

dangerous part of the escape involved travel through slave states. Such aid as white abolitionists rendered was available only after the most hazardous part of the fugitive's journey was accomplished.

By no means all abolitionists supported underground railroad activities. Although they were usually ready to help an individual fugitive who happened to come their way, many abolitionists looked askance at efforts to entice slaves to escape, preferring to use legal rather than illegal means to gain their ends. Moreover, many of them felt that assistance to fugitives did not really weaken the institution of slavery, which was their real objective. Nevertheless the fugitive slave issue, especially after the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, and the sight of runaway slaves were powerful factors in converting northerners to antislavery views.

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Old Gentlemen's Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861. By Robert Gray Gunderson. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961. Pp. xiii, 168. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$5.00.)

The title of this book is taken by its author from the characterization which Horace Greeley derisively made of the Washington Peace Conference. It was, in fact, largely an old man's convention as measured by the standards of longevity in those days, for out of the 132 delegates who actually attended, only seven were under forty years of age and twelve were seventy or more.

Representatives from twenty-one states met in Washington on February 4, 1861, for the purpose of applying in the sectional dispute that old American custom of compromising, which had saved the day on several important occasions in the past. But as Professor Hesseltine notes in his Foreword, extremists in both North and South had passed beyond the point where they were willing to give and take.

Though a convention to compromise sectional difficulties had been suggested as early as the summer of 1860, nothing concrete developed until Virginia called for such a convention in January, 1861; but the very day on which the delegates assembled in Willard's Hotel Hall there also assembled in Montgomery, Alabama, delegates who were soon to organize the Confederate States of America. Although some leaders who were setting up the Confederacy were willing to re-enter a "re-constructed" Union, it was now late in the day for compromise.

Of the twenty-one states that sent delegates to Washington, only six were slave states, and all of the free states were not represented. Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan sent no delegates, and the Pacific states were too far away to attend. There was no chance of the convention working out a compromise that would be accepted by northern and southern extremists, who in reality were largely in charge of the destinies of the country, although there is a general opinion among historians, shared by the author of this book, that a majority of the people in both North and South would have accepted a compromise—the compromise that the convention worked out or the Crittenden Com-

promise, which had been devised but not accepted in the Senate. Both the Peace Convention Compromise and the Crittenden Compromise were in essence largely similar—both dealing only with the slavery issue, and if adopted either would have become the Thirteenth Amendment.

The author, Professor Gunderson, of Indiana University's Department of Speech and Theatre, has as a sort of underlying theme which he in no wise belabors, the importance of propaganda, oratory as well as the printed word, in capturing men's hearts and souls. The extremists worked it overtime. Though there were economic issues more fundamental than slavery, yet people could be emotionalized over slavery easier than over any other issue. The moderates or conservatives failed to employ devices to capture people's emotions. This study, based on a widespread search of newspapers, manuscript collections, as well as the records of the convention, offers a valuable approach to the outbreak of the Civil War as well as an excellent analysis of the convention and its activities.

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Prologue to Sumter: The Beginnings of the Civil War from the John Brown Raid to the Surrender of Fort Sumter. Edited by Philip Van Doren Stern. *Civil War Centennial Series.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961. Pp. xvi, 576. Illustrations, maps, index. \$9.95.)

Soldier Life in the Union and Confederate Armies. Edited by Philip Van Doren Stern. *Civil War Centennial Series.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961. Pp. ix, 400. Illustrations, index. \$6.95.)

As the Civil War centennial years begin, noted author and editor Philip Van Doren Stern makes his contribution toward refreshing the general reader's interest in those exciting events between John Brown's attack at Harpers Ferry and the surrender of Major Anderson at Fort Sumter. To arrange and present a meaningful account of the politics and people of that period is the objective of *Prologue to Sumter*. In this work, which is a collection of excerpts from writings pertinent to his topic, Editor Stern draws from diaries, official records, newspapers, and several secondary works. In the main, he chooses well from the mass of materials concerning the ominous period under consideration.

In each of the twelve sections of *Prologue to Sumter* Stern builds up suspense about the fate of the Union as he presents through the words of historians, soldiers, statesmen, and plain folk what was occurring in the North and the South as the two areas drifted helplessly into a brothers' war. Often these accounts are skillfully arranged to bring into sharp focus the theme of a section, building toward the climax at Sumter. This is particularly true of the sections entitled "The Union is Dissolved," "Storm over the White House," and "The Rack of Indecision." It is unfortunate that the section dealing with the South's preparation for war is not broader in scope to include more of what was going on in the several southern states.