

## Transcription

### **"Virginia should step forth to-day"**

There is a principle that underlies one of the resolutions of that Peace Conference which forbids that Virginia should submit to it. It may seem small and insignificant in itself; but it underlies the foundation upon which all our institutions rest. That Peace Conference declares that a slaveholder of the Southern States shall not have a right to travel over a non-slaveholding State with his property, while a Yankee, from the Green Mountains of Vermont, may trot his Morgan through the State of Virginia, live here and claim the protection of the laws of the land for his property. Is that equality? Is that justice, that I should be denied the privilege of taking my property whithersoever I desire, while these Northern men shall take their property wherever they choose? Sir, it is an inequality to which Virginia will not submit. But should Virginia offer any further propositions of compromise to these men who have been trampling, are now and will continue to trample upon our most sacred rights and most vital institutions; and should we, sir, on bended knees, beg our oppressors and those who have aggrieved us to do justice—or should we stand upholding our own institutions and our own rights, and defy any further aggressions? We have done nothing that a good citizen would not do. We have not invaded the rights of the Northern States, neither their soil nor their institutions. They are the aggressors, and upon their shoulders should rest the responsibility of all that has occurred. And yet, some gentlemen, probably, will be willing to offer to these men additional opportunities to grant us rights that are already granted to us.

For one, sir, there is no power on this earth, there is no connection, there is no state of circumstances that will induce me to go into a Convention of any description with the people of the non-slaveholding States upon this question.

But, sir, the patriot's heart sinks within him when he reflects that this great temple of human liberty is crumbling in the dust. I had hoped, and you had hoped, sir, that the proud eagle, that emblem of our greatness and our liberty, with one foot upon Plymouth Rock and the other stretching to Vancouver's island, and then with his beak lapping in the waters of Cape Sable, slaking his thirst for awhile in the waters of the Rio Grande, looking into the future of the South-West, would have been permitted to pursue his onward progress, until he had embraced within



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the sphere of his supervision the adjacent countries whose union with us would seem to be an inevitable decree.

But, sir, Abolition fanaticism has perverted this destiny, and that proud eagle is driven from his high and elevated position to seek some more congenial spot where he may hereafter repose in peace. And where is that, sir? it is in that noble temple that is now being built up in the Southern States. There, sir, he will find his future dwelling, and, as I say in that resolution, Virginia should step forth to-day, and form one of the columns of that beautiful temple which is intended for the future dwelling of freemen's sons.

Now, Mr. President, where will Virginia go is a settled question. Her interests, her associations, her sympathies all say where, but when? that is the question. When will she go? If I had my way at this 4th day of March, 1861, at this very hour of 12 o'clock, while Abraham Lincoln is standing upon the Eastern portico of the Federal Capitol swearing to maintain and defend the already violated Constitution of the United States—whilst he is taking the oath of office from the venerable Chief Justice of the United States—I would have you, sir, standing on the West portico of the Virginia Capitol, swearing by her ancient fame that his sceptre should never extend over the Old Dominion. I would, at this hour, if I had my way, have you there, sir, proclaiming that Virginia is no longer a member of this Confederacy.

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