remained in session until the telegraph had brought assurances that Lincoln had secured a sufficient number of electors to ensure his election ; it then summoned a State convention and adjourned. The State convention, which is a legislative body chosen for a special purpose, met December 20, and unanimously passed an “ ordinance of secession,” repealing the Acts by which the State had ratified the constitution and its amendments (§ 108), and dissolving “the Union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of the United States of America.” The convention took all steps neces­sary to make the State ready for war, and adjourned. Similar ordinances were passed by conventions in Missis­sippi (January 9, 1861), Florida (January 10), Alabama (January 11), Georgia (January 18), Louisiana (January 23), and Texas (February 1).

1. The opposition in the South did not deny the right to secede, but the expediency of its exercise. Their effort was to elect delegates to the State conventions who would vote not to secede. They were beaten, says A. H. Stephens, by the cry that the States “could make better terms out of the Union than in it.” That is, the States were to withdraw individually, suspend the functions of the Federal Government within their jurisdiction for the time, consider maturely any proposals for guarantees for their rights in the Union, and return as soon as satis­factory guarantees should be given. A second point to be noted is the difference between the notions of a State convention prevalent in the North and in the South. The Northern State convention was generally considered as a preliminary body, whose action was not complete or valid until ratified by a popular vote. The Southern State convention was looked upon as the incarnation of the sovereignty of the State, and its action was not supposed to need a popular ratification. When the conventions of the seceding States had adopted the ordinances of secession, they proceeded to other business. They appointed delegates, who met at Montgomery, the capital of Alabama, February 4, formed a provisional constitution for the “ Confederate States,” chose a provisional president and vice-president (Jefferson Davis and A. H. Stephens), and established an army, treasury, and other executive departments. The president and vice-president were inaugurated February 18. The permanent constitution, adopted in March, was copied from that of the United States, with variations meant to maintain State sovereignty, to give the cabinet seats in Congress, to prevent the grant of bounties or any pro­tective features in the tariff or the maintenance of internal improvements at general expense, and to “ recognize and protect” “ the institution of negro slavery, as it now exists in the Confederate States.”
2. Under what claim of constitutional right all this was done passes comprehension. That a State convention should have the final power of decision on the question which it was summoned to consider is quite as radical doctrine as has yet been heard of ; that a State conven­tion, summoned to consider the one question of secession, should go on, with no appeal to any further popular authority or mandate, to send delegates to meet those of other States and form a new national government, which could only exist by warring on the United States, is a novel feature in American constitutional law. It was revolution or nothing. Only in Texas, where the call of the State convention was so irregular that a popular vote could hardly be escaped, was any popular vote allowed. Elsewhere, the functions of the voter ceased when he voted for delegates to the State convention ; he could only look on helplessly while that body went on to constitute him a citizen of a new nation of which he had not dreamed when he voted.
3. The border States were in two tiers—North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas next to the seceding States, and Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri next to the free States. None of these were willing to secede. There was, however, one force which might draw them into secession. A State which did not wish to secede, but believed in State sovereignty and the abstract right of secession, would be inclined to take up arms to resist any attempt by the Federal Government to coerce a seceding State. In this way, in the following spring, the original seven seceding States were reinforced by four of the border States (§ 267), making their final number eleven.
4. In the North and West surprisingly little atten­tion was given to the systematic course of procedure along the Gulf. The people of those sections were very busy ; they had heard much of this talk before, and looked upon it as a kind of stage-thunder, the inevitable accompaniment of recent presidential elections ; and they expected the difficulty to be settled in some way. Re­publican politicians, with the exception of a few, were inclined to refrain from public declarations of intention. Some of them, such as Seward, showed a disposition to let the “ erring sisters ” depart in peace, expecting to make the loss good by accessions from Canada. A few, like Chandler, believed that there would be “blood-letting,” but most of them were still doubtful as to the future. Democratic politicians were hide-bound by their repetition of the phrase “voluntary Union” (§ 180) ; they had not yet hit upon the theory which carried the War Demo­crats through the final struggle, that the sovereign State of New York could make war upon the sovereign State of South Carolina for the unfriendly act of secession, and that the war was waged by the non-seceding against the seceding States. President Buchanan publicly condemned the doctrine of secession, though he added a confession of his inability to see how secession was to be prevented if a State should be so wilful as to attempt it. Congress did nothing, except to admit Kansas as a free State and adopt the protective Morrill tariff (§ 276) ; even after its mem­bers from the seceding States had withdrawn, those who remained made no preparations for conflict, and, at their adjournment in March 1861, left the Federal Government naked and helpless before its enemies.
5. The only sign of life in the body politic, the half-awakened word of warning from the democracy of the North and West, was its choice of governors of States. A remarkable group of men, soon to be known as the “ war governors,”—Washburn of Maine, Fairbanks of Vermont, Goodwin of New Hampshire, Andrew (p. 787) of Massachusetts, Sprague of Rhode Island, Buckingham (p. 788) of Connecticut, Morgan (p. 790) of New York Olden of New Jersey, Curtin of Pennsylvania, Dennison of Ohio, Morton (p. 790) of Indiana, Yates of Illinois, Blair of Michigan, Randall of Wisconsin, Kirkwood of Iowa, and Ramsey of Minnesota, —held the executive powers of the Northern States in 1861-62. Some of these governors, such as Andrew and Buckingham, as they saw the struggle come nearer, went so far as to order the pur­chase of warlike material for their States on their private responsibility, and their action saved days of time. And at all times they were admirably prompt, methodical, clear­sighted, and intensely devoted to their one duty.
6. The little army of the United States had been almost put out of consideration ; wherever its detachments could be found in the South they were surrounded and forced to surrender and to be transferred to the North. After secession, and in some of the States even before it, the forts, arsenals, mints, custom-houses, ship-yards, and public property of the United States had been seized by