# The War Between the States

## ON THE EVE OF SECESSION.

In a memorial of Mr. George Davis, the beloved leader of the Lower Cape Fear, the writer, whose affectionate admiration has continued with increasing veneration, said for his committee, on the occasion of a large assembly of representative citizens to honor Mr. Davis' memory by suitable resolutions of respect:

"In 1861 the shadow of a great national calamity appeared—the whole country was convulsed with conflicting emotions. The political leaders of North Carolina were divided upon the issue. Mr. Davis loved the Union, and steadfastly counseled moderation. His appointment by the Legislature as a member of the Peace Commission, to which further reference is made, created a feeling of absolute confidence in the minds of the conservative citizens.

"The desire of the people of North Carolina was to see peace maintained, whether the Union was preserved or not, and for this purpose the Legislature on January 26, 1861, appointed commissioners to conventions to be held at Montgomery, Alabama, and Washington City. These commissioners were Hon. Thomas Ruffin, Hon. D. M. Barringer, Hon. David S. Reid, Hon. John M. Morehead, Hon. D. L. Swain, J. R. Bridgers, M. W. Ransom, and George Davis. Mr. Davis went to Washington City as a member of the Peace Congress, which assembled on February 4, 1861. The moral weight of the position and the character of the gentlemen then and there assembled gave to the significance of the occasion portentous aspects. The Congress sat with closed doors; ex-President Tyler was elected president, and on taking the chair made one of the most eloquent and patriotic speeches ever heard. This conference was in session until February 27, 1861, when Mr. Davis telegraphed: 'The convention has just adjourned *sine die,* after passing seven articles of the report of the committee, much weakened. The territorial articles passed by a majority of one vote. North Carolina and Virginia voted against every article but one.'

"It is difficult for those of us who remember only the intense unanimity of the Southern people after the war was fairly inaugurated to realize how in those previous troublous days the





minds of men were perplexed by doubts. Up to this time the Union sentiment in North Carolina had been in the ascendant. The people waited upon the result of the Peace Congress, and in this section especially was the decision of many reserved until Mr. Davis should declare his final convictions. His announcement of them marked an epoch in his life, and in the lives of countless others, for weal or woe."

Immediately upon his return home, the following correspondence took place:

WILMINGTON, 2d March, 1861.

DEAR SIR:—Your friends and fellow-citizens are exceedingly anxious to hear from you with reference to the proceedings of the Peace Congress, and to have your opinion as to their probable effect in settling the distracting questions of the day.

Will you be kind enough to give them a public address at such time as may suit your convenience?

Respectfully yours,

JAMES H. DICKSON.
ROBERT H. COWAN.
D. A. LAMONT.
THOMAS MILLER.
DONALD MACRAE.
ROBERT G. RANKIN.
JAMES H. CHADBOURN.
A. H. VANBOKKELEN.
O. G. PARSLEY.

TO GEORGE DAVIS, ESQ.

WILMINGTON, 2d March, 1861.

GENTLEMEN:—Being under the necessity of leaving home tomorrow, I will comply with the request of my fellow-citizens, as intimated in your note, by addressing them at such hour and place this evening as you may appoint.

Respectfully yours,

GEO. DAVIS.

TO DR. JAMES H. DICKSON, and others.

The newspaper reports of the public meeting and of Mr. Davis' powerful speech which followed do not convey to our minds the overwhelming sensations of those who listened to this masterpiece of oratory. Mr. Davis was obliged to close before he had finished his address. The people were profoundly moved, and the hearts of all were deeply stirred. Many left the hall while he was speaking, for they could not restrain their emotion.

The *Daily Journal* of March 4, 1861, said: "In accordance with the general desire, George Davis, Esq., addressed his fellow-citizens on last Saturday, March 2, at the Thalian Hall in reference to the proceedings of the late Peace Congress, of which