

What students might read in high school history.

There Is To Be No War

Alfred Iverson of Georgia
Speaking before the U.S. Senate
December 4, 1860

We intend, Mr. President, to go out peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must; but I do not believe, with the Senator from New Hampshire, that there is going to be any war. If five or eight States go out, they will necessarily draw all the other Southern States after them. That is a consequence that nothing can prevent. If five or eight States go out of this Union, I should like to see the man that would propose a declaration of war against them, or attempt to force them into obedience to the Federal Government at the point of the bayonet or the sword.

Sir, there has been a good deal of vaporing on this subject. A great many threats have been thrown out. I have heard them on this floor, and upon the floor of the other House of Congress; but I have also perceived this: they come from those who would be the very last men to attempt to put their threats into execution. Men talk sometimes about their eighteen million who are to whip us; and yet we have heard of cases in which just such men had suffered themselves to be switched in the face, and trembled like sheep-stealing dogs, expecting to be shot every minute.

But, sir, there is to be no war. The Northern States are controlled by sagacious men, like the distinguished Senator from New York [William H. Seward]. Where public opinion and action are thus controlled by men of common sense, who know well that they cannot succeed in a war against the Southern States, no such attempt at coercion will be made. If one State alone was to go out, unsustained by her surrounding sister States, possibly war might ensue, and there might be an attempt made to coerce her, and that would give rise to civil war; but, sir, South Carolina is not to go out alone. In my opinion, she will be sustained by all her Southern sisters. They may not all go out immediately; but they will, in the end, join South Carolina in this important movement; and we shall, in the next twelve months, have a confederacy of the Southern States, and a government inaugurated, and in successful operation, which, in my opinion, will be a government of the greatest prosperity and power that the world has ever seen.

The fifteen slave States, or even the five of them now moving, banded together in one government, and united as they are soon to be, would defy the world in arms, much less the Northern States of this confederacy. Fighting on our own soil, in defence of our own sacred rights and honor, we could not be conquered even by the combined forces of all the other States; and sagacious, sensible men in the Northern States would understand that too well to make the effort.