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CAUSES OF THE WAR.

SPEECH

OF

HON. GEORGE BLISS,

OF OHIO,

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MARCH 12, 1864.

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S P E E C H .

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. BLISS said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I propose, according to the custom of this House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, to submit some remarks upon the message and proclamation of the President which were communicated to Congress at the commencement of the present session, and to briefly consider some topics presented therein, which are of vast importance to the millions of people who are represented upon this floor. The message and proclamation, communicated together, and involving the same subjects, are substantially one document, and in my remarks will be so treated. The subjects therein presented are such as give rise to the widest difference of political opinion possible among our people—a portion of whom, and probably a majority of this body, profess to receive the present and future policy declared by the President with satisfaction, and some with admiration; while all rational men, who have not been indoctrinated with the revolutionary views of the so-called Republican party, contemplate them with amazement and fear, and well may they tremble in view of such enormous assumptions of ungranted power.

The Constitution of the United States, which in better times was admitted to be the paramount law of this land, in defining the powers and duties of the President, provides that—

“He shall from time to time give to the Congress information of the state of the Union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.”

In accordance with this provision of the Constitution many statesmanlike papers, under the title of message, were by former Presidents communicated to Congress, and thence to the people at large. They exhibited the onward march of an exceedingly happy and prosperous people toward the attainment of unexampled dignity and power. In times of peace and in times of war they showed the admirable working of our wise and beneficent Government. The well adjusted powers of the Constitution were found to be sufficient for every national emergency. The Chief Magistrate had no occasion for the exercise of even doubtful powers. It is refreshing to withdraw as far as possible, for a

brief space, our contemplations from the present condition to read anew those glowing descriptions of the country's prosperity. But those halcyon days of the Republic are past, and a message of a different type now claims our consideration.

The President is not required to inform Congress of the facts as to the condition or integrity of what was once the Union—its broken fragments are as visible to us as to him; but the duty of his office is, by the application of the wisdom and statesmanship which his position guaranties that he shall possess, to advise the legislative department and the people of the best and surest means of rescuing the country from a terrible dilemma in which it has no aid of past experience; to show the means, if such there be, by which that Union to which the Constitution calls his attention, and which has crumbled under his guardianship, may be restored. I do not call upon the President to give a history of the concatenated circumstances which led to the dissolution. I do not think that it would be a pleasant task for him to write the narrative, nor do I think it would be sufficiently authentic when written.

It would be profitable, however, for us all to pause and consider the causes which have brought our country to its present unfortunate condition, and to arise from the reflection with a solemn purpose to recognize the instructive truths of our history, and, without party passion or selfishness, which we cannot afford to indulge in these times, to set ourselves by common consent about the work of replacing the Government upon its old foundations, to the end that its old prosperity may revive.

There is no difficulty in determining the source of the evil. It is the temporary success in the councils of the nation of principles and policy which are in irreconcilable antagonism to the Government. Upon that antagonism the present Administration came into power, and thus it may be seen what force has begotten a purpose to change the principles of the Government into conformity to the notions and advantages of a successful party. If an intelligent stranger desired to discover the root of our national difficulties, he would naturally inquire into the history, character, and action of the political parties into which our people have been divided. He would readily ascertain that the party

called Democratic had administered the Government with great success from its early years, and with but little interruption, and had on all occasions adhered strictly to the letter and spirit of the Constitution, and secured to the nation the blessings which, faithfully supported, it was competent to bestow. On the other hand, he would learn the history of a party of perpetual opposition, constantly vilifying the administration of Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson, and of the later Democratic Presidents, chameleonizing itself as often as its inflexible purpose of opposition required. He would learn also how all opposition to that party was unavailing while anything like the true principles of the Constitution and Government were acknowledged; and this research would bring him down with the current of events to about the time of the Chicago convention, where form and effect were given to the anti-democratic sentiment to achieve a victory over the principles of the Constitution and to verify the apprehensions of our great statesman, now gone, who, in words as true as inspired prophecy, foretold the dangers of a sectional party's success. And there I leave the supposed inquirer, with his conclusion to be inferred.

In the year of our Lord 1860, a party recently yecked Republican assembled in convention at Chicago to nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. That memorable convention was composed of specimens of all the disintegrated factional organizations which, under too many names to be here recited, had theretofore been fighting against the gallant and successful Democracy. The newly aggregated party was strong in numbers and dangerous in its reckless aspiration for success. It was said by a maximist of the olden time, that the honest men of a nation were too strong for the rogues; but he lived in too early an age to see the demonstrations of our later times. That convention perceived the imprudence of placing in nomination any man who had been conspicuous in his opposition to the great principles which had so often been sustained by the people at the ballot-box in the defeat of their candidates. They had learned shrewdness by experience, and following its suggestions, ignored the claims of their statesmen, who, in their extensive dealing in political affairs, had made records by which they might be judged. So the hopes of our learned Secretary of State and of the accomplished Secretary of the Treasury, whose *back* only is *green* while his head is supposed to be ripe, both of whom it was understood aspired to the nomination, were adjudged to be too conspicuous to insure success; and this I give as a part of the solution of the problem of the presidential milk in the Lincoln cocoon.

The effective element employed in the campaign was anti-slavery—unmixed and unadulterated abolitionism—looking to no consequences, except to defy them, embarrassed

by none of the ordinary questions of State policy or political economy. Reason and argument were to be conquered by concentrated fanaticism.

When the struggling Democrats cried out for Douglas and the Union, and admonished them that their success as a sectional party arrayed in deadly hostility to the constitutional rights of the Southern States would lead to the disruption of the Union, they returned only scoffs for answer, and stimulated their idolatry by worshipping short pieces of rails as the veritable rails which their candidate had split.

When the unfortunate rupture occurred in the Charleston convention, the Republicans hailed the event with great joy as a harbinger of their success. What effect it might have upon the stability of the Union was with them an inferior consideration; they only contemplated its effect upon the election.

Under these circumstances, which are well known to the country, the Chicago nominee was elected by a minority vote of the people of the United States. That his election was a triumph of northern sectional principles is none the less true because it might have been prevented by the cordial coaction of the southern with the northern Democrats. That coaction was prevented by the supposed permanent predominance of abolitionism in the North. Nearly all of the free States were under Republican rule, and had enacted legislation against the constitutional rights of the South. It must be admitted, because it is true, that the arrogant and unlawful invasions of the predominating party in the North had led the southern people to believe that under that predominance they could by no possibility enjoy the guaranteed privileges of the Constitution. In this they were undoubtedly right; but they were wrong in the belief that the conservative principles of the Democracy were prostrated beyond the hope of redemption in the North. I believe that had they stood and acted in good faith with the northern conservatives, who were friends alike to all sections of the country, victory would ere long have rewarded the common effort and purged the northern counsels of the abolition malady. The election of Douglas, if it had not settled the slavery controversy, would at least have beaten down the demon, and the country would have been comparatively quiet for a while. We, therefore, of the free States who never sought to abridge the rights of any section, or to interfere with its local institutions, have much more right to complain of the defection of the southern people than have those who by a long and persistent practice of aggressions upon them provoked them to their criminal act.

The President elect in due time took upon himself the functions of his high office with many of the political ideas which Americans naturally derive from the principles of our Government; and although of strong abolition proclivities, he seemed to have little con-

ception of the extreme requirements which would be made of him by the party to whom he was indebted for his position. He seemed to see this Government as organized under, and with powers limited and defined by, a written Constitution. The miserable subterfuge of a war power, by which a sworn officer could innocently violate his oath, and hold in contempt all the laws of his country, had not then been invented. He saw not, because there was not, any bypath by which to travel around the plain dictates of the Constitution. So, when civil war ensued, people were called upon to incur the hardships and dangers of the long march and the battle-field, and all that constitutes "the tug of war," to "restore the Union," which still existed in law, although it was broken in fact—not to pave the way for a new regime which should open the territories of the South to Northern plunderers; it was to "enforce the Constitution and the laws," which were claimed on all hands to be as obligatory upon the people of the seceded States as they had ever been; "to put down the rebellion." All and each of these forms of expression imported the enforcement of simply constitutional authority over those subjects who were in rebellion against a Government to which they, like other citizens, owed allegiance. And the President promised and assured the people over and over, and declared to the world through his minister of the state, that the war should be prosecuted for that purpose, and for no other. The President seemed to be sincere in these pledges; to keep them was only his sworn duty. The people, who loved the Union, and were willing to incur every necessary sacrifice for its preservation, tendered to the avowed Union policy of the President their united support. The military skill and ability of the country pertained principally to Democrats, who promptly tendered their services to the Government, and the conservative and unsectional men of the States rallied to the standard of the Union. Half a million men might as well have been had as seventy-five thousand at the first call. Such was the spirit of the war then; such was the spirit of the President's proclamations then. Alas! to what unknown quarter has that spirit fled? Where is the fulfillment of the pledge? Where is the motive to vindicate the Constitution and laws? Where the purpose to restore the Union?

"Gone, glimmering through the dreams of things that were."

In that portion of the message which is given under the name of "proclamation," as well as in the message proper, the President assumes an entirely new position upon all the important political considerations which have grown out of the war. He takes upon himself the arbitrament of all the civil rights of the people of the States which have been or may be conquered by the arms of the Federal Government, claiming for himself the power to dictate the form and character of the gov-

ernments, the creation of which, by what is called the process of reconstruction, will be permitted by the Executive, and also the terms and conditions upon which such governments may be formed and become States of the Union. They are to be Governments, not, in the language of the Declaration of Independence, "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," but governments imposed upon the people by the omnipotence of the President. The President consents that the new States thus to be produced may take the names and geographical limits of the old States, but the plan and principle of their formation, as proposed, is as thoroughly anti-republican as it is absurd and impracticable. Perceiving that no considerable portion of the Southern people will voluntarily comply with his proposal to them to abandon their constitutional rights in reference to slave labor, and take oaths to sustain his emancipation proclamations, the President announces the strange purpose of sustaining and enforcing such governments whenever a small minority—one-tenth of the voters of a seceded State—shall elect to comply with his aforesaid terms. Such a scheme is subversive to all our ideas of a popular republican government, the sovereignty of a State being committed, not to the people, to be exercised by the voice of a majority, but to the inconsiderable fraction of one-tenth of the people. It would, of course, require a huge army in every such State to preserve such a flagitious Government; and its maintenance, if it were possible, which it clearly is not, would be at the sacrifice of every principle of the Constitution and of human liberty.

That there may be factions of men in the seceded States, consisting of the original inhabitants and corrupt Northern miscreants who will betake themselves thither to share in the mighty plunder of commonwealths, who will consent to the revolting scheme, is rendered probable by the eagerness with which a great predominating party seizes upon and cherishes the elements and policy of disorganization and ruin. And is such to be the fruit of executive proclamations? Why, sir, there was a time when proclamations from the highest authority called upon us as a people favored of Heaven to assemble to express our thanks to a beneficent Providence for his blessings, to observe the solemn ordinances of fasting and prayer, or to perform some high political duty involved in our relations to the State; but now they come careering in their wild course through the political firmament, like comets in the heavens, rushing through the constellations without any fixed orbit. They come to herald the disorganization and crash of our political system.

What has occurred of late, I ask, to confer upon the President, or any other citizen, this enormous power to deal with the very framework of our Government as he pleases? He

has declared, on divers occasions and in the most solemn manner, since his inauguration and during the war, that he had no legal power to abolish slavery, and pledged himself to the faithful execution of the fugitive slave law. We are obliged from his own words to take it as admitted by him that he has no warrant of law for the late edicts which he has proclaimed. I know that a certain class of higher-law men, more inventive than the President, harp and carp about what they call a war power, which, as they claim, relieves the Administration from all the injunctions and restrictions of the paramount law of the realm, and that by the force of extreme pressure, accomplished by persuasions and menaces, they have misled the President to depart from the constitutional policy which he promised to observe. To their influence we may impute the suspension, or rather the annihilation, of the *habeas corpus*, the trampling and overthrow of the jurisdiction of the courts, the suppression of the freedom of the press, the denial to private citizens of the protection of their own laws, their arrest without process or charge, even, of treason, or other crime defined by law, their cruel imprisonment and banishment for no other cause than the exercise of free speech in criticising the policy and conduct of the agents in whose hands the people have temporarily confided the defined powers of the Government. That extravagant sentiment is often expressed on this floor. The gentleman from Pennsylvania who represents the great manufacturing city of that State, and who has maintained a high standing in the legal profession, in a speech recently delivered in this House said:

"The war power of the Constitution is equivalent to the Roman dictatorship. It is, however, here as there, the extreme medicine of the Constitution, and not its daily bread. The mission of a republic is peace; war is a state of violence. To conduct an army upon the principles of republican equality would be fatal to all subordination and discipline. For such an exigency as this the normal condition of the Republic will not serve. Its very organization would forbid it. War is anti-republican in its effects, and can only be successfully waged on anti-republican principles. While it prevails the law itself must almost necessarily be silent."

If these words have any significance they mean that the Constitution invests the President in time of war with unlimited dictatorial power—power over the lives, liberties, and property of the people. It is wonderful how the heated furnace of party politics operates upon men's opinions. If a student, three years ago, under examination by a committee of lawyers, had expressed such an opinion, he could not have been admitted to the bar of any county court in the United States.

In answer to these extravagant and illogical assumptions which, once admitted, would transform an officer of the Government of strictly limited powers into a despot of unlimited powers, it is only necessary to refer to that Constitution which is authoritatively declared to be the paramount law in war and peace, and which

declares that no power beyond the letter of its grant exists in or can be exercised by the Federal Government or its officers.

The eleventh clause of the eighth section of article one of the Constitution declares that—

"The Congress shall have power to declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water."

The twelfth clause adds:

"To raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years."

The thirteenth:

"To provide and maintain a navy."

The fourteenth:

"To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces."

Fifteenth:

"To provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions."

Sixteenth:

"To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively the appointment of the officers, and the authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress."

In the foregoing clauses of the Constitution is contained the war power, and the only war power there is in this nation. It is vested in Congress and not in the President. In war he does not rightfully become a dictator, for the seventh clause of section one of the second article provides in reference to the President as follows:

"Before he enters on the execution of his office, he shall take the following oath or affirmation: 'I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.'"

So the Constitution, and not its sworn vassal and supporter, is the dictator. Immediately following the form and requisition of the oath in the first clause of section two of the last named article, the military power of the sworn President is thus defined:

"The President shall be Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States and of the militia of the several States when called into the actual service of the United States."

The obligation of the oath extends to all the official action of the President, either as a military commander or an executive officer of the general laws. No man in the government is bound by stronger obligations than he to act in subserviency to the law. So much for the painted bubble and dishonest pretense of a war power which makes a sworn subordinate superior to the Constitution. Sir,

if the framers of that wise instrument were still in life can you not imagine with what deep disgust they would hear such heresies proclaimed by degenerate posterity upon the floor of the Congress which they established?

A special pretense is assumed by the party in power as a sufficient justification for the unconstitutional acts of the Administration in managing the public policy. It is the pretense that slavery in the States was and is the culpable cause of the war, and that slavery, therefore, must be abolished at all hazards as a condition of peace. It is a convenient apology for revolutionists. It is inculcated by their press, in their sermons, and speeches; it is heard in this body and in the Senate. But the falsehood of the assertion is apparent to any man who is willing to think rightly upon the subject. It might as reasonably be said that money is the cause of robbery, larceny, and many other crimes; that human existence is the cause of murders. The right of the people of certain States in slave labor was recognized and guaranteed by the Constitution, and is so to-day if the Government of the United States has an existence. When this fact was regarded we had no civil war or tendency to war. The free States grew and prospered, and the slave States kept pace with them in the onward march of prosperity, dignity, and empire. The unprecedented development, expansion, and prosperity of the country under the Government of 1787 proves that there was no element in its Constitution hostile to its dignity, or progress, or perpetuity. Before it was shattered by Northern fanatical sectionalism it had accomplished more for the benefit of mankind than all other existing governments in the world. It needed only the fealty of its subjects to be immortal.

Sir, I have witnessed the progress of abolitionism from the very commencement of its career in this country. Long before the number of its devotees had become sufficient to invest it with political influences, those devotees seemed to exclude from their thoughts every political consideration except the abstract idea that slavery in the States must be abolished. That one absorbing thought governed all their political action. They waited, but not inactively or vainly, for the time to come when they should be strong enough to induce some party to secure their additional strength by helping them to accomplish their object. Meetings of a semi-religious character, consisting of great numbers, were at length held, in which expert lecturers appealed to the sympathies of the people, giving the most exaggerated and false accounts of slavery and the cruelty of slaveholders, assailing the Constitution and Union as works of the devil, villifying Washington and other patriots of his time as man-stealers, singing disunion songs, into which they had degraded the sacred hymns by parody, and finally closing the exciting entertainment with prayer to God to aid them in destroying the wicked Union, and hur-

rying on, like an organized band of showmen, to meet some other congregation ready to be fanaticized. I saw the process, and, I think, the motive of the absorption of this element of dissension and treason by a great and powerful party, which had discovered the efficient use to which it could be put, and then I saw a great portion of the preachers of the Gospel and the congregations over which they had influence fall down before the beast and worship it. I saw it grow strong enough to grasp the reins of government in nearly all the non-slaveholding States, and then, as before stated, came legislation in those States in direct and intentional derogation of the known constitutional rights of the people of the slave States. Judges in my own State made decisions against the plain letter of the Constitution of the United States and the acts of Congress, when the rights of Southern people were in question. I will specify one case only, although I might others. In the county of Loraine, an abolition judge, simply, I suppose, to show his fealty to abolition at the expense of a violation of his official oath, charged a grand jury to pay no attention to any act of Congress for the rendition of fugitive slaves, because all such acts were unconstitutional and void, although he knew that the Federal Courts had held them valid. In that way, sir, the Northern anti-slavery men treated the compromises of the Constitution on which the Union was based.

Relieved of Southern opposition it was an easy work for the anti-slavery party to win the election, and apparently with but little care for the evil consequences which might result they proceeded to accomplish the great purpose in which alone they were all united, of taking the Federal Government into their hands. And when they had accomplished their object, and the well-founded fears of their opponents that secession would follow was realized, many of their politicians and the leaders of the abolition press received and published the news of that secession and commented upon it with all the coolness of men who realize the foreseen result of a process which they have deliberately applied. The *New York Tribune*, the great mouth-piece of Eastern abolitionism, the *Cincinnati Commercial*, and the *Ohio State Journal*, two leading abolition papers in my State, were in favor of submitting to secession, probably for the reason that they regarded it as a natural result of the success they had helped to achieve.

It will be seen from the foregoing history of events what was the cause of the war; that it was not slavery as established by law, but that anti-slavery as a political element combining for one bad purpose all the incongruous recusants to the Constitution who, like the followers of Lucifer, were ready to rebel against any Government they could not control, and acting upon the pretendedly humane policy of abolition, which is really subversive of law, and revolutionary, was and is the cause of the war. It

begot secession and secession involved war; therefore, it is the prime cause of both evils.

As in these degenerated days repentance of sin is decidedly out of fashion with the party in power, and as the worst of Republican sinners, when rebuked by a Democrat, are wont to resort to counter accusation, and cry out secessionist, copperhead, &c., I deem it prudent, by way of self-protection, to declare my views upon this subject of secession. I am not as liberal toward the doctrine as the President seems to have been when, as a Representative of his district in the State of Illinois, he made a speech on this floor in which, while commenting upon the rights of the subjects of Government to throw off their allegiance and establish a new Government to suit their inclinations, he said :

"Any people, anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing Government and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable—a most sacred right—a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world. Nor is this right confined to cases in which the whole people of an existing Government may choose to exercise it. Any portion of such people that *can*, may revolutionize and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit. More than this, a majority of any portion of such people may revolutionize, putting down a minority intermingled with or near about them who may oppose their movements."

This view of the President carries the doctrine of revolution considerably further than Democrats are willing to go. That a nation of people or a province under the oppression of a wicked Government may, in the opinion of the world and before God, be justified in resorting to revolution for the purpose of achieving independence and liberty, I believe. But that forcible revolution is the unconditional right of a portion of the people of a nation or the dependency of a nation, to be exercised at their mere pleasure, I do not believe. The justification of the American Revolution which resulted in our national independence was not put upon any such ground. Secession I believe to be no more nor less than revolution. In the American sense of the term, it is the exercise of what is claimed to be the reserved rights of a State in the Federal Union to withdraw itself from the Confederacy whenever the people of such State may elect to do so, with or without any other reason than their desire for complete independence. I do not admit the existence of any such right, nor assent to its assumption. I regard the General Government of the United States in its sphere as a unit, as verily such as the government of a State, and that all the people of the State owe it allegiance which it is not at their option to revoke.

But let us consider how this doctrine of the member from Illinois would apply to a given state of circumstances. Let it be supposed that he afterwards, in the process of events, become

President of the United States, and as such officer, in violation of his official obligations, had assumed to disfranchise, crush and punish, without law or right, the citizens of a State, thus manifesting by his acts an intention to employ tyrannically the powers which were given to him for an entirely different purpose, in forcibly suppressing the laws of a State which protects its citizens. This state of circumstances would, according to his doctrine, authorize not only the State, but an interested portion of the people of a State to revolutionize and overthrow his administration, and, if necessary, to inflict upon him the same banishment which he had unlawfully inflicted upon others. In a government like ours, whose administrators are elective at short intervals, I would invoke the forbearance of the people till the ballot-box could be appealed to for redress; but if any tyrant should undertake to interfere with that sacred dispenser of the people's will, he would deserve to be swept from the face of the earth by an injured and betrayed community. In such extremity men may be justified in exercising the ulterior right which they hold from God.

In contemplating this subject I recognize two crimes, and the relation between them: first, the inciting crime of invasive abolitionism; and second, the induced and consequent crime of secession. They who by their own wrongs have contributed to the latter crime should expect by the divine law to share in its punishment. They are not, I say again, as well entitled to complain of the deeds as are those who at all times have abjured both the incentive and the crime.

We of the conservative school cannot patiently listen when we are told that the policy of restoring the Union upon its original principles is merely ridiculous. We know, as experience has proved, that it needs nothing but the honest fealty of the people, which every Government requires, to sustain that Union. We are not satisfied with the policy of the President and the predominating party in shaping the results of military conquests. We have no faith in the proposed new system. We demand the restoration of the Union; we demand it because it is our birthright, because we have done nothing to forfeit that right, or to incur a dispossession of it. We demand it because it was many times solemnly promised to us, and because upon the faith of that promise many thousands of Democrats gave their lives to enable the Administration to perform it. The fleshless bones of our slaughtered brethren can scarcely be expected to remain quiet in their shallow graves if the sacred bond be not kept. We demand it because the children of the patriotic dead should not be robbed of the inheritance for the assurance of which their fathers died; and we demand it for the further reason that the best interests of the country and of mankind require it.

Were such wise and saving policy to be adopted even at this late day, and after so

many faithless violations of pledges to abide by the law and abjure revolution, there would be no further necessity or apology for executive tinkering with the governments of the States. It would, to be sure, disappoint the fanatics by defeating the insane purpose to turn loose upon the country four million negroes, helpless and unprovided for, and entirely unfitted for the position intended to be thrust upon them; but it would, at the same time, protect the incompetent negroes against the inhuman policy of depriving them of the most needed, and to them essential benefits of the system to which they were born. It might defeat, or at least defer the great philanthropic design of those transcendental abolitionists who propose by a process which they call "miscegenation," a word of their scholarly invention, to improve the bone, skin, muscle, hair, and brain of their fellow-citizens, and especially their own posterity; the process being the amalgamation of the inferior blood with the superior blood of the African. But as this is an exceedingly ravishing idea among its votaries, and is earnestly propagated in lectures and songs, and to some extent in the pulpit, it is possible that the return of the negro to his condition of servitude would only defer the benefits of "miscegenation" to a time when the philosophy of the thing shall be better comprehended.

It might somewhat enfeeble a certain party by diminishing the contemplated advantage of African support at the ballot-box, an advantage which I could appreciate when I found the names of more than half a hundred negroes who voted to give the seat I occupy to my opponent upon the poll-books of a single precinct in my district. Had there been as many more of them, I should not have been here to tell the story. I cannot see that these considerations, however important some people may regard them, should have operated to change the promised mode of suppressing the rebellion.

One more of the objections to carrying out the constitutional programme in disposing of the rebellion ought to be noticed before I leave that point. It would render vain and fruitless all that learned ingenuity which has enabled a majority of this House to put such a novel and before unheard-of interpretation upon the Constitution, that by a sweeping confiscation of southern estates and the political disfranchisement of their owners the whole country may fall, with just compensation to nobody, into the hands of human cormorants whose greedy selfishness would insinuate itself between the people and a restoration of the Union.

It is charged that we oppose the war and seek to embarrass the Administration. The proposition thus abstractly stated is not true. We oppose perversion of the war to any purpose of party aggrandizement, to any purpose of revolution, to any purpose other than its originally declared object, to preserve the Constitution, Government, and Union. In

the light of a war designed to accomplish and able to accomplish this object, we never opposed it, nor did we ever seek to embarrass the Administration in carrying it on. We deprecated the commencement of war and sought through our representatives in the councils of the nation to give effect to the common sentiment of the conservative portion of the people by the adoption of the measure of compromise and conciliation proposed by the patriotic Crittenden. We looked with strained eyes and hoped with throbbing hearts for an adjustment upon that easy and equitable basis, which should avert the threatened calamity. We know by the most incontrovertible evidence, by the direct testimony of Douglas and Pugh, that the influential representatives of the South, who held secession in their hands as clouds in the troubled sky hold lightning, were willing to remain in the Union if that measure of compromise should be adopted and the incoming Administration would pledge itself to its faithful observance. The Democracy, favoring the measure, gave it their hearty support, but visions of new-born power and predominating sovereignty controlled the Republican mind. "No compromise with slavery" was their motto, not even to avert disunion and war. Having the controlling power they rejected the proposition. Secession was soon accomplished and war came speedily.

The Administration declared the principle upon which the war should be conducted. To show what that declaration was, as I have not the official records at hand, I take the liberty to quote from a very able and patriotic message of the Governor of New Jersey, recently communicated to the Legislature of that State. Speaking of the object of the war, the Governor says:

"This object on the part of the Government was explicitly stated by a resolution passed unanimously by the House of Representatives soon after the commencement of hostilities, and which still stands as the authoritative declaration of the popular branch of Congress. (By parenthesis I must say that if the worthy Governor had known how many times that resolution had been laid on the table by the votes of a majority of the House during this session he would have omitted the latter clause.) That resolution declares that 'the war is not waged for the purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights and established institutions of the States, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union, with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired, and that as soon as these objects are accomplished the war ought to cease.' In the published correspondence of the State Department the same idea is forcibly expressed in the following language: 'The rights of the States, and the condition of every human being in them will remain subject to exactly the same laws and forms of administration whether the revolution should succeed or whether it shall fail.'" * * * * "In the one case the States would be federally connected with the new confederacy, in the other they would be, as now, members of the United States; but their constitutions and laws, customs, habits, and

institutions in either case would remain the same.' In repudiating indignantly any intention on the part of the Executive to disturb the institutions of the States, the writer adds: 'Any such effort on his part would be unconstitutional, and all his actions in that direction would be prevented by the judicial authority of the United States, even though assented to by Congress and the people.'

This language has none of the sound of the emancipation proclamation, nor of the reconstruction and amnesty proclamation, which proposes that one-tenth of the people of a seceded State, complying with the wishes of the President, and surrendering on oath such legal rights as he wishes them to surrender, shall be helped to govern and dominate over nine times their number who possess the same constitutional rights, according to the learned Secretary, as the favored few. The Democrats, in keeping with the statesmanlike sentiments above quoted, oppose all unconstitutional coercion practiced to make abolition States to be ruled by a contemptible and purchased minority, at the expense of the cardinal principle of free government. They do not contemplate as auspicious the time when, by such corrupt means, the chief officers of our government shall be elected. They oppose all such policy in the management of the war as recently sent into the State of Florida a band of brave officers and soldiers to further the same objectionable motive, if that ready historian of the times, the public press, be truthful in its declarations. If truthful, somebody must account to the country in this world, or to God in the next, for twelve hundred citizens, or more, as is believed, slaughtered and taken prisoners in an unmilitary enterprise.

Let it be shown to the conservative men of this nation that the Administration is devotedly intent upon preserving the masterly edifice of this Government, and honestly makes war against the seceded States for that noble purpose, and I guaranty that no Democrat will oppose it. Any difference of opinion which might exist would exist only as a citizen's private thought. And even now, when we are forced by a weight of evidence which must control the honest judgment, to believe that our Federal Government restored to its pristine condition is not the object of the party which conducts the war, we do not attempt to throw any obstacles in its way. We counsel no resistance to it; we do not seek to stop the war. War is inaugurated as the policy of the Administration, and for reasons easily perceived, it can probably accomplish no object, good or bad, except by conquest, and that does not promise to be immediate. With all its usurped powers this Administration cannot live beyond its appointed time. During the short residue of the period allotted to it, I, for one, do not wish it to arbitrate the future of my country. If it is said that the war was premature, let it be recollected that peace may be premature also. We say if a sound constitutional

party had continued in the control of the Government there would have been no secession, no war; but they are upon us like destroying fiends. Who shall rescue the Union in this emergency? Who shall adjust the terms of peace which must at some time succeed to war?

If the present Administration should adjust the terms of peace according to the ideas which now govern its policy, then would be blighted forever the hopes of all those whose hearts are quickened by the love of free and popular government. I believe that with the Democracy in power successful negotiations for the restoration of the Union could be had; but, manifestly, under the present Administration no such negotiations can be had, nor if they were practicable would they be adopted, for the Administration is committed to the revolutionary scheme of reconstruction and against the Union.

I know the awful burdens and expense of the war, as well as a finite capacity comprehend what is so near the infinite. But as a lesser evil I would suffer even its further accumulations, during the time of abeyance, as the only means whereby the people, in the exercise of their constitutional right, if that right be not forcibly taken from them, may institute an Administration whose advent will assure the accomplishment of their great desire. The olive-branch of peace, which it has been well said should accompany the sword of war, has been ignored in all of this bloody war of ours. The maxim a thousand times expressed is, "No negotiation until the last rebel lays down his arms." What a malicious sentiment! Why not negotiate on just and honorable terms to induce the enemy to lay down his arms? Will you send millions of your fellow-citizens to the slaughter upon a mere point of etiquette? Let a people whose moral and political senses are awakened correct this evil at the ballot-box.

Inasmuch as I have undertaken to comment somewhat upon the conduct of the war, I feel constrained to allude to another matter of great moment which has stricken the public mind with surprise and regret, and weakened the confidence of many in the integrity of the Administration.

I said heretofore in my remarks that at the commencement of the war the principal military talent and accomplishment of the country was possessed by men belonging to the Democratic party. I repeat the assertion, not for the purpose of boasting, but because it becomes an important consideration when we seek for an explanation of the astonishing course which has been pursued by the President in relation to the command of our armies. Those Democrats of military capacity were among the first to proffer their services to the Administration to aid in putting down the rebellion and restoring the supremacy of the Government and the Union. They did not suppose that they would be compelled to don the complexion of the Ethioip to save their

epaulets, nor that their tactics would be overruled by one having no military knowledge whatever, though the Constitution had added to his civil function the theoretic capacity of Commander-in-Chief. Foremost among these men who hastened to the standard of their country, mapped out the war, planned its campaigns, and laid down the sagacious strategy which, if supported and not interrupted, would have accomplished the people's object, was that distinguished general whose name is so honorably associated with the campaigns, battles, and strategy which resulted in the reconquest and restoration of West Virginia; who saved against the persistent assaults of vastly superior forces, against the violation of faith by the Administration to which he looked in vain for promised support, that most gallant of all modern armies, the army of the Potomac. Under the command of any general of less than the highest military capacity that army would have been lost. Thanks for its preservation are due only to the great ability and watchful vigilance of its chief commander, by which its ranks were not only marshaled according to the highest military science, but also imbued with the discipline and bravery which made it unconquerable.

The incidents and result of the seven days of battles on the Peninsula placed the name of the commander, and the army into which he had breathed his own spirit, high on the roll of fame, before it was known or even suspected by the country that the terrible emergency had been brought upon the general and his gallant army by the neglect and refusal of the Administration to supply the promised means to insure the salvation of the army and the accomplishment of the object of their pursuit, the capture of the Confederate capital.

The next incident which befell the general after the accomplishment of his eminent success was his suspension from command. What induced this strange measure? It was not that he had not taken Richmond, for, as we have seen, the fault of the failure was not his. The country has passed upon that question and is recording its judgment now. That judgment is that the Administration and the great party-power which controlled it required of military commanders something more than a straightforward prosecution of the war for the defeat of the Confederate power and the restoration of the constitutional Government. The commander of the Army of the Potomac was not sufficiently interested in the abolition policy of the Republican party. He had not sufficiently advanced in the science of ethnology to perceive that the negro was better adapted to the duties of a soldier than white men. The scheme of reconstructing States upon the plan of the proclamation had not entered into his policy. Confiscating the plantations of the South into the hands of Northern disunionists to be cultivated by enforced negro labor under a system which, while it gives the high-sounding name of

freedmen to slaves, exacts their toil and sweat at a less compensation than they received from their former masters, did not enter into his plan. Placing "the round and top of sovereignty" upon the heads of one-tenth of the people of a State to secure from a meager minority made up of *proteges* the electoral votes of that State was not in his contemplations. Excluding from the army all sources of political information, except such as were most fully committed to the Administration and denunciatory of all criticism upon it, enforcing the distinction of keeping Democrats in the ranks and sending Republicans to their homes at a great expense to the Government to vote in behalf of the Administration, were useful political appliances, but were not regarded by the general as among the legitimate appliances of war. That military ability and military success could not long secure the countenance of the Administration to a general so remiss in more important things is evident to those who know the history of the times.

After the deposition of General McClellan from command, the army of the Potomac, under a new leader, fought another battle. The result of that battle, as every body knows, was to send its broken ranks, dispersed and demoralized, before a conquering foe, who took advantage of the rout to invade the upper States and the capital itself. It was a time of awful peril; the boldest heart palpitated with fear; the emergency was pressing. Ulterior considerations gave way for the moment to the most certain means of saving the capital and of freeing from hostile occupation the territory over which the enemy's battalions were victoriously tramping. All thoughts were concentrated upon the deposed McClellan. He was called again in that dread hour to his command. Order immediately sprang from confusion; courage succeeded to panic and affright. Among other important achievements the great battles of South Mountain and Antietam were fought and won. Defeated in both of those engagements, our enemies were driven across the Potomac, foiled of all their sanguine expectations by the bravery of the army which under another commander they had so recently dispersed. The judgment of the country is that without the timely intervention of that general the invasion would have been in a great degree successful, and that the public edifices of the capital might have presented to the nation's view nothing but incongruous masses of broken and ruined masonry.

After a short space necessarily spent in recruiting the energies of our men after these terrible and exhausting struggles, and when the General having pursued and overtaken the retreating enemy was about to attack him, with as reasonable expectations of his capture as the exigencies of modern warfare admit, he was again dismissed from his command. Though tears coursed down the cheeks of the hardy war-worn soldiers at the

separation again repeated, they were of no avail. Services could be dispensed with when the enemy was on his retreat which were indispensable when he was on his advance.

It is interesting to the unprejudiced to see that the obscurity which for a long period involved the policy of the Administration toward the General before mentioned is being illuminated by truthful and circumstantial history which has too long been suppressed. The interested people are now permitted to judge, from the facts before them, what policy and whose policy, supported and not overruled through inadmissible motives, would ere this time probably, in the result certainly, have conquered the rebellion and restored the union of States, if military conquest achieved upon the principles of right

and justice be capable of leading to such a result.

The limitation of my time prevents me from proceeding further upon this subject; but in concluding, I conjure this House and the country, by the reverence we have for the memory of our fathers; by a just regard for all that made us a prosperous and happy people; by all our yearning desire for the liberty and prosperity of those who are to come after us; by all the holy patriotism that ever was enshrined in the American heart; by the considerations of self-protection and duty to God, to stop the course of this revolution which threatens to prostrate the very citadel of our liberties, and seek not for repose till the Government of 1787 be rescued from the grasp of abolitionism and reinstated in its rightful sway.