

The Daily Sentinel.

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DAILY SENTINEL.

WM. E. FELL, PROPRIETOR.

A SECESSIONIST VIEW OF RECONSTRUCTION.

So far as the reconstruction laws are not a mere wanton exercise of arbitrary power, so far as they do not depend on the ancient and execrable principle that might makes right, their justification lies in the doctrine of secession. If the secession ordinances were valid, and the States pretending to secede did thereby become independent foreign governments, then the contest was not a civil but a foreign war, and the success of our arms gave us all those rights of conquest which appertain to a victorious nation by the body of nations known as international law. If the secession doctrine was sound, and the independence acquired in pursuance of it was real, it logically follows that Congress can prescribe rules for the government of a foreign territory which became ours by the right of conquest, and that the time and manner of the readmission of the seceded States to the Union, are subject to Congressional discretion. The Hon. Iverson L. Harris, one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Georgia, has written a letter laboring submission to the prescribed conditions, and making the validity of the ordinances of secession the cornerstone of his argument. We copy enough to exhibit the line of reasoning:

REACTION.—We can assure the people of Virginia that relief is coming from the right direction, and that radicalism will soon be put to death in the house of its friends.—*Richmond Courier.*

Expressions like the above are becoming frequent in Southern newspapers, but their truthfulness depends perhaps as much upon the deportment of the Southern people in the coming months as upon anything else. They must abstain from any course of action or conduct that gives ground of suspicion in regard to the genuineness of their professions of loyalty or that is capable of being perverted or misconstrued by reckless demagogues, for purposes of mischief.—*Journal of Commerce*, (N. Y.)

A GREAT TRUTH.—Nothing can be more repugnant, nothing more hostile, nothing more directly destructive, than excessive, unrestricted, and unconstitutional confidence in men; nothing worse than the doctrine that official agents may interpret the public will in their own way, in defiance of the Constitution and laws themselves; or that any public officer, high or low, should undertake to constitute himself, or call himself, the representative of the people, except so far as the Constitution and laws create and nominate him such representative.—*Daniel Webster.*

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Upon this view you will perceive that I utterly deny that there was a civil war in its legitimate sense—that we were rebels, traitors. A necessary consequence from this position is, that upon the termination of hostilities, there can be no confederation or amalgamation to the municipal laws of the conqueror.

The claim that the Constitution is ours, and that we have never parted with it, contains within it the fatal admission of our guilt as traitors.

The status of Georgia, then, at this time, is that of a conquered State out of the federal Union.

If this is so, it is the light only of the laws of nations that our situation can be properly considered.

It must, I think, be conceded by every just, whose rendering has extended beyond Blackstone, and the Constitution of the United States, that it is a settled and unquestionable doctrine of the laws of nations, that the conqueror, according to the customs of Christian civilized nations, may rule the State conquered at his will, by moulding its political institutions to that will, with no other restrictions on his power than the customary usages of such nations.

The Congress of the United States, from this source, and this alone, derived their power to pass the reconstruction acts; they did not spring from the exercise of enumerated and delegated powers to Congress, but from the power outside of the Constitution inherent in the victor.

Viewing these acts, then, in the light of terms imposed by the conqueror on the conqueror—and I am driven by a stern logic to look at them in that light, and in no other—so regarding them, I am called on to determine what line of conduct it is most expedient to pursue. I am compelled also, to remember at the same time, that there is no earthly tribunal to which the conquered can appeal for remedy or redress. Are we not, then, by an incurable necessity compelled to choose between acquiescing in those acts, or resistance? Would not the last be downright madness? The other alternative is the only thing left us.

If we could but concede the premises, we should be obliged to admit that this is soundly and ably reasoned. But it would be the most stupendous example of self-satisfaction in the history of the world, for the Northern people to admit the premises. True it is, that the reconstruction acts can be justified on no other principle; but the North has expended too much blood and treasure in contesting the doctrine of secession to concede its validity now. If the South had a right to secede, and by secession became a foreign nation, we waged against it a most cruel and unjustifiable war, and conducted the war on false pretences from beginning to end. In entering upon the war, and during the whole course of its prosecution, we maintained that the ordinances of secession were nullities, of no more force than if they had never been passed. Our government was never weary of declaring, both to our own people and to foreign nations, that we were dealing merely with revolting citizens; and we carried this doctrine to such a length as to make it a ground of vehement accusation against Great Britain that she conceded to the South enough of a belligerent character to assume the position of a neutral. The whole tenor of the despatches sent from our State Department, and the whole tone of our administration was in strong incitation of the foreign powers for regarding the Confederacy as a legitimate nation.

We waited for a long while to see whether the South had the right to secede, and whether the belligerent party in a civil war, refrained for a long while even to exchange prisoners; and now, in broken contradiction to our whole record, we insist on a method of restoration which involves a full acknowledgment of the right of secession, and is utterly indefensible on any other principle.—*N. Y. World.*

Nobody seems to know where Ex-Secretary Stanton is, but the discoveries made in his department since he left it show that he is in—*Louisville Journal.*

"No More Presidents."—In a Radical procession in St. Louis, a few nights since, a banner was prominent which bore this inscription: "No more Presidents. Presently the first step to despotism."

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