

February 7, 1861 - Secession Demonstration and Ball in Memphis



The Secession Demonstration.

Multitudes, Excitement and Enthusiasm!

Brilliant Illumination!

The Ladies for Secession!

Designs, Mottos, etc., etc.



The Unionists assumed so much from their torchlight procession on Thursday night, that the secessionists were put on their metal, and received, universally, that a demonstration should be made of the strength of their party, of its weight and influence, and of its prevalency among all classes, from the laborer and the mechanic to the merchant and the capitalist. Throughout the day, the great question which the election of this day is to settle, and the intended procession in the evening, so entirely and universally attracted public attention that business was to a great extent neglected. In every public place, at the corners of the most frequented localities, knots of individuals engaged in warm discussion were to be seen throughout the day. As the hours advanced the feeling widened and deepened until toward evening the approaching event occupied the thoughts and conversation of all classes and all ages.



Opening the Ball.

As the sun began to decline the stores were deserted, and in hundreds of windows, and [illegible] the fronts of buildings busy hands and nimble workmen were occupied in the necessary preparations. The streets became comparatively quiet for a while. A hush of brooding expectation rested for a while over the city. As the sun withdrew his beams from the rolling wave of the Mississippi—that rolled on as of yore, in grand unconsciousness of man's passions, and of the fate of empires—and sank behind the dark woods of Arkansas, a gun rolled out its boisterous echoes. Like a mighty enchanter, the sound awoke the multitude. Thousands of pealing voices gave back in exultant hurrahs their reply to the far pealing resonance. As the light of day died out, and night's dim shades called out the glimmering stars, peal after peal came bursting from the gun; rapidly the streets were filled with their living tenants; in quick succession wild and vigorous shouts rent the air. Bonfires were lighted at the corners of streets; colored lights threw their green and scarlet glare from many house tops; huge rockets few hissing through the air. Then the vast array of light began to scintillate over the length and breadth of the city. From hundreds of windows refulgent beams illuminated the deepening night. As the hour advanced, the squadrons that were to appear in the coming spectacle began to muster. As horsemen and footmen, military and civilian, carriages and wagons passed for their rendezvous, the gazing crowds cheered gallantly.

The Spectacle.

According to the plan announced the delegations of various parts of the city met in localities from which they passed in order to the final rendezvous in front of the Exchange building. With a correctness that reflects great credit on the marshals, the sections were placed in their proper positions as they arrived on the ground and the vast aggregation was ready to commence a display far, very far beyond any similar thing ever before seen in the streets of Memphis. The order to march was given, and amid the clangor of music and the shouts of men the vast multitude began to move, and the great army of secession proceeded to display its might and manifest its claim as an exponent of public sentiment.



To give a description of the pageant is entirely beyond our power. In attempting some faint enumeration of its individual features we must, by the very work of detail, lose the effect of the enormous groupings; the passing on and on of marshaled multitudes; the fiery glare of thousands of torches; the far stretching and vivid brilliancy of the vast train of light that wound in and out in seemingly interminable convulsions; the effect of waving of flags, of hundreds of passing transparencies, of the light gushing radiant and dazzling from a thousand windows, of the many designs, rich and beautiful, that met the sight on every turn! This can not be described and equally impossible it is that it should be imagined—those alone who saw the vast display can have a conception of its imposing features, its wondrous grandeur, and they will never forget it; the young that gazed in wonder when their heads are whitened with the hoary mark of age will tell their descendants of the great secession procession in 1861.

The Procession.

The *avants courriers* of the procession, were a half dozen marshals on horseback, decorated with silk scarfs. These were followed by a wagon drawn by four horses; in front of the vehicle were two of the largest sized railway lanterns with their powerful reflectors; these opened the procession with a flood of light. As the vehicle advanced, the illumination of surrounding objects by the stream of dazzling brilliancy induced a peculiar and an enchanting effect. Several blue and red transparencies were suspended in the same wagon. A fine band of music came next, whose stirring strains had the most enlivening effect. The stimulating strains of the Marseillaise again and again through the evening, produced an effect little short of those the streets of many a French city have witnessed when experiencing its weird and stirring influence in scenes not unlike those that are called into being among us at the present time. A train of men bearing red lights; a wagon with drum and fife and transparencies; a skiff mounted on wheels and filled with men bearing a large flag, transparencies and torches, came after. Then followed a wagon with two transparencies each twenty feet long by six feet in height. On one side was represented Andy Johnson with his head hanging down, while Joe Lane points him out with an exclamation: "I have no respect for a traitor!" Between the futures "bleeding Kansas" was typified by a burning house; the figures were flanked by the mottoes—"We have exhausted the argument, we now stand by

our arms," and "Our Fathers fought for freedom from one tyrant, we fight for freedom from millions of tyrants." At the end of the wagon—"A united South will prevent civil war." On the reverse side is a portrait of Vice President Hamlin, flanked by full length figures of a Yankee, in the act of whittling, and a jolly negro wench, with the motto: "The Republican Vice President and his pedigree." These figures are flanked by the mottoes—"Negro slavery, it must and shall be preserved;" "We make no more compromises."

Drays in considerable numbers with men having torches and transparencies. Men carrying torches succeeded, then, another wagon with transparencies twenty feet long and six feet high, having the mottoes "People's candidates for the Convention: Marcus J. Wright, Humphrey R. Bate, Solon [illegible], and D. M. Currin," and "Separate State Secession our only remedy." A long file of men two and two, with torches and transparencies containing mottoes, a wagon crowded with gentlemen bearing transparencies of various designs. Came [illegible] and then a wagon with transparency twenty feet long by six feet high, having on one side a representative of the ship *Star of the West*, and Morris Island in the distance, from the [illegible] on which a shot is smashing into the [illegible]; above is the motto: "South Carolina hospitality." On the reverse side was the mottoes "Beware of abolitionism in disguise and of those who consent to be [illegible phrase] abolitionists." When I [illegible] of Union, in the South, I snuff [illegible] is the tainted air," "We rejoice that there are seven States where Yankee Union-lovers [illegible] not wag a tongue." At the end was "Old Virginia goes out on the [illegible] of February."

The next object was one of the most pleasant to the [illegible to the bottom paragraph on the page] of the pageant was welcomed throughout the course of the procession with rapturous plaudits. A long train of carriages followed, every one of them filled with ladies, very many of whom waved flags from the carriage windows; then a train of drays, those upon them usually carrying torches and transparencies; a wagon, conspicuous among the riders on which was a negro having cotton spread thick "on the place where the wool ought to row;" a wagon with a splendid band that was delighting the crowd with Dixie when it passed us. Horsemen two and two in long procession, most of the riders wearing blue silk scarfs, went next. A very striking portion of the evening's display, was that consisting of well dressed gentlemen excellently mounted. With these were the Zouaves, carrying their arms and dressed in their gorgeous scarlet costumes. A shout of [illegible] welcomed them every where; a wagon with another band of music came next, then a long string of footmen two and two carrying torches; a wagon with two long and very excellently painted transparencies of the military of Memphis, and a considerable number of volunteers followed it; then two wagons with transparencies; a transparency of the size and shape of a log cabin—it was covered with mottoes and was brightly illuminated; after these were torches two and two, carried by a perfect army of men, and then the vast procession had passed.

The Illumination.



The illumination was very far beyond anything of the sort ever before accomplished in this city; it was a fine specimen, not only of the taste, but of the wealth of our citizens, for many of the transparencies, and designs, and mottos, in gas jets, were of a very expensive character. We should like to speak considerably in detail of this very striking and pleasing portion of the demonstration, but space and lateness of the hour forbid. We mention the greater portion of the names of those who illuminated their stores and business places, if we have omitted some that have a good claim to notice, and especially private residences, the utter impossibility amid the bustle and throng to collect all, must be our excuse; we have done as well as we could. [Illegible] in this portion of the evenings attraction, was the dry goods store of Speed, Donoho & Strange, on Main street, between Monroe and Union; a brilliant arch of gas jets, the entire width of the premises and the height of the whole of the first-story, beneath which, in letters each a foot long, all of blazing light, was the motto: "The South forever," had a most gorgeous effect. On the balcony of the second-story were displayed other devices, and every window to the top was a blaze of light illuminating many large scarlet and white and still more small scarlet stars. These large stars were fifteen inches in diameter, and one of them was composed entirely of small stars, and was labeled "Cuba." It was not vividly illuminated like the rest, but loomed, as it were, in the distance of the future. The whole of this illumination received great commendation; the gas jets were made by Watson & Co., gasfitters.

Wiley B. Miller & Co., dry goods store in the Clay block, had a splendid display of colored lights in every one of their large windows; the effect was gorgeous. The *Avalanche* office had a magnificent circle and cross of glowing gas jets on Madison street, a large flag at the corner, and the motto in large letters of gas jets "Secession our only remedy." Shepperd and Moore, wholesale dry goods, 303 Main street, had a very large and brilliant star of gas jets, besides a general illumination. Armstrong & Co., saddlers, 247 Main street, were among the first in their illumination. They had a large semicircle and stars, and the motto "Our hope" all in one jet. In transparency was the motto "Secession block." Muir, Stubbins & Pullen, china store, 294 Main street, had a splendid star in gas jet, and numerous beautiful fancy lanterns of colored glass. This was very pretty. F. W. Royster & Co., dry goods, 234 Main street, had a grand transparency, beautifully painted in colors, eight feet square. In the centre was a large palm tree, flanked by eight beautiful stars, the seven seceding States and Tennessee, and had the mottoes "Separate Secession," and "A United South." Wiggs, Bro's. & Co., druggists, corner of Main and Union, had numerous small stars, representing the seceding States with the names of which they were labeled; that for South Carolina had a Palmetto flag with the surrounding motto: "Southern Independence." Many smaller stars and a general lighting up from bottom to roof, made this display noticeable. Dr. W. C. Bryan, opposite the above, had six large stars, each surrounded by fifteen smaller ones. Plumber & Gilbert, drugs, 261 Main, had the motto: "Southern Independence," and circles of small stars. Wm. Park & Co., hardware, 304 Main, had a transparency with the motto: "Freemen, we must strike for Independence, and die before we



submit to Black-Republican rule!" Clark & Co., jewelers, corner of Main and Madison, besides being handsomely illuminated, had two large railway lamps with reflectors. M'Combs & Co., hardware, corner of Main and Madison, had a transparency with the motto: "Immediate secession our only remedy to prevent civil war! Our rights have been violated in the Union, we will now reclaim them out of it! No coercion! No compromise; no submission to Black-Republican government." J. O. Ford & Co., saddlers, had a transparency of a palm tree and cotton bales. G. G. Sengstock & Co's drug store in the Gayoso House was beautifully illuminated with colored lanterns; colored birds were burned opposite the store. The APPEAL office was brilliantly illuminated the entire front, beautiful stars, fourteen inches diameter, scarlet and white, typical of the seceded States, were displayed. The following all illuminated: Bransford A Co., wholesale shoes, 301 Main street; Mansfield & Co., drugs, 281 Main; Monsarrat, Dupree & Co., real estate agents, 262 Main; Flaherty's furniture store, Union street; Yearout, Royster & Co., daguerreotypists, 420 Main; J. T. Begbie, saddler, 328 Main; Chas. N. Erych, 333 Main; Hunt & Lloyd, china, 305 Main; Wynne & Park, 397 Main; Norris, Maull & co., clothing, 296 Main; A. J. Warren & Co., jewelry, 293 Main; Horton & Hunter, dry goods, 291 Main; Francisco & co., hatters, 289 Main; Wallace & Van Pelt, shoes, 287 Main; Ingraham & Lees, furnishing, 283 Main; J. D. Williams & co., dry goods, 279 Main; Warren & Co., corner of Main and Monroe; Morris, Maul & Co., clothing, next door to above; H. Wade & Co's book store; Benson's music store; T. Aydlett, 233 Main, dry goods; A. Sessail, dry goods, 194 main; Jas. B. Kluney, furniture, 192 Main; Jack & Shanks' china store; Sproule & McCown's clothing store; Caldsey, dentist; Bingam's, daguerreotype gallery, corner of Main and Adams; Burnett, Hendrix & Walker, grocers; Drs. Billings & Peck, corner Main and Washington; Saffarrane [?] & Stratton, tinware; Monroe, Talbot & Dancey, drugs, 350 [?] Main; Williams & Macgiveney, groceries, 351 Main; Camp & Co., furniture Jackson block: M. Bamberger, groceries, corner of Market and Front row. Mr. Coleman illuminated the whole front of the telegraph office on Court square, in a most brilliant manner, though not exactly in the line of the route, the glorious radiance compelled attention and admiration.

Bonfires.

Beside probably many places we did not observe, there were bonfires at the corner of Main and Union; two at the corner of Madison and Main; corner of Gayoso house; on Shelby, between Union and Gayoso; corner of Adams and Second, and two on Main, between Adams and Washington.

Mottoes.

The number of mottoes displayed on this occasion was immense. We present a number of them below; they are not selected, but taken haphazard just as we had opportunity to copy them:

"Memphis [illegible] are with the South," "Wright, [illegible], Borland [?], Norris [?];" "Cotton is King;" "Anti-Coercion—Southern Rights and Southern



Honor before Union;" "When the stars are floating high, and the stripes are [illegible], we'll march to the tune of Dixie, and of the Union [illegible];" "The spaniel licks the hand that smites him, the submissionists [illegible]—we won't;" "The [illegible] of the Revolution advocated submission;" "All honor to noble, brave South Carolina;" [illegible] with "Texas O. K.;" "Tennessee, will you go?" "Our rights in a Southern Confederacy;" "No more Compromises;" "Death before negro equality, and no Union with negro-worshippers;" "The sunny South free from oppression;" "Death before oppression;" "Men of the South, stand to your guns and by your rights;" a picture of Emerson Etheridge carrying out his threats of coercion, by firing a house with incendiary torches—on the reverse side, a picture of hanging "a rebel" by the [illegible]—to these the motto is affixed: "This is what the South may expect from abolitionists and their allies;" in the hanging scene is affixed this quotation from [illegible]: "We'll not [illegible] a [illegible], but are only executing the law," "Virginia true to '76;" "Abolitionism is Amalgamation;" "Southern belles and [illegible], how do you like the picture;" "Co-Operation or submission is sympathy with Abolitionism;" "Young men of Tennessee will you submit to Tennessee rule?" "Lincoln and John Brown committed no offense against the United States!; "Abolitionism equalizes colors and countenances, negro socialism, negro fellowship. Bah! Bah!" "State rights, Union in the South;" "Blood will tell, Hamlin the Maine negro;" "No free negro Vice-President for us;" "Andy Johnson worse than Arnold;" "Submissionists now are as Tories in '76;" "Union at this time is submission and cowardice;" "Union with the North played out;" "We will follow our southern sisters;" "Tennessee must not wait to be kicked out of the Union;" "Do not disgrace Tennessee by submitting to Lincoln;" "Too late for co-operation now;" "Watch the traitors among us;" "We go with the seceding States;" "Southern mechanics true to the South;" "We want no Chicago thieves in our party;" "1,500 majority for Wright, Currin, Borland, and Bates, the secession candidates;" "APPEAL, *Avalanche* and the *Enquirer* all go for secession;" "Give us the Constitution as our fathers made it;" "Vote to-morrow for white man's rights;" "Vote the secession ticket;" "Topp will be at the bottom to-morrow."



Concluding Remarks.

The importance and interest of the occasion has induced us to go beyond our usual limits in describing the grand secession demonstration of yesterday, but there are many things we strongly wish to say that must perforce go unsaid. We cannot forbear, however, to add a word on the strict order and gentlemanly conduct that characterized the procession. We cannot describe this feature better than by mentioning the fact that at the time the whole vast procession passed immediately by Odd-Fellows' hall, a Union meeting was carrying on there, when the procession was dispersed, the Union meeting was still peaceably proceeding. The procession was not only a numerous one but it was a highly respectable one; many of our most prominent citizens and men of the highest standing were in the procession, taking an active part in all its

proceedings. In our account of it, we have strictly avoided exaggerations, "to paint the lily and refine the gold" are no more deeds of supererogation than would be the adoption of inflated descriptions in reference to an event that stands so prominent in its simple greatness. We repeat, the great secession procession of 1861 will be remembered by the children of to-day when the snows of ages is upon their brow.

Memphis *Appeal*, February 9, 1861.^{Note 1}

Note 1: As cited in: <http://www.uttyl.edu/vbetts>.

