

Transcription

"A government for ourselves"

Now in the middle of the nineteenth century we are awakened by the astounding announcement in one section of our country that we have no government worthy of our support, and the announcement is at once accompanied by a rebellion to throw off this government under which we have been so long happy and prosperous, and the inauguration of a system such as would never have been countenanced by our fathers. We of Western Virginia are asked to concur in this action. We are placed in a peculiar position. The Convention of Virginia at Richmond, so far as they have the power, have by the passage of an Ordinance of Secession withdrawn us from the Union of our fathers. They submitted their action to a vote of the people as they proclaimed it, but in a way that made that vote a mockery. The vote in form has ratified the Ordinance of Secession—thus in the estimation of that Convention withdrawing us from the United States of America. Under these circumstances Western Virginia is placed in a peculiar position.— The States north of us and some of the Slave States have made no effort by an official body to withdraw from the Union. States south of us have gone according to their opinions out of the Union. Elsewhere there are no efforts being made in any of them by any regularly constituted bodies to retain their places in the Union, while here in Western Virginia we have determined that by the help of Him who rules on high we will resist the action of that Richmond Convention, which has practiced upon us a monstrous usurpation of power, violated the Constitution of the country and violated every rule of right. We have determined I say, to resist it, and under this determination we are found here to-day to take definite action. If you gentlemen, will go with me, we will take definite, determined and unqualified action as to the course we will pursue. We will take such action as will result in Western Virginia, if not the whole of Virginia, remaining in the Union of our fathers. I am satisfied that the members of this Convention concur with me almost unanimously.

Then, in this Convention we have no ordinary political gathering. We have no ordinary task before us. We come here to carry out and execute, and, it may be, to institute, a government for ourselves. We are determined to live under a State Government in the United States of America and under the Constitution of the United States. It requires stout hearts to execute this purpose; it required men of courage—of unfaltering determination; and I believe, in the gentlemen who compose this Convention, we have the stout hearts and the men who are



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determined in this purpose. The definite line of action to be pursued, it is not for me to indicate. Here are learned gentlemen, men of experience, who, no doubt, after deliberation will devise the course proper for us to pursue.

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