared the war to be "cruel and unnecessary," was tried by court-martial, and sentenced to close imprisonment. His sentence was however changed by President Lincoln to banishment within the Confederate lines. The arrest and sentence provoked wide controversy in the press and in public gatherings, the Democrats as a body denouncing the action of the military commission, and the Republicans justifying it in some cases and in others regretting it. Not meeting with a cordial reception at the South, Vallandigham escaped to Canada, and while in exile was nominated for Governor of Ohio, but was defeated by a large majority. The next year he returned to Ohio unmolested and resumed his profession. During the conduct of a murder trial at Lebanon, O., Vallandigham attempted in the court room to illustrate his theory of the homicide; in doing this the pistol in his hand was accidentally discharged, and his death was immediate.

### SPEECH ON THE WAR AND ITS CONDUCT

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 14, 1863

SIR,—I am one of that number who have opposed abolitionism, or the political development of the anti-slavery sentiment of the North and West, from the beginning. In school, at college, at the bar, in public assemblies, in the legislature, in Congress, boy and man, in time of peace and in time of war, at all times and at every sacrifice, I have fought

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against it. It cost me ten years' exclusion from office and honor at that period of life when honors are sweetest. No matter; I learned early to do right and to wait.

Sir, it is but the development of the spirit of intermeddling, whose children are strife and murder. Cain troubled himself about the sacrifices of Abel and slew his brother. Most of the wars, contentions, litigations, and bloodshed, from the beginning of time have been its fruits. The spirit of non-intervention is the very spirit of peace and concord.

I do not believe that if slavery had never existed here we would have had no sectional controversies. This very civil war might have happened fifty, perhaps a hundred, years later. Other and stronger causes of discontent and of disunion, it may be, have existed between other states and sections, and are now being developed every day into maturity. The spirit of intervention assumed the form of abolitionism because slavery was odious in name and by association to the Northern mind, and because it was that which most obviously marks the different civilizations of the two sections.

The South herself, in her early and later efforts to rid herself of it, had exposed the weak and offensive parts of slavery to the world. Abolition intermeddling taught her at last to search for and defend the assumed social, economic, and political merit and values of the institution. But there never was an hour from the beginning when it did not seem to me as clear as the sun at broad noon that the agitation in any form, in the North and West, of the slavery question must sooner or later end in disunion and civil war.

This was the opinion and prediction for years of Whig and Democratic statesmen alike; and, after the unfortunate dissolution of the Whig party in 1854, and the organization of the present Republican party upon the exclusive anti-



slavery and sectional basis, the event was inevitable, because in the then existing temper of the public mind, and after the education through the press and the pulpit, the lecture and the political canvass, for twenty years, of a generation taught to hate slavery and the South, the success of that party, possessed as it was of every engine of political, business, social, and religious influence, was certain.

It was only a question of time, and short time. Such was its strength, indeed, that I do not believe that the union of the Democratic party in 1860 on any candidate, even though he had been supported also by the entire so-called conservative or anti-Lincoln vote of the country, would have availed to defeat it; and, if it had, the success of the Abolition party would only have been postponed four years longer. The disease had fastened too strongly upon the system to be healed until it had run its course.

The doctrine of "the irrepressible conflict" had been taught too long and accepted too widely and earnestly to die out until it should culminate in secession and disunion, and, if coercion were resorted to, then in civil war. I believed from the first that it was the purpose of some of the apostles of that doctrine to force a collision between the North and the South, either to bring about a separation or to find a vain but bloody pretext for abolishing slavery in the States. In any event I knew, or thought I knew, that the end was certain collision and death to the Union.

Believing thus, I have for years past denounced those who taught that doctrine with all the vehemence, the bitterness, if you choose—I thought it a righteous, a patriotic bitterness—of an earnest and impassioned nature. Thinking thus, I forewarned all who believed the doctrine, or followed the party

which taught it, with a sincerity and a depth of conviction as profound as ever penetrated the heart of man.

And when, for eight years past, over and over again, I have proclaimed to the people that the success of a sectional anti-slavery party would be the beginning of disunion and civil war in America, I believed it. I did.

I had read history and studied human nature and meditated for years upon the character of our institutions and form of government, and of the people south as well as north; and I could not doubt the event.

But the people did not believe me, nor those older and wiser and greater than I. They rejected the prophecy and stoned the prophets. The candidate of the Republican party was chosen president. Secession began. Civil war was imminent. It was no petty insurrection, no temporary combination to obstruct the execution of the laws in certain States, but a revolution, systematic, deliberate, determined, and with the consent of a majority of the people of each State which seceded.

Causeless it may have been, wicked it may have been, but there it was—not to be railed at, still less to be laughed at, but to be dealt with by statesmen as a fact. No display of vigor or force alone, however sudden or great, could have arrested it even at the outset. It was disunion at last. The wolf had come, but civil war had not yet followed. In my deliberate and solemn judgment there was but one wise and masterly mode of dealing with it. Non-coercion would avert civil war and compromise crush out both abolitionism and secession. The parent and the child would thus both perish.

But a resort to force would at once precipitate war, hasten secession, extend disunion, and while it lasted utterly cut off



all hope of compromise. I believed that war, if long enough continued, would be final, eternal disunion. I said it; I meant it; and accordingly to the utmost of my ability and influence I exerted myself in behalf of the policy of non-coercion. It was adopted by Mr. Buchanan's administration with the almost unanimous consent of the Democratic and Constitutional Union parties in and out of Congress; and in February, with the consent of a majority of the Republican party in the Senate and the House.

But that party most disastrously for the country refused all compromise. How, indeed, could they accept any? That which the South demanded, and the Democratic and conservative parties of the North and West were willing to grant, and which alone could avail to keep the peace and save the Union implied a surrender of the sole vital element of the party and its platform, of the very principle, in fact, upon which it had just won the contest for the presidency, not, indeed, by a majority of the popular vote—the majority was nearly a million against it,—but under the forms of the constitution.

Sir, the crime, the "high crime," of the Republican party was not so much its refusal to compromise, as its original organization upon a basis and doctrine wholly inconsistent with the stability of the constitution and the peace of the Union.

The president-elect was inaugurated; and now, if only the policy of non-coercion could be maintained, and war thus averted, time would do its work in the North and the South, and final peaceable adjustment and reunion be secured. Some time in March it was announced that the president had resolved to continue the policy of his predecessor, and even go a step farther, and evacuate Sumter and the other federal forts and arsenals in the seceded States. His own party

acquiesced; the whole country rejoiced. The policy of non-coercion had triumphed, and for once, sir, in my life, I found myself in an immense majority.

No man then pretended that a union founded in consent could be cemented by force. Nay, more, the President and the secretary of state went farther. Said Mr. Seward, in an officio-diplomatic letter to Mr. Adams: "For these reasons, he (the President) would not be disposed to reject a cardinal dogma of theirs (the secessionists), namely, that the federal government could not reduce the seceding States to obedience by conquest, although he were disposed to question that proposition. But in fact the President willingly accepts it as true. Only an imperial or despotic government could subjugate thoroughly disaffected and insurrectionary members of the State."

Pardon me, sir, but I beg to know whether this conviction of the President and his secretary is not the philosophy of the persistent and most vigorous efforts made by this administration, and first of all through this same secretary, the moment war broke out, and ever since till the late elections, to convert the United States into an imperial or despotic government?

But Mr. Seward adds, and I agree with him: "This federal republican system of ours is, of all forms of government, the very one which is most unfitted for such a labor."

This, sir, was on the 10th of April, and yet that very day the fleet was under sail for Charleston. The policy of peace had been abandoned. Collision followed; the militia were ordered out; civil war began.

Now, sir, on the 14th of April, I believed that coercion would bring on war, and war disunion. More than that, I believed what you all believe in your hearts to-day, that the



South could never be conquered—never. And not that only but I was satisfied—and you of the Abolition party have now proved it to the world—that the secret but real purpose of the war was to abolish slavery in the States. In any event, I did not doubt that, whatever might be the momentary impulses of those in power, and whatever pledges they might make, in the midst of the fury, for the constitution, the Union, and the flag, yet the natural and inexorable logic of revolutions would sooner or later drive them into that policy and with it to its final but inevitable result, the change of our present democratical form of government into an imperial despotism. These were my convictions on the 14th of April.

Had I changed them on the 15th, when I read the President's proclamation, and become convinced that I had been wrong all my life, and that all history was a fable, and all human nature false in its development from the beginning of time, I would have changed my public conduct also. But my convictions did not change. I thought that if war was disunion on the 14th of April it was equally disunion on the 15th and at all times.

Believing this I could not as an honest man, a union man, and a patriot lend an active support to the war; and I did not. I had rather my right arm were plucked from its socket and cast into eternal burnings than with my convictions to have thus defiled my soul with the guilt of moral perjury. Sir, I was not taught in that school which proclaims that "all is fair in politics." I loathe, abhor, and detest the execrable maxim. I stamp upon it. No State can endure a single generation whose public men practise it. Whoever teaches it is a corrupter of youth. What we most want in these times, and at all times, is honest and independent public men.

That man who is dishonest in politics is not honest at heart in anything; and sometimes moral cowardice is dishonesty. Do right; and trust to God, and truth, and the people. Perish office, perish honors, perish life itself; but do the thing that is right, and do it like a man.

Certainly, sir, I could not doubt what he must suffer who dare defy the opinions and the passions, not to say the madness, of twenty millions of people. Had I not read history? Did I not know human nature? But I appealed to time; and right nobly hath the avenger answered me. I did not support the war; and to-day I bless God that not the smell of so much as one drop of its blood is upon my garments. Sir, I censure no brave man who rushed patriotically into this war; neither will I quarrel with any one here or elsewhere who gave to it an honest support. Had their convictions been mine, I too would doubtless have done as they did. With my convictions I could not.

But I was a representative. War existed—by whose act no matter—not by mine. The President, the Senate, the House, and the country all said that there should be war—war for the Union; a union of consent and good will. Our Southern brethren were to be whipped back into love and fellowship at the point of the bayonet. O, monstrous delusion! I can comprehend a war to compel a people to accept a master; to change a form of government; to give up territory; to abolish a domestic institution—in short, a war of conquest and subjugation; but a war for union! Was the Union thus made? Was it ever thus preserved?

Sir, history will record that after nearly six thousand years of folly and wickedness in every form and administration of government—theocratic, democratic, monarchic, oligarchic, despotic, and mixed—it was reserved to American