

COUNTY SECESSION ATTITUDES
(Rockbridge, Virginia 1860-1861)

by

George Frederick Ashworth

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

I

The geographical position of Rockbridge County lends significance to its attitude toward secession. The justification of this **statement** divides itself into two parts.

First, should be shown the relation of the Valley of Virginia to the other parts of the State at the time of the discussion as to what Virginia's position should be, a discussion which resulted in the secession of Virginia, and the splitting off of the western counties from the eastern and central portions because of this act.

For purposes of clarification we may divide the Virginia of 1860 into five main sections. The "Southside", which was Virginia's "black belt", was the section where most of the two main staples of the South, tobacco and cotton, were grown; and was the section where most of the slaves were found. The "Tidewater" was the oldest section of the State. Here the plantation system had worn out the land to a great extent, and although the old Virginia mansion houses, so famous in history and legend, were still to be found here, as they are now, the land surrounding them was more restricted, and, as an industrial system, plantation agriculture with its natural corollary, slavery, was not so important as in the newer "Southside". The "Piedmont" was even at this time one of the wealthiest sections of the State. But it was not so dependent on the plantation system in its usual forms as were the two sections just mentioned. Many slaves were found on the larger estates of this rolling country, but they were fewer in numbers

than in those sections where tobacco was the chief crop with cotton of lesser, but calculable, importance. Horse raising and grazing were prominent and the farm land was given over to a diversity of crops. This section has maintained its prosperity down to the present; and its great estates, bordered by gray stone un-mortared walls, with handsome white-columned mansions set back from the highways, overlooking broad pasture lands where race horses on stud and lean western steers being fattened for the market on the blue grass graze, make a picture of luxurious and spacious rural life that has no parallel in this country.

These three older sections of Virginia have, however, much in common; and they had in 1860. All had great estates, and though the industrial system of all was different than the others, all supported a slave population larger than the more western sections of the State.

In these regions we find a different sort of life. From the Alleghanies westward the land is mountainous and broken. From the mountains westward the topography grades off into another Piedmont, but it is not so smoothly rolling as the eastern slope, the hills being sharper in outline. It terminates in a gently rolling plain along the Ohio river. We now know that most of these western counties would never have split from the mother State had the question been submitted to all of the people in them.¹ But had there been no sentiment at all favoring disruption it could not have taken place. So here we have another section, of small farms, few slaves, and nurturing a Union sentiment, which if not a majority sentiment was at least an aggressive minority one.

1. J.C.McGregor, The Disruption of Virginia

Between these two general classifications of the opposing sections of Virginia, there is a third. Lying between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghany mountains is the Valley of Virginia. It is hilly all the way from Harper's Ferry, where it is broadest and flattest, to the high hills of Southwest Virginia, where it is amalgamated to some extent with the mountain ranges. The lower reaches of this valley, from Greenville to Harper's Ferry, are drained by the Shenandoah river, and this part of the Valley of Virginia is known as the Shenandoah Valley. From Augusta county to the mouth of the river this valley is very productive of fruits and small grains, and was called after the State seceded, "The breadbasket of the Confederacy." The entire valley is given over in the main to relatively small farms, and was in 1860. Slavery was not so important as it was in the eastern part of the State, but was more prevalent than in the mountain regions of the west and the valley of the Ohio.

In about the center of this valley is Rockbridge County. With a population of about 12,000 whites, in 1860, it had four or five thousand slaves.²

This county, then, in the center of a border section, lying between the two extremes of the State, will be studied. Its attitude toward secession should be significant. Virginia seceded, Rockbridge County was loyal to the State. The secession attitudes of the County will be surveyed in the chapters following. First, let us examine the causes of Virginia's leaving the Union. We can then study in detail the relation of the part to the whole.

2. James B. Dorman, as quoted in The Valley Star of March 14, 1861

II

In 1861, secession, so long a subject of discussion and debate, as to its legality, efficacy, and morality, had become a fact in several Southern States. Federal forces and State forces had clashed, and the nation waited in suspense to see what the next move of the new government in the Cotton States would be. Every ear was turned to Washington to hear the decisions, so slow in taking definite form, of the untried President of an ~~old~~ government he had sworn to sustain---decisions of the leader of a new party---the party of a section just come into power.

When, after accusation and counter accusation, rebuke, malediction, and attempts at adjustment had come to nothing; were found to be only little steamjets rising from the seething crucible of a nation's passions---then boasts of power and pleas for forbearance mingled in the air of the Halls of Congress, and delegation after delegation left Washington to aid their several States to recall unto themselves the power delegated to a no longer desired Union. When the men of a nation viewed each other with hostile and distrustful glance and the women waited for husbands, sons and sweethearts to be called to arms against their kin - all eyes were turned to Virginia.

Virginia was the focal point of a conflict, the fulcrum of a national balance. And Virginia waited. No one studying the subject can fail to reach the conclusion that Virginia's attitude at this crucial time was moderate and praiseworthy. In calling the Washington Peace Conference of 1861, she became the only State in the Union to suggest a practical way ~~out~~ of the sectional difficulties, and move to put it into effect. In the speeches of her representative men and the editorials of her editors, urging

independent and measured action, decrying any move that would shatter the Union before every effort had been made to save it, and condemning the extremists on both sides of the question, a force and a restraint are exhibited that can but be admired. ³

The Old Dominion had every reason to move slowly toward a decision which would sever her connection with the Union. The first of the British Colonies, and the greatest of them, when the United States government was brought into being by the pen of one Virginian and led successfully to independence by the sword of another, she had an interest in that government unequalled by any other State. Much of the early history of this republic is written in the lives of Washington, Marshall, Jefferson, Henry, Madison, Mason, Monroe, Wythe and many others - Virginians.

Virginia, the strongest and nearest State below the Potomac, knew that should she secede, the heaviest^t burden of the war would fall on her shoulders. She realized that her soil would drink up the blood of her sons, sacrificed to the Gods of War, while her homes, more than all others, would furnish fuel for the altar fires. ⁴

And this also was the thought of millions of men beyond her borders, ⁵ watching and waiting for the decision of this premier commonwealth. Especially did those in control of the governments at Washington and Montgomery appreciate her situation. They knew that should Virginia secede, her prestige would give the act great weight in the counsels of the other Border States. They knew that Virginia's strength taken from one side and thrown to the other would incline the balance sharply toward the ultimate success of the Southern Confederacy. No act other than foreign intervention could have so much significance.

3. The Lexington Gazette, November 1, 1860 to May 30, 1861 and

The Valley Star, November 15, 1860 to April 18, 1861 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid.

Events bear out these views. The length of the war, and the strength of the Confederacy, would certainly have been greatly lessened had Virginia remained in the Union. Try to imagine the War's attaining anything like the proportions it did with the man power and wealth of the then largest and richest Southern State, and with the military genius of Lee and Jackson, not to mention several others of note, subtracted from the Confederate armies and added to the Union strength. Lee's generalship would have eliminated the military blunders and frequent changes of command, so costly to the Federal cause during the early years of the war. Imagine the effect on the Southern cause of having Washington deep in Union territory instead of almost on the firing line, where Virginia's secession placed it. Calculate the effect on the Confederate armies of having to defend a long and irregular border formed largely of surveyor's lines, rather than of rivers and mountain ranges. And then calculate with all these factors the probability of other Border States remaining in the Union if Virginia had set the example.

English military historians, as well as many Americans, have expressed the well considered opinion, that without Virginia, the Confederacy could not have maintained itself for two years in the field, at the most generous estimate. This may sound extreme to the casual observer; but consider the evidence, weigh the opposing arguments, and the verdict seems logical. At any rate, the influence of Virginia with the Border States was enormous, her power considerable, her military leaders notable, her position across the river from Washington most strategic, her historic prestige great; and in 1861 all eyes turned to her. Virginia seceded, the fulcrum was shifted, and the balance destroyed - Why?

III

James Ford Rhodes has advanced what is generally known as the standard thesis on the cause of the War Between the States - Slavery. But both U. B. Phillips and William E. Dodd, recognized leaders in the field of Southern history, depart from this view.

Many other causes command our attention, such as: Opposing commercial and industrial interests including tariff discrimination, fear of a race war, State's rights, the threat of coercive restraint of attempted secession, and the unsolved problem of what to do with the vast horde of dependent and ignorant negroes if freed in accordance with the demands of the Northern abolitionists - a problem Lincoln said he could not solve, even if he were given unlimited power and means. These questions involving the negro are not to be confused with slavery as a cause in itself. They were problems occasioned by the presence of the negro in the South, be he slave or free.

Virginia did not secede from the Union in order to protect the institution of slavery within her borders, or to aid in extending it elsewhere. Both History and Economics may be resorted to for proof of this statement.

Colonial Virginians had realized their future danger when the African slave trade began to assume large proportions, and they had repeatedly requested the King of England to restrict the traffic, only to be refused such assistance. Their legislature had passed acts to restrain the importation of negroes, but the laws had been declared null and void. Mass meetings were held denouncing the trade, and the people were nearly of one mind in opposition to it. ⁶

When, after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Virginia became a State, she was in a position to take action on this subject, and in 1778 her legislature passed a statute prohibiting the slave trade. When the State ceded the Northwest Territory to the United States, she was foremost in maintaining that slavery should be forever excluded from the part lying north of the Ohio river. When in the Federal Constitution, the slave trade was allowed to continue for twenty years, it was "a bargain between New England and the far South" which "was carried against the sturdy opposition of Virginia."⁷

Virginians were most prominent in the early days of the Republic in trying to restrict and eventually to stop the slave trade and retard the growth of the institution of slavery. Her sons in Congress and in high Federal positions, including the Presidency, worked toward these ends,⁸ and until 1832 statutes were passed with the same purpose in view. This date marks the turning point of Virginia's attitude toward slavery, and the change is directly chargeable to the Abolitionists of the North.⁹ Virginia felt capable of handling her own domestic problems, and would brook no interference from beyond her borders. Then too, her people felt, as did those of the other Southern States, that this meddling was a threat to the safety of their homes. Before their minds' eyes rose the grim specter of slave insurrection, and they recalled Nat Turner's rebellion, with its train of murder, rapine and arson. There was always danger, sometimes exaggerated in the minds of the whites, that the misdirected efforts of the Abolition fanatics would have this effect on the hordes of slaves throughout the State. Especially were those of the large plantations conscious of their

7. Ibid. pp. 25 - 30

8. Ibid. p. 33

9. Ibid. p. 52

peril, where perhaps only one or two families of whites lived in close proximity to hundreds of slaves. Virginia had just cause for resentment.

The idea of returning freed negroes to their native Africa probably had its inception in Virginia, and Virginians were, in the early days, the most prominent members of the American colonization society. Many Virginians when they died freed their slaves, and many more gave during life, or left in their wills, money to "colonize" their slaves in some Northern free State or in Liberia.¹⁰ But even more convincing than this evidence of the opposition of many Virginians to slavery on moral or humane grounds, are the economic reasons for the unpopularity of the institution in the State,

Contrary to popular belief, a very small proportion of Virginians were slaveholders, and many of these had but few. In 1860, only one white man in twenty was a slaveholder, and of over a million whites, only one hundred and fourteen owned as many as a hundred slaves. Most of these large slaveholders lived east of the Blue Ridge. It can readily be seen by these facts that a great majority of the white population had no direct interest in slavery. Neither were they "poor whites". The great bulk of the people of Virginia were independent farmers, professional men and artisans.

In addition to the fact that so small a proportionate number of Virginians were personally interested in the institution, it is almost certain that it was no longer of any considerable economic advantage to the State. Indeed, many thought it to be actually a disadvantage.¹¹ The plantation system must con-

10. Ibid. pp. 60 - 124

11. Ibid. pp. 125 - 128

tinually seek new lands due to its exhaustive effect on the soil, and it had long been declining in importance in Virginia. As slavery was only profitable and suitable to the plantation system, it had little value in Virginia by 1860.

Virginia was, however, accused of being a "breeding ground" for negroes, and statements of the number of slaves leaving the State each year were shown to prove the accusation. But negroes left Virginia each year for several reasons. Freed slaves were required to leave by law. Slave owners emigrated to new lands and took their slaves with them. Slave owners bought lands and sent their slaves to work them, though remaining in Virginia themselves. Finally, slaves were sold to traders and exported, but the amount and value of this traffic has been grossly exaggerated. Most of the soldiers and a great majority of the famous Virginian generals were not slaveholders.¹² We must look elsewhere for their reasons for going to war.

Of course, it is true that slavery produced the conditions, which, when remedies were looked for in divergent ways by North and South, brought on the "irrepressible conflict." The effect of Abolitionist activity has already been discussed, and no people realized more fully than the Virginians the almost insuperable difficulties contingent on the blanket emancipation demanded by these fanatics. [The property value of the slaves, their own welfare, and the social and political problems which would arise concerning their relations to their former masters and to the State, were they freed, made universal emancipation unthinkable to Virginians. No doubt the Abolitionist's demands caused the Southerner to look to his arms, but secession was no defense for slavery in Virginia,

12. Ibid. pp. 147 - 158

with her long border exposed to Union territory, and we must still look further for her **reasons** for secession and war.

IV

When Lincoln issued his call for 75,000 volunteers, and sent word to Governor Letcher to muster Virginia's quota, the call was quickly followed, on April 17, by the passing of the Ordinance of Secession in the Virginia State Convention. This ordinance was ratified at a special election on May 23, 1861. Virginia left the Union because she would not see the seceded States brought back into it by force. She had repeatedly declared that she would brook no such policy on the part of the Federal government, and she resisted it to the end.¹³

Albert J. Beveridge states, in his biography of Abraham Lincoln, that "armed coercion (was) the force, which when Lincoln employed it, turned thousands of Southern men into secessionists and was the decisive influence that made Virginia... withdraw from the Union."¹⁴ There is little question that this is true. There were two schools of thought in Virginia. One maintained that a State had a constitutional right to secede, and the other, while denying such a right, also denied the right of the Federal government to hold a State in the Union by force. Both of these schools upheld the "right of self-government", in the strictest connotation of that **phrase**, and declared that they would resist the passage of troops over Virginia soil to coerce the States of the South that had seceded.¹⁵

Virginia had steadily asserted that Lincoln

13. Ibid. p. 282 14. A.J. Beveridge, Abraham Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 118

15. B.B. Munford, Virginia's Attitude Toward Slavery and Secession, p. 290

should not force the seceded States back into the Union at the points of Federal bayonets, and when he adopted this policy, Virginia seceded from the Union she had done more to found and maintain than any other State.

This, then, was Virginia's reason for leaving the Union. This was the proximate cause of her Ordinance of Secession. The utterances of her leaders at this time, the editorials of her newspaper editors, the resolutions adopted at the mass meetings of her people, all bear out this statement.¹⁶

After making every effort to preserve the Union, after rebuking and attempting to restrain the extremists on both sides, after counselling moderation and following her own counsel, after waiting until the last minute before taking the drastic step - Virginia seceded from the Union. Not because she believed in secession. Not because she thought that her sister Southern States had done right in precipitating the "irrepressible conflict," But because she would not see them forced to live under a government they had cast off; would not raise her sword against them, but rather in their defense.

Virginia fought from the highest altruistic principles. Her attitude until she seceded had been more moderate than that of any other State, and her act of secession was occasioned by more lofty motives. Virginia's reason for the stand she took in 1861 was similar to that of her great leader, General Robert E. Lee, who said: "It is the principle I contend for, not individual or private benefit."¹⁷

16. The Lexington Gazette, November 1, 1860 to May 30, 1861

17. B.B. Munford, Virginia's Attitude Toward Slavery and Secession, p. 304

Virginia left the Union because she would not allow her boundaries to be crossed or her territory invaded by troops whose errand was coercion of the Southern States. Was this also the feeling in Rockbridge County, which held it loyal to the State?

In presenting the available evidence as to the attitude of Rockbridge County, a chapter division has been made of the different collections of material. Nothing has been included that does not bear more or less directly on the question of just what the attitudes toward secession were in Rockbridge County. All the material is believed to be representative of the true views of the leaders and people of the County. Views expressed by visitors, outsiders writing or speaking of Rockbridge, or persons in the County for special reasons but not native to it, have been omitted.

When Virginia seceded John Letcher, a native of Rockbridge, was Governor. A chapter has been devoted to the publication of such of his proclamations, messages, and letters as were deemed of sufficient importance to the people at the time to be published in the Lexington newspapers.

The most important single act of Virginia in trying to avoid civil war, was the calling of the Washington Peace Conference. The delegates were not appointed by counties, as there were not nearly this many delegates sent, but a Rockbridge man, Judge John W. Brockenbrough, was selected as one of Virginia's delegates to this meeting. His speeches and resolutions in the Conference, and letters he wrote for publication, relative to it, make up another chapter.

Perhaps the most important convention of any kind, from the Virginia point of view, was the State Convention, called by the Legislature at the suggestion of Governor Letcher, to consider Virginia's policy during the crisis in the national affairs, occasioned by the secession of certain Southern States. Samuel McD. Moore and James B. Dorman represented Rockbridge at this conference, and their speeches and resolutions in Convention, with their letters relative to the issue, will be found in another chapter.

Two newspapers were published in Lexington at this time, The Lexington Gazette and The Valley Star. A chapter has been devoted to the opinions expressed in the editorials, and to the accounts of the meetings of the people, and to the attitudes voiced in communications to each of these papers.

In this way it is hoped that every important, and more or less official or representative, source of Rockbridge County secession attitudes is covered. The material here should throw a strong light on all expressions of feeling which were strong enough, and which those expressing them felt enough interest in and confidence in, to express in public or in official meetings. The views are those which Rockbridge men were willing to present to the world, and were willing to fight for.

If this thesis shall demonstrate why Rockbridge men remained loyal to the Old Dominion, when just across the mountains disaffection was rampant, and fought for four years against overwhelming odds; and having lost, returned to a Rockbridge many times desolated by Hunter and others, but expressed no regret for their action - if this thesis demonstrates this, it will have served its purpose well.

Chapter Two

JOHN LETCHER, GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA

Because of the state of affairs in Virginia and in the nation, and due to Virginia's unusually important part in the crisis precipitated by these conditions, the burden resting upon the shoulders of her chief executive in 1861 was probably greater than that borne by any other in the United States, with the two exceptions of Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln.

Reasons have been previously given for the importance of Virginia, and those in charge of directing her perilous course in these trying times were fully conscious of it. In addition to the importance of her decision was the difficulty of making it. Virginia in 1861 was a Border State, the most important one to both North and South.

As Governor John Letcher was a Rockbridge man, his proclamations and addresses bearing on the vital question of the hour should throw considerable light upon the nature of the secession attitudes of the county's leading citizens. Such of these utterances as were considered of sufficient interest to be published in the county papers will be presented as evidence of the thoughts and actions of this man who did so much to direct the history of his native State.

On November 29, 1861 the Valley Star printed a letter from the Governor to a citizen of Pennsylvania. The latter had written to the Governor asking permission to raise troops in Virginia for the purpose of suppressing the rebellion in the

Cotton States.

Governor Letcher replied that such a proposition was out of the question. Pennsylvania was as responsible as any Southern State, he said, for the difficulty, and if she and her sister Northern States would repeal their "personal liberty" laws the trouble might be smoothed over. He declared that though Virginians regretted the secession of the Cotton States, they would resist attempts to attack those States over Virginia soil. ¹

Here the Virginian takes the only possible stand under the circumstances, and his view is, therefore, not particularly enlightening as to his general attitude. The proposition of the Pennsylvanian was absurd in itself.

On January 17 the Star printed his message to the Legislature. A digest with quotations of that part of the address bearing on federal relations is given below. It is a full expression of his views on the vital questions at issue, and throws considerable light on his viewpoint at this time.

The Governor said that the times were those "of peril and danger," and that "An error committed now can never perhaps be corrected."

He pointed out that the "vile spirit of faction" was everywhere prominent, and that the country was torn by dissension, and "fierce and angry excitement" were everywhere exhibited. He then traced the growth and greatness of the United States and emphasized the importance of preserving these gains.

The Governor then repeated a recommendation he had previously made in his inaugural address, that a convention

1. The Valley Star, November 29, 1860

of all the States be called to settle the differences, or, failing, to agree to peaceable secession. This was, he said, the only remedy "under the Constitution," and was provided for "in the fifth article thereof." He suggested that the Legislature take steps to call such a convention, and cited the former usages of the fifth article of the Constitution, and quoted Governor John Floyd on the subject, in support of his views.

The Governor advised that Virginia look after her own interests, as the Cotton States were looking after theirs, and act carefully. "A disruption of the Union is inevitable, and if new confederacies are to be formed we must have the best guarantees before we can attach our State to either of them."

He then criticized the Governor of South Carolina for blaming Virginia for not immediately joining that State. He quoted the South Carolinian to show that the Palmetto State was trying to put Virginia in a position where she must either join South Carolina or lose her slaves.

Mr. Letcher then pointed out the difference in tone between the protestations of friendship and good feeling on the part of South Carolina's commissioner, and the actual feeling in the State as expressed by its chief executive. He also quoted the Governor of Mississippi in the same vein, and repeated that he would resist Virginia's being coerced "into any line of policy."

"For the present condition of public affairs the non-slaveholding States are chargeable; and if the Union shall be destroyed on them will rest the solemn responsibility." Governor Letcher traced the work of the abolitionists in incendiary material sent through the mails, in arms sent to slaves, in "personal liberty laws", and in the John Brown raid at Harper's Ferry.

The Governor showed that the free-slave parity in Congress had been destroyed by Northerners, and quoted Lincoln's "House Divided" speech to demonstrate the crisis precipitated by his election to the Presidency. Mr. Letcher then said that in his opinion a dissolution of the Union would result in the formation of four confederacies instead of two. New England and New York would form one, the Cotton States of Georgia, Alabama, North and South Carolina, and Florida another, the Pacific Coast States another, and the Border States, the Mississippi Valley States, and the Old Northwest would form a fourth. "These results are bad enough, but may be much worse," he remarked. He said that it was unusual that Virginia had taken no firm stand on the refusal of the governors of Ohio and Iowa to surrender slaves indicted for insurrection at Harper's Ferry.

Governor Letcher declared that the calling of a State Convention was unnecessary as the Legislature could take care of the situation at the time. He suggested that commissioners be sent to the various States to try to reach an adjustment, except in the case of New England, where "puritanism has no respect for human constitutions."

He stated that the adjustments necessary were: The "personal liberty laws" should be repealed by the States that had passed such laws. Slavery should not be discontinued in the District of Columbia unless Maryland did the same and not then unless the citizens of the District should demand it. The equality of the States and Territories should be protected and personal property should be insured against loss. Transmission of slaves should not be interfered with. Punishment of slave raiders from

the North should be guaranteed. The Federal Government should be restrained from appointing to local office in the slaveholding States men not in sympathy with their institutions.

Mr. Letcher then attacked the Northern belief that non-slaveholders would not fight for the State as erroneous and insulting. In 1860, he said, 53,824 persons paid taxes on slaves, 159,088 on land, and 201,000 on property other than slaves and non-land. The/slaveholders, he stated, were interested in this slave property and in the common prosperity.

The Governor declared his belief in Virginia's States Rights doctrine, and "unqualified hostility to the doctrine of coercion by the Federal Government." He said that he would resist the attempt of Federal troops to cross Virginia's boundaries to Virginia's soil, or to go through the State for this purpose. "The citizens of Virginia who will not respond to her call, is a traitor to her rights and her honor."

Mr. Letcher recalled the Hartford Convention and expressed the desire that New England would secede. "They have originated more trouble, caused more strife, and created more hatred, dissension, and division in our country than all the other States combined." This section had continually opposed the acquisition of new territory, he said, and he believed that with them out of the way the rest of the States could settle their differences. "The times require prudence, wisdom, and patriotism; union, harmony, and conciliation," he stated.

The Governor then showed how valuable a commerce between Norfolk and Europe would be to the State. He said that the trade of the Northwest and the new Southwest would be brought

to Norfolk by railroads. This would increase the size of the cities, the value of the land, and the general prosperity of the State. This should all be taken into consideration, he warned, in deciding what course Virginia was to pursue.

"In conclusion, I have but to add, that the will of Virginia will furnish an inflexible rule for the direction of my own action. My destiny is linked indissolubly with hers. In the expressive language of Ruth, 'Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God'.²"

No explanation of these sentiments is necessary. The Governor's attitude was not uncommon at the time in Virginia. It is one expressive of displeasure at the actions of the extremists on both sides of the question, and desirous of Virginia's pursuing an independent and honorable course. The intense loyalty to the Old Dominion, so marked in many of her leading citizens, is also a prominent expression in this address.

On April 25 the Lexington Gazette published a proclamation by the Governor to the effect that as the United States had not the legal right to wage war on the seceding States, and as the Federal Government threatened Virginia with the passage of troops over her territory for this avowed purpose, all State troops should hold themselves in readiness for orders to take the field.³ This proclamation is merely a definite step in support of the Governor's expressed purpose not to allow Virginia's boundaries to be crossed by an army bent on coercion of the Cotton States.

2. The Valley Star, January 17, 1861

3. The Lexington Gazette, April 25, 1861

The letter of Governor Letcher, replying to the Secretary of War's request that Virginia furnish her quota of troops for the United States army, appeared in the Lexington Gazette on the same date as the proclamation just mentioned. The second paragraph is the significant one and is quoted here.

"In reply to this communication (the Secretary's letter) I have only to say that the Militia of Virginia will not be furnished to the powers at Washington for any such purpose as they have in view. Your object is to subjugate the Southern States, and a requisition made upon me for such an object - an object, in my **judgment**, not within the purview of the Constitution or the Act of 1795 will not be complied with. You have chosen to inaugurate civil war, and having done so we will meet it, in a spirit as determined as the Administration has exhibited towards the South.

Respectfully,

(signed) John Letcher" ⁴

This letter is also merely an act of carrying out the views previously expressed in his message to the Legislature. Nothing more of particular importance appears in the county papers concerning the Governor's utterances. His position seems to have been permeated by a love and loyalty to Virginia, a desire for conciliation and compromise if this were possible without sacrificing either the interests or the honor of the State, and a determination to uphold both of these at all costs.

Chapter Three

JOHN W. BROCKENBROUGH, DELEGATE TO THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

At the suggestion of Governor Letcher the Legislature of Virginia called a convention of all the States for the purpose of adjusting the difficulties confronting them. This conference met in Washington from February fourth until February twenty-seventh 1861, delegates being present from twenty-one States.

One of the delegates was Judge John W. Brockenbrough of Virginia and of Rockbridge county. He was one of the most prominent men in the county at this time and was the founder of the Lexington Law School in 1849 which was incorporated as the law school of Washington and Lee University under General Robert E. Lee's administration.

He was very active in public affairs and his speeches in the Washington meeting, his resolutions there, and two important letters he wrote relative to the conference are presented here as indicative of the views of one of Rockbridge county's great men of the time. In reply to two groups of petitioners, asking him to be a candidate for a place on the Virginia delegation to the Washington convention, he expressed himself as follows:

"...if the people of Rockbridge so will it, every effort of which I am capable shall be exerted to restore the Union to its Constitutional basis, and to avert the horrors of impending civil war....

"A written Constitution, limiting and defining the powers of government, ... is the grand idea of the American mind: ... But the great value of a written Constitution, consists in its

power to protect the rights of minorities... To justify such hostile legislation... the guarantees of the Constitution are insidiously destroyed, and... the political Jesuit... resorts to a higher law to justify the most flagrant usurpation....The liberties of a brave free people may be lost by treachery never by assault....

"Fellow citizens, the Union that the Constitution gave us no longer exists... Northern greed of power under the specious cloak of religious fanaticism... has culminated in the election of a Sectional President by a purely sectional vote....The Southern States are reduced...to...subjugated provinces... If military coercion is attempted a... civil war, will be the immediate and inevitable result, and whether it terminates in the victory or defeat of the aggressive party the consequences will be equally deplorable....How can it be averted...by the unflinching firmness of the border Southern States exhausting all honorable efforts to prevent the effusion of blood, yet prepared to encounter all the horrors of war rather than accept peace at the price of their lost liberty.... Virginia is destined to play an important part... Let her Convention agree upon an ultimatum demanding that new guarantees be engrafted upon the Constitution declaratory of its true principles before they were perverted by the dominant faction.... If the demands... be rejected...Virginia and all her sisters of the border should instantly withdraw from all association with the Northern States - Such determined action... will secure them ... from invasion... from the North. The fifteen Southern States ... could never be conquered at home... tens of thousands of generous spirits at the North...who will take no part against us, or else will become... allies of the South....A new and powerful

Confederacy would spring from the ashes of the old....Producing a staple which now affords profitable employment to the industry of the civilized world, it would be to the interest of all nations to cultivate relations of peace with her - Virginia would become the chief manufacturing State of the new Confederacy.... let Virginia pursue a line of policy which will... conduce to a peaceable separation from the States of the North. She has never invaded the rights of any other State; let her defend her own with a dignity and courage worthy of her former renown....

"Such are the views I entertain... They will govern my action as a member of the Convention,...

(signed) John W. Brockenbrough ¹

Judge Brockenbrough seems in this letter to lay practically all of the blame for the existing conditions at the door of the North. However the typical attitude of desiring Virginia to pursue a cautious and independent course is prominent here. Perhaps there is more of a threat in his views as expressed here than in those of Governor Letcher before the real crisis.

On February 22 in the Conference at Washington Mr. Brockenbrough spoke to establish Virginia's position, and to defend and explain it.

"I represent an old and honorable Commonwealth. I speak remembering the maxim that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath.' But I should disregard my duty if I did not reply to what was said a few days ago, in arraignment - in unfair and improper arraignment, of Virginia.

"Virginia occupies no menacing position, nor

1. The Lexington Gazette, January 24, 1861

attitude of hostility toward the Union or her sister States. Virginia knows that 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.' She knows, too, that there is good policy in the maxim, 'in peace prepare for war.' Her action is only such as is dictated by a prudent foresight. How unkind, then, are such taunts against Virginia, the mother of us all, She comes here in a paternal spirit; she desires to preserve the Union; she disdains to employ a menace; she knows that she can never secure the cooperation of brave men by employing menaces. No! She wishes to use all her efforts to perpetuate the reign of peace.

"Another says we are seeking to secure an amendment to the Constitution by the employment of unconstitutional means, and that this meeting is a revolutionary mob - that these eminent men of the country assembled here, constitute a mob. No, sir! No!

"I cannot for my life so consider it. This is merely an advisory body. We are here to devise an adjustment, and to lay it before Congress. We are exercising the right of petition, and that is a sacred right. Is this revolutionary? No, sir! You insist that Congress should receive a petition, although that body has no right to act upon it. If so, how much more should our petition be received when we seek to preserve the Union, and when the Constitution expressly authorizes Congress to act in such a case.

"The gentleman from Vermont said last evening, that a pledge from the South to abide by the result would be a condition precedent to the submission of the proposition at all, and yet he says he cannot pledge Vermont. Why, then, does he ask us to pledge Virginia?

"Well that is the pledge we have no authority to give. We cannot accept these propositions as a boon from any section.

We must have them as a right, or not at all.

"But let me address myself at once to the momentous question. It seems that we can agree upon every thing but this question of slavery in the Territories. So far as that subject is concerned, Virginia has declared that she will accept the Crittenden resolutions. She and her southern sisters will stand upon and abide by them. If gentlemen will come up to this Basis of adjustment with manly firmness, the electric wires will flash a thrill of joy to the hearts of the people this very hour. Why not come up to it like men?

"The Supreme Court has already established the rights of the South, so far as this question is concerned, upon the basis which is satisfactory. Under the Dred Scott decision, the people of the South have the right to go into any portion of the Territory with their slaves. You, gentlemen of the North, will not abide by that decision. You have declared in your platform that it is a miserable dogma. How can we be satisfied with such a guarantee for our rights as that?

"But it is said that this part of the Dred Scott decision is only an obiter dictum; that the question was not presented by the record. This is not so. As was said by Governor Wickliffe, the other day, there were two questions in that case. The judgement of the court was upon them both, and both were presented by the record.

"We know that the dominant party has elected a President on a purely sectional issue, and in deadly hostility to our institutions. We believe, from all the indications of the times, that our institutions are utterly insecure. Therefore we ask these guarantees. Give them to us, and from that time you

will restore peace and quiet to the country. You at once attach the Border States firmly to you forever. I hope you will do so; but I tell you that the Border States cannot be retained ⁿ unless you will consent to give such guarantees as will bring back the seceded States, and unite us all in a glorious confederation.

"Sentiments have been uttered here that grate harshly on the minds of Southern gentlemen. It is said that this is a war of ideas. If so, then there is certainly that irrepressible conflict about which we have heard so much. But it is not true that slaves exclude free labor. Come to the harvest homes of Western Virginia. There you will see the union of white and black labor - see the two races working harmoniously together. The mechanics are white, the field hands are black. Those only make such assertions who know nothing about it.

"You insist at the North that slavery is a sin. If it is as you claim it to be, a sin, the sum of all villainies, then we may as well separate. We cannot live together longer.

"If we cannot have the aid of other sections, the Border States must take the subject into their own hands, and settle ~~it~~ for themselves. These States, with one exception, have shown a most excellent spirit. Let them all come up to the work today; on this natal day of Washington, of whom it was said that nature had denied him children, ^{in order} that he might be indeed the Father of his Country. New Jersey has most nobly responded, through her distinguished sons, but especially through the voice of that eloquent man, who swept with a master hand the chords of the human heart, in his remarks here, and tones of heavenly music responded to the touch.

"The whole nation stands on tiptoe awaiting the final result of the action of this Conference. All sections are ready to make sacrifices, but sacrifices are not required. Let us act, and then go home. A grateful people will bind the wreath of victory around your brows, for 'Peace hath her victories not less than war.'

"We make no appeal to the sympathies of gentlemen. We ask you to do justice, simple justice to the South. Do it, and you will do honor to yourselves. Give us the guarantees we ask, and my word for it, you will see the seceded States coming back one by one, and we shall see ourselves once more a happy and a united people!" ²

The chief addition in this speech to the views previously expressed in the letter is that Virginia would be satisfied with the provisions of the Crittenden compromise as an adjustment. Speaking on an amendment regarding the means of acquiring territory, Mr. Brockenbrough said:

"I feel a deep solicitude in this subject. We are here for the purpose of settling a great difficulty. Instead of settling, we shall add to it by placing these unnecessary obstructions in the way of acquiring territory, in the future. Would not the South be safer by the adoption of this guarantee? It is the only one, aside from the first section, which gives the South a grain of power. We cannot go on with things as they are - only seven States to contend with all the rest of the nation. We must all desire that the seceded States should return to the Union. How are they to come back? By treaty, or by the sword? Who will

2. L.E. Chittenden, A Report of the Debates and Proceedings in the Secret Sessions of the Conference Convention.

not prefer to win them back by adopting principles in our amendments which will make it for their interest to return? If the amendment is adopted, no future territory will be acquired without the consent of a majority of Senators on both sides of the line. Reject this, and I have not the slightest hope of ever seeing the seceded States again in the Union. I believe this amendment will meet the wishes of a large majority of the people of Virginia."³

This gives some idea of the sort of proposition Mr. Brockenbrough was willing to support as necessary to Virginia's welfare, and in the following extract may be seen the kind of plan he would oppose. The plan provided for remuneration of slave owners for escaped slaves by the Federal Government. Such remuneration would cancel the former owner's rights in the slave. Mr. Brockenbrough's objections are to the point.

"By this amendment you are inaugurating a system of covert emancipation to which the South can never submit. We protest against its adoption. The argument upon which you seek to sustain it is a false one. How can the owner receive the full value of his rescued slave when he himself, as a citizen and a tax-payer, pays a part of the price?"⁴

Mr. Brockenbrough also proposed an amendment to the first section of the proposed Constitutional amendment whereby,

"The rights of the slave States shall be protected by all departments of the territorial government during its continuance."⁵

This, he explained, was to make clear and definite the rights of slaveholders.

3. L.E.Chittenden, A Report of the Debates and Proceedings. 4 Ibid.
5. Ibid.

After the Conference the Virginia commissioners made a report to the Legislature of the State. As Judge Brockenbrough was unable to be present he wrote a letter to the other commissioners from Virginia, Hon. John Tyler and Hon. George W. Summers, and this was attached to their report. The letter follows:

"Gentlemen:- I beg leave to address you as two of the commissioners...in the late Peace Conference in Washington ...and to state my views in reference to the results of that conference." He then complimented the Assembly on passing the Act calling the Conference, and stated that the Act gave the Crittenden compromise as the basis of adjustment. This was contrasted with Conference plan of adjustment as regard to the line of $36^{\circ} 30'$, saying finally, that though the former might be construed to be as good as the latter; "Whatever the true construction of it be, it is a most weighty objection to it, that it admits of various interpretations." The Conference plan did not so well protect the rights of slaveholders he said, as "The terms...are negative only." He gave as his opinion that the section of the plan then under discussion gave slaveholders sufficient protection. "Upon every sound principle of interpretation, I think that the rights of the master to his slaves, as property, are protected by this section."

"The second section introduces a new, and as I think, valuable ~~principle~~ ^{principle}. So far as the acquisition of future territory is concerned, it creates a dual Senate, by an equal partition of power between the two sections of the Senate." This he elaborated, saying that northern Mexico and Cuba were the only likely territorial acquisitions south of the line $36^{\circ} 30'$, and that even if the North should try to check the South on these it

would be impossible as Cuba was naturally slave and the Mexican territory could easily be divided equally. The advantage of this plan was that the South could check the North in its acquisition of free territory.

The third section regarded non-interference with slavery where it existed and did not differ from the Crittenden plan, Judge Brockenbrough explained.

"The action prohibiting the foreign slave trade by Constitutional amendment is objectionable simply because it was wholly unnecessary," he stated.

"The seventh and last section of the Conference scheme is very much less satisfactory than the corresponding one in Mr. Crittenden's plan." This, he explained, was because the the payment for fugitive slaves was made from the public treasury instead of by those who prevented redress of the outrage. It forced the South to pay part of the indemnity for "a wrong committed against herself."

The Judge continued: "...it is clear that the Crittenden plan is far preferable to that of the late Peace Conference. ...we struggled to live up to the very letter of our commission by obtaining an adjustment on the basis of the former plan, ... We were uniformly voted down by that inexorable majority!" The plan was voted on by sections, Virginia voting against two of them, he said, and that he would have voted for the plan as a whole because he believed his constituents in Western Virginia would so have voted.

He concluded: The momentous issue must now be decided by "the Convention now assembled to give expression to her (Virginia's) solemn will. My earnest prayer is that true wisdom

may conduct her safely and honorably out of this great crisis. Every loyal son of her's awaits the issue with intense solicitude, and for myself I will say that my destiny is bound up indissolubly with hers.

"I am, gentlemen, most cordially

"Your friend

(Signed) "John W. Brockenbrough

The final wording of this letter is not unlike in letter, and almost identical in spirit with the closing of Governor Letcher's address to the Legislature quoted above. His views on the Conference are interesting in themselves, and the quotations given show his attitude to be not very different from that of the Governor. However, he seems less optimistic as to the possibility of a ~~satisfactory~~ adjustment, than was the Governor at this period. His strong sense of honor and State pride finds a model in the speech of Letcher. He is , perhaps a little more ready to make a break, but is still careful, and ready to concede much to make an adjust^{ment}, in accord with the wishes of his constituents, as he believes them to be.

Chapter Four

SAMUEL McD. MOORE AND JAMES B. DORMAN, DELEGATES
TO THE VIRGINIA CONVENTION

The Virginia State Convention, which convened on February 13, was called to consider the state of the Union and what Virginia's attitude toward it should be. Its acts and the utterances of the delegates attending bear more directly, therefore, on the subject of **secession** than any other acts or expressions.

Samuel McD. Moore and James B. Dorman represented Rockbridge County at the Convention, and their statements of policy before their election, resolutions they presented to the assembly, and speeches they made before it, will constitute the material of this chapter, with the addition of a letter written by Mr. Moore to a friend in the County while Mr. Moore was in Richmond attending the Convention.

As official representatives of Rockbridge county to the Convention which was to decide Virginia's, and consequently Rockbridge County's, course in the "irrepressible conflict", their **secession** attitudes should be more or less truly reflective of those of a majority of Rockbridge citizens. Announcing his candidacy Mr. Moore said:

"...I shall be in favor of preserving the Union ...on such terms as will secure to the people of Virginia, the full enjoyment of all their prosperity and rights. If it cannot be preserved then I shall favor forming a New Confederacy including all the states that will give satisfactory guarantees...of all our rights....the New England States cannot and will not give such

...guarantees...therefore it will be necessary to exclude those States...I think that all the other States will ultimately come into a new Confederacy on satisfactory terms.

"I shall insist if a New Confederacy is formed... that the Constitution shall prohibit the reopening of the African Slave Trade...that the revenue...shall, whenever practicable, be raised by duties on foreign imports, and that the government... shall never, except in cases of absolute necessity...impose any direct tax on the people.

"...Virginia can never become very prosperous except as a manufacturing State, for which she is better adapted than any other State in the Union. The New England States have already built up their manufacturing...desire preventing competition in the middle States...I think...no evil will be likely to result from the New England States being excluded from a New Confederacy when formed.

"I am strongly in favor of the acts of the proposed Convention being submitted to the people for ratification or rejection....

"My earnest wish is that in the present emergency Virginia shall act firmly, cautiously, and wisely. That she shall take no step which she may hereafter have reason to regret, or be compelled to recede from."

(Signed) S. McD. Moore 1

~~Mr.~~ Moore seems to blame New England for most of the trouble. In view of the accusation so often made by the North and the lower South that Virginia was a "slave breeding" State, ~~Mr.~~ Moore's declaration against reopening the African Slave

trade is interesting. He is obviously anxious to do the best thing to protect Virginia's interests and to do nothing in a hurry.

James B. Dorman's acceptance of the request that he be a candidate needs no comment. After declaring himself in favor of referring the Convention's conclusions to the voters he said:

"In conclusion , that I have been nominated as a Union man, and such I am, honestly and firmly....I confidently believe that this final appeal will be successful. But should it prove fruitless, I shall not speculate upon the position then to be taken; for the best would almost inevitably involve civil war, and it would only then remain to meet and accept the duties of the ho un with patriotic sorrow, but with manly firmness."

(Signed) James B. Dorman ²

Replying to another delegate in the Convention Mr. Moore said that he **did** not intend to be bound hand and foot to the Cotton States. He said that they had not consulted Virginia, and that he would hesitate to go with them until he knew the terms. He said that the Legislature had said too much and that the Convention should make the decision, with the people behind it as they were. He would neither be hurried out of the Union, nor kept in it by precipitate action he declared. He would submit to neither the North or the South, but would maintain the rights of Virginia. "The Republicans will shortly have the purse and the sword. There is nothing left in the purse, (Laughter) and as to the sword; Virginia could not be forced into a wrong position by all the armies

in the United States." ~~Mr.~~ Moore said that at the proper time he would undertake to show that the interests of Virginia and the Cotton States were in conflict, as the policy of free ports and direct taxation which was desired by the States of the lower South, would not suit Virginia.³

On February 25, ~~Mr.~~ Moore made a long speech in support of some resolutions he presented, in which he was strong for Virginia's rights and interest, and rather hard on the extremists. After the Convention adjourned ~~for~~ the day and Mr. Moore had repaired to his hotel, the secessionists made quite an adverse demonstration in front of it. This demonstration will be described in the words of The Valley Star after the speech has been presented:

"Mr. Moore, of Rockbridge"-"I desire to offer certain resolutions; and to follow them with some remarks if I can make myself heard. They read as follows:

"1. Resolved, That the conduct of the so-called free States in resisting the execution of the fugitive slave law - in refusing to give up criminals fleeing from justice - and in seeking to deprive the Southern States of any portion of the common territory of the nation, and of their citizens, in circulating incendiary pamphlets among us - in furnishing arms to bands of assassins to invade our borders and murder our people, and with other flagrant wrongs, is such as to require prompt **reparation** of the injuries inflicted and to justify Virginia in demanding, as she does demand, full and ample security that those wrongs shall not be repeated.

³.The Lexington Gazette, February 21, 1861

⁴.See subsequent note 4

"2. Resolved, That Virginia can never consent to become a member of any confederacy, by the Constitution of which, the reopening of the African slave trade is not prohibited.

"3. Resolved, That Virginia will not become a member of any Confederacy the government of which, except under extraordinary circumstances, is to be supported by direct taxation.

"4. Resolved, That this Convention doth approve of the amendment to the Constitution of the United States proposed by the Crittenden resolutions; and declare its readiness to accept the same as a satisfactory adjustment of existing controversies between the Northern and Southern States.

"5. Resolved, That in the event of the amendments referred to, or other equivalent amendments to the Constitution not being adopted, Virginia will be ready to enter into a compact with such States as will agree to adopt said amendments, by which the present government of the United States shall be declared to be dissolved, as to the States so agreeing, and that they will thenceforth constitute a new Confederacy under the Constitution so amended, from which all the States not so agreeing shall be excluded. ⁵

~~Mr.~~ Moore said that he presented the first resolution to show the conflicting desires of Virginia and the seceded States. "They have lost no slaves...we alone have been the sufferers....Their real ground for dissatisfaction lies in the operation of the tariff. They are for free trade and direct taxation, and I maintain that our interests demand that we shall have a revenue to support any new government that may be formed, and that that revenue shall arise from duties on imports.

"There is then a direct conflict between our interests and those of the seceded States." ~~Mr.~~ Moore then quoted the Governor of South Carolina in saying that they had "been ready for forty years to demand a division of the Union, and they only wanted a pretext to make an effort to dissolve it." This showed, Mr. Moore pointed out, that the causes of dissatisfaction in Virginia, which were of recent origin were not the same as those of South Carolina.

"Now, sir, what is their real cause of complaint? They are but two, and these stick so prominently that you cannot fail to see them.

"They are opposed to any collection of any duties on goods brought into the country and they want free trade and direct taxation. Sir, the election of Lincoln, of which they now complain, and which they present as their chief cause for secession is not the true cause. And even if it was they all one are responsible for his election, for it was the natural result of the course they pursued in the Charleston Convention." The speaker then stated that Douglas was the only Democrat who could have won and that the party split, caused by the Breckenridge element, beat Douglas. There was no excuse for the split, he showed, as both candidates supported "squatter sovereignty." Low tariff lost the middle States to Lincoln, ~~Mr.~~ Moore declared.

Contrasting Virginia's slave interests with those of the seceded States, he continued,

"Our interest is that slaves should be sold as high as possible because we have the commodity to supply. Their interest is, that they shall be sold as low as possible because they need the services of those slaves. Their policy then will be to re-open

the African slave trade, and I think I can foresee evidence that such is their purpose." ~~Mr.~~ Moore then quoted newspaper opinions that a revolution might be used to achieve this end and stated his belief that Southern opinion favored it.

He then attacked direct taxation, and showed how expensive a new confederacy would be in maintaining an army and navy, and asked how the money would be raised. He then said that not so many States would join the new government to bear this burden as had been prophesied, and said that slaves would replace the free white laborers of Virginia which Virginia did not want though the Southern States seemed not to care.

"Mr. President, I have seen it stated that Virginia was so situated with regard to these States that they could drag us into connection with them against the will of the people. Is that so sir? But, sir, not satisfied with that they are holding the lash over us to enforce obedience to their wish."

~~Mr.~~ Moore showed how Virginia was to be forced into the Confederacy by the closing of the inter-State slave trade, and that the offer of a ten percent tariff as an inducement to joining would not pay a quarter of the necessary income.

He then criticized the seceded States for their attitude toward Virginia's commissioners, saying, "I would be unwilling to go into a connection with a people who cannot treat us with any more respect than they have done. For one, I would repudiate all connection with such a people." He charged the cotton States with lacking republican principles, and said that "the history of the world shows that democracy and monarchy are so combined as to produce an absolute despotism."

Referring to the Southern belief in the power of

"King Cotton" to bring the world to the feet of the South, he pointed out, "As to King Cotton, let me say that it is just as important for us to sell as it is for them to buy."

"As for the matter of secession; I do not intend to discuss that now. The respect I have for the opinions of gentlemen who entertain the idea that secession is a rightful remedy, and that every State has that right, prevents me from saying what I think of it. But for that respect, I should denounce it as the most absurd and ridiculous notion that was ever presented. They make government nothing but a rope of sand, and the most solemn compact that men can enter into is to be set aside by one of the parties to it." He then sarcastically outlined the Southern position on this doctrine and denied Virginia's accession to it.

"I do not mean to discuss that point, because I go for the right of secession as a revolutionary right."

Mr. Moore then discussed his fifth resolution, saying that he thought that with New England excluded the seceded States could be brought back as he had suggested, but added that he thought it would not be amiss to leave South Carolina out for awhile until she learned "to treat people with a little more decency and respect that she has done."

He then cautioned against going into war unprepared, making some humorous remarks, and illustrating by the case of the young men who wanted "a fight for the fight's sake."

"I will fight for Virginia to the last hour, and although she goes against my consent, I will still be bound to follow her fortunes," he declared, and concluded his remarks with the warning: "There is a secret partner in this movement, and that partner is no other than John Bull." 4

The Valley Star ran an editorial on the demonstration made by the secessionists at ~~Mr.~~ Moore's hotel, under the caption, "A First Step toward Anarchy in Virginia". The article told of the speech and said that ~~Mr.~~ Moore had spoken in the interests of Virginia instead of the Cotton States, and told some "stubborn facts" which displeased men of a "certain party."

A speaker replying to ~~Mr.~~ Moore was applauded so vociferously that the speaker ordered the galleries cleared. The execution of this order caused so much disturbance that the evening's session was broken up. This "so exasperated the disunionists who were driven out that they determined to collect a mob to insult ~~Mr.~~ Moore at his hotel. Accordingly, soon after supper, fifty or sixty men - we state the number on the authority of an eye witness - assembled in the neighborhood of the slave market and proceeded with a band of music to serenade Mr. Goode and other secession members of the Convention - and to play the 'Rogues March' and give three groans as they passed Mr. Moore's hotel. They even contemplated burning Mr. Moore in effigy - but were dissuaded from this by some of the more polite of their number."

The editorial termed this occurrence an "outrage" and an "infinite disgrace" to Richmond. "Just after the disturbance in the Convention, a resolution was offered to move the Convention to Staunton," but the writer hoped that the "members of the Convention, especially those from the West will not suffer themselves to be overawed and driven from the Capitol by a secession rabble, however composed."

The article then said that the Richmond Dispatch estimated the mob at 2000, which number it may finally have swelled

to, that a dangerous precedent had been set, and that "before many months we may have a set of disorganizers in Richmond worse than the Plug Uglies of Baltimore." ⁶

~~Mr.~~ Moore's speech does not, I believe, show particularly strong Union views, as the hostile Richmond gathering seemed to think. It does, however, show very strong tendencies to look strictly to Virginia's interests. One of the most interesting features is his tacit admission of the charge, made in both Northern and Southern States, that Virginia was a slave "breeding" State. His comparison of the conflicting slave interests of Virginia and the Cotton States seems to bring this out. A good point he brings out, which is not commonly seen in speeches of this period, is that it was just as important for the South to sell cotton as for the rest of the world to buy it, and hence King Cotton was not so supreme as some planters seemed to think. His statement that John Bull was a silent partner in the secession is amusing. For all his Unionist tendencies, it will be seen that he still held to the right of secession as a revolutionary right, which may or may not be the same thing as the simple "right of revolution."

In Convention on Friday, March 1, "Mr. Dorman submitted the following resolutions, which were ordered to be referred to the Committee on Federal Relations.

"1. Resolved, That the Federal Union was made by the people of the several States, and can rightfully be dissolved, by the power alone that made it.

"2. Resolved, That Virginia should use her best efforts to procure a direct vote of the people of all the States, including those which have seceded from the Union, upon the

alternative proposition of disunion or adjustment on the basis of the Peace Conference proposition - and that she will thereafter cooperate with such States as concur with her in the result of their votes." 7

In these resolutions Mr. Dorman seems to be trying to establish the right of a State to secede and at the same time pave the way for an adjustment on the Peace Conference plan.

A little later he made a speech on some resolutions that had been presented, to the effect that Virginia prepare to resist Lincoln. He said that he would not be hurried into anything.

"I beg leave to say for myself, representing as I do a county which has a population of 12,000 whites and between 4 and 5,000 slaves...I have ever taken the position...that I owed my allegiance to the good old mother first, and that it should be given her first, last, and all the time. Is it at all surprising to hear such a sentiment from a Virginian?

"My colleague and myself declared before the people that the first intimations of coercion by invasion upon the part of the Black Republican power should be met by us at the frontier at the point of the bayonet. We are but as one man here, but we are men of the right stamp. We don't intend to do anything rashly that shall bring upon this State the horrors of civil war."

He continued that if an ordinance of secession were passed it would be voted down by "the 60,000 majority represented upon this floor," and that it was useless to talk of Virginia's honor, for that was more involved in keeping the trust she had accepted in forming the Union than in any duty to the Southern States

In concluding, Mr. Dorman said that no rash action should be considered, that he would not be hurried, and that the

Convention should strive to reach some conclusion that would
 "unite the people of this Commonwealth upon some common ground
 of action."⁸

On March 21 the Gazette printed a letter written
 by Samuel McD. Moore to a friend in Rockbridge county. It was dated

"Richmond, March 15, 1861

"Dear Sir: I have been surprised to find that many
 sensible people have looked upon the Inaugural of Lincoln as very
 warlike, and as threatening coercion,...a more careful and critical
 examination of it will show that the opinion referred to, is entirely
 erroneous. It is true he talks about the oath he takes to execute
 the laws and of his purpose to do so, and he throws a little ad
captandum to please the party by which he was elected."

He goes on to show that Lincoln said he would not
 resort to coercion as he had not the necessary money nor the aut-
 horization of a force bill, and that besides having no legal aut-
 hority for such action Lincoln distinctly said that he would not
 enter into such a move unless the seceded States were the aggressors.

"Another idea is entertained by some...that Virginia
 has exhausted all her means of bringing about a restoration of the
 Union and obtaining redress of the grievances of which she has
 reason to complain.

"And on what ground does this opinion rest? Why it
 is said Congress refused to refer the proceedings of the Peace
Conference to the people of the several States - What was to be
 expected of a Black Republican Congress, elected two years ago?...

"Depend upon it Virginia has not exhausted one-tenth
 of her means, of accomplishing her great and noble purpose.

8. The Valley Star, March 14, 1861

"Commissioners will be appointed to meet commissioners from other slave States remaining in the Union, and I doubt not they will agree upon an ultimatum which will be confirmed by all these States, and it is almost certain that Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and other States will accept the terms. And it won't be long before the Cotton States will be glad to get back.

"We shall try to adjourn by the first, or very early in April.

"The secessionists are straining every nerve to get up excitement among the people, and to get instructions to members. But I think they will effect but little by it. We will report the Peace Conference resolutions, with some amendments, this week." ⁹

This letter and the speech of Mr. Dorman both seem to indicate that the Rockbridge delegates were trying to keep the secessionists from doing anything rashly or hurriedly and that Mr. Moore, at least, had confidence in their ability to do it. His optimism as to the free States which would join the border slave States is interesting.

On Monday, March 18, in Convention, ~~Mr.~~ Dorman submitted the following resolution which was ordered to be referred to the Committee on Federal Relations.

"Resolved, That the Committee on Federal Relations inquire into the expediency of amendments to the Constitution of the United States, being submitted by this State to other States of the Union, providing and declaring, (first) that Electors of President and Vice-President, shall be chosen on the District system; and, (second) that persons of African blood, in whole or in

part, are not and shall not be citizens of the United States or citizens within the meaning of the 2d section of the 4th article of the Federal Constitution; and, further, whether such amendments should form part of any ultimatum laid down by Virginia or the Border States of the South, or should be submitted separately and distinct from such ultimatum." 10

These resolutions are simply attempts to find the adjustment necessary to restore the nations peace. On March 23 ~~the~~ Dorman submitted the following:

"Resolved, That this convention recommends to the General Assembly the passage of a law imposing a license tax on the sale, by retail, within Virginia, of the products of such Northern States as continue to retain offensive acts, of the character known as 'Personal Liberty Bills', amongst their statutes; guarding, however, in such a law against any infringement of the provisions of the Federal Constitution.

"Resolved, That the President of the Convention cause copies of the foregoing to be communicated forthwith to the two Houses of the General Assembly." 11

This is obviously an attempt to pass measures that would bring the free States to terms.

But when the tide turned to secession, both Rockbridge delegates swung into line and backed up the State's decision. They had, as has been seen, done all in their power to effect an adjustment, but when the majority decided on secession, after Lincoln's call for volunteers, Mr. Moore and Mr. Dorman supported the measure. On April 22 Mr. Moore offered the following resolutions, which show his change of heart:

"Resolved, That it be earnestly recommended, to the citizens of the several counties of the Commonwealth, to promptly form and discipline companies of volunteers, of their able-bodied men; and to the county courts, to buy or raise by issuing bonds a sufficient amount of money to equip and arm such volunteers when raised.

"On further motion of Mr. Moore, ordered that said resolution be published in the newspapers." ¹²

Both resolutions were adopted by the Convention.

Samuel Mc.D. Moore was a member of the Committee on Federal Relations, and was also one of the Virginia Commissioners who met Alexander H. Stephens, Commissioner of the Confederate States, and agreed to the temporary union of Virginia with the Confederate States, before she formally joined the Confederacy. ~~Mr.~~ Moore voted against, and ~~Mr.~~ Dorman for, the Ordinance of Secession, which was adopted by a vote of 88 to 55. Both Rockbridge delegates signed the Ordinance at the appointed time. ¹³

Both of these men did their utmost to maintain Virginia in the Union and adjust the grievances of the Old Dominion without leaving the Union. Having failed they both signed the ordinance, though ~~Mr.~~ Moore did not vote for it when it was the question. However ~~Mr.~~ Moore's attitude is in no doubt, as a reference to the preceding paragraph shows how active he was as a committeeman and commissioner, and a reference to his last resolutions will show that he was working for the State from the moment it seceded. . The attitudes of these two men are characterized by caution of action and intense loyalty to Virginia, just as were those of Governor Letcher and Judge Brockenbrough.

Chapter Five

THE LEXINGTON GAZETTE, NOVEMBER 1, 1860 TO MAY 30, 1861

During the period under study, there were published in Lexington two newspapers: The Lexington Gazette and The Valley Star. As the often used epithets "molders of public opinion" and "reflectors of public opinion" would indicate, newspapers are generally supposed to be fairly reflective of the life and thought of their times and towns. For this reason a careful survey of these two Rockbridge papers was made, to ascertain what the attitudes toward secession of the editors, contributors, and news sources of these journals were. The most outstanding and significant contributions to the solving of this problem are presented here. In the next chapter will be found selections from The Valley Star. In this chapter are treated the articles of The Lexington Gazette. For the most part little comment will be made on the material presented, as it is usually unnecessary. Only the salient features and new angles will be noted, and the general conclusions concerning the County Session Attitudes will go more carefully into the interpretation of the material here presented.

Until April 25, 1861, the Gazette carried below its name plate the motto "the Union Must be Preserved",¹ and during the campaign of 1860 supported the ticket of John Bell and Edward Everett, printing the ticket in the masthead on the editorial page.² The paper urged the withdrawal of Breckenridge, to prevent a split in the Democratic party, saying, "that he is the only obstacle in the way of Lincoln's certain and overwhelming defeat."³

1. The Lexington Gazette, August 23, 1860 to April 25, 1861
 2. Ibid. November 1, 1860 3. Ibid.

On November 1, the Gazette ran the following editorial.

"The Election is Almost at Hand.

"At many of our Presidential elections there have been great questions at issue - but the time never was when our situation was more alarming than it is at present.

"Our existence as a confederated republican government; and perhaps, our existence as a free people, depends upon the result of the approaching election.

"During the whole canvass we have feared the election of Lincoln, and as the election day approaches there is little to encourage us that he may be defeated....The country is informed of the imminent danger...It is...important for Southern people to take a conservative stand at the election....If there is not a heavy vote cast for Bell and Douglas over Breckenridge, there will be great danger of an immediate revolution in the South...The strength of the Disunionists will be estimated by the vote of Breckenridge.... We have not the slightest uneasiness about the vote in Virginia. It will be for Bell....we desire to see Union men at the polls.

"...neither Douglas nor the platform has given rise to the Breckenridge party;...this party was gotten up by men who have panted for disunion for years....

"...It will be a test vote, between Union men and Disunion men."⁴

The following editorial, on the importance of the election to the country, and expressing the hope that Lincoln failed of election, was printed on November 8, before the election returns were in.

#Nil Desperandum

"The election is over - the crisis is past. The

voters of a population of thirty millions have exercised the highest prerogative of freemen. They have expressed their will...

"As we write we do not know what its fiat is. We do not know but that this nation...has by its voice given ... ascendancy to a fanatical, sectional and aggressive party, with some desperate Catalines as leaders, and with a band of auxiliaries attached to their legions of dismal, dire, and devilish Abolitionists...But we cannot believe without further proof that they are so wrong that they cannot be made to see their errors. They are Americans; they love their country and the Union, and they will feel the necessity of adhering to the Constitution in order to save the one and the other. This may seem too great a stretch of charity in us but we will not abandon the hope it inspires, as long as we can discern the stars of the Union in our political firmament, obscured though it be by driving clouds.

"Of only one thing we feel sure, Virginia is right. God bless her - our mother, noble old Virginia. She was first in the struggle for Liberty - first in the Convention of 1787 - her voice has ever been lifted with the power and calm dignity of unsullied integrity for Liberty and Union. And again she has spoken in a voice not to be misunderstood, to the madmen of the North, and to the madmen of the South. Her voice will be heard and heeded, and if need be her strong arm will be felt to drive back come from what quarter they may, the Gauls from the Citadel."⁵

An editorial on November 15 tried to show that Lincoln's expressed views showed that he was not to be feared by the South.

5. Ibid. November 8

"What Lincoln Said In Illinois

"Under this caption the Lynchburg Virginian publishes extracts from speeches made by the President elect, in Illinois in 1858 - If such are now Mr. Lincoln's opinions, the South ought certainly await for an overt act. As many of our Presidents before he is opposed to the institution of slavery, but if he will do his constitutional duty, surely the South should be satisfied. We do not intend to be understood as apologizing for his position, but we insert the extracts alluded to above for the purpose of showing that the South should not hurry out of the Union. He is certainly more moderate than we had supposed.

Then follow the extracts noted. Among them are

"Let me say I have no prejudice against the Southern people. They are just what we would be in their situation."

"When they remind us of their constitutional rights, I acknowledge them, not grudgingly, but ^{fully} ~~frankly~~ and fairly;..."⁶

• These italics are either the Gazette's or the Virginian's.

In the following editorial on the Governor's Proclamation calling a special session of the Legislature, there is some criticism of the manner of wording the message, but the act is approved on the ground that it places the affairs of the State in the hands of responsible body.

"Proclamation of the Gov. of Virginia"

"In another column will be found the Proclamation of Gov. Letcher, convening the Legislature of the State on the 7th of January. For this call of an extra session three reasons

are ascribed. The unfinished business of the last session, the affairs of the J.R. & K. Company, and the election of Lincoln and Hamlin....We think it calculated to have this effect. It directs the public attention to a responsible body, and disposes eager men to wait for its deliberate action. It also takes away from some men...the pretext for assuming...the government of Virginia....

"Minute men may now pause in their enlistment...their Commander-in-Chief may apply for a formal Commission, at the hands of the Legislature.

"In this view we have no objection to make to the convening of the Legislature. We cannot say we are particularly pleased with the wording of it. The Governor says that 'prudence requires that the Representatives...determine calmly and wisely what action is necessary in this emergency'!

"We could wish that the Governor had inserted the saving clause, what action if any. For the only action, that is, unusual action, present to anticipation is secession. The language... might be interpreted...that such action might be necessary. We trust that such an interpretation would do him injustice. It is true that it is not very distinctly understood by the public what is his position on this question...Some persons look forward to the calling of a Convention by the Legislature. We have no idea that such ^{a thing} will be done, unless there should be some entirely new phase of affairs, and this can hardly be before the 4th of March.

"What constitutes...affairs upon which the Legislature will...deliberate? The election of a Black Republican President.... the only question of account that can arise...whether for this cause Virginia will leave the Union....She has said by her vote

distinctly that she does not consider that the election of Lincoln either so touches her honor, or so endangers her interests, as to demand secession - to call for the ruthless destruction of the noblest governmental fabric the world ever saw - to justify Civil War, that last dire resort of unmeasured horrors. Virginia has settled this question and she will not reconsider it at the dictation by word or action of the other states. We trust...the Legislature...will instruct our Representatives in Congress...to show to the world, that Virginia can take care of her own honor and defend her own rights...and that she is not ^{to} be moved...from her attitude of conscious dignity and conscious strength."⁷

"North and South"

An editorial calling attention to the distress caused in both sections by controversies, and closing,

"But ^{as} Virginia has no complicity with the follies of either we feel at perfect liberty to steer clear of the troubles of both."⁸

"Is The Election of Abraham Lincoln
To The Presidency A Sufficient Cause
For A Dissolution Of The Union?"

"All parties had their candidates before the people at the late election....

"Each of these parties took its chance before the people....Did any one or any party that is for secession now, deny the right to the Black Republican Party to run a candidate? And would it not be a most remarkable position for a party to take, if one would say to another before the election: we will contest the field with you, we will use every exertion to elect our candidates, and if we prevail he shall be the President, but if you prevail, we will not stand by the election, we will dissolve the

Union, or in the statesmanlike language of a South Carolina Congressman, we will break up the "occursed Union"?

"If the election^{of} one candidate over another is a sufficient cause for a dissolution of the Union...it would not be worth preserving...

"But viewing the question in another aspect....

"Now that he is elected what can he do? The Conservative party have a majority in both houses of Congress. The Supreme Court is Conservative....Had we not, them, better try him? It may be that he will prove to be a conservative and a law abiding man....From Gen. Washington down to Gen. Jackson not one single President was a pro-slavery man....Experience has proved to the Southern people that slavery is a real blessing to the African race....

"The pro-slavery sentiment has advanced unmeasurably in the South where we can see it face to face and understand its workings. And in the North the sentiment in favor of slavery is growing....We must give the Northern people time. They have not the near approach to slavery that we have. Let us then preserve the Union,^{if} it can possibly be preserved, and besides the other blessings which we will enjoy under it will prove in the end the best for the institution of slavery."⁹

The argument in the second and third paragraphs of this editorial is clever. The latter part of the article is simply a restatement of old arguments, but shows the desire of the paper to maintain the status quo as long as possible, if not indefinitely.

On December 20, the following editorial stressed again the fallacy of thinking secession a remedy for any wrongs, or necessary because of Lincoln's election, and plead for independent and honorable action by Virginia.

"Wrongs And Remedies

...Yet as we held...neither honor nor sound policy would require any state to leave the Union on account of the election a Black Republican president we see no reason for abandoning our position now...because of the present contagion of excitement....Having shown that we do not dishonor ourselves by remaining in the Union under Lincoln's administration, we proceed to argue that it is the best policy....

"...Let us accept the conclusion that we are not to be 'Kicked out of the Union'....Let this proud Commonwealth hold on to the interest she has in the Union and be not moved from her propriety either by Northern impertinence or by Southern arrogance and bullying." ¹⁰

The same issue of the paper reported the following meeting:

"Meeting of the Mechanics and Working
Men of Lexington

"...It adjourned without passing any resolutions, to meet again on the 19th inst., to which meeting all Union men are invited. We believe they will have nineteen out of twenty of the people of this county to act with them in the adoption of conservative resolutions." ¹¹

A general meeting of the same nature was also noted:

"Meeting Of The Citizens Of
Rockbridge County

Because of the bad weather and small out of town attendance it was moved by J.B.Dorman to hold another meeting January 7th. Resolutions were then read from the Committee on Resolutions.

"Whereas, in the perilous condition of the country brought about by the unprincipled ambition of some, the impractical ideas of others, and the lamentable prevalence of prejudice and passion, it is the duty of all patriotic citizens to contribute what they can to the just, wise, and if possible peaceable settlement of the distracting questions now at issue, we, ^{the} people of Rockbridge, deem it incumbent upon us briefly to express our judgement respecting the nature of the existing crisis and the course of action it demands. Therefore,

"Resolved, first." That the Constitution should be "dear to every state" as, under Providence, the best guarantee of our common liberties and national welfare, the last encouragement to the victims of misgovernment elsewhere, and the best hope for diffusion of truth and virtue throughout the earth.

"Resolved, 2nd, That inestimable as is such a Union towards these ends it cannot in our judgement possibly survive the extensive and persistent violation of the principles of justice on which it was founded.

"Resolved, 3rd, That in the aggressive anti-slavery agitation so long originated...and so pertinaciously continued - through the pulpit, the press, the mobs,...the harsh enactment of State Legislatures,...and by the appeals to insurrection and murder...the principles of right on which the Constitution was es-

established have been grievously outraged.

"Resolved, 4th, That in so far as the recent election may be justly regarded as the expression and triumph of this spirit, it, although under the forms of the Constitution, is a most portentous violation of the principles of that sacred compact.

"Resolved 5th," That Virginia should still strive "for redress of her grievances within the Union, before contemplating the last resort of the destruction of the existing Confederacy.

"Resolved 6th," That demands should be made by all the South for repeal of "Personal Liberty Bills" and for additional measures to protect Southern interests, and that the South should forbear from its "ultimate action till this endeavor be adequately ~~xxxxxxx~~ tested.

"Resolved 7th, That waiving all expressions of opinion in reference to 'the right of secession,' yet we deem it proper to say that it would be highly inexpedient to resort to coercion against any seceding State.

"Resolved 8th," Approving Gov. Letcher's calling the Legislature, and recommending that commissioners be sent "with strong fraternal appeals to the several states.

"Resolved 9th, That we approve the plan proposed by Gov. Letcher for a General Convention of the States under the 5th article of the Federal Constitution.

"Resolved 10th," That speeches at the coming meeting be limited to half an hour."

Among other business items, Dr. Daniel Morgan offered the following:

"Resolved; That though the people of the Northern States have shown in their Legislatures and their mobs ~~that~~ the Federal Constitution and oaths administered under it are ineffectual

to restrain them or protect us, that it is the first wish of the people of Rockbridge to preserve the Union and to remain in it, if it can be restored to, and preserved in the State it was before the commencement of abolition agitation.

"2nd That Virginia has such a permanent common interest with the Southern States that she will remain united with them in as out of the present Federal Union, as long as such Union secures to us liberty and tranquility.

"3rd That we spurn the suggestion that Western Virginia will in any event separate her destiny from that of Eastern Virginia."

Captain S.H.Letcher also offered the following resolution: "That the Legislature, when it assembles, should promptly call a convention to decide what action the State will take in the present emergency."

All of these resolutions were referred to the Committee.¹² They indicate clearly the desire of the people to adjust their differences within the Union, but also show that adjustment is demanded. The statement of the seventh regarding coercion is important in that it shows the attitude on the question which was to be so important later.

"Meeting of the People of Rockbridge on Monday last"

The Committee on resolutions not having met, laid the resolutions before the meeting. Many speeches were made, and "The meeting became tumultous." Cheers were given for South Carolina by 60 or 70 people.

"If the vote had been taken on the resolutions we have no doubt that it would have stood at least four for them to one

12. Ibid.

against them, although they were not acceptable to many Union men in the county....If the vote of the county were taken we do not believe there would be as many as 250 votes for secession." 13

It is interesting to notice, however, that cheers were given for South Carolina at this meeting, the first expression of this kind noticed so far.

"The Convention Bill"

"We have been opposed to a convention from the first... For the Legislature to take away from the people the power to call a convention; and to take from them the power of ratifying the acts of the same, is a piece of usurpation unheard of in the history of a free country...." 14

An editorial on Governor Hicks' address to the people of Maryland expressed the following views.

"Governor Hicks of Maryland has published an address to the people of that State...If blood must be shed he sees that Maryland must be the home of the war; ...Like Maryland, we of Virginia have more and greater grievances against the North;... chivalry, we think, ought to have restrained the Cotton States from precipitation...they know that we must endure the greater horrors of war." 15

"Proceedings Of The Meeting On Monday Last"

Samuel McD. Moore and J.B.Dorman were selected by the committee and appointed by the meeting to represent Rockbridge county at the Richmond convention. The Crittenden Compromise was sanctioned as the plan for an adjustment to maintain the Union, and the Committee reported that petitions would be circulated at the polls on February fourth to that effect. The

meeting adjourned "with three cheers for the Union." 16

"To The Polls! Vote For Reference!"

"On Monday next you are called upon to give the most important vote of your life....the one which requires you to say whether or not the action of the Convention...shall bind you without your ratification...

"...grinding tyrannies...owing first and last to misplaced confidence.

"...Without a majority of the people of the State vote for its submission we will secede, and if Mr. Webster was right, civil war, will be the inevitable consequence....and each of you perhaps, dragged from your family to spill your blood in civil strife. To the Polls, then, and vote 'For Reference'." 17

Francis T. Anderson in declaring himself not a candidate for a convention seat expressed the following opinions:

"You may rely upon it, whatever politicians may say, the people dont want war. They will have the fighting to do and the expenses to pay....the people should hurl the politicians from power, North and South, who have brought this evil upon the country....Much will depend upon...the Commissioners who are to meet in Washington on the 4th of February." 18

"The Election

"The returns of the election for the Convention, shows that we were right in our opposition...Northern fanatics...may conclude that Virginia will remain in the Union, whether her rights in regard to the institution of slavery are protected or not. If any such construction as that be put on the election, it is greatly to be feared that it may defeat all hopes of adjustment...

"If our differences can be settled what good result,

can any one tell, will be accomplished by the Convention....

"...Virginia ought to ~~have~~ waited until the excitement... had spent its force; and then by coming forward acting with that deliberation and dignity which becomes a sovereign, her influence would extend from one end of the country to the other.

"But ~~her~~ convention is now in session - her own people and the people of other States, will look with confidence to it for wise, moderate, patriotic, and healing counsels...." ¹⁹

This editorial merely emphasizes the desire for cautious and well-considered action the Gazette had continually called for. The following editorial shows the paper's confidence in the ~~dis~~-solution of the Southern Confederacy if the Peace Conference is successful in reaching an adjustment.

"A Southern Confederacy"

The statement was made that if the Washington Conference succeeded in its endeavors to reach a compromise that would hold the slave States still in the Union, that the Southern Confederacy would not "have a duration of twelve months," and that the people forming it would find they had been led into it by "the tricks of demagogues.

"When we see an intelligent nation...ready to overturn such a government...it is enough to shake the faith of anyone in the capacity of man for self-government." ²⁰

The following selection is in reality a calling to the attention of the people their common sources of pride and interest.

"The Twenty Second"

"...In times like these, when the nation is rent by feuds, when strife and discord and sectional animosities prevail to such

an extent of bitterness as to dismember the Confederacy and cause the best and wisest of our people to fear lest the sun of our national prosperity and greatness, before it has ever reached the meridian of its splendor, may go down in blood and carnage - in such a crisis as this it is grateful to the heart to know and feel that there still remains to us one day when passion and prejudice are forgotten and the great American heart spontaneously offers the incense of its earnest devotion to the memory and worth of him who was 'first in war, first in peace,' and still lives 'first in the hearts of his countrymen!'" 21

The following editorial sets forth a widely held view of the period; that slavery in Virginia was doomed if she entered the Southern Confederacy.

"The True Policy For Virginia"

op
 "Our/position to Virginia's going into a Southern Confederacy, has been on account of the institution of slavery." A defence of slavery follows, on the grounds that it is really good for the African, and that some people would abuse any institution.

"We have believed from the first that if the Southern States unite together slavery will be driven from Virginia." The belief is here stated that were Virginia part of another nation the North would have less respect for a treaty concerning fugitive slaves, than it had then for the law concerning them, with Virginia part of the United States. Virginia's grievances, it was stated, were greater than those of the Cotton States, and they had showed her little consideration in seceding. If Virginia should join them, she would have to become a free State. "Their separation from the

General Government we firmly believe has been the hardest blow ever inflicted on the institution of Slavery. As they cooperated with the abolitionists to bring about the election of Lincoln, they now cooperate with Lincoln to put slavery in the course of its ultimate extinction." The article attacked Southern radicals and bemoaned the fact that they were defenders of slavery, saying that "it deserves to be defended not by braggarts and bullies, but by dignified gentlemen." 22

The letter below shows a different view of the President's Inaugural than that of the Gazette. It is communicated to the paper.

"President's Inaugural

"Five Grs. Strychnine Well Sugared Over"

The letter quotes from Lincoln's Inaugural on the point that no State has a right to withdraw from the Union, and says:

We would say to our President, examine the Constitution, you will find the Federal Government does not claim anything therein as an inherent right - it only claims powers granted to it by the States.

(Signed) Rail Fence" 23

The next editorial of note strikes a different tone regarding the crisis.

"A Speedy Adjustment Or A Permanent
Separation

"We are reluctant to give up the government, because we believe that taken altogether it is the best government that has ever been organized on earth. But the country is standing and has long been standing in an awful suspense, which has prostrated

business in every department. Something must be done and done speedily. The middle States have shown an earnest desire to restore peace and quiet to the country. They have been actuated by a spirit of concession and compromise; and if the free States do not soon meet them in their laudable efforts to bring about an adjustment, we shall come to the conclusion that separation is inevitable.

"...Virginia, we believe, will be satisfied with terms of adjustment agreed upon by the Peace Congress; but will the Northern States come to that? For ourselves, we have but little hope that they will.

"The obstinacy of the North has become discouraging." The editorial mentioned the vote of the North against a proposal to give a Constitutional guarantee by amendment against interfering with slavery where it existed, and derided them as "higher law votes."

"We hope that the affairs of the country may yet take some turn, by which our government will be saved; but if it should be otherwise, the Union men of Virginia, at least, will stand acquitted before the world, of the crime of having brought about its destruction." 24

The Gazette commented in a somewhat different tone than "Rail Fence" on the Lincoln Inaugural, though it had nothing to say which really favored it. "We are not disposed to complain of the tone of this document. It will be seen that it maintains the doctrine of coercion; but there is not the slightest intimation in it that he would recommend to Congress the adoption of any

coercive measures. We think on the other hand that there is ground for hoping that he would, on the score of policy, be opposed to such measures.

"We will not at this time give our views of his inaugural further."²⁵

At this time there was considerable talk of a convention of the Border States to secure concerted action among the States with the same interests, and to add weight to the moves of any one of them. Some Virginians even prophesied that in the event of a dissolution of the Union a Border State Confederacy should be formed.²⁶ An editorial on such a convention was run on March 28.

"If we were for joining the Confederate States, and it may be that we will have to do that, we would still, as we do now, favor a Convention of the Border States. It is our interest to adhere to these States." The article continues, that these States might still save the Union by their concerted action, and that even if secession should prove necessary, harmonious action would add strength to the move, and that it might be possible to carry a few free States with them by this show of power.²⁷

The issue of April 25 seems to mark the turning point in the Gazette's policy. From this point on, the paper is full of news dispatches concerning clashes between Northern and Southern sympathizers, troop movements, and so forth. The resistance to the passage of Northern troops through Maryland is told in several dispatches, and the mobbing of the Massachusetts regiment by the people of Baltimore is given considerable space. All of these news items are written from the Confederate viewpoint.

25. Ibid. 26. The Valley Star, January 17, 1861 27. The Lexington Gazette, ~~XXXXXX~~ March 28, 1861

An item, entitled "War Movements in Rockbridge," tells of the mobilization and departure of the Rockbridge Rifles, Rockbridge 1st and 2nd Dragoons for Staunton and Harper's Ferry, of 150 V.M.I. Cadets for Richmond, and of the quartering of the Rockbridge Greys at V.M.I. ²⁸

This was shortly after Lincoln's call for volunteers and the proclamation of Governor Letcher to the effect that all Virginia troops stand ready to take the field to defend the State against the passage of Northern troops through it to coerce the Southern States back in the Union, which explains the sudden change in the policy of the Gazette and of the attitude of the people, as illustrated by their actions mentioned in the news item above. About this time the Richmond Dispatch, in an article entitled "Gallant Rockbridge", lauded the county for being one of the first to have troops in the field after the publication of the Governor's proclamation, though it had been a strongly Union county up until this time. ²⁹

"The Departure of the Troops"

Telling of the touching ceremonies at the court house when the companies left for Staunton, after prayers, and saying:

"It were useless for Lincoln and his hirelings to attempt to subdue men, who were as fully convinced of the righteousness of our cause. They will never surrender to his despotic rule." ³⁰

A short item makes definite the common cause with the South. "The South is united to a man in defense of our rights.

28. Ibid. April 25

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

We fight for our homes, our wives, and children, whilst Lincoln and his host of Yankee greasers are making a war of aggression, stimulated by the desire to gain on the one hand and a miserable fanaticism on the other. With these feelings animating our hearts we do not fear the result." ³¹

The two next items show how Rockbridge was taking the new situation.

"Our citizens have shown a highly commendable liberality in equipping and preparing for service, the soldiers called into the service of the State. The ladies have been busily engaged in making clothing for the soldiers, and otherwise encouraging brave hearts and strong arms in the defence of our rights."

"Our streets present an unusually active appearance. Everyone busy, horses, wagons, stages, boats, all engaged in the service of the State." ³²

The resolutions of the meeting quoted below are a contrast to those of the meeting recorded above. The resolutions, adopted at a meeting of the people of Rockbridge county, follow:

1st Appointing a committee to receive subscriptions and clothing material.

2nd Appointing a treasurer to receive and an executive committee to disburse monies.

3rd Appointing a quartermaster to receive materials.

"4th Resolved. That able-bodied young men, not exceeding two hundred men, who desire to serve their country be requested to report of Col. Davidson, at Lexington, immediately.

5th Appointing a commissary to receive food supplies. ³³

The first item below shows what the people considered a heinous crime in these days, and the second indicates another way in which Rockbridge people were helping to prepare Virginia for war.

"Beware of traitors - We understand the people of **Collierstown** were after a man who espoused the cause of Lincoln. The last heard of him he was making tracks for Lincoln^{dom}."

"A party of gentlemen of this place have pledged themselves to support and otherwise provide for the families of soldiers who have gone to the war." ³⁴

The speech given in the account of the presentation of a flag to the Rockbridge Artillery by the ladies of Lexington is illuminating as to the viewpoint of the men who were taking the field. It was made by J. D. Davidson on behalf of the ladies, and ^eaccepted by the captain of the company. Davidson said, that the men should honor the flag presented to them by sweethearts, wives and mothers. "You are about to perform your part in the greatest drama that has ever been exhibited to man." For years, he told his audience, they had lived happily in the Union under its flag, but that under it they had recently been insulted, injured, and would be degraded if they had remained loyal, but that under the new flag they would "march to victory."

"The Rev. Dr. Pendleton, Captain of the Company, received the flag in their behalf and responded to Mr. Davidson in a few appropriate and feeling remarks.

"Pointing to the flag he referred to the Red, as an emblem of the heart's blood that will, if necessary, be shed in defense of our homes, our rights, and independence.

"Sergeant Davis responded with an appropriate acknowledgement on the part of his comrades in arms, and eloquently

appealed to them never to suffer that banner to be lowered in disgrace, or trail in dishonor before the minions of a tyrant."

In the course of his speech Davis told of this incident which reveals the attitude of the women at the time. "I cannot but repeat what a noble lady of this village said to me in conversation a few days ago. 'The man', said she, and as she spoke her eyes glowed like a burning ember, and her bosom heaved with emotion, 'that does not go to fight for his country now in this hard hour of peril, shall never have this hand of mine, for if he will not protect and defend his country, he will not protect and defend me.'" ³⁵

The following letter, communicated to the Gazette, is probably as full an expression of the feeling toward Lincoln at the time as could be found. It is perhaps a trifle extreme, but extremities were ordinary in these hectic days.

"The Last President of the United States"

"...the last President of the United States is Abraham Lincoln a name rescued from obscurity only to be consigned to imperishable scorn and infamy. In him we find an assemblage of the most odious vices.....With regard to his cowardice we need no other testimony than his Hegira from Harrisburg in the disguise of a Highland dress....But the crowning infamy of all his vices is the threat of himself and the leaders of his vandal hordes to excite a servile war...would result in horrors, compared with which, the most barbarous Indian cruelties would be acts of mercy.... That a man of Lincoln's low instincts, who was probably never admitted into good society until he had passed the age at which he could have been benefitted by its refining influence should

thirst for blood and plunder is not at all surprising. But that a man of Gen. Scott's world wide reputation, and he too a Virginian, should be willing to unsheathe the sword given him by his native State and stain his matricidal hands with the blood of a mother, who has cherished and honored him from youth to hoary age, seems to be a climax of treason, ingratitude, and infamy almost incredible. ...A mother who finds that in a beloved and cherished son she has only been cherishing in her bosom a viper, whose only return for all the maternal love lavished upon him is to sting her to death... His hatred and enmity must soon be buried with him in a dishonored grave, and then like Benedict Arnold, to be despised, even by the unprincipaled myrmidons, in whose service he has forfeited what to all men should be dearer even than life and much more than gold - his honor.

(Signed) A Virginian" 36

This attack on General Scott gives an idea of the light in which the Virginians viewed the "traitorous" conduct of the Virginian generals who remained with the Federal army as Scott did, also Thomas, and several others.

In marked contrast to the Gazette's former expressions on the prospective war, are those contained in the editorial entitled: "Declaration of War

"The Southern Confederacy has picked up the gauntlet that Lincoln has thrown down and answered his threats with a declaration of war. The war that is forced upon us is a war between the free and independent South and the Black Republican despotism at Washington. The South has exhausted every measure for peace, but she is ready for the solemn alternative. Nothing can be more

manly and dignified than both the style and manner of this important paper.

"The South enters upon this warfare with means and resources which render her more than equal to the maintenance of her independence. She stands upon her own ground; she can bring more men and better soldiers upon that ground than her enemies.... The war will be waged on the water as well as land. Privateers are already preparing for sea, and as many as three thousand applications for letters of marque are before the Montgomery Government. It is possible that ^{the} mediation of England and France may be ~~interposed~~ to prevent the gigantic struggle which is at hand, and our position and their interests undoubtedly give them the right to interpose. The South asks nothing but what is right, and will submit to nothing that is wrong. She intends to defend herself as long as a man lives who deserves to be called a man, and strong in her cause, her courage, and above all, the guardianship of Heaven, she draws the sword and throws away the scabbard." 37

In the light of subsequent events it is interesting to notice here the dependence put on the Southern military supremacy and on European intervention. Though the Confederate soldiers proved themselves superior on many fields, Southern resources, the numbers of the Southern armies, and the intervention of foreign nations failed to materialize.

The next selection is rather retrospective to the Gazette's conservative attitude. In this article the writer pleads for fair play and for abstinence from action which might later be regretted.

"During the excitement incident to revolution it is extremely difficult to keep the passions under the control of reason - We are liable to be carried away by impulse, and hurried into the commission of acts of injustice to our fellow citizens." The French Revolution was here cited as an example of this.

"The people of the South claim the right to a government to which ^{they} assent...believing that powers not granted by the people have been usurped by the Black Republican party, we have taken up arms to defend our rights and our ~~pe~~representatives to the State Convention have enacted an ordinance, declaring our independence of the government of the United States...

"Already an intolerance has been...manifested... One suggests that all who vote against the ordinance be forced into the army - Another says they should be notified to leave the State, and others propose to treat them to a coat of tar and feathers. This is all wrong and subversive of the fundamental principles of our present revolution. All men have the right of expressing their opinions...We should remember that the ordinance is not in force until sanctified by the people...If a fellow citizen is not to be allowed to exercise his free will in casting his vote, then the submission of the question is mere mockery." A vote Napoleon had the "free people" take is cited here. Those who voted against the Emperor were to be shot.

"Many of our best citizens, true and loyal to Southern rights have been 'Union men' and still believe that the Border States have not adopted the best method of redressing their grievances...yet they are ready to defend Virginia with the

last drop of their blood."

The conclusion of the article attacked "self constituted censors" and advised them to "be sure you are right in your suspicions before you do injustice to yo ur friends." 38

A typical tribute of the times is entitled "The Ladies" and states that "the ladies of the South have from the beginning of o ur trouble been in favor of secession," and that "hundreds throughout the State are daily employed in the manufacturing of clothing and equipment for the soldiers, cartridges and munitions of war for the reception of the vandal hordes who threaten to invade us - Whilst they thus contribute to our physical wants they are ever ready with pleasant smiles and encouraging counsels..." Especial tribute was then paid to the ladies of Rockbridge County. 39

"The Secession of Virginia

"Last Thursday the freemen of Virginia voted themselves out of the corrupt, rotten, and abolitionized despotism of the Northern usurpers. Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, their destinies are now cast with the Southern Confederacy....The true American flag now floats at the South over the homes of the brave and land of those...who will be free despite all the diabolical efforts of treacherous Yankee tyrants to enslave them."

The Editorial said that the secession day would be long remembered, as was that day in '76 when our forefathers proclaimed their independence. Virginia, it said, had stood the wrongs of the North longer than seemed possible, but had finally decided to resist; "then did the sovereign people of Virginia rise in their strength and in the noble spirit of her time-honored motto, 'Sic Semper Tyrannis.'"

"With the exception of a little disaffection in ~~some~~ of the Northwestern counties the returns of the vote on the ordinance of secession will exhibit almost entire unanimity among the ^epeople of Virginia in shaking off the Lincoln dynasty of Northern oppression and spoliation malignity." The struggle might be long and hard, it was said, but no matter what the price, Virginia would "drive back the hireling~~x~~ mercenaries of Abolition fanaticism or whiten the hills and vallies of our State with the bleached bones of the Yankee invaders. Virginia's act of secession was done in self defense, and if for that we are to have a long and bloody internecine war, and after we have triumphantly sustained our cause, as we trust in God we may, the North comes more coolly ~~and~~ calmly to reckon upon whom the responsibility for the bloody struggle rests, we can trul y say to her -

"Shake not thy gory locks at (us)

"Thou canst not say (we) did it.'" 40

This editorial really brings to a close the period under survey. The attitude as expressed in this needs no interpretation. From here on there is only one side to the controversy as far as the Gazette is concerned.

The survey of this paper seems to show pretty definitely a conservative attitude throughout. All hurried or hot-headed action was discouraged until the actual act of secession, and a rather strong Union tone pervades the editorial policy before the Ordinance was passed. Of course, after this act the paper supports Virginia's decision absolutely, which is typical I believe of Rockbridge County's attitudes.

Chapter Six

THE VALLEY STAR, NOVEMBER 15, 1860 TO APRIL 18, 1861

The first editorial of importance regarding this subject appeared on November 15 and concerned the election just past.

"The Result

"Now that the battle is over and the smoke and dust sufficiently cleared away to enable us to look over the battle field, and ascertain the damage done to this fair fabric of ours, we at once, from the notes of preparation, realize our awful situation. That we are upon the heels of a crisis, no sane man will deny....The Union! It is gone, that precious jewel around which the American heart clung and throbbed with joy for so many long years. And fanaticism, hatred, malice and revenge, now reign triumphant throughout the length and breadth of the land. And here comes the enquiry, from whence proceedeth the destructive element? We answer from the North and from the South, from the East and from the west. The vile politician and the selfish man, the ^{fan}atic and the self-constituted patriot, are responsible for the misery and woe that is about to be entailed upon ~~an~~ innocent and unsuspecting people....The man who could utter a word and raise his arm against the Union, deserves banishment from the land. Lincoln is elected, and sectionalism ~~is~~ one end of this Union is triumphant and the Union is broken up...." ¹

This rather pessimistic viewpoint is followed by one which seems to look forward to what eventually came, war.

1. The Valley Star, November 15, 1860

"Anniversary of the Rockbridge Rifles
political

"In these high and exciting/times our peculiar institutions demand defence - such as we have in the Rockbridge Rifles. Every encouragement in the power of our citizens should be extended to this company; and we would here suggest to our town authorities, (and we believe it would meet with the approbation of our citizens) that they rent the Odd Fellow's Hall for the company to drill in." ²

The following editorial presents the same views as to the duties and ability of the Border States to prevent conflict or precipitate action, as does the Gazette.

"Our Duty

"...it would be madness for Virginia to think of following the disunion lead. Her true position is, in conjunction with the other conservative and border Southern States, to present an imposing front in the way of energetic remonstrance against armed collision between the Federal Government and the Seceding States, so as to avoid the calamities of civil war and give us time to attempt at least to compose these angry difficulties by friendly negotiation. And for this last purpose we see no plan so feasible as that proposed by Gov. Letcher, for a convention of all the States under the 5th article of the Constitution." ³

One of the ideas most objected to in Rockbridge county was that the State was being "hitched" to the Cotton States whether it would or no.

"...Virginia too,...is being 'hitched on' to these States...that she must go with them. Will you consent to this good

people? Are you prepared for Disunion and civil war, under the dictation of the Cotton States? If not wake up! Realize the fact that we are in the midst of Revolution, and be prepared to expend all your energies of thought and action for the preservation of the Constitution and the Union, and to avert the horrible evils of fratricidal strife - of brother's blood shed by brother's hands." 4

The Star expressed its feelings concerning "Disunionists" by saying: "If any of them stray into these parts beware of them." 5

On December 6 a letter was printed from a correspondent signing himself "National Democrat", which denied the Star's statement that a State had a constitutional right to secede "for just cause." The letter said that this was merely the "right of Revolution", and quoted Jefferson, Madison, and Jackson to support **his** contention. 6

In replying the Star said: "In our humble opinion the Federal Government is not a government of the people, but of the States who formed it, and by whom it was adopted in State convention, and by the Declaration of Independence it was declared to 'be the right of the people' (the people of each State) to alter or abolish it whenever it became destructive of the ends for which it was formed.

"This right to alter or abolish or secede from is clearly not a revolutionary right, the right of revolution dates back long before the Constitution was ever dreamed of. The right of revolution cannot be claimed for a State, it rests with the people....

"In the resolution of 1798 the Constitution is styled a 'compact to which the States are parties,' and whenever

that compact is broken or violated they further declare 'the States who are parties thereto (not the people) have the right and are in duty bound to interfere for arresting the progress of evil and for maintaining within their respective units the authorized rights and liberties appertaining to them.' This is the right of secession, a State reassuming the powers granted, when those powers have been perverted to her injury."

The editorial quoted from Jefferson and Madison to prove these points, drew a distinction between secession and nullification, and closed with a few sarcastic sallies against "National Democrat." ⁷

This a full statement of the argument of the "right of secession", but is rather poorly expressed, and the writer in some places weakens his own arguments by his illustrations.

"The County Convention"

Comment was made on the large size of the meeting despite the bad roads and bad weather. "It did our hearts good to think that love for the Union was the feeling, that has thus stirred up our people - and we rejoice...If war must come this moderate and temperate conduct will become determination that no human power can withstand or subdue."

The article then paid tribute to Samuel McD. Moore and James B. Dorman, whom ^{the} the county convention had nominated to seats in the State convention, and concluded: "Let us crush out that odious doctrine of Secession per se - and so scotch the snake, that to kill it would be mercy - Then To the Polls! To the Polls!! and vote for Moore and Dorman as the representatives of the Union loving people of West Augusta." ⁸

7. Ibid. December 6, 1860

8. Ibid. January 24, 1861

"The State Convention

"The duty that will be imposed upon this body if the people elect secessionists is one that will be fearful in its results. There is imperishable glory in building up a free and happy government but equally imperishable infamy in tearing down and destroying..." The editorial said that some were base enough to destroy this great work of Washington and others. "The Legislature in the Convention Bill has made provision for reference of the action of said convention to the people, if they desire it, and he who refuses by his vote...aids in tearing out of Republican Institutions, their very life blood....This will be a rapid step toward the establishment of a despotism." The people were urged to vote for reference, and told to distrust those who would not. "Beware of such men." 9

An editorial entitled "The Election" urged all voters to go to the polls and vote for reference, saying that a day thus spent might save months spent in camp.¹⁰

Another demanded, "No Splitting" and said that a split ticket was the hope of the secessionists. It concluded, "The Union men can give to both their nominees at least 1500 majority, Let them do so for the good of the cause...which ought to be above all other considerations." 11

"A Last Appeal" was still another flowery editorial urging voters to the polls to "vote for the men who have been nominated as the candidates of our Union Convention,...and demand at the hands of the Convention that they refer their action to the people. Neglect this, and if you find our State cut loose from her moorings and floating among the rocks and quicksands of Disunion you will have none to blame but yourselves. Then to the polls!!" 12

"Reconstruction of the Union" presented an argument to show the folly of dissolving the Union for the purpose of reforming it with different provisions, and blamed the fanatics in New England and the hot-heads in the South for the ~~plan~~ plan.

Declaring that there was no "irreconcilable hatred between the two sections" as those "far from any possible battlefield" seemed to suppose, the editorial stated, "To descend to the lowest argument on this side of the question - civil war cannot be made to pay."

In defence of the Union under the Constitution the editorial continued: "If Union is not possible under this instrument with all its checks and balances and compromises, we hazard nothing in asserting that no ingenuity of man can invent a better charter."

A discussion of what the state of affairs would be without the Union followed, and as an example of the sort of problems that might arise, it was pointed out that if the States were independent of one another the State of Louisiana could close the Mississippi river. ¹³

This whole argument, of course, bears on the plan to dissolve the Union, and reconstruct it without New England and with Constitutional provisions affecting the protection of slavery. The article below is an attempt to refute the arguments for secession, put forward by the advocates of that policy.

"Should Virginia Secede?"

The Unionists wished to hold on to the Union as long as this could honorably be done, it was said, but the secessionists were divided. Some desired immediate secession, others

wished to wait for the results of the Washington Peace Conference, still others desired secession on March fourth, and a fourth group favored "quasi secession." The editorial directed attention to the first two classes, who said:

First; That if Virginia did not secede she would be completely subjugated to Lincoln. To this the editorial replied that, "We don't think the people of Virginia so pusillanimous as to run away from so much that is glorious in the past - on account of so dastard a fear of the future. As much as we deprecated the election of Lincoln, we have no such fears of him and his party-^{happy} but to borrow a phrase from another, we are willing to take him, 'under protest and on probation.'"

Second; That "Virginia will be the manufacturing State of the South." The editorial stated in reply that under the free trade doctrine of every Confederate State except Louisiana, Virginia could not compete with the pauper labor of Europe, and that Virginia was better adapted to "agriculture, grazing, and mining....Let Virginia then, hold on to the Union and slavery." ¹⁴

"Our Position"

"It has been our object throughout our entire editorial course...to prevent, if possible, a dissolution of these United States. And in doing so...we have incurred the displeasure of some of our patrons, who have fancied to themselves, that because we have been such a strong advocate of the Union, we must necessarily be a submissionist. Now, we would disabuse the minds of those who entertain such an opinion of us....We have long thought upon this subject, and we have carefully observed the aggressive spirit of the Northern portion of the Confederacy upon the institutions of the South, and now that the issue has

come we are for demanding our constitutional rights, in the right way, and in the proper spirit, and if we cannot get them, be assured that you will not find us classed among the submissionists." 15

A month after this statement of the paper's position, the unionist policy was unchanged, as evidenced by this editorial which appeared March 14.

"Pushing - Pulling

"Poor Virginia! how they are pushing and pulling at her. There have been two senatorial functionaries at Washington, hailing from Virginia, but misrepresenting her sentiments, with their eyes steadily fixed on high places in the Southern Confederacy - pushing - pushing - to drive her from the Union." The glory of the Union meant nothing to these men, the editorial said. They would destroy it to create a number of lesser confederacies, with interest in only one, and that one "based on a Staple and an Institution - Cotton and Slavery." These men, the editorial continued, would do anything, accept anything, in order to achieve their ends, and they were aided ^{by} men from the South trying to pull Virginia into the Confederacy by "humbug stories" of her advantages in that position. 16

The same issue of the paper carried an article reporting alleged discord in the new Southern Confederacy, and also one saying that Lincoln's inaugural contained no message of aggression, although it was "political document" and "jesuitical to an extent unworthy of so high a functionary." This editorial also recommended that resolutions be passed, declaring against coercion, by the State Convention. 17

An editorial saying that coercion was extremely unlikely stated that, "Bad as some of the administration are, and God knows their past record shows them bad enough - we grant them enough prudence and good sense to conciliate rather than irritate. They are wise enough to know ~~from~~ indications too plain to be mistaken, that coercion will at once result in producing a united and belligerent South....Hence we infer that an attempt at coercion is the most improbable of events....The precipitators think there will be coercion because they wish to see it....May God frustrate their evil designs, and save from destruction, the best government ever devised by man." 18

In view of subsequent events, this editorial is not extremely judicious, but it should be remembered that the policy of the paper was unionist at this time. The article below announces a change of editors and a change of policies.

"To The Public"

"We have completed an arrangement with our old friend Wm. P. McCorkle, Esq., by which he takes the editorial management of the Valley Star....we propose henceforth to devote the Star to the interests of our native and beloved State. We have waited until waiting ceases to be a virtue. The Old Dominion has done all that honor will allow to preserve the old Union. Every thing has failed, and the question now is shall we unite with the prosperous South, or shall we starve with the Northern Black Republicans." 19

The next item concerns foreign recognition, and takes the view, which, if it had materialized, would have won the war ~~for~~ for the Confederacy. It tells of the departure of the commissioners to the foreign governments to secure recognition, and cites historical examples to show that recognition of a government such as

was not uncommon.
 that existing in the Southern States/~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ That
 the commissioners will secure such recognition is prophesied, as
 soon as the foreign governments realized that a de facto government
 was firmly established. Such recognition would not depend on rec-
 ognition from the United States government the writer believed. ²⁰

"War Inevitable

"The startling news of the last few days renders
 it almost certain that we are on the eve of a bloody civil war,
 Troops and munitions have been dispatched Southward, and whatever
 may be the intention of the administration, it will be almost im-
 possible to prevent a collision. And for all the evils that may
 flow from such a contest, we shall have to render due thanks to
 the Virginia Convention. Had this imbecile and treacherous body
 looked to their country's interest instead of their own, civil
 war would have been impossible. Virginia would have been in line
 with her sisters of the South and in a state of complete defence,
 and not in league with the foul birds that are gorging and filthing
 over the putrid carcass of the Union. 'Wait' is said to be the
 watchword by which the devil and Lincoln know their own; and as
 the fabled head of Orpheus floated out of sight repeating again
 and again a beloved name, so we may expect these dirt-eating sub-
 missionists to cry Wait! even after their heads are in the basket." ²¹

This attack is rather uncalled for, judging from
 the procedure of the Convention, which passed the Ordinance of
 Secession shortly after the crisis.

Below is another argument advanced for leaving the
 Union.

"Territory North and South"

Declaring that the North had taken more than ~~its~~ share of the common territory, the editorial gave detailed statistics to prove this, and concluded: "It will be seen that in the beginning the territory of the South was four times greater than that of the North, while now it is three times less. And yet there are persons in the South who still clamor for compromise!" ²²

"A States Rights Democrat"

"A communication in the last Gazette over the above signature, calls for some notice at our hands." The writer then goes on to prove the "right of secession", which had been denied by "A States Rights Democrat." The argument is that as anything not granted to the Federal Government by the States is retained to their powers, they have the "right of secession" by inference. This argument is elaborated, and many famous statesmen of the past are quoted in support of it. ²³

The following is a fine example of the tributes being paid to the Southern Ladies of the time. It is headed,

"The Ladies Are With Us"

The piece praises the women all over the South for the aid they are giving . A few extracts give the tone:

"Every day they are throwing to the breeze banners woven by their own fair hands."

"Can the cause, thus supported by the active sympathies of all that is pure and lovely be wrong?"

"If she has not the active courage of the soldier, she has the fortitude of the heron; and those who think that because she is all gentleness and kindness, she must be spiritless and weak, do most egregiously err. If she have the

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

footfall of velvet for the chamber of sorrow, she has a heel of iron for the traitor and timeserver; and in proportion as she admires courage and daring, she pities and despises the craven heart that would submit to injustice and wrong." 24

The latter part of this smacks a little of being more of an argument to get young bloods to join the army, than merely a tribute to Southern Ladies.

Another editorial called attention to the alleged lies and ruses indulged in by the government in connection with the Fort Sumpter episode, and stated that the Federal officers felt that the existing conditions of quasi-hostility between the government and the Southern States justified such machinations. 25

"Facts for the Consideration of the
People of Virginia"

Tells of the costs of government and of Virginia's share, concluding, "The tobacco and wheat growers of Virginia will understand the question on all its practical bearings when they see Mr. Lincoln's agents dismounting at their doors and demanding the payment of taxes to the Federal Government; a part of which, by the way, let them bear in mind, is to be paid for catching cod fish on the coast of New England." 26

Two editorials, both headed, "War! War!", appeared in the issue of April 18. The first told of the dispatches coming in, and said, "War! actual war! is upon us; and in view of its mighty consequences we sink all bitterness of feeling - all personal and party rancor - and call upon the men, citizens, sons of Virginia to unite in an attitude of defence. This is no time for threats and taunts - it is the time for harmony of feeling and

concert of action among all parties. Gentlemen, what say you? Friends, citizens, sons of a common mother, shall we unite?"

This is a plea for unity among the Virginians. The second one mentioned above is to arouse the fighting blood of the men. It declared:

"War! War!

"The armed cohorts of Abe Lincoln and the Black Republicans are to invade the soil of our State! Virginians arm yourselves and prepare to meet your foes. There can be no hesitancy now, we must fight for our homes, and our firesides, or in the ranks of Lincoln we must fight against them. Unsheath your swords and do your duty. He who hesitates or doubts now is a traitor. God of our fathers defend and protect us and confuse and destroy our enemies." 27

The confusion and destruction in the Federal armies during the early part of the war must have made Mr. McCorkle believe that his prayer had taken effect. The notice below brings to a conclusion this period of the Star's secession editorials.

"The State Seceded

"Lexington, April 17. - The best feeling prevails amongst our people. Everybody seems rejoiced at the prompt action of the Convention. We are now probably as nearly united as any other community in the State.

"God save the Commonwealth." 28

The attitudes expressed in the Valley Star are not very different than those in the Gazette. The latter is more temperate and judicious than the former, but both followed approximately the same course. They were unionist until Lincoln's call for volunteers, and then they were wholeheartedly for secession.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSIONS

Virginia's proximate cause for secession was the coercion of the Southern States back into the Union by the Federal Government. Rockbridge County was loyal to the State, and chiefly for the same reasons that made the State loyal to her Southern sisters.

Rockbridge County's secession attitudes were those of the State as a whole, with probably a stronger Union sentiment up until the actual act of secession, when the views of the County and the eastern sections were expressed as virtually indetical.

Rockbridge men would not be dragged into the conflict against their wills. They felt that the allegation, that Virginia was inevitably "hitched to the Cotton States," was a disgrace to the State if true. They firmly believed, and so held in their public utterances, that Virginia should act independently and honorably and with due deliberation, as befit a Commonwealth of her importance, and with her historic prestige.

These County leaders blamed the Northern abolitionists for the crisis in national affairs, but they blamed both them and the Southern "hot-spurs" for precipitating the "irrepressible conflict". Before the Ordinance of secession was passed, they were only less hard on the radical wing in the South than on the Abolitionists.

A strong love of the Union was prevalent in Rockbridge County, and the leaders felt that no stone should be left unturned in making every effort to save the Union and ^{at} the _^

same time preserve the honor and prosperity of the State. They believed that slavery was right, and that outside meddling and interference with ^{the} institution was wrong, dangerous, and should be resented and prevented.

Slavery was an institution of some importance in the County, but the commercial or industrial or economic value of it, was hardly worth going to war to maintain. The principle of non-interference by outsiders may have been, but this was not the reason Rockbridge remained loyal to the State.

Rockbridge men often declared that secession from the Union would end slavery in Virginia, because the North, as a separate nation, could hardly be expected to respect any treaty rights of the South regarding fugitive slaves, if it would not respect a law concerning them which was passed under a common constitution. They had also shown that Virginia would suffer from an alliance with the Southern States because of their divergent views on the tariff. So it cannot be said that Rockbridge County was influenced in its stand by any hope of material gain through a splitting up of the old Confederacy.

Rockbridge men held first, that Virginia should act deliberately, without any outside pressure or influence, in keeping with her position and prestige - that the honor of the State should be upheld at all costs. They held second, that because of her part in forming and maintaining the Federal Union, Virginia should do everything in her power to prevent the final dissolution of that Union. Thirdly, they believed that Virginia should not allow her rights to be trampled upon by North or South, and that she should secede if necessary to defend these rights. They also believed that both the Abolitionists of the

North and the radicals of the South were trying to break up the Union, that it was the responsibility of the Border States, led by Virginia, to prevent this if possible.

Rockbridge leaders held finally, that coercion of the seceded States by the Federal Government was morally and constitutionally wrong, and that if such coercion was attempted, Virginia should secede; and they declared that Rockbridge County would be first in line to support such secession.

When the State did secede, Rockbridge put several companies in the field immediately, and wholeheartedly supported Virginia throughout the duration of the War. The attitude of the County toward secession was moderate and firm. While it was possible, she expressed through her leaders her Union views, and when, in her belief, such expression was no longer advisable, she gave of her best to aid in the ultimate success of the new Confederacy in the greatest of American conflicts - The War Between the States.

Finis