

Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 35
Number 3 *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol 35,
Issue 3

Article 8

1956

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Recommended Citation

Proctor, Samuel (1956) "The Call to Arms: Secession From a Feminine Point of View," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 35: No. 3, Article 8.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol35/iss3/8>

THE CALL TO ARMS

Secession from a Feminine Point of View
edited by SAMUEL PROCTOR

ADDRESS OF THE Ladies of Broward's Neck through Editors of the Papers, to the Politicians of Florida, as to their Present and Future Protection against Abolition Emmissaries of the North.¹

To the Editor of the *Jacksonville Standard*:²

Sir: The ladies of Cedar Creek Precinct, more generally known as Broward's Neck,³ being not unmindful that silence in the affairs of men and in particular that of politics, should be the place and province of females, but could not be expected on the present occasion, from the natural disposition and inquisitiveness of our sex, that we should be mere idle spectators of the passing scenes and excitement which prevails here and throughout the Southern country, involving in obscurity the result of everything that is sacred and dear to the South and taking the past submissive policy of Southern politicians as an index to the future, we will be left at the mercy of a large and hostile majority in Congress against us and our institutions:⁴

1. There is no evidence that this "Letter to the Editor" was ever published. Copies of the *Jacksonville Standard* for the period are not available, and no reference to the letter was found in the contemporary Florida press. The letter was copied from an original manuscript in the Napoleon B. Broward Papers at the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, Florida. According to Broward family tradition, Helen Broward, the daughter of John Broward, wrote this letter in cooperation with her sisters Margaret, Maria and Florida Broward.
2. The *Jacksonville Standard* was a weekly which began publication sometime in the early fall of 1858. Its editor was Dr. Holmes Steele and its publisher was Ramon Canova. J. Pendleton Gaines, Jr., "A Century of Florida Journalism" (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Florida, July, 1949), 33, quotes an undated news item from the *St. Augustine Examiner* to the effect that Steele and an associate later bought Canova's interests in the paper. The *Jacksonville Standard* was described by the Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal* as an "able and staunch Democratic States Rights newspaper."
3. Broward's Neck was the name given to the property owned by Colonel John Broward and members of his family along Cedar Creek and the Trout River in the northern part of Duval County.
4. As a result of the elections of 1858 the Democratic Party lost control of Congress. The South faced the realization that the balance in area,

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Under such circumstances we think it proper we should meet and consult together and through you and your contemporary papers ask those we have a right to look to for protection and safety what they intend to do to attain that object. Will they still remain in the Union and trust to the tender mercies of Yankees and protect us by smoky resolutions and compromise, or will they avail themselves of the means given them by God and nature and defend themselves? We are now reaping the fruits of the former policy. The doctrine of abolition laid down in the incendiary book of Helper's is before us and its emissaries are illuminating our country from Texas to Florida.⁵

We hope the fact we have referred to is sufficient apology for our meeting and consultation, and hope to be indulged in a few further remarks on this subject and its ultimate result on ourselves and posterity. And as we are plain country women which compose this meeting and have not yet learned nor wish to learn the art of "thinking one thing and another telling," but say what we think, we must speak in plain terms of the Submissionists and Unionists in our midst. And if any person is desirous to know how we came by the information to which we allude, we tell them in advance, by reading the newspapers and public journals for the ten years past and when we read we do so with inquiring minds peculiar to our sex.⁶ Have you forgotten Mother Eve? If

population, wealth and power had been tipped even more heavily in favor of the North. The election results gave a strong impetus to the Southern disunionist movement. Allan Nevins in *The Emergence of Lincoln* (New York, 1950), I, 404-409, analyzes the effects of the election on Southern attitudes.

5. Hinton Rowan Helper, a North Carolinian, in 1857, wrote *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*. Almost overnight the book became a bestseller in the North, and rivaled Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in popularity. Using citations from the census of 1850, Helper made startling comparisons between the wealth of the North and South. He blamed the backwardness of the South on the impoverishment of free labor due to the competition of slave labor. Helper violently attacked the slaveholders and advocated the abolition of slavery, not so much to help the Negro but to improve the economic position of the poor white. The book became a campaign document for the newly formed Republican Party, and its merits and demerits were argued in Congress and by newspapers all over the country. In the South, Helper was denounced as a traitor, he was hung and burned in effigy, and many Southern legislatures passed laws forbidding the possession or sale of the book.
6. During the 1850's, newspapers were indeed the "public educators" for most of the people of Florida. According to the United States

so, we introduce you to her descendants, lovers of knowledge, whose hearts ever teem with gratitude to editors and all literary writers for our information. But our condition is unlike hers. She plotted her destruction; we strive for the salvation of the garden of America, by attempting to remove the mote from your eye. Yes, what we read we analyse well, hold little councils of our own, and are soon lost in thought, fancy ourselves Statesmen and think we will avenge all wrongs. But alas! the spell is broken, we cast them aside in hopeless despondency. We do not read as the gentlemen frequently do, a few lines, throw the paper down, light a cigar and walk off, without inquiring whether the printer's bill has been paid or not. Were it our place to subscribe for the paper the printer's bill would never go unpaid.

As the gentlemen are prone to find fault with the ladies on such occasions we hope they will hear us with patience whilst we remind them of their faults on a large scale, so large in its ultimate consequences no one can see the future result.

All will admit the acquisition of California was the one boon we acquired by the Mexican War and for which hundreds of Southern women were left widows and their children fatherless. When it was organized by an Act of Congress the Southerner, by reason of his slave property, was denied a residence there, and the widow of a soldier who died for its acquisition, if she possessed slave property, was also refused a residence. To this outrage the Southern Members of Congress and State Legislatures, after sputtering and muttering a while, compromised without getting anything and thereby planted the seed for future aggression.

When the Territory the Kansas applied for admission with a Constitution permitting slavery, President Buchanan, with the sagacity of a just and profound Statesman, foreseeing the storm that would arise from the refusal by Congress of their just demand, sent a special message to Congress for its admission. It was

Census of 1860 Florida had twenty newspapers - seventeen of which were weeklies, one bi-weekly, and two tri-weeklies. William W. Davis in *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913), 42, says that by the time the campaign of 1860 got underway there were a total of twenty-two newspapers in the state, seventeen of which were Democratic.

referred to a committee in both branches of Congress and both committees recommended its admission as a slave state. Congress refused its admission on that ground and our Southern members submitted again to a compromise and the Southern State Legislatures again submitted to the insult and injury, with all these facts looking the South in the face. A few women asked them could our condition be worsted by a change.

In our humble opinion the single issue is now presented to the Southern people, will they submit to all the degradation threatened by the North toward our slave property and be made to what England has made white people experience in the West India Islands - the negroes afforded a place on the same footing with their former owners, to be made legislators, to sit as Judges. Shall a sister behold her brother doing military duty in the same rank and file with the negroes and bear the application the English give theirs, - the spotted regiment! Think, mothers! What would you feel should you view your sons in such a condition. And yet you hear people around you advocating union! Facts are sometimes stranger than fiction. We hear men, and strange to say, Southern men, too, after all the aggression against the South, and threatening the final emancipation of our slave property, which would carry in its pathway all the evils of Haiti to the whites, and yet they are devoted to the Union and at the same time willing to dissolve the marriage union on frivolous pretenses, which they have solemnly promised before God and their countrymen to keep inviolate.

Some of the Union submissionists in our midst begin to be afraid that if the South seceded from the North they would suffer from the want of clothing. It is not our province or inclination on this occasion to play the politician, but we will take occasion to say to all such alarmists that in our humble opinion secession from the North is the only practical way to bring about the long desired trade direct with Europe. In that event the European merchants would import to our Southern ports an abundance of as good clothing and on as good terms as could be gotten from Yankeedom, which we could easily and directly pay for with our cotton. Which trade once established no power on earth could prevent or interrupt.

To our young friends who are disposed to defend the rights of the South at all hazards, fear not on that subject for when that

day shall have come we will like our Revolutionary matrons forego our amusements, lay aside our musical instruments and apply ourselves to our cards, spinning wheels and looms, and with the abundance of cotton and wool at our command, supply you with clothing you would not be ashamed to wear. And when by your valour peace is restored to our firesides we will welcome your return by striking a new and sweeter chord to the glories of the South.

And to our agitated matrons, here and throughout the South, we would recommend to reserve their crimolines to present to our Southern Politicians who have compromised away the rights of the South.

Mr. Editor, will you and your contemporaries have the kindness to give this article early consideration in your papers and oblige.

THE LADIES OF BROWARD'S NECK

*Broward's Neck, Duval County,
East Florida, Nov. 6, 1860*