

Autobiography of Jubal Early

1912

I believe that the world has never produced a body of men superior, in courage, patriotism, and endurance, to the private soldiers of the Confederate armies. I have repeatedly seen those soldiers submit, with cheerfulness, to privations and hardships which would appear to be almost incredible; and the wild cheers of our brave men, when their thin lines were sent back opposing hosts of Federal troops, staggering, reeling and flying, have often thrilled every fibre in my heart. I have seen, with my own eyes, ragged, barefooted, and hungry Confederate soldiers perform deeds which, if performed in days of yore by mailed warriors in glittering armor, would have inspired the harp of the minstrel and the pen of the poet.

Having been a witness of and participant in great events, I have given a statement of what I saw and did, for the use of the future historian. I have not undertaken to speculate as to the causes of our failures, as I have seen abundant reason for it in the tremendous odds brought against us. [...]

During the war, slavery was used as a catch-word to arouse the passions of a fanatical mob, and to some extent the prejudices of the civilized world were excited against us; but the war was not made on our part for slavery. [...] The generation in the Southern States which defended their country in the late war, found amongst them, in a civilized and Christianized condition, 4,000,000 of the descendants of those degraded Africans. The Creator of the Universe had stamped them, indelibly, with a different color and an inferior physical and mental organization. [...] This immense number of people could not have been transported back to the wilds from which their ancestors were taken, or, if they could have been, it would have resulted in their relapse into barbarism. [...] The conditions of domestic slavery, as it existed in the South, had not only resulted in a great improvement in the moral and physical condition of the negro race, but had furnished a class of laborers as happy and contented as any in the world, if not more so. [...] Nevertheless, the struggle made by the people of the South was not for the institution of slavery, but for the inestimable right of self-government, against the domination of a fanatical faction at the North; and slavery was the mere occasion of the development of the antagonism between the two sections. That right of self-government has been lost, and slavery violently abolished.

When the passions and infatuations of the day shall have been dissipated by time, and all the results of the late war shall have passed into irrevocable history, the future chronicler of that history will have

a most important duty to perform, and posterity, while poring over
45 its pages, will be lost in wonder at the follies and crimes committed
in this generation.

Source: Jubal Anderson Early, *Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative
of the War between the States* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company,
50 1912), available online at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/early/>.