

Slavery and States Rights

Great Speech of Hon. Joseph Wheeler, of Alabama.

From the Richmond, Va., Dispatch, July 31, 1894

Causes Of The War.

Opposition of the Southern Colonists to Slavery, and Their Devotion to the Union--Advocates of Secession.

On Friday, July 13th, 1894, the House of Representatives being in Committee of the Whole, on appropriations and expenditures, and having under consideration the bill to remove the charge of desertion standing against Patrick Kelleher, late private, Company C, Thirty-eighth Illinois Volunteers, Mr. Wheeler, of Alabama, as a member of the Committee on Military Affairs, made a speech which has since attracted widespread attention. The discussion, which became animated, led up to the causes of the late war and its immense expenditures, and Mr. Wheeler brought out some startling historical facts. He said:

I did not intend or desire to enter into any discussion about the war, but in reply to the question of the distinguished gentleman from New York, General Curtis, I will say that these expenditures were caused by events which I deplored. The armies causing these immense expenditures were raised for reasons with which I was not in sympathy, and I regretted very much that they were raised. (Laughter and applause). I never thought them necessary, because I believed then, as I believe now, that our appeals should have been heeded when we went on our knees at the Peace Congress, in Philadelphia, to beg for arbitration and peace, and to beg that some guarantee should be given that the Constitution of the country should be regarded.



CHIEF-JUSTICE CHASE IN THE PEACE CONVENTION.

Chief-Justice Chase told our southern people, in his great speech of February 6, 1861, that neither he nor any of the leaders of the Republican party, could guarantee to the South that the party coming into power would obey the clause of the Constitution which pledged protection to the property of the people of the South.

Mr. Chase said:

The result of the national canvass which recently terminated in the election of Mr. Lincoln has been spoken of by some as the effect of a sudden impulse or of some irregular excitement of the popular mind; and it has been somewhat confidently asserted that, upon reflection and consideration, the hastily-formed opinions which brought about the election will be changed.

I cannot take this view of the result of the presidential election. I believe, and the belief amounts to absolute conviction, that the election must be regarded as a triumph of principles cherished in the hearts of the people of the free States.

We have elected him (Mr. Lincoln). After many years of earnest advocacy and of severe trial we have achieved the triumph of that principle. By a fair and unquestioned majority we have secured that triumph. Do you think we, who represent this majority, will throw it away? Do you think the people will sustain us if we undertake to throw it away? I must speak to you plainly, gentlemen of the South. It is not in my heart to deceive you. I, therefore, tell you explicitly that if we of the North and West would consent to throw away all that has

been gained in the recent triumph of our principles, the people would not sustain us, and so the consent would avail you nothing.

Mr. Chase, in that speech, with great force, gave the South to understand that the Northern States would not, and ought not, to comply with the obligations of the Federal Constitution.

He said if the leaders attempted an enforcement of that part of the Constitution which the South demanded, the people of the North could not sustain them, and they would be powerless.

But he said we may do this: We admit the contract, we admit the constitutional contract, and we may regard it similar to cases in chancery where circumstances have arisen that make a party unable to comply with his contract, and, therefore, the court decrees pecuniary compensation.

There were many reasons which brought on the conditions which culminated in the war, which necessitated the vast expenditure of money which is exhibited in the table.

The doctrine of States rights, protective tariff, internal improvements, and in fact all the questions upon which the Democratic party differed with their political opponents, entered into the question; but as history seems to contend that the existence of slavery was the main cause, I will comply with my friends' request, and, from a southern standpoint, give some reasons which come to my mind, and in doing so I beg that every one present will believe me when I disclaim any feeling or any disposition to censure any one or any section.

I know all, and especially I know the soldiers, will accept my statements in the same good feeling in which they are uttered, and will appreciate the propriety of a southern man calling attention to historical facts, which refute allegations made upon this floor, that the responsibility of the war rested altogether upon the southern people.

When the people of the South settled on the shores of Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, they had no intention of encouraging or even tolerating the institution of slavery.

The thrifty New England seamen, in their voyages to the Indies and other countries, saw its practical operation, and solely with the view of profit in the transportation and sale of the African, they, with characteristic energy, urged upon all the Colonies the great advantages which would result from utilizing this character of labor. Their friends in the North readily acceded to their importunities, but not so with those of the South.

SOUTHERN COLONIES OPPOSED SLAVERY.

Oglethorpe and his colonists were possibly the most determined in resisting the importation, sale and use of African slaves; and for twenty years they were successful in the enforcement of the law which prohibited the landing of slaves in Georgia. Finally, together with the other Southern States, they succumbed, and the New England ship owners amassed fortunes by plying the business of buying negroes in Africa, transporting them to the United States, and selling them for the most part to southern people.

The evil of this traffic soon became apparent to the people of the South, and when the Constitution was framed in 1787, the South demanded that the fundamental law of our land should inhibit this traffic of importing human beings from Africa. The South was resisted by the New England slave-traders, and as a compromise, it was agreed that the trade should be restricted, and after the year 1800, entirely prohibited, but, by the persistency of New England, the provision was finally extended to the year 1808.

It has been charged that the opposition of southern slave-holders, which was manifested in the convention to the continued importation of slaves, was attributable to their desire to maintain the value of the slave property they already possessed, but contemporaneous writing clearly shows that the mass of these people were actuated by no such selfish motives.

Very soon the people of the North found that their climate was not adapted to slave labor, and as the Constitution prohibited the continuance of the profitable business of catching or buying negroes in Africa and selling them to the people of the South, they ceased to have any interest in this class of property. I do not say that the lack of pecuniary interest actuated any one, but about this time there commenced what history will record as a war upon the institution of slavery.

NORTHERN STATES NULLIFY THE CONSTITUTION.

Instead of upholding and enforcing the constitutional guarantee which I have read, many States of the North enacted laws making it a criminal offence for any official to comply with his oath of office and comply with the terms of the Constitution, so far as it affected this question. This was done against the protest of such great men as Edward Everett and Daniel Webster.

This precise question was discussed by that great statesman, Daniel Webster, in his Buffalo speech of May 22, 1851. He said:

Then there was the other matter, and that was the fugitive-slave law. Let me say a word about that. Under the provisions of the Constitution, during Washington's administration, in the year 1793, there was passed by general consent a law for the restoration of fugitive slaves. Hardly any one opposed it at that period; it was thought to be necessary in order to carry the Constitution into effect; the great men of New England and New York all concurred in it. It passed and answered all the purposes expected from it till about the year 1841 or 1842, when the States interfered to make enactments in opposition to it.

We see here that Mr. Webster states that these laws, enacted by Northern States, nullifying this constitutional provision, commenced as far back as 1841 to 1842. He continued:

Now I undertake, as a lawyer, and on my professional character, to say to you and to all, that the law of 1850 is decidedly more favorable to the fugitive than General Washington's law of 1793. * *

Such is the present law, and, much opposed and maligned as it is, it is more favorable to the fugitive slave than the law enacted during Washington's administration in 1793, which was sanctioned by the North as well as by the South. The present violent opposition has sprung up in modern times. From whom does this clamor come?

* * * Look at the proceedings of the anti-slavery conventions in Ohio, Massachusetts, and at Syracuse, in the State of New York. What do they say? That, so help them God, no colored man shall be sent from the State of New York back to his master in Virginia. Do not they say that? And, to the fulfillment of that, they pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. Their sacred honor! They pledge their sacred honor to violate the Constitution; they pledge their sacred honor to commit treason against laws of their country.

We see here that Daniel Webster charged that the agitators against slavery were guilty of pledging their honor to violate the Constitution. He said they pledged their sacred honor to commit treason against the laws of their country. If possible, Mr. Webster was even more emphatic in his great speech at Capon Springs. This devoted patriot said:

The leading sentiment in the toast from the chair is the union of the States. The union of the States. What mind can comprehend the consequences of that union, past, present, and to come? The union of these States is the all-absorbing topic of the day; on it all men write, speak, think, and dilate from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. And yet, gentlemen, I fear its importance has been insufficiently appreciated.

Again, speaking as a constitutional lawyer, Mr. Webster said:

How absurd it is to suppose that when different parties enter into a compact for certain purposes either can disregard any one provision, and expect, nevertheless, the other to observe the rest! I intend, for one, to regard and maintain and carry out to the fullest extent the Constitution of the United States, which I have sworn to support in all its parts and all its provisions. It is written in the Constitution--

"No person held to service or labor in one State under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

That is as much a part of the Constitution as any other, and as equally binding and obligatory as any other on all men, public or private. And who denies this? None but the Abolitionists of the North. And, pray, what is it they will not deny? They have but the one idea; and it would seem that these fanatics at the North and the Secessionists at the South are putting their heads together to devise means to defeat the good designs of honest,

patriotic men. They act to the same end and the same object, and the Constitution has to take the fire from both sides.

Mr. Webster then told his hearers that if the Northern States persisted in their refusal to comply with the Constitution the South would no longer be bound to observe the constitutional compact He said:

I have not hesitated to say, and I repeat, that if the Northern States refuse, willfully and deliberately, to carry into effect that part of the Constitution which respects the restoration of fugitive slaves, and Congress provides no remedy, the South would no longer be bound to observe the compact. A bargain cannot be broken on one side and still bind the other side. I say to you, gentlemen in Virginia, as I said on the shores of Lake Erie and in the city of Boston, as I may say again in that city or elsewhere in the North, that you of the South, have as much right to recover your fugitive slaves as the North has to any of its rights and privileges of navigation and commerce.

Mr. Webster also said:

I am as ready to fight and to fall for the constitutional rights of Virginia as I am for those of Massachusetts.

Then followed the election of Abraham Lincoln upon a platform which clearly informed the southern people that the guaranties of the Constitution, which they revered, and the doctrines of State rights and other principles of government, which they cherished, were to be ignored, and that they were to be deprived of the greater part of their property, and all possibility of continued prosperity.

The South was of necessity alarmed. They were seized with the fear that the extreme leaders of the Republican party would not stop at any excess, that they would not be satisfied with depriving them of their property, but that, so far as possible, they would place the ignorant slave not only upon equality with, but even above his former master.

It was but natural that such an impending fate horrified the people, and that measures to avert it were contemplated and discussed.

SOUTHERN PEOPLE DEVOTED TO THE UNION.

The southern people loved the Union with a devotion which had no precedent in the history of the world. It was a work very largely of their creation. Their blood and treasures were freely given to secure its independence. The South gave to that sacred cause the voice and eloquence of Patrick Henry, to arouse the people to action; the pen of Jefferson, to write the Declaration that we were a free and independent people; the sword of Washington, to win the battles which made us one of the nations of the earth; and it also furnished Chief-Justice Marshall, to proclaim the principles upon which American jurisprudence and civil liberty are founded.

They were southern with Washington who crossed the Alleghenies, one hundred and forty-one years ago, to defend the pioneers who were braving the dangers of the western forest. They were southern men who, under Captain Gorman, hastened to the defence of Massachusetts at the first sound of battle at Concord and Lexington. In the war of 1812 the South gave her undivided support to the flag, and largely contributed to the success of our arms. The last battle of that war was fought by a southern general, with southern men, on southern soil.

In the Indian wars the South always furnished her full share of soldiers, and in the Mexican war the killed and wounded from the Southern States in proportion to population was about three times that of the States of the North. In the war of 1861-'65 the South furnished 640,000 to the Federal army, a larger number than it furnished to the Confederate army. This was the only period during which there was any division of sentiment on this point among the southern people, for since 1865 they have been as devoted to the flag and the Union as the people of any part of our land.

The people of the South did not wish to give up the benefits of a government to the establishment of which they had so largely contributed. They were loyal and law-abiding, and refused to follow the example of the

participants in the Shay rebellion in New York, the whiskey rebellion in Pennsylvania, the Dorr rebellion in Rhode Island, and the Hartford convention rebellion in Connecticut; but they reluctantly succumbed to the conviction that the party about to take control would have no respect for their rights. For more than half a century they had been taught by their northern brethren that when the people of a State found that it was not to their advantage to remain in the Union it was not only their privilege but their duty to peacefully withdraw from it.

SECESSION ADVOCATED BY MASSACHUSETTS.

Ninety years ago the people of Massachusetts expressed themselves in favor of the principle of secession by the enactment of the following resolution in the Massachusetts Legislature:

That the annexation of Louisiana to the Union transcends the constitutional power of the Government of the United States. It formed a new Confederacy, to which the States united by the former compact are not bound to adhere.

It is clearly shown by the history of the times that the people of New England were very pronounced in their expressions that the Constitution recognized the unquestioned right of a State to secede from the Union.

At the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the inauguration of Washington, April 30, 1839, ex-President John Quincy Adams delivered an address which was received with great approval by the people. In that speech Mr. Adams said:

But the indissoluble union between the several States of this confederated nation is, after all, not in the right but in the heart. If the day should ever come (may Heaven avert it!) when the affections of the people of these States shall be alienated from each other; when the fraternal spirit shall give way to cold indifference, or collision of interest shall fester into hatred, the bands of political asseveration will not long hold together parties no longer attracted by the magnetism of conciliated interests and kindly sympathies; and far better will it be for the people of the disunited States to part in friendship from each other than to be held together by constraint. Then will be the time for reverting to the precedents which occurred at the formation and adoption of the Constitution, to form again a more perfect union by dissolving that which could no longer bind, and to leave the separated parts to be reunited by the law of political gravitation to the centre.

It is very evident that Mr. Adams and the people of New England generally regarded these views as the correct interpretation of the original compact which bound the people together. I will call attention to the fact that three years later, January 24, 1842, he presented a petition to Congress from citizens of Haverhill, Mass. I read from Congressional Globe, volume XI, page 977:

MONDAY, January 24th.--In the House. Mr. Adams presented the petition of sundry citizens of Haverhill, in the State of Massachusetts, praying that Congress will immediately adopt measures favorably to dissolve the union of these States.

First. Because no union can be agreeable and permanent which does not present prospects for reciprocal benefit; second, because a vast proportion of the revenues of one section of the Union is annually drained to sustain the views and course of another section, without any adequate return; third, because, judging from the history of past nations, that union, if persisted in in the present state of things, will certainly overwhelm the whole nation in destruction.

There was a strong manifestation against receiving the petition, and by some it was denounced as treason and perjury.

On page 980 Mr. Adams spoke in his own defence and in favor of the petition. He said:

I hold that it is no perjury, that it is no high-treason, but the exercise of a sacred right to offer such a petition, and that it is false in morals, as it is inhuman, to fasten that charge on men who, under the countenance of such declarations as I have here quoted, come and ask of this House a redress of grievances. And if they do mistake their remedy, this government should not turn them away, and charge them with high-treason and

subordination of perjury; but ought to take it up, to weigh the considerations which can be urged in their favor; and if there be none but those which are so eloquently set forth in the pamphlet I have quoted, these should be considered. If they have mistaken their remedy, the House should do as the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. Marshall) told us he was ready to do--admit the facts.

Mr. Gilmer, page 983, introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, That in presenting to the consideration of this House a petition for the dissolution of the Union, the member from Massachusetts (Mr. Adams) has justly incurred the censure of this House.

The following resolution was also introduced by Mr. Marshall, of Kentucky:

Resolved, therefore, That Hon. John Q. Adams, a member from Massachusetts, in presenting for the consideration of the House of Representatives of the United States a petition praying the dissolution of the Union, has offered the deepest indignity to the House, of which he is a member; an insult to the people of the United States, of which that House is the legislative organ; and will, if this outrage is permitted to pass unrebuked and unpunished, have disgraced his country, through their representatives, in the eyes of the whole world.

Two weeks were exclusively devoted to Mr. Adam's trial, at the end of which the entire proceedings were laid on the table. I find the following note on page 236 of the Globe:

The trial of Mr. Adams, to the exclusion of all other business, commenced on the 25th of January, and terminated on the 7th of February, when the whole proceedings were laid on the table, without deciding a single point. The expenses of the House during that time, thus wasted, exceeded \$26,000.

The failure on the part of the House to even censure Mr. Adams was construed by many as an admission that Mr. Adams's construction was correct.

This sentiment in favor of secession continually gained strength, and five years later the Legislature of Massachusetts passed another secession resolution. I read from "Acts and resolutions passed by the Legislature of Massachusetts in the year 1844," page 319:

1. Resolved, That the power to unite an independent foreign State with the United States is not among the powers delegated to the General Government by the Constitution of the United States.
2. Resolved, * * * That the project of the annexation of Texas, unless arrested on the threshold, may drive these States into a dissolution of the Union.
3. Resolved, That his Excellency, the Governor, be requested to transmit a copy of the foregoing resolves to each of the Senators and Members of the House of Representatives of this Commonwealth in the Congress of the United States.
4. Resolved, That his Excellency, the Governor, be requested to transmit a copy of the same resolves to the Executive of the United States and of the several States.

Approved by the Governor, March 15, 1844.

A year later, February 22, 1845, the Legislature of Massachusetts celebrated Washington's birthday by passing still another secession resolution.

I read from the same volume, pages 598 and 599:

Resolved, That Massachusetts has never delegated the power to admit into the Union, States or Territories without or beyond the original territory of the States and Territories belonging to the Union at the adoption of the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved, * * * and as the powers of legislation granted in the Constitution of the United States to Congress do not embrace the case of the admission of a foreign State or foreign Territory by legislation into the Union, such an act of admission would have no binding force whatever on the people of Massachusetts.

Resolved, That his Excellency, the Governor, be requested to transmit copies of the preceding report and resolves to the President of the United States, the several Senators and Representatives in Congress from this Commonwealth, and the Governors of the several States.

Approved by the Governor, February 22, 1845.

I beg to call special attention to the second resolution, and also to that part of the third resolution which directed the Governor to transmit copies of the resolution, etc. All this was a part of the history of our country when Mr. Lincoln was elected by the solid vote of the States of the North, opposed by the solid vote of the States of the South.

A large part of the northern press contended that the States of the South had a full right to secede if the people desired to withdraw from the Union, and it was common to see in the northern press the words, "Erring sisters go in peace."

THE NORTHERN PRESS ADVOCATES SECESSION.

Mr. Lincoln's election was fully known on the evening of November 8, 1860, and the next morning, November 9th, Mr. Greeley's New York Tribune contained the following:

GOING TO GO.

If the cotton States shall become satisfied that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace. The right to secede may be a revolutionary one, but it exists, nevertheless.

And again, in the same issue of his widely-circulated and influential paper, Mr. Greeley said:

We must ever resist the asserted right of any State to remain in the Union and nullify or defy the laws thereof. To withdraw from the Union is quite another matter; and whenever a considerable section of our Union shall deliberately resolve to go out, we shall resist all coercive measures designed to keep it in. We hope never to live in a republic whereof one section is pinned to the residue by bayonets. Let them have both sides of the question fully presented; let them reflect, deliberate, then vote; and let the action of secession be the echo of an unmistakable popular fiat. A judgment thus rendered, a demand for separation so backed, would either be acquiesced in without the effusion of blood, or those who rushed upon carnage to defy and defeat it would place themselves clearly in the wrong.

The New York Tribune of November 16, 1860, again announced their views to the southern people in an article headed "Secession In Practice," in which the paper used the following words:

Still we say, in all earnestness and good faith, whenever a whole section of this republic, whether a half, a third, or only a fourth, shall truly desire and demand a separation from the residue, we shall earnestly favor such separation. If the fifteen slave States, or even the eight cotton States alone, shall quietly, decisively say to the rest: "We prefer to be henceforth separated from you," we shall insist that they be permitted to go in peace. War is a hideous necessity, at best, and a civil conflict, a war of estranged and embittered fellow-countrymen, is the most hideous of all wars. Whenever the people of the cotton States shall have definitely and decisively made up

their minds to separate from the rest of us, we shall urge that the proper steps be taken to give full effect to their decision.

Three days afterward, on the 19th, the same paper uses these words:

Now, we believe and maintain that the Union is to be preserved only so long as it is beneficial and satisfactory to all parties concerned.

We do not believe that any man, any neighborhood, town, county, or even State, may break up the Union in any transient gust of passion; we fully comprehend that secession is an extreme, an ultimate resort--not a constitutional, but a revolutionary remedy. But we insist that this Union shall not be held together by force whenever it shall have ceased to cohere by the mutual attraction of its parts; and whenever the slave States or the cotton States only shall unitedly and coolly say to the rest, "We want to get out of the Union," we shall urge that their request be acceded to.

The New York Herald of Friday, November 23, 1860, said:

THE DISUNION QUESTION--A CONSERVATIVE REACTION IN THE SOUTH.

We publish this morning a significant letter from Governor Letcher, of Virginia, on the subject of the present disunion excitement in the South; southern constitutional rights, Northern-State acts of nullification, and the position of Virginia in this crisis. * * * * To this end would it not be well for the conservative Union men of the city of New York to make a demonstration--a northern movement or conciliation, concession and harmony?

Coercion, in any event, is out of the question. A union held together by the bayonet would be nothing better than a military despotism. Conciliation and harmony, through mutual concessions, in a reconstruction of the fundamental law, between the North and the South, will restore and perpetuate the union contemplated by the fathers. So now that the conservative men of the South are moving, let the Union men of the North second their endeavors, and let New York, as in the compromise of 1850, lead the way.

And on the following day, November 24th, the Tribune says:

FEDERAL COERCION.

Some of the Washington correspondents telegraph that Mr. Buchanan is attempting to map out a middle course in which to steer his bark during the tempest which now howls about him. He is to condemn the asserted right of secession, but to assert in the same breath that he is opposed to keeping a State in the Union by what he calls Federal coercion. Now, we have no desire to prevent secession by coercion, but we hold this position to be utterly unsupported by law or reason.

I will also quote an article from the New York Daily Tribune, Friday, November 30, 1860:

ARE WE GOING TO FIGHT?

But if the cotton States, generally, unite with her in seceding, we insist that they cannot be prevented, and that the attempt must not be made. Five millions of people, more than half of them of the dominant race, of whom at least half a million are able and willing to shoulder muskets, can never be subdued while fighting around and over their own hearthstones. If they could be, they would no longer be equal members of the Union, but conquered dependencies. * * * We propose to wrest this potent engine from the disunionists by saying frankly to the slave States:

"If you choose to leave the Union, leave it, but let us have no quarrel about it. If you think it a curse to you and an unfair advantage to us, repudiate it, and see if you are not mistaken. If you are better by yourselves, go, and God speed you. For our part, we have done very well with you, and are quite willing to keep along with

you, but if the association is irksome to you, we have too much self-respect to insist on its continuance. We have lived by our industry thus far, and hope to do so still, even though you leave us."

We repeat, that only the sheen of northern bayonets can bind the South wholly to the evils of secession, but that may do it. Let us be patient, neither speaking daggers nor using them, standing to our principles, but not to our arms, and all will yet be well.

I will read an extract from an editorial in the New York Times of December 3, 1860:

By common consent, moreover, the most prominent and tangible point of offence seems to be the legislation growing out of the fugitive-slave law. Several of the Northern States have passed personal-liberty bills, with the alleged intent to prevent the return of fugitive slaves to their masters.

From Union men in every quarter of the South come up the most earnest appeals to the Northern States to repeal these laws. Such an act, we are assured, would have a powerful effect in disarming the disunion clamor in nearly all the Southern States, and in promoting the prospects of a peaceful adjustment of all pending differences.

The next day, December 4th, the New York Times publishes another article, in which it says:

Mr. Weed has stated his opinion of the crisis thus:

1. There is imminent danger of a dissolution of the Union.
2. The danger originated in the ambition and cupidity of men who desire a southern despotism, and in the fanatic zeal of the northern Abolitionists, who seek the emancipation of slaves regardless of consequences.
3. The danger can only be averted by such moderation and forbearance as will draw out, strengthen and combine the Union sentiment of the whole country.

Each of these statements will command general assent. The only question likely to arise relates to the practical measures by which the "moderation and forbearance" can be displayed.

And while the South Carolina Convention was in session, and before any State had seceded, and when it was doubted by many whether such action would be taken, Mr. Greeley said:

If it (the Declaration of Independence) justifies the secession from the British Empire of three million colonists in 1776, we do not see why it would not justify the secession of five millions of southerners from the Federal Union in 1861. If we are mistaken on this point, why does not some one attempt to show wherein and why? For our own part, while we deny the right of slave-holders to hold slaves against the will of the latter, we cannot see how twenty millions of people can rightfully hold ten, or even five, in a detested union with them by military force.

In the same issue of Mr. Greeley's paper we read the following:

If seven or eight contiguous States shall present themselves authentically at Washington, saying: "We hate the Federal Union; we have withdrawn from it; we will give you the choice between acquiescing in our secession and arranging amicably all incidental questions on the one hand, and attempting to subdue us on the other," we could not stand up for coercion, for subjugation, for we do not think it would be just. We hold the right of self-government even when invoked in behalf of those who deny it to others. So much for the question of principle.

This conservative view of the question which Mr. Greeley gave to the world with such emphasis, and in which he expressed his opinion of the principle involved, was reiterated for days, weeks and months, with the characteristic persistence of that able leader.

Mr. Greeley also said:

Any attempt to compel them by force to remain would be contrary to the principles enunciated in the immortal Declaration of Independence, contrary to the fundamental ideas on which human liberty is based.

These articles continued to appear in the northern press for months after the election of Mr. Lincoln, and until after most of the Southern States had seceded. They continued until after the people of the South had adopted a constitution, and organized their new Confederate Government; after they had raised and equipped an army, appointed ambassadors to foreign courts, and convened a congress; after they had taken possession of three fourths of the arsenals and forts within their territory, enrolled her as one of the nations of the earth.

After all this, Mr. Greeley's paper continued to indorse the action of all southern people as fully as it was possible for language to enable it to do so. Mr. Greeley said:

We have repeatedly said, and we once more insist, that the great principle embodied by Jefferson in the Declaration of American Independence, that governments derive their just powers from consent of the governed, is sound and just; and that if the slave States, the cotton States, or the gulf States only choose to form an independent nation, they have a clear, moral right to do so. Whenever it shall be clear that the great body of southern people have become conclusively alienated from the Union, and anxious to escape from it, we will do our best to forward their views.

Mr. Greeley was earnestly and ably supported in his views by the most prominent men and able editors of Republican papers all over the North.

I cite the following from the Commercial which was certainly the leading Republican paper of Ohio. After Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated, the Commercial said:

We are not in favor of blockading the southern coast. We are not in favor of retaking by force the property of the United States now in possession of the seceders. We would recognize the existence of a government formed of all the slave-holding States, and attempt to cultivate amicable relations with it.

In addition to all this, the commander of the Federal army, General Winfield Scott, was very emphatic in endorsing the views of the New York Tribune and other papers, to the effect that secession was the proper course for the southern people to pursue, and his oft-repeated expression, "Wayward sisters, part in peace," seemed to meet the full approval of the great body of the people of the North. In obedience to all this advice, the Southern States did secede, and almost immediately the vast Federal armies were raised, battles were fought, money expended, and this, let me tell my friend from New York, was the cause of the vast appropriations regarding which he asked an explanation.

These appropriations were made to carry on the most stupendous war recorded in modern history. From April 15, 1861, to the close of the war, there were called into the service of the United States 2,865,028 soldiers. Besides this we have had evidence placed before Congress of numerous organizations called into service by the Governors or other officials of border States, which would probably number 500,000 men.

That these men were brave is proved by the terrible casualties of the battles which they fought.

The struggle from May 5 to May 12, 1864; at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania, which should really be called one battle, was a good index of the sanguinary character of the conflict.

The losses of Grant's army in that conflict, as reported in Scribner's statistical record, was 9,774 killed, 41,150 wounded, and 13,254 missing.

It gives an idea of the magnitude of this conflict to recall that General Grant's loss in killed and wounded in this battle was greater than the loss in killed and wounded in all the battles of all the wars in this country prior to 1861.

The loss in all the battles of the seven years of the Revolution was 2,200 killed, and 6,500 wounded.

The loss in the army of 1812 was 1,877 killed and 3,737 wounded.

The loss in the war with Mexico was 1,049 killed and 7,929 wounded; in all, only 19,227 men.

Now, if we add all the losses of the Indian wars, including the French and Indian war, the entire loss would be less than half the killed and wounded in this great battle.

As another evidence of the gallantry of the officers and soldiers, I will mention that during that war forty-six generals of the United States army and seventy-six generals of the Confederate army were killed at the head of their commands in battle.

I have given an explanation of this matter to the best of my ability, and from the standpoint of one whose feelings were and are in entire sympathy with the southern people, but who since the close of that war has been as devoted to the Union of the States and the prosperity, welfare, and glory of our country as the most distinguished soldier who fought in the Federal army from 1861 to 1865.

Source: Southern Historical Society Papers. Vol. XXII. Richmond, Va., January-December. 1894.