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Vera Atque Honesta Dicere.

MEMPHIS.

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THE PAST TEACHING THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

SECESSION.

When Secession took place, the public opinion of the South was far from being prepared for it. Its blind guides had taken little pains to instruct the people in regard to it. Whole States would by large majorities have denied the right to secede, and in no State except South Carolina was there anything like unanimity on the question of right. Even there, opinions were divided. Why was this the case? It is to be supposed that the Southern States might have been brought, by use of due means, to as complete an agreement on this question as on any other that affected their interests. Yet, to much of the South, Secession was an odious word.

The subject was discussed when South Carolina nullified the Tariff Acts; but then she had not attempted to secede; and the two questions were so intermingled as to make the arguments incoherent. Who can point to a [illegible] If a dozen respectable arguments, in demonstration of the right of Secession? Who now remembers even one? Leave out Mr. CALHOUN and a few Carolina Statesmen, and where is the Southern Democrat that ever made one? The Whigs, it is well known, almost universally denied the right.

Now, Secession was the *last* remedy of an aggrieved State; the *ultima ratio*, when redress could not otherwise be obtained. It was the last great conservative remedy, by the fear of resort to which, when the veto power should have failed to arrest unconstitutional legislation, and the Supreme Court should have proved faithless or be powerless, the encroaching States might be compelled to retrace their steps, and permit the Union to continue. Moreover, unless the right existed, the whole Southern theory of the Constitution was false, and the States had become mere Provinces of an Empire, held together by an indissoluble bond, a supreme law enacted by the one will of the whole People of all.

Public opinion was left to form itself as it might, in regard to this invaluable right; and to settle down upon the conviction that nullification and Secession were twin heresies; and of course, to adopt Mr. WEBSTER's doctrine as to the *popular* origin of the Government. These questions were not discussed before the people, by the candidates for office; who confined themselves to those of the Bank and Tariff, when they meddled at all with principles, which was done but rarely and at brief intervals. The faculty of telling low and vulgar anecdotes, commendable in a low comedian or negro minstrel, and sometimes availed of, though with questionable propriety, over the wine, after a convivial dinner, was far more valuable than statesmanship, and made more members of Congress and Governors of States than constitutional logic or genuine eloquence.

Why was this question always kept beneath the surface? JACKSON's hostility to CALHOUN made that Statesman's doctrines hateful to the masses; for the former was the very incarnation of Democracy, and up to the year 1861 there was scarcely a county in the South, [illegible] democracy controlled, any one save a JACKSON democrat could be elected. The name of JACKSON remained a tower of strength, and long after he died, he ruled the South. The regular candidates of the party needed no other commendation or qualification than that their democracy was purely and unquestionably Jacksonian. If it were not, it must at least be called so; although the ancient worthies of the party sometimes mumbled an allusion to the obsolete Jeffersonian orthodoxy.

Of course, to 'harmonize' the party, the question of the right of Secession was never mooted, but carefully kept out of sight. We do not think that any one ever even 'moved' to insert a plank in any National Democratic platform, assuming the existence of the right; and certainly it never happened that such a 'plank' was incorporated. Other questions, not so dangerous to the internal 'harmony,' were found or invented, to keep this and other like principles from being troublesome. Indeed, it was supposed that JACKSON's ghost would have interfered, with angry malediction, if in any such Convention the question had been stirred. 'By the Eternal,' he would have said, 'the Union shall be preserved.'

To General JACKSON, then, to the popular idolatry of him, to the obsequiousness of party to his notions, to the politician's fear of the awful consequences of advocating an unpopular doctrine, and to the necessity of harmony in the Democratic party, it is owing, that when the South seceded, it was not at all convinced that it had the right to do so. Of the men who had the management of her affairs, there was not one in twenty, (was there one in a hundred?), who could have demonstrated, even to his own satisfaction, the existence of that right, by any argument fit to be made before a court or in the Senate? Who *did* it in the Senate, when the States were seceding, and Senators retiring after long harangues? What man amongst them all could have met WEBSTER in debate upon that question? TOOMBS might; for he is a great intellect. HUNTER could not; and if there were others who could have set the people right upon the question, why did none among them do so in time?

The fruits of this reticence, of this forbearance to stir unwelcome questions, are ample. They should be very satisfactory to those leaders of public opinion, who long held offices by prescription, and to vote against whom was deemed unpatriotic heresy. If they were incompetent to enlighten and convince the people on this subject, what business had they with the offices they coveted and won? Who will explain that singular failure in human nature which makes incompetent men always eager to obtain office, and always the most eager in obtaining those who they are most incompetent and unfit to fill? Why is it, how hundred answer their incapacity may be to all other men, that they never become conscious of it and resign? Does ignorance always imagine itself learned in proportion to its profundity, and dullness always think itself wise and capable in proportion to its so-many-horse-power [illegible]

[illegible] fruits, we say, are as [illegible] Southern State, in [illegible] Tennessee, [illegible] ... representation, [illegible] would speed- [illegible] and [illegible] ... field makes an election a [illegible]

[illegible] ... Democrat, said [illegible] ... Democrat [illegible] ... Democrat [illegible] ... Democrat