

**From: Memoirs, with special reference to secession and the Civil War
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Excerpt from Reagan's preface: "My endeavor has been to conform to the truth of history, and to make no truce with error by compromise. And while dealing to some extent with controverted questions, I try to be just and fair, invoking the charitable judgment of those who may read it."

CHAPTER VIII
CAUSES OF THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

This question cannot be fairly discussed without a reference to historical facts more or less remote. George Bancroft, in his *History of the United States* (Vol. I, p. 159) says: **"Slavery and the slave-trade are older than the records of human society: they are found to have existed wherever the savage hunter began to assume the habits of pastoral or agricultural life; and, with the exception of Australasia, they have extended to every part of the globe. They pervaded every nation of civilized antiquity."**

Slavery existed among the Egyptians, the Hebrews, the Babylonians, the Phoenicians, the Greeks, the Romans, and, until later years, in every modern civilized nation on earth. At the time it was planted in the American colonies it was justified by the priesthood on the ground that it was taking the Africans from a condition of barbarism and cannibalism to where they could learn useful vocations, the methods of civilized life, and something of the Christian religion. Slavery was introduced into the American colonies long before the American Revolution by the people and crowned heads of Great Britain, France and Spain, and by the Dutch merchants. At the date of the Declaration of Independence, African slavery existed in all the colonies; and at the adoption of the Constitution, in all the States but Massachusetts. The Constitution of the United States, devised by the patriotic fathers, who, by their skill, courage and endurance won our independence, contained the following provision on that subject:

Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons.

The same article further provides that:

The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the

year one thousand eight hundred and eight; but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person.

Thus was provision made for a continuance of the slavetrade for twenty years after the adoption of the Constitution. Another clause reads:

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.

This was clearly intended to give the sanction of the Constitution to the right of the owner of slaves to recapture them if they escaped and to control their persons and labor. I quote these clauses of the Constitution to show that the institution of African slavery was recognized by it as lawful, and was protected specially by its terms; and for the further purpose of showing that if slavery was a sin it was a national sin, and that the whole nation was responsible for its existence, and that if the Constitution had permitted it to be abolished it should have been done at the cost of the nation. But, in fact, the Congress had no power, under the Constitution, to abolish it. It had always been treated as a domestic and local institution, which the several States might abolish or retain, independently of the power of Congress; and it had been abolished by a number of States.

It must be understood that I am not discussing the question of whether slavery was right or wrong; and certainly not with a view to its revival; but some consideration of the legal status of the institution must of necessity precede what I shall say about the war between the States, and is essential to a fair and just understanding of the causes of that great struggle.

As time wore on the people of the Northern States found slavery to be unprofitable and sold their negroes to the planters of the South, where they could be more profitably used on the cotton, tobacco, and sugar plantations. Subsequent to the American and French Revolutions, the opinions of the people of western Europe and of the United States changed on the subject of slavery, and Great Britain and France freed their slaves in the West India islands; and these islands have ever since remained in a chronic condition of revolution.

The slavery question early began to be discussed in the United States, and anti-slavery societies were formed; and societies for the colonizing of negroes in Africa were organized especially in the Southern States. A few persons manumitted their slaves, mostly in the South, and in a few instances they were to be made free at a certain age. The agitation of the question soon assumed a sectional character and brought about a more or less violent agitation. This caused Northern politicians to seize upon it as a means of obtaining popular favor, and caused the people of the South to cease the discussion of the question except to defend it. There was indulged much unreasoning fanaticism by the enemies of slavery following this, and the agitation produced sectional

parties North and South, and became a real danger to the Union. It should be borne in mind that in the discussion of this question, the abstract right of man to personal liberty was substantially the only question considered. The Abolitionists would not discuss the question of race or its fitness and capacity for civilization and selfgovernment.

In 1856 the anti-slavery men were organized into a sectional political party and nominated John C. Fremont of California for President, and William L. Dayton of New Jersey for Vice-President. These candidates received 114 electoral votes, all from Northern States; while James Buchanan of Pennsylvania and John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, the Democratic candidates, received 174, and were elected. Encouraged by this evidence of strength, in 1860 the anti-slavery party nominated Abraham Lincoln of Illinois for President and Hannibal Hamlin of Maine for Vice-President; and this ticket secured exclusively from the Northern free States 180 votes, and was elected, John C. Breckinridge receiving 72 electoral votes, John Bell 39, and Stephen A. Douglas 12 (though he received a very large popular vote). From this it is seen that the slavery question had become strictly sectional, as between the North and the South. During the struggle over the fugitive slave law fourteen of the Northern States had passed what they called "personal liberty" laws, making it a penal offense for any officer or citizen to return or aid in returning a fugitive slave to his master; thus attempting to nullify the provisions of the Constitution, which they had taken an oath of office to support, and defying the acts of Congress and the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States on this great question. And here I quote the following extract from a speech delivered by the Hon. W. H. Seward, in the city of Boston on the 27th of August, 1860, during the canvass for President and Vice-President, within less than three months of the time at which Lincoln and Hamlin were elected to the positions of President and Vice-President of the United States. This quotation is made to show that Seward, one of the most pronounced leaders of the Republican party, and Lincoln, who was elected President by that party, were distinctly committed to the doctrine that there was a higher law than the Constitution of the United States, on which they relied to secure its overthrow. And it is quoted to show that these two great leaders of that party were in full harmony of view with the members of the State legislatures, which had passed the "personal liberty" laws to nullify the provisions of the Constitution and laws, and the decisions of the courts on this subject. Mr. Seward said:

What a comment upon the wisdom of a man is given in this single fact, that fifteen years only after the death of John Quincy Adams, the people who hurled him from power and from place, are calling to the head of the nation, to the very seat from which he was expelled, Abraham Lincoln [enthusiastic applause], whose claim to that seat is that he confesses the obligation of that higher law [applause] which the sage of Quincy proclaimed; that he avows himself for weal or woe, for life or death, a soldier on the side of freedom in the irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery [prolonged applause]. This, gentlemen, is my simple confession. I desire, now, only to say that you have arrived at the last stage of this conflict, before you reach the triumph which is to inaugurate this great policy into the Government of the United States. But let not your thoughts

and expectations be confined to the present hour. I tell you, fellow-citizens, that with this victory comes the end of the power of slavery in the United States.

And I make the following quotation from the speech of Mr. Chase, delivered before the Peace Congress, which assembled in Washington City on the 6th of February, 1861. Among other things, he said:

Aside from the territorial question—the question of slavery outside of slave States—I know of but one serious difficulty. I refer to the question concerning fugitives from service. The clause in the Constitution concerning this class of persons is regarded by almost all men, North and South, as a stipulation for the surrender to their masters of slaves escaping into free States. The people of the free States, however, who believe that slaveholding is wrong, cannot and will not aid in the reclamation, and the stipulation becomes, therefore, a dead letter. You complain of bad faith, and the complaint is retorted by denunciations of the cruelty which would drag back to bondage the poor slave who has escaped from it. You, thinking slavery right, claim the fulfilment of the stipulation; we, thinking slavery wrong, cannot fulfil the stipulation without consciousness of participation in wrong. Here is a real difficulty, but it seems to me not insuperable. It will not do for us to say to you, in justification of non-performance, "the stipulation is immoral, and therefore we cannot execute it"; for you deny the immorality, and we cannot assume to judge for you. On the other hand, you ought not to exact from us the literal performance of the stipulation when you know that we cannot perform it without conscious culpability. A true solution of the difficulty seems to be attainable by regarding it as a simple case where a contract, from changed circumstances, cannot be fulfilled exactly as made. A court of equity in such a case decrees execution as near as may be. It requires the party who cannot perform to make compensation for nonappearance. Why cannot the same principle be applied to the rendition of fugitives from service? We cannot surrender—but we can compensate. Why not then avoid all difficulties on all sides and show respectively good faith and good will by providing and accepting compensation where masters reclaim escaping servants and prove their right of reclamation under the Constitution? Instead of a judgment for compensation, determined by the true value of the services, and let the same judgment assure freedom to the fugitive. The cost to the national treasury would be nothing in comparison with the evils of discord and strife. All parties would be gainers.

Mr. Chase soon afterward was made Secretary of the Treasury of the United States by Mr. Lincoln, who later elevated him to the Chief Justiceship of the Supreme Court of the United States. His speech is a deliberate statement, from one of the ablest and most distinguished men of the Republican party, that they repudiated and would not comply with the provision of the Constitution requiring the rendition of fugitive slaves. He says that "the people of the free States believe that slaveholding is wrong, and will not aid in their reclamation, and the stipulation [of the Constitution], therefore, becomes a dead letter." He also says, "You [the people of the South] ought not to expect from us the literal performance of the stipulation" of the Constitution. The compact of Union, without

agreeing to which the Union could not have been formed, the Constitution which the President, the Secretary of the Treasury and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and every other high officer of the United States and of the State government had to take and did take a solemn oath to support, was disregarded, along with the acts of Congress and the decisions of the highest courts, because of the modern opinion of a political party, that these were all based on immorality. Can one well conceive of a more dangerous and startling excuse for violating the fundamental law, destroying the social and industrial system of fifteen States of the Union, and the sacrifice of three thousand million dollars of property in slaves?

But Mr. Chase proposed to substitute for the provisions of the Constitution a compromise by paying for the slaves. He could not be, and was not, ignorant of the fact that the members of his party, in the Congress which preceded the election of Lincoln as President, would not consent even to discuss or to consider the question of paying for the liberation of the slaves. He knew, as we were all made to know, that the anti-slavery party had not the most remote intention of paying for them. And his speech, in this respect, was but the pitiable attempt of a really able man to cover up an unconstitutional proceeding marked by all the badges of hypocrisy and bad faith.

These facts show that Seward and Chase, the two greatest leaders of a great and then dominant political party, just entering upon the control of the Government of the United States, were engaged in teaching their party what would appear to be treason by a palpable and intentional overthrow of the Constitution, a nullification of the acts of Congress, and a contemptuous disregard of the highest courts, intending to change the character of the Government by revolutionary methods.

Mr. Seward, one of the prominent Republican candidates for the Presidency, and one of the most influential members of that party, who became Secretary of State under Lincoln, had declared that the slavery question presented an "irrepressible conflict." Later, Abraham Lincoln, who in time became President, declared that the "country could not remain half free and half slave." That could only mean that the agitation must go on until the people of the nonslaveholding States could secure the abolition of slavery by unconstitutional means; for there was no other way by which their purpose could be accomplished.

This agitation caused the inauguration of a civil war in Kansas, in which many lives were lost and much property destroyed. John Brown, who had obtained a bad notoriety in Kansas, went back to the Northeast and organized an armed band of revolutionists from the Northern States, with which he invaded the State of Virginia for the purpose of inaugurating a servile war between the white and black people, with all the barbarism and cruelty which would of necessity be engendered by such a war. They fortified themselves at Harper's Ferry, in that State. A few persons were killed and Brown and some of his associates were captured, tried in the civil courts, condemned and hanged for treason. The Northern people, instead of condemning the dreadful crime of Brown, in a number of instances draped their churches in mourning and spoke of him as a martyr; showing their approval of this treasonable and revolutionary invasion of the South.

During the Congress which immediately preceded the war, thirty-odd compromise measures were presented in the two Houses of Congress, all of them offered by Southern men or Northern Democrats, for the purpose of trying to get some plan adopted by which war and secession could be avoided, and the rights of the States preserved. Every one introduced in the House of Representatives was received with hooting and derision by the Republicans. When the Southern members appealed to those from the North to aid them in some measure of peace which would preserve the Constitution and preserve the rights of the States and of the people of the South, such appeals were answered by the statement, "We are in the majority and you will have to submit." The Southern members and the Southern people did not want secession—they only sought the protection which was due them under the provisions of the Constitution. The Southern people had always shown their devotion to the Union, even while the New Englanders were threatening secession and disunion.

I have gone through with the statement of some of the facts of history, in order to do my part in dealing with what were the opinions and practices of the whole world as to slavery, and to fix the responsibility for that great war and the enormous destruction of life and property where it properly belongs, and to show that it was forced on the South by a revolutionary movement for the purpose of overthrowing so much of the Constitution as protected slavery, and so much of it as concerned the question of States' Rights and States' Sovereignty. But they were also influenced by other great and controlling questions relating to the industrial and financial affairs of the country, as I shall show further on.

It has been assumed and is assumed by those who were our adversaries that it was an unnecessary war, and that it was brought about by political leaders in the South. I think the facts I have presented show that the rights and sovereignty of the States, and the social and industrial systems of the South, and property, valued at about three thousand million dollars, were dangerously menaced by the policy and action of half the States and two-thirds of the white population. Even with all this threatened wrong, the South sought by every means in its control to avoid an unequal war. The people of the South had no organized government, they had no army, no navy, no treasury, and the most limited means for creating any of these, as the South had not been a manufacturing country. In attempting to withdraw from the Union they hoped to do so peaceably and had no purpose to interfere in any way with any of the rights of the Northern States. They simply desired to withdraw from association with a government which had already demonstrated its deadly hostility to the rights and interests of their citizens; and to establish for themselves a government friendly to their own interests. Those who were our adversaries have never dared, so far as I know, to discuss the incidents which preceded and led up to the war. The whole public record is against them. They limit what they have to say to what occurred during the war, and to a fraudulent pretense that they were fighting for the old flag and to preserve the Union. Doubtless hundreds of thousands of soldiers were made to believe this great falsehood, and were engaged in what they believed to be a patriotic war; but the great leaders of opinion who gave form and force to the policy and movements which caused the war, either did so as reckless political demagogues or for the purpose of producing a

condition of things which they knew would inevitably cause war. Such will no doubt be the conclusion of the impartial historian after the passion and prejudices of that struggle shall have died away. Fortunately for the truth of history, all of the material facts which show the causes leading to the war are so far matter of record as to give the people of after times its true account.

I quote the following paragraph from Dr. Curry's *Civil History of the Confederate States*, as it expresses better than I could the sentiments which come into my mind after writing the foregoing:

One of the most singular illustrations ever presented of the power of literature to conceal and pervert, to modify and falsify history, to transfer odium from the guilty to the innocent, is found in the fact that the reproach of disunion has been slipped from the shoulders of the North to those of the South.

To illustrate the opinions of the American people, and the policy of the Government of the United States in the past, in addition to the quotations from the Constitution, and the reference to the acts of Congress, and opinions of the Supreme Court referred to in former pages, it may not be inappropriate to state the following historical facts:

General Washington, who commanded the armies during the war which separated this country from Great Britain, was the president of the convention which formed the Constitution of the United States; he was chosen by the people as the first President, and served in that office for two terms, eight years; and he was understood to be the largest owner of slaves in the United States. Mr. Jefferson, who was President eight years; Mr. Madison, who served as President two terms; Mr. Monroe, who filled the office two terms; General Jackson, who served as President eight years; Mr. Polk, four years; and General Taylor, who was elected President and died during his term of office, were all slaveholders. Many Senators and Representatives in Congress, many governors of States, many justices of the Supreme Court, circuit and district courts of the United States, many high State officials, including legislative and judicial officers, were slaveholders. Thousands of Christian men and women, as devout and sincere as any on earth, including ministers of the gospel, were slaveholders. The more fanatical of those who were engaged in the crusade against slavery denounced slavery as a sin, as the sum of all villainies, and must therefore have held that all the great and good men and women I have just referred to were wicked, sinful, and villainous. Is this just and reasonable?

It is proper to say that before the slavery agitation became sectional and political, numbers of slaveholders and others in the Southern States questioned the policy of slavery; a few set their slaves free; others favored the colonization of the negroes in Africa; and many felt that it was a bad inheritance from which they did not see how they were to be relieved. The system of slave labor was gradually giving way in the border slave States, such as Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri; and if the people of the Southern States had not been subjected to the fanatical crusade which precipitated war, slavery would probably have slowly and finally disappeared in all of them.

The slaves in the United States before the war were estimated to be of the property value of three thousand million dollars. This property was acquired under the authority of the Constitution and laws of the United States, and of the States where it existed. Under such conditions was it patriotic, was it just, was it reasonable for the people who did not own slaves,—citizens of States where slavery did not exist, which States and citizens had no right or authority over the matter in States where it did exist, and where it was protected under the Constitution and laws, Federal and State,—to attempt to interfere or to control it? On this question the States, and the people of different States, had no more right to interfere with each other than if they had belonged to different nations.

After the South had been forced into a war by the unconstitutional and unlawful course of the North, the people of the North assumed, and now insist, on so falsifying history as to make it appear that the war was the result of Southern policy. Surely in the face of the recorded history of the past, this attempted great fraud cannot stand the test of time and of impartial examination.

On a previous page I suggested that there were other controlling causes of danger to the perpetuation of the Union besides the question of slavery. I shall content myself by a general statement of some of these causes, without elaboration, as they form a part of the public general history of the country.

In the convention which formed the Constitution there was a serious division of opinion among its able and patriotic members as to the character of the government they were to establish. A number of the leading statesmen of that day, with Thomas Jefferson as their leader, favored a reversal of the old-world theory that political sovereignty resided in the head of the government, and that the people were the subjects of that sovereign, insisting that the people were citizens and not subjects; that sovereignty resided in the citizens, who had the right to make, alter, or amend their form of government as they chose; that they possessed sufficient intelligence and virtue to create, organize, and so administer the government as to secure protection to life, person, and property and to maintain order in society; and that public officers were public servants. There were other able and patriotic statesmen of that time, with Alexander Hamilton at their head, who doubted the capacity of the people for self-government, and who believed a strong government should be formed for the purpose of giving protection to life, person, and property, with power to control refractory States; a government somewhat on the plan of the English government, omitting royalty and aristocracy. Looking to the history of the past, and remembering that the plan of self-government, as proposed, was an experiment, it is not surprising that these differences of opinion should have then existed. The aim of one of these parties was for the largest liberty of the people, consistent with the maintenance of good government, and to limit the powers of the Federal Government to jurisdiction over such matters as related to international questions, and to questions of interstate policy, leaving the States with sovereign jurisdiction over all local and domestic questions. The other party favored a government with larger and more general powers. Those who favored limiting the

powers of the Federal Government succeeded in getting their views imbedded in the Constitution.

After the adoption of the Constitution opinions remained divided between those who favored a strict construction and those who favored a latitudinarian construction of it. This division, under one and another name, has continued down to the present time; first as Federalists and Republicans, afterward as Democrats and Whigs, and later as Democrats and Republicans. Neither of these antagonistic parties has ever been willing to accord to the other fidelity to the Union. The danger arising from these divisions, while remote in the past, has ever been present, and now threatens the safety of the Union, under the Constitution, more seriously than at any former time.

The jurisdiction of Congress has been greatly enlarged by the Republican party. Some of its measures in legislation, and in the attempt at legislation, have gone much beyond anything proposed by the early Federalists. The late President Garfield, in a speech delivered in the House of Representatives during the session of Congress preceding his nomination for the Presidency, declared his preference for the theory of General Hamilton rather than that of Mr. Jefferson. After that declaration he was nominated and elected President by the Republicans. The current action of that party shows that it favors a centralized general government. One of its boasted achievements, as a result of the war, is that it destroyed the doctrine of States' Rights. That means that it claims to have enlarged the powers of the Federal Government beyond what was intended by the Constitution, and that it has correspondingly abridged the powers of the State governments. This lets in on us a brood of mischiefs which may prove fatal to our constitutional government and to civil liberty.

Other causes which threatened the perpetuity of the Union grew out of the jealousy and selfishness of the New England States. When the United States in 1803 acquired the Louisiana Territory those States protested vehemently against its acquisition, partly on the ground that it would give a preponderance to the agricultural States over the manufacturing States; and they threatened to secede from the Union. In the blindness of their jealousy, they seemed unable to realize that the larger the area of free trade within the Union the more extensive would be the market for their manufactured goods. They no doubt now understand that. The war of 1812-15 with Great Britain was engaged in by the United States perhaps more for the protection of the shipping interests and the commerce of that section of the Union, and to protect their seamen from unlawful impressment by the British cruisers, than for any other single cause. The people of New England opposed that war, encouraged the British, and called a convention to consider whether they would not withdraw from the Union. When the question of the admission of Missouri into the Union was being considered, they again urged the view that its admission would increase the power of the agricultural States to the disadvantage of the manufacturing States, and again they threatened to secede from the Union. The same contention was made when Texas was admitted; and again when the treaty of 1848 between the United States and Mexico was being considered, which contemplated the cession of a considerable part of the territory of Mexico to the

United States, as indemnity for the expenses of the war brought on by the acts of the Mexican Government.

A chief purpose of the manufacturers and capitalists of New England was to control the financial policy of the Government so as to advance their pecuniary interests. In 1831-32 they had so far succeeded through unjust tariff legislation, as to drive South Carolina into nullification, and came near involving the Country in a war; which was only averted by a gradual reduction of the tariff.

On the several points here suggested, and to show what the views of the people of that portion of the Country were as to the right of a State for sufficient cause to secede from the Union, I make the following quotation from an address delivered by the Hon. John H. Rodgers, one of the judges of the district court of the United States, at a Confederate reunion at New Orleans, in May, 1903:

"An assemblage of citizens of Boston in Faneuil Hall in 1809, state, in a celebrated memorial, that they looked only to the State legislatures, who were competent to devise relief against the unconstitutional acts of the General Government. 'That your power is adequate to that object is evident from the organization of the Confederacy.'"

Here is distinctively recognized the doctrine that each sovereign State has a right to judge alone of its own compacts and agreements. This must, of necessity, be true unless the right to interpret the compact or agreement has been waived, or the power conferred upon another. This language of Madison is buttressed by the acts of ratification of the Constitution by some of the States. Virginia said in her ratification act:

"The delegates do in the name of Virginia declare and make known that the powers granted under the Constitution of the United States may be resumed by them whensoever the same shall be perverted to their injury or oppression, and that every power not granted thereby remains with them at their will."

New York was even more specific, and Maryland and other States showed equal concern in jealously safeguarding the sovereignty of the States.

In the prior history of the country repeated instances are found of the assertion of the right of secession and of a purpose entertained at various times to put it into execution. Notably is this true of Massachusetts—indeed, of all New England. In 1786, when the States were bound by the Articles of Confederation, we are told that the situation was "dangerous in the extreme." The agitation in Massachusetts was great and it was declared that if Jay's negotiations, closing the Mississippi for twenty years, could not be adopted, it was high time for the New England States to secede from the Union and form a confederation for themselves.

Plumer traces secession movements in 1792 and 1794, and says, "**All dissatisfied with the measures of the government looked to a separation of the States as a remedy for oppressive grievances.**"

In 1794 Fisher Ames said: "**The spirit of insurrection has tainted a vast amount of country besides Pennsylvania.**"

In 1796 Governor Wolcott of Connecticut said: "**I sincerely declare that I wish the Northern States would separate from the Southern States the moment that event [the election of Jefferson] shall take place.**"

Horatio Seymour, on October 8, 1880, in a public address in New York City, thus spoke: "**The first threat of disunion was uttered upon the floor of Congress by Josiah Quincy, one of the most able and distinguished sons of Massachusetts. At an early day Mr. Hamilton, with all his distrust of the Constitution, sent word to the citizens of Boston to stop their threats of disunion and let the government stand as long as it would. When our country was engaged with the superior power, population, and resources of Great Britain, when its armies were upon our soil, when the walls of its capitol were blackened and marred by the fires kindled by our foes, and our Union was threatened with disaster, the leading officials of New England threatened resistance to the military measures of the Administration. This was the language held by a convention of delegates appointed by the legislatures of three New England States and by delegates from counties in Vermont: In cases of deliberate, dangerous, and palpable infraction of the Constitution, affecting the sovereignty of a State, and liberties of the people, it is not only right but the duty of such State to interpose for their protection in the manner best calculated to secure that end. This covers the whole doctrine of nullification.' I may add, it covers the whole doctrine of secession, for it recognized the right of the State to determine when infractions of the Constitution have occurred, and to apply their own remedies.**"

The men who uttered these threats, which gave "aid and comfort" to the enemies of this country while they were burning its capitol, were held in high esteem. To this day the names of George Cabot, Nathan Dove, Roger M. Sherman, and their associates are honored in New England.

The acquisition of Louisiana, in 1803, created much dissatisfaction throughout New England, for the reason, as expressed by George Cabot, Senator from Massachusetts, and the grandfather of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (in whose *Life of George 'Cabot* the statement is made): "**That the influence of our (northeastern) part of the Union must be diminished by the acquisition of more weight at the other extremity.**" At the time secession, or the separation of the States, was freely discussed with no suggestion of any idea among its advocates that it was treasonable or revolutionary.

Colonel Timothy Pickering, an officer in the Revolution, afterwards Postmaster-General, Secretary of War, and Secretary of State in Washington's Cabinet, and afterwards for

many years a Senator from Massachusetts, was also a leading secessionist in his day. In Lodge's *Life of Cabot* his letters to Senator Cabot reveal his convictions of the power in a sovereign State to sever its connection with the Union. In one of his letters, written in 1803 to a friend, he says: **"I will not despair. I will rather anticipate a new Confederacy, exempt from corrupt and corrupting influences and oppressions of the aristocratic Democrats of the South. There will be (our children at the farthest will see it) a separation. The white and black population will mark the boundary."**

In another letter he says: **"The principles of our Revolution point to the remedy—a separation; that this can be accomplished without spilling one drop of blood, I have little doubt."**

Other quotations to the same point, found in the letters of Colonel Pickering, might be given. The occasion forbids. Such were his views of the nature of the compact under the Constitution. He was a revolutionary patriot, a friend and associate of Washington, and a trusted servant, during many long years, of Massachusetts.

In 1811, in the debate of the bill for the admission of Louisiana into the Union, Josiah Quincy, a member of Congress from Massachusetts, said: **"If this bill passes, it is my deliberate opinion that it is virtually a dissolution of the Union; that it will free the States from moral obligation, and as it will be the right of all, so it will be the duty of some definitely to prepare for that separation, amicably if they can, violently if they must."**

Cabot, Quincy, and Pickering were strong Federalists, not misguided advocates of States' Rights, but friends of a strong, centralized Federal Government.

All of us know of the Hartford Convention, held in 1814, growing out of the war with Great Britain, in which were representatives regularly elected by the legislatures of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut, and representatives irregularly chosen from New Hampshire and Vermont. They sat with closed doors, but it is known that their object was the discussion of the expediency of those States withdrawing from the Union and setting up a separate Confederation. They determined upon its expediency then, but published to the world the conditions and circumstances under which its dissolution might become expedient.

In the years 1844-45, when measures were taken for the annexation of Texas, the legislature of Massachusetts passed a resolution that: **"The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, faithful to the compact between the people of the United States, according to the plain meaning and intent in which it was understood by them, is sincerely anxious for its preservation; but it is determined, as it doubts not the other States are, to submit to undelegated powers in no body of men on earth; and that the project for the annexation of Texas, unless arrested on the threshold, may tend to drive these States into a dissolution of the Union."**

I need offer no apology for making this long quotation, which fully sustains my briefer reference to important facts of history; and shows very conclusively that the people of that part of the Union now entertain very different views as to the right of a State to secede, from those they formerly advocated. Their arguments of late years, on this question, would convict their fathers of threatened revolution and treason, which would seem to be rather unfilial; and creates a suspicion of hypocrisy, and can hardly be classed as political honesty.

It is a noteworthy fact that while the representatives of the other States disapproved and condemned these threats of secession, they never denied the right of a State to secede when there was no other remedy against wrongs and oppressions.

I could wish to be dealing in recitals of a more pleasant character, but the foregoing facts are a part of the history of the times with which I have to deal; and if they are not of as cheerful a nature as might be desired, it must be remembered that it is the facts themselves, and not the recital of them, which may be disagreeable. If the action of the people of New England, at the time mentioned, was patriotic, the action of the people of the South from 1861 to 1865 must also have been patriotic. If the people of the South from 1861 to 1865 were rebels and traitors, those of New England must also have advocated rebellion and treason.

In the end the alternative was offered to the Southern people to submit to all this, to surrender the protection of the Constitution and laws of the United States, and to become the degraded and dishonored victims of Northern fanaticism and abolitionism and avarice, or to secede from the Union and form a government friendly to their own rights and interests. They chose the latter alternative, and, after one of the most heroic struggles known to history, and such a sacrifice of life and property as has hardly been equaled in any war, they failed to maintain their independence and separate nationality, and were doomed to pass through all the crime and horror of the years of Reconstruction. And they are now citizens of a country governed by a party which has enlisted under its banners the corporate wealth of the banks, the railroads, the manufacturing establishments, the great trusts; and instead of a constitutional government resting on great principles, and controlled by patriotic citizenship, we have a government largely outside of the Constitution, controlled by class interests and money, and labor organizations; with a contest between capital and labor as to which shall be the master, and get the most money from the people.

Notwithstanding the horrors of the war between the States, the crimes and robberies of Reconstruction, the annulment of the State governments of the South, the disfranchisement of the white race, and the enfranchisement of the negro, the people of the South have reestablished civil governments, revived their industries, and restored prosperity for their people. Hard as their fortune has been in the past, they have accepted the new conditions, and hope for the restoration of constitutional principles of government, and for the maintenance of popular liberty. The Constitution once covered and protected the people wherever the American flag floated, but now by the action of Congress and the decisions of the Supreme Court its flag covers vast extents of territory

and ten millions of people where the Army and Navy carry it, but where the inhabitants are not under the government and protection of the Constitution. For some purposes they are in the United States, and for other purposes they are aliens; a condition and a policy which indicate that Congress and the Supreme Court consider the Constitution of the United States unconstitutional.

When we consider the departures from the Constitution since the year 1860, the increase of the jurisdiction of Congress, the growth and expenditures of the Federal Government, no thoughtful man can fail to feel a sense of anxiety and fear for the future of the great Republic. I shall not object to the criticism these thoughts will subject me to, if they shall in any degree have the effect of directing attention to the dangers which now lie before us.

Source:

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