

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War



PATRIOTIC RECOLLECTIONS

The War: It's Cause and Remedy

by

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Viewed in the light of Scripture and God's providences, war is the result of sin; and its remedy is repentance and reformation. God, in the present calamitous rebel war, has a controversy with the people - with the whole people - North and South. It is not the South alone that is guilty. The North has participated in the guilt. Judged by the divine rule, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required," we may be more guilty than the people of the Southern States. The North has had the majority of votes in Congress, and the preponderance in intellectual, moral, religious, and physical power. It has furnished the politicians and the means to aid the South in their schemes of domination. "For fifty years," said an eminent statesman, "the Slave States have ruled this country, and it has been done with the consent and aid of the Free States,"

We are a nation laden with trespasses and sins. We have provoked the Almighty to anger, our rulers, statesmen, our ecclesiastical bodies, our churches, the people of the whole land; and He has come out in judgment against us. All history, sacred and profane, bears witness to the fact that he never fails to punish nations that have thus offended, and persisted in their transgressions. His retributive justice seems to require it. Nations, as such, must be punished, if at all, in this world, and they are punished, often with terrible destruction. What nation, considering the light and privileges we have enjoyed, has been so criminal and sinful as ours? Shall we be spared? "Shall I not visit for these things?" saith the Lord; "and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

We have sinned in many ways, and especially in our cruel treatment of the Indians and the negroes. The voice of their blood crieth unto God from the ground. But at the present time we refer particularly to the treatment of the colored man - bond and free - and especially of the enslaved. We have been a slaveholding nation. Slavery has been strengthened and extended by the cooperation of the Free and Slave States, in spite of the remonstrances and warnings of the abolitionists, who predicted the present state of things, if slavery was permitted to continue. Emancipation was demonstrated to be both wise and safe. But instead of heeding these warnings, the power of the national government has been exerted to increase the slave power and to extend the slave territory. The North has joined hands with the South in upholding, strengthening, and extending the accursed system, in trampling upon the rights of our brethren in bondage, and in arresting and remanding to hopeless bondage the panting fugitive in his noble attempt to secure his freedom. "We are

verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

The piercing wail and cry of the enslaved, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" though they have been unheeded by the nation, have been heard in heaven. "Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which of you is kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth."

Slavery is the cause of this present war. Who doubts it? And there can be no permanent peace while slavery exists in this country. There will ever be an "irrepressible conflict" between freedom and slavery. If the infatuated men at the South, who have precipitated the slave States into this conflict with the United States government, should, overawed and disheartened by the extraordinary uprising and determination of the people of the Free States, back down and profess loyalty; if a peace should be proclaimed on compromising terms, how long would it be before another treasonable outbreak would occur, and the people of the North be called again into the tented field, to defend the flag of their country, and maintain their civil and religious liberties?

What then is the remedy? We unhesitatingly answer: IMMEDIATE AND UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION. Let the North repent of their sin in conniving at slavery and upholding it, and bring forth works meet for repentance. There is no safety or lasting peace in any other course. By this glorious achievement we should have the blessing of the God of the oppressed, and thus insure to ourselves and our posterity a career of prosperity such as this country has never enjoyed, nor any other nation witnessed. It is a practicable and safe remedy. John Quincy Adams, in his memorable speech, delivered in the House of Representatives, April 14th and 15th, 1842, declared that in case of actual invasion or actual war, whether servile, civil, or foreign; "not only the President of the United States, but the commander of the army, has power to order the universal emancipation of the slaves."

Whenever immediate emancipation has taken place, it has been attended with peaceful and prosperous results. This has been fully demonstrated in the West Indies. Though denied by slaveholders and their apologists, it still remains a historical fact, and the page of history will bear attestation to its feasibility and utility. How could it be otherwise? It is always safe to do right. There are, it is true, inconveniences and losses connected with all great moral revolutions in society and nations, but necessity is the mother of invention, and adjustments soon take place that make the transition easy and beneficial.

The negroes are wanted at the South. They would be willing to remain. Hands off! Give them freedom, offer them fair wages, protect them in their social and industrial relations, encourage and cheer them, and all would be safe. "BE JUST AND FEAR NOT." If emancipation should be proclaimed by government or otherwise, as above suggested, the slaveholders would hardly attempt to retain the slaves in bondage. Their own safety would induce them to make the best of a political necessity. In Antigua, when the slaveholders found that the British act of emancipation had passed, they at once liberated the slaves without availing themselves of the four years' apprenticeship system; and in Martinique, when the slaves had risen in rebellion because they believed that the emancipation decreed by the French Government had been withheld from them by the Colonial authorities, the slaveholders, believing acquiescence was the part of wisdom, announced Liberty and Fraternity to the bond-men. In both cases, the happiest results followed - peace, concord, and prosperity.

Prosperity would be one of the attendant blessings of emancipation, in which the South would largely partake. Our peace would flow as a river; the people of the North and South would grasp each others' hands in mutual friendship; commerce, agriculture, and manufactures would receive a new impulse; the burdens of the people would be lightened; and, under the benignant smiles of a kind Providence, the civilized world would exclaim: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

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