

**OUR COUNTRY: ITS PERIL AND ITS
DELIVERANCE. FROM ADVANCE
SHEETS OF THE DANVILLE QUARTERLY
REVIEW, FOR MARCH, 1861, PP. 73-115,
STATE OF THE COUNTRY, PP. 292-337**

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FROM

ADVANCE SHEETS

OF THE

DANVILLE QUARTERLY REVIEW, FOR MARCH, 1861.

BY THE

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ART. IV. — *Our Country — Its Peril — Its Deliverance.*

- I. THE SPIRIT OF ANARCHY: Its Rise — Progress — Present State — Nature — Tendency.
- II. GROUNDS OF HOPE AND EFFORT: Statement of the Facts, Principles, and Considerations, on which the Preservation of the Union depends.
- III. NEGRO SLAVERY: As the Cause or Occasion of Sedition, Anarchy, and Revolution — Considered in the light of our Civil and Political Institutions, — of the Law of Nature, — and of the Word of God.
- IV. AMICABLE SETTLEMENT: Statement of the Case — Relation of the North and the South to the Rendition of Fugitive Slaves, and to Slavery in the Territories, — Rights and Duties of both Parties, — Amicable Settlement as Simple and Equitable, as it is Wise and Patriotic.
- V. THE DOCTRINE OF COERCION: Its Abuse — Nature — Relation to the actual State of Affairs — The Power, Duty, and Responsibility of the General Government.

I. 1. What we propose is, *first*, to make such a statement of the condition of affairs as may be of use to upright men, in enabling them to determine what ought to be attempted, and what can be accomplished, in the way of preventing the ruin of their country; and, *secondly*, to make clear to all men, the position of a vast party in this country, who desire and who deserve, in all possible events, to be understood by posterity — and who, even if their principles are now overborne and their counsels are now rejected, may, if they are faithful to themselves, retrieve from the wreck of their country, whatever survives when the period of exhaustion shall come upon its destructive madness.

2. There is no lesson which the universal course of human affairs teaches so thoroughly, as their own instability. And yet there is no lesson so hard for men to learn; no lesson so pregnant of results, and so little heeded. How faithful ought men to be when overtaken by defeat and adversity — if they would consider that defeat and adversity, with courage and wisdom, are a preparation for triumph? How just and forbearing ought men to be in the midst of power and prosperity, if they would consider

that power and prosperity, in the degree that they are corrupt, make the road to destruction broad and sure? And how immense, how unexpected, how effectual are the resources of God, in the accomplishment of what he ordains to be results of human conduct?

3. Look at the actual position of public affairs throughout this great nation — consider whither they are tending — consider whence that tendency has arisen — consider by what means it is propagating itself: and then reflect upon the unexpected and extraordinary means by which ruin is overtaking every interest and hope of the country — and upon the absolute completeness of the ruin, when these means shall have worked their full effect. In a state of security apparently perfect, and of prosperity apparently complete — a small and fierce party, scattered through some of the Northern States, commenced a systematic and persistent agitation connected with the Black Race on this continent; and in the heart of their system lay this idea, that laws and institutions and rights and duties and interests of every description, ought to give way, if there was need of it, to the accomplishment of their designs. In the progress of time and events, and the ruin of political parties, this fundamental idea — which is the essence of lawlessness and anarchy — attaches itself in the public mind of some of the Northern States, to that particular aspect of the question of the Black Race which relates to the obligation, under the Federal Constitution, of delivering fugitive slaves; and laws of various kinds are passed, throwing the weight of State authority against the obligation of the very highest national law. And so the idea and process of disintegration, as the tendency to lawlessness and anarchy strengthens, has thus risen from the condition of a fanaticism, to the dignity of a principle recognized by States and asserted in laws. As if to warn men of the breadth of the peril involved in this tendency, and to mark the extremity of the peril arising from its connection with the question of the Black Race, one of the slave States had already, under a similar, but directly opposite tendency, formally asserted its right, not only to obstruct the execution of the laws of the United States, but to nullify them absolutely, and upon its own sole and sovereign discretion; so that the spirit of lawlessness and anarchy, in its

absolute and universal tendency to disintegrate all things — moved, though not first, yet more rapidly and by more decisive acts, at the South than at the North.

4. Once more in the progress of time and events, and the ruin of political parties — the whole nation finds itself arrayed, in the last Presidential election, into two opposite parties, (of which the defeated one is mad enough to sub-divide itself into three); and this same question of the Black Race, both in the aspect of the rendition of fugitive slaves, and in the aspect of slavery in the Territories — and these same questions of supreme law and of lawlessness as connected therewith — mounting to the highest national importance, and apparently swallowing up all other questions, are resolved, so far as that election could resolve them. But the solution is every way remarkable. For while Mr. Lincoln is elected President — the majority of the nation is so decidedly against him, that he would have been beaten if the power of Congress to create uniform electoral districts had ever been exercised; nay, would have been beaten under the existing system, if all opposed to him had been allowed by the corruption or folly of parties to unite on one opponent. Moreover the solution is further remarkable, in this, that both Houses of Congress, and, as is alleged, the Supreme Court of the United States, held his most dangerous opinions to be unconstitutional: and it is still further remarkable in this, that Mr. Lincoln himself, while representing the Northern section of the anarchical tendency of the times, is known to repudiate the original principle of that faction concerning the rendition of fugitive slaves, — and is by universal consent, even of his candid opponents, an able, honest, and patriotic man. At the end of thirty years of working of the spirit we have been tracing, a decisive event had thus put the country in a posture where it would clearly appear whether the hereditary law-abiding spirit of our race remained, the great prop and safeguard of all our institutions; or whether the spirit of anarchy, already so signally manifested at both extremities of the nation, had so far poisoned the national life of our race at its fountain, that the time had come for one of those great explosions of human passion which fill so many melancholy pages in the history of our race.

5. It is not easy to conjecture, and it is impossible to say with

certainly, what would have occurred if the late presidential election had terminated differently from what it did, — in any one of the various ways in which a different termination was possible. This far we may now speak with certainty, that in some form or other, the spirit of turbulent fanaticism which had pervaded the States of the extreme North so long and so deeply, would not without a miracle, such as history does not record, have been allayed or composed under any defeat that was possible, in the state of national parties as they are now known to have existed at that time. For there was this fatal element, long concealed — not generally believed — but openly avowed since the secession of South Carolina — that secession, as the final and deliberate choice of the extreme South, was the point to which political opinion had been long and carefully trained, and political parties long and singly directed. This fatal training, added to the widely diffused spirit of anarchy, smarting under a defeat equally signal and unnecessary, and stimulated by considerations of the very highest importance connected with the question of the Black Race in every aspect of that question — produced the apparently sudden revolution which has already, when these pages are written, led the six cotton States (South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana) to pass separate acts of secession from the United States of America. Here then is the consummation of this spirit of lawlessness and anarchy, working as we have already said it universally works, unto the disintegration — the morcelment of all things; — the consummation of it, so far as to embrace all the States producing cotton, sugar, and rice, as their great staples. What is next to be determined is, the fate of the mixed slave States — those divided between farming and planting, (North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas): and then the fate of the border slave States, (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri): and then, we may confidently add, the fate of the nation. Whatever, in the meantime, it is of the last importance to bear in mind, shall be the conduct of the whole of the free States, and especially of the border free States (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa), may be decisive alike of their own fate, and of that of all the rest, and of the nation itself for many generations.

6. Is it possible for any thoughtful person to suppose, that this spirit of reckless disregard of all existing institutions, has already accomplished all the results of which it is capable? What shall prevent it from swallowing up all the remaining slave States? What shall, after that is accomplished, prevent a counter-revolution in every one of those slave States? What shall prevent its taking some new direction with still more vehement force, throughout the whole North? What shall prevent a counter-revolution in every Northern State? And who can venture to hope, that a spirit which everywhere tramples under foot those institutions which everywhere have been esteemed most sacred, and everywhere despises the most venerable and the most cherished traditions of our country and our race; will finally slake its thirst in any thing but human blood, or fail to assuage its insatiable rapacity by universal plunder? Cannot even the blind see, that when laws are violated in the name of morality and order, and constitutions are set at nought in the name of liberty and security, and revolutions are accomplished by terror and conducted under the guidance of irresistible fanaticism; that there can be no result to such a career, as long as it has way, but the destruction of everything that human governments are instituted to protect; and that at every step of the career, the overthrow of every salutary power and the disintegration of every healthful force of society, more and more confirms the existence and the reign of universal anarchy? It is as if God should destroy every principle of cohesion in the physical universe, and leave every separate force in it working to the destruction of all things. It is as if he should destroy every idea of subjection in the moral universe, and leave the passions of men to work out all the horrors of an infinite disorder. It is as the steady working of omnipotent force, unto the production of universal helplessness. It is, when it shall pervade the earth, the realization of the conjectures of those who expound the divine predictions concerning the condition in which *The Son of Man* will find all nations at his second coming — the universal reign of lawlessness after the universal disintegration of every element capable of restraining it. What we say is — not that these results are inevitable: God forbid! But we do say they are natural — they are imminent — they are far more

to be apprehended, than what has already occurred, both in the North and in the South, was to be apprehended thirty years ago. And we may say these things with a greater confidence of an insight of the terrible future, and a more eager beseeching of our generation to beware; since during more than thirty years we have not ceased to lift up an unheeded testimony, both against the principles and the proceedings, both at the North and at the South — whose frightful results the country is now beginning to realize.

II. 1. Let us now seek, amidst this chaos, for some ground of hope and effort. Throughout the eighteen free States, society is supposed to be under the control of the Republican party. As indicated by the presidential election in November last, it may be conceded that the majority in all those States, did at that time, believe the election of Mr. Lincoln to the Presidency, to be the best of the alternatives then offered to their choice; and it may be further conceded, though it is not strictly accurate, that, at present, the local political and military power, in all those States, is in the hands of the Republican party. But it is also true that a minority in those States, numerically almost as large as the entire voting population of the fifteen slave States, voted against Mr. Lincoln — and are thoroughly opposed to the distinctive principles of the Republican party. It is also undeniable that a very large number of those who voted for Mr. Lincoln, are far more Whigs or Americans than they are Republicans: — and it is equally certain that a very large number of the Republican party itself, strictly speaking, are patriotic men, who, while they preferred the success of their party to the success of any other party, prefer the peace, the prosperity, and the security of their country above anything that could be obtained by the triumph of their party. If any political result in the future, therefore, can be considered certain, it is certain, that a revolution in opinion, more or less decided, will manifest itself throughout the free States, whenever the issue is clearly put to them between their country and any political party. And it is equally certain, that whatever party shall hurry those States, by whatever means, into the horrors of civil war, and the anguish of that impending anarchy of which we have spoken; will perish by a counter-revolu-