

DEMOCRATIC WATCHMAN--SUPPLEMENT.

BELLEFONTE, PA., FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 9, 1869.

SPEECH

P. GRAY MEEK,

In the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania, on the ratification of what is termed the Fifteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution, giving Negroes, Chinamen and Indians the right to vote.

Mr. MEEK. Mr. Speaker, it is scarcely to be expected that after so many able and eloquent arguments, made by my Democratic colleagues against the passage of this resolution, that I can add anything that will either convince, instruct or interest the gentlemen who are to vote upon this question. But, Mr. Speaker, as I have the honor to represent an honest, intelligent and patriotic white constituency, I would be false, not only to them, but to my State, my race and to myself, were I to permit this great, this most appalling iniquity to be consummated without raising my voice to protest against it. This resolution to ratify what is termed an amendment to the Federal Constitution, involves two questions, both of which are great fundamental principles in our system of government—questions which are the very corner stones upon which our Republic was erected—questions upon the termination of which not only rests the perpetuity of our Commonwealth, but the future of our race and the safety of society. These questions are the

RIGHTS OF THE STATES AND THE STATUS OF THE RACES.

To treat these questions as they should be treated would certainly take a much older, abler and better informed person than myself; but, sir, I have too much love for my State, too much pride for our proud old Commonwealth, too much regard for its honor, welfare, power and worth to sit silently by and see her rights trampled upon, her powers usurped, her privileges abridged, yea, sir, her very existence blotted out by a usurpation of the General Government in the hands of Puritan fanatics and rum soaked Radicals, as wrong as it is debasing, as outrageous as it is infamous, and as revolutionary as it is repulsive.

It is true, as has been asserted here by members advocating this measure, that article five of the Federal Constitution provides for the amendment of that instrument, in precisely the manner that this so called amendment is proposed to be made; but it is equally true that that same constitution limits the power of amendment to such matters only as come within the jurisdiction of the General Government. Two of these limitations were expressly made in the same article which provided a mode of amendment, and others result from the general character of the Constitution, and particular provisions within it.

Among the general principles underlying our Federal Constitution, which operates as a limitation upon the right of amendment, is the fact that ours is a republican form of Government. No change in the Constitution, or any addition to it, which would transform our Government into a monarchy would be a legitimate amendment. Such a change, instead of being an amendment would be rank revolution; and even if the revolutionists were able to pass it through the prescribed forms and put it into practical effect, its validity, if it had any, would not result from the legitimate right of amending the Constitution, but upon the despotic principle that might makes right.

Another general principle which operates as a restraint upon the right of amendment is explicitly expressed in article ten of the amendments, which declares: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the States are reserved to the States respectively or to the people." And section eight of that instrument sets forth plainly what powers were delegated to the law making power of the United States, as well as those prohibited the States, and nowhere, at no place, or under no construction, can there be found authority for this attempted usurpation of the reserved rights of the States. The question of suffrage—the elective franchise—is precisely one of those questions which have been "reserved to the States respectively or to the people." By no word or syllable of the Constitution has the Federal Government been invested with any power or authority in regard to this subject. The two houses of Congress, even by a unanimous vote, have no more constitutional right or power to propose such an amendment—no, not amendment, but revolution—as that which we have under consideration, than the Parliament of Great Britain, the Corps Legislatif of France or the Cortes of Spain. It is a subject not within its jurisdiction, and the people of the States, whose rights are to be trampled upon and crushed out by this most infamous usurpation, would be justifiable in revolt—will be cowards if they do not resist.

Why, sir, if three fourths of the States, through the General Government, have the power to strike the word "white" from the Constitution of Pennsylvania, as this pretended amendment proposes, has it not the right to strike out any word, sentence or section within it? If it can strike out the word "white," can it not strike out the very first section of the first article, which creates this body, now ready to admit by its votes that this power belongs to the General Government? I ask you, in all candor, where is the assurance that the same power that now seeks

to annul one of the provisions of our State Constitution, will not, before another year, attempt to annul all? If Congress, endorsed by the Legislatures of three fourths of the States, can say who shall vote within our Commonwealth, can it not also say who shall be our judges and our jurymen, our office holders and our law makers, as well as what rights we shall enjoy and what religious faith we shall profess? If Pennsylvania, once proud, peerless Pennsylvania, has not the power to fix the qualifications of electors within her own broad borders, pray tell me what power she does possess?

The fundamental principle of our Government is, that governments "derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," or in other words, that all governmental authority is inherent originally in the people themselves. In framing their governments they delegate certain powers to those governments and give them a certain general or limited jurisdiction over certain governmental questions. The powers of the government are limited by the instrument by which those powers have been delegated. Hence neither the State or Federal Government are absolute over all questions. The powers of each have been delegated by the people—the sovereign source of all political power; and in the written Constitutions is expressly declared what powers are delegated, while the omnipotent voice of the people, like the voice of the Almighty addressed to the sea, has said, "Thus far mayest thou go and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be said."

We, Mr. Speaker, the immediate representatives of the people of Pennsylvania, have no power over this subject. Our own State constitution defines the qualifications of voters in this Commonwealth, and this Legislature has no power, either directly or indirectly, to change its provisions on the subject so as to be binding upon our own people, much less have we the power to bind the people of other States by any unauthorized action of ours. To amend our State Constitution requires that two successive Legislatures propose the amendment, and then that a majority of the qualified voters of the State ratify the amendment at the next general election. We have taken an oath to support that Constitution, and yet a majority of this House, with that oath still fresh upon their lips, are ready to violate it, by voting to allow an unauthorized power to strike from it the most important provision it contains. This question of suffrage is a question which even the States as States in their governmental capacity have no jurisdiction over. It is fixed and regulated by the Constitutions of the several States, and no power save the power that made them—the people—can alter, change or amend. Why, Mr. Speaker, this act of usurpation on the part of the General Government and the State Legislatures, to fix the qualifications of voters in the several States, is assuming authority over subjects that even the crowned heads of Europe fear to exercise. It is but a short time since the question of extending the elective franchise to persons not before exercising it in England was agitated there, and the Queen, fearing to exercise a power over her subjects that radicalism is assuming to day in this Government, prorogued Parliament and sent the question to the people for their decision. Should the people of the several States of this Government have less power in changing a fundamental principle of their organic law than the subjects of England? Should Congress and the State Legislatures of the American Republic assume authority that the monarchies of Europe fear to assert? And yet it is being done, done now, and a party claiming to be republican in principle is the party committing this outrage and usurpation.

But, Mr. Speaker, power is always aggressive and grasping, and its history in our government is not an exception to the general rule. We have been making, for the past ten years, rapid strides towards centralization, and every step in that direction has removed us so much farther from the republican freedom of our ancestors, and so much nearer to the despotism of European monarchies. The liberties of the masses of the people are becoming less secure just as they allow the grasping power of the Federal Government to wrest from them and lodge within itself, powers that have heretofore been exercised only by them. How long, at the rate we are now progressing towards a centralized despotism, will it be until the same power that now seeks to mutilate our State Constitution, will blot it out entirely? How long, sir, until the authority that now seeks to say who shall vote within our Commonwealth, will say also who shall fill the gubernatorial chair, if we are left one? How long, sir, until our State Government is blotted out, and the people who are now sovereign will be subjects? I venture the prediction, Mr. Speaker, that neither you or I will go down to the grave with age before these things come to pass, unless a check is put to these usurpations of powers not delegated to the General Government.

This so called "amendment" has been proposed by Congress. It may be ratified by the requisite number of States, and it may then be enforced upon the several States, by the power of the General Government. What then? Is it legally valid as an amendment? No. Is it sanctioned by the people? Have they given their consent to it? No. A few hundred men who happen to be members of Congress and of State Legislatures, and who were elected to these offices without reference to such a measure as this, will have triumphed over the will of the American people.

What then becomes of the theory of our Government, that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed?" It is cast to the moles and the bats. Our officers are no longer servants of the people but their masters—the people are no longer sovereign but slaves.

If it is true, and it certainly is, as was alleged by the party now advocating this monstrous outrage, no longer ago than last fall in its platform of principles, "That the question of suffrage in all the loyal States properly belongs to the people of those States," in the name of all that is good and great, why is it not left for the people to decide? Why is it not left where you said, not six months ago, it "properly belongs?" There is no necessity for the mad haste with which this is attempted to be fastened upon us. There is no reason why it should not be left to the voice and vote of the people of Pennsylvania to decide.

But, Mr. Speaker, turning to the other question involved in this discussion—the question of the status of the races, even were the right to enfranchise the negro as proposed by this measure undeniable, how many, very many, weighty, very weighty reasons there are why it should not be done. The only arguments that have been advanced here or elsewhere by the advocates of negro voting, appear to be based upon the great fallacy that the negro is only a white man with a black skin—that he possesses the same intellectual and moral faculties as the white race, and may, therefore, be incorporated with the social and civil elements of our society as an equal partner in the government of our country. On no other ground would any man of ordinary intelligence claim the equality of suffrage for the negro. On no other grounds could it be claimed without a manifest design of demoralizing and debauching our own civilization. On no other ground can they base any arguments in favor of this black measure. The "loyalty" of the blacks will not do. The people understand that too well. "Loyalty" has covered too many infamous crimes to make it a cloak to cover more. The masses can see through it—can understand it, they detect it, they spurn it. It was the watchword of the Tories of the Revolution. It was the watchword of the thieves, Puritan hypocrites, Constitution defiers, law breakers, treasury robbers, diving bullies, sanctified murderers, spies, pimps, cut throats, and the whole horde of unprincipled wretches, political vagabonds and prison deserving villains, who reaped riches out of the blood of the people, and ghouls like ghouls over the misery of the country during the late unholy crusade for plunder and power. No, sir, "loyalty" will do no longer. There must be some other reason for the enfranchisement of the negro population, and members upon the other side can only base their arguments upon the assumption of the moral and intellectual equality of the white and negro races. But which of them have attempted to prove the premises on which their conclusions alone can rest? Who among their eminent leaders dare attempt it? Suppose, sir, it should be proven that the negro is no more the equal and brother of the white man than the ass is the equal and brother of the horse, than the buzzard is the equal and brother of the eagle, what then becomes of all this ear splitting rhetoric about "the equality and brotherhood" of negroes and white men? It is as baseless as the rich man's dreams. An attempt to establish equality upon foundations where Almighty God has fixed eternal inequality is an undertaking so profane and so God defying that we might think it would stagger the fanatics and revolutionists of this negro suffrage party. But it does not, sir. They have got beyond that point, and the decrees and works of God himself must be swept by the board if they stand between it and places of power and profit.

The eminent Dr. Caldwell, in his work entitled "The Unity of the Races," points out over a hundred anatomical and physical differences between the negro and the white man—differences which as distinctly prove the negro to be a different being from the white man as the ass is proved to be a different creature from the horse. Currier declares "that the anatomy of the negro evidently approximates the monkey tribes." Prof. Agassiz asserts that "the chimpanzee and gorilla do not differ more from the orang than the Malay or white man differ from the negro." Prof. Wymann, of Cambridge college, Massachusetts, says, "It cannot be denied, however wide the separation, that the negro and orang do afford the points where man and the brute, where the totality of their organization is considered, most nearly approach each other." But why, sir, multiply evidence upon this point? It is a matter no longer in dispute. And, sir, in the properties of the brain and heart the negro is as far behind the white man as he is in his physical peculiarities. History proves that his mental and moral depravity is as old and as unchangeable as his physical type. You can no more elevate the mind of the black race than you can change the color of its skin. It was faithfully painted upon the monumental walls of Egypt five thousand years ago, precisely as we know it to exist to-day, and was there described as the "barbarian." From that day down to our own debased times no people ever looked upon him other than as an inferior being, created by an allwise God to be ruled rather than rule.

Eminent writers estimate that not less than five hundred millions of whites have lived and died in Africa since the beginning of the historic period—church records show that

millions upon millions of dollars have been expended annually, by missionaries, to civilize and christianize these black barbarians, and yet what has it all amounted to? Where is the tribe that has been benefited? Not to be found, sir. Where is the permanent good that has resulted from it? Let the boiled bones of missionaries, who have returned, after a short visit to their homes in christianized countries, to their missions among these barbarians only to be cooked and eaten, answer. And more, sir, while it is impossible for these advocates of negro equality, to point to a solitary case in which the negro has adopted our civilization, so, too, is it impossible for them to show a single instance on the face of the globe, of his having retained an enforced civilization, longer than held as the slave or subject of some superior race. If there is a spot in any country or climate, where the freed negro has not related to wards barbarism, pray, sir, where is it? Do you point to Jamaica? The snake worship and idolatry and the Fetish superstition of this degraded race there, is simply proof of what I assert. Do you point to Hayti, let the debauched and demoralized condition of the negro there, with his witch fearing and Obi worship, answer. And, sir, come nearer home. Look upon our own soil, within the limits of our own country, under the enlightening and civilizing effects of military governments, Freedman's Bureau, purified puritan preachers, and Massachusetts school mams; and see the negroes of the South rapidly relapsing into the barbarism and heathenish practices of their African ancestors—snake worship—idolatry—child eating and witch craft, and tell me how long it will be, going back at the rate they have, since abolitionism gave them freedom and suffrage, until they will be worthy followers of the skull scraping king of Dahomey or the devil worshipping, man eating demigods of the Fane?

There is not, Mr. Speaker, an instance on record where negroes have had a voice in the affairs of government in any country, at any time or under any circumstances, were that government has not gone to ruin. It was the recognition of the equality of the races, the enfranchisement of these black proteges of abolitionism, that brought ruin to Mexico—that devastated and destroyed San Domingo—that caused the fall of the Republic of Central America, and brought destruction to the South American States. There, sir, are witnessed the result of negro equality in that mass of civil and social degradation, which is so rank and foul that humanity stops the nose at it.

Are we to follow in their wake? Are we to go down to death and destruction, sink into that seething, sickening pool of mongrelism, simply to secure power and plunder for the negro suffrage party? It seems so. It looks so. I fear it is so. Congress has cracked its whip and the asses who draw its loads have started at the snap, and are now dragging us down, down, down.

There are men upon this floor who know and feel that this attempted usurpation is wrong, outrageous, and debasing, yet who are too cowardly to vote against it, because, Congress and king caucus, has ordered otherwise. Shame upon such freemen! A thousand shames upon such poltroonery!

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me ask of the gentlemen who intend voting for this revolting measure, why it must be forced upon the people? Is it because the negro is your equal in intelligence? You do not admit him to be such. Is it because he carried a musket in your armies? Did not your own sons under the age of twenty one, and who are not allowed to vote, do the same? Is it because he is taxed to maintain the government? Are not women and minors and foreigners taxed also? Is it because you favor "manhood suffrage"? Why then prevent the intelligent white foreigner from voting for five years? Is it because the white race is unfit or unable to govern itself? Where is the government that has been benefited by negroes having a voice in its affairs? Is it because you believe in "universal suffrage"? Why then give the ballot to the ignorant negro, the dirt eating Chinaman and the depraved digger Indian, as you are now seeking to do, and withhold it from your own sons, your wives, daughters and sisters? Sir, it is for none of these reasons. It is not because justice demands, or philanthropy dictates it, but because a dire party necessity requires it. It is to prolong the reign of Radicalism; to keep your thieves and usurpers in power, and your villains out of the penitentiary. It is to place voting machines in the hands of capital, to override and vote down the interests of labor, and to degrade the toiling millions of this country to the condition of the mongrelized inhabitants of Mexico.

But thank God, the Democracy of New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Georgia, aided by down trodden Virginia, despotism cursed Mississippi, and outraged Texas, will stand like a wall of fire between you and the consummation of your most infamous designs, until the people—the white people—the sovereign people of Pennsylvania, in their majesty and power, choose at the ballot box, men who will fill your places in this hall next winter, and vote to rescind the resolution of ratification you are about to pass. From this moment we start the cry of Repeal! It will ring through every valley, through every village, and over every hill-top in this broad Commonwealth, and he who will not pledge himself to vote to repeal this most debasing resolution, will not occupy a seat upon this floor during the next session of our Legislature.