

## BENJAMIN GRATZ BROWN

**B**ENJAMIN GRATZ BROWN, American politician and journalist, was born at Lexington, Ky., May 28, 1826, the son of Mason Brown, a Kentucky jurist, and died at St. Louis, La., Dec. 13, 1885. He was educated at Transylvania and Yale Universities, and studied law at Louisville, where he was admitted to the Bar. He afterwards removed to St. Louis and in 1852 entered the Missouri legislature, of which he continued a member for nearly fifteen years. During this lengthened period he was a conspicuous opponent of slavery, delivering in 1857 a memorable anti-slavery speech. As the editor of the "Missouri Democrat," a radical Republican journal, he was the mouthpiece of the Free-Soil movement in Missouri, and in 1857, as the Free-Soil candidate for governor, was defeated by only five hundred votes against him. At the outset of the Civil War he threw all his influence into the Union cause, raising a regiment, and afterward leading a brigade of militia against Price and Van Dorn, when these Confederate generals invaded Missouri. From 1863 to 1867 he sat in the United States Senate and in 1871, as a Liberal Republican nominee, was elected Governor of Missouri by a majority of 40,000. In 1872, he was nominated for Vice-president by the Democratic party on the ticket with Horace Greeley. The canvass was conducted with extraordinary bitterness and the Democratic party suffered defeat at the polls, Brown meanwhile returning to the practice of his profession.

### ON SLAVERY IN ITS NATIONAL ASPECT AS RELATED TO PEACE AND WAR

FROM ADDRESS DELIVERED AT ST. LOUIS, SEPTEMBER 17, 1862

**T**HE lover of his country is not apt to be discouraged as to the eventual triumph of its arms. The lost battle, the miasmatic campaign, abandoned lines and blown-up magazines are regarded as incidents of war. They are deplored but not held as conclusive or even significant of the ending. There are "signs of the times," however, in our horizon that have a gloomier look than lost battles. And darkest and strangest of all the discouragements that have of late befallen must be considered the spectacle presented by the government in its dealings with this terrible crisis—

(460)

reposing itself altogether upon the mere barbarism of force.

One would think when reading the call for six hundred thousand men to recruit our armies, and seeing there no appeal to or recognition of the ideas that rule this century, not less than this hour, that as a government ours was intent on suicide—as a nation we had abandoned our progression. Can it be that those who have been advanced for their wisdom and worth to such high places of rulership do not understand that since this world began the victories of mere brute force have been as inconsequent as the ravages of pestilence and as evanescent as the generations of men. Or can it be that, understanding, they care only for tiding over the present contest to bequeath revolt and internecine war as the inheritance of those who are to come after them. That would be virtual disintegration—national death.

If the government undertakes to abandon the revolution in its very birth-pains—if it intends to have no reference to the ideas of which it is the representative—if it contemplates a disregard of the progressing thought that not only installed it, but has carried it so far forward since installation—if it is determined to found its dominion over subjugated States not in the name of a principle that shall assimilate its conquests and assure their liberties, but of simple power—then will it place itself by its own action in the attitude of other and equally gigantic powers that have attempted the same work and have failed. It may have its day of seeming successes, but even that will entail an age of complications.

Does not Poland, as fully alive to-day, after ninety years of forcible suppression, as on that morning of the first partition, convince us that this thing of the dominion of power

without the assimilation of nations can only continue upon condition of an ever-recurring application of those forces that achieved the first reduction? Does not the uprising and the cry for a united Italy, after five hundred years of fitful effort, continuous conflict, and successive disintegration under the tramp of a multitudinous soldiery, tell how fixed are social laws, how faithful to freedom are peoples, and how certain the retribution following upon those policies of government that sacrifice the future to the present, the moral to the mere material, the consolidating the foundations of a great commonwealth to the hollow conquest, the mock settlement, the outward uniformity. History is full of such illustrations, because history repeats itself.

But I need not go with you further in citing its judgments in condemnation of that reliance upon physical force which deems itself able to dispense with any appeal to principle. We cannot if we would cast behind us the experience of eighteen centuries of Christian amelioration, in which mankind have been learning to rely upon moral and intellectual forces rather than simple violence in their dealings with each other as nations. Not that civilization has surrendered its rights of war, but that it insists that ideas shall march at the head of armies. Napoleon III, when he announced that the French nation alone in Europe made war for an idea, intended to represent it as leading, not relapsing from the civilization of the age. And therein he both uttered a philosophic truth and penetrated the secret of success.

Strip the choicest legions of the inspiration they derive from a controlling, elevating cause—especially that cause whose magic watchword cheers to victory in every land—and in vain will you expect the heroic in action or the miracle

in conquest. It is a coward thought that God is on the side of the strongest battalions. The battles that live in memory—that have seemed to turn the world's equanimity upside down—have been won by the few fighting for a principle as against the multitude enrolled in the name of power. When therefore it is conceded that the mere announcement of a policy of freedom as the policy of this war would paralyze the hostility of all the sovereigns of Europe and wed to us the encouragement of their peoples, why is it that so little faith obtains among our rulers that it would equally strengthen the government here amid the millions of our own land? Have the populations of our States fallen so low—become so irresponsive to the watchwords of liberty that it is not fit to make such an appeal to them? Is there no significance in the fact that amid the five thousand stanzas that have vainly attempted to exalt the unities of the past into a nation's anthem—a song of war kindling the uncontrollable ardors of the soul—one alone, proscribed like the "Marseillaise," has been adopted at the camp fire—

"John Brown's body lies a moldering in the grave,  
His soul is marching on."

Six hundred thousand soldiers summoned to the field, and for what? The nation asks of the President, for what? Is it that the government may wring a submission from the possible exhaustion on the part of the seceding States, that shall be a postponement, not a settlement, of this great crisis, and that shall be unrelated to the causes that have produced it or the progression on our part that has put on the armor of revolution? If so, the government will find when perhaps it is too late that in addition to the rebellion it will have to confront a public opinion that has no sympathies

with reaction and that will withdraw, as unitedly as it has hitherto given all its trust, from those in power. Or is it that grounding this great struggle upon its true basis, upholding the national honor whilst battling for the national thought, our armies are to be marshalled under the flag of freedom, and the peace achieved is to be one that shall assure personal and political liberty to every dweller in the land? If that be so let the fact be proclaimed, not hidden from the people, and there will need no call from President, no conscription from Congress, to recruit the ranks of the soldiers of the republic.

The two great revolutions of modern time which mark the most signal advance in political freedom, that of England during the Commonwealth and that of France in 1789, have this among many other striking features of similarity—that in each case a large part of the empire resisting the advent of free principles took up arms against the government to contest the issue. In the *Vendée*, as in Ireland, it became necessary to establish by force the supremacy of the new order. It was antagonism by the population of whole sections, and in both instances, courses of conciliation having proved worthless, a stern and vigorous policy of subjugation was required. That even the success which crowned such measures was only partial and transient, demanding a supplemental work of assimilation, is also well worthy of attention. But in subduing the resistance now presented this nation has that to contend with, not less than that to assist it, which was not present in either of the parallels cited. I allude to slavery, the strength and the weakness of the South.

Look steadily at the prospect. Nine millions of people in all—five millions and a half of whites addressing themselves exclusively to warfare, sustained by three millions and

a half of blacks drilled as slaves to the work of agriculture. Such are the official statistics of the seceding States.

With the whites the conscription for military purposes reaches to every man capable of bearing arms; with the blacks the conscription for labor recognizes neither weakness, nor age, nor sex. Solitary drivers ply the lash over the whole manual force to transform plantations into granaries. This allotment necessarily gives to war the largest possible number of soldiers and extracts from labor the greatest possible production of food. Combined, protected, undisturbed, the relation so developed presents a front that may well shake our faith in any speedy subjugation.

Of these five and a half millions white population, the ratio over the age of twenty-one which, according to statistical averages, is one in six, will give a fraction over 900,000 men, from which deduct as exempts or incapables twenty per cent, leaving 720,000, and add on the score of minor enlistments one half of those between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, or 55,000, and there existed 775,000, as the total possible Confederate force in the outset. If from this number 100,000 be stricken off as the aggregate of the killed, disabled, imprisoned, and paroled since the outbreak of the war, and 70,000 be added as the probable number of recruits from Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland, there will result 745,000 as the effective force. From these are to be taken the men needed for the civil service, for provost and police duties, and for regulating the transmission or exchange of productions—certainly not less than 90,000, and there remains an aggregate of 655,000 as the fruit of thorough conscription.

Perhaps, however, it is right to make from such rigid possible military array a deduction in favor of the population which abandoned the seceding States since the war began and

that which, intrinsically loyal, has evaded enrollment. In default of any certain information this may be placed at 55,000 men, thus leaving 600,000 soldiers fit for service and ready to be concentrated and marched as the skill of their commanders may determine.

Such is the strength of the array that now contests and resists the cause of advancing freedom in the nation. That the strength is not overestimated; that the conscription has been remorseless is proven by every critical battle-field where our armies have been outnumbered, and is to-day doubly attested by our beleaguered capital and widely menaced frontiers. There then is the rebellion stripped to the skin. Look at it squarely. Those 600,000 soldiers stand between us and any future of honor, liberty, or peace. How are they to be disposed of, defeated, suppressed?

It is an imposing column of attack, but it has also its element of weakness and dispersion. Remember that in making such an estimate it has been predicted upon the fact that the whole available white population was devoted to the formation of armies. No part was assigned to the labor of the field or workshop, to production or manufacture; but all this vast organization reposes for sustenance—not to speak of efficiency, on the hard-wrung toil of slaves.

Reflect, furthermore, that this whole foundation is mined, eruptive, ready to shift the burden now resting on it so heavily. The three and a half millions of black population engaged in supplying the very necessaries of life and movement to the Confederate armies are all loyal in their hearts to our cause and require only the electric shock of proclaimed freedom to disrupt the relation that gives such erectness and impulsion to our adversaries and such peril to ourselves. Years of bondage have only sharpened their sensibilities

toward liberty, and the word spoken that causes such a hope will penetrate every quarter of the South most speedily and most surely.

Emancipate the industry that upholds the war power of the South; destroy the repose of that system which has made possible a levy "*en masse*" of every white male able to bear arms; recall to the tillage of the field; to the care of the plantation; to the home supports of the community a corresponding number of the five and a half millions whites, and there will be put another face to this war.

Compel the rebels to do their own work, hand for hand, planting, harvesting, victualling, transporting—to the full substitution of the three and a half millions blacks, now held for that purpose, and where now they advance with armies they will fall back with detachments; where abundance now reigns in their camps, hunger will hurry them to other avocations. It needs only that the word be spoken.

A national declaration of freedom can no more be hidden from the remotest sections of the slave States than the uprisen sun in a cloudless sky. The falsehoods, the doubts, the repulsions that have heretofore driven them from us will give place to the kindling, mesmeric realization of protection and deliverance. In the very outset their forces, which now march to the attack, will be compelled to fall back upon the interior to maintain authority and prevent escapades "*en masse*." Insurrection will not so much be apprehended, for where armies are marshalled and surveillance withdrawn, the slave is wise enough to know that a plot with a centre—an uprising would be sure to meet with annihilation, whilst desertion from the plantations is only checked by the repressive rules of our own lines.

The right to do these things needs not to be argued; it is

of the muniments of freedom, of the resorts of self-preservation, of the investure that charges the government with the defence of the national life. And in this hour can be effected that which hereafter may not be practicable. Occupancy of the entire coast with many lodgments made by our navy, a penetration of the valley of the lower Mississippi, giving access to all its tributary streams, and the exposed front of Virginia, Tennessee, and Arkansas, give ample basis for extending such a proclamation. Resuming the advance ourselves, with augmented forces, we shall find the 600,000 Confederates compelled to detach one half their force for garrisoning the cotton States, whilst of the remaining 300,000, large numbers will necessarily fall out to replace the industrial support of their families along the border. State by State, as it is occupied and liberated, will recall for substitution those spared to offensive war in reliance upon slave production. The 300,000 will speedily become 100,000, and instead of concentrating back upon their reserves, massed in imposing column, as has heretofore been their policy when temporarily checked, the very condition of the South will require a wide dispersion of their forces. Conquest and suppression will thus be rendered matters of absolute certainty. The double result of immensely diminished numbers in the Confederate armies and of its separation into broken columns for local surveillance over all threatened slave territory is thus seen to flow from emancipation as a war measure.

In the grave contest on which we have entered for life and for death no appreciative judgment can be formed of the absolute necessity of writing freedom on the flag that leaves out of view the organization of the labor and the valor for military purposes of the population thereby liberated. The substitution of freed blacks, whenever they can relieve for other

duties the enlisted soldier, has already so far commended itself in defiance of slave codes and equality fears as to have been adopted in some divisions of our armies. The wisdom that should have foreseen in such a policy extended as far as practicable the addition to-day of 50,000 soldiers to the effective fighting force of the government, perhaps changing the fate of critical campaigns, has been unfortunately wanting. And yet the army regulations as applied to the muster-rolls of our forces will show that nearly twice that number of disciplined troops could have been relieved of ditching, teaming, serving or other occupation, and sent to the front. Moreover, any policy which looks distinctly to the subjugating and occupying, militarily, until the national authority shall be sufficiently respected to work through civil processes the States now in rebellion, must embrace within its scope the employment of acclimated troops for garrison and other duties during those seasons fatal to the health of our present levies.

The diseases of a warm climate have already been far more destructive to the lives of our soldiers, as shown by aggregated hospital reports at Washington, than all other battlefields, and hereafter in the prevalence of those epidemics so common in the Gulf States our battalions, if subjected to Southern service, would melt away disastrously. It is not possible, therefore, to separate the holding of the rebel States from the employ of acclimated troops. And for that purpose but one resource exists—the liberated blacks, whose veins course with the blood of the tropics. Arm them, drill them, discipline them, and of one fact we may be sure—they will not surrender.

I take it that a race liberated by the operation of hostilities is entitled by every usage of warfare to be armed in defence of those who liberated them, and furthermore I take it that a

people made free in accordance with the humanities of this century is entitled by every right, human and divine, to be armed as an assurance of its own recovered freedom.

This step will be at once the guarantee against future attempt at re-enslavement and the bond that no further revolt on the part of the States occupied shall be meditated. Above all else it will be assurance unmistakable that no disgraceful peace, no dismembered country, no foresworn liberties, will end this war. What, shall we stand halting before a sentimentality, blinking at shades of color, tracing genealogies up to sons of Noah, when our brothers in arms are being weighed in the scales of life and death! Go, ye men of little faith; resign your high charges, if it be you cannot face a coward clamor in the throes of a nation's great deliverance.

Go and look yonder upon the pale mother in the far north-land, weary with watching by her lonely hearth for the bright-faced boy's return. Her hope had nerved itself to trust his life to the chances of the battlefield; but the trundling wheels bear back to her door a stricken form, in coarse pine box, with the dear name chalked straggling across, indorsed "fever." Listen then to the wail of crushing woe sobbed out by a broken heart, and say to her if you can, general, statesman or president, that you refused the aid that would have saved that double life of mother and son. Verily the graves of the northmen have their equities equally with those of the rebellion.

There are those strange to say who, in addition to the war now waged by us against five and a half millions of whites, would add to the task of reduction thus imposed upon our government the further work of taking possession of and deporting to other lands the three millions and a half of blacks. Disregarding the assistance that might be derived from the

co-operation and enfranchisement of the slave labor of the seceding States, they would not only strip the slaves of the present uncertain hope of personal freedom which may be found within our lines, but, still viewing them as "chattels," to be dealt with as fancy may dictate, would serve a notice on the world that the best usage they can hope for from risking life to render us aid will be transportation to climes and countries beyond the reach of their knowledge, and that only inspire ignorance with terror. According to such, the practical solution of the present crisis consists:

First. In conquering the rebellion by making its cause a common cause, as against us, by both master and slave.

Second. In holding the conquered territory and superinducing a state of peace, plenty, and obedience by the deportation of all who are loyal and of all who labor.

With such the magnitude, not to say impracticability, of migrations that would require—even if all were favoring—transport fleets larger and costlier than those employed for the war, is not less scouted at as an obstacle, than the resistance to be foreseen from the unwilling and the depopulation that may be objected by the interested is treated as a fanaticism. Without challenging the sincerity of those who advocate such views, it will be sufficient to say that I differ from them altogether. I do not believe the government has "chattel rights" in the slave emancipated by act of war any more than the rebellion had; and I do believe that the doctrine of personal liberty, if it be worth anything—if it be not a sham and a delusion—if it is to have any application in this conflict—must be applied to them.

It is not in behalf of the noble and the refined, the generous and the cultivated, that the evangel of freedom have been heretofore borne by enthused armies in the deliverances