

the House any endorser of Helper's book. For two months they filibustered successfully against Republican John Sherman, who had ill-advisedly signed the appeal, while the flames of sectional conflict roared higher and higher. What does the following speech by Representative James Bullock Clark of Missouri (later a member of the Confederate Congress) presage about the preservation of the Union?

These [Helperite] gentlemen come in and say that the riches of the South are neglected by the bad management of the South; that the accursed plague of slavery does it; and that, therefore, non-slaveholders at the South should rise in their majesty—peaceably if they can, forcibly if they must—take their arms, subdue the slaveholders, drive out the plague of slavery, take possession of the country, and dedicate it to free labor.

That is the sentiment in the book which these gentlemen recommend to have circulated gratuitously all over the South. Are such men fit to preside over the destinies of our common country? Can the South expect from such men the maintenance of the integrity of the Constitution? Our slave property is as much our property under the Constitution, and under the guarantees of this government, as any property held at the North. Whether it is sinful to hold slaves, whether slavery is a plague and a loss, and whether it will affect our future destiny, is our own business. We suffer for that, and not they.

We ask none of their prayers. We need none of them. If we were in need of them, and if the only way to escape future punishment and misery were to receive benefit from the prayers of those [sixty-eight] who signed that recommendation, I should expect, after death, to sink into the nethermost Hell. [Laughter.]

Do gentlemen expect that they can distribute incendiary books, give incendiary advice, advise rebellion, advise non-intercourse in all the relations of life, spread such works broadcast over the country, and not be taken to task for it? I presume that the South has sufficient self-respect; that it understands the effect of its institutions well enough; that it has its rights, and dares to maintain them.

3. James Hammond Proclaims Cotton King (1858)

As the resentment of the South rose, so did its confidence in its ability to stand alone as a Confederacy, if need be. It rode through the panic of 1857 with flying colors; its enormous exports of "King Cotton" overshadowed all others from America. But the North might well have responded with the cry "Grass is King!" For, as Helper pointed out in his banned book, the value of the North's hay crop, though consumed at home, was greater than that of the South's cotton crop. Yet Senator Hammond of South Carolina, a bombastic owner of some three hundred slaves, voiced the cry "Cotton is King!" in this famous Senate speech. He referred to the dangerous dependence of the enormous English textile industry on the huge imports from the South. What were the problems with his argument?

Why, sir, the South has never yet had a just cause of war. Every time she has seized her sword it has been on the point of honor, and that point of honor has

³Congressional Globe, 35th Congress, 1st session (March 3, 1858), p. 961.

been mainly loyalty to her sister colonies and sister states, who have ever since plundered and calumniated her.

But if there were no other reason why we should never have a war, would any sane nation make war on cotton? Without firing a gun, without drawing a sword, when they make war on us we can bring the whole world to our feet.

The South is perfectly competent to go on, one, two, or three years, without planting a seed of cotton. I believe that if she was to plant but half her cotton, it would be an immediate advantage to her. I am not so sure but that after three years' cessation she would come out stronger than ever she was before and better prepared to enter afresh upon her great career of enterprise.

What would happen if no cotton was furnished for three years? I will not stop to depict what everyone can imagine, but this is certain: old England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her. No, sir; you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares make war upon it. Cotton is King!

[It is not surprising that cotton should have deluded the South when the British themselves conceded their fatal dependence. A writer in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (February 1851, p. 216) confessed: "We rest almost entirely on the supplies obtained from a single state [nation]. No one need be told that five-sixths, often nine-tenths, of the supply of cotton consumed in our manufactures come from America, and that seven or eight thousand persons are directly or indirectly employed in the operations which take place upon it. Suppose America wishes to bully us, to make us abandon Canada or Jamaica for example, she has no need to go to war. She has only to stop the export of cotton for six months, and the whole of our manufacturing counties are starving or in rebellion; while a temporary cessation of profit is the only inconvenience they experience on the other side of the Atlantic. Can we call ourselves independent in such circumstances?"]

Thought Provokers

1. A favorite argument of the South was that the black slave was better off than the wage slave of the North or England. (See also earlier, p. 324.) In what respects was this true? false? John Quincy Adams said, "Misery is not slavery." Comment.
2. Why could persons who had eyewitnessed slavery in the South offer such radically differing accounts? What would have been the future of slavery if it had been left alone? What effect did the Haitian slave revolt have on American views of slavery?
3. It has been said that the Garrison abolitionists were right in principle but wrong in method. Comment. Garrison advocated disunion as a means of ending slavery. Explain the logic or illogic of his position. Explain how you would have dealt with slavery if given "all earthly power."
4. Why did so many people in the North deplore the boat-rocking tactics of the abolitionists and often despise them? Did the abolitionists do more harm or good?
5. In what respects did Hinton R. Helper help to cause the Civil War? In what respects did the "Cotton is King" complex cause the Civil War? It has been said that cotton was a king who enslaved his subjects. Comment.

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