

CHAPTER XIV.

PART PLAYED BY THE "FOURTH ESTATE." —DIVISION VOTED.

THE FRIEND OF DIVISION.

Concerning the ordinance for division, the morning after the adjournment of the Convention the *Intelligencer* said:

"The measure is not quite all the more ardent Divisionists would have preferred; but if we are not greatly mistaken in the temper of the people and in what will be the expression of it in the election to be held, we shall all be citizens of the State of Kanawha before many months roll around."

The position of the *Wheeling Intelligencer* at this time in Western Virginia was at once unique and influential. It was at that time in every essential the leading newspaper in the western half of the State. No dailies were then printed in the West except at Wheeling and Parkersburg. From the time A. W. Campbell came into the editorial control of the *Intelligencer* in 1856, the paper had been strongly, though conservatively, free-soil; and as the issue of secession developed, it had grown correspondingly more emphatic in its unqualified support of the Federal government and its denunciation of secession.

THE ORGAN OF SECESSION.

The opposition paper at the opening of the rebellion, the *Wheeling Union*, was owned by Henry Moore, a wealthy man with his chief interests in Baltimore, a Roman Catholic in religion and a Southern Democrat in politics, who had started the *Union* as a venture for his son Philip Henry, who, as the national issue developed, took the Disunion side of it; and in the Spring of 1861, as we have seen, kept the John Tyler dictum standing at the head of his editorial columns.

THE INTELLIGENCER A POWER.

The *Intelligencer*, by its editorial ability, its elevated tone, its unflinching Unionism and its anti-slavery attitude, had at the opening of the rebellion taken high rank not alone in Western Virginia but among its contemporaries outside. When the question of a separation from Virginia began to be agitated, it was one of the first to take it up and soon became conspicuously and effectively the organ of division; and probably wrought more powerfully than any single agency towards the result finally achieved; and it took the ground and maintained it, without apology, that the elimination of slavery was a vital and necessary part of the task.

The foregoing statement is not only a proper part of this history, but explains why such frequent quotation in these pages is made from the columns of the *Intelligencer*, in connection with the movements we are following. That newspaper was through this period the organ and embodiment of Union and new State opinion, the medium

employed by the friends of these movements in all parts of Western Virginia, and always a faithful exponent of their views and promoter of their purpose. It thus became the center around which the new State and free-State elements rallied and was looked to as not only faithful but authoritative. Two years before his death, Governor Peirpoint, reviewing the times with which this volume deals and his connection with them, said: "What would we have done without the *Intelligencer* in those days? I felt then and feel now, that it was the right arm of our movement."

Six days after the adjournment of the Convention, answering the plea that had been made for delay in the matter of a division of the State, the *Intelligencer* said:

"It would take a long time for us to go through a list of the excuses of one kind or another that were urged, and could be plausibly urged, against a division. To sum them up—for we are compelled to be brief—there is neither distraction nor revolution, nor broken faith, in the action of the Convention. Revolution implies violence and illegality; or, if you please, unconstitutionality. There is nothing of the kind in the action of the Convention. They have taken their steps legally and in order, just as it is provided by the Constitution of the United States that they should be taken. The question is all open from the beginning to the end. It is first to be submitted to the people; it is next to be submitted to the Legislature; and next to Congress. The manner prescribed by the Constitution is fully and entirely complied with and even more. Whence then comes the opposition on this score? And as to implied faith with Union men of Eastern Virginia or of the Valley, there is nothing in it worthy of serious consideration. As Union men we are Union to them still. The bond of Unionism—national Unionism—with them remains just as ever. In common with the

Union men from other States, the men of Western Virginia will go on fighting the battle for the Union in Virginia. Aside from that bond, old scores and natural boundaries stand as they have all along."

In a review of the new State proposition in the *Morgantown Star* in September, the suggestion was made that when it should become necessary for the restored government to give way to the jurisdiction of the new State, it could remove its temporary capital to Winchester or Alexandria, then within the Federal lines, pending the subjugation of the remainder of Virginia. This seems to have been the first public suggestion of the way out of a difficulty which had troubled some members of the Convention.

October 8th, the *Intelligencer* notes the prospect that the ordinance for division would be carried by "an overwhelming majority. Our correspondence and our exchanges" says the editor "induce us to believe that the people are getting to be almost a unit in favor of the measure."

RESULT OF ELECTION.

Day by day and week after week the interest in the coming election grew. Two days after the election, the *Intelligencer* said:

So far as we have had reports from the election on Thursday, they show an astonishing unanimity among the people in favor of a new State.

The result of the election was a surprise all around. Opponents of division were surprised at the popular unanimity in favor of it. Friends of the measure were

surprised to find the people so far in advance of their estimates. The expression was nearly all one way. Kanawha which had been overrun by Wise in the early Summer voted 1,039 for division, one against. Putnam gave 209 to none; Cabell, 200 to none; Harrison, 1,148 to 2; Marion, 760 to 38; Monongalia, 1,591 to 18; Upshur, 614 to none; Randolph, 171 to 2. The official vote as communicated by the Secretary of the Commonwealth to the constitutional convention in December, was 18,408 for division, to 781 against.

PEOPLE COULD NOT BE FOOLED.

November 5th the *Intelligencer* said:

The people thoroughly understood the gist of the whole outcry against present expediency. They recognized this plain and palpable fact that the men who got it up were not friends of the new State, and at no other time would they be a bit more likely to vote for it than now. They seized the strong common-sense view of the subject as if by intuition and determined that whether the project succeeded or not before Congress, the world should see that it was the choice of the people of the Northwest to have a new State, and that they were not one whit less firm and inflexible towards the Eastern Virginia usurpers now than they were last spring. Had we voted down the new State, that would have ended it. We never in this generation could have brought it to a vote again. All our talk for the past twenty-five years would have been considered as retracted.

THE MAIN QUESTION PRESENTS ITSELF.

And now a new question began to raise itself in the foreground. Not new in its nature; rather as old as the question of division itself; but new in the sense that for

the first time it had to be met with some practical solution. It had been settled by the result of the election that Western Virginia would go to Congress for admission into the Union; and the question what to do with slavery in view of that ordeal would have to be answered in the constitution to be framed by the Convention to assemble November 26th. On the morning of that day, the delegates were greeted in the editorial columns of the *Intelligencer* with an introduction to the question on which the issue of new Statehood was ultimately to turn:

The convention to form a constitution for a new State out of the territory of the Commonwealth of Virginia meets to-day in this city. It is one of the most important bodies ever convened in any State of this Union. Its action will possess a national interest. Its assemblage marks an era in the history of the great rebellion. It meets in response to the all but unanimous call of the loyal people of more than thirty-nine counties of Western Virginia.

NO, THANK YOU!

There had been some newspaper talk about a general dismemberment of Virginia, the contemplated transfer of Accomac and Northampton Counties to the State of Maryland, and the suggestion that such a partition might throw the Valley to the new State to be formed west of the mountains. Touching this, the editor continues:

For our part, we hope to escape the affliction of being united to the Valley—notwithstanding the many loyal people that are there and the two or three loyal counties that have voted to come with us. The greatest portion of the Valley is as antagonistic to the West as ever was the Tide-water region. We want a homogeneous State. Such we never could have united

to the Valley. Negroes are their staple. They are not ours. We want to get clear of negroes. The Valley does not. We want in a few years to become a free State. If, however, the wish shall become anyways general among the people of the Valley, when this rebellion shall have been put down, to join us, they can do so by adopting the free-state policy which the West will have originated. In this way only, and with this understanding only, would their acquisition be of any benefit. We do not wish to be connected any longer with the miserable one-ideal negro policy that has cursed us all the days of our lives thus far. That policy has always been arrogant, selfish and absorbing. We have had enough of it. Let us have a natural State. Our interests lie eastward, not southward. It is the capital, skill and enterprise and hardy manhood of the Eastern States that are to develop Western Virginia; that are to build cities and towns, villages, factories and workshops, school-houses and churches, in places now almost unknown within our limits. We know that without foreign enterprise labor and capital, the city of Wheeling would have been nothing. We know that Western Virginia without these same helps will be nothing in a hundred years to come.

What we want, then, is a policy that will meet the case; and that policy is obviously and manifestly a free-State policy. Let feudalism and every species of middle-ageism and all sorts of anti-progress be kept out of our constitution from the start. Do not let us build up hindrances and stumbling-blocks for those who shall come after us. Our bitter experience ought to teach us compassion for our successors. Will we be equal to the emergency? We shall see within the next few weeks.