

**THE SECTIONAL CONTROVERSY;
OR, PASSAGES IN THE POLITICAL
HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES,
INCLUDING THE CAUSES OF THE
WAR BETWEEN THE SECTIONS**

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The Sectional Controversy; Or, Passages in the Political History of the United States, Including the Causes of the War Between the Sections by William Chauncey Fowler

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WILLIAM CHAUNCEY FOWLER

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BY
WILLIAM CHAUNCEY FOWLER, LL. D.

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PREFACE.

IN the year 1850, the week before Mr. WEBSTER delivered his memorable speech on the seventh of March, I had the pleasure, in Washington, of taking tea with my old friend and classmate, Governor McDOWELL, then a member of Congress. When I rose to take my leave of him, he said he was not willing to part without telling me of a burden which was resting on his mind. "I am convinced, my dear friend," said he, "that there will be a disunion of the States. There is a great change going on at the South. Two years ago, when I delivered my speech for the Union, all were melted down into a common feeling of love for the whole country. Men of all parties in the House gave me their hands and congratulated me on what they were pleased to call my patriotic speech.

"But now some of the same men are not willing to hear a word on the subject of the Union. I am not in the councils of these Southern men, though I suppose I might be, if I would think and act with them. Every thing is tending to disunion; and I wanted to tell you so before you return to the North."

As he said this to me in earnest, tender tones, and with eyes filled with tears, I felt that his sad forebodings ought to be heeded, and their grounds investigated.

Not very far from this time, I made the acquaintance of Judge BURNET, of Cincinnati, at Union Hall, Saratoga, and was greatly interested in his intelligence, wisdom, and patriotism. In repeated conversations, he said to me, in substance: "These

States cannot long hold together—they will separate.” On my replying, I can hardly believe that the Southern States will be so unwise, he answered, “Ah, my dear sir, the difficulty is with Northern men. Great numbers of them do not value the Union so much as they do their doctrines on slavery, which, in their working, are hostile to the Union. A spirit of disunion exists at the North which will continue to increase in extent and intensity until it has produced a separation of the States.”

After hearing the testimony of these two patriot statesmen, the one speaking of the South and the other of the North, I resolved to investigate the following questions, chiefly for my own satisfaction :

I. Is the traditionary sentiment in favor of the Union dying out in the hearts of the people of the States ?

II. Is the bond of Union, namely, the Constitution, growing weaker in the respect and confidence of politicians ?

III. As a consequence, are the States drifting along, to some extent, unconsciously, toward disunion ?

IV. What are the causes of this alarming condition of the country ?

V. Which section of the Union is responsible for the operation of these causes ?

While investigating these questions, my historical collections, in their bearing on their solution, grew to such an amount, and assumed so much importance in my estimation, that I concluded to present them to the public in the following pages, as furnishing a satisfactory answer to these questions. In adopting a chronological arrangement of my materials, I have endeavored to bring distinctly into view *the prominent questions in dispute between the two sections in the successive eras, from the first settlement of the country down to the close of President Buchanan's administration.* The answer to the former set of questions depends on the answer to the latter. For the statement of

these latter questions, and for the arguments on each side, I have quoted Northern utterances and Southern utterances. These, with the "Remarks," inserted at the close of each chapter, will enable the careful reader, *at a small expense of time*, to obtain a knowledge of the *principal sectional questions* which have agitated the country from the first to the present time. He cannot fail to see that the same questions, under different forms, appear, disappear, and reappear, on the tide of time, as if they had not already been discussed, and as if one generation of politicians must again settle what had been regarded as settled by a former generation. Every political aspirant in each section has been ready to show his prowess in attacking some supposed political heresy in the other section, even though it had been often confuted; just as formerly "every young churchman militant would try his arms in thundering on Hobbes's Steel Cap."

Disguise it as we will, bitter feuds have existed between the North and the South, for a generation at least, reckoning a generation at thirty years. In that period men have come forward into life in each section who think of those born in the other section, only to hate them or despise them, or, at least, to misunderstand them. Where does the blame rest? Not solely on the North, nor solely on the South. *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra.* The careful reader of this small volume will be satisfied that all the political intelligence and virtue of the country is not to be found north of Mason and Dixon's line, nor south of it; and that political and sectional pride, and intolerance, and hatred, and desire of office, confined to neither section, have brought the Union of the States to the verge of ruin.

When the rapid current of events in 1861 outran the fears of the ridiculed "Union-savers," and hurried on the dreaded catastrophe, the civil war, then begun, was but the logical sequence of foregoing events. Bitter feelings long cherished, bitter

words often uttered, injuries inflicted, insults offered, naturally germinated and grew into deeds of violence and blood. Dragons' teeth had been plentifully sown, and they started up armed men. And yet multitudes, at the time, were so ignorant of the prevalent sectional feelings and purposes, that, in surprise, they asked, "What are they fighting for?"

The people of the two sections of the country, are, to a large extent, ignorant of each other, and hence, in their estimate of each other's institutions, they are misled by illusions of the imagination.

For the purpose of distributing information among the people, this volume, which might be entitled "HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS," is offered to various classes of readers.

I. To all, whether North or South, who are ignorant of the political history of the United States, and who have not an opportunity of referring to original sources.

II. To all, whether North or South, who have strong sectional prejudices.

III. To all, whether North or South, who wish for the restoration and the preservation of the Union.

IV. To all, whether North or South, who wish to understand the causes of the war between the sections.

V. To all, whether North or South, who value the prosperity of the country more than they do the success of their party.

VI. To all, whether North or South, who believe that merely defeating the armies of the Southern States will bring back the Union.

VII. To all, whether North or South, who wish to understand the constitutional relations between the States and the Federal Government.

VIII. To all, whether North or South, whose hearts, not limited by party or section, are large enough to embrace the interests of the whole country, and of all the States.

The final issue of the sectional controversy lies in the future, beyond the ken of mortal vision, wrapped up in the hollow of God's mysterious hand. He only, who presides over the destiny of nations, "sees the end from the beginning." But though thus limited in vision, man can gather from the past the lessons of wisdom for his guidance in the future. And may we not indulge the pleasing hope that the people of the States, gathering wisdom from the mistakes of the past, in the sectional controversy, may become qualified to enjoy, in the long future, the blessings of union under the FEDERAL CONSTITUTION ?

W. C. F.

New York, 1862.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the smooth operation of any business and for the timely preparation of financial statements. The text notes that without accurate records, it becomes difficult to track income and expenses, which can lead to errors in reporting and potential legal issues.

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