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CONTENTS

LAURENCE M. KEITT'S LETTERS FROM THE PROVISIONAL CONGRESS OF THE CONFEDERACY, 1861

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On February 4, 1861, the delegates of six Southern states met in Montgomery, Alabama, for the purpose of forming a new confederated government. The resulting convention is historically significant for it performed three distinct and major functions of government. The convention acted as a constitutional convention drawing up the provisional and later the permanent constitution of the new Confederacy. Secondly, it functioned as the Confederate electoral college, electing Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens provisional president and vice-president. And thirdly, the convention resolved itself into the first congress of the Confederate States of America.[1]

South Carolina's representatives at this convention were Robert W. Barnwell, William W. Boyce, James Chesnut, Jr., Christopher G. Memminger, William P. Miles, Thomas J. Withers, Robert B. Rhett and Laurence M. Keitt.[2] The South Carolina delegation was a conservative body for the main part. Barnwell, Chesnut, Memminger and Withers represented the moderate element in South Carolina, and Rhett led the radical secession element, while Keitt, Miles, and Boyce represented that group of young men educated and reared in a South Carolina society captive to the philosophy of John C. Calhoun. Keitt and this group of young Carolinians had sought to "Calhounize" the federalistic philosophy of the national government during the 1850's. But in the last years of that decade it became apparent to the young Calhounists that they had failed in their attempt to propagate Calhoun's philosophy on a national level. Thus they took what they considered the only honorable course left—Secession.[3]

With Secession, Keitt and the Calhounists looked to the formation of a new Confederacy as a final triumph of their patron saint Calhoun. They were soon disillusioned. The moderate majority at the convention selected Davis as Confederate president. Keitt, Boyce, and Miles had preferred the Georgian Howell Cobb to Davis, as Cobb more nearly fulfilled their ideal of a leader of the Calhoun tradition. The letters of Laurence M. Keitt to James H. Hammond and Susan Sparks Keitt show much of the hope and disillusionment

[1] Albert N. Fitts, "The Confederate Convention," *Alabama Review*, II (April 1949), 83.

[2] Charles Edward Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War 1860-1865* (Chapel Hill, 1950), 85.

[3] Elmer Don Herd, Jr., "Chapters from the Life of a Southern Chevalier: Laurence Massillon Keitt's Congressional Years, 1853-1860" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of South Carolina, 1956), chap. i.

experienced by the young Calhounist at the convention in Montgomery, and later at Richmond, Virginia.

The author was born on October 4, 1824, at his father's plantation near St. Matthews in Orangeburg District, South Carolina. His father was George Keitt and his mother, Mary Magdalene Wannamaker of St. Matthews. Keitt was graduated from the South Carolina College (now the University of South Carolina) in 1843. He served in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1848 to 1853. In 1853 Keitt was elected to the United States House of Representatives. He served in the House until 1860, when he resigned to take an active part in the South Carolina Secession Convention. In 1861 he was one of eight delegates from South Carolina to the Montgomery convention.[4]

In January 1862, Keitt was commissioned colonel of the 20th Regiment, South Carolina Volunteers. He was prominent in the defense of Charleston harbor in 1862-1863, and for a time he held the rank of brigadier general. His regiment was ordered to Virginia in the spring of 1864. During the Battle of Cold Harbor (June 1, 1864), he was wounded while leading a charge. The following day, Keitt died in Richmond.[5]

In 1858 Keitt married Susan Mandeville Sparks (1834-1915), daughter of Samuel and Ann Harry Sparks of Marlboro District, South Carolina.[6] The Keitts had two daughters, Anna (1860-1919) and Stella (1861-1865).[7]

13th Feb 1861
Montgomery

My Dear Genl.[8]

I have received your two letters, and concur in your views. As to free trade, we are all against it. Direct taxation would ruin us. Each of our people would sooner give ten dollars which they have never seen, than one they have had in their pockets. We must have a revenue Tariff. Our taxation must be indirect. I have sent to you a copy of our [Provisional] Constitution. You will see that we have made the prohibition of the slave trade more stringent than it was.[9] There are very few changes from the old [United States] Constitution.

The policy of one of the changes I question. I allude to the one which forbids Congress from making any appropriation which has not been

[4] *Ibid., passim.*

[5] *Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1949* (Washington, 1950), 1397.

[6] J. A. W. Thomas, *A History of Marlboro County, . . .* (Atlanta, 1897), 35.

[7] Letter from Lillian M. Cain to editor, January 31, 1956.

[8] Letter from Keitt to James H. Hammond, James H. Hammond Papers, Library of Congress.

[9] *Provisional Constitution of the Confederate States of America,* Article I, Section 7, Paragraph 1 & 2.

called for by the President or by some head of a Department.[10] Suppose fifty years hence there should be parties. Suppose war should be declared, and the President be opposed to it. He might not send in an estimate, and this would paralyze the Country. I like the intention. I would like to accomplish the purpose, but I dont want the safeguards to break us down. What do you think of it?

[Jefferson] Davis will be here on Friday. I suppose he will be inaugurated on Monday. His friends disclaim any idea of re-construction on his part. The impression prevails in V[irgini]a that he is, and [Alexander] Stephens also, and it is doing us harm there. Stephens denies it and Davis' friends say he will do the same. We hope that V[irgini]a will soon be out. Her elections they tell us, only show that without amendments to the [United States] Constitution she will go out. She must have new and satisfactory guarantees. She will not get them.

The No[rth] Ca[rolina] Commissioners tell us she is sure to go. We are discussing the foreign policy of the Confederacy. I hope we shall soon send ministers abroad. We must get before the world. The Committee is working on a permanent Constitution. They hope soon to be able to report. A Pro[visional] Gov[ernmen]t was taken because we could not get the other in time. I'll write to you and report our progress. You will see that we are a Congress. In Geo[rgia] and Al[abam]a they feared an election. Do let me hear from you. My kindest regards to Mrs Hammond, and to Miss Kate. With the kindest regards I am

My dear Genl
Yours

L M Keitt

19th Feb 1861[11]
Montgomery

Here I am, *my own dear Susie,* in the midst of pageantry, cheers, enthusiasm and waving kerchiefs, more completely alone and lonely than I would be by the dead sea. What do I care for all these banners and scutcheons and shouts while you are not with me? If you were here, I should be happy. I should be so anywhere if I had you by my side. How I have come to fold every thing with the recollection of you. Not only my hopes and ambitions, struggles and aspirations take you as a

[10] *Ibid.,* Paragraph 7.

[11] Letter from Keitt to his wife, Susan Sparks Keitt, Lawrence Massillon Keitt Papers, Manuscript Department, Duke University Library. This letter was written the day following Davis' inauguration while Montgomery was still a festive city.

part of themselves, but even the little concerns and incidents of life wrap you up with that essential existence. I see a pretty view, it is dull because you are away. A beauty passes before me. I long to show her that I have a wife far more beautiful than she. I catch a little child in the street, and I go back at once, to our little darling,[12] whom you gave to me. There is a cultivated and brilliant women says a friend. A moment I talk to her, and feel irrepressibly, you would not have told me so had you known how cultivated and brilliant madame is. Ah Susie love, you little dream how much I have suffered from your absence. I will do my best, in the work which engages us, but your absence is a sad draw back to me.

The work, I know, is a great one,—and I will do my best. It is the work of bringing a nation into existence. Slow and painful is the growth of a good man—still more so that of the great Nation. Its life is longer, but its step is slower. Its pulse is as the silent tide, while man's is as the petulant wave. Its voice is that of the great bell that sounds once in a generation of men. Its stroke is that of the great hammer, that rises gently, but falls more grieviously *[sic]*. This people has its tears, its throes, its visions, its defeated feelings and its intoxicating triumph. Man diets,—the Nation never, or seldom. It has its sleep, its long trance, its dreams, its night walking, but it does not die. In its deepest trance it is ready for the silver horn of the promised prince. It looks down into dark gulfs with firmness, and up to the golden height hopefully. The mirage wraps you round. The delusions are not as to existence—they are only as to space and time. Sail on and you will meet the very ship you saw in the air. Its figure was inverted, but it is now erect. The thirsting Pilgrim sees in the Arab desert, the palm trees and the fountains—not now—but one more day stride, and he is there. *Forward* is the inexorable word in this world. To our age then, and forward, for the fountains and the palm trees.

But Ma Belle why should I tire you with these musings—I know not and I cannot say—but I fly to you in imagination as soon as the rein is taken from my work. I do my duty in the practical business of the new government as well as I may, and that done, I may justly give way to my soul's longings, and fly right back to you. Wearied now, and tired and worn down—would that I could lay my overworked head upon you, and feel that I was cared for—well! well! I hope it will soon be so.

Kiss our little dear for me and dream that I have kissed you

lovingly and affectionately

Laurence Keitt

[12] Keitt refers to his daughter, Anna (May 4, 1860-January 4, 1919).

15th May 1861
Montgomery

My Dear Genl.[13]

The quick procession of events has so occupied me that, with the illness of my father,[14] I have not been able to write to you as I intended. You see that we have declared the "War exists," and thus the curtain may lift at any moment. It is possible that Genl Scott may attempt to retake Harper's Ferry or Norfolk, but I doubt it. He has not troops enough to do either in the face of of *[sic]* the forces we have at either place. Besides we have a large force within striking distance, and Scott is too prudent to run these risk. He will not invade V[irgini]a with such Volunteers as he now has. He will not do it before he has 40,000 regulars for Volunteers to gather around. This he will not be able to get before the Fall. By regulars I mean troops well drilled. Thus, I do not anticipate any active military operations this summer.

Genl Scott is able and we must not underrate him. I think that we ought to have 100,000 men in V[irgini]a. She must be the theatre of war. The only difficulty I see, is about money. We must have $50,000,000. There will be difficulty, I think, in getting so much. We have men enough and courage enough, but it will be hard to get money. We see now how much we have suffered by having all centres of Exchange at the North.

Our foreign relations are propitious. We have had no official information, but athentic *[sic]* and unofficial ones are favorable. There is a reaction at the North. You will soon see forced loans in Fifth Avenue. Here we lack efficiency. The administration has not sufficient energy. We ought to end this matter soon. I am afraid that they are too much taken up with little gratifications. I hope to get away in a few days, and may be in Augusta Saturday. I will if I can run over and see you. My regards to Mrs Hammond, Miss Kate and if I should not be able to stop do write to me at Bennettsville.

I am dear Genl
yours
L M Keitt

[13] Letter from Keith to James H. Hammond, Hammond Papers.

[14] Keitt's father, George Keitt, died on April 19, 1861, following a short illness.

20th Aug. 1861
Richmond

My Dear Gov.[15]

I agree with you that we are building upon the most unsubstantial foundations. The Gov't will neither buy nor advance upon cotton and, if the war lasts, its financial policy, unless corrected, will land us in bankruptcy. I fear the policy of the Bill laying direct taxes. Of course Memminger like all officials, wishes to administer his branch of the government with all possible ease, state and convenience. As you told me, he does not look higher than the devices of a small Bank Corporation. Where are we to get the money from to pay the $ 15 or 1600,000 which will be assessed to us? Payment must be made in gold or silver or Treasury notes. We cannot get gold or silver of course and as we have nothing to sell to the government which it will buy, how are we to get Treasury notes? I do not see my way. If the blockade is removed we can easily get the money—but if it is not, I am in the dark about it. I fear the influence of the distress it must create. Let a man, who is away in the ranks have his property sold, and you will see great disaffection. But what I chiefly fear is, that if it grinds, it will make our people accept an imperfect peace. The scheme is not clear and clean cut.

The news is just coming in from Europe. I doubt if the battle [of Manassas or Bull Run] changes the condition of our relations with the old world. We will not be recognized now. Nor will the blockade be lifted until their interests require it. Policy is the only interest, clearly or blindly seen. [Lord John] Russell's letters are dead against us—and our Press deceive our own people, or are themselves blind. There is great sickness in our Army. Almost fifty per cent are now in the Hospitals or on the sick list. And this I hear is true both of the Potomack and the Peninsular Armies. The Commissariat is wretched and the Hospital accommodations are very scanty and imperfect. The suffering of the winter are to be very severe. If we could take Baltimore, we could winter an army. But I am not at all certain that we can capture it. We must not run too great a risk for the Potomack army is our only one for the time being. We missed our chance after the Battle of Bull Run. Our Army had no mobility and of course could accomplish nothing substantial. It does seem to me, as if we are to live from hand to mouth. I fear that by next spring our army will have considerably melted away if there be no improvement in its Commissariat and Hospitals.

Where are we to get shoes and woolen clothes for them? I have asked but can get no satisfactory answer. No powder is being made

[15] *Ibid.*

either. I am afraid that we are fighting, as you say, with one hand tied behind our backs. We adjourn Saturday. I expect to leave tomorrow night for home. Do write me at Bennettsville.

Make my compliments acceptable to Mrs. Hammond and Miss Kate. I hope you got home well and continue so. How did you like the Springs? I do not think the Army will move soon.

I am, Dear Genl
yours

L. M. Keitt

Gov Hammond
Augusta Geo[rgia]

POOR WHITE LABORERS IN SOUTHERN COTTON FACTORIES 1789-1865*

By Richard W. Griffin
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The Southern States, despite climatic and soil conditions favoring an exclusively agrarian economy, entered the competition for factory manufacture of textiles nearly as early as the New England States. The domestic manufacture of cotton and woolen goods, long carried on in the South, provided a sound basis and experience for the gradual transition of labor from home to mill. When cotton mill promotion attracted greater interest in the 1830's and '40's, the observation was made that a girl who could make thread on a country spinning wheel could easily learn to do so on a throstle-frame, and this was equally true of the power loom.[1]

The manufacture of cotton in the South, originated in South Carolina in the winter of 1789, was begun by an English artisan who, with the support of local planters, opened a small factory near Stateburg, in the high hills of Santee. Here he built the necessary machinery, including throstle-frames of eighty-four spindles each. This small beginning led a contemporary to predict great advantages for South Carolina; he assured interested persons that "the high price of labor . . . will not operate as an obstruction, as these machines, with the labor of two hands, can do the work of fifty or sixty, and to as great perfection." [2]

In the years from 1789 to 1793 similar efforts were made in other Southern States. A group of Danville, Kentucky, residents established a mill in 1790. John Hague built and put into operation a two-hundred spindle mill near Nashville, Southwest Territory in 1791 [3], despite the fact that hostile Indians in this region provided an unusual occupational hazard for the frontier mill worker—the threat of scalping.[4] In 1794 Tench Coxe, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, reported that groups of

* Research for this paper was sponsored by a grant-in-aid of the Social Science Research Council.

[1] *DeBow's Review,* VIII (February 1850), 134.

[2] *The* (Annapolis) *Maryland Gazette,* July 22, 1790. *The Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine* (Philadelphia, July 1790), V, 61.

For a reference to an earlier experiment in cotton manufacturing in South Carolina, see this *Magazine,* VIII (1907), 220.

[3] *The Knoxville* (Tenn.) *Gazette,* December 17, 1791.

[4] *The Maryland Gazette,* April 5, 1792.