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WAS IT ANTI-SLAVERY?



[FIRST PRIZE ESSAY, 1916, ON "THE CAUSES THAT LED TO THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES," IN THE LATHAM PRIZE CONTEST, WHICH WAS INAUGURATED BY THE SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS IN 1915 THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF MRS. T. J. LATHAM, OF MEMPHIS, TENN.]

BY
LLOYD T. EVERETT

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Was It Anti-Slavery?

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BY LLOYD T. EVERETT, BALLSTON, VA.

When the smoke of the American Revolution lifted, it discovered to the world a straggling line of thirteen petty republics fringing for a thousand miles and more the western shore of the Atlantic. Only comparatively homogeneous in blood, these stripling commonwealths were varied in latitude and diversified in temperament, tendencies, and material interests. But recently brought together in one common contest against a common oppressor across the seas, harmony dwindled and discord grew between them in proportion as the late joint struggle for independence receded into the past. Grouped, regrouped, and countergrouped into large and small States, free-labor and slave-labor States, planter and sea-trading States, States with wide stretches of Western hinterland and States without, the baker's dozen of mutually jealous little Minervas eyed each other furtively from the very start.

Even during the war for independence little Maryland held up the Articles of Confederation from unanimous adoption and actual operation until assured of a satisfactory disposition of the vast Western-land grants held by Virginia and others of the large States. It appears that as early as 1786

many in the North and East favored an agreement with Spain for closing the Mississippi as a trade outlet for the scattered but growing settlements beyond the mountains. New England particularly (herself cut off from Western expansion by her geographical position) was found ever hostile to Southern and Western extensions. Bear this fact well in mind in tracing the later course of what came to be the great inter-sectional controversy. Again, many and significant evidences of jealousy between various States or groups of States and between the two great sections of South and North are found in the debates of the general and State conventions that framed and that adopted the Federal Constitution of 1787-89. No wonder that Washington in his farewell address considered the new Constitution and his "confederated republic" thereunder as an "experiment."

One of the "compromises of the Constitution" resulted from a "deal" between certain States of sea-trading, slave-transporting New England and some of the Southern States by which the proposed provision requiring a two-thirds vote in Congress in matters regulating commerce (including sea carriage) was defeated, and the importation of slaves from Africa should not be abolished before the year 1808.

There was pronounced opposition in New England to the purchase of the great Louisiana territory by Jefferson's administration in 1803. Like opposition from the same quarter developed some eight years later to the admission of the southernmost portion of this Louisiana country as the State of Louisiana; and Representative Josiah Quincy, of Massachusetts, uttered from the floor of Congress his famous threat of secession by "some" of the States, "amicably if they can, violently if they must."

The War of 1812 gave occasion for yet further expressions of disaffection up New England way. The Federalist party,

with its stronghold there, had become hopelessly ousted from power by the Democrats, led by Jefferson and other Southern men. Moreover, the trade restrictions resulting from the war and other policies of the Democrats bore hard upon New England's sea-carrying interests, although Mr. Wilson remarks in his "History of the American People" that the planters of the South were even harder hit. In the midst of this war the memorable Hartford Convention of New Englanders was held as an angry protest against the war and the administration. This convention squinted toward secession; and about the same time Daniel Webster on the floor of the House of Representatives, speaking in opposition to one of the war measures, threatened disunion in no uncertain tones.

A few years after the war the question of Western expansion was again up. This was in 1819-21, when "the Missouri questions" shook the country from end to end. New England and the North generally opposed the admission of this new Southern and Western State. For the first time *slavery as a distinctly sectional issue* came to the fore. If the West must be settled after all, the North and the Northeast were determined to keep as much of it as possible for themselves and for white labor as against the South and black labor. The dispute raged long and hot, involving many legislative proposals and party maneuvers.

It is very commonly supposed that the slave-labor State of Missouri and the free-labor State of Maine were together admitted under the "Missouri Compromise," by which Missouri was allowed to come in with slavery; but no more slave-labor States were to be admitted from the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude thirty-six degrees, thirty minutes. This is not correct. Under such a proposal Maine was admitted; but Northern members afterwards voted against the admission of Missouri with slavery, and her admission was delayed another

year. (See the history of this most informingly discussed in A. H. Stephens's "History of the United States.")

The aged Jefferson, himself an abolitionist from principle, decried this injection of politico-moral questions into inter-sectional politics. He said it smote upon his ears "like a fire bell in the night" and could mean only bloodshed and disunion. Jefferson pointed out that true friends of the negroes should be glad to see them diffused over a larger stretch of country. That this "anti-slavery" stand of the North in Congress was economic and political, not moral and philanthropic, is manifest from a study of the laws of those times in Northern and Northwestern States aimed against free negroes there.

For a few years after the admission of Missouri the question of Western expansion as a sectional issue slept, then broke forth again at the time of the nullification crisis, 1830-33. Senator Foot, of Connecticut, had introduced a resolution looking to the restriction of the survey and sale of Western lands. The South and the West attacked it as designed to retard the development of the West and to keep the factory laborers of the North from emigrating. Too, the moneyed interests (centered in the North) were accused of wishing to maintain a permanent, interest-bearing national debt. Manufactures had received a great impetus during the trade troubles accompanying the second war with Britain, and "protective" tariffs had been demanded by and conceded to the manufacturers. These were mostly in the middle States, but by 1830 were quite numerous in New England also.

By her determined stand in the nullification crisis South Carolina, reënforced by widespread sympathy in other Southern States, forced a radical reduction in the tariff under the famous compromise of 1833. She thereby incurred the lasting enmity of New England and of much of the North generally. Up to this date the abolitionist crusade had made no

great headway in the North, least of all in New England. But it was in the midst of these nullification debates in Congress that John Quincy Adams uttered the significant threat that if "protection" of manufacturers was not to be given to the North, then the South ought not to expect continued protection of negro slavery. It was from this very juncture that abolitionism and "free-soilism" began to make marked growth throughout the North. Except for a brief period in the early forties, a low or lowered tariff prevailed from nullification until the war of 1861.

In the nullification debates we find the agricultural South and West, for the most part, standing together against the common hostility of the mercantile North and East. But a change soon took place. The North found that the West was bound to grow, anyhow. Largely increased immigration from Europe began about this time to pour into Northern ports and to furnish the needed cheap labor for Northern mills; the West was steadily beguiled with the prospect of vast "internal improvements" (roads, aids to navigation, etc.), at the expense of the Federal treasury. These improvements called for large revenue and so lent added plausibility to the demand for a high tariff on imports. Thus long before 1861 the Northeast and the Northwest became allied against the South. But few Europeans came into the South, where the immigrant laborers would find themselves in competition with slave labor. Thus the North's population grew faster than the South's. Also these Continental Europeans were imbued with the ideas of strong monarchical, centralistic governments, and so were the more ready to embark upon a war of invasion and conquest (when the issue with the South should once be finally drawn) and thus help overwhelm the minority, though a considerable one, in the North opposed to any such repudiation of the principles of our Declaration of Independ-

ence and our historical, constitutional rights. Lincoln in his war of coercion derived much aid and comfort from the German immigrants with their ideals of blood and iron.

Meanwhile many in the North had opposed the annexation of Texas, also that of other Southwestern territory, resulting from the war with Mexico. The Kansas-Nebraska controversy gave rise to the Republican party in the 'fifties, *which demanded that the South keep out of the common territories which had been acquired by the common blood and treasure of the South and North alike.* Horace Greeley, one of the Republican leaders, was slow to be drawn into the professed anti-slavery agitation, because, as he himself said in 1845, he found too much slavery in the North. In the factory districts there the women and children toiled thirteen and fourteen hours a day, and the factory hands dwelt in the company's houses and worshiped God at the company's church.

The new party in its first national platform (1856) did not declare for a high or "protective" tariff. It polled a good vote that year and, thereby encouraged, declared for such a tariff in 1860, thus appealing to both the land-hungry of the West and the bounty-hungry of the East. Meanwhile the John Brown raid into Virginia, seeking to incite the negroes to war with the Southern whites, had occurred in 1859, and widespread sympathy with and for him was expressed in the North, a sympathy doubtless fanned by Harriet Beecher Stowe's stirring novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," of this period. The Democrats and the Constitutionalist-Union men split into three tickets in 1860, thus allowing the Republicans to elect their candidate by a majority of the electoral votes, though by a minority of nearly a million of the popular vote.

Most of the Southern States then withdrew, and the war of coercion followed. A high tariff was promptly enacted as a "war measure" to raise revenue for waging war on the

South, which was to be retained in the Union *inter alia* to furnish cheap raw materials for Northern manufacturers and perhaps an outlet for the Northwest via the Mississippi. This tariff was repeatedly increased during the four years of war. Yet, despite this need of revenue, the free-homestead act of 1862 was passed, thus materially reducing the income from the disposal of the new lands of the West. And with it all a huge public debt was piled up.

Some one has aptly remarked that the Northern writers have been too prone to ascribe moral causes to the great war of the 'sixties and Southern writers too much inclined to lay it to a difference of view of constitutional rights; that, in truth, the causes were primarily economic. Commercial and economic questions have caused most of the great wars of history, and human nature is the same in America as elsewhere. In his farewell address Washington warned against belief in disinterested kindness in national conduct; Mr. Taft has spoken to like effect. Tariff, Western lands, immigration, the desire in certain selfishly interested quarters for a big permanent public debt—all these had more to do with our great war than the historians have usually told us.

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