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SOUTHERN AFFAIRS.

SPEECH

OF

HON. HENRY B. BANNING,
OF OHIO,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

FEBRUARY 10, 1875.



WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
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S P E E C H
OF
HON. HENRY B. BANNING.

The House being as in Committee of the Whole upon the President's annual message—

MR. BANNING said :

Mr. SPEAKER, after the many able speeches made in Congress upon southern affairs it is a delicate matter for me to ask the attention of the House to what I may have to say upon the subject. The importance of the question under discussion, involving as it does the rights and liberty of every American citizen, is my apology.

Believing in the saying of that founder of the Republic who told us "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," also in the saying "it is better to defend our liberties upon the door-sill than upon the hearth-stone," I come to the consideration of this all-important question without any partisan feeling whatever, as a humble representative of a great constituency, who, without respect to party, at the largest meeting held in Cincinnati since the firing upon Fort Sumter in 1861, adopted the following resolutions:

The following resolutions were received with applause and unanimously adopted: Whereas it is part of the current public history of the country that on the 4th day of January, A. D. 1875, a general of the Army of the United States detailed an armed body of soldiers with orders to enter the legislative hall of the State of Louisiana, while the Legislature of said State was engaged in the work of organization, and to compel the withdrawal from said hall of persons claiming membership in said body, and who had been admitted to seats and qualified as members, said orders being executed by said soldiers, thus interrupting the organization of said body, and affording an opportunity to other persons claiming the same seats to enter and occupy the same and to organize said Legislature, thus practically determining a contest of election; and whereas a general of the Army has publicly called upon the President of the United States to declare a portion of the people outlaws, and to grant him authority to try, condemn, and punish them by martial law: Therefore,

Resolved, That as citizens of the Republic, invested with the right and charged with the duty of giving earnest attention to public affairs and pronouncing dispassionate judgment thereon, we regard these events with alarm and indignation.

Resolved, That it is essential to the preservation of free institutions in the United States that the military power shall at all times be subordinate to the civil power; that the Army shall not be called upon or permitted to perform mere police power in any part of the Union; that the right and the duty of preserving social order within the several States shall at all times be recognized as belonging to the respective State governments, except in the single instance provided by the Federal Constitution, which authorizes the General Government to protect the States respectively "against domestic violence upon the call of the executive when the Legislature cannot be convened."

Resolved, That our judgment of the action of General Sheridan is formed without regard to the truth or falsity of the grounds upon which he has sought to justify it; that upon his own statement of the facts it was an unwarranted and violent usurpation of power, a violation of the Constitution and of his duty as a citizen and as a soldier, and we call upon our fellow-citizens throughout the Union not to be misled in the discussion of this grave topic by the recital of the alleged wrongful and illegal acts of other persons at other times and places, but to judge the action of General Sheridan upon its own merits; that the usurpers of power in all

periods of the history of the struggle between liberty and despotism have justified themselves by the plea that the public safety required their usurpations.

Resolved, That the call of General Sheridan for power to arrest, try, condemn, and punish citizens of Louisiana by martial law is a gross insult to the whole people of the country, and deserves signal rebuke from the Government and from the people.

Resolved, That we view with distrust and disapprobation the multiplication of military titles, military offices, and military emoluments, believing that the true military power of the Republic is, and should be, its citizen soldiery; and that we call upon our immediate Representatives in Congress to support the bill recently introduced providing for the abolition of the office of Lieutenant-General of the Army of the United States, with an amendment including all the unnecessary military officers.

Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to our Representatives in Congress by the chairman.

Hon. George Hoadly, one of the ablest lawyers in the country, a republican who supported General Grant for the Presidency, prevented by a business engagement from attending the meeting, wrote to the presiding officer this letter :

CINCINNATI, *January 14, 1875.*

DEAR SIR: Your note of the 13th is just at hand and contents noted.

I regard the Administration as having been engaged now for three years in a conspiracy to deprive the people of Louisiana of their just right to govern themselves and an effort by force and fraud to substitute a State government which has never been chosen by that people for that of their own selection. So believing, I should, without regard to the particular question who first called in the military on this occasion, have been glad to take part in the meeting you speak of. But business engagements in the supreme court compel me to be in Columbus on Saturday, and you will therefore please accept my sympathy and excuse my absence.

Yours, truly,

GEORGE HOADLY.

Hon. GEORGE W. C. JOHNSTON.

Hon. W. S. Groesbeck, whose national reputation makes his name familiar to all, wrote as follows:

JANUARY 14, 1875.

DEAR SIR: I received yesterday your note asking my opinion as to the propriety of calling a meeting "to express the sentiments of our city in regard to the recent transactions at New Orleans," and I notice in the papers of to-day that such a meeting has been resolved upon and will soon be held.

I think such a meeting will be very proper, and that it should be so managed as that all will feel free to participate in it. The transactions to which you refer were most extraordinary, and should be promptly noticed by public meetings throughout the country. They have no precedent in our past, and should not be allowed to become a precedent for our future. Bayonets are out of place in legislative halls.

Very respectfully,

W. S. GROESBECK.

Hon. G. W. C. JOHNSTON, *Mayor.*

Hon. Job E. Stevenson, my predecessor in this House, and republican candidate against me last fall, sent the following letter:

CINCINNATI, *January 15, 1875.*

DEAR SIR: Yours in relation to a proposed meeting of citizens to consider recent and pending events in Louisiana received.

It seems to me that such a meeting properly assembled and conducted, might do good service, and I should be not unwilling to participate.

Yours, truly,

JOB E. STEVENSON.

Hon. G. W. C. JOHNSTON, *Mayor, &c.*

Governor Allen, in answer to an invitation to be present, wrote:

STATE OF OHIO, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
Columbus, January 16, 1875.

DEAR SIR: For official reasons I cannot, as you request, be with our friends in your city to-night.

Things look gloomy, yet I do not dread the future. A few of the republican politicians may but the republican masses will not stand passively by and see any

man seek to assuage his thirst for power in the blood of the people. The democracy, of course, will be true to itself.

Your friend,

W. ALLEN.

Hon. G. W. C. JOHNSTON, *Mayor of Cincinnati.*

Hon. George H. Pendleton addressed the meeting, and among other things said :

My fellow-citizens, there is order and quiet and, in some sense, peace in New Orleans to-night. The interest there is intense, but it is not turbulent. I rejoice that it is so. This conduct is an evidence of wisdom and virtue and good citizenship. Those men who addressed the meeting in New York and promised that their fellow-citizens should not be goaded into conflict with Federal authority, but that they would rely upon the moral power of their sister States to restore free government in that section of the country, uttered no vain words. Stigmatized by the military commander who the day before had assumed command over them as banditti; abused by every Federal officer as cut-throats and assassins; treated as if free government in this country had no rights which Federal power was bound to respect; governed by a power which confessedly will fall the moment that Federal bayonets are taken away, they have, nevertheless, by rare magnanimity, by wonderful self-control, thrice-armed their quarrel which was already just.

I am glad, as I said, that it is so for their sakes, because it is evidence of wisdom and virtue. I am glad that it is so for our sakes, because it gives no alloy to the sympathy that we can feel for their private wrongs, and puts no check upon the indignation and public sentiment for the unparalleled outrages upon public liberty. I am glad that it is so for another reason. It shows that all over this country, even under the most trying circumstances, the people of the country have accepted everywhere the results of the war. It shows that everywhere they have accepted the constitutional amendments, and mean to abide by them. It shows that everywhere they have accepted the doctrine of civil and political rights of all citizens. It shows that after the wave of civil war has passed away all our people everywhere are coming back to the recognition of that peace and order which must be the concomitant of liberty, and without which there can be no good government.

The able lawyer and author Dr. Thuro Wright, addressed the meeting. From his remarks I read the following extract :

He was here as a citizen of the United States who did not want to see his country a military despotism. He did not want needlessly to find fault with the authorities or indulge in harsh terms concerning their public acts; but that our rulers were above criticism no one would venture to assert. He would pray, if he prayed at all, "O God, may we not despise our rulers;" and would also add, "O Lord, may they not act so that we cannot help despising them."

Mr. Speaker, this large meeting at Cincinnati, the resolutions adopted, the letters and sayings of the distinguished men which I have quoted, show the deep-seated indignation of our people, and this regardless of party division. The people are shocked at the military interference in civil rights, and the sooner, Mr. Speaker, we return to the guarantees of the Constitution, the better it will be for us and the government of the fathers it is our patriotic duty to perpetuate.

I invite the attention of the House to the political situation in the South since the close of the war; and permit me, sir, to say when the late war began I enlisted and marched to the front, and fought through to the end. That end came when with Lee's surrender the South laid down its arms, and our flag waved in triumph over every foot of our territory. I was a soldier in war; I propose to be a citizen in peace. When the men of the southern army laid down their arms and accepted the situation, I supposed they were to be restored to all their rights under the Constitution. Knowing their bravery, admiring their gallantry, and the pluck, courage, and obstinacy with which for more than four long years they sustained their confederacy against superior numbers, I did not want to see them punished. Nor had I (much as I mourned their loss) any wish to revenge with more southern blood the blood of my dead comrades.

And I prayed God to receive it as a sufficient atonement and offering upon the altar of peace, and make it the sacred cement of an everlasting Union of States. I felt toward the South like our heroic General Sherman when he made terms of peace with Johnston, that we were the conquerors and that we could afford to be generous to the men of the South who had staked their all upon the confederacy and lost.

The armed conflict between the North and the South was war, honorable war, each side believing itself to be in the right, and carried on for years by huge armies and able officers. We called it a rebellion; and yet no man dreamed of hanging or shooting a prisoner. During its progress the soldiers upon both sides felt a respect for each other that in the hour of misfortune amounted to affection. When the confederates laid down their arms our soldiers met them with smiles and shared with them, as only soldiers can share, their rations and their blankets. This feeling was so strong that when the gallant Sherman dictated terms of surrender they seemed to be terms tendered friends, not foes. The home-guard and the politician shrieked with anguish. And now, ten years after, we find the same deadly animosity animating the same class, and a bitterness of feeling that was not felt by the soldiers amid the roar of cannon upon the field of battle.

Of this we had, I am pained to say, a humiliating illustration upon this floor in the last few days. The honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. BUTLER,] the leader of the House upon the other side, said in response to a charge of hanging a man in New Orleans during the war:

So far from taking offense, I glory in it; and the trouble has been that I did not hang more than I did.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the first time, and God send that it may be the last, that we are called upon to hear a northern gentleman and soldier boast of having been an executioner, and regretting that it had not been in his power to hang other men for political offenses. The feeling of the brave soldier on looking back upon the bloody battle-fields where he led his columns into fight is one of regret. He has pride in his success, but pain over the cost of that success; but here is a boast over the gallows when no great soldierly impulse could enter to give it dignity or virtue.

I should feel some alarm lest a portion of the people at the North shared in this feeling, for the remark passed unrebuked from the other side of this Chamber, but the late elections that turned mainly on this grave question reassures me.

In the gentleman's own district there seems to have been a revulsion of popular sentiment, and all his brilliant attainments and powers of speech proved insufficient to retain his valuable services upon this floor. While I speak the party of deadly antagonism is going to pieces, and the legislation of hate, thank God, approaches its end.

The better feelings that animate the soldier seems to have taken hold upon the people, and now, instead of gloating over the slaughter of the past and legislating as if we were in the midst of a bloody war, the Congress of the United States is instructed through the late elections to preach "peace on earth, good will to men." Why, sir, if by marching South we could call from their narrow beds the moldering bones of the confederate dead and reanimate in life those we destroyed, such march would be made with more enthusiasm by the

men of the North than any that animated our soldiers in their campaigns of the late conflict.

I believe that with all the abuse and humiliation heaped upon the South since that war, their manhood survives the oppression, and the same generous impulse animates their hearts that stirs our own. It remains for the Christian statesman to grow fat on the legislation of hate and gloat over the cruelties he has through the courage of others been able to practice.

Another distinguished gentleman from the same State drew a vivid picture of the dangers through which he had passed where as he said:

I have been here, sir, when the freedom of debate was vindicated only by forming a hollow square in front of the Speaker's desk while men uttered their sentiments here in the House; when the galleries were filled with armed men, whose threats to silence debate on this floor were audible in any part of this Hall. I had hoped, sir, that that day had passed and passed forever. I had hoped that the condition of things which made such a proceeding possible was never to return again.

Certainly, sir, these were deplorable times and much to be lamented; but, sir, I think that bad as ruffianism was, according to the gentleman's story, it was a healthier thing than that condition which, however pleasant it may have been, gave the country the "Credit Mobelien," the El Paso corruption, the Pacific mail subsidy, and other frauds that have gone well-nigh to destroy the faith of the American people in their Government. The late war, properly considered, wiped out the deadly antagonism that gave birth to the violence the gentleman laments. He need fear no return of such. In the next Congress we shall have, it is said, eighty-odd confederate soldiers. I can assure my friend that in these eighty members he will find not only gentlemen, but kind-hearted and generous men, whose impulse will be to protect the weak rather than to encourage violence. The men who had the courage to fight for the confederacy, now that they have given their promise, will have the honor to keep it and stand for our liberties and the right.

With these views I have watched with anxiety the course of the General Government in its treatment of the South. And, sir, it is hard to tell whether that treatment has been more stupid than fraudulent or more fraudulent than stupid. The corruptions that characterize the political management of the South culminated under a pretense of protecting the colored people. The political managers have been the colored people's deadliest enemy. Organizing these ignorant masses into secret associations, they have sent down political adventurers to control and direct them, and brought the whole Army of the United States to protect their infamous plunder and oppression. Keeping alive the animosities of the late war, these men have sought through an abuse of the word patriotism to perpetuate its despotism. The negro race is mainly the unskilled labor of the South. Left to themselves labor and capital would have naturally harmonized, stimulated by the wants of the late war that made commercial reconstruction a necessity. In clothing the negro with full citizenship and giving him the privileges of the ballot-box we made him master of the situation. If he failed in securing safety to himself, it was not the fault of the southern white man, but the misconduct of the political managers under the patronage of the General Government.

It will be observed that in those States where the democracy obtain control, such as Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Missouri, and Texas, we have peace, prosperity, and good order. No man is made afraid, and equal political rights are extended to all; while in those States that are under the despotism

of republican politicians and the Army anarchy and outrage, hand in hand, shock the people of the United States.

A southern State under control of the Administration, is a state where officials plunder with impunity, protected by the bayonets of the regular Army. Take, for instance, South Carolina. The retiring governor plundered the State on a taxation that amounted to confiscation, and while the debt was piled up in hopeless bankruptcy, there is nothing left to show in return but the enormous wealth and riotous living of shameless officials. Negroes, but lately field hands, are made officials because they are negroes. All social restraints are swept away. Taxation is but another name for confiscation. To illustrate, I give the following statement:

Taxes and taxable property in South Carolina before and since the war.

The taxable property before the war was.....	\$400,000,000
Taxable property in 1874.....	170,000,000
Taxes levied before the war.....	500,000
Taxes levied in 1873.....	2,700,000
Legislative expenses before the war.....	40,000
Legislative expenses, 1873.....	291,000
Public printing before the war.....	5,000
Public printing, 1873.....	450,000

And when the oppressed tax-payer of South Carolina came to Washington last winter for relief, he received no encouragement from the President, and his petition to Congress was referred to a committee, where it will sleep until adjournment on the 4th of next March. These tax-payers were white men and democrats. How different would have been their reception and the consideration of their petition had they been negroes and republicans I need not stop to say.

LOUISIANA.

More than ten years have rolled by since the close of the war. The republican party during all this time has had control of the General Government and in Louisiana, but has not succeeded in reorganizing and reconstructing this State; and why? The happiness, prosperity, and welfare of the people of Louisiana would be advanced by reconstruction and self-government; while both the material and political prosperity of the country would be increased by quiet and proper self-government in Louisiana.

During all these ten years the war, which we supposed ended in the surrender of the South, has been continued in Louisiana solely for the purpose of robbing her helpless people. Kellogg and his followers, backed by the regular Army, have been managing the affairs of this unfortunate people, and have so robbed and wronged and have so outraged every principle of self-government and civil liberty as to cause the deepest indignation among the people of the country, without respect to party, against the cruelty and tyranny of the authorities in power. From the records of Congress I gather the story of this unfortunate State to be as follows:

During the late presidential contest steps were taken to secure the vote of Louisiana. It was known it would be largely liberal and democratic. To this end a bill was filed and an order of court procured from Judge Durell, since arraigned for impeachment, and his resignation accepted by the President while charges were pending against him.

Prior to the issuing of this order of court W. P. Kellogg, acting governor of Louisiana, which place he then as now holds by the bay-

onets of the regular Army, wrote to Attorney-General Williams the following, and I quote his words:

The supreme court is known to sympathize with us and has incidentally passed upon the legality of our returning board.

And again he says in the same communication:

Our returning board being held as the legal returning board, and in nowise affected by the promulgation of the recent election bill, may make the return required by law, which will show the republican State ticket elected and a republican majority in the Legislature.

But to enforce his wicked proceedings it was necessary to have the support of Government bayonets, therefore this man concludes his communication with the following significant paragraph:

I therefore respectfully suggest that General Emory, who I think appreciates the necessity and sympathizes with the republican party here, be instructed to comply with any requisition that the United States courts may make upon him in support of its mandates and to preserve the peace.

To this demand the Attorney-General, George H. Williams, makes the following prompt response:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, *December 3, 1872.*

S. B. PACKARD, Esq.,

United States Marshal, New Orleans, Louisiana:

You are to enforce the decrees and mandates of the United States court no matter by whom resisted, and General Emory will furnish you with all necessary troops for that purpose.

GEORGE H. WILLIAMS,
Attorney-General.

Thus a bill in chancery was brought before a corrupt judge "known to sympathize," and whose decision was known in advance, and the necessary order obtained, which the troops were called in to enforce; and with what effect General Casey, collector at New Orleans, telegraphs to the President, as follows:

NEW ORLEANS, *December 6, 1872.*

President GRANT:

Marshal Packard took possession of the State-house this morning at an early hour with military posse, in obedience to a mandate of the circuit court, to prevent illegal assemblage of persons under guise of authority of Warmoth's returning board in violation of injunction of circuit court. Decree of court just rendered declares Warmoth's returning board illegal, and orders the returns of the election forthwith to be placed before the legal board. The board will probably soon declare the result of the election of the officers of the State Legislature, which will meet in the State-house with the protection of court. The decree was sweeping in its provisions, and if enforced will save the republican Legislature and State government, and check Warmoth in his usurpations.

JAMES F. CASEY.

The troops, however, do not seem to have acted with sufficient promptness, and General Casey again flies to the telegraph:

NEW ORLEANS, *December 11, 1872.*

President GRANT:

Parties interested in the success of the democratic party, particularly the New Orleans Times, are making desperate efforts to array the people against us. Old citizens are dragged into an opposition they do not feel, and pressure is hourly growing; our members are poor and our adversaries are rich, and offers are made that are difficult for them to withstand. There is danger that they will break our quorum. The delay in placing the troops at the disposal of Governor Pinchback in accordance with joint resolution of Monday is disheartening our friends and cheering our enemies. If requisition of Legislature is complied with all difficulty will be dissipated, the party saved, and everything go on smoothly. If this is done, the tide will be turned at once in our favor. The real underlying sentiment is with us, it can be encouraged. Governor Pinchback acting with great discretion, as is the Legislature, and they will so continue.

JAMES F. CASEY,
Collector.

In the mean time the good citizens of Louisiana, amazed and disheartened at these arbitrary and despotic proceedings, selected a committee of one hundred of their ablest and their best-known citizens to proceed to Washington and respectfully petition the President for relief. Before the committee could leave New Orleans to execute the humble right of petition, it was met by the following shameful order from Attorney-General Williams, that far exceeds any ever issued by a European despot:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, *December 13, 1872.*

Hon. JOHN MCENERY,

New Orleans:

Your visit with a hundred citizens will be unavailing so far as the President is concerned. His decision is made and will not be changed, and the sooner it is acquiesced in the sooner good order and peace will be restored.

GEORGE H. WILLIAMS,
Attorney-General.

The usurpation was accomplished; and from that day to this the people of Louisiana have been plundered and oppressed by these creatures of the Administration, over whom they could have no control. The ballot-box was denied them. They could not punish; the courts were closed against them; and, bound hand and foot, they have been the helpless victims of the foulest oppression. If any one doubts, let him read the speech of Senator CARPENTER in the Senate last session.

The Kellogg government came in with a Gatling gun in the hands of United States officials, sustained by the bayonets of the regular Army in the enforcement of an illegal order from a corrupt and incompetent court. It was driven out last fall before the frown of an exasperated and desperate people. At that time we are told that even Collector Casey, who assisted in inaugurating Kellogg, turned upon him and besought the President not to interfere; while the very negroes themselves cheered the victors as they marched in triumph to the State-house. Before this march of an indignant people the usurpers, possessed of the guilty feeling that makes cowards of all men, fled in dismay. It was claimed that they had a majority at the back of the people of Louisiana. This majority, if it existed, as they claim, was thoroughly organized and well armed, and yet their leaders, without striking a blow worthy the name, hid themselves from sight, while crying piteously to the Executive at Washington for help. Then came an event that illustrates with striking force two facts. The first is the conservative feeling that animates this sorely tried and down-trodden people. The other, the fearfully despotic power that has grown up since the war at this national capital. A single officer, with less than a regiment, by an order of a few words, restored the usurping government and caused the indignant citizens to quietly lay down their arms and retire to their homes. There is no despotism in Europe that can give an instance of power such as this. I know, sir, it is alleged that a fear of the General Government controlled the people. And I might say that such argument only proves what I assert. Why should our Government be feared by a people it was created to protect? Have we come to that pass that our Union is held together by the Army? If so, and fear was the element that caused the oppressed to submit in silence, it is not Louisiana alone, but every State in the Union that is threatened with the loss of its liberties.

Following this extraordinary chain of events came a struggle through the ballot-box. I will not say this people had the promise of a fair election; but, animated by a hope that they might

be heard through that which makes the very foundation of our political structure, they appealed to the ballot-box. We may be sure that the men who would seize and hold by violence the powers of government would not hesitate to secure that usurpation through fraud. The so-called count of votes, the action of the returning board, was in accordance with all that had preceded in this history of outrage. Under pretext of intimidation of voters, that never existed in fact, enough conservative members of the Legislature were thrown out to insure a majority for the usurpers by a board pronounced by the republican committee sent by Congress to investigate the matter to have been illegal. And now, sir, the fraud ends and the violence begins again. So infamous was the outrage contemplated, that it was necessary to select a man who could carry it through without hesitation and with unscrupulous energy of purpose. What they needed is what is known as a "mere soldier." General McDowell was in command of the department, as gallant a soldier as ever blessed a country with his courage; he is no less the citizen. Possessed of fine abilities and a rare culture, he could not be called upon for work such as this. His subordinate, General Emory, had already shrunk from the duties imposed upon him. General Sheridan was the man selected.

Not daring to assert their work in advance, he went South under a pretense of relaxation from duty. Arriving in New Orleans at the moment when the Legislature was about to assemble, he struck the opportune moment and at once assumed command. We had had Gatling guns and bayonets under the control of custom-house officers. We had seen the regular Army dispersing an armed people under a pretext of re-establishing law and order, but now, for the first time, the second officer of the Army of the United States orders that Army into a legislative hall of a sovereign State, not for the purpose of preventing bloodshed or even preserving order, but to settle a mere political question by the bayonet; not for the purpose of driving that Legislature out, but for the purpose of settling with the bayonet who might sit as members of that Legislature and who might not.

The feelings that animated this soldier on approaching the scene of his action may be gathered from his first dispatch. He had scarcely landed at New Orleans before he telegraphed to his chief at Washington the following extraordinary indictment of a people he was to govern:

HEADQUARTERS DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
New Orleans, January 4, 1875. (Received 4—11.45 p. m.)

W. W. BELKNAP,
Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.:

It is with deep regret that I have to announce to you the existence in this State of a spirit of defiance to all lawful authority and an insecurity of life which is hardly realized by the General Government or the country at large. The lives of citizens have become so jeopardized, that unless something is done to give protection to the people all security usually afforded by law will be overridden. Defiance to the laws and the murder of individuals seem to be looked upon by the community here from a stand-point which gives impunity to all who choose to indulge in either, and the civil government appears powerless to punish or even arrest. I have to-night assumed control over the Department of the Gulf.

P. H. SHERIDAN,
Lieutenant-General United States Army.

On the very day of this dispatch armed soldiers of his command invaded the halls of legislation and threw out by force enough conservative members to leave the conspirators in possession of the government. The day following he again telegraphed a dispatch that

indicates the "mere soldier" is yet animated by feelings that possessed him before he had even a knowledge of affairs he was sent to control. Burke said "that he would not know how to frame an indictment against an entire people." The "mere soldier" gives him the form of such indictment in the following dispatch:

[Telegram dated headquarters Military Division of the Missouri, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 5, 1875. Received January 5.]

W. W. BELKNAP,
Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.:

I think that the terrorism now existing in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas could be entirely removed and confidence and fair dealing established by the arrest and trial of the ringleaders of the armed White Leagues. If Congress would pass a bill declaring them banditti, they could be tried by a military commission. The ringleaders of this banditti, who murdered men here on the 14th of last September, and also more recently at Vicksburgh, Mississippi, should, in justice to law and order and the peace and prosperity of this southern part of the country, be punished. It is possible that if the President would issue a proclamation declaring them banditti no further action need be taken except that which would devolve upon me.

P. H. SHERIDAN,
Lieutenant-General United States Army.

You will observe that in this dispatch he sweeps in the entire people. And at the end of ten years so-called reconstruction finds no remedy for the disorders charged than those gained through martial law, drum-head courts, and sudden executions. This is the duty that he proposes should be devolved upon him through a proclamation of the President.

The man who would have made such a proposition as this when Lee surrendered, at the end of a cruel and bloody war, would have been regarded with horror by the entire people of the United States. A war of hate has produced more evil than a war of arms. At the end of ten years of what should have been peace we have this bloody proposition made by the second officer of the Army of the United States, and this, sir, receives the sanction of his masters at Washington. In response the Secretary of War telegraphs as follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, January 6, 1875.

General P. H. SHERIDAN,
New Orleans, Louisiana:

Your telegrams all received. The President and all of us have full confidence, and thoroughly approve your course.

WM. W. BELKNAP,
Secretary of War.

Fearing this telegram may be considered hasty, later in the same day the Secretary reiterates it, as follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 6, 1875.

General P. H. SHERIDAN,
New Orleans, Louisiana:

I telegraphed you hastily to-day, answering your dispatch. You seem to fear that we had been misled by biased or partial statements of your acts. Be assured that the President and Cabinet confide in your wisdom, and rest in the belief that all acts of yours have been and will be judicious. This I intended to say in my brief telegram.

WM. W. BELKNAP,
Secretary of War.

Now, sir, since when in the history of our Republic has the interference of the "mere soldier" in our civil affairs become a necessity? In a war with a foreign power I can readily understand that the Army is from sheer necessity a mere "machine," but it is in civil differences that the soldier disappears in the citizen. We have been told in Europe, in like cases, "that tyranny ceases when the bay-

onet thinks." Regardless of this great lesson we now find ourselves called upon to recognize the "mere soldier." Sir, it were better for us to suffer from the assassination pictured by this general and all the evils that come of a disorganized political and social condition (for they will in time correct themselves) than to build up in our midst that blind military power that has been through all ages the fittest tool of despotism. The "mere soldier," sir, is not only foreign to our traditions but he is fatal to our liberties. Under the name of law and order through such instruments the most fearful crimes have been perpetrated against law and order. The people of Louisiana are no aliens, and in this they become the people of the United States. I speak not only in behalf of their privileges, but that of my own and of every citizen of the Republic.

We cannot disturb one stone in the great structure of civil and political liberty without weakening the foundation. We cannot employ the armed man, who has been educated and trained to blind obedience, without taking the very key-stone from the arch. This is not punishment in Louisiana, it is ruin to us all. The same authority and blind obedience that sent a file of soldiers into the Legislature of Louisiana, can send an armed force into this Hall and in the name of law and order wipe out the last vestige of constitutional liberty. And were this done we would find the same men on this floor and throughout the country denouncing us for any remonstrance or resistance that we might make.

It is said that history repeats itself, which means that human nature is the same throughout all time. The factious supporters of despotism in Europe find their counterpart here. From them we appeal to the people and the Constitution. I thank God that the late elections indicate knowledge, firmness, and courage in our court of appeal.





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