

## The Southern States.

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The history of the Southern States of this Union is the checkered portion of the story of this Nation. Up to the close of the war in 1865 that part of her history is full of high lights and profound shadows. Those states developed men of the most splendid talent and equal folly, the two so blended that the latter almost damned the former and the former almost redeemed the latter. But few of them ever displayed "common sense" in public matters. Toombs, Yancey, Rhett, Davis, Regan, Stephens, Fitzpatrick, Benjamin and others of that brilliant throng nearly all displayed a want of it. From the earliest days of the slavery agitation their talents with their folly made a blend that aroused both admiration and painful regret.

That men of their mental caliber should believe slavery right, staggers the ~~man~~<sup>man</sup> of today. The idea of free men is so plain, so elemental and so essential to our system of government that men less learned in the queer freaks of the human mind than the men of today, must hesitate to believe those men honest in that belief till the last possible proof is considered. Nothing short of the way they offered life and fortune in defending slavery could satisfy the mind. And such splendid consecration! It has never been surpassed in the story of human life.

One thing about the war that was always strange to me was the way both North and South tried to disguise the real cause of it. It was, in the last and true analysis, slavery and that only. True, there were side-issues, resultant trends and effects, but every one of them was of a secondary nature. The South claimed that it fought that war to preserve States Rights; the North

claimed that it fought to preserve the Union. Incidentally, of course, both those things were involved. Eliminate slavery from the equation and States Rights were not menaced and no one would have thought of dissolving the Union. Every way one turns, from every angle of vision, in every sub-problem, the Negro was visible, present and persistent. The North threatened no primary aggression except on slavery; the South pointed out no danger that was not primarily aimed at slavery. The dangers both talked about were all over beyond slavery, but were of its essence and sprang from it. If the North had not been determined to free the slaves they could not have gotten up an army as they did; had the South freed the slaves with the same act by which they withdrew from the Union there would have been no war. If the primary idea of the North had been to preserve the Union that could have been easily done by guaranteeing the perpetuation of slavery,---by expressly putting slaves on the same constitutional footing as other personal property. Up till the first shot that would have prevented the war.

I do not overlook the fact that by 1861 both sides were red hot for a fight,---but it all arose over the negro. They had been quarrelling for years, shaking fists in each other's faces and calling names; had been discussing constitutional guarantees, reserved powers and states rights; but behind it all was the Negro!

That the South fought as well as ever men did is beyond question. That ~~the men who were willing~~ to offer life must in the absence of another controlling motive be accepted as proof of sincerity; and that they fought for a cause utterly wrong, utterly illogical and shocking to the sense of a fair man is not an argument against according such belief in their sincerity.

I was raised in Alabama in the midst of slavery and slaves. While a boy of eight to twelve years of age I heard ministers of the Gospel, honest, noble men, many times, from the pulpit announce with absoluteness that slavery was morally right, ordained of God, and cite passages from the Bible to sustain them. Though a child and surrounded by intense pro-slavery influences, deep down in my heart I felt that they were wrong. I could not refute their biblical citations nor <sup>n</sup> explain away any of those proofs, but I felt that in some way they could be answered, and then and there was implanted in my very nature a distrust of religion and the Bible, from which I have never been able to escape.

Perhaps no body of men, in all prior history, ever displayed such rank folly, such imbecility, as the Confederate Congress. Not a measure of beneficence or wisdom relieves their four years of existence from the contempt of men. Those men, for ability in discussion, for logical theorizing, for academic views, always displayed talents of the highest order. Some of the speeches made by them were classics and in theory splendidly able, but the product of constructive legislation by that body during its four years of existence was worse than chaff,--it was foolish, and for that reason and its consequences, near criminal. Had the / Confederate Congress desired the triumph of the Union but sought to conceal that desire, and had the art to play the game, it would not have acted other than as it did.

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