

PREFACE.

UNDER a solemn sense of duty to my unhappy country, and to the brave soldiers who fought under me, as well as to myself, the following pages have been written.

When the question of practical secession from the United States arose, as a citizen of the State of Virginia, and a member of the Convention called by the authority of the Legislature of that State, I opposed secession with all the ability I possessed, with the hope that the horrors of civil war might be averted, and that a returning sense of duty and justice on the part of the masses of the Northern States, would induce them to respect the rights of the people of the South. While some Northern politicians and editors, who subsequently took rank among the most unscrupulous and vindictive of our enemies, and now hold me to be a traitor and rebel, were openly and sedulously justifying and encouraging secession, I was labouring honestly and earnestly to preserve the Union.

As a member of the Virginia Convention, I voted against the ordinance of secession on its passage by that body, with the hope that, even then, the collision of arms might be avoided, and some satisfactory adjustment arrived at. The adoption of that ordinance wrung from me bitter tears of grief; but I at once recognized my duty to abide the decision of my native State, and to defend her soil against invasion. Any scruples which I may have entertained as to the right of secession, were soon dispelled by the mad, wicked, and unconstitutional measures of the authorities at Washington, and the frenzied