

world our second declaration of Independence, scarcely inferior in its causes and consequences to the first. He came here young, unknown to his country. He left these halls with a maturity of fame, which rarely falls to the lot of any statesman. I was then upon the frontier, and well do I remember with what straining eyes and heaving hearts we turned towards the Capital, to know if the honor and interests of our country would be asserted and maintained. There were then two men here, upon whom, more than upon any others, perhaps more than upon all others, devolved the task of advocating the war, and of carrying through the measures of the Administration. And nobly did they perform their duty. They were the honorable Senator from South Carolina, and a retired statesman, Mr. Clay, from whom, though it has been my fortune to differ in the party contests that divide us, yet it has always been my pride to do justice to his eminent qualities, and to his high services to his country, and especially to his services during our last contest with England. They were the leaders of that great legislative war, who, like the Homeric heroes, threw themselves into the middle of the fight, and fought the battles of their party and of their country, with equal talent, firmness, and success.

As to the evils of war, he of us is blind to all historical experience, who does not see them, and unfaithful to his position, who does not acknowledge them. There is no such representative of the States here. We all acknowledge the evils of war, both moral and material. We differ as to their degree, and as to the power of this country to endure and to inflict them. While the condition of England presents great means of annoyance, it presents also palpable elements of weakness. I am not her paucrist. I shall never be accused of that. But if I see the defects of her national character, I can see also her redeeming virtues. I am sensibly alive to the acts of injustice she has done us. The feeling is deposited at my heart's core. But I do not shut my eyes, either to her power or to the virtues she actually possesses. I can tell what she has done to attract the admiration of the world; for her deeds of war and peace are written upon many a bright page of human story. She has reached a commanding eminence among the powers of the earth—a giddy eminence; and I believe she will find it an unstable one. I do not, however, estimate her present position as high as many do, and I consider it as unsafe as almost any one can. The elements of her weakness lie upon the very surface of her affairs, open to the most careless observer. But she has great military and naval establishments, and she is engaging and extending them. I am not going to spread before the Senate the statistics of her powers of annoyance and defence. This has been sufficiently done already. But I will express my decided conviction, that these tubular statements give an exaggerated picture of her condition. Old vessels, old guns, mere skeletons, invalids, the relics of half a century of war, are arranged in formidable lists of figures, and go to swell the general aggregate.

Besides, she has peculiar drawbacks to the exertion of her power. The seeds of danger are sown in the most important province of her home empire, and may at any time start up into an abundant harvest of ruin and disaster. The dragon's teeth may become armed men.

She has possessions round the world to retain, and in many of them a discontented population to restrain. Her commerce, the very foundation of her prosperity and greatness, is scattered over all the bays, and inlets, and gulfs, and seas of the world; and he, who knows the daring character and enterprise of our people, knows that our public and private armaments are almost swept from its extensive shores. But I shall not pursue this investigation further. While I believe she will go to war with us, if she cannot escape from it without wholly sacrificing her own honor, as she views the question, I recollect she has done so twice before, with no credit to herself, but with imperishable glory for us.

A few words as to the condition of her finances, and her means of carrying on a war. It is said to be the last feather, that breaks the camel's back. That the time will come when the artificial and oppressive fiscal system of England must break down, and, like the strong man of Israel, involve her existing institutions in the fall, is as certain as any future political event can be. But that time has not yet come, and he must be a bolder or a wiser man than I am, to predict when it will come. She has the same means now to meet her war expenditures, which she has long had. The power of drawing upon the future for the exigencies of the present, leaving the generations to come to pay the debt, or to cast it off, like a burden too heavy to be borne. At this very moment she is making an experiment, which will be almost a revolution. A wise experiment, as I believe, but still a fearful one, for no old society, whose habits are fixed, and which accommodates itself with difficulty even to gradual changes.

As to the points of contrast between our condition and that of England, they are before the world; and for the purposes of peace or war, we need not fear the most searching examination.

Happen what may, we can neither be overrun nor conquered. England might as well attempt to blow up the rock of Gibraltar with a spittle, as to attempt to subdue us. I suppose an Englishman never even thinks of doing so; and I do not know that I can exhibit in stronger terms its impossibility.

I might easily spread before the Senate our capacity to annoy a maritime adversary, and to sweep the British flag from this part of the continent; but I forbear. What we have twice done in the days of our comparative weakness, we can repeat and far exceed in those days of our strength. While, therefore, I do not conceal from myself, that a war with England would temporarily check our progress, and had many evils in its train, still I have no fear of the issue, and have an abiding confidence, that we shall come out of it, not indeed unharmed, but with all the elements of our prosperity safe, and with many a glorious achievement written on the pages of our history.

It pains me, sir, to hear allusions to the destruction of this Government, and to the dissolution of this confederacy. It pains me, not because they inspire me with any fear, but because we ought to have one unpronounceable word, as the Jews had of old, and that word is *dissolution*. We should reject the feeling from our hearts and its name from our tongues. This cry of woe, we, the Jerusalem, must hardly upon my ears. Our Jerusalem is neither beleaguered nor in danger. It is yet the city upon a hill, glorious in what it is, still more glorious, by the blessing of God, in what it is to be—a landmark, inviting the nations of the world, struggling upon the stormy ocean of political oppression, to follow us to a haven of safety and of rational liberty. No English Times will enter our temple of freedom through a breach in the battlements to bear thence the ark of our constitution and the book of our laws, to take their stations in a triumphal procession in the streets of a modern Rome, as trophies of conquest and proofs of subordination.

Many a raven has croaked in my day, but the angry has failed, and the Republic has marched onward. Many a crisis has presented itself to the imagination of our political Cassandra, but we have still increased in political prosperity as we have increased in years, and that, too, with an accelerated progress unknown to the history of the world. We have a class of men, whose eyes are always upon the future, overlooking the blessings around us, and forever apprehensive of some great political evil, which is to arrest our course somewhere or other on this side of the millennium. To them, we are the image of gold, and silver, and brass, and clay, contrariety in unity, which the first rude blow of misfortune is to strike from its pedestal.

For my own part, I consider this the strongest government on the face of the earth for good, and the weakest for evil. Strong, because supported by the public opinion of a people inferior to none of the continents of the earth in all that constitutes moral worth and useful knowledge, and who have branched into their political system the breath of life, and who would destroy it, as they created it, if it were unworthy of them, or failed to fulfil their just expectations.

And weak for evil, from this very consideration, which would make its fall its and its faults the signal of its overthrow. It is the only Government in existence which no revolution can subvert. It may be changed, but it provides for its own change, when the public will requires. Plots and insurrections, and the various struggles, by which an oppressed population manifests its sufferings and seeks the recovery of its rights, have no place here. We have nothing to fear but ourselves.

And the Senator from South Carolina will permit me to remark, that the apprehension he expresses, that a war may bring forward military dictators, who would ultimately establish their own power upon the ruins of their country's freedom, is, in my opinion, if not the last of all the evils, one of the very last, which this Republic has to fear. I will not stop to point out the circumstances of our position, character, and institutions, which render a military despotism impossible in this country. They are written in our national characters, not upon the wall, but upon the hearts of every American; and they need no seal to expound them. Our safety is our union; our only fear, disunion. In the moral government of the world, national offences are punished by national calamities. It may be that we may forsake the God of our fathers, and seek after strange gods. If we do, and are struck with judicial blindness, we shall but add another to the long list of nations unworthy of the blessings acquired for them by preceding generations, and incapable of maintaining them;—but none as signally so as we.