C / 6 4

1861 Cooper Harris Incoming Letters 184

SIDE TWO

either a separation or a military despotism but I believe that in a year the north will be tired of advancing money, & if some arrangement can be made, whereby the mouth of the Mississippi can be secured as an outlet to the great west, peace will be made, if the war is kept up it will be by the great north west. It is much easier to remain in the Service than to resign, for in the United States Service there is a certainty of promotion & for the present of pay. The Officers who have given up everything to go in the Southern Service have gone conscientiously, and because they thought it their duty & I respect them. They are wrong & deluded, they are fighting against the Administration not realizing that they are breaking up the best Government that ever existed merely because they are opposed to a four years administration, but they know, every man of sense must know, that we are giving up their temporal interests for a principle. I do not believe in the right of secession, but I think that had the ~~principle of~~ Constitution contained an express provision that a state could not leave the Union save by a right of revolution, & then that the other states or the United States Government could by force of arms compel her to remain, then the Constitution would not have been ratified by the states. It was wise to leave this as an implied power of the General Government, trusting to the growth of strength of the good in establishing it as a fixed & eternal principle. However it is useless to argue the question, my only hope has been that with the march of our armies in overwhelming force through the South, the Union men would be encouraged to speak out, but this hope is past fading. If a regular army under proper discipline could do the work, this might be the result, but with Volunteers every step is marked by pillage & destruction of property, & the Union sentiment will be destroyed as they advance. The monstrous misstatements of the Volunteers & the Northern papers in regard to the atrocities committed by the Confederate troops after the late battle, which are doubtless generally believed in the North, will tend to work up a spirit of even greater hatred & revenge. These accounts are denied by those who were prisoners there & who have escaped, every regular officer to whom I have spoken denies it, & one at least has told me that there was more killing of wounded by our Volunteers than there was by the enemy, that they had great difficulty in preventing the rabble knaves from killing prisoners, but the poison has gone forth in the Northern mind & the antidote will not reach them.