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THURSDAY MORNING, APRIL 16 1863.

REMARKS

HON. WILLIAM HOPKINS,
OF WASHINGTON,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

April 9, 1863,

On Joint Resolutions on the state of the country.

Mr. SPEAKER: The magnitude of the question before us must be my apology for trespassing upon the indulgence of the House at this late hour of the session. Before proceeding to the discussion of the resolutions, I desire to strip the subject of the mists thrown around it by the political harangue delivered last night by the learned and eloquent gentleman from Allegheny, (Mr. Shannon.) Whatever may be said of the length of that speech, or of its applicability to the subject under discussion, all will agree that its logic was irresistible. It would be impossible to remember all that was said in the course of a three hours' speech; and I regret that an opportunity was not afforded me to reply to him at the time, when his remarks were more fresh in my memory.

Had a stranger chanced to enter this hall during the first two hours of the gentleman's speech, he would have supposed that a political gathering of partisans was assembled here, and that the orator was arraigning the great Democratic party upon a charge of inconsistency, especially upon the slavery question. Now, Mr. Speaker, I must confess that my powers of perception did not enable me to see the relevancy of this part of the gentleman's speech to the questions under discussion. Suppose, sir, we concede that the Democratic party has been inconsistent upon this question, or that it has been even as variable upon all questions as the opposition party (with which the gentleman himself is now identified) with its varied names, how would that affect the present condition of our country? Sit in the present sad and trying hour, when the pillars of our glorious Republic seem to be crumbling, and the temple of our liberties rocking on its foundation stones, it would be more patriotic and statesmanlike to strive to prevent its utter overthrow, rather than to indulge in tirades about party consistency.

Ent to the logic of the gentleman from Allegheny. He told us that a Democratic convention was held in the city of Pittsburg in 1849, at which a resolution was adopted "against the farther extension of slavery," and therefore, by the gentleman's logic, every subordinate of the administration has a right to arrest and imprison for months a private and peaceable citizen in a loyal State, "without due process of law," or without even any information or accusation being made according to the requirements of the Constitution. Is not that clear?

Again—the gentleman told us that Floyd, Johnson and Cobb had defrauded the government out of large sums, consisting of arms, funds, &c., and therefore he would have us believe that the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been plundered from the Treasury during the present administration, was all right; and not only so, but the man who questions the integrity of these public robbers, is "in sympathy with the rebellion." Is not this equally clear?

The gentleman also told us that James Buchanan, in 1819, offered a resolution against the introduction of slavery into free territory, and therefore, according to the gentleman's logic, President Lincoln had an undoubted right to issue his proclamation freeing the slaves in the revolted States. Who will fail to be convinced by such cogent reasoning as this?

Having thus disposed of the gentleman's political declamation, of which I cannot see the pertinency. I proceed, Mr. Speaker, to notice his argument upon the resolutions. The only reference he made to these, was to the third, fourth and seventh. The third reads thus:

"*Resolved*, That the present deplorable civil war has been forced upon the country by the disunionists of the Southern States, now in arms against the Constitutional Government, and in arms around the Capital; that in this National emergency, Congress, banishing all feeling of mere passion or resentment, will recollect only its duty to the whole country; that this war is not waged on their part in any spirit of oppression, or for any purpose or conquest or subjugation or purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of those States, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union, with all the dignity, equality and rights of the several States unimpaired; and that as soon as those objects are accomplished the war ought to cease."

This resolution, Mr. Speaker, was regarded at the time, and for many months afterwards, as the true test of loyalty, throughout all the loyal States, and it was adopted by a Republican House of Representatives, with, I believe, three dissenting votes.

Thus we find the immediate representatives of the people, in the most solemn and unequivocal manner, defining what the purposes of the war, on our part, were. With the object of the war thus defined, the patriotic citizens throughout the country, without distinction of party, rallied to the support of the government by hundreds of thousands, and to their credit be it said, they did not stop to inquire who occupied the Executive chair, and, sir, with a patriotism rarely if ever equalled, and a courage never surpassed, tens of thousands of these brave men have laid down their lives on the altar of their country. Yes, sir, the land has been deluged with blood in this fratricidal war, and much of it the best blood of the country, and it is not, perhaps, an exaggeration to say that a hundred thousand widows, and five hundred thousand orphan children, are to-day wailing the loss of husband and father, to say nothing about fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, who have lost loved ones. But all this was submitted to with becoming resignation. The heart stricken bowed to their sad fate, under the assurance that the terrible sacrifice was made in attempting to sustain the Constitution and Union as they were bequeathed to us by our fathers. But alas, how delusive was this fondly cherished hope, based as it was, upon the plighted faith of the government. In an evil hour the President yielded (as I solemnly believe against his own better judgment) to the seductive influences of the radicals who surrounded him, or in his own language, to the "outside pressure," and did that which in his inaugural address, as well as on several subsequent occasions, he declared he had no power to do. Is this allegation true? Let the President be his own witness. In his inaugural he said, in speaking of slavery in the States:

"Fourth. That this General Assembly, in the exercise of its right to differ with the Federal Executive, enters its solemn protest against the proclamation of the President of the United States, dated the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, by which he assumes to emancipate slaves in certain States, holding the same to be unconstitutional and void."

In regard to this resolution, I shall have something to say hereafter. For the present, I pass on to the consideration of the seventh resolution, which is as follows:

"Seventh. That this General Assembly deem it proper further to declare, that it, together with all the truly loyal people of the State, would hail with pleasure and delight any manifestation of a desire on the part of the seceded States to return to their allegiance to the government of the Union, and would, in such event, cordially and earnestly co-operate with them in the restoration of peace and the procurement of such proper guarantees as would give security to all their interest and rights."

And this, Mr. Speaker, is the resolution which the gentleman from Allegheny treated with such scorn and contempt; and concern-

ing which he even used the polite and classic expression, that he would "spit upon it." I venture to say, sir, that this resolution embodies the spirit of every prayer that is offered to the Throne of Grace by every *true* Christian man. Yes, sir, go with me to yonder sanctuary of the living God, and listen to that devoted servant of the Prince of Peace, whose mission was to preach "peace on earth, good will to man," and hear him as he invokes the "Great God of Battles to restore once more to our beloved and bleeding country the inestimable blessings of peace." What think you, Mr. Speaker, would be the response of a gentleman who would *sneer* at such a resolution as this? Would it be a hearty "amen?" No, sir; no. It would be "blood," "blood," "blood." Or, Mr. Speaker, go with me, if you please, to yonder humble cottage, and as you approach tread lightly, for it is the abode of a widow, whose husband has fallen on the battle field, in defending the "glorious ensign of the Republic, once known and honored throughout the world." See her as she wearily bows, surrounded by her little ones; hear her as she implores Him who has promised to be "a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow;" see her gushing tears, as she whispers, "O, Father, I would humbly beseech Thee to put it into the hearts of those who have taken up arms against the government to return to their allegiance, and thus stay the further ravages of this cruel war, that others may be spared from my sad fate." What would be the response of the gentleman from Allegheny and those who applauded his sentiments on that side of the House, and in the gallery. Would it be a cordial "amen?" No, sir; I suppose it would be "spit upon it." Because, Mr. Speaker, such a prayer is the very essence of this seventh resolution. Nothing, it seems, will satisfy these gentlemen but blood, more blood. In the language of a reverend gentleman, whom I commend disengaged both in the north, and in the border slave States. All the energies of every man, woman and child in the revolted States. In the exuberance of the gentleman's desire to present the resolutions, and those who voted for them, as odious a light as possible, he ignored the eighth altogether. That resolution reads thus:

"Eighth. That the soldiers composing our armed forces merit the warmest thanks of the nation. Their country called, and nobly did they respond. Living, they shall know a nation's gratitude; wounded, a nation's care, and dying, they shall live in our memories, and monuments shall be raised to teach posterity to honor the patriots and heroes who offered their lives at their country's altar. Their widows and orphans shall be adopted by the nation, to be watched over and cared for as objects truly worthy a nation's guardianship."

And this is one of the series of resolutions which the gentleman calls "miserable trash," and this, notwithstanding the gentleman himself voted for this particular one. I undertake to say, sir, that every Democrat in the Commonwealth would cordially endorse the sentiment herein contained.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of the most terrible civil war that history records.

And this is one of the series of resolutions

which the gentleman calls "miserable trash,"

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munity would cordially endorse the senti-

ment herein contained.

Mr. Speaker, I will not believe that any fur-

ther advance will be made in the direction I

have indicated—I will cling to the hope that

better counsels will prevail, and that the ad-

ministration may yet be brought back to a re-

alization on the fact that this war was "un-

waged, on our part, for the purpose of over-

throwing or interfering with the rights or es-

tablished institutions of any of the States, but

to defend and maintain the supremacy of the

Constitution, and to preserve the Union, with

all the dignity, equality and rights of the sev-

eral States unimpaired," &c.

Mr. Speaker, I can regard the Abolition

proclamation of the President in no other light

than as "an assumption of power, not dele-

gated by the Constitution and laws of the

country, but in derogation of both." This

may seem like strong language to employ in

reference to the "powers that be," which

inspiration teaches us, "are ordained of God,"

but, in the fear of *Him*, I believe it to be true—and if, in time like these, I should fail to utter it, I should deem myself unworthy of a seat upon this floor. Am I not fully sustained in the allegation, that the proclamation was a usurpation of power, not warranted by the Constitution and laws, by the official declara-

tions of the President himself, as quoted above? But, for the sake of argument, suppose it be conceded that under the plea of "Military necessity" the President had the power to issue the proclamation, what practi-

cal good can result to either race from its ex-

ercise? For my life I cannot see how either

can be benefited, but, on the contrary, I can

see nothing but "evil, and only evil, and that

continually." Why, sir, look at it for a single moment. Here are some three or four millions of unfortunate beings, thrown upon their own resources, many of them without sufficient in-

telligence to appreciate the blessings of liberty,

and wholly incapable of taking care of them-

selves. This, I admit, may be their misfor-

tune, rather than their fault, but it is, never-

theless, true, and hundreds and thousands of

them, when left without a protector, would be

obliged either to subsist on the cold charity of

the world, or go down to premature graves

from absolute starvation. Then again, those

of them who would be able and willing to

work, would come in direct competition with

the labor of white men and women, and con-

sequently reduce their wages below subsisting

point; and thus, while you would not, in the

remotest manner, improve the physical condi-

tion of the former, you would inaugurate a

policy ruinous to the latter, and create a jeal-

ousy and bitter strife between the two classes,

which would lead to the most disastrous con-

sequences. But, sir, let me not be misunderstood here. I am not now, nor have I ever

been, the advocate of slavery. On the con-

trary, I could wish that there was not one of

the race, either bond or free, within the limits

of the United States; that they were some-

where by themselves, to enjoy all the liberty

they are capable of. But I have always main-

tained, and do still maintain, that neither Con-

gress nor the President has any right to inter-

fer with it in the States, either by civil or

military power. This is one of the reserved

rights of the individual States, and they, and

a colony, can exercise it. I cannot sustain

a policy which would change so radically,

and so radically, their present relation, even if the power existed, them to themselves and

to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which

I now read.

"Advocating the Proclamation of Freedom," he said:

"But its inhumanity is urged. There are

many. We know they speak the truth when they

say that the negro slays everything within his reach</p