

Fort Randall N.D.

1<sup>st</sup> Lieut Klee

Dear George

By the last mail I received yours of the 11<sup>th</sup> ult. in which you say that South Carolina will secede and that all the Cotton States will follow on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> March next. You then say "If they do, what course will you pursue?" I would like an answer to this question and if you will be governed by circumstances, tell me what they are. You being an officer of the Army I am particularly to hear from you what course you will pursue in case of a secession of the Southern States.

Your questions are so comprehensive that, in order, to give you a clear idea of my views and intentions, to state my convictions, inclinations and intentions somewhat in detail.

In the first place I have no sympathy with sectional parties North or South - the Abolition and secession parties are the mutual growth of each other, yet I cannot but acknowledge that the South has just cause of complaint. The North has elected Lincoln upon a sectional issue - upon a sectional platform - pledged to carry

out swords "irrepressible conflict" and have nullified the laws of Congress enacted to protect Southern Rights - have made war upon the interests and domestic institutions of the Slave States. All this I do not consider ~~yet~~ sufficient cause for rebellion for such is secession until we seek redress and protection by legal means and within the Union. Secession should be the ultimate Ratio quertum, Rebellion against tyranny I consider justified by necessity - when all other means of redress have been tried. I believe we can get redress within the Union - let us demand it legally but earnestly and unitedly - if we fail we can appeal to the God of battles - feeling justified before God and having the sympathies of the civilized world. Until we make that appeal it is my duty as an officer of the Army and as a citizen of the United States to be loyal to the legal government and to obey all legal and proper orders. If then Lincoln has been constitutionally elected the President of the Union - it is our duty to see him inaugurated - the South should insist upon this - should he violate his oath of office insist upon his being punished - should he use his power to oppress the South -

Though Constitutionally we are absolved from  
our allegiance and rebellion becomes a  
sacred duty should we fail in getting  
redress. While we show ourselves a law-  
abiding people - who should unitedly  
demand redress - we would get it - we have  
in the free States more conservative votes  
than all the votes of the slave States.  
You may ask how we are to proceed - I  
leave that to wiser and more experienced  
heads than mine - I prefer a convention  
to amend the Constitution. Virginia, Kentucky  
and Tennessee - the three great conservative  
States of the Union should call together  
their Legislatures and act in concert to  
save the Union and protect every section  
from oppression - if necessary let them do  
this armed to the teeth.

All my blood are South - My home is South  
My interests and inclinations are South -  
I believe that Slavery is a blessing to the  
Negro yet I should be sorry to see a  
Separate Republic established upon  
the sole idea of Negro Slavery. Tennessee  
is my home and never would I draw  
my sword against her - when she is  
defending her Rights - Sooner would I return  
my commission to the President and  
Retire to my Mountain home and

labor for my daily bread - Justice  
would I feel justified in my own eyes  
should I for office sake allow myself  
to be used against my neighbors in  
an unjust cause - yet I feel it a duty  
to shrink from no duty that the honor  
or interests of the Union demands -

I should never willingly see Northern  
troops sent to coerce the South -

Now as to what I will do - I shall  
stand by the Union as long as I can  
do so with honor and the Union answers  
the purposes for which it was instituted -  
When I can no longer serve the Union  
with approval of my own conscience I  
shall return my commission to  
the President - Return would a be  
a Rebel - Should there be a peaceful  
separation I go with my State - When  
my State wants my services I shall  
be on hand - As to circumstances -  
we have to be governed by them -  
What these circumstances may happen  
to be I cannot foresee - what in these  
troubled times come upon us unawares -  
I believe I can safely say that I do not