

Transcription

"I shall never despair of the Republic."

To be brief, I am ready to sacrifice myself, and live in obscurity and poverty, deserted by friends for whom I would die rather than harm, if by such sacrifice I can save the rich legacy from our Fathers, and the rightful inheritance of our children. I am ready to hazard my life, if necessary, in fighting the battles of Virginia in a just cause, but I am not willing to sacrifice the best interests of my State and my country, and the hopes of oppressed mankind throughout the world, in upholding South Carolina in a bad cause; in a wholly unjustifiable and petulant whim, which she avows she has indulged for thirty years. I am not willing to rush upon destruction for a misplaced sympathy for a State that exulted over the election of a Republican president, burnt their tar barrels and illuminated their cities, because it afforded them *the pretext* for rebellion, and that has since violently seized upon the Forts, Arsenals, arms and ammunition, and money of the United States, and has fired upon, and driven from her waters, an unarmed vessel bearing that flag of the Union which has borne us triumphantly through every war and every trouble. I am not one of those who profess or feel such sympathy, nor will I uphold her in such conduct. Yet I would afford her every opportunity to retrace her injudicious step.

My earnest and urgent advice, then, is that Virginia should remain in the Union, demanding all her constitutional rights, the repeal of all unconstitutional laws—or the declaration of their nullity by the Supreme Court,—and a just punishment for those who shall resist its decisions. Let her remain in, and, taking sides with neither, act the part of mediator and peace-maker between the extremes of both sections of the country. . . .

When I see in the distance the frightful and appalling consequences of dissolution and civil war, which many will not see, until the reality is brought to their own firesides and hearthstones, where our wives and our daughters and all that is cherished on earth is clustered, I cannot but persuade myself that both parties will shudder and recoil at its approach, and come to honorable terms of settlement. *For one I shall never despair of the Republic.*

Citation: Excerpt from John Minor Botts's announcement in the *Richmond Daily Whig*, January 28, 1861.

