



Charles Ingersoll, “A Letter to a Friend in a Slave State,” (Philadelphia: John Campbell, Bookseller, 1862). Historical Society of Pennsylvania, TL4165

[2] We are in the midst of a civil war, to North and South alike unexpectedly; for when was civil war deliberated on? The North did not believe the South would leave them; the South did not believe the North would fight to retain them; the South armed and struck the blow, and now the sword is drawn on both sides, and cannot be sheathed without conquest or compromise.

The purpose of this letter is to explain to you some of the views of the persons in this State who regard conciliation as our only available resort, and look upon the extreme course of the Government as ruin.

[3] If the President and his advisers were reliable men, though the philosophy of freedom teaches to distrust power, every citizen with the love of country in his breast, would be disposed, in a great emergency; to bestow upon them a liberal confidence; but when his want of force and their want of virtue are the vice of our position, instead of the call not to embarrass the Government, which we hear from so many mouths when a measure of the administration is challenged, a watchful jealousy is the duty of all.

[7] A word now – the question for the country being war or compromise – upon the war which we are at this time waging, and the probabilities, as they strike people generally, of its success as a war of conquest. Let us suppose to ourselves all the advantages of an immense force, and grant we can keep it up to 700,000 men, which is out of the question, for no free people will pay heavy taxes, which in the much burdened countries are imposed by one class, and paid by another, and not imposed by the people on themselves. Let us also suppose, which is equally out of the question, that for any length of time we can safely tempt authority with the control of such a force.

[8] We must assume that the South will resist with all their might, and that our progress in their territory is to be effected by force of arms. Not only has there been no evidence, but the contrary, by many Northern witnesses, of a desire to see the Northern army among them; and whatever the Union feeling in the South, if kindly dealt with, it is against all reason and probability that a spirited and free people should invite to their conquest a government, however legitimate, which their immediate State, by organized action, and a majority of their people, has agreed to throw off

[18] Did you ever hear of a *people* that were conquered? In the great wars of the beginning of the present of the century, kingdoms were overrun, and peace dictated in the capitals of half dethroned monarchs; but the people made no resistance; it was only to overcome the army.

[19] Do we entertain of our own blood so poor an opinion, as for a moment to suppose we could ever beat into the Union the people of the South?

[20] And if we be wrong, are not compromise and conciliation better than war? .

And why should not the strong conciliate; why should not the head of an army of seven hundred and eighteen thousand men compromise? Whoever, let him be the most passionate Republican of them all, will recollect what has always been, and now is the way of the world, must admit that compromise is not a policy, but a necessity.

[53] But if we submit our necks to the yoke; if we yield to unconstitutional pressure, to a mock reign of would be terror; if, by a system of spying and seizing, violations of the person, violations of property, violations of the press, violations of papers and private correspondence, we are to be muzzled and hushed up; if the voice of the that is raised for freedom and union is choked in men's throats; in the North by Mr. Lincoln, in the South by Mr. Davis; if, when our plainest word ought to be spoken in its loudest tone, some Jack-in-Office is to command scilence; if at an hour when each citizen should be sentinel to the State, and public judgement to monitor authority, we, whose blood and treasure support them, are to be kept under . . . by a feeble Government, at the head of a numerous army, why then, God help us!

The difficulty – I repeat – is not with the South, it is with the North. Doubtless there are other difficulties; the two governments, the government at Washington and the government at Richmond, with two entire national establishments, two debts, two armies, two navies, two allegiances, and all the infinite entanglements which have supervened since the session of Congress of 1860-1. But the main difficulty is with the North – the North ruled by Abolitionists. While their dominon lasts, the difficulty is insuperable.

But should the next Congressional election leave the Administration in a lean minority, the Democratic party – if events do not in the mean time overwhelm the country – will have it then in their power; they will assuredly use it, to compel a change of measures; to require an earnest and sincere effort to bring about a settlement. Why should they not, out of their preponderance of votes, when opposed to the abolition party . . . elect the majority of the members of the next House of Representatives. If they do, the back of abolition is broken, and the process of regeneration will be commenced.

. . . . *To support the government* will mean that we support lawful authortiy in lawful courses, and oppose it in all other. This war, in which we have been miserably involved – by the act of the South – by the faults of the North – we will support, as a war for the Union – which being assailed with the sword, must be maintained with the sword. We will carry it on, not with the power of arms alone, but essaying, also, the force of ample justice, and offers of frank conciliation.