

republican State governments to be raised up; and in the last resort, and I will say Congress waited long, the nation waited long, experience had to come to the rescue of reason before the thing was done—in the last resort, and as the last thing to be done, Congress determined to dig through all the rubbish,—dig through the soil and the shifting sands, and go down to the eternal rock, and there, upon the basis of the everlasting principle of equal and exact justice to all men, we have planted the column of reconstruction; and, sir, it will arise slowly but surely, and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Whatever dangers we apprehended from the introduction to the right of suffrage of seven hundred thousand men, just emerged from slavery, were put aside in the presence of a greater danger. Why, sir, let me say frankly to my friend from Wisconsin, that I approached universal colored suffrage in the South reluctantly. Not because I adhered to the miserable dogma that this was the white man’s government, but because I entertained fears about at once intrusting a large body of men just from slavery, to whom education had been denied by law, to whom the marriage relation had been denied, who had been made the most abject slaves, with political power. And as the senator has referred to a speech which I made in Indiana in 1865, allow me to show the principle that then actuated me, for in that speech I said:

“In regard to the question of admitting the freedmen of the Southern States to vote, while I admit the equal rights of all men, and that in time all men will have the right to vote, without distinction of color or race, I yet believe that in the case of four million of slaves, just freed from bondage, there should be a period of probation and preparation before they are brought to the exercise of political power.”

Such was my feeling at that time, for it had not then been determined by the bloody experience of the last two years that

we could not reconstruct upon the basis of the white population, and such was the opinion of a great majority of the people of the North; and it was not until a year and a half after that time that Congress came to the conclusion that there was no way left but to resort to colored suffrage, and suffrage to all men except those who were disqualified by the commission of high crimes and misdemeanors.

Mr. President, we hear much said in the course of this debate and through the press about the violation of the constitution. It is said that in the reconstruction measures of Congress we have gone outside of the constitution, and the remark of some distinguished statesman of the Republican party is quoted to that effect. Sir, if any leading Republican has ever said so, he spoke only for himself, not for another. I deny the statement *in toto*. I insist that these reconstruction measures are as fully within the powers of the constitution as any legislation that can be had, not only by reason, but by authority. And who are the men that are talking so much about the violation of the constitution and who pretend to be the especial friends of that instrument? The great mass of them, only three years ago, were in arms to overturn the constitution and establish that of Montgomery in its place, or were their Northern friends, who were aiding and sympathizing in that undertaking.

I had occasion the other day to speak of what was described as a constitutional Union man—a man living inside of the federal lines during the war, sympathizing with the rebellion, and who endeavored to aid the rebellion by insisting that every war measure for the purpose of suppressing it was a violation of the constitution of the United States. Now, these men who claim to be the especial friends of the constitution are the men who have sought to destroy it by force of arms,

and those throughout the country who have given them aid and comfort. Sir, you will remember that once a celebrated French woman was being dragged to the scaffold, and as she passed the statue of liberty she exclaimed: "How many crimes have been committed in thy name;" and I can say to the constitution, how many crimes against liberty, humanity, and progress are being committed in thy name by these men who, while they loved not the constitution and sought its destruction, now, for party purposes, claim to be its especial friends.

My friend from Wisconsin yesterday compared what he called the Radical party of the North to the radicals of the South, and when he was asked the question by some senator, "Who are the radicals of the South?" he said, "They are the secessionists." Sir, the secessionists of the South are Democrats to-day, acting in harmony and concert with the Democratic party. They were Democrats during the war who prayed for the success of McClellan and Pendleton, and would have been glad to have voted for them; and they were Democrats before the war, and the men who made the rebellion. These are the radicals of the South; and my friend from Wisconsin, after all, is voting with the radicals.

The burden of his speech yesterday was that the reconstruction measures of Congress are intended to establish negro supremacy. Sir, this proposition is without any foundation whatever. I believe it was stated yesterday by the senator from Illinois [Mr. Trumbull] that in every State but two the white voters registered outnumbered the colored voters; and the fact that in two States the colored voters outnumbered the white voters is owing to the simple accident that there are more colored men in those States than there are white men. Congress has not sought to establish negro supremacy, nor has

it sought to establish the supremacy of any class or party of men. If it had sought to establish negro supremacy it would have been an easy matter by excluding from the right of suffrage all men who had been concerned in the rebellion, in accordance with the proposition of the distinguished senator from Massachusetts [Mr. Sumner] in his speech at Worcester in 1865. He proposed to exclude all men who had been concerned in the rebellion, and confer suffrage only on those who were left. That would have established negro supremacy by giving the negroes an overwhelming majority in every State; and if that had been the object of Congress, it could have been readily done.

But, sir, Congress has only sought to divide the political power between the loyal and the disloyal. It has disfranchised some fifty thousand disloyal leaders, leaving all the rest of the people to vote. They have been enfranchised on both sides, that neither should be placed in the power of the other. The rebels have the right to vote so that they shall not be under the control and power of the Union men only, and the Union men have been allowed to vote so that they shall not be under the control and power of the rebels. This is the policy, to divide the political power among those men for the protection of each. Sir, the charge that we intend to create a negro supremacy or colored State governments is without the slightest foundation, for it would have been in the power of Congress to have easily conferred such supremacy by simply excluding the disloyal from the right of suffrage—a power which it had the clear right to exercise.

Now, Mr. President, allow me to consider for a moment the amendment offered by the senator from Wisconsin, and upon which his speech was made, and see what is its effect,—I will not say its purpose, but its inevitable effect,—should

it become a law. I will ask the secretary to read the amendment which the senator from Wisconsin has proposed to the Senate.

[The secretary read as follows:

“Provided, nevertheless, That upon an election for the ratification of any constitution, or of officers under the same, previous to its adoption in any State, no person not having the qualifications of an elector under the constitution and laws of such State previous to the late rebellion shall be allowed to vote, unless he shall possess one of the following qualifications, namely:—

“1. He shall have served as a soldier in the federal army for one year or more.

“2. He shall have a sufficient education to read the constitution of the United States and to subscribe his name to an oath to support the same; or,

“3. He shall be seized in his own right, or in the right of his wife, of a freehold of the value of \$250.”]

Sir, these qualifications are, by the terms of the amendment, to apply to those who were not authorized to vote by the laws of the State before the rebellion—in other words, the colored men. He proposes to allow a colored man to vote if he has been in the federal army one year, and he proposes to allow a rebel white man to vote, although he has served in the rebel army four years! He proposes that a colored man shall not vote unless he has sufficient education to read the constitution of the United States and to subscribe his name to an oath to support the same; whereas he permits a rebel white man to vote who never heard of A, and does not know how to make his mark even to a note given for whisky.

Again, sir, he proposes that the colored man shall not vote unless he shall be seized in his own right or in the right of his wife of a freehold of the value of \$250; a provision

which, of course, would cut off nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand colored men in the South. The colored man cannot vote unless he has a freehold of \$250, but the white rebel who was never worth twenty-five cents, who never paid poll-tax in his life, never paid an honest debt, is to be allowed to vote. Sir, what would be the inevitable effect of the adoption of this amendment? To cut off such a large part of the colored vote as to leave the rebel white vote largely in the ascendancy and to put these new State governments there to be formed again into the hands of the rebels. Sir, I will not spend longer time upon that.

My friend yesterday alluded to my indorsement of the President's policy in a speech in 1865. I never indorsed what is now called the President's policy. In the summer of 1865, when I saw a division coming between the President and the Republican party, and when I could not help anticipating the direful consequences that must result from it, I made a speech in which I repelled certain statements that had been made against the President, and denied the charge that by issuing his proclamation of May 29, 1865, he had thereby left the Republican party. I said that he had not left the Republican party by that act. I did show that the policy of that proclamation was even more radical than that of Mr. Lincoln. I did show that it was more radical even than the Winter-Davis bill of the summer of 1864. But, sir, it was all upon the distinct understanding that whatever the President did, that his whole policy or action was to be submitted to Congress for its consideration and decision; and, as I before remarked, if that had been done all would have been well. I did not then advocate universal colored suffrage in the South, and I have before given my reasons for it, and in doing that I was acting in harmony with the great body of the Republi-

can party of the North. It was nearly a year after that time, when Congress passed the constitutional amendment, which still left the question of suffrage with the Southern States, left it with the white people; and it was not until a year and a half after that time that Congress came to the conclusion that we could not execute the guaranty of the constitution without raising up a new class of loyal voters.

And, sir, nobody concurred in that result more heartily than myself. I confess (and I do it without shame) that I have been educated by the great events of the war. The American people have been educated rapidly; and the man who says he has learned nothing, that he stands now where he did six years ago, is like an ancient mile-post by the side of a deserted highway. We, Mr. President, have advanced step by step. When this war began we did not contemplate the destruction of slavery. I remember well when the Crittenden resolution was passed, declaring that the war was not prosecuted for conquest or to overturn the institutions of any State. I know that that was intended as an assurance that slavery should not be destroyed, and it received the vote, I believe, of every Republican member in both houses of Congress; but in a few months after that time it was found by the events of the war that we could not preserve slavery and suppress the rebellion, and we must destroy slavery—not prosecute the war to destroy slavery, but destroy slavery to prosecute the war. Which was the better? To stand by the resolution and let the Union go, or stand by the Union and let the resolution go? Congress could not stand by that pledge, and it was “more honored in the breach than the observance.”

Mr. Lincoln issued his proclamation of emancipation, setting free the slaves of the rebels. It was dictated by the

stern and bloody experience of the times. Mr. Lincoln had no choice left him. When we began this contest, no one thought we would use colored soldiers in the war. The distinguished senator sitting by me here [Mr. Cameron], when in the winter of 1861 he first brought forward the proposition, as secretary of war, to use colored soldiers, was greatly in advance of public opinion, and was thought to be visionary; but as the war progressed it became manifest to all intelligent men that we must not only destroy slavery but we must avail ourselves of every instrumentality in our power for the purpose of putting down the rebellion, and the whole country accorded in the use of colored soldiers, and gallant and glorious service they rendered. In 1864 a proposition was brought forward in this body to amend the constitution of the United States by abolishing slavery. We do not think that this is very radical now, but it was very radical then; it was the great measure of the age, and almost of modern times, and it was finally passed; an amendment setting free every human being within the limits of the United States. But, sir, we were very far then from where we are now. All will remember the celebrated Winter-Davis bill, passed in June, 1864, which took the power of reconstruction out of the hands of the President, where it did not in fact belong.

I refer to Mr. Lincoln; but if that bill had passed it would perhaps have resulted in the destruction of this government. We can all see it now, although it was then thought to be the most radical measure of the times. What did it propose? It proposed to prescribe a plan, to take effect when the war should end, by which these rebel States should be restored. I refer to that bill simply to show how we have all travelled. It required but one condition or guaranty on the part of the

South, and that was that they should put in their constitutions a provision prohibiting slavery. It required no other guaranty. It required no equalization of representation; no security against rebel debts, or against payment for emancipated slaves; and it confined the right of suffrage to white men. But it was thought to be a great step in advance at the time; and so it was; but events were passing rapidly, and in 1865 the President came forward with his proposition, and I am stating what is true from an examination of the documents when I say that, but for the want of power with the President, his scheme in itself considered was far more radical than that of the Winter-Davis bill: but events were rapidly teaching the statesmen of the time that we could not reconstruct upon that basis.

Still, Congress was not prepared to take a forward step until the summer of 1866, in the passage of the constitutional amendment, which we now regard as a half-way measure, necessary and vital as far as it went, but not going far enough. That was rejected, and we were then compelled to go further, and we have now fallen upon the plan of reconstruction which I have been considering. It has been dictated by the logic of events. It overrides all arguments, overrides all prejudices, overrides all theory, in the presence of the necessity for preserving the life of this nation; and if future events shall determine that we must go further, I for one am prepared to say that I will go as far as shall be necessary to the execution of this guaranty, the reconstruction of this Republic upon a right basis, and the successful restoration of every part of this Union.

Mr. President, the column of reconstruction, as I before remarked, has risen slowly. It has not been hewn from a single stone. It is composed of many blocks, painfully laid

up and put together, and cemented by the tears and blood of the nation. Sir, we have done nothing arbitrarily. We have done nothing for punishment—aye, too little for punishment. Justice has not had her demand. Not a man has yet been executed for this great treason. The arch fiend himself is now at liberty upon bail. No man is to be punished; and now, while punishment has gone by, as we all know, we are insisting only upon security for the future. We are simply asking that the evil spirits who brought this war upon us shall not again come into power during this generation, again to bring upon us rebellion and calamity. We are simply asking for those securities that we deem necessary for our peace and the peace of our posterity.

Sir, there is one great difference between this Union party and the so-called Democratic party. Our principles are those of humanity; they are those of justice; they are those of equal rights; they are principles that appeal to the hearts and the consciences of men; while on the other side we hear appeals to the prejudice of race against race. The white man is overwhelmingly in the majority in this country, and that majority is yearly increased by half a million of white men from abroad, and that majority gaining in proportion from year to year until the colored men will finally be but a handful in this country; and yet we hear the prejudices of the white race appealed to to crush this other race, and to prevent it from rising to supremacy and power. Sir, there is nothing noble, there is nothing generous, there is nothing lovely in that policy or that appeal. How does that principle compare with ours? We are standing upon the broad platform of the Declaration of Independence, that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the

pursuit of happiness." We say that these rights are not given by laws; are not given by the constitution; but they are the gift of God to every man born in the world. Oh, sir, how glorious is this great principle compared with the inhuman—I might say the heathenish—appeal to the prejudice of race against race; the endeavor further to excite the strong against the weak; the endeavor further to deprive the weak of their rights of protection against the strong.