Epitaph on the United States of America, 1861

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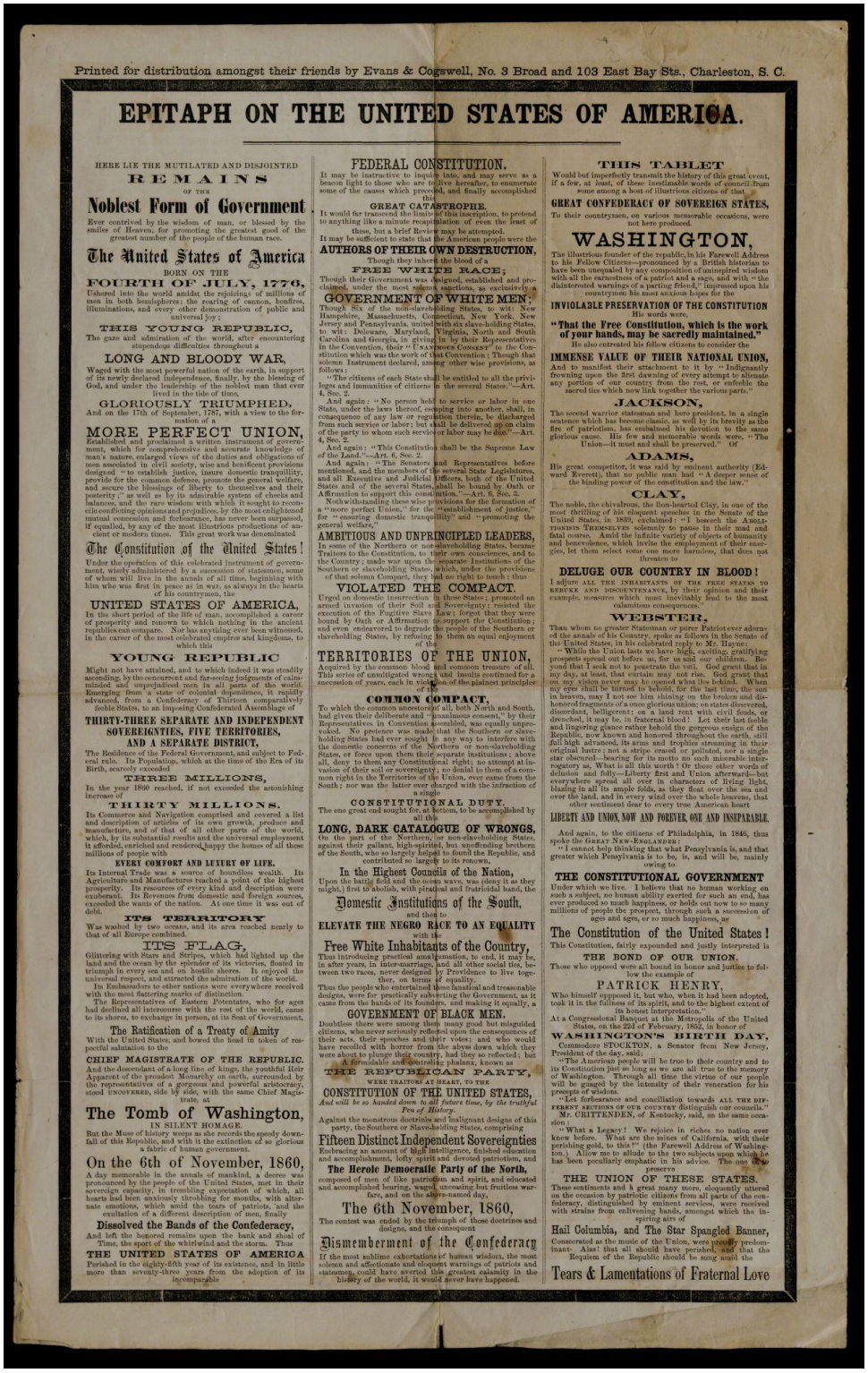

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EPITAPH ON THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

HERE LIE THE MUTILATED AND DISJOINTED

REMAINS

OF THE

Noblest Form of Government

Ever contrived by the wisdom of man, or blessed by the smiles of Heaven, for promoting the greatest good of the greatest number of the people of the human race.

The United States of America

BORN ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1776,

Ushered into the world amidst the rejoicings of millions of men in both hemispheres; the roaring of cannon, bonfires, illuminations, and every other demonstration of public and universal joy;

THIS YOUNG REPUBLIC,

The gaze and admiration of the world, after encountering stupendous difficulties throughout a

LONG AND BLOODY WAR,

Waged with the most powerful nation of the earth, in support of its newly declared independence, finally, by the blessing of God, and under the leadership of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of time,

GLORIOUSLY TRIUMPHED.

And on the 17th of September, 1787, with a view to the formation of a

MORE PERFECT UNION,

Established and proclaimed a written instrument of government, which for comprehensive and accurate knowledge of man's nature, enlarged views of the duties and obligations of men associated in civil society, wise and beneficent provisions designed "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity;" as well as by its admirable system of checks and balances, and the rare wisdom with which it sought to reconcile conflicting opinions and prejudices, by the most enlightened mutual concession and forbearance, has never been surpassed, if equalled, by any of the most illustrious productions of ancient or modern times. This great work was denominated

The Constitution of the United States!

Under the operation of this celebrated instrument of government, wisely administered by a succession of statesmen, some of whom will live in the annals of all time, beginning with him who was first in peace as in war, as always in the hearts of his countrymen, the

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

In the short period of the life of man, accomplished a career of prosperity and renown to which nothing in the ancient republics can compare. Nor has anything ever been witnessed, in the career of the most celebrated empires and kingdoms, to which this

YOUNG REPUBLIC

Might not have attained, and to which indeed it was steadily ascending, by the concurrent and far-seeing judgments of calm-minded and unprejudiced men in all parts of the world. Emerging from a state of colonial dependence, it rapidly advanced, from a Confederacy of Thirteen comparatively feeble States, to an imposing Confederated Assemblage of

THIRTY-THREE SEPARATE AND INDEPENDENT SOVEREIGNTIES, FIVE TERRITORIES, AND A SEPARATE DISTRICT,

The Residence of the Federal Government, and subject to Federal rule. Its Population, which at the time of the Era of its Birth, scarcely exceeded

THREE MILLIONS,

In the year 1860 reached, if not exceeded the astonishing increase of

THIRTY MILLIONS.

Its Commerce and Navigation comprised and covered a list and description of articles of its own growth, produce and manufacture, and of that of all other parts of the world, which, by its substantial results and the universal employment it afforded, enriched and rendered happy the homes of all these millions of people with

EVERY COMFORT AND LUXURY OF LIFE.

Its Internal Trade was a source of boundless wealth. Its Agriculture and Manufactures reached a point of the highest prosperity. Its resources of every kind and description were exuberant. Its Revenues from domestic and foreign sources, exceeded the wants of the nation. At one time it was out of debt.

ITS TERRITORY

Was washed by two oceans, and its area reached nearly to that of all Europe combined.

ITS FLAG,

Glittering with Stars and Stripes, which had lighted up the land and the ocean by the splendor of its victories, floated in triumph in every sea and on hostile shores. It enjoyed the universal respect, and attracted the admiration of the world.

Its Embassadors to other nations were everywhere received with the most flattering marks of distinction.

The Representatives of Eastern Potentates, who for ages had declined all intercourse with the rest of the world, came to its shores, to exchange in person, at its Seat of Government,

The Ratification of a Treaty of Amity

With the United States, and bowed the head in token of respectful salutation to the

CHIEF MAGISTRATE OF THE REPUBLIC.

And the descendant of a long line of kings, the youthful Heir Apparent of the proudest Monarchy on earth, surrounded by the representatives of a gorgeous and powerful aristocracy, stood UNCOVERED, side by side, with the same Chief Magistrate, at

The Tomb of Washington,

IN SILENT HOMAGE.

But the Muse of history weeps as she records the speedy downfall of this Republic, and with it the extinction of so glorious a fabric of human government.

On the 6th of November, 1860,

A day memorable in the annals of mankind, a decree was pronounced by the people of the United States, not in their sovereign capacity, in trembling expectation of which, all hearts had been anxiously throbbing for months, with alternate emotions, which amid the tears of patriots, and the exultation of a different description of men, finally

Dissolved the Bands of the Confederacy,

And left the honored remains upon the bank and shoal of Time, the sport of the whirlwind and the storm. Thus

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Perished in the eighty-fifth year of its existence, and in little more than seventy-three years from the adoption of its Incomparable

FEDERAL CONSTITUTION.

It may be instructive to inquire into, and may serve as a beacon light to those who are to live hereafter, to enumerate some of the causes which preceded, and finally accomplished this

GREAT CATASTROPHE.

It would far transcend the limits of this inscription, to pretend to anything like a minute recapitulation of even the least of those, but a brief Review may be attempted.

It may be sufficient to state that the American people were the

AUTHORS OF THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION,

Though they inherit the blood of a

FREE WHITE RACE;

Though their Government was designed, established and proclaimed, under the most solemn sanctions, as exclusively a

GOVERNMENT OF WHITE MEN:

Though Six of the non-slaveholding States, to wit: New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, united with six slave-holding States, to wit: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina and Georgia, in giving in by their Representatives in the Convention, their "UNANIMOUS CONSENT" to the Constitution which was the work of that Convention; Though that solemn Instrument declared, among other wise provisions, as follows:

"The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States."—Art. 4, Sec. 2.

And again: "No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor; but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."—Art. 4, Sec. 2.

And again: "This Constitution shall be the Supreme Law of the Land."—Art. 6, Sec. 2.

And again: "The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State Legislatures, and all Executive and Judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation to support this constitution."—Art. 6, Sec. 3.

Notwithstanding these wise provisions for the formation of a "more perfect Union," for the "establishment of justice," for "ensuring domestic tranquillity" and "promoting the general welfare,"

AMBITIOUS AND UNPRINCIPLED LEADERS,

In some of the Northern or non-slaveholding States, became Traitors to the Constitution, to their own consciences, and to the Country; made war upon the separate Institutions of the Southern or slaveholding States, which, under the provisions of that solemn Compact, they had no right to touch; thus

VIOLATED THE COMPACT.

Urged on domestic insurrection in those States; promoted an armed invasion of their Soil and Sovereignty; resisted the execution of the Fugitive Slave Law; forgot that they were bound by Oath or Affirmation to support the Constitution; and even endeavored to degrade the people of the Southern or slaveholding States, by refusing to them an equal enjoyment of the

TERRITORIES OF THE UNION,

Acquired by the common blood and common treasure of all. This series of unmitigated wrongs and insults continued for a succession of years, each in violation of the plainest principles of the

COMMON COMPACT,

To which the common ancestors of all, both North and South, had given their deliberate and "unanimous consent," by their Representatives in Convention assembled, was equally unprovoked. No pretence was made that the Southern or slaveholding States had ever sought in any way to interfere with the domestic concerns of the Northern or non-slaveholding States, or force upon them their separate institutions; above all, deny to them any Constitutional right; no attempt at invasion of their soil or sovereignty; no denial to them of a common right in the Territories of the Union, ever came from the South; nor was the latter ever charged with the infraction of a single

CONSTITUTIONAL DUTY.

The one great end sought for, at bottom, to be accomplished by all this

LONG, DARK CATALOGUE OF WRONGS,

On the part of the Northern, or non-slaveholding States, against their gallant, high-spirited, but unoffending brethern of the South, who so largely helped to found the Republic, and contributed so largely to its renown.

In the Highest Councils of the Nation,

Upon the battle field and the ocean wave, was (deny it as they might,) first to abolish, with piratical and fratricidal hand, the

Domestic Institutions of the South,

and then to

ELEVATE THE NEGRO RACE TO AN EQUALITY

with the

Free White Inhabitants of the Country,

Thus introducing practical amalgamation, to end, it may be, in after years, in inter-marriage, and all other social ties, between two races, never designed by Providence to live together, on terms of equality.

Thus the people who entertained these fanatical and treasonable designs, were for practically subverting the Government, as it came from the hands of its founders, and making it equally, a

GOVERNMENT OF BLACK MEN.

Doubtless there were among them many good but misguided citizens, who never seriously reflected upon the consequences of their acts, their speeches and their votes; and who would have recoiled with horror from the abyss down which they were about to plunge their country, had they so reflected; but

A formidable and controling phalanx, known as

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY,

WERE TRAITORS AT HEART, TO THE

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES,

And will be so handed down to all future time, by the truthful Pen of History.

Against the monstrous doctrines and malignant designs of this party, the Southern or Slave-holding States, comprising

Fifteen Distinct Independent Sovereignties

Embracing an amount of high intelligence, finished education and accomplishment, lofty spirit and devoted patriotism, and

The Heroic Democratic Party of the North,

composed of men of like patriotism and spirit, and educated and accomplished bearing, waged unceasing but fruitless warfare, and on the above-named day,

The 6th November, 1860,

The contest was ended by the triumph of those doctrines and designs, and the consequent

Dismemberment of the Confederacy.

If the most sublime exhortations of human wisdom, the most solemn and affectionate and eloquent warnings of patriots and statesmen, could have averted the greatest calamity in the history of the world, it would never have happened.

THIS TABLET

Would but imperfectly transmit the history of this great event, if a few, at least, of these inestimable words of council from some among a host of illustrious citizens of that

GREAT CONFEDERACY OF SOVEREIGN STATES,

To their countrymen, on various memorable occasions, were not here produced.

WASHINGTON,

The illustrious founder of the republic, in his Farewell Address to his Fellow Citizens—pronounced by a British historian to have been unequaled by any composition of uninspired wisdom with all the earnestness of a patriot and a sage, and with "the disinterested warnings of a parting friend," impressed upon his countrymen his most anxious hope for the

INVIOLABLE PRESERVATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

His words were,

"That the Free Constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained."

He also entreated his fellow citizens to consider the

IMMENSE VALUE OF THEIR NATIONAL UNION,

And to manifest their attachment to it by "indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts."

JACKSON,

The second warrior statesman and hero president, in a single sentence which has become classic, as well by its brevity as the fire of patriotism, has enshrined his devotion to the same glorious cause. His few and memorable words were, "The Union—it must and shall be preserved." Of

ADAMS,

His great competitor, it was said by eminent authority (Edward Everett), that no public man had "A deeper sense of the binding power of the constitution and the law."

CLAY,

The noble, the chivalrous, the lion-hearted Clay, in one of the most thrilling of his eloquent speeches in the Senate of the United States, in 1825, exclaimed: "I beseech the ABOLITIONISTS THEMSELVES solemnly to pause in their mad and fatal course. Amid the infinite variety of objects of humanity and benevolence, which invite the employment of their energies, let them select some one more harmless, that does not threaten to

DELUGE OUR COUNTRY IN BLOOD!

I adjure ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE FREE STATES, TO RENOUNCE AND DISCOUNTENANCE, by their opinion and their example, measures which must inevitably lead to the most calamitous consequences."

WEBSTER,

Than whom no greater Statesman or purer Patriot ever adorned the annals of his Country, spoke as follows in the Senate of the United States, in his celebrated reply to Mr. Hayne:

"While the Union lasts we have high, exciting, gratifying prospects spread out before us, for us and our children. Beyond that I seek not to penetrate the veil. God grant that in my day, at least, that curtain may not rise. God grant that on my vision never may be opened what lies behind. When my eyes shall be turned to behold, for the last time, the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious union; on states dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold the gorgeous ensign of the Republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original lustre; not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured—bearing for its motto no such miserable interrogatory as, What is all this worth? Or those other words of delusion and folly—Liberty first and Union afterward—but everywhere spread all over in characters of living light, blazing in all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind over the whole heavens, that other sentiment dear to every true American heart

LIBERTY AND UNION, NOW AND FOREVER, ONE AND INSEPARABLE.

And again, to the citizens of Philadelphia, in 1846, thus spoke the GREAT NEW-ENGLANDER:

"I cannot help thinking that what Pensylvania is, and that greater which Pensylvania is to be, is, and will be, mainly owing to

THE CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT

Under which we live. I believe that no human working on such a subject, no human ability exerted for such an end, has ever produced so much happiness, or holds out now to so many millions of people the prospect, through such a succession of ages and ages, of so much happiness, as

The Constitution of the United States!

This Constitution, fairly expounded and justly interpreted is

THE BOND OF OUR UNION.

Those who opposed were all bound in honor and justice to follow the example of

PATRICK HENRY,

Who himself opposed it, but who, when it had been adopted, took it in the fullness of its spirit, and to the highest extent of its honest interpretation."

At a Congressional Banquet at the Metropolis of the United States, on the 22d of February, 1852, in honor of

WASHINGTON'S BIRTH DAY,

Commodore STOCKTON, a Senator from New Jersey, President of the day, said:

"The American people will be true to their country and to its Constitution just so long as we are all true to the memory of Washington. Through all time the virtue of our people will be gauged by the intensity of their veneration for his precepts of wisdom.

"Let forbearance and conciliation towards ALL THE DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF OUR COUNTRY distinguish our councils."

Mr. CRITTENDEN, of Kentucky, said, on the same occasion:

"What a Legacy! We rejoice in riches no nation ever knew before. What are the mines of California, with their perishing gold, to this" (the Farewell Address of Washington.) Allow me to allude to the two subjects upon which he has been peculiarly emphatic in his advice. The one is to preserve

THE UNION OF THESE STATES.

These sentiments and a great many more, eloquently uttered on the occasion by patriotic citizens from all parts of the confederacy, distinguished by eminent services, were received with strains from enlivening bands, amongst which the inspiring airs of

Hail Columbia, and The Star Spangled Banner,

Consecrated as the music of the Union, were proudly predominant. Alas! that all should have perished, and that the Requiem of the Republic should be sung amid the

Tears & Lamentations of Fraternal Love

Evans & Cogwell, Epitaph on the United States of America, 1861.
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