CHAPTER VI.

THE VIRGINIA CONVENTION—ITS CAPTURE BY THE CONSPIRACY.

THE UNION VICTORY.

The Convention thus brought together in midwinter, in the midst of an insurrection already embodied, had been chosen by a people of whom a large majority were opposed to secession. The Secessionists had all voted against referring the action of the Convention back to the people; the Unionists had all voted for such reference. The result of the election was deemed a great Union victory. Some wolves in sheep's clothing had slipped in; but still the Union control of the Convention was considered decisive. The choice for president of such a "strong and determined Union man" as old John Janney of Loudon, nominated by such another as George W. Summers of Kanawha, was assuring. This Convention was the rock against which the billows of secession would beat in vain!

"WILL YOU WALK INTO MY PARLOR?"

With his message to the Assembly January 7th, Governor Letcher had transmitted credentials of two ambassadors from Alabama whom he styled "commissioners to the sovereign State of Virginia." Among these budding sovereignties, ambassadors and commissioners plenipotentiary were cheap and abundant. Before the Convention had got...
fairly organized there was an irruption of these high-flying gentlemen from other Southern sovereignties—one each from Mississippi, Georgia and South Carolina—who had come, like the spider to the fly, to press upon the Convention the hospitality of the parlor of secession. It was a repetition of the stimulation applied to the Assembly. But the Convention did not seem so hot for revolt as the other body had been. They were not carried off their feet by the fervid appeals of the Cotton-State emissaries. First impressions of the Convention justified the popular expectation. There was an appearance of dignity and steadiness that augured well.

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE.

There were 152 delegates, of whom in the Presidential election the year before 85 had been for Bell, 35 for Douglas and only 32 for Breckenridge. On a superficial view, the body was considered "Union" by more than a safe majority. But it was not understood then as well as afterwards that Bell's candidacy was in the interest of Breckenridge and secession, and by no means all his supporters could be counted as supporters of the Union. Besides, this estimate did not take into account the new fact that men were about to be tried by a new standard. It had been easy to be "for for Union" in theory and profession; it remained to be seen how men would endure the test in practice. Were they prepared to stand up against friends, neighbors and fellow-citizens who were about to draw the sword? One of the surviving secession members recently classified the delegates as they stood at the opening as "One-fourth for immediate secession, one-fourth for the
Union unconditionally, one-half in favor of making a still further effort to bring about pacification and avoid disunion if possible.” Out of this conditional one-half, whose status was to be determined by circumstances, were to come the woes of Pandora. It was as true in that Convention as it ever was in the Bible that those who were not for were against. Any middle ground was impossible. The truth was like the negative of a photograph: it was there, not yet visible, but needed only to be developed. In that negative one-half were hidden enough Secessionists, when developed in the “dark-chamber” of secret sessions, to carry Virginia across the Rubicon. Nobody could be counted for the Union if not unconditionally. All others were Secessionists under pressure—when the time came; after due pretense of being overcome.

REFERENDUM.

February 20th, a committee reported the vote on the question of referring the action of the Convention to the people. Including all but sixteen counties the vote was announced as showing a majority of 52,857 in favor of “Reference.” Yet on the 5th the Enquirer had declared that not twenty “submission Unionists” had been elected. The next day it raised the number to thirty, and said that the “resistence men” had elected over a hundred. At this time it looked to the superficial observer as if the Enquirer were wide of the mark.

CONFIDENCE AMONG THE CONSPIRATORS.

But while the great body of the Convention were ostentatiously for the Union, the avowed Secessionists were in no wise dismayed, and they were busy as moles working
under ground. By and by, some of the "Union" members began to show the quality of their professions. But before particularizing, let us note some almost prophetic words which had appeared in the *Clarksburg Guard* just at the opening of the year, before the meeting of the Assembly which called the Convention:

**A LIFTED CURTAIN.**

From numerous articles published in the newspapers—evidently by disunionists—it is believed that a strong effort will be made in the approaching session of the Legislature to induce that body to authorize the call of a convention for the purpose, pretingedly, of determining what course Virginia shall pursue, or what position she will assume, in the present alarming state of affairs existing in the country; and it is believed that the movers of this scheme hope and expect, by the handicraft workmanship of their many dextrous and never-tiring wire-workers and tricksters, to be enabled in the building up of this convention to secure and to mix in its body a majority of members favorable to disunion; and then to decide in favor of disunion and proceed to make the necessary provision for the appointment of vigilance committees and minute-men (another name for Jacobin clubs) in every county and magisterial district in the State, to be set to work in every corner, and to work openly in appearance but secretly as spies; to use all means, whether fair or foul, to inflame the public mind, to excite and arouse the worst and most depraved portion of the population, like the Yancy vigilance committees. And no doubt they expect with this machinery to easily drag Virginia into revolution whether her people are willing or not, if it can be done in no other way.

This was written by John J. Davis, of Clarksburg, a young lawyer, who was in the May Convention, in the June Convention and House of Delegates of the restored government, and afterwards in Congress. The attention of Mr. Carlile was caught by the article, from which the
foregoing is but a brief extract, and he obtained from the 
editor of the paper, Cyrus Ringler, the name of the writer, 
sought him out and made his acquaintance. The history 
of the Convention shows how well the programme here 
forecast was carried out.

NO COERCION.

To understand how the catastrophe involved in the 
secession of Virginia could become possible, we need to 
understand the special conditions which constituted the 
weakness of "Border-State" Unionism, now in Virginia 
approaching the ordeal of fire.

Va.—10
The Unionism of the so-called Border-States was a tenderer plant than the variety grown farther north. Conditions of soil and atmosphere were different; and there had been a system of culture which made the plant less hardy than if it had been left to a natural growth. For years the educators had been quietly busy, in the press and from the hustings, inculcating the dictum that while the "Union and the Constitution" must be preserved, there must under no circumstances be any employment of force to that end. It was a sort of political "Christian science." There must be no administration of remedies no matter how desperate the case. The preachers of this gospel, professing to be Unionists were of the variety that believed in the virtues of the "Crittenden compromise;" that thought the rights of the South needed guaranties, and that the Border-States were in position to exact them in their character of intermediate between the two extremes.

When the application of Carlile and Willey, senators-elect from Restored Virginia, was under discussion in the Senate July 13, 1861, Ten Eyck of New Jersey asked Powell of Kentucky why Kentucky had not come to the rescue of the government when the call was made for 75,000 men? Powell replied that Kentucky believed the call was for the "subjugation" of the Southern States. Kentucky had assumed a position of "neutrality" and he hoped would be able to maintain it. Ten Eyck rejoined that, in the language of Kentucky's own son, General Rousseau, "neutrality is treason." There could be no neutrality in such an issue as confronted the country. "Whoever is not for the government," he said, "is against it." Douglas'
last words at Chicago were: "There can be no neutrality in this war; only patriots or traitors."

Mr. Lincoln let the light of truth into this border-State fallacy in his message to Congress in July, 1861:

In the Border States, so-called—the Middle States—there are those who favor a policy which they call armed neutrality; that is the arming of those States to prevent the Union forces passing one way or the Disunion the other over their soil. This would be disunion completed. Figuratively speaking, it would be the building of an impassable wall along the line of separation; and yet not quite an impassable one, for under the guise of neutrality it would tie the hands of the Union men and freely pass supplies from among them to the insurrectionists which it could not do as an open enemy. It would do for the Disunionists that which of all things they most desire—feed them well and give them disunion without a struggle of their own.

Under all this protest against "coercion" and this pretense of neutrality on the part of the Border-State "Union" men, it was continually assumed that the claim of the State to the citizen's "allegiance" took precedence over that of the United States; and there was a tacit assumption also that the general government was, in some sort, an aggressor and trespasser on the "reserved rights" of the States; constituting a grievance and conceding ground claimed by the Secessionists. But none attempted to define, in the words of Jackson, "the acts so plainly unconstitutional and so intolerably oppressive to them" as to justify the theory of government oppression.

Thus had the ground been prepared in Virginia to make it easy "to mix in" the Convention enough "no-coercion" Unionists to fatally "dope" that body when the crisis preparing for them had to be met.
In this matter of "coercion" the Richmond conspirators were careful not to take their own medicine. They did not hesitate a moment to coerce the people of Virginia into the Southern Confederacy the instant their plot was ripe for it. Even the President of the United States, with one foot in the grave and the other on the brink of infamy, could find no warrant in the Constitution for the "coercion of a State." He could have found abundant warrant for the coercion of rebels within a State if he had wanted to. His attitude receives possible explanation from the fact (stated by McPherson) that after his death a lot of Confederate bonds were found among his papers.

GOING WITH THE STATE.

Standing alone, the bald fallacy of "State sovereignty" could not have captured Virginia or her Convention, for the large preponderance of sentiment in the State was against it. It was the false standard of State pride to which the plea of "no coercion" successfully appealed; and it was not every man who could find courage to reject the dogma that he must "go with his State." Virginia Whigs had long been the followers of Henry Clay, who in the memorable debate over compromise measures in 1850 said:

If Kentucky to-morrow unfurls the banner of resistance unjustly, I will never fight under that banner. I owe a paramount allegiance to the whole Union: a subordinate one to my own State. When my State has cause for resistance, I will share her fortunes; but if she summons me to support her in any cause which is unjust against the Union, never will I engage with her in such a cause.
This had been the doctrine of Whigs in Virginia; but the insidious missionary work of the "no-coercion" propagandists had seduced large numbers of them from this attitude and prepared them to abandon it in the emergency the conspiracy was planning to produce.

TRAPPED.

That half of the Convention who were "Union" on conditions had drawn the line at measures of coercion; and it was this that paralyzed their loyalty when the crisis came. On the call for troops, they "gave way," as expressed by Mr. Summers in his Wheeling speech. It was this which brought old John Janney down from the chair to confirm with his signature the fatal ordinance which lighted the fires of the rebellion and to congratulate and commend Lee, who had been appointed to head the forces of revolt against that Union which had educated him, whose bread he had eaten, whose oath he violated, whose sword he dishonored in accepting the commission of rebellion. To this inexorable end were brought all who accepted the dictum that the government must not employ force to preserve its life. The woman who deliberates is not more surely lost than was the Unionist who in that day committed himself to the doctrine of no-coercion.

PAR NOBILE FRATRUM.

In this Convention the Northwest was especially disgraced by two members. One was Samuel Woods, of Barbour, who was the first of the "Union" delegates to show the cloven foot. Only eight days after the assembling, he
offered resolutions declaring that the allegiance of the citizen to his State was paramount; that Virginia recognized no right of coercion, that "any attempt to coerce was a declaration of war." The other was Leonard S. Hall, of Wetzel, who, the same day, moved to instruct the Committee on Federal Relations to report the constitution of the Confederate States as Virginia's ultimatum. When Woods had offered his no-coercion resolutions, he was eulogized by Wise, who was encouraged thereby to regard the Northwest as sounder than some were willing to believe. Hall was afraid it was not so sound as Governor Wise supposed. He himself was the only man in all that section who had been elected on the Crittenden proposition. There was, he assured them, no sounder States-rights people upon the face of the earth than the people of Wetzel. He proceeded to say he believed the State had a right to secede; that the Constitution was nothing more than a treaty between sovereignties. He was willing to present an ultimatum to run to the first of July, and "if Virginia is to go, let her go and take the Constitution with her."

A letter from Wetzel received in Richmond stated that nine out of ten who had voted for Hall supposed him a "good Union man," and considered themselves sold to the South through the influence of Charles W. Russell, who was recognized as Hall's political mentor. Mr. Porter, of Hancock, after his return from the Convention, said that "to have any influence in Richmond a man must talk and act like Hall of Wetzel, who said the people of Wetzel were in favor of the dissolution of the Union 'because there was an irrepressible conflict between free and slave labor.'"
Now, there were just seven slaves all told in Wetzel County; but for this specimen of philosophic statesmanship the Richmond folks presented Hall a gold-headed cane. It was inscribed: 'Presented to L. S. Hall, of Wetzel, for his vindication of the honor of Virginia.'"

Mr. Woods, while emulating Hall's example of subservience to secession, seems to have been a man of more sense, with also a greater capacity for evil. He was the first signer of the secret circular sent out to the "Jacobin Clubs," or "minute men," summoning the mob to Richmond to overawe the Convention when they were getting ready to force the passage of the ordinance of secession. Concerning this man Woods, a correspondent of the Indianapolis Journal wrote from Phillippa in December, 1861:

At this place lived the notorious Woods, who was elected as a Union delegate to the Richmond Convention and there, it is said, was the first to move for secession; and when he returned made a speech to the people, and especially to the women, giving utterance to the basest falsehoods concerning the designs of the Northern Army upon the defenseless. And when the Federal cannon, on the 2nd of June I believe it was, from an adjacent hill poured their thundering missiles upon the rebel army then in town, he leaped upon his horse and with the armed rebels scampered away. On his starting, his wife alarmed by his reports concerning the Northerners, asked what she should do? "O," he said, "I guess they will not molest you." And strange to say, she and her children have remained in the vicinity until the present time, unmolested!

A correspondent of the Wheeling Intelligencer, writing in June, 1861, says that when Woods ran away from Phillippa, he carried with him the assets of the Bank of Phillippa, "leaving only the vault behind." This writer
says Woods went to Richmond as a Union man, elected over an avowed Secessionist, although the circular he addressed to the people of Barbour was "covert disunion masked in the livery of heaven."

A LOOKER ON IN VIENNA.

The editor of the Intelligencer, Mr. Campbell, spent some time in Richmond as a "looker on in Vienna." Hall, of Wetzel, had caught his attention and had received some notice, more polite than flattering, in letters to his paper. He had said the member from Wetzel was misrepresenting his people in the demonstrations he was making in favor of secession. Hall, eager to make the most of any kind of notice however unflattering, was so inflated with this he got up in the Convention for a personal explanation. In the course of it he said Clemens and Hubbard, of Ohio County, had been elected on a platform dictated by the editor of the "Intelliger." This brought the Hon. Sherrard to his feet with a fine show of indignation over Hall's imputation that he was "disloyal to the institutions of Virginia." Hubbard followed in a similar vein, quoting his address prior to the election. He had come to the Convention "as a Virginian—a Virginian from the Chesapeake to the Ohio—a Virginian on both sides of the James River." This was the correct thing for politicians in Virginia to do at that time. If one did not want to be "suspect" (as they used to say in France under Robespierre) he must on all fitting occasions avow his loyalty to Virginia and its negro institution. It is a surprise that so
good a man as Chester Hubbard should have evinced this sensitiveness, but Clemens’ disclaimer was quite in keeping with his usual political attitude.

NORTHWESTERN DEVOTION TO RICHMOND.

Willey was even more solicitous about Eastern approbation than most of his Western colleagues. Following the speech made by Hall, of Wetzel, March 21st, vindicating the people of Wetzel against the suspicion of “disloyalty to Virginia,” Mr. Willey got the floor and addressed the Convention at some length in vindication of the Northwest generally against “intimations and insinuations prejudicial to the character of that section for her loyalty to the institutions of Virginia—going to credit the idea that there is a want of loyalty in the Northwestern section of the State to the institutions of the State—all our institutions.” Towards the conclusion of his remarks, Mr. Willey put the Northwest into the attitude described in the following passage:

When the last resort must come—when the proper appeal to the law and the constitution has failed to redress the grievances of the East—when her oppressions are intolerable—I tell you the Northwest will send you 10,000 men, with hearts as brave and arms as strong as ever bore the banner of freemen; and they will rally to her support and seize by violence, if you see proper to call it so, or rescue by revolution, what we could not get by means of law. We are with the gentleman from Princess Anne (Wise) in that regard. We do not always understand what is meant by the right of secession, we do not understand what is meant by the right of revolution, but when the proper cause arises there are men in West Virginia who will stand by the right to the last extremity.
It is interesting, in view of later events, to note through Editor Campbell's letters the roseate glow of early confidence in the Unionism of the Convention, and how that glow faded away later into soberer and finally somber colors. He wrote the day after the Convention met, referring to certain avowed Secessionists in the East: "They see now pretty plainly that there is going to be no secession of this State. * * * And, more than all, they see that the Western members are resolving that the State shall not be put to all the expense of this Convention without knowing where it and kindred expenses are to come from. It is in the air that the grand move so long talked of for an ad valorem tax is going to be made. This, as General Jackson, of Wood, says, will be turning the Convention to account, and, if the point is gained, will relieve the West of nearly one million dollars in taxation which she now has to pay more than she ought. * * * "Certainly," said one of the Northwestern members about it, the East does not expect that we of the West are going to have our heart's-blood wrung out of us by such taxation. * * * Indeed, it is the common subject of remark, and I have heard it a dozen times this day, that since the West was a West she has never evinced a tithe of the backbone which she does now."

Further along, Editor Campbell is "glad to hear that Ben. Wilson, of Harrison, and our old friend Alpheus F. Haymond, are right upon the vital question of Western interests and also upon the grand anti-secession resolve. I hear members also speak encouragingly of L. S. Hall."
Alas, that hopes so fair should prove so false! We have already noted the later aspects of the member from Wetzel. Only six days after this cheerful outlook was penned, we find Benjamin Wilson, of Harrison, elected on strong professions of Unionism, offering the following:

Resolved, That we, the people of Virginia, in Convention assembled, do adhere with patriotic devotion to the Union of these States, and that we will do so as long as the same can be perpetuated consistently with full security of all our constitutional rights and the maintenance of the equality of all the States.

Resolved, That it is inexpedient and improper for the general government to increase its forces at the forts and arsenals and dock-yards within the limits of Virginia, or to do any act looking to warlike preparations against the State.

It may be noted here as well as later that Mr. Wilson, while favoring secession, lacked the courage to vote for the ordinance, and was excused from voting on his own request. But he voted at home for the ratification of the ordinance, and made so little concealment of his secession sentiments that in June, 1861, he was arrested by the military authorities, along with James M. Jackson and others, at Clarksburg.

Mr. Haymond soon gave himself conspicuously to bringing forward declarations on the subject of ad valorem taxation. This gave him the appearance of looking vigilantly after Western interests. While he and other Western members were entertaining their constituents with this talk about amending the constitution so as to correct some of the iniquities from which the West had always suffered, the secession conspirators were busy as moles with the real business of the Convention, burrowing under the foundations of Virginia Unionism, getting ready to topple
the whole structure into the abyss of the Confederacy—which being done, what would it avail whether taxation were ad valorem or on the old basis?

**SYMPTOMATIC.**

Let us note here a few symptoms of the temper of the Convention as manifested from time to time. February 20, numerous resolutions were introduced generally expressing attachment to the Union, but denouncing "coercion." Six days later Mr. Goggin, while denying the right of secession, admitted a revolutionary remedy, and said wherever Virginia went he was "with her." March 2d Mr. Goode, of Bedford, offered a resolution reciting that the powers delegated to the general government had been perverted to the injury of Virginia; and as the Crittenden resolutions had been rejected by the North, every consideration required Virginia to secede. March 5th, Mr. Harvie offered a resolution requesting the Legislature to make appropriations to resist the attempt of the Federal authorities to enforce the laws in the seceded States.

**LOOKS SERIOUS.**

But the first real shock to the complacency of the Union men in and about the Convention came from a resolution offered by Flournoy—Know-Nothing candidate for Governor against Wise in 1855. It was as follows:

*Resolved,* That whilst Virginia has a high appreciation of the blessings of the Union, and would do much and forbear much to perpetuate them, yet it feels itself bound to declare that an identity of interest and wrongs with the seceded States of the
South would, in case of an attempted coercion by the Federal
government, demand and receive the interposition of all her
military strength in resisting such aggression.

This went to the Committee on Federal Relations; and Mr. Willey, of that committee, confided to Editor Campbell that matters in the committee were not encouraging, and that the Flournoy resolution had given the committee a somber view of possible danger.

THE Secession MACHINE.

The chief instrumentality in the Convention for befogging the "no-coercion" Union members and committing them to secession was the Committee on Federal Relations, upon which the Unionists had been allowed by President Janney only seven members out of the twenty-one. On this committee the West had only four: William McComas, of Cabell; Samuel Price, of Greenbrier; Waitman T. Willey, of Monongalia, and John J. Jackson, of Wood. This committee undertook to name and shape conditions upon which Virginia would remain in the Union. In its composition, through some inexplicable means, President Janney had been led to compose it wholly in the interest of secession. It was but one instance of many—though an amazing one—in which the half-hearted Unionists of the Convention permitted their adversaries to seize and control the machinery of the Convention. The conditions formulated by this committee for the restraint of the United States government were, of course, impossible conditions, and were intended so to be; yet conditions which, once assented to by a member and rejected by the Federal
authorities, drove him to the logical alternative of supporting secession. This was the study and purpose of the conspiracy; and the propositions brought forward by this committee were exploited and discussed day after day with the two-fold purpose of confusing and inoculating members known to be vulnerable and of occupying the time till the progress of events and the consummation of plans should bring them to the crisis when the conspirators were ready to strike. This committee brought in a report March 9th—rather three reports. The majority embodied the suggestion that the eight slave-holding States which had not yet seceded be requested to appoint commissioners to a conference to be held at Frankfort, Kentucky, in May; and appended was a proposed amendment to the national Constitution covering the substance of the points agreed on by the Peace Conference. Messrs. Harvey, Montague and Williams reported in favor of immediate secession. The Convention was not ready for this. Mr. Wise disented from both reports, differing from the majority in details but looking in the same direction. But none of the propositions received the assent of the Convention. It was not expected they would. They were but time-servers.

A SIGNIFICANT VOTE.

One of the declarations reported by the committee will illustrate their character and purpose. It was declared that the people of Virginia would "expect, as an indispensable condition that a pacific policy be adopted towards the seceded States, and that no attempt be made to subject them to the Federal authority, nor to reinforce the forts now in possession of the military forces of the United
States, or recapture forts, arsenals or other property of the United States within their limits, nor to exact the payment of imposts upon their commerce."

Mr. Carlile moved to strike out the language quoted. His motion received but 17 votes out of 121 cast. This motion covered the whole vital issue, and the vote showed that Virginia was lost to the Union. It is difficult to see how any one could mistake the significance of this expression and suppose after that there was a Union majority in that body on which any dependence could be placed. Those who voted for Mr. Carlile's motion were: Brown, Burdett, Burley, Carlile, Carter, Conrad, Dent, Early, Hubbard, John N. Hughes, Lewis, Moore, Patrick, Porter, Sharp, C. J. Stuart and Tarr. Willey and Alph. Haymond voted against.

It appears that early in the session Mr. Carlile fell in with the outcry against the right of the government to "coerce" a State, whether in earnest or from politic motives is not clear. February 16th he offered a resolution declaring that since the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Chisholm vs. the State of Georgia, and the adoption of the XIth amendment, he was "at a loss to understand how the impression that the Federal government possesses power to coerce a State had obtained credence." But Carlile was loyal at heart and recognized the right of the government to enforce its laws everywhere. In a speech delivered March 7th, he declared it had the right to collect the duties in the seceded States as in all others; and the motion just noticed, to strike out of the Federal Relations report a contrary declaration, confirms this attitude.
March 27th the committee brought in a substitute for their first report, proposing that the constitutional amendment should be submitted to the States for ratification or rejection; and if not ratified before the first Monday of October following, Virginia should then “resume” her sovereignty. This proposition to hang a threat over the country made even less impression. The element that had taken direction of the Convention did not look to any schemes involving such long delays. Like the member from Isle of Wight in the Assembly, they were for “action” just as quick as they could prepare to precipitate it. The discussion on the committee’s report went on for several weeks, and served its purpose in occupying the time and in preparing members for more energetic action.

In the discussion of the ninth resolution of the report April 6th, Mr. Bouldin offered a substitute declaring the independence of the seceded States should be acknowledged without delay. This was rejected by only three majority; but on the 9th Wise offered a substitute for the tenth resolution to the effect that Virginia recognizes the independence of the seceded States, and this was adopted by 128 to 20.

THE FEVER RISES.

After the inauguration of President Lincoln, the excitement in and around the Convention increased like a fever as the night draws nigh. The crisis was approaching and events setting towards the catastrophe with accelerated speed. The galleries of the Convention were daily crowded
and popular demonstrations in the streets, intended to exert pressure on the Convention, increased in numbers and energy.

**THE MOB GIVES VOICE.**

Referring to Carlile’s speech of March 7th, for which he was hissed as he was leaving the Convention accompanied by two ladies, Marshall M. Dent, member from Monongalia, wrote to his paper, the Morgantown Star, that the speech “struck the secessionists like a thunderbolt and was decidedly the boldest effort of the session.” Mr. Dent adds the following incident as showing the temper of the Richmond populace even at that time:

This afternoon a crowd assembled at the old market and taking down a Union flag which had been floating there for many days, hoisted in its stead, amidst the cheers of the crowd, the rattlesnake flag. Speeches were made by several persons, among whom was Charles Irving, Mr. Clemens’ second in the duel with Wise. In the course of his remarks Irving impressed upon the people that resistance was not enough; that the true policy was to drive the Convention out of the city at the point of the bayonet. Scarcely had Mr. Irving uttered these words when the crowd shouted “That’s right! That’s right! Drive them out!” and these cries were followed by deafening cheers.

About this time it was reported that O. Jennings Wise had told a member of the Convention that if they did not pass an ordinance of secession they ought to be driven from the hall at the point of the bayonet. Hon. William G. Brown, member from Preston, offered resolutions to request the Virginia senators to resign. Next morning he was abused by the Richmond Examiner and denounced as a relative of “old John Brown.”
Conspiracy, which the poet feigned is ashamed even to "show its dangerous brow by night, when evils are most free," now threw off all disguises and came out into open day. The junta engaged a public hall (Metropolitan Hall), and held daily sessions, though under lock and key, organizing means of intimidating the Convention and forcing it to obey their will. John F. Lewis, in his testimony before the Joint Committee on Reconstruction (elsewhere quoted), makes this mention of this lawless body:

At the same time a party of Secessionists met together at Richmond—a self-constituted convention—for the purpose of forcing this Convention to pass an ordinance of secession or of turning them out of doors and deposing Governor Letcher. And I believe that if it had not been for the fear of that body the ordinance of secession could not have been passed. A large portion of the people of Virginia at that time were utterly opposed to the passage of an ordinance of secession.

John Goode, a member of the Convention from Bedford County, who became Solicitor General of the United States government under President Cleveland, printed in the Washington, D. C., Conservative Magazine, in its issue for February, 1900, a review of the history of this Virginia Convention. In the course of his article he makes the following reference to these conspirators sitting in Metropolitan Hall:

For several days prior to the action of the Convention on the 17th, there had been a convention of the people in session at Metropolitan Hall, in the city of Richmond. They had come from all parts of the State to make known the public demand for decisive action without further delay.
The nature of this "public demand" receives illustration from the following secret circular sent out from Richmond early in April:

**SUMMONING THE MOB.**

Your presence is requested at Richmond on the 16th day of April, 1861, to consult with friends of Southern rights as to the course which Virginia should pursue in the present emergency. Please bring with you or send a full delegation of true and reliable men from your county and if convenient aid the same object in the surrounding counties. On arrival at Richmond report to

**Samuel Woods, Barbour.**
**John R. Chambliss, Greenville.**
**Charles F. Collier, Petersburg.**
**John A. Harman, Augusta.**
**Henry A. Wise, Princess Anne.**
**John T. Anderson, Botetourt.**
**William F. Gordon, Albemarle.**
**Thos. Jeff. Randolph, Albemarle.**
**James W. Sheffey, Smyth.**

Woods was the only Western member who had the hardihood to father this call upon the mob. Gordon was Clerk of the House of Delegates. The time fixed was the day before that on which the ordinance was finally passed. A militia muster had been appointed for the same day as a part of the programme for terrorizing the Convention. Wise, the violent, is one of the signers of this paper, as befits him.

**CORRUPTING THE CONVENTION.**

For some time the conspiracy had been making swift progress. A correspondent wrote the *Philadelphia Press* from Washington the latter days of March that the secession conspirators had sent agents all through Virginia to
promote secession; that every kind of offer had been made to leading Union men in the Convention to unite in a coup d'état, and "some in whom great confidence had been placed have yielded to these inducements." Proffers had been made to make Norfolk the great port of the Southern Confederacy; "and an organized plan is undoubtedly on foot," added the writer, "to seize Fortress Monroe." It was not generally known but early in the year the garrison in Fortress Monroe had been reduced to two companies. A Washington despatch to a New York paper April 1st regarding the Virginia Convention, said: "All information agrees in representing that a decided reaction has occurred and that the Union sentiment is rapidly losing ground in all parts of the State which have hitherto been opposed to the revolutionary movement in any form." This was more apparent than real, the appearance being created by the great activity of secession emissaries throughout the State.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN TRIES TO GET IN TOUCH.

Before coming to the culmination, let us notice with some particularity an incident connecting with the Convention so interesting and important that no account of that body would be complete without it. This was the effort made by President Lincoln to get before the Union element in the Convention a proposition that they adjourn the Convention and go home, he on his part undertaking to remove the casus belli in Charleston Harbor by the evacuation of Sumter. President Lincoln clearly connecting the peril of having this Convention in session with the peril in Charleston Harbor, hoped to get rid of both at one stroke.
The facts were brought out in the investigation made at Washington by the Joint Committee on Reconstruction in February, 1866, in the testimony given by John F. Lewis, a member of the Convention from Rockingham County; that given by John B. Baldwin, a member from Augusta County, and that by John Minor Botts.

Mr. Lewis was one of the few Unionists in the East who never struck their colors. He voted against the ordinance of secession and was the only member east of the Alleghenies who did not sign it. He was threatened with hanging, and at one time thought the threat might be executed. Note what Mr. McGrew says about him in a subsequent chapter.

Baldwin went to the Convention as a Union man and kept up his professions till the ordinance had passed. He then signed it and was given a commission in the Confederate military service, was sent to the Confederate Congress, in which he occupied a seat throughout the war and at the same time, by special dispensation held a commission as Colonel. It will appear in the course of what is to be related that he had earned these distinctions.

"AN ORIGINAL UNION MAN."

When he testified, being asked if he was "an original Union man," he replied: "The most thorough-going I ever knew." In the course of his testimony he said he had never believed in the right of secession, didn't believe in it now; "always looked upon the whole thing as an absurdity and humbug. I always believed," he said, "as a question of law, right and power, the Government had a
right to hang Jeff Davis and me too. I was not a Seces­sionist,” he added; “I was a rebel.” Since when, the committee ought to have asked him? When he was posing as such a “thorough-going” Union man?

Mr. Botts was one of the Unionists whose Unionism would wash; the quality of his loyalty, like the quality of mercy, was “not strained.”

TREACHERY OF GEORGE W. SUMMERS.

From the testimony of these three appear the follow­ing facts. About the beginning of April President Lin­coln sent a messenger to George W. Summers to ask him to come to Washington as he had an important matter to communicate; requesting him, further, if he could not come to send some trustworthy Union man in his place. Mr. Lincoln had once been associated with Summers in Congress and knew him as perhaps the ablest man in pub­lic life in Virginia and as the reputed champion of the Union cause in the Convention. Mr. Summers did not go; nor did he make any reply to Mr. Lincoln’s message.

SENDS A TRAITOR TO THE PRESIDENT.

After some delay he sent John B. Baldwin; who went without any credentials from Summers, reached Wash­ington April 4th, presented himself to Mr. Seward as having come from Mr. Summers in response to the President’s message to him; was accompanied by Mr. Seward to the White House and introduced in a whisper to President Lincoln, who was surrounded by visitors, simply as “Mr. Baldwin of the Virginia Convention.” The President
knowing Mr. Baldwin must have come from Summers and not doubting his sympathy with the object sought, received him cordially, and taking him into a private apartment locked the door against possible intrusion.

STORY TOLD BY BALDWIN.

According to Mr. Baldwin's statement, the first thing the President said to him was: "Mr. Baldwin, I am afraid you have come too late; I wish you could have been here three or four days ago." Then he said: "Why do you not adjourn the Virginia Convention?" "Adjourn it?" said Mr. Baldwin. "How? Do you mean sine die?" "Yes," said the President, "sine die. Why do you not adjourn it? It is a standing menace to me which embarrases me very much." Mr. Baldwin did not claim to quote the precise language.

COULDN'T THINK OF IT.

Mr. Baldwin expressed his surprise. "The Virginia Convention," he said, "is in the hands of Union men; we have in it a clear and controlling majority of nearly three to one; we are controlling it for conservative results; we can do it with perfect certainty if you will uphold our hands by a conservative policy here. I do not understand why you want a body thus in the hands of Union men to be dispersed, or why you should look upon their sessions as in any respect a menace to you; we regard ourselves as co-operating with you in the objects which you profess to seek. Besides, if we were to adjourn sine die, leaving these questions unsettled, it would place the Union men
of Virginia in the attitude of confessing an inability to meet the occasion; the result would be that another Convention would be called as soon as the Legislature could be put through for the purpose, * * * and the Union men of Virginia could not with proper self-respect offer themselves as members of that Convention, having had the full control of one and having adjourned without having brought about any sort of settlement of the troubles upon us.

"And, sir, it is but right for me to say one thing to you, that the Union men of Virginia, of whom I am one, would not be willing to adjourn that Convention until we either effect some settlement of this matter or ascertain that it cannot be done."

Mr. Baldwin proceeded expansively to tell the Committee what he had said to Mr. Lincoln. The Chairman at length asked him what plan he had proposed for such a settlement. Mr. Baldwin's plan had been a conciliatory proclamation and a call for a National Convention "to come together and settle this thing."

He said the President had "said something about the withdrawal of the troops from Sumter on the ground of military necessity;" that he had replied that would never do, that if he had intended to hold the Fort he ought to have strengthened it and made it impregnable; that to hold it in the present condition of the force there was "to invite assault." "Go upon higher ground," said Mr. Baldwin. "The better ground is to make a concession of an asserted right in the interest of peace." * * * "If you do not take this course, if there is a gun fired at Sumter—I do not care on which side it is fired—as sure as there is a
God in heaven, the thing is gone! Virginia herself, strong as the Union majority in the Convention is now, will be out in forty-eight hours." * * * "And I wish to say to you, Mr. President, with all the solemnity that I can possibly summon, that if you intend to do anything to settle this matter, you must do it promptly. I think another fortnight will be too late."

All this according to Mr. Baldwin, who seemed to remember voluminously what he had said to the President but had a very meager recollection of what the President had said to him.

Being asked if Mr. Lincoln had made "no pledge, no offer, no promise of any sort," Mr. Baldwin replied: "I was about to state that I have reason to believe that Mr. Lincoln has himself given an account of this conversation which has been understood—but I am sure misunderstood—by the persons to whom he talked as giving the representation of it that he had offered to me that if the Virginia Convention would adjourn sine die he would withdraw the troops from Sumter and Pickens. I am as clear in my recollection as it is possible to be under the circumstances that he made no such suggestion, as I understood it, and said nothing from which I could infer it."

Later Mr. Baldwin was asked this question and gave the answer quoted:

*Question.*—You think you cannot be mistaken when you say that Mr. Lincoln did not assure you in any form that it was his purpose to withdraw the garrison from Sumter and Pickens at that time?

*Answer.*—Of course, I would not be willing to say if I heard that Mr. Lincoln had given a different representation of it that it was impossible he should have done so. I have no reason to
believe that Mr. Lincoln was a man capable of intentional misrepresentation in a matter of that sort; therefore, I would not, of course, undertake to say that it was impossible he could have intended to convey that impression. If I were certified Mr. Lincoln had said he intended to give me that impression, I should be bound to concede it, although at the same time I would be bound to say that the idea never occurred to me and that when I first heard that such an idea had been suggested, I was as much surprised as I was ever in my life.

WHAT LINCOLN TOLD BOTTs.

April 15, 1866, five days after the examination of Mr. Baldwin, Hon. John Minor Botts was examined by the Committee. Regarding the Summers-Baldwin episode, he stated that April 7, 1861, Sunday, he was in Washington and received a note from President Lincoln inviting him to call. He spent the evening, from seven to eleven, with Mr. Lincoln, and in the course of the conversation the President told him of his message to Summers and his interview with Baldwin. As Mr. Botts repeated to the Committee what Mr. Lincoln had told him, the President's first words to Mr. Baldwin were: "Ah, Mr. Baldwin, why did you not come here sooner? I have been waiting and expecting some of you gentlemen of the Convention to come to me for more than a week past. I had a most important proposition to make to you. I am afraid you have come too late. However, I will make the proposition now." Mr. Lincoln then recited the situation in Charleston Harbor—Anderson there with eighty men and provisions only till a certain date near at hand. He had sent a messenger to Governor Pickens asking him to allow Major Anderson to buy his marketing in Charleston, or if he objected to men from Sumter landing, that he would have
marketing sent to the Fort. In this case he would not try to provision the Fort; otherwise he would send an un­armed ship with provisions, accompanied by an armed fleet, the fleet not to enter the harbor unless the provision vessel should be fired on; but if it were, to enter the harbor and protect it. "Now, Mr. Baldwin," said Mr. Lincoln, "that fleet is lying in New York Harbor and will be ready to sail this afternoon at five o'clock; and although I fear it is almost too late yet I will submit, any way, the proposition I intended when I sent for Mr. Summers. Your Convention has been sitting now nearly two months and all they have done has been to shake the rod over my head. You have recently taken a vote in the Convention on the right of secession, which was rejected by 90 to 45, a majority of two-thirds, showing the strength of the Union party in that Convention; and if you will go back to Richmond and get that majority to adjourn and go home without passing an ordinance of secession, so anxious am I for the preservation of the peace and to save Virginia and other border States from going out, I will take the responsibility of evacuating Fort Sumter and take the chance of negotiating with the Cotton States which have already gone out."

"Well," said Mr. Botts, "how did Mr. Baldwin receive that proposition?"

Raising his hands, Mr. Lincoln replied: "He would not listen to it for a moment; he hardly treated me with civility. He asked me what I meant by an adjournment. Did I mean an adjournment sine die? 'Why, of course, Mr. Baldwin, I mean an adjournment sine die. I don't
mean to assume such a responsibility as that of surrendering that Fort to the people of Charleston upon your adjournment and then for you to return in a week or ten days and pass your ordinance after I have given up the Fort.'"

Mr. Botts felt very much incensed that Mr. Baldwin should have rejected such a proposition, and asked if the President would authorize him to make that proposition to the Union men of the Convention? He would guarantee with his head that they would adopt it.

"Oh," said Mr. Lincoln, "it is too late; the fleet has sailed and I have no means of communicating with it."

Mr. Botts then asked if he might mention the circumstances for the effect on public opinion in Virginia and elsewhere? "Not just now, Botts; later you may," replied the President.

Botts Tells Lewis.

Mr. Botts returned to Richmond on the 15th; and on the evening of the 16th—his house being a sort of headquarters for the Unionists of his kind—a number of gentlemen were there, among them John F. Lewis, and to him he mentioned, in a rather private way, the circumstances of his interview with President Lincoln about Mr. Baldwin's visit, Mr. Lincoln's proposition and Mr. Baldwin's rejection of it. He asked Lewis if he had heard anything of this. Mr. Lewis was surprised. He said he had not heard a word, and did not believe it. "I would not," he said, "believe any man that I was not entirely familiar with who would charge that John B. Baldwin had taken
upon himself such a responsibility as to have rejected that proposition or to have withheld it from his Union colleagues in the Convention, who would most gladly have adopted it; and if you do not object I would like to ask Mr. Baldwin about it.”

“So far from my objecting,” replied Botts, “I prefer that you would ask him, as you have intimated a doubt as to the veracity of Mr. Lincoln.”

Next morning before Mr. Botts was out of bed, Lewis came to his room and told him he had seen Baldwin, who had acknowledged to him that the proposition was made, and that upon Lewis telling him he felt very much concerned that he should have taken such a responsibility upon himself, Baldwin had said he would like to see Botts and make “an explanation on the subject and the reason why he had rejected it.” Further, Lewis added that Mr. Baldwin had consented to come up there with him immediately after breakfast.

Soon after Mr. Botts’ breakfast, Lewis and Baldwin were announced. Mr. Botts went into the front room and Mr. Lewis said, in the presence of Mr. Baldwin: “Well, Mr. Botts, Mr. Baldwin has come up here to make some explanation to you about the circumstances connected with his conversation with Mr. Lincoln and why he declined to accept the proposition.”

“Well,” said Botts, “Mr. Baldwin, is it true that Mr. Lincoln did propose to you that if the Convention would adjourn and go home without passing an ordinance, he would evacuate Fort Sumter?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Baldwin, “he did.”
“My God,” said Botts, “Why did you reject such a proposition as that?”

The only answer Mr. Baldwin made was by taking out his watch and saying: “It only wants twenty minutes of the hour of meeting of the Convention, when a most important vote is to be taken” (which Mr. Botts knew to be the vote on the ordinance of secession). “I am obliged to be there punctually at the hour and I have not time to make the explanation I desire, but I will avail myself of the earliest opportunity to make a full explanation of the whole of it.”

“From that time to this,” adds Mr. Botts, “I have not laid my eyes on Mr. Baldwin, nor have I heard any explanation from him, nor have I had directly any communication from him.”

Mr. Botts further stated in his testimony that Governor Peirpoint, and he thought one other gentleman, whose name he could not recall, had told him Mr. Lincoln had made the same statements to them as to him regarding his interview with Mr. Baldwin. Peirpoint said Mr. Lincoln had told him Baldwin had demanded also the evacuation of Fortress Monroe.

LEWIS CONFIRMS BOTTS.

Mr. Botts’ account of this matter is confirmed by the testimony of John F. Lewis, taken by the Committee before either of the others, on the 7th of February.

The following is a part of Mr. Lewis’ statement:

I went to the house of John Minor Botts, in Richmond, on the 16th of April, 1861, and he informed me he had been in Washington a few days before and had had an interview with Mr.
Lincoln, in which interview Mr. Lincoln informed him that he had sent a special messenger to Richmond for George W. Summers to come to Washington; and in the event of his not being able to come, to send some reliable Union man to consult with him on important matters. Mr. Summers from some cause or other did not go but sent John B. Baldwin, of Augusta County, Virginia. Mr. Lincoln informed Mr. Botts that he had made this proposition to Colonel Baldwin: that if that Convention would adjourn without passing an ordinance of secession, he (Mr. Lincoln) would take the responsibility of withdrawing the troops from Fort Sumter. Colonel Baldwin declined to accede to it, and no such proposition was ever made or communicated to the Convention. Next morning, I took Colonel Baldwin to the house of Mr. Botts, who told him he was informed such an interview had taken place. Colonel Baldwin did not deny it. In answer to Mr. Botts' question, how in the name of God he could take the responsibility of withholding the knowledge of such an interview from the Convention, Colonel Baldwin remarked that it was then near the hour for the meeting of the Convention, and he was compelled to be there, but would see him again. No such communication was ever made to the best of my knowledge and belief to any large portion even of the members of the Convention, and a large number of them are to this day ignorant of the fact.

ONLY THREE MEN IN RICHMOND KNEW.

Mr. Lewis' colleague in the Convention, who roomed with him, was Algernon S. Gray, an intimate friend of Baldwin. Mr. Lewis told Botts that the night of the 16th of April after his return from Botts' house, he mentioned to Mr. Gray Baldwin's visit to the President, the proposition made to him by Mr. Lincoln and his rejection of it. He says Mr. Gray exhibited extraordinary surprise. "Where in the world did you get that from?" he said springing out of bed. Mr. Lewis replied that Mr. Botts had just returned from Washington where the facts had
been communicated to him by the President, and Botts had told him that night. Mr. Gray replied: "I did not suppose there were more than three men in the city of Richmond who knew of it." This could have but one possible meaning—that Summers, Baldwin and Gray were the three.

Mr. Lincoln did not communicate the matter to the cabinet or the public, doubtless feeling deeply chagrined that in taking so great a responsibility he had met with treachery and failure.

**PEACE OR WAR?**

Sometime before this the Convention appointed a committee to wait on President Lincoln to ask what were his intentions toward the seceded States. William Ballard Preston, who later offered the ordinance of secession, "Sandy Stuart," who had been an old whig and had tried to be a Unionist, and George W. Randolph, who had beaten Botts for the Convention and became the Confederate Secretary of War, were the committeemen. The committee were directed to ask the President "to communicate to this Convention the policy which the authorities of the Federal government intend to pursue in regard to the Confederate States." The preamble set forth that "the uncertainty in the public mind as to the policy the government intends to pursue towards the seceded States is extremely injurious to the commercial and industrial interests of the country."

Mr. Carlile, when the resolution was offered, moved to insert, as having an equally injurious uncertainty, "the
policy the seceded States intend to pursue towards the general government.” This was rejected, of course, as was also his further motion that a committee be appointed “to wait on the seceded States and report to the Convention what policy they intend to pursue towards the general government.” In opposing the resolution, General Jackson, of Wood, said that “under no circumstances would he or his constituents consent to relinquish the stars and stripes and join with South Carolina.” This declaration produced excitement amongst the conspirators. Montague of Middlesex followed, commenting upon “the singular declaration of the venerable gentleman from Wood.” He called upon Eastern men to take note of it.

WHAT LINCOLN TOLD THE COMMITTEE.

The committee presented themselves to Mr. Lincoln the day after the firing on Sumter, when they felt confident they would get the answer they wanted. It is not strange they got it. Mr. Lincoln referred them to his inaugural address as the best possible exposition of his purposes. “As I said then I now repeat,” he told them, “‘The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy and possess property and places belonging to the government and to collect the duties on imports; but beyond what is necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no use of force against or among the people anywhere.’ But,” he added, “if in the pursuit of a purpose to drive the United States authorities from these places (military posts and property) an unprovoked assault has been made on Fort Sumter, I shall hold myself at liberty to repossess it if I
can and like places which had been seized before the government was devolved upon me; and, in any event, I shall to the best of my ability, repel force by force.” He reaffirmed the entire inaugural address; and with this decisive answer, the committee went back to Richmond to help precipitate secession.

ORDINANCE OF SECESSION PASSED.

The day the committee had their interview with the President, was issued his proclamation calling for 75,000 men. This convergence of events furnished what the conspirators had been waiting for. The ordinance of secession was introduced, in secret session, the following day. It was entitled “An Ordinance to Repeal the Ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America by the State of Virginia and to resume all the rights and powers granted under the said Constitution.” One day later, April 17th, still in secret session, the ordinance was passed. The body of the ordinance was the following:

Now, therefore, we, the people of Virginia, do declare and ordain that the ordinance adopted by the people of this State in convention on the 25 day of June, 1788, whereby the Constitution of the United States of America was ratified, and all acts of the General Assembly of this State ratifying and adopting amendments to said Constitution, are hereby repealed and abrogated; that the union between the State of Virginia and the other States under the Constitution aforesaid is hereby dissolved, and that the State of Virginia is in the full possession and exercise of all the rights of sovereignty which belong to a free and independent State. And they do further declare that the said Constitution of the United States is no longer binding on any citizen of this State.
It was stated by John B. Baldwin, in the testimony previously quoted from, that he understood the original of this ordinance was then in possession of the government, having been taken at the time Richmond was captured in the Spring of 1865.

The vote on the ordinance of secession, with complete list of the convention, will be found in the chapter contributed by Mr. McGrew. Of the Western members voting against the ordinance, Haymond of Marion, Price of Greenbrier, and Berlin of Upshur, recanted, went back to Richmond and cast their fortunes with the Confederacy.

A DOOR LEFT OPEN.

That there might be no question about their right to secede from the Confederacy in the (probable) event they should want to, the Convention, on the motion of "Sandy" Stuart, put into the ordinance ratifying the Confederate constitution the following:

In adopting this constitution, Virginia reserves to herself the right to withdraw whenever its powers are perverted to her injury, of which she alone shall be the judge.

THE REIGN OF TERROR.

Describing the mob violence and terror reigning at Richmond just before the passage of the ordinance of secession, George McC. Porter, member from Hancock County, in a speech at Wheeling May 5th, said:

After the attack on Sumter, the mob in Richmond seized the artillery. They ran howling through the streets. They broke through the doors of your State house. They tore down
the stars and stripes and hoisted in its place the flag of the Confederate States. The ordinance of secession was passed. The injunction of secrecy is upon every member. I can only say that it passed—and one thing more, which you doubtless already know, that I did not vote for it. I would have suffered this right arm to be cut off before I would have signed that ordinance.

Speaking of the committee sent to the President to demand whether he meant peace or war, Mr. Porter said:

As the committee left for Washington, Roger A. Pryor left for Charleston, where he told the Secessionists they must strike a blow and Virginia would go out "in one hour by Shrewsbury clock." Pryor knew, and those who appointed the committee
knew, that when Sumter was attacked the government would be justly incensed and the President would give them an unsatisfactory answer.

Pryor, in his speech at Charleston, said: "Do not distrust Virginia. * * * I will tell you, gentlemen, what will put her in the Southern Confederacy in less than 'an hour by Shrewsbury clock'—strike a blow! The very moment that blood is shed, Old Virginia will make common cause with her sisters of the South!"

Chester D. Hubbard, one of the Wheeling members, who followed Mr. Porter, said he also witnessed the tearing down of the flag and other acts of violence. He called upon Thomas Sweeney, who had been at Richmond at the time and was present, for his testimony to the violence described. "The mobs were composed of as scabby a looking set of roughs as I ever saw in my life," said Mr. Sweeney, "and they had things pretty much their own way." Mr. Sweeney denied that he was a Disunionist. He "stood where he had always stood," and denounced the usurpation unsparingly.

Ephraim B. Hall, a member of the Convention from Marion, spoke to a mass-meeting at Fairmont May 6th. Among other things he said:

The genuine Union men did not constitute more than one-third of the Convention. A tremendous outside pressure was brought to bear to dragoon us into the measures of the Secessionists. We were subjected to all sorts of insults. We were hissed at and groaned at. The galleries were brought to bear on us whenever any man dared utter a sentiment for the Union. Some of us were spit upon. We were told we would be driven out at the point of the bayonet. I come before you to-day with the Commonwealth's seal upon my mouth. (Cries "Take it
And when it was found we were not to be driven by ordinary means, you know what followed. We were finally forced into secret session. I remonstrated, but to no purpose. They told us that before the Convention adjourned the injunction of secrecy would be removed and they would retain a reporter and keep an accurate record of the proceedings. They refused to remove it.

At the same mass-meeting, John S. Burdett, member of the Convention from Taylor, was one of the speakers. He, too, testified to the mob fury which had assailed the members of the Convention who were against secession. When Burdett rose to speak, he was greeted with derisive cries of "John Brown!" He had said in a speech at Grafton that Wise was a worse man that John Brown. "I would rather be John Brown" he now responded "than Benedict Arnold." He told the men who were hooting him that they were "blackguards—of the same piece with the ruffians who tried the same game at Richmond, where there were seventeen hundred assembled to intimidate the Convention, not one of whom paid taxes, nor paid his board while there. Within an hour," he continued, "after the ordinance had passed, a mob of seventeen hundred of just such chaps as these were in the capitol grounds. They went to the arsenal, got out the cannon and paraded around the capitol. We adjourned and went to our boarding-houses to get away from the mob. I felt for the first time, when I saw them break down the doors of the capitol and tear down the flag, how deeply disgraced was the ensign of the Nation. A portion of this dirty mob, with a rope in their hands, went to the boarding-house of Mr. Carlile." Mr. Burdett had previously written from Richmond: "Carlile's boarding-house was surrounded last
night by a mob, who had with them a rope with which to hang him. They called for him and were loud in their threats of vengeance."

In reference to the reign of terror in and around the Convention at this time, Mr. Willey, member from Monongalia, some years afterward wrote this graphic description of the crisis:

During the progress of the bombardment of Fort Sumter, the excitement in Richmond and in the Convention was intense. Bonfires and illuminations blazed high in the streets and public squares; the national flag was torn from its place over the dome of the capitol and trampled under the feet of an infuriated mob. Stores and public places were closed and the populace sought the streets to give vent to their feelings. Strangers rushed to the city from all parts of the State and helped to swell the throngs. Many who had come in advance of the call to meet on the 16th of April assembled together in a large hall and sat with closed doors. No ingress could be obtained to the sessions of this mysterious body. The Convention went into secret session. The scenes witnessed within the walls of that room, as detailed by members, have no parallel in the annals of ancient or modern times. On the morning of the 17th, Mr. Wise, the member from Princess Anne, rose in his seat and drawing a large Virginia horse-pistol from his bosom laid it before him, and proceeded to harangue the body in the most violent and denunciatory manner. He concluded by taking his watch from his pocket and, with glaring eyes and bated breath, declared that events were now transpiring which caused a hush to come over his soul. At such an hour, he said, Harper's Ferry and its armory were in possession of Virginia soldiers; at another period the Federal navy-yard and property at Norfolk were seized by troops of the State.

It was then that the Union members saw the object of the other assemblage, which had sat with closed doors from its beginning and whose concealed hand, seizing the reins of government, had left them the form without the power to resist.
Three months before, a private letter from Richmond, written January 14th, had said:

It is threatened here that unless the Convention to meet will act to suit the views of the "Minute Men," the latter will seize upon this city and inaugurate a State revolution.

How these things all come together, like the stones in the temple! The "Jacobin clubs" forecast by John J. Davis in the Clarksburg Guard; the "Minute Men" here referred to; the ruffians enrolled in this revolutionary organization, summoned from all parts of the State by secret circular; John Goode's "convention of the people" sitting behind locked doors in the Metropolitan Hall, using the State executive as an instrument to precipitate war—dispatching State troops, seizing government property, threatening and overawing the Convention, sending messengers to Charleston to tell Governor Pickens to fire on Sumter to force the President's hand and compel the Convention to act—it is a panorama of conspiracy and violence unsurpassed in modern times!

LEVYING WAR.

The day following the passage of the ordinance of secession, the powers in control at Richmond—it does not clearly appear whether the orders emanated directly from the Governor or from the Jacobin body sitting in Metropolitan Hall, who had seized the reins as they were seized by the revolutionary sections in Paris in the days of Danton and Marat—began war against the United States by seizure of Harper's Ferry, of the Federal buildings in Richmond, Norfolk and Portsmouth; by sinking vessels in the Elizabeth River to prevent escape of United States
ships lying at or near Gosport Navy Yard; and by the attempted capture of war and naval material at Gosport. An order was next day wired to Wheeling to take possession of the United States Custom House there, but was not executed. At Harper's Ferry, the garrison destroyed nearly all the property which could have served the rebels; at Gosport, millions of material was burned, including ships at anchor, to prevent its falling into their hands. The spoil at Harper's Ferry was limited to a few thousand muskets, mostly flint-locks; of which, by Letcher’s order to General Kenton Harper, 5,000 were sent to the rebel “Plug-Uglies,” General Stewart’s militia, in Baltimore. General Butler captured there several boxes of them marked “Arsenal and Armory, Harper’s Ferry.”

It was the knowledge that these expeditions were on the way which caused a “hush” to come over the “soul” of Wise as he stood in the Convention with doors locked against the public, a horse-pistol lying before him, timing the expeditions, watch in hand, and telling Union members that the die was cast.

The rebel mortification over their failure to secure more plunder finds expression in Pollard’s “Southern History,” where this destruction of Government property to save it from falling into the hands of its enemies is denounced as “acts of vandalism.”

**LEAGUE WITH THE CONFEDERACY.**

Under both the act of assembly and the schedule to the ordinance of secession, the ordinance was not to take effect till submitted and ratified at the polls, May 23d. Yet
seven days after the ordinance was passed, the Convention, still in secret session, entered into a league with the Confederate States whereby all the purpose and effect of the ordinance was accomplished at once. It was a coup de main. There was no waiting for popular ratification. The terms of the secret league provided that pending the adoption of the permanent Confederate constitution—that is, instantly—the entire military forces and operations of Virginia "in the impending conflict with the United States" should be put under control of the President of the Confederacy, upon the same footing as if Virginia had already become a member of that government. After this, with Confederate soldiery in absolute control, instituting a reign of terror in three-fourths of the State, the form of going through an election on the question of ratifying the ordinance was a mockery.

ACTS OF WAR.

John Minor Botts told the Joint Committee on Reconstruction, after reciting the overt acts of war—the seizure of Harper's Ferry, and of the Federal buildings at Richmond and Norfolk, the obstruction of the channel in Elizabeth River, and the introduction of a large number of troops from other Southern States, making a general camping ground throughout Eastern Virginia, that the conspirators

FORCING RATIFICATION

Then very quietly turned to the people, when they had to vote on the ordinance, and said: "Now, we are involved in war and the rejection of the ordinance will not stop the war; so you can vote for the ordinance of secession or against it, as you like. But, in the language of the Emperor Napoleon's friends,
"we advise you to vote for' it."  * * * The people found it would be utterly useless and at the same time extremely dangerous for them to exercise the privilege of freemen; and there was a general and almost universal acquiescence in what they could not prevent. * * * I have never seen the vote, nor have I seen anybody who has seen it. I have no doubt that a large majority of those who did vote voted for the ordinance; but whether that vote constituted a majority of the legal voters of the State I have never had any means of ascertaining. I know that the vote against it was very small, because the city of Richmond, which had given me some 1,700 or 1,800 votes against my competitor, and could therefore, I suppose, have given some 1,500 or 1,600 against the ordinance of secession, actually gave only two votes against it. To illustrate the farce and mockery of the vote taken at that time, I will mention that there were assembled at that time a large body of troops at and around Norfolk, among them a regiment then commanded by Col. Roger A. Pryor. This regiment was composed principally, if not entirely, of Union men, and when it was found they were voting against the ordinance they were disbanded and not allowed to vote.

MASONIC COERCION.

It further illustrates the kinds of pressure exerted east of the mountains to force the ratification of the ordinance of secession to give place to the following letter published by ex-Senator James M. Mason:

Winchester, Virginia, May 16, 1861.

To the Editor of the Winchester Virginian:

The question has been frequently put to me, What position will Virginia occupy should the ordinance of secession be rejected by the people at the approaching election? And the frequency of the question may be an excuse for giving publicity to the answer.

The ordinance of secession withdrew the State of Virginia from the Union, will all the consequences resulting from the separation. It annulled the Constitution and laws of the United States within the limit of this State and absolved the citizens of Virginia from all obligations of obedience to them.
Hence it follows, if this ordinance be rejected by the people, the State of Virginia will remain in the Union and the people of the State will remain bound by the Constitution of the United States, and obedience to the government and laws of the United States will be fully and rightfully enforced against them.

It follows, of course, that in the war now carried on by the government of the United States against the seceded States, Virginia must immediately change sides, and under the orders of that government turn her arms against her Southern sisters.

From this there can be no escape. As a member of the Union, all her resources of men and money will be at once at the command of the government of the Union.

Again: for mutual defence, immediately after the ordinance of secession passed, a treaty or "military league" was formed by the Convention in the name of the people of Virginia, with the "Confederate States" of the South, by which the latter were bound to march to the aid of our State against the invasion of the Federal government. And we have now in Virginia, at Harper's Ferry and at Norfolk, in face of the common foe, several thousand of the gallant sons of South Carolina, of Alabama, of Louisiana, Georgia and Mississippi, who hastened to fulfill the covenant they made, and are ready and eager to lay down their lives, side by side with our sons, in defence of the soil of Virginia.

If the ordinance of secession is rejected, not only will this "military league" be annulled, but it will have been made a trap to inveigle our generous defenders into the hands of their enemies.

Virginia remaining in the Union, duty and loyalty to her obligations to the Union will require that those Southern forces shall not be permitted to leave the State, but shall be delivered up to the government of the Union; and those who refuse to do so will be guilty of treason, and be justly dealt with as traitors.

Treason against the United States consists as well "in adhering to its enemies and giving them aid" as in levying war.

If it be asked, What are those to do who in their consciences cannot vote to separate Virginia from the United States? the answer is simple and plain. Honor and duty alike require that they should not vote on the question; and if they retain such opinions, they must leave the State.
None can doubt or question the truth of what I have written, and none can vote against the ordinance of secession who does not thereby (whether ignorantly or otherwise) vote to place himself and his State in the position I have indicated.

J. M. Mason.

VOTE ON "REFERENCE."

In the paper written by John Goode, before referred to, he claims the popular vote on the ratification of the ordinance was 125,950 for and 20,373 against. "It is proper to say" Mr. Goode remarks "that the vote in opposition was cast principally in the Northwestern counties, whose members had voted against the ordinance in the Convention and which subsequently formed the new State of West Virginia"—the only counties, Mr. Goode might have added if he had cared to tell the whole truth, in which men dared vote against ratification. Mr. Goode's figures, however, appear to be incorrect. The vote as announced in the Convention June 25, 1861, was: For ratification, 128,884; against, 32,134. These figures will also be found in the American Cyclopedia. This made a total vote of 161,018; majority, 96,750. It is not probable that these are honest figures. The Presidential vote in Virginia the previous November had been 167,223. Under the conditions prevailing, it is impossible to believe so nearly the whole vote of the State was cast on the ordinance. The conspirators had full control of the returns and could cook the result to suit themselves. Up to the time Mr. Botts testified, it would seem the figures had not been given out. Whatever the vote may have been, it was not, save in those western counties within the Union lines, an unconstrained expression. In no other part of the State could the voter
afford to vote openly against. He was as effectually muzzled as if he had had a bayonet at his throat, where this was not the literal fact.

After the consummation of that league, nothing that was or could have been done by legislative bodies or executive at Richmond could have a feather's weight in force of law. Conspiracy had become insurrection and was in the saddle. The day after the league was consummated the Convention ratified the constitution of the Confederate States and chose five commissioners to the Confederate Provisional Congress, among them Gideon Draper Camden, formerly circuit judge at Clarksburg.

The members of the Convention who consummated the "league" with the Confederacy were: John Tyler, William Ballard Preston, Samuel McDowell Moore, James P. Holcombe, James C. Bruce and Lewis E. Harvie. Vice-President Stephens was the commissioner for the Confederacy.

**TROOPS REFUSED.**

The quota of Virginia under the President's call was 2,340. Letcher sent this reply to the requisition:

I have only to say that the militia of Virginia will not be furnished to the powers at Washington for any such use or 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 act of 1795—will not be complied with.

And he added: "You have chosen to inaugurate Civil War."
Mr. Summers declared at Wheeling in 1863 that it was the President's call for troops which was the cause of the Virginia secession; but he did not mention how carefully everything had been planned—even with some assistance from him—to force the President to issue this call. Said Mr. Summers:

It was not the firing on Sumter that carried Virginia out. During the days of that bombardment, and almost every hour, the wires bringing us messages from Montgomery—especially to Ex-President Tyler from his son, who was acting in some official capacity down there—how steady and firm we went on, vote after vote, in that convention, under the constant announcement of this bombardment, its success and final triumph. No man did give way—our majority still between thirty and forty upon every resolution. The Union men—those elected as Union men—who ultimately gave way did not give way upon the ground that Fort Sumter had been attacked. They knew full well that that attack came from the other side; that it was wrong—wholly indefensible. The pretext for the secession was the proclamation of President Lincoln, which they chose to announce and act upon as a declaration of war.

Let it be remarked that this hypothetical Union majority, of which Mr. Summers speaks, was a delusion and a snare. The event showed what it was worth. John B. Baldwin, Mr. Summers' intimate and confidential, was a fair sample of the material composing it. When Baldwin told Mr. Lincoln he had only a fortnight to choose between peace and war by evacuating Sumter, he knew what he was talking about. Did not Summers, who sent him to Mr. Lincoln without consulting with a single Union member of the Convention, know equally well? Pryor was sent to
Charleston to tell Governor Pickens to fire on the Fort because that would force the President to issue his call for troops; and this being done, the quasi-Unionists in the Convention were committed to vote for secession. "Virginia will go out in forty-eight hours," Mr. Baldwin told President Lincoln. "Virginia will go out ‘in one hour by Shrewsbury clock’" said Pryor to the people of Charleston.

**THE ANTICS OF WISE.**

At Richmond, Henry A. Wise seems to have been the head devil. John F. Lewis says Wise was regarded as the head of the Secession party there at that time. Yet he even then made the pretense of being a Union man, and coming to Lewis' desk one day in the Convention he said: "You help me save the negro and I will help you to save the Union." After the surrender of Lee, he wrote a letter saying he had been convinced long before the close of the war that slavery was an evil, and that if the South had been successful he had intended to canvass the State for the abolition of slavery! In February, 1866, Wise told Col. Orlando Brown, a Massachusetts man, assistant commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, then resident in Richmond, that he had been "for the Union all through." "Had we succeeded," he said, "we would have shown you what the Union was." Further, he claimed that he had never fought for the Confederacy. "I never fought under the Confederate flag," he said. "It may have been carried in my brigade, but I have gone under the Virginia flag." "And," adds Colonel Brown, "he showed me his Virginia buttons, which he said he had worn all through the war."
THE RICHMOND CONVENTION.

ARMING AND DISARMING.

The significance of events, obscure in the midst of them forty years ago, is clearer now in the light of fuller information and in the perspective of distance. An enormous plot was known to be working throughout the South, with its most important centers at Richmond and Washington. Conspirators were in high places in the National government, betraying their trusts and using their powers and opportunities to plunder and disarm the government they meant to destroy. The head of the War Department was systematically removing government arms and munitions from Northern factories and arsenals to arsenals and forts in the South. As early as December, 1859, the Secretary of War ordered transferred from Springfield and Watervliet 105,000 muskets and 10,000 rifles to arsenals in South Carolina, Alabama and Louisiana. Between January 1, 1860, and January 1, 1861, he sold under color of law to sundry persons and States as "unsuitable for military service," 31,600 muskets. October 20, 1860, he ordered 40 columbiads and four 32-pounders sent from Pittsburgh to an unfinished fort at Ship Island, on the coast of Mississippi, and seventy columbiads and seven 32-pounders from same arsenal to a fort at Galveston, the building of which had scarcely been commenced! The attempted removal of these heavy guns from Allegheny Arsenal created intense excitement at Pittsburgh, where a monster mass-meeting assembled at call of the Mayor to protest against the shipment. Joseph Holt, of Kentucky, becoming Secretary of War, the order was countermanded before it had been fully executed. The Mobile Advertiser
announced that during the year 135,430 muskets had been "quietly transferred from the Northern arsenal at Springfield alone to those in Southern States." "We are much obliged to Secretary Floyd," says the editor, "for the foresight he has thus displayed in disarming the North and equipping the South for this emergency." A report on this subject was made in the United States House of Representatives from the Military Committee by Hon. Ben. Stanton of Ohio (who spent the closing years of his life after the war in West Virginia). The report states that the Sardinian government desired to buy from 100,000 to 250,000 muskets "unsuitable for the military service of
the United States;” and that the Secretary of War agreed to make the sale, but after accepting the application, withdrew from it on plea of a misunderstanding as to the price, which Mr. Belknap, the agent, denied and which the Committee found no evidence of. Apparently Mr. Floyd had found more desirable customers at home.

JEFF DAVIS TRIES TO HELP.

The Secretary of War had no authority to issue standard arms to the States beyond their pro rata of the current appropriation for the purpose; but he did in 1860 issue to eight Southern States in advance their quotas for 1861. Jefferson Davis in January, 1860, introduced in the Senate a bill for the sale by the government of arms of standard pattern to States and Territories and for the appointment from the ordnance corps of superintendents of armories in place of the incumbent civilians. The bill passed the Senate by a party vote—the Democrats for, the Republicans against; but it failed in the House. If it had become a law, the operations of Mr. Floyd would have been on a much larger scale.

MISTaken CLEMENCY.

In recalling these and other incidents of National treachery and betrayal of trust, by which the government was stripped, disarmed and left “naked to its enemies,” as preliminary to its destruction, one is constrained to doubt the wisdom of that almost maudlin clemency which refused to punish these unequaled criminals. Such a clemency towards those whose only offence was open and
honest (though mistaken) rebellion may have been justified by the highest political considerations; but what could justify the same magnanimity toward the villains who had foresworn themselves and who to the betrayal of National trusts had added treason in the highest places in the government?

VIRGINIA GETS A SHARE.

Virginia was a beneficiary of Secretary Floyd's treachery, as appears from Governor Letcher's message to the rebel Virginia Legislature in December, 1861. In this message Mr. Letcher says that on the 8th of January, 1861, the day after the meeting of the Assembly called together by him, he was in secret conference with other traitors (the word is mine, not his) over the question of seizing Fortress Monroe. "It is to be regretted," he observes, "that Fortress Monroe was not in our possession, that it was not as easily captured as the Navy Yard and Harper's Ferry. As far back as the 8th of January last, I consulted with a gentleman whose position enabled him to know the strength of that fortress, and whose experience in military matters enabled him to form an opinion as to the number of men that would be required to capture it. He represented it to be one of the strongest fortifications in the world, and expressed his doubts whether it could be taken unless assailed by water as well as land and simultaneously."

In another part of the message Mr. Letcher recites his operations through Secretary Floyd in the procurement of arms from the government, of whom he says he purchased for the State of Virginia 5,000 muskets, 13 Parrot
rifled cannon, and a large quantity of powder. He laments that he could not get 10,000 muskets more. "If we could have then purchased," he says, "all the arms which we desired to obtain, our State would have been in a better condition to repel the assaults of the Federal executive."

The transfer of so many muskets to arsenals farther South may explain why there were only 5,000 left for Letcher. "For this struggle, so suddenly commenced," comments the Governor, "Virginia had for some time been making such preparations as her means enabled her to make. Although she was not so well prepared as was desirable, still she was better prepared than most of her Southern sisters —better prepared than any of them." "For some time anterior to the secession," continues Mr. Letcher, "Virginia had been engaged in the purchase of arms of different kinds, ammunition and other necessary articles, and in mounting artillery, in anticipation of the event which subsequently occurred."

What singularly wise prevision! Yet in his January message Governor Letcher had affected to deprecate the calling of a Convention. It was a game of secret treachery and false pretense all around. Mr. Davis before he made his forecast in the Clarksburg paper, must have been favored with a glimpse under some lifted curtain of things intended only for nocturnal eyes!

LETCHER "THE IGNoble."

After reading this avowal of Mr. Letcher's, it is impossible to have any respect for the claim made for him that he was a Union man at heart. He told this to Mr.
Burdett at his home in Lexington after the war, and Mr. Burdett is inclined to give him credit for sincerity; but if he had been what he claimed, he never could have played the traitorous part he did, much less have boasted of it. His own voluntary statements in his message show who it was that had "chosen to inaugurate Civil War." The New York Times expressed very uncomplimentary opinions of Mr. Letcher. It described him as "the ignoble;" as "false and cowardly;" as "despised even among the people of Virginia;" "an abject tool in the hands of the usurpers." His own admissions seem to justify this estimate of him. As apparently related to the part Letcher was playing at this period, it may be mentioned that Senator "Jim" Mason wrote to a friend at Paris as early as February 20th, while he still held his seat in the Senate: "Arrangements have been made to secure the passage of an ordinance of secession in Virginia, and Washington will be seized at an early day."

VIRGINIA IN THE LEAD.

In the light of these disclosures, we see Virginia at the opening of 1861, though a large majority of her people were loyal to the United States, far in advance of all the other insurgent State governments in her preparation for the devil's dance of war. Her pretended attitude of peace-maker was only the cover for energetic preparations for hostilities. She had her "peace" commissioners at Washington amusing the country with talk about pacification; and even had the insolence to send a special committee to the President to demand of him whether he meant peace or war.
Wise said early in the Convention that "by all the gods" they "should have war." They did have war, to repletion. Before Appomattox came around, the appetite of the belligerent Mr. Wise and his fellow-conspirators who survived was fully sated. The crop they had sown to the gale of madness was a little slow in maturing, but it ripened at last and was reaped in the whirlwind. The punishment of Virginia for unfaithfulness to the teachings of her earlier statesmen was severe. One of her citizens, Charles Douglas Gray, of Augusta County, testifying before the Joint Committee on Reconstruction, being asked what was the appearance of the country which had been the arena of active operations, described the desolation in the Shenandoah Valley as follows:

From Harper's Ferry to Newmarket—which is about eighty miles—from one mountain to the other, the country was almost a desert. There were no fences. Speaking of the condition of the valley after General Sheridan retired, I described wheatfields growing without any enclosure. Some one asked me whether the stock would not destroy the wheat? I said "Certainly, if General Sheridan had not taken the precaution of removing all the stock." We could cultivate grain without fences, as we had no cattle, hogs, sheep or horses, or anything else. The fences were all gone; some of the orchards were very much injured; but the fruit trees had not been, as a general thing, destroyed. The barns were all burned; a great many of the private dwellings were burned; chimneys standing without houses, and houses standing without roof, or door, or window. A most desolate state of affairs; bridges all destroyed, roads badly cut up. Large armies, whether friendly or hostile, are devouring animals. The damage was not all done by the Federals. The country from Alexandria to the Rapidan suffered perhaps as much as the Shenandoah Valley.
Another citizen of Virginia (Hotchkiss, of Staunton) has well summarized in an article in the Encyclopedia Brittanica the ruin wrought in Virginia by the war:

The Civil War of 1861-65 was more disastrous in its consequences to Virginia than to any other State of the Union. From first to last, its territory was overrun; hundreds of battles and minor engagements took place within its borders, and all the destruction incident to gigantic military operations fell upon it. Tens of thousands of her best men were killed in battle. Its territory was dismembered and a third part of it cut off, while more than three hundred million dollars worth of property was destroyed in what remained.

WHEREIN THE CONVENTION FAILED.

In a last glance at this historic Convention, on whose edict turned events as fateful as ever hung on the greatest battles of the world, let us try to realize one aspect of it which has never anywhere been presented.

It was called at the instance of the conspirators, by a legislature thoroughly in sympathy with their purpose, with a view to throw Virginia into the projected revolution. The people of Virginia as a whole did not want a Convention for this or any other purpose; and in electing delegates, they chose a large majority on pledges against secession, by popular majorities aggregating near sixty thousand; and by like majorities voted to limit the powers of the Convention so that any dangerous action taken by it should be inoperative till ratified by popular vote.

When the delegates came together, it appeared that about two-thirds of them were for maintaining the Union. Backed by the great preponderance of Union sentiment
among the people of Virginia as expressed in their election, what had we a right to expect from these delegates? The whole secession plot in Virginia had been defeated—provided the victory were not thrown away; provided the citadel were not basely surrendered. We should have expected to see this majority, flushed with victory and feeling a high sense of their great opportunity and responsibility, proceed to organize the Convention in the interest of the Union cause against secession; and this being done, to adopt a declaration that inasmuch as the Convention had been called for an object to which the people of Virginia had declared themselves overwhelmingly opposed, and inasmuch as the Convention was not wanted for any other purpose, the proper and only thing for it to do was to adjourn sine die. This would have ended secession in Virginia. If the traitorous legislature had ordered another election for another Convention, they would have been beaten by a still larger majority. It needed only that the Union majority in the Convention should rise in a manly way to a realization of their strength and of their duty.

Instead of this, what do we see? The minority are allowed to organize the Convention, to control its machinery and shape its proceedings from first to last, in the interest of secession. An old man is elected President who, through either imbecility or treachery, gives fourteen out of twenty-one of the Committee on Federal Relations to the conspirators. This was the committee which gave direction and shape to the whole business of the Convention. The minority were permitted to bring in the rebel emissaries from the Cotton States to harangue the delegates and seduce them from their duty if they could. This
sovereign body representing the strength and dignity of the people of Virginia, was bullied and threatened by ruffians in its galleries, in the lobbies and in the street. From beginning to end the conspiring, fire-eating minority, with Wise at its head, took the aggressive and employed every element of intimidation to dragoon the majority; while this great imbecile majority accepted the attitude of apologists and were on the defensive from the first. Such Union men as Summers and Willey made pleading and pathetic speeches against secession, when all they had to do to make secession impossible was to muster their majority and adjourn the Convention! We may search the records of popular assemblages in vain to find anything so fatuous.

From their first day of victory down to the lamentable end, this Union majority, in their pitiable helplessness, stood in the Convention like a flock of frightened sheep, while the wolves raged around them, every now and then snatching one from their ranks, till their case became hopeless. At last there was no longer even the counterfeit of power to resist; and the helpless Unionists were forced into secret session; where, under intimidation of Wise's horse-pistol, of the conspirators in Metropolitan Hall, of the mobs in the streets, from distrust of one another, knowing their ranks were honey-combed with treachery—under Wise's announcement, too, that war operations had already begun—this proud Union majority, sent up to Richmond to protect the Commonwealth against the possibility of such a catastrophe, made their final surrender!

It is a spectacle long to be remembered—long to be deplored; to be explained as best it may.