

tame of his fellow. A thousand channels of communication with the people are always open, through which the humblest citizen may criticise public measures, and arraign before the tribunal of public opinion, the candidate for official station, or those to whom for the time being may be entrusted the management of the affairs of Government.

Thus much may be asserted, in relation to secret political associations upon the hypothesis, that the ends sought to be attained may be such as are warranted by the laws of the land, and by the spirit and character of our civil institutions. But how much more are they to be deprecated, when those purposes tend to the subversion of the well established and most dearly cherished principles of our Government, and to the establishment of rules for discriminating against large classes of citizens, not only unknown to the Federal Constitution and those of the several States, but plainly prohibited both by the letter and spirit of each and all of them.

The nature and character of the issues, too, to which these organizations have given rise, are such as must be deeply deplored by all who sincerely wish the permanent peace of the country.— The welfare of the Union depends so much upon the united affections and patriotism of the whole people, that any formidable effort “to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection,” to segregate and divide them into clans or classes by a proposed exclusion from any right of citizenship, either on account of place of birth or religious opinion, must excite in every true patriot feelings of the most painful solicitude. All history admonishes us that a war of races and sects is the deadliest curse that can afflict a nation. Let us not turn a deaf ear to her warning voice, by countenancing those who may rashly involve us in both, in the effort to accomplish political ends, by appealing to a morbid and fanatical religious zeal, and thus stirring at their sources, the most ungovernable passions and prejudices of the human heart. Indeed it may require already a most vigorous exercise of public virtue to turn back the tide of evil flowing upon us, from an improvident introduction of religious issues into the field of political agitation and to restrain that proclivity to intolerance and proscription, which has recently been developed in different sections of the country. We should ever guard the perfect freedom of the citizen in matters of religious opinion, and the purity of the ballot-box as we would our honor, and resist every invasion of either as a blow aimed at the very corner-stone of our political edifice. If on the one hand we permit brute force to control the ballot-box, and violence to deter the quiet and peaceably disposed citizen from the exercise of his_n right of suffrage, or on the other, allow a citizen to be proscribed on account of his religious faith, we “poison the very fountain of public security,” our Constitution becomes a solemn mockery and the Republic a cheat and a delusion, whose very essence is despotism.

I herewith transmit all the legislative resolves which, since your