

The immediate issue

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THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE: A SPEECH OF WENDELL PHILLIPS

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MASSACHUSETTS ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY AT BOSTON.

The 8th day of November closed the record up to that day. We need have no criticism on matters which took place before. In our judgments of men we differ; but our business is with facts of national action. As abolitionists, we shall probably no more agree in our judgment of individuals than the sects agree in their creeds, no matter how long or how patiently we may argue such questions; but if our sessions have any purpose or utility, it must consist in the expression of an anti-slavery opinion in regard to the facts now taking place in American civil life; and my judgment is, that the great duty of abolitionists at this time is to record their opinion as to such facts; otherwise, there seems to be no meaning, no purpose in any meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-slavery Society.

The future just opening upon us has one question for abolitionists, and that is, the terms of reconstruction. The great danger in that future consists in three facts. The first is, that the prejudice against the negro is not more than half eradicated from the North. Secondly, that the republican party, which has the Government in its control, is weakened in its principle by the very numbers which have rallied to its flag. Thirdly, that the Executive pleads earnestly an immediate reconstruction of States, within the next twelve months.

The first element to which I adverted, the continuing prejudice against the negro, and the second, that the republican party is not itself able to command a decisive vote on questions of absolute justice to the negro, make the third, the wish of the Executive to reconstruct under such circumstances, vitally important in an anti-slavery point of view. I have no doubt, any more than the most sanguine among us, that if the same pressure could be continued upon the administration which we have enjoyed hitherto, and which has made 1864 out of 1861, we should compel liberty out of the present aspect of affairs; but that pressure was composed of two elements. On the Southern side it was war; on the Northern side it was discontent with the Executive. The Government has travelled from 1861 to 1864, not of its own will. I do not regard it as having accomplished one single step self-moved. In every case, it has been bayoneted up to it by the pressure of outside public opinion, by a distinct intimation from almost every quarter, and especially from abolitionists, that its course and attitude were not satisfactory. On the Southern side, there was another element, —war. As long as that continued, it ripened the South and the North. It educated both parties. Our defeats educated the Northern mind, our victories educated the Southern mind; and while

this process went forward there was no great fear that the Government would be able to balk the purposes which underlie the great civil convulsion; but the press and the general public have measurably discontinued, within the last six months, this critical pressure, and rebuke of the attitude of the administration. The public mind has largely settled down into the conviction that the question is safe, somewhere, either in the purposes of the Executive or in the march of events, and consequently the press and the general public have largely discontinued their criticisms. On the other hand, when we look at the South, there is a battle going on inside the Confederacy far more momentous in its influence on our future than any battle Grant will fight, or than Sherman has fought; that is, the contest between the statesmen of Georgia and Richmond as to which shall lead the Confederacy. Vice-President Stephens, Gov. Brown, and the class of men whom they represent, are undoubtedly wearied with the efforts already made to establish independence, and satisfied that they have done enough. I do not look upon them as having exhausted their means, or as intimating that they have exhausted their means. On the contrary, even Sherman, certainly a competent judge, writing from Georgia itself, on the 25th day of October, two months after the victory at Atlanta, commences his letter with an observation of this kind, which 29 30 he repeats in another letter of the same date: "This war is only begun." Doubtless he meant, "I see around me so many evidences of the means of continuing the war, that, in a military point of view, it is only begun." If any party at the South discontinue it, they discontinue it not of necessity, but of purpose.

Now, the Georgia plot, so to call it, to unhorse Davis, and throw him from the saddle, is a momentous one as regards the anti-slavery issue. If they conquer, the idea of peace dominates in the Confederacy. When that idea gets the helm of the Confederacy, peace will be made; no doubt of it, because the whole tone of the republican party is peace, on some condition or other, shortly, from political and military necessities, as they judge. We were told in Washington, by a dozen members of the House, that if North Carolina should knock at the door to-day, having chosen Senators and Representatives, and should say, "I wish to enter as I stand: I will discuss slavery when I have entered, but I submit to the flag—admit me!" we are assured, I say, by half-a-dozen members, "We could not take a vote; she would be admitted by acclamation." Such is the temper of Congress itself. But Congress, even in that mood of mind, recognizes and confesses that the wish for the speediest reconstruction prevails in the White House, with tenfold the intensity that it does in its own body. If, therefore, from any respectable portion of the South, especially from a portion that had got control of the Confederacy, an offer of peace should come, there would undoubtedly be negotiations resulting in it; and every man who is acquainted with the state of public feeling even here knows, that, if Georgia should ask to-morrow to be admitted to this Union on the basis of freeing her slaves within ten years or twenty years, every other man in the community would say, Amen! that two-thirds of the republican party would honestly say, Amen! For you must remember that the republican party is not to-day composed of, certainly not ruled by, its original elements, educated

by thirty or twenty years of political struggle. It consists, on the left hand, of a converted democratic, on the right hand, of a converted Bell-Everett, section,—men who “see men as trees walking,” have no definite conception of the necessities of the question, no real experimental knowledge of the subject; and their very honesty of purpose, entitling them to influence, doubles their danger to us. They would deservedly influence politics, and control it, through the press and the Executive. They honestly believe to-day in the madness of immediate emancipation, and any scheme which repudiated it would have their earnest sanction. Added to this is another element. The President has distinctly avowed to the House Committee on Reconstruction, “I will sign almost any bill on that subject which admits Louisiana; I will sign no bill which does not admit her.” In other words, he practically endorses the statement of Gen. Banks at the Tremont Temple, that the reconstruction of Louisiana is the model which the Executive sets to the other States for the reconstruction of civil government; because, in the first place, this very avowal says to Congress, “It is safe thus to reconstruct Louisiana; reconstruct it;” and, secondly, every man knows, that any one State which passes the doors of Congress will necessarily be the model for every other; because Louisiana once admitted as she stands, if Georgia or South Carolina comes up to-morrow, they will justly claim: “Give us the same privileges and terms that you have accorded to Louisiana;” and every man acquainted with politics in general or the state of parties in particular to-day knows that you could not rally a vote against such a claim. Admit one State, and you fix the precedent: every other State will deem itself injured if it is precluded from any privilege enjoyed by the first admitted State. When, therefore, Congress submits,—as even Mr. Sumner is understood to say they must submit, however reluctantly, in this single objectionable instance, to the wishes of the President,—when Congress submits to this reconstruction of Louisiana, it establishes the principle underlying Louisiana as the guide for future reconstruction. What is that principle? I hardly need to examine it. Fortunately for us, Judge Field has exhibited in one act its nature. A brutal, domineering, infamous overseer spirit, such as we knew it before '60, its symbol, the bowie-knife, comes back to the House as the chosen representative, at the first blush, of the white men of Louisiana,—one of them represented to me, by competent authority, a month ago, as really a rebel at the bottom of his heart as any one that treads the continent. That is the first harvest reaped in the hot enthusiasm of the hour, with every eye in the nation planted on the reconstruction. What element of the white race will follow? What class of men will hereafter come up to share authority with us, if this be their best sample?

But this is not, perhaps, the exact question for an Abolitionist; it is the question for a citizen. We are sharing sovereignty with that white race; but to-day I come here merely to criticise the attitude of that white race toward the negro. You will remember that to-day we have the power to protect the negro in New Orleans as perfectly as we have in the streets of Boston. The slightest fringe of his rights trampled upon, and the hand of Government can reach the offender as effectually in New Orleans as in State Street. That is the attitude to-day, How necessary is it that Government

should enjoy that right? Look at Maryland and see. Maryland accepted emancipation at her own will: she voted it of her own will. It was not forced upon her by conquest; by the act of the Federal Government; it was accepted by her own citizens. If there ever was a State, therefore, where the interest of the black race could be trusted to the fairness and good purpose of the white race, it was Maryland. What was the fact? Twenty-four hours after that proclamation of Gov. Bradford's, making the Constitution the law of the land, the whites of that State took up a forgotten law, and proceeded with speedy and vengeful activity to put it into execution. Left alone a week, as I was assured in Baltimore, they would have had all the young colored persons so thoroughly apprenticed that liberty to them would have been a sham for the next fifteen or twenty years. The courts were powerless to oppose it. Gen. Wallace, of the United-States army, on the spot, issued his order superseding every court in Maryland, as far as the negro was concerned. That order, withdrawn within a week at the request of the loyal men, because it had done its work, defeated the plot; but had he not been there, there would have been no power competent to arrest that conspiracy, which our friend here (Geo. Thompson) knows was nothing but a literal repetition of what was done in the West Indies. Jamaica parallels our experience in every particular. I remember when I was in England in 1841, the delegates from Jamaica told me exactly the same story that the loyal men of Baltimore did last month.

This is the white race, in the best circumstances, at the commencement. As I say, while we are in actual possession of a State, holding it by the army, we can protect the negro, reconstruct a State, and where are we? Why, we have put up a fence between the Federal Government and the State Government. The bill before the House proposes, for instance, that South Carolina, with 300,000 white men, and not a loyalist among them, and 400,000 black men, and not a disloyalist among them, shall be reconstructed, the fence erected between us and them, the government of the State given to these 300,000 rebels, and the black men put under their feet helplessly. If we were in England, I should have no doubt and no fear: because the English realm has but one law, practically; and the statute of London runs to the end of the realm. By the Queen's Bench, or the Privy Council, a magistrate at the end of the earth can be unseated according to the will of Parliament. That is England; but that is not America. Put up the fence between you and Louisiana or South Carolina, and the Federal law runs to it, not over it, except in two or three specified cases. Suppose (what is by no means certain) that we get an amendment of the Constitution prohibiting slavery. Many abolitionists have said, that, "with the prohibition of chattel slavery, and an abolitionist for Chief Justice, the negro is safe." How unwise! On the other side the State fence is Robert Small and Gov. Aiken. On this side is Salmon P. Chase and the Federal Constitution. Why, if Gov. Aiken has got any brains, he can grind Robert Small to powder in nine hundred and ninety-nine different ways without trespassing on the Anti-Slavery Amendment; and until he does, Salmon P. Chase cannot interfere. When I come to speak to you, in a moment, of Louisiana, you will see that Banks has actually set them the example, and

given them the very method, by which to grind the negro without restoring chattelism. Do not let us forget the history of the anti-slavery struggle, and what it has taught us of the limited authority and influence of the Federal Government.

Every man of you, fifty years old, can remember the experience of the Federal Government in 1831, when the strongest power in the nation grappled with the State of Georgia, and was defeated. When Georgia seized a converted Cherokee, in 1831, and said, "I will hang him," Chief Justice Marshall said, "You cannot: it is unconstitutional." Orthodoxy rallied from Massachusetts Bay to the Mississippi and said, "You shall not: it is infamous." Where is there a stronger power than the orthodox sects of the North for an army and the Supreme Court for a general? Congress denied the legality of the proceeding. The press of the country, ignorant and exultant, said, "It can't be done." "See if it can't," said Georgia, and hung him up. Then she took Samuel Worcester and put him in jail. Behind him stood the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign and Domestic Missions, in front of him the Chief Justice, but Georgia turned the key on him, and there he lay, until, in her sovereign will, she chose to open it. South Carolina took our black seamen out of ships, and put them in jail. Winthrop even was lifted to manhood enough to prove it was illegal; the Secretary of State proved it was unconstitutional; Massachusetts protested; Congress protested; we sent Samuel Hoar down to say, "Wayward sister, why do you so?" "Go home, or I will put you in," was the answer. We had the Federal authority, the North, and the Constitution on our side; but they availed nothing. Texas took six of our black men and sold them, ten years ago; and we do not know to-day where they are. Unconstitutional, all of it; public opinion on our side largely at the North; but Congress said, "We know no means by which to check a State." Chief Justice Marshall exhausted all his ingenuity in the Cherokee case. The interlocking of State and Federal authority is so complex, that when a State, short of war, chooses thus to throw herself athwart the Government, it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to interfere with her.

We are to remember the history of the cause. I allow, of course, what every man knows, that all this time we had a pro-slavery public: we are to have an anti-slavery one, I hope, in the future; but I want to bring to your minds, first, the almost impossibility, even with the Constitution on our side, of attacking a State, and then to remind you that the white men of the reconstructed States can keep inside the Constitution, be free from any 32 legal criticism, and yet put the negro where no Abolitionist would be willing to see him.

Now, to my mind, an American abolitionist, when he asks freedom for the negro, means effectually freedom, real freedom, something that can maintain and vindicate itself. I do not believe in an English freedom, that trusts the welfare of the dependent class to the good will and moral sense of the upper class. This is aristocracy. The ballot in England is in the hands of some eight hundred

thousand or a million of men, and the welfare of the rest trusted to their sense of justice. That is their philosophy of government; it is not ours. Our philosophy of government, since the 4th day of July, 1776, is that no class is safe, no freedom is real, no emancipation is effectual, which does not place in the hands of the man himself the power to protect his own rights. That is the genius of American institutions. Now, when I see the nature and relative position of the State and Federal Governments, and know that the white man of the North, if he wished to, could not protect the negro of Louisiana, once put that State fence between them, could not if he would, and I still believe, would not if he could, in the absolute sense of justice and freedom; then, as an abolitionist, under such a government, I fall back on the democratic principle, and claim of the anti-slavery party that it shall be content with no emancipation which does not put into the hands of the freedman himself the power to protect his newly-acquired liberty (applause). No emancipation is effectual, no freedom is real, which does not take that shape. I argue it simply as a question of security, not of justice, or magnanimity. For a nation to ask a man to fight for them and then leave him without full citizenship, is an infamy which would make a man forswear all part in such a nation (loud applause). I have seen a letter from one of our ablest captains, who writes—"I do not believe in the equality of races. I do not accept the policy of allowing negroes to fight. I do not believe in universal suffrage, nor in universal freedom. I believe that this is a white man's battle, and that white men should fight it. But" he says, "if the white man chooses to give himself to trade, and let the negro fight the battle, the hand that defends the country has a right to govern it," (applause.) That is honest logic. That is the honest logic of an opponent of anti-slavery. That is the logic of a man whose growing popularity, with such a heart, constitutes one of the great dangers of our future.

If we are to believe in the sincere purpose of the Administration to arm the negro and give him his musket as the basis of his right to every privilege of citizenship, how shall we explain that when Sherman asked for Col. Bowman, months ago, to organize the negroes who sought our camp, from that day to this, though often repeatedly urged, no one has been sent him! From that day to this, the Government has never responded to his call. From that day to this, the Executive at Washington has not answered, though urged, even by Maryland, to do it. They left him to sully the noblest achievement of the war by the most infamous act that ever disgraced a nation. When he swept across the continent, doing what no soldier had done before, had he gathered the only help he got, the black man, into his ranks, his star would have taken its place in the highest galaxy of patriots and captains. But instead of that, with deliberate infamy, he paused at the end of a causeway a mile long, let the white men pass, and held back the negroes who had brought him horses, food, information, and then tore up the bridge, and stood by while rebel cavalry shot that mass of friends down as they would a herd of buffaloes (cries of "Shame!") The proudest action of the war is covered with a blot sufficient to make any American unwilling to name it as done by his countrymen. Show me an instance, under any plea of military strategy or necessity, where a white

man seeking our lines, in the whole four years, has been hurled back on the bayonets of the enemy, and our men stood by and saw him shot down, and I will grant some excuse, some plausible apology for this infamous butchery by the first military genius of the white race. I know, of course, in whose immediate presence and by whose immediate order the act was done; but as you do not seek out the name of the soldier who actually tore up the bridge, but visit your rebuke on this Davis who ordered the act, so I go farther and hold the head of the whole expedition, Sherman, responsible. Any marked act in that march which he has not censured he must be held to have indorsed and approved. This infamy is too monstrous for our indignation to be satisfied, grovelling down among petty underlings, like this Jefferson C. Davis. I hold Sherman responsible since he has endorsed it by silence. If the Administration remains silent, then I hold President Lincoln and Mr. Secretary Stanton the real murderers. They can hasten fast enough to relieve a general who spares the lives of his soldiers; we wait to see what they will say to one who murders them.

Louisiana!—the President offers it to us as an initial reconstruction. We may see what sort of freedom, therefore, we are to hope for if the black man be left to the tender mercies either of a Major General or of the white men of the rebel States; but in examining this matter, I shall rely almost exclusively on the speech of Gen. Banks at Tremont Temple. I take that not because I think Gen. Banks's statement to be any evidence whatever of the truth of what he says, but because I find enough admitted and claimed for merit by him in that speech to make me repudiate Louisiana. Thoroughly untrustworthy in regard to the whole question of Louisiana, only a brain thrice sodden would accept Banks's evidence on any point relating to the negro. A Major General, born in Massachusetts, graduated 33 by three years of such a war as this, who could say to the black regiment of Louisiana, which had left half its numbers under the mouths of the enemy's cannon, when it asked to put "Port Hudson" on its flag, "No," while he permitted a white regiment, doing picket duty two miles off, so to inscribe their banner, is not fit witness where the negro is concerned, (applause.) I refuse him all right to testify; and I visit the same criticism even on the War Department when I recollect that it is but a month since they rectified that infamous injustice. Week after week, month after month went by, and the men whose comrades had died under the very mouths of the enemy's cannon had a flag unmarked, while so many a white man flaunted his lie in their faces, and the Government at Washington, indifferent and heartless, permitted this injustice; but as I say, I accept the acknowledgments of Gen. Banks in this speech as sufficient for my purpose.

What you call the freedom of Louisiana, is "Bank's freedom," and it is no freedom for me. The English, in 1834, called their apprenticeship system, "Stanley freedom;" they replaced it soon by something better. The Abolitionists, asking for bread—Emancipation—are presented with a stone,—"Banks's freedom." I, for one, do not accept it.

In that speech, Gen. Banks, himself, describes his system as one planned “to *prepare* the negro for as perfect an independence as that enjoyed by any other class.” The anti-slavery agitation of thirty years stamps its contempt on any *preparation* of the negro for justice (loud applause.) If there is any thing patent on the whole history of our thirty years' struggle, it is that the negro no more needs to be *prepared* for liberty than the white man (applause.) Yet Gen. Banks begins his speech by saying he has initiated a system to *prepare* the negro for liberty! He then goes on to say, that in the State of Louisiana, the negro is not allowed to make a contract. Now, I try him in two ways. He says neither the negro nor any laboring man in Louisiana, can be allowed to make a contract. If he is sincere, why hasn't he put the white laborer as well as the black under his Provost Marshal? (Applause.) If his principle is a correct one, his law should be, “No laboring man in Louisiana shall fix the rate of his own wages, fix the term of his own contract, or leave the spot where he has agreed to labor;” but there is no such rule. Gen. Banks, having laid down the principle that no *laboring man* is able to make a contract in Louisiana, proceeds to do—what? To settle that no *black man* shall make a contract! showing the sham of the original principle! What he means, practically, is, “no laboring negro shall make a contract.”

We never shall have a nation until it is governed by one idea. The idea of Massachusetts liberty is MANHOOD; a human being, not an artificial being; a thing created by God, not by law. The Southern idea of liberty has been, a white race lifted into position by law, and a black race thrust down into its position by law. The idea of Massachusetts liberty is, a man competent to sell his own toil, to select his own work, and, when he differs with his neighbor, a jury to appeal to. My will at the beginning of the road, and a jury at the end;—that is liberty, according to the Northern interpretation. Gen. Banks's liberty for the negro is, no right to fix his wages; no right to choose his toil, practically no right; having once chosen his place, no right to quit it; any difference between employed and employer tried by a provost-marshal, not a jury. History always repeats itself. In Jamaica, England tried her apprenticeship system, and said to the negro, “If you differ with your master, go to the Stipendiary Magistrate.” Who was he? He was a commissioned Englishman, who travelled from plantation to plantation, arrived late in the afternoon, took a bath, a dinner, a bottle of Madeira, went to bed, got up late, breakfasted with his host, and then coolly sat down on the piazza to hear what the negroes had to say. The negro never got any justice, of course. In the same way, Gen. Banks has set up what he calls a Provost-Marshal. He has the American ingenuity as to phrases. It is not a magistrate, it is not a justice. You know we have never had slavery. Years ago, we had the “domestic institution;” then we had “the peculiar institution;” then “the patriarchal institution;” then a Methodist Bishop was requested, not to get rid of his slaves, but to get rid of his “*impediment*,” (laughter). Mr. Choate, when in his last years he canvassed Massachusetts, said, not slavery, but “antagonistic system of labor.” So Gen. Banks organizes labor, sets up a Provost Marshal—a very innocent military officer— who visits the white man, dines, sups, sleeps, goes up in the morning, and

listens at arm's length to the complaints of the freedman. What chance of justice has he? His wages having been originally fixed by that Provost-Marshal and the employer, without any voice of his, any difference is referred to the Provost-Marshal, and practically, necessarily, though not included in the ostensible system, behind the Provost Marshal stands the lash. I have here the letter of a New England Brigadier General stating that to his knowledge the freedmen are whipped. I have in my own ears the confession of a New York Colonel that he had sent his own soldiers to see it done; and we have the statement, in Colonel McKaye's report, that whipping was undoubtedly practised on many plantations under this beautiful "organization of labor."

Thus Gen. Banks hands over the black man to the white race in Louisiana, and then Mr. Lincoln insists that that State shall be admitted as a representative State, with two Senators to balance New York, and five Representatives to balance Connecticut. By all the record of thirty years, I protest. By every principle held sacred in the anti-slavery discussions of a quarter of a century, I protest against accepting that bastard as a true son of the Rebellion (applause). Louisiana is "keeping the promise to the ear and breaking it to the hope." It is sacrificing the very essence of the negro's liberty to the desire for a prompt reconstruction. I do not believe it will be possible to reconstruct those States for a quarter of a century, if the attempt is made to reconstruct them of white men. This generation never will have their minds changed to that extent that they can be trusted. I said to one of the Provost-Marschals of North Carolina—the most Union State of all, it is said,—“How much unionism is there in North Carolina?” “Well,” said he, “when a man is half whipped and thoroughly starved, he is a very good Unionist.” No doubt he is. The white race is no fit timber to build States with, and, looking at the question as mere citizens, the ballot to the negro is indispensable, because we have no other timber to build States with, and unless we build with him, we must postpone reconstruction for so many years that the very patronage of territorial government would swamp Republican institutions. Keep them territories, let the Democracy come in in eight years or four, with the money-power of this banking system in one hand and territorial government on the other, and Republican government will be almost a farce. God gives us but one bridge over the pit, like the line of the Mohammedan legend, fine as a spider's web. Step one single iota to the right or left of absolute justice, and the nation is in the pit (applause). All that the negro needs, and all that belongs to him, is the indispensable necessity of the white race, as well as justice to him. I contend, therefore, that what the anti-slavery cause needs to-day, is the most indignant protest against “Banks's liberty” in Louisiana, a most indignant repudiation of it as emancipation, the most earnest protest against the acceptance of such a State by Congress on every ground, unless we would lose half the fruits of the Rebellion. A government color-blind; no distinction of race in the camp or the Senate; the negro entitled to vote and to be voted for; to fight with rifle in hand or to order the battle with stars on his shoulders; stars and office for the heart, brain and hand, that can win and wield them; this is at once justice, fair play, magnanimity and necessity, and the only pathway to safety and empire.

I believe, friends, that there is more hope of safety to us in Richmond to-day, than there is in Washington, because, as I said, speaking of the struggle within the Confederacy, if Jefferson Davis keeps the saddle, he continues the war, and will clean this continent from St. Louis to St. Augustine—free every black, yes, give him a patent of nobility, before he will yield to the Yankee; and that process will educate us. Do not let us be wanting to the grand signs with which Providence beckons us forward. Whoever supposed he would live to see such an hour as we see to-day? Jefferson Davis marched out of Washington, his right hand full of fetters for the black, on which he had written "Forever." To-day he sits in Richmond, with pale lips debating with his fellows whether the black man will defend and save him. [Mr. May—"God be thanked!"] He might be painted to-day kneeling at the very feet of the negro, begging help, or aghast at the gulf which yawns beneath, and no hand but that of the black to save him. Such a change no other page of history shows us. God has given it to us, the glorious result of battle in the South, and as keen a struggle in Northern thought and purpose here. I see it as my friend [Mr. May] does, but what I demand of him is, that in the future as in the past, he shall give us that same keen criticism which has made 1865 out of 1861, which has bent Jefferson Davis to the feet of the negro, and which will yet force him to muster that very race against us; and Northern prejudice, half exorcised by the thunders of Port Hudson and Fort Wagner—the negro on our side—will shudder down to its own place—the bottomless pit—when the negro carries a victorious banner against us. Then we shall confess "the negro will fight," not in the complacent tone of pitying condescension, but with wholesome terror and common sense (applause). Yes, it is war at the South, and as keen a war betwixt the abolitionists of the North and the political policy which governs the Republican party, on which I base my hope—not in praises, not in wasting time telling how much has been done. The world knows that. It is the last step which makes success or failure. It is the last half hour which actually consummates victory. As Napoleon said, it is the last fifteen minutes and the last regiment which decides which army beats.

I know, as my friends do, how much has been done. Just so the soldier in front of Richmond to-day knows exactly how much has been done. He can count Chattanooga and Gettysburg, Antietam and Petersburg, and the Wilderness, and cry exultingly to Grant, "How much?" But suppose he should fold his arms, and say, "Lieutenant General, we have done so much that I am going home, and shall leave you to consummate the victory, solitary and alone, over Richmond;" should we think that policy? It seems to me some of our anti-slavery friends stand to-day counting up success after success, created solely by the anti-slavery bayonet thrust into the White House, and, having finished the list, they say, "Let us fold our arms, cry, Great is the Republican party, and trust Abraham Lincoln to consummate a perfect victory." Will Grant, even with all his past successes, make Richmond capitulate without an army? Just as soon as the Republican party can subjugate the slaveocracy without our searching criticism and constant demand, "Onward! Justice, absolute 35 Justice, forthwith and forever!" To-day the balance hangs. Who are to gain or to lose? Don't think that I

exaggerate the problem. We have not measured "the job." More than half of it remains in front to-day. The fault of the American mind from the commencement, has been in not probing and measuring the vastness of the work. Some two years ago, McClellan summoned Sherman to his side, and said, "How many men will it take to hold Tennessee?" "Two hundred thousand," said Sherman. "Madness!" said the "young Napoleon" (laughter). "Insanity! You are a fanatic; it won't take thirty thousand;" and he banished the fanatic west of the Mississippi, to take charge of an Indian post. It has taken three hundred thousand men to hold Tennessee; the banished fanatic has swept across the continent, and snuffs the breezes of the Atlantic, with conquered States for a retinue, while the young Napoleon has gone to study engineering in a foreign land! (Loud applause.) To-day there is an opinion similar to McClellan's—that the future is so near, so ready for one grasp, that we can afford to relax our efforts, disband, muster out, and trust the Generals and Senators to *negotiate* the victory. That is McClellan, thinking that Tennessee could be held with a handful. In time, I think you will realize that the fanaticism which is to grasp both ends of the continent is that which measures to-day, with anxiety, the severity of the trial and the vastness of the work before us. (Loud applause.)

WHAT THE BLACK MAN WANTS: SPEECH OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MASSACHUSETTS ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY AT BOSTON.

Mr. President, —I came here, as I come always to the meetings in New England, as a listener, and not as a speaker; and one of the reasons why I have not been more frequently to the meetings of this society, has been because of the disposition on the part of some of my friends to call me out upon the platform, even when they knew that there was some difference of opinion and of feeling between those who rightfully belong to this platform and myself; and for fear of being misconstrued, as desiring to interrupt or disturb the proceedings of these meetings, I have usually kept away, and have thus been deprived of that educating influence, which I am always free to confess is of the highest order, descending from this platform. I have felt, since I have lived out West, that in going there I parted from a great deal that was valuable; and I feel, every time I come to these meetings, that I have lost a great deal by making my home west of Boston, west of Massachusetts; for, if anywhere in the country there is to be found the highest sense of justice, or the truest demands for my race, I look for it in the East, I look for it here. The ablest discussions of the whole question of our rights occur here, and to be deprived of the privilege of listening to those discussions is a great deprivation.

I do not know, from what has been said, that there is any difference of opinion as to the duty of abolitionists, at the present moment. How can we get up any difference at this point, or at any

point, where we are so united, so agreed? I went especially, however, with that word of Mr. Phillips, which is the criticism of Gen. Banks and Gen. Banks's policy. I hold that that policy is our chief danger at the present moment; that it practically enslaves the negro, and makes the Proclamation of 1863 a mockery and delusion. What is freedom? It is the right to choose one's own employment. Certainly it means that, if it means any thing; and when any individual or combination of individuals, undertakes to decide for any man when he shall work, where he shall work, at what he shall work, and for what he shall work, he or they practically reduce him to slavery. (Applause.) He is a slave. That I understand Gen. Banks to do—to determine for the so-called freedman, when, and where, and at what, and for how much he shall work, when he shall be punished, and by whom punished. It is absolute slavery. It defeats the beneficent intentions of the Government, if it has beneficent intentions, in regard to the freedom of our people.

I have had but one idea for the last three years, to present to the American people, and the phraseology in which I clothe it is the old abolition phraseology. I am for the “immediate, unconditional, and universal” enfranchisement of the black man, in every State in the Union. (Loud applause.) Without this, his liberty is a mockery; without this, you might as well almost retain the old name of slavery for his condition; for, in fact, if he is not the slave of the individual master, he is the slave of society, and holds his liberty as a privilege, not as a right. He is at the mercy of the mob, and has no means of protecting himself.

It may be objected, however, that this pressing of the negro's right to suffrage is premature. Let us have slavery abolished, it may be said, let us have labor organized, and then, in the natural course of events, the right of suffrage will be extended to the negro. I do not agree with this. The constitution of the human mind is such, that if it once disregards the conviction forced upon it by a revelation of truth, it requires the exercise of a higher power to produce the same conviction afterwards. The American people are now in tears. The Shenandoah has run blood—the best blood of the North. All around Richmond, the blood of New England and of the North has been shed—of your sons, your brothers and your fathers. We all feel, in the existence of this Rebellion, that judgments terrible, wide-spread, far-reaching, overwhelming, are abroad in the land; and we feel, in view of these judgments, just now, a disposition to learn righteousness. This is the hour. Our streets are in mourning, tears are falling at every fireside, and under 37 the chastisement of this Rebellion we have almost come up to the point of conceding this great, this all-important right of suffrage. I fear that if we fail to do it now, if abolitionists fail to press it now, we may not see, for centuries to come, the same disposition that exists at this moment. (Applause.) Hence, I say, now is the time to press this right.

It may be asked, "Why do you want it? Some men have got along very well without it. Women have not this right." Shall we justify one wrong by another? That is a sufficient answer. Shall we at this moment justify the deprivation of the negro of the right to vote, because some one else is deprived of that privilege? I hold that women, as well as men, have the right to vote (applause), and my heart and my voice go with the movement to extend suffrage to woman; but that question rests upon another basis than that on which our right rests. We may be asked, I say, why we want it. I will tell you why we want it. We want it because it is our *right*, first of all. (Applause.) No class of men can, without insulting their own nature, be content with any deprivation of their rights. We want it, again, as a means for educating our race. Men are so constituted that they derive their conviction of their own possibilities largely from the estimate formed of them by others. If nothing is expected of a people, that people will find it difficult to contradict that expectation. By depriving us of suffrage, you affirm our incapacity to form an intelligent judgment respecting public men and public measures; you declare before the world that we are unfit to exercise the elective franchise, and by this means lead us to undervalue ourselves, to put a low estimate upon ourselves, and to feel that we have no possibilities like other men. Again, I want the elective franchise, for one, as a colored man, because ours is a peculiar government, based upon a peculiar idea, and that idea is universal suffrage. If I were in a monarchical government, or an autocratic or aristocratic government, where the few bore rule and the many were subject, there would be no special stigma resting upon me, because I did not exercise the elective franchise. It would do me no great violence. Mingling with the mass, I should partake of the strength of the mass; I should be supported by the mass, and I should have the same incentives to endeavor with the mass of my fellow-men; it would be no particular burden, no particular deprivation; but here, where universal suffrage is the rule, where that is the fundamental idea of the Government, to rule us out is to make us an exception, to brand us with the stigma of inferiority, and to invite to our heads the missiles of those about us; therefore, I want the franchise for the black man.

There are, however, other reasons, not derived from any consideration merely of our rights, but arising out of the condition of the South, and of the country—considerations which have already been referred to by Mr. Phillips—considerations which must arrest the attention of statesmen. I believe that when the tall heads of this Rebellion shall have been swept down, as they will be swept down, when the Davises and Toombses and Stephenses, and others who are leading in this Rebellion shall have been blotted out, there will be this rank undergrowth of treason, to which reference has been made, growing up there, and interfering with, and thwarting the quiet operation of the Federal Government in those States. You will see those traitors handing down, from sire to son, the same malignant spirit which they have manifested, and which they are now exhibiting, with malicious hearts, broad blades, and bloody hands in the field, against our sons and brothers. That spirit will still remain; and whoever sees the Federal Government extended over those Southern

States will see that Government in a strange land, and not only in a strange land, but in an enemy's land. A post-master of the United States in the South will find himself surrounded by a hostile spirit; a collector in a Southern port will find himself surrounded by a hostile spirit; a United States marshal or United States judge will be surrounded there by a hostile element. That enmity will not die out in a year, will not die out in an age. The Federal Government will be looked upon in those States precisely as the Governments of Austria and France are looked upon in Italy at the present moment. They will endeavor to circumvent, they will endeavor to destroy, the peaceful operation of this Government. Now, where will you find the strength to counterbalance this spirit, if you do not find it in the negroes of the South? They are your friends, and have always been your friends. They were your friends even when the Government did not regard them as such. They comprehended the genius of this war before you did. It is a significant fact, it is a marvellous fact, it seems almost to imply a direct interposition of Providence, that this war, which began in the interest of slavery on both sides, bids fair to end in the interest of liberty on both sides. (Applause.) It was begun, I say, in the interest of slavery on both sides. The South was fighting to take slavery out of the Union, and the North fighting to keep it in the Union; the South fighting to get it beyond the limits of the United-States Constitution, and the North fighting to retain it within those limits; the South fighting for new guarantees, and the North fighting for the old guarantees;—both despising the negro, both insulting the negro. Yet, the negro, apparently endowed with wisdom from on high, saw more clearly the end from the beginning than we did. When Seward said the status of no man in the country would be changed by the war, the negro did not believe him. (Applause.) When our generals sent their underlings in shoulder-straps to hunt the flying negro back from our lines into the jaws of slavery, from which he had escaped, the negroes thought that a mistake had been made, and that the intentions of the Government had not been rightly understood by our officers in shoulder-straps, and they continued to come into our lines, threading their way through bogs and fens, over briers and thorns, fording streams, swimming rivers, bringing us tidings as to the safe path to march, and pointing out the dangers that threatened us. They are our only friends in the South, and we should be true to them in this their trial hour, and see to it that they have the elective franchise.

I know that we are inferior to you in some things—virtually inferior. We walk about among you like dwarfs among giants. Our heads are scarcely seen above the great sea of humanity. The Germans are superior to us; the Irish are superior to us; the Yankees are superior to us (laughter); they can do what we cannot, that is, what we have not hitherto been allowed to do. But while I make this admission, I utterly deny that we are originally, or naturally, or practically, or in any way, or in any important sense, inferior to anybody on this globe. (Loud applause.) This charge of inferiority is an old dodge. It has been made available for oppression on many occasions. It is only about six centuries since the blue-eyed and fair-haired Anglo-Saxons were considered inferior by the haughty Normans, who once trampled upon them. If you read the history of the Norman Conquest, you will

find that this proud Anglo-Saxon was once looked upon as of coarser clay than his Norman master, and might be found in the highways and byways of old England laboring with a brass collar on his neck, and the name of his master marked upon it. *You* were down then! (Laughter and applause.) You are up now. I am glad you are up, and I want you to be glad to help us up also. (Applause.)

The story of our inferiority is an old dodge, as I have said; for wherever men oppress their fellows, wherever they enslave them, they will endeavor to find the needed apology for such enslavement and oppression in the character of the people oppressed and enslaved. When we wanted, a few years ago, a slice of Mexico, it was hinted that the Mexicans were an inferior race, that the old Castilian blood had become so weak that it would scarcely run down hill, and that Mexico needed the long, strong and beneficent arm of the Anglo-Saxon care extended over it. We said that it was necessary to its salvation, and a part of the “manifest destiny” of this Republic, to extend our arm over that dilapidated government. So, too, when Russia wanted to take possession of a part of the Ottoman Empire, the Turks were “an inferior race.” So, too, when England wants to set the heel of her power more firmly in the quivering heart of old Ireland, the Celts are an “inferior race.” So, too, the negro, when he is to be robbed of any right which is justly his, is an “inferior man.” It is said that we are ignorant; I admit it. But if we know enough to be hung, we know enough to vote. If the negro knows enough to pay taxes to support the government, he knows enough to vote; taxation and representation should go together. If he knows enough to shoulder a musket and fight for the flag, fight for the government, he knows enough to vote. If he knows as much when he is sober as an Irishman knows when drunk, he knows enough to vote, on good American principles. (Laughter and applause.)

But I was saying that you needed a counterpoise in the persons of the slaves to the enmity that would exist at the South after the Rebellion is put down. I hold that the American people are bound, not only in self-defence, to extend this right to the freedmen of the South, but they are bound by their love of country, and by all their regard for the future safety of those Southern States, to do this—to do it as a measure essential to the preservation of peace there. But I will not dwell upon this. I put it to the American sense of honor. The honor of a nation is an important thing. It is said in the Scriptures, “What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” It may be said, also, What doth it profit a nation if it gain the whole world, but lose its honor? I hold that the American government has taken upon itself a solemn obligation of honor, to see that this war—let it be long or let it be short, let it cost much or let it cost little—that this war shall not cease until every freedman at the South has the right to vote. (Applause.) It has bound itself to it. What have you asked the black men of the South, the black men of the whole country, to do? Why, you have asked them to incur the deadly enmity of their masters, in order to befriend you and to befriend this Government. You have asked us to call down, not only upon ourselves, but upon our children's

children, the deadly hate of the entire Southern people. You have called upon us to turn our backs upon our masters, to abandon their cause and espouse yours; to turn against the South and in favor of the North; to shoot down the Confederacy and uphold the flag—the American flag. You have called upon us to expose ourselves to all the subtle machinations of their malignity for all time. And now, what do you propose to do when you come to make peace? To reward your enemies, and trample in the dust your friends? Do you intend to sacrifice the very men who have come to the rescue of your banner in the South, and incurred the lasting displeasure of their masters thereby? Do you intend to sacrifice them and reward your enemies? Do you mean to give your enemies the right to vote, and take it away from your friends? Is that wise policy? Is that honorable? Could American honor withstand such a blow? I do not believe you will do it. I think you will see to it that we have the right to vote. There is something too mean in looking upon the negro, when you are in trouble, as a citizen, and when you are free from trouble, as an alien. When this nation was in trouble, in its early struggles, it looked upon the negro as a citizen. In 1776 he was a citizen. At the time of the formation of the Constitution the negro had the right to vote in eleven States out of the old thirteen. In your trouble you have made us citizens. In 1812 Gen. Jackson addressed us as citizens—“fellow-citizens.” He wanted us to fight. We were citizens then! And now, when you come to frame a conscription bill, the negro is a citizen again. He has been a citizen just three times in the history of this government, and it has always been in time of trouble. In time of trouble we are citizens. Shall we be citizens in war, and aliens in peace? Would that be just?

I ask my friends who are apologizing for not insisting upon this right, where can the black man look, in this country, for the assertion of this right, if he may not look to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society? Where under the whole heavens can he look for sympathy, in asserting this right, if he may not look to this platform? Have you lifted us up to a certain height to see that we are men, and then are any disposed to leave us there, without seeing that we are put in possession of all our rights? We look naturally to this platform for the assertion of all our rights, and for this one especially. I understand the anti-slavery societies of this country to be based on two principles,—first, the freedom of the blacks of this country; and, second, the elevation of them. Let me not be misunderstood here. I am not asking for sympathy at the hands of abolitionists, sympathy at the hands of any. I think the American people are disposed often to be generous rather than just. I look over this country at the present time, and I see Educational Societies, Sanitary Commissions, Freedmen's Associations, and the like,—all very good: but in regard to the colored people there is always more that is benevolent, I perceive, than just, manifested towards us. What I ask for the negro is not benevolence, not pity, not sympathy, but simply *justice*. (Applause.) The American people have always been anxious to know what they shall do with us. Gen. Banks was distressed with solicitude as to what he should do with the negro. Everybody has asked the question, and they learned to ask it early of the abolitionists, “What shall we do with the negro?” I have had but one

answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played the mischief with us. Do nothing with us! If the apples will not remain on the tree of their own strength, if they are worm-eaten at the core, if they are early ripe and disposed to fall, let them fall! I am not for tying or fastening them on the tree in any way, except by nature's plan, and if they will not stay there, let them fall. And if the negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall also. All I ask is, give him a chance to stand on his own legs! Let him alone! If you see him on his way to school, let him alone,— don't disturb him! If you see him going to the dinner-table at a hotel, let him go! If you see him going to the ballot-box, let him alone,— don't disturb him! (Applause.) If you see him going into a workshop, just let him alone,—your interference is doing him a positive injury. Gen. Banks's "preparation" is of a piece with this attempt to prop up the negro. Let him fall if he cannot stand alone! If the negro cannot live by the line of eternal justice, so beautifully pictured to you in the illustration used by Mr. Phillips, the fault will not be yours, it will be his who made the negro, and established that line for his government. (Applause.) Let him live or die by that. If you will only untie his hands, and give him a chance, I think he will live. He will work as readily for himself as the white man. A great many delusions have been swept away by this war. One was, that the negro would not work; he has proved his ability to work. Another was, that the negro would not fight; that he possessed only the most sheepish attributes of humanity; was a perfect lamb, or an "Uncle Tom;". disposed to take off his coat whenever required, fold his hands, and be whipped by anybody who wanted to whip him. But the war has proved that there is a great deal of human nature in the negro, and that "he will fight," as Mr. Quincy, our President, said, in earlier days than these, "when there is a reasonable probability of his whipping anybody." (Laughter and applause.)

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SUFFRAGE FOR THE BLACKS SOUND POLITICAL ECONOMY: SHOWN IN A LETTER TO THE "BOSTON DAILY ADVERTISER," BY ELIZUR WRIGHT.

On the heels of victory comes a question which no tax-payer can afford to neglect a moment. If the public mind is not made up on it by the time victory is fully ours, we might almost as well be defeated—that is, considering ourselves merely as property-holders and tax-payers. The question is that of reconstruction.

Opinion may differ, according to the degree of information, as to facts; but I think all will agree that there is little use and much waste of power in working a State government *by Federal machinery*.

Till the *enfranchised* population of a rebel State is so far reclaimed from the secession heresy that a *majority* of it can be relied on to protect itself and maintain its authority as an organized loyal State government, such organization is worse than superfluous, for the national power must be present

in force, and to make that force efficient must be supreme. As to the white population of the rebel states, nothing is more certain than that it will take a long period of military subjugation, after the overthrow of the rebel armies, to educate out of it its rebel propensities, so that a majority of it can be relied on for loyal State government. It is certainly true that powerful interests are on the right side, and the thing would come about in time. But in the meantime two things inevitably go on:—

1st. The public debt accumulates, for a military occupation never pays as it goes.

2d. The blacks are largely trained to arms, for they are the cheapest and best troops we can have under the circumstances.

Hence, when we arrive at the period when loyal State governments— *that will go alone* —can be set up, the blacks must be enfranchised or they will be ready and willing to fight for a government of their own; and here is more war, and more public debt, and more taxation.

Observe how we have put one foot in by enlisting colored troops. Perhaps we couldn't help it. We certainly cannot withdraw it. Now we are putting in the other, by passing the amendment to the Constitution.

The effect of this, when passed, is to take away about 1-27th of the power of the loyal States in the lower house of Congress, and give it to the reconstructed rebel States, provided all are restored. This comes of counting into the representative population two-fifths of certain persons who were before counted out. To be more exact, suppose the amendment passed, all the rebel States restored, and the 241 members of the House of Representatives to be apportioned among the several States by the rule adopted for the 38th Congress, members would be gained and lost as follows:—

Gain.

Alabama 1 Member.

Georgia 1 “

Louisiana 1 “

Mississippi 1 “

N. Carolina 1 “

S. Carolina 1 “

Tennessee 1 "

Texas 1 "

Virginia 1 "

Total 9

Loss.

Illinois 1 Member.

Indiana 1 "

Iowa 1 "

Minnesota 1 "

New York 1 "

Ohio 1 "

Rhode Island 1 "

Pennsylvania 2 "

Total "

If the franchise in the reclaimed States is to be restricted to the white population, this giving them the advantage of eighteen votes when readmitted, puts off the day when such a thing can be safely done. If done too promptly, before secession theories and confederate bonds shall have gone back into nothingness, we may find that by the very act of amending the Constitution we have brought ourselves to the unpleasant dilemma of having either to pay the rebel debt or borrow the 41 rebel theory and secede from the very Union we have restored by conquering the rebels.

There is only one way to avoid this and make our victory immediately fruitful. In two States a decided majority of the population is black, and, by necessity, loyal. In five others, the black element is more than one-third; and it is strong enough to make an effective balance of power in every State where the rebellious element is of any serious magnitude. Again, the particular chivalry which got up and

engineered the Rebellion has such a horror of sharing political power with its former chattels, that when the enfranchisement of the blacks is determined on as the *sine qua non* of reconstruction, and its own military power is overthrown, it will emigrate to a more congenial political atmosphere. We have then nothing to do but convert whites enough to make a majority, when added to the enfranchised blacks, to have State governments that can be trusted to stand alone.

I think I could easily convince any man, who does not allow his prejudices to stand in the way of his interests, that it will probably make a difference of at least \$1,000,000,000 in the development of the national debt, whether we reconstruct on the basis of loyal white and black votes, or on white votes exclusively, and that he can better afford to give the Government at least one-quarter of his estate than have it try the latter experiment.

I am not disputing about tastes. A negro's ballot may be more vulgar than his bullet. Being already in for it, the question with me is, how the one or the other can be made to protect my property from taxation; and I am sure I would rather give away half the little I have, than to have the victories of 1865 thrown away, as I am, sure they will be, if, endeavoring to keep the South in subjugation by black armies, the Government allows four millions of black population to continue disfranchised. 6

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RECONSTRUCTION: A LETTER FROM WILLIAM HEIGHTON TO GEORGE L. STEARNS.

Elmer, Salem Co., N. J. Feb. 27, 1865.

George L. Stearns, Esq., *Boston, Mass.*

Sir, —I lately received from you two communications, in which you advance certain propositions, and ask my influence and support for them.

1st. To organize the anti-slavery men of the country.

2d. To bring their combined influence to bear effectively upon the reconstruction of the social and political institutions of the Rebel States, and to remodel our financial system, in order to correct abuses growing out of slavery.

3d. To aid in procuring for Gov. Andrew, of Massachusetts, a seat in the Cabinet at Washington, as an able and faithful exponent of anti-slavery principles and measures.

I reply—I am not acquainted with the peculiar abuses of our “financial system” growing out of slavery, nor aware that some other champion of freedom might not be as proper a candidate for a seat in the Cabinet as Gov. Andrew, though I think he would shed lustre upon that position; but if I can be of any service in an organization whose object is, after the Rebellion explodes, to reconstruct the Rebel States, and re-unite them upon the basis of liberty and equal rights, you can put my name down upon your anti-slavery record.

That you may not mistake me, I will state a few fundamental propositions which I hold indispensable to that end.

1st. The unity and essential equality of the human race. God is “OUR FATHER.” All men are brothers, and the distinction between a man and a beast is infinite.

2d. Equality of rights. All human beings have an *equal* right—1st, to life and liberty; 2d, the development and culture of body, mind, and moral nature. The *Government* should secure these to the State, because its health, wealth, prosperity and highest happiness depend upon the fullest possession and enjoyment of them. 3d, the right to *property* in the common elements of nature,—light, air, water, and the land. The right to these elements is inalienable, because they constitute the elements of the human body, which could not for a moment exist without them, and because God created them for the maintenance, in every age, of all the living. They are a common gift, which no man has a right to monopolize, and which the governing Power is bound to secure to each citizen who needs them, or who desires them.

3d. Responsibility of Government. Government is responsible for the equal protection and faithful promotion of the highest well-being of each individual within its domain.

4th. Monopolies. The State is bound by legislative obligations only so far as these were necessary to its life and well-being. No existing generation can, by its legislation, bind the next generation to measures deemed hostile to the public life, health and happiness.

5th. The franchise. On this subject I offer an illustrative statement before I give the principle.

In New Jersey the ballot-box is, in effect, sometimes set up openly for sale to the highest bidder, and so many *bought* votes taken at the polls that the unbought ones are deemed of little value to the candidates. I have heard voters declare, here in Salem County, that the only benefit they could see in the franchise to the poor man, is the money he gets for his vote. To be sure, these were foreigners. I never heard a native say this, though many sell their votes. The abuse is so great that some respectable voters excuse themselves from voting as being useless. But ask those gentlemen

with the bribe money in their pockets what objection they have to a negro vote, and nearly every man will roll up his eyes and lift his hands in holy horror, as if you were covered all over with leprosy, or had just committed the unpardonable sin. Now I am not addressing these men. To reason with them would be ridiculous. But every anti-slavery man and political reformer will at once comprehend the justice and humanity of the following proposition.

43

PURITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE BALLOT BOX.

“First pure.” (Bible.) A corrupt use of the ballot-box is not Democracy, but an aristocracy (money rule) of the most odious kind. The purity therefore of the franchise should be guarded by the severest penalties. Heavy fines, to go to informer on conviction of the offender, with imprisonment at hard labor, and partial loss of franchise for the first offence, and total loss for the second, would probably accomplish that end.

Purity, then, the election,—withdraw all sinister motives to a corrupt vote. Make the vote the simple expression of the uncorrupted sense and will of the voter, and open the franchise to every adult and human being. Mind rules the universe. Give it an open field and fair play, and let the national will, protected from sinister motives, and guided by the national intelligence, create and maintain the national institutions.

The third clause of my second proposition—“the right to *property* in the common elements”—is so important that I beg, in conclusion, to make a few remarks upon it.

You will find the security of this right indispensable to the reconstruction of our southern communities. Immense landed estates in a few hands (baronies) the world over, are death to Democracy. If three or four men own a whole country, they will be its governors. Its road system, school system, court, judges, officers, municipality and franchise, will all be controlled by them. They can and will, even under republican forms, secure their own election to the highest seats in the state and national counsels, and become there, as in former years, an element of jarring and perpetual discord.

The landed estates, therefore, of all the prominent and active rebels, the great chiefs, should be confiscated and broken up. After these criminals are executed or transported, it might be safe to confer upon such heirs as remained in the country, and should take the oath of allegiance, so much land as would constitute a moderate homestead, while an equal homestead should be apportioned to each colored family. These, in fact, have the first and highest right, since the clearing

and improvements have been done mainly by their labor. The soldiers, also, should receive bounties from it, and any left could be sold in limited quantities to loyal men.

In a conference held by Secretary Stanton and General Sherman with the colored people of Savannah, soon after that city was taken, the chosen spokesman of the negroes was Garrison Frazier. On being asked, "How can your people take care of themselves?" he replied: "The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn and till it by our own labor." All this man's replies to the Secretary and General were marked by uncommon shrewdness and good sense, but this excelled. How has he a country who has got no home? Who habitually sells himself to somebody for a day or week to get bread for his family?

If, then, you wish to uproot slavery, break up land monopoly. Twin strands of one rope, slavery in some form will ever feed its insatiate maw upon stolen industry, so long as land monopoly shall be allowed to exist. The new freedom of the south, under the old land monopoly will be worse to the feeble and decrepit than their former slavery. Stung with poverty and desolation caused by the rebellion, the barbarous land-barons, with blind rage and malignant hate will vent their spleen on the innocent and helpless freedman, and, charging him with being the cause of their ruin, with an oppression unknown to former times of successful slavery, will grind him to powder. God help the poor ignorant negroes, who without any home, or legal claim to the elements of life, shall be compelled, day by day, to offer his labor to such masters in order to get bread for his wife and children! No, the government that shall permit land monopoly to wield its blighting curse over four millions of ignorant and helpless blacks will be false to its highest obligations, and an absolute despotism to the black race, to be again engulfed, at some future period, in its own blood.

If you anti-slavery gentlemen who are forming an organization to reconstruct the rebel states, should be wanting in intelligence to comprehend the magnitude of this great land question, let me admonish you that you are not qualified for the duty you have undertaken. I make this remark because the idea is not embraced in your printed communications.

In this letter I send you my political daguerreotype,—Democratic and Republican in every feature. If you conclude it will not disgrace your anti-slavery gallery, you will hang it up there among the rest.

CONGRESS HAS ADJOURNED!

And for Nine Months the nation must consider the problems of A RE-CONSTRUCTION OF STATES, SUFFRAGE FOR LOYAL BLACKS, THE TERMS OF PEACE, AND OTHER PRESSING QUESTIONS.



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