

Transcription

"I owe Virginia little; my country much."

FOR THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

Fort Crittenden, Utah, June 6, 1861.

I have seen the call of the Virginia Convention on all natives of the State in the army and navy, and have been the subject of other more pointed appeals.

The respect which I owe to the opinions of the citizens of my native State demands of me an answer—an exposition of my circumstances and views of duty.

I belong to a district of the State which, I just learn, has *voted for Union*. At fourteen years of age I was severed from Virginia; the National Government adopted me as its pupil and future defender; it gave me education and a profession; and I then made a solemn oath to bear true allegiance to the United States of America, and to "serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever." This oath and honor alike forbid me to abandon their standard at the first hour of danger.

In the national service I have been for thirty-four years a Western man, and if my citizenship be localized a citizen of Missouri.

My military profession has not prevented attentive observation of political affairs; and I have had of late the vantage ground of a calm position. Thus I have formed strong political opinions, which must have had their weight in deciding my course.

Now, what was the true *status* of a great sectional struggle, when the Virginia Convention resolved upon revolution?

For the first time in our national history her citizens enjoyed a legal right to settle *with their slave property* on every acre of the public domain; and this had just been recognized, for the first time, by the Republican party in their votes for their Territorial acts of Congress. If a barren right, it was too confessedly a mere point of honor. And slavery was recognized by local law, with the acquiescence of that party, in all the territory south of the old Missouri compromise line.

The "personal liberty" acts of some Northern States—misrepresented, but really disloyal and irritating—were being reconsidered; some had already been modified or repealed.

The Democratic party was gaining strength; was successful in some of the New England States. But for Southern defection it had been in control of two of the three great departments of Government.



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The fugitive slave law had just been executed at *Chicago* with unwonted facility by an officer appointed by the new Administration.

But one patent fact remains: the "Confederate" States had committed an overt act of aggressive *war upon the nation!* they threatened its capital, and the President had called for militia for public defence.

Years ago public men at the South began to despair of their habitual control in the future of the power of the National Government; they were irritated at this prospect, and unreasonably, for it was to be the legitimate result of our political system, and of sectional institutions. But the politicians of the "Cotton States" had long familiarized themselves with ultra ambitious schemes; they were committed—especially in South Carolina—beyond any dignity of retraction to vain State-rights theories and threats of State action; they embraced wild, dazzling, but unscrupulous and impracticable designs; they resolved to *rule*, if only amid the ruins of their country. They *conspired*; they had influence to sever the great national party; they remorselessly turned their backs on their constant and sorely pressed friends at the North and West. They forced an election by a minority of the people; and then gladly raised the cry of sectional domination, and of imaginary injuries and evils to follow. They *took advantage of their own wrong*, and pronounced a political crime the success of a sectional party, to which they had deliberately contributed.

Then the oligarchy of South Carolina, (a State not very homogeneous, politically or socially, with any other part of the nation,) with contemptuous disregard of the dignity and of the counsels of their neighbors, coolly set themselves to convert a great excitement into temporary madness. They applied the torch to the temple of free government. South Carolina assumed the bad eminence of leader in revolution and ruin. Thus aided, the arts of demagogues and the violent energies of rebellious spirits elsewhere dragged or dragooned the reluctant *voiceless* inhabitants of six other States into her train. Ever since the leaders have exerted every art to gain over the "Border States," to save themselves from failure; until desperately they lit the torch of war; then Virginia fell into the snare. In a secondary position, she is made a tool—a fender against collision—a battle-ground. When the war tocsin sounded her Catalines, her mad youths, her city mobs, drove excitement to frenzy; and a great Union majority in the Convention was overcome: Thus recklessly, for a time, the temperate voice of duty has been drowned; and the good old State may have been plunged into the darkness of moral and physical desolation—the hell of a bitter civil, it may be a servile war.



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I have given the utmost condensation to this sketch of my views and convictions; it is not a time for many words. If I had been on the ground I might have felt tempted to shoulder a musket in defence of the mother of *dead* statesmen, "right or wrong;" but, alas! I might have been first called upon to encounter the associates of childhood in the honest mountains and valleys of her West. What dire complications of crime! To cut this gordian knot of horrors my sword had instinctively turned against the usurping "majesty" of cotton.

I owe Virginia little; my country much. She has entrusted me with a distant command; and I shall remain under her flag as long as it waves the sign of the National Constitutional Government.

In these far distant mountains I could only offer patriotic prayers for the result of the vote on the 23d of May. I trust that reason may have then recovered her *sway*; that the voice of a majority may not have been restrained by bayonets; that, sounding above the clamor of anarchy and *still respected*, it may have pronounced the loyalty and just attitude of the State.

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