

FITZ JOHN PORTER.

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in their council they moved armies at a distance from the capital, and an officer in command of an army of Austria at that time who violated the orders of the Aulic Council was in danger of losing his head, and certainly his command. We imitated that council here in Washington, and it is neither unreasonable nor unjust, but faithful to the truth of history, to say that most of our disasters resulted from the fact that the movements of the armies were directed from this center, and not by the will or plans of the generals in command in the field.

In the beginning of the French revolution the Austrians sent three armies into Italy, commanded by well-trained soldiers, each with one being directed where he was to move his armies, where he was to get his means of supply, on what lines and angles he should move—positive directions as to their future action. The French people, at that time in the throes of a fearful revolution, had broken down absolute power, had crushed the remnants of feudalism and vassalage into the earth, and in their attempt to gain freedom and to vindicate the rights of humanity they incurred the hostility of all the centralized governments of Europe. A man suddenly appeared in the field. Educated as a soldier, he had attained some distinction as a subordinate officer at Toulon and had quelled insurrection at Paris. He came from the people, and defying low birth and iron fortune, became a captain of men. He had thirty-five thousand ill-fed, ragged soldiers, without a commissary or a quartermaster department at all, and inspired by the love of liberty he dashed inside the scientific lines of the Austrians and destroyed three armies, either of them of superior force to his own, conquered Italy, humiliated the Austrian Government, and took and destroyed the council. And if Napoleon Bonaparte had died then he would have left a better memory behind than after his ambition robbed him of his patriotism. [Laughter.]

I say he not only destroyed their armies and gave freedom to Italy, but he took the council. There was the result of an attempt to control armies from the central government, and it would certainly have been as well for our country if our central government had taken counsel from such a result, as history is philosophy teaching by example. When General Grant came to Washington he was put in supreme command of all the armies of the Republic, and the councils at Washington ceased to control. From the day Grant was put in command no military disasters occurred. The armies were successful, as these gentlemen who surround me, and who served in the army of the Confederate States, so fully understand. It is said that Grant's testimony is not to be taken in its full force because, as I understand the allegation, he was charged the other day in this House with some kind of understanding that he was to be promoted in rank and thus retired, and his advocacy of General Porter would be alloyed with the dross of money and the gratification of his ambition.

Why, Mr. Speaker, there never has been one day since I have had the honor of a seat in this House and have been allowed to vote, although opposed to General Grant politically, on which I would not have voted to restore him to the Army and give him pay for the service he has rendered to his country. And so far from there being combination on either side of the Chamber to make any opposition to such a measure, I have never heard it mentioned, except by a few of the Democratic members that have said to me they would vote as I did, in casual conversation. I never objected to it, and it was quite unnecessary for the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CURTIN] to say that any impression prevailed on this side of the House that any bargain of that kind had occurred. I congratulate that gentleman on his good taste in the fact that he did not publish what he said in his speech. [Laughter.] The repentance of the man who two thousand years ago repented in his last hour was, not too late, but very close on the margin. It is said by one of the Scotch poets:

Between the saddle and the ground,
Mercy was asked and mercy found.

So between the time that eloquent gentleman delivered his speech and the time the printer put it in type he repented [laughter], because he knows that General Grant's testimony, which is certainly the greatest military authority in this country, is added to this case. Certain remarks of the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. HORN] the other night were admirably replied to by the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WOLFE] today. That gentleman took the House by surprise by his reply to the gentleman from Michigan. The gentleman from Michigan amused the House with his grotesque wit, as he always does, and when he appealed to the gentleman on this side he said: "You were in the rebellion against this Government and have no right to vote on this matter; for this is our business; this is our general and not yours." Well, sir, I do not admire any such principle, nor can I think that any logic of the American citizen can reach it. I don't believe any such thing. If we are of any consequence here or in the family of the nation of the world we have nationality. Twenty years have returned us to peace and, I pray God, to fraternity. The gentleman from Michigan remembers what we fought these men for. It was to keep union in the Government. We did not desire the union of the States to be broken, because we thought that throughout its borders its blessings and benefits could be enjoyed as a great country instead of being divided into factions and segments and subjected to domestic strife. The people of the North were put in the field and called to arms to maintain the Government, to maintain the great nationality, the dead level of social equality, this grandeur of individual rights, this invitation to the arts of industry and thrift and virtue. We fought in order that the example we have set to all the world may not be broken, for, Mr. Speaker, six thousand years of rule of humanity stand parallel with one hundred years of rule of this great people. Either the rule of six thousand years was wrong or we are

wrong. There have been times in the history of humanity when there were ephemeral efforts of the government of man for himself, but they failed. Thus this Government was framed and set up after the light and knowledge of years had made this great country the only true Republican form of government ever given to humanity.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the war was over we invited the States to reform their governments and send their Representatives to these Halls. They are the peers of the gentleman from Michigan. [Applause.] There is not a maimed man who fought in that unhappy war on this floor who is not the peer of the Speaker, the President of the United States, and they are to be taken into full fellowship as a part and parcel of the country, and I regret from my heart to hear such appeals from gentlemen representing a constituency in this Chamber. He says "stand aside" to American citizens, every man on this floor is an American citizen and is nothing more, and in the morning and in the evening we should all thank the Almighty that we are American citizens; and all those inside and outside who obey the law and stand by the Government of this country are peers, and no more, no matter whether they are honored by official position or in the walks of private life, and I hold it to be the paramount duty as it is the right of every member of this House, no matter where from, or what his antecedents, to vote on a question which involves the rights of an American man.

After the war there was a free forgiveness of those who differed from us on principle, but as we in the North believed, attempted without cause to break down the Government. Why? Mr. Speaker, it was because they believed that they had just cause for resistance that prolonged the war. But for such a measure of sincerity in that belief they could never have put vast armies in the field and continued until their whole country was in desolation. Campaigns, running through many years since the war, has constantly been made that the South is largely represented on this floor by soldiers and brigadiers, as they are generally called. I accept their presence here as better men than those who sent them into the field to fight. I take it for granted that in the North as well as in the South the man who believed he was right, although he was in error, and fought in that great war, is a better man than the quartermaster, the paymaster, the sutler, or the contractor of the army, and the gallant men who persuaded them to go out to fight. [Great applause.] That is the class, those are the men who, on both sides, in persuasive eloquence asked soldiers to go into the war. From every battlefield came up expressions in sympathy with the people, and to every battlefield hearts and prayers went out from home.

The war left the South in poverty, absolute poverty, and it was not creditable in their poverty to send the carpet-bagger and the official thief down there to steal what little was left. [Great applause.] Yes, Mr. Speaker, the war left the South in poverty, and it is not unjust to say that to some extent it blistered the morality of the North as all wars demoralize people. Every candid man on this floor will admit that it will take a long time to blot out the effects of the war even with those who were successful. We are now asked to deal with a soldier sent to West Point from Pennsylvania; a man who for twenty-two years has suffered injustice. Yet men on the other side of the House turn to us here and say that citizens of the United States, elected to represent the people of the United States, have no right to vote on this question and should stand aside.

In the speech of the witty gentleman from Michigan [Mr. HORN] there was interpolated by another member of the House something about Agamemnon and Ajax, and the Lord knows what. [Great laughter.] I did not understand it then, and I fail to understand it now. [Renewed laughter.] But one thing we all did understand, and that was that five minutes was put into the speech of the gentleman from Michigan by arrangement; anybody could understand that perfectly. You are asked to deal with an American citizen, and each one of you here represent a part of this great country, once more united, covered by the same Constitution, and with the same interest in the glories of the revolution and the history of our armies. Yet it was asked, it was impudently asked, that you should stand aside and leave this quarrel to us.

Well, if you should leave it to the Representatives of the North, from the indications made on that side of the House, I am not sure that Fitz-John Porter would lose this bill; indeed it would seem from the opposition made that the Republican members of this House would not vote to continue the stain upon him.

When I first saw Fitz-John Porter, Mr. Speaker, he was young; his eye was brilliant; his hair was dark; he was the model of a young soldier. It was at Harrisburg, at the beginning of the war, when Washington was shut out from us. There were sixteen thousand militia there that Porter desired to take to Baltimore. They were not clad, barely armed, and no comforts for them could be improvised at the time. I can see him now as he then presented himself when he said, "If you will give me this army I will march it to Washington if I have to march over the ashes of cities; but if you do not give me this army, and Washington should fall, you will be responsible." And I yielded the force to his command, and he approached and covered Baltimore, and held all hostile movements in check in that direction, and this man is now accused of being a traitor who thus promptly acted for himself and controlled the first movements of troops toward the capital of the country. [Great applause.]

In the beginning of the war, when everything was disjointed and in confusion, the newspapers of the North kept up a continuous cry of "On to Richmond." That was the newspaper clamor, but those who were engaged in the organization of troops and in levying men for the service learned too much of the difficulty of raising armies and the necessity for discipline to join

in that cry. And those with conservative views during that trying period of our history knew quite well and noticed that there was always somebody between our armies and Richmond, and gave us great trouble before we did get there after four long years of hard fighting. As the quota of Pennsylvania before we called out our three years' men, twenty-three regiments were placed under the command of General Robert Patterson, of Philadelphia. Some one to-day over on the other side spoke of General Patterson in language far from complimentary of that old man, who is now in his grave. I would not mention his name, as he is dead, except for the remark to which I have referred. I think it was my colleague from the Schuylkill district.

Mr. BRUMM. You are mistaken, Governor; it was not I.

Mr. CURTIN. I beg my colleague's pardon. I might have been sure he could not do any such injustice as that to General Patterson's memory. General Patterson was a foreigner who came to this country in his youth and made it his country of his adoption. In 1812, with a captain's commission, he raised a company in Pennsylvania and with it marched to Canada, arriving at the camp of General Scott's army at midnight. The next morning he engaged in battle and served faithfully and gallantly through that war. In the beginning of the war with Mexico he was made a major-general, and as second in command joined General Scott at Vera Cruz, engaging in every battle of that war until the fall of Mexico and the restoration of peace.

When the late civil war commenced he was put in command of a district, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. Communications were entirely broken with Washington, and he took command of the forces in the Shenandoah Valley. It was charged upon General Patterson that he withheld his forces when he could have held Johnson, who was in his front and who passed to Bull Run, and secured that success. General Patterson asked for a court of inquiry, but his application was declined. The President said to him: "General Patterson, you can afford to wait." That old man waited until the war was over, and then he published a vindication so perfect that those who had accused him of treachery blushed, and the men who would have mobbed his house in Philadelphia were ashamed of their conduct. That citizen-soldier died, having served his adopted country well. He was followed to the grave by the benedictions of his fellow-citizens, and when the coming sun of spring breaks the ice-bound earth, and it smiles in flowers, the first and freshest are gathered to be put upon the grave of that old Irish hero, who, in pride I can say, honored me by his friendship.

Why, Mr. Speaker, General Thomas was accused, Sherman was accused, General Grant was complained of, and now, when we have here a victim of the mistakes in Washington, for all made mistakes, it is asked that this House shall restore him to his rights. He is not now that handsome soldier that I saw in his youth. His hair is gray and his eyes are dim. His children are above all others interested in having the stain removed from their father. Technically it is said we cannot reverse the decision of the court. When it is proposed in the American Congress to do justice to an American citizen, high or low, let the member who will cast his vote on such technicality settle his technical doubts in eternity; for there is a higher law that man shall do justice one to another. Charity and justice go hand in hand. This man now asks simple justice from his country, and that is all.

I do not care whether the court of review had a right to examine witnesses on oath or not. It can not make the slightest difference in the discharge of duty in these halls, nor can it make any difference whether the court was constitutional or not. Military courts and civil courts are entirely different. The one class is rigid, fierce, executing its sovereign will and decrees at once; the other takes care of the rights of persons and property. The humblest man in all this great country can appeal from the verdict of a jury or the judgment of a court, however trifling the amount in controversy. And when one is accused or found guilty of crime, in every State in this Union there is the right of appealing for a review by the courts of errors. Here is a man who many years since in the excitement of the war, was under the mandate of the Secretary of War, to hurry through the proceedings, condemned by a court-martial, and who for twenty-two years has been asking a rehearing. The President gave him a court of inquiry.

As the question now presents itself to us we are not to determine it by rigid rules or by technicalities; it is the truth we are seeking, the plain, open truth. This man has appealed from the judgment of that military court; his appeal is here. It is sustained by the judgment of the court of inquiry, composed of eminent men sitting in a time of profound peace, when no victim was demanded, having before it all the evidence presented to the former court, supplemented by the testimony of officers of the Army of the United States and of the confederate army who were engaged in the battle; and more than all, supported and sanctioned by the opinion of General Grant, which must be regarded as the highest military authority in this land. He appeals to the representatives of the people, and from this Chamber, representing the American people, his appeal waits its way and is now pending before the august tribunal of the American public. Fifty millions of people are interested that no man shall be injured by public or private law, by military or civil law. To such a tribunal this man now appeals. He appeals on the facts as presented. He appeals on the highest military authority; he appeals as an American citizen, and the question is far above politics, with all its aspirations, its honors, its emoluments.

Let us do justice, simple justice, in plain words which all men can understand, whether they be military men or civilians. If this man has been wronged, let us give him justice. Technically born of the ingenuity of man often stand in the way of truth and right, but simple justice flows from the throne of the Almighty, and let us take counsel from our hearts in dealing with this our

fellow-citizen. I know full well that many of the gentlemen on the other side will vote for this bill, and I am glad to hear that some who differ with me in political opinions will vote in that way. I know full well how my colleague from the Allegheny district [Mr. BAYNE] will vote, as he has spoken, but do not know how the gallant soldier who stands in my front will vote. He gave the first fresh years of his matured life to the service of the country, and stood in the leaden hail of battle with the general we desire to relieve.

Having served with Fitz-John Porter he certainly will not tolerate for one moment the imputation that he was a coward. He has reason to know of his courage and his skill as a military commander, and if he has doubts I trust he will lean to the vindication of an honest, faithful man rather than to follow the progressive and rigid politics of his surroundings. To him and my colleagues on both sides of this Hall I appeal to remember the honor and the character of Pennsylvania. They all know of this man, they all know of the blood that runs in his veins, and in making that appeal to my colleagues I know it will go down to the body of the people. It is a soul-born sentiment or truth that in Pennsylvania we love to do homage and pay respect to the martial virtues, and let it be understood that the fair fame of that historic State has never been tainted by the accusation of infidelity or treason to any of her citizens, soldiers, or statesmen.

But forcible as the appeal which this bill makes to my colleagues in this enlightened presence of their pride in Pennsylvania, the case of General Porter appeals to every man upon broader, more far-reaching, and grander grounds. Proud as we are to be Pennsylvanians, there is a title of broader significance and still more dear to us all, and to every man within our borders who can stand up and say to all the world, and feel the full significance of the declaration, I am an American citizen and will do justice to my peer and my brother either in private or official life when I know that justice has been done him. Here we are standing in the presence of an appeal by the citizen to the Representatives of the people; and as they represent the people and are supposed to present public sentiment in its truth and right, from its Representatives it goes to the entire country, and I will carry the appeal to the grand inquest of the American nation.

It should be the pleasure, as it is surely the duty, of the Representatives of the American people to wipe away the stigma from General Porter and to proclaim to all the world that we have restored him to his rights, made him once more a citizen. And I declare, as I understand it, that this bill wipes out every stain from the character of the man, it being the solemn adjudication of the Government as represented in these Halls. [Loud applause.]

Mr. Speaker, a code of morality which would be applicable to a man but should not control the actions of communities or States or nations would be a delusion and a fraud, and a representative of the people in these halls who is controlled by prejudice, or whose judgment is warped by excitement, and most of all by the rigid bonds of political fellowship, must be forgetful of the morality which should guide him in his search for truth and justice. And now, when we are once more a united people and restored to fraternal relations, to concord and peace, when we are all interested in the progress and enlargement of the glory and power of this great people, let us do justice to every man within our borders, whether he be of high or low birth, whether he be soldier or civilian, and searching for that justice which God has stamped on the human heart, let us take from this man the ban under which he has rested for many long, weary years and give to his children that pride which they must feel in a father who served his country faithfully, in a name that never was tainted, and the consolation of knowing that they are not the children of a traitor to his country; but they shall rejoice and give to their country that fidelity that is due to it from every American citizen; and that after long years of suffering their father's name has been restored in all its brightness, and from his country he has at last received justice.

And when that work has been accomplished the citizens honored by the right of representation upon this can find consolation and just pride in the truth that they too have performed their duty to their country, their constituents and their fellow citizens.

Miscellaneous.

Governor Ordway, Dakota, to-day addressed the House Committee on Territories in favor of the admission of Dakota as a state.

The President has appointed James Long commissioner to the New Orleans Cotton Exposition on the part of Pennsylvania, with R. H. Thomas as alternate.

The village of Hawley, in Wayne County, has been incorporated as a borough to the dissatisfaction of many of the people.

Chairman Curtin, of the Foreign Affairs Committee, has been authorized to report a resolution granting Minister Hunt, at St. Petersburg, permission to accept the coronation medal given him by the Czar.

The Governor has appointed A. H. Light, of Lebanon, D. A. Orr, of Chambersburg, and F. A. Aul and W. Penn Lusk, Trustees of the State Hospital at Harrisburg.

Mrs. Elizabeth Betz, of Harrisburg, is the only widow of a revolutionary soldier living in Pennsylvania. Her husband died in 1847, aged ninety-nine. She is eighty-three.

The Perry County Court has decided that the bridge crossing the Juniata River at Newport is the property of the county, and has issued an order declaring it free to the public.

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