

ple are represented, which operates directly on the people individually, not upon the states; they retained all the power they did not grant. But each state having expressly parted with so many powers as to constitute jointly with the other states a single nation, cannot from that period possess any right to secede, because such secession does not break a league, but destroys the unity of a nation; and any injury to that unity is not only a breach which would result from the contravention of a compact, but it is an offence against the whole Union. To say that any state may at pleasure secede from the Union, is to say that the United States, are not a nation; because it would be a solecism to contend that any part of a nation might dissolve its connexion with the other parts, to their injury or ruin, without committing any offence.

Secession, like any other revolutionary act, may be morally justified by the extremity of oppression, but to call it a constitutional right, is confounding the meaning of terms; and can only be done through gross error, or to deceive those who are willing to assert a right, but would pause before they made a revolution, or incur the penalties consequent on a failure.

Because the Union was formed by compact, it is said the parties to that compact may, when they feel themselves aggrieved, depart from it; but tis precisely because it is a compact that they cannot. A compact is an agreement or binding obligation. It may, by its terms, have a sanction or penalty for its breach, or it may not. If it contains no sanction, it may be broken with no other consequence than moral guilt; if it have a sanction, then the breach incurs the designated or implied penalty. A league between independent nations, generally, has no sanction other than a moral one: or, if it should contain a penalty, as there is no common superior, it cannot be enforced. A government, on the contrary, always has a sanction, express or implied; and, in our case, it is both necessarily implied and expressly given. An attempt by force of arms to destroy a government, is an offence, by whatever means the constitutional compact may have been formed; and such government has the right, by the law of self defence, to pass acts for punishing the offender, unless that right is modified, restrained or resumed, by the constitutional act. In our system, although it is modified in the case of treason, yet authority is expressly given to pass all laws necessary to carry its power into effect, and under this grant provision has been made