

Mr. STIRLING. Perhaps there may not be much difference upon that point. I understood the gentleman to assert it as a duty, and do not recollect his using the term "flagrant;" but I suppose my memory is in fault upon that subject. This right to resist, I suppose, is a legal right, as much in England as here. Men have the same right here, subject to the arbitration of the Supreme Court, if they take their lives in their hands, if they choose to resist and be tried. What do you mean then by the doctrine of revolution?

I am very free to say that I do not intend to be responsible for what Mr. Lincoln may have said when he used the language that has been alluded to. I do not mean to be responsible for what any of the people who have gone before us have said with regard to the question except so far as I agree with them; I mean upon the right of revolution, or the duty of the people to separate when they cannot get along together. I am perfectly willing to take the opinion of anybody upon a matter of which he knows as much as I do; that is when he has the same facts and the same circumstances to reason upon and stand upon. The men that framed this government came out of the Revolution as friends and brothers; and they came out under circumstances very different from the circumstances that surround us. They had a general idea that this government would be broken up if any considerable portion of the people attempted resolutely and firmly to resist it. Mr. Lincoln had the same idea. Mr. Everett had the same idea. When the war first broke out there was scarcely a prominent public man in the North who believed that this government was able ever to make a serious attempt to resist the States if they attempted to secede. So much for the authority on that subject.

I admit the right of revolution as firmly as anybody else admits it, except so far as this, that under our democratic system where we have provided universal suffrage, where we have taken all these methods of developing the popular power, which the old governments of the world seem to be afraid of, the establishment of these rights in the democratic form of government is to that extent an abridgment of the right of revolution. Under a monarchy you can have no other remedy than a revolution; but under an elective government, every two years or four years, there is provided an opportunity to change the government, which restricts the right of revolution just so far as it affords a peaceable remedy. Hence there is a greater responsibility under such a government in making a revolution.

Otherwise there is no use in a democratic form of government. It is not right for us to run all the risks of absolute popular sovereignty, together with all the dangers which many feared from trusting universal suffrage with

the great mass of the people. It is unwise to continue our democratic system if we are to run all the risks of convulsion that are to be found in the old world, and the risks of our own system too. I say that our system of government restrains the right of revolution in that sense; and it is qualified also in another sense.

I do not deny the abstract right of any portion of the people to rise under oppression; but if they trample on my toes when they rise, I have a right to use my foot. I say that the citizens of the United States, if any portion of the people of the United States attempt to rise, have a right to take into consideration how far that affects their rights and liberties. They have a right to say in the first place, "Your revolution is on principles which imperil us; your revolution, if successful, destroys us. We have the same right to self-preservation that you have; and if your right of self-preservation justifies you in rising against the government, the same right justifies us in putting you down." That is all apart from the legal question of coercion; and that is just the reason why Everett, Lincoln and all those men were mistaken with regard to what was going on. It was a fact that there existed in the minds of the people a consciousness that everything to them depended upon the existence of this government. When the guns were fired upon Fort Sumter, Mr. Lincoln was impelled to do what I am convinced that up to that moment he had no idea of doing. He had no idea that he ever would have an army in Tennessee and North Carolina. But the people ruled. The great tide of the people's power, the energy and the will of the people, carried the government at Washington along with the public mind of the country, in the same direction in which their irresistible impulse drove them. It was the truth flashing from the lightning of the people's power; it was truth expressed in those instincts of the people, and expressed in a manner excelled only by the revelations of Omnipotence. There is no such truth as truth flashed out from the convictions of the people, growing out from their instincts and the traditions of their lives. The great truths of the world are truths of that character. It was the truth that the people of the United States had down deep in their hearts, that came out. It was the consciousness that this war involved a principle that was dear to them, which made them determine that they would not allow any right of revolution or anything else which would imperil them.

Gentlemen talk about the Constitution of the United States. What is the Constitution of the United States, grand as it is in its principles and in its origin? It is paper, and pen, and ink? Take away the territory of the United States, the people of the United States, and what is the Constitution of the