

Democrat and Sentinel.

THE BLESSINGS OF GOVERNMENT, LIKE THE DEWS OF HEAVEN, SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED ALIKE, UPON THE HIGH AND THE LOW, THE RICH AND THE POOR.

NEW SERIES.

EBENSBURG, PA. WEDNESDAY, AUG. 6, 1862.

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July 30 1y

SPEECH OF HON. WM. H. WITTE, OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY.

The Democratic State Convention, after concluding its labors, on the evening of the 4th inst., resolved itself into a Mass Meeting and invited the Hon. Wm. H. Witte, of Montgomery, to address the Delegates and others present, whereupon Mr. W. appeared and spoke as follows:

Gentlemen of the Convention and Fellow-Citizens:—I have to thank you for the invitation to address you. I esteem it a very high privilege, and I assure you, I am grateful. It is always a privilege to speak on those questions which directly concern the Democratic party and the country, and it is especially a privilege to be allowed to address such an assemblage as this here to-night—more especially under the circumstances. I rejoice with you, because I think there is a feeling of general rejoicing here. I congratulate you, as I think I well may, upon the termination of your labors to-day. I regard the action of this Convention to-day as wise and just, and as I think the future will show, calculated to vindicate the past history of the Democratic party and secure for it future power and future glory. [Applause.]

In a popular form of government, where political power is derived by the process of the ballot, opinion must be free, and there must be in the citizen a proper authority for the exercise of opinion on all subjects, especially those of a political character. This is the process by which political power, in all its forms, is derived, and it is, therefore, a great obligation to impeach no man's opinion, if it is exercised conformably to law and by virtue of the law, and to have a proper respect for his convictions and his conclusions. And there is, also, a high and solemn duty, especially as we regard it in the Democratic party, which requires that while we have regard for the opinions of other men, and while we respect their motives and those of their party organization, and especially at such a time as this, in the hour of our country's peril, we must discharge our obligations to our party and to ourselves, as citizens under a free government, by speaking boldly and freely of those things which are rank abuses, and which have brought us, if not to ruin, to the very verge of ruin. [Applause.]

We have heard through the Republican party press, in public and private circles, and through other means by which the sentiment of that party is made manifest, that the Democratic party has failed to exercise its function; has failed to fulfill its glorious mission; that it is not quite the party of the Union that it ought to be, and that there are here and there men (I do not impeach their motives or question their patriotism) who think they could not properly discharge their duty to their country and to this glorious Union by remaining in the Democratic party.

Well, Mr. President and gentlemen, if the Democratic party be not the party of the Union, I have read its history in vain. If the history of this great country is anything more—and, thank God, it is nothing less—than the simple, plain story of the Democratic party and its beneficent enactments, then have I read that history in vain. It is but about sixty years since that party was distinctively brought into life—since it assumed form and shape—and you will remember with me (perhaps it is not unprofitable for us to remember these things now, for they are the substratum of our political structure) the circumstances under which it was brought into existence. It was when Jefferson commenced his administration of the General Government, under the elder Adams, the most odious and unjust naturalization laws had been enacted, which rendered a period of fourteen years' residence necessary to entitle a foreigner to citizenship. The country was new and contained much unsettled land. The Democrats wanted to make this country, what the tyrant ridden people of the Old World deemed it, an asylum for the oppressed of all nations. They wanted to make it truly the modern Canaan, and when the Democratic party came into organized existence, it was based upon the great doctrine of equality of rights. It said to the oppressed millions of Europe "come unto us and, complying with our laws, which, after a short residence, you may, yourselves, help to enact."

During the sixty years which followed, and which have just closed, the theory and principles of the Democratic party were enacted into law; and were practically applied as the policy of the Government, with the most beneficent effects. The alien and sedition laws of the elder Adams were repealed, and in their place the Democracy gave to the country liberal naturalization laws and perfect freedom of speech and of the press. The favorite doctrine of the party as to the acquisition of territory was put in practice, so that while immigration was invited, land was duly provided for the immigrants to settle upon and cultivate. The Democracy took the ground that this Western Continent must be ours, and thus inaugurated the theory of acquiring new territory. The purchase of the Louisiana territory, which included the entire country west of the Mississippi and east of the Rocky Mountains, out of which so many flourishing States have, since, been formed, the production of which, already, are almost incalculable in amount, was the work of the Democratic party and the result of Democratic policy, notwithstanding the furious opposition made by the party which, under divers names, has always arrayed itself against the Democracy.

In 1812 we were called upon to assert our rights upon the ocean—to vindicate our character and prove our power as a nation—and we did it, by driving the British cruisers that infested our coasts from the seas and by causing Great Britain to sue for peace—thus establishing our status through out the world, and compelling not only respect but submission to the motto on our banners—"Free trade and sailors' rights" [Applause.]

Among other positions taken and maintained by the Democratic party was the position—a fundamental idea with that party—that the public treasures should be withdrawn from the control of private corporations, and that the public should be furnished with a reliable currency. You remember the great bank question. In the memorable struggle growing out of that exciting question, the Democrats succeeded in establishing their financial theory, which has, ever since, been the ruling theory of the Government. We came to other cases of like character, but entirely in harmony with the theory we had laid down. We withdrew the business of the country, with all its wealth, after a fearful struggle against a most formidable opposition, backed up, as it was, by powerful private interests, from the control of private corporations. Then we had the enemy fiercely contending against us, as they had done a few years before on a question similar in character. Then came the second foreign war we had. Our enemies then fiercely contended with us. We know what Congress now does—we know what it did then. There is not much difference. There is a power there, now, which is rendering the Executive impotent, and which is making an effort to displace our noble and courageous soldiers in the field, though they have sealed their devotion to their country in their heart's blood. These men, in Congress, have no more patriotism than those had, during the Mexican war, who voted against furnishing our soldiers with supplies. That war was rendered necessary, in the estimation of the Democratic party, on account of the invasion of our rights of our citizens on Mexican soil, and the Government said then, as I trust it ever will, in similar cases, say—"We will not allow the slightest encroachment upon the rights of any one of our citizens, however humble," and we vindicated that position with our blood and treasure. The opposition then was led by some such men as now in Congress, oppose the Government—such as Sumner, Wade, Wilson and others—who proclaimed: "We will vote you no supplies and give you no money, but hope the Mexicans will welcome you with bloody hands to hospitable graves!" The party that vindicated the country against encroachments on the rights of its citizens was the Democratic party. [Great applause.]

It may not be unprofitable to think of this. You, gentlemen, can all draw your own parallels. You see how entirely applicable it is.

Lock over the list of measures established since 1800, the wisdom of which has been tested by the approval of the people—and you will see that every measure that has stood the test of time, and which has been approved by the people—the wisdom of which has been attested by practical experience and actual observation has been the work of the Democratic party.—Not a single leading measure which has stood the test of time and trial, and the wisdom of which is acknowledged, is left unrepaid upon the statute books, or public records, which did not originate in the Democratic party and which was not established by that party. It has liberalized the laws regulating the elective franchise; it has protected every class of our citizens when assailed and their constitutional rights threatened; it has protected the individual citizen whenever his rights have been assailed; it has protected the States, respectively, against all encroachments, or threatened encroachments of the Federal power, and it has, with equal firmness and power, upheld and defended against all foes, whether within or without, that power which was constituted and established by the Union of all the States. [Applause.]

Being the party of the people and having the rights and interests of the people always at heart, as a necessary result of its principles, the great Democratic party has ever been the champion of any and every individual, or class, or religion, or trade, or interest, when any of these have been assailed in their constitutional rights. When the mechanics and laborers of the country were suffering from oppressively long hours of labor; the Democratic party, as their friend and champion, contended for the ten hour system and succeeded in establishing it, a Democratic National Administration leading off by adopting this system in the Government dock yards, machine shops, etc., when the foreign emigrants were assailed, the Democratic party protected them; when the Catholics were assailed on account of their religion, it protected them; when the benevolent society of Free Masons were assailed, it defended them; when the hotel and tavern keepers were assailed, it defended them in their rights, and, in all cases, it has been successful in its defence of the constitutional rights of our citizens, whether as classes or as individuals, whether as citizens of a State or of the United States.

During the last sixty years the opposition to the Democratic party has strenuously opposed all the great and beneficent measures which have been adopted and approved by the people as the true policy of the Government, and under which the country has grown and prospered in a manner unparalleled in the history of nations, and in lieu of

these great and wise measures, it has tried to establish measures of an opposite character. The men composing the party of the opposition tried to institute an unjust and illiberal naturalization policy, any they failed; they tried to inaugurate a very extended and very complicated system of currency, and they failed; they have endeavored to originate and establish measures of domestic policy, without utility in them, and have failed; they sought to abridge the rights of foreign-born citizens, and citizens who professed a religious faith differing from their own, and thank God! they failed in that; they made a traitorous opposition to the war of 1812, and did all in their power to embarrass the Government under the administration of President Madison and failed; they gave "aid and comfort" to the enemies of our country in that war by furnishing friendly signals for the benefit of the enemy's ships of war on our coast, and by trying to foment discord and discontent among our own people respecting the war, and failed. They then attempted, also, to dismember the American Union by organizing a secession Convention at Hartford, composed of delegates from all the New England States, and by these passing resolutions declaring that "when emergencies occur which are either beyond the reach of the judicial tribunals, or too pressing to admit of the delay incident to their forms, States, which have no common empire, must be their own judges and execute their own decisions!" But, thank Heaven! they failed in this also. They tried to establish an unequal and unjust revenue system, and failed; they bitterly opposed the purchase of the great Louisiana territory, and failed; they opposed the war with Mexico and exerted themselves to the utmost to cripple the Government during that war, to discourage enlistments, and to disparage the heroic men who maintained the honor of our country and its flag in that contest, but they most ignominiously failed. In short, the old Federal party, under its proper name and the numerous cognomens under which it has ever been known, has opposed every measure that was right and advocated every one that was wrong. The people, after having due time to discuss and fairly understand the principles involved in the various questions at issue, decided against the opposition, utterly wiping out from the record and the statutes, every important measure which that party ever succeeded in enacting into law—thus showing that that party was unfit to govern the country and that it had not the confidence of the American people.

Thus, it is seen, the opposition to the Democracy has ever been unprofitably a party of failure—it has failed in everything. Or if it has ever attempted anything of importance and has not failed—signally failed, then have I read the history of this Government and the history of parties in vain.— [Applause.]

But how has it been with the Democratic party? In all that it has attempted, it has succeeded—gloriously succeeded, and the magnificent results of its own success have made our country prosperous and powerful, great and glorious, far above and beyond any example in the world's history. [Great applause.] Before the onward march and beneath the strong arms and the wisely directed efforts of our party and its policy, the primal forest have given place to cultivated fields, to smiling villages and flourishing cities, and the wide wilderness of the mighty West has been to "blossom as the rose," to swarm with teeming millions of prosperous and happy people drawn together from the "four quarters of the earth," the surplus of whose immense agricultural productions goes far to feed the world, and to augment the general wealth of the country, while tens of thousands of brave and stalwart men from this region of recent wilderness, rise up and fly to arms at the call of their country, as the followers of Roderick Dhu spring from every bush at his whistled signal. Fairy-like the Democratic party has waved its magic wand over the great western wilderness and millions of happy and prosperous people have as it were, sprung into being; the forests have vanished in a twinkling, and a very ocean of cereals flows in, its waves swelling and rolling in golden glory over imperial tracts larger in extent and more fruitful in life sustaining products than some of the principal nations of the Old World. Upon the gulf, on the Pacific, in the great valley between the Alleghenies and the Rocky Mountains, new empires have been founded and additional rights and privileges granted to the people, from time to time, under and by the power of the Democratic party—not a single State, save one, has been added to the great Confederacy—not a single star, save one, added to our glorious flag since 1800, but has been the work of the Democratic party.—Every one of these new States, with the single exception mentioned, came into the Union with two Democratic United States Senators, and with these a constitution liberalized and popularized, but just and wise in all its provisions.

From the beginning the Democratic party has been the successful promoter and defender of the rights of the people and the prosperity of the country. It made the judiciary elective; it protected the rights of married women; it secured the homestead of the citizen against seizure; it secured to the foreign immigrant the rights of citizenship against the narrow and bigoted policy of the Opposition, by making the period of residence preparatory to the full exercise of a free-man's privileges as short as practicable and prudent, (in some of the States this period was reduced to only six months.) At all times and in all matters, the Democracy

have enacted the most liberal measures; and always, in the formation of State Governments, opposing the Federal party, under its various names and various guises, by preventing what that party sought to legalize—encroachments on the rights and interests of the masses, and, thank God! in every instance the Democratic party succeeded. So, too, in the older States. In every instance where the Constitution of an old State has been altered it has been liberalized as in the case of New Jersey and other States, where the property qualification for voters and jurors has been abolished. In every case the Democratic party has protected the rights of the masses by liberalizing and popularizing the State Constitutions so far as practicable and proper.

While, as I have said, the Opposition to the Democracy, in all their attempts to embody their principles into law, to be the policy of the Government have failed, the Democratic party, on the contrary, has, in all cases, succeeded. It contended for a liberal naturalization law, and succeeded; for freedom of speech and of the press, and succeeded, for it was the Democratic party that repealed the odious alien and sedition laws which the Federalists had enacted; it contended for the policy of extending our National limits by the acquisition of territory, and succeeded—magnificently succeeded, so that the number of States have increased from thirteen to thirty four, leaving still an almost unlimited extent of territory, rich in agricultural and mineral resources, acquired under Democratic rule, out of which numerous flourishing States will yet be formed. It contended (against a very powerful opposition, backed by immense wealth,) for the separation of the National treasure from private corporations, and succeeded; it favored and sustained the war of 1812, for "free trade and sailors' rights," and succeeded; it favored the protection of our citizens against the injustice and insults of Mexico, and made war upon that country to avenge these outrages and vindicate our citizens, and it succeeded, not only in vindicating our citizens, but in adding a vast and valuable territory to the public domain. It has ever been pre-eminently, the party of success, and its success has proved the success of the country. Its history is the history of the country for sixty odd years. [Applause.]

Not only is the Democratic party thus identified with the measures protecting the rights and interests of the people, with the great increase in our population, wealth, and extent of territory, and increase in the number of States, with our popularized policy, generally, at home, but it is owing to the work of our party that our country is respected abroad. It was Marcy who protected Kotza against the attempted tyranny of Austria, it was Cass who broke up the famous Quintuple treaty; it was Polk who carried on a successful foreign war, with an overflowing treasury and, at the same time, fed the starving millions of Europe; it was Madison who made our flag respected in every sea; and it was Gen. Jackson who brought proud France to her knees on the question of indemnity; and it was he who, in 1822, quelled the first outbreak of rebellion in the South, by compelling respect for and obedience to the Federal authority. [Vociferous applause.] These are the acts and events that have made us a respected power abroad and they were all the work of the Democratic party.

Gentlemen, I shall be brief not wishing to weary you. [Cries of "go on," "go on," "don't stop yet."] We are told there are or should be no parties now—that we should all be for the Union. Would to God that we could all be for the Union and the country, but we are not all for the country. Many of the people are not for the country, but thank Heaven every man who is a Democrat must be for the country, and when he ceases to be for the country, he must cease to be a Democrat.— [Great applause.] It is peculiarly upon this point that the Democratic party differs now, as it ever has done, with the opposition. This difference exists because the Democratic party has always contended for the Constitutional rights of all the States without regard to their local institutions, as it has for the individual's rights, without reference to the State in which he lives. This has ever been the theory and practice of the party. It has always felt it to be its duty to carry out its obligation to the individual States and the individual citizen. Thus upon the Southern question, we have defended the rights of the South and stood between what we considered Northern sectionalism and Northern treason, and what we have deemed an invasion of Southern rights—not because they were Southern rights, (they are really to more Southern than Northern,) but because they are the rights of the States, under the Constitution. That has always been the doctrine of the Democratic party and always will be.— Nevertheless, the opposition say: "It is exceedingly difficult for you to separate yourselves from your Southern friends," and therefore, they tell us that we must now come out and say there is no danger at all in the theory of the party in power—that we entirely approve of it, believe it to be wise and humbly submit, hide our diminished heads, [laughter.] go down on our knees and cry for quarter, else we are not and cannot be Union men. [renewed laughter.] In short, we are traitors. Against that doctrine I protest, in my own name.— [A voice—"wh don't."] I receive it first as an insult to my party, whose fidelity and devotion to the Federal Government I will not allow to be impeached. [Immense applause.] The Federal authority as now constituted at Washington has a power, legal and constitutional, and such being the case, the obligation to the citizen to respect that authority and discharge his duty, to it is as imperative as if that power were exercised in the person of a man of his own choice. I have confidence, in the Democracy, in its intelligence and wisdom of the Democratic party, but in its love of justice; and I do not believe that party can be put in a false position, here or elsewhere, before the country, or any issues of the day.

The Democratic party has always been one of law and order. It has been maintained that the difference between it and the opposition has been that the opposition has always contended that the citizen might set up his right of opinion, or of conscience, as they sometimes call it superior to law, or in other words, enact with his own breast a higher law than the Constitution, and follow it! thus making his individual mind superior to the collective wisdom of the founders of the Republic and his pretended "conscience" superior to the supreme law of the land! while the Democratic party has ever maintained that the first and highest obligation of the citizen is to obey the Constitution and the laws, as written and enacted, saying to these "higher law" patriots: "You have no right to follow the dictates of an opinion that conflicts with the law; this is not a government run mad, in which the opinion or the conscience of every individual, or what he may please to term his conscience, is to govern his political actions.

This a government of opinion—of the majority's opinion—when it is expressed and embodied in the form of law and in obedience to the Constitution, but not a Government under which a man may plead his individual "conscience," or opinion, to justify the violation of the laws. This is a government of law.

The Democratic party has but one thing to do—no new thing. Every body is liberalized in our theory and no new thing is required. It has but to vindicate its past history in obeying and supporting the law under which it exists—even though the executor and administrator of the law be personally and politically objectionable.— To that end, I believe, the Democratic party will do, now, what it has done before.— I do not think there can be any question as to its duty, and I am quite sure, Mr. President, that there will be no hesitation in discharging it. The two previous wars we had, were conducted by the Democratic party. The necessity for those wars seemed to be absolute and unavoidable and the Democratic party prosecuted them successfully, against the determined opposition of the party opposed to it. In the beginning of the present war, the Democratic party furnished men and money without stint, and we say, now, sixty years trial has proved us, and we will give our best men and best blood we have to restore the Union and to reassert the authority and supremacy of the Constitution. [Great applause.]

But, at the same time, we say to the persons and the party in power, "whilst we give you money and men—treasure and blood, to put down the rebellion, and whilst we declare that our ties with the Southern men now in arms against the Government are severed, and there can be no harmony between us—(because they have become traitors, whilst we are loyal, and have shown the basest ingratitude of traitors, who would not wait a single hour when we had waited long years in their defence, but, in a single instant, precipitated us into the horrors of civil war. The Democratic party can have nothing in common with traitors, either South or North [applause])—whilst we do all this," we say to the men at the head of public affairs, "we hold you responsible for the conduct of the war—for the expenditure of our money, for the fate of our brethren and friends, fighting for our flag, in the field and for the fate of the Union, the means for saving which the loyal people have furnished you with and the salvation of which is in your hands." And we say, further, to this Administration, "carry on this war; we will give you all the money and men you need; but there must be no invasion of private rights where there is no authority; men must not be arrested in the public streets and imprisoned without warrant, when the temples of justice are open and the judges are on the bench. [Great applause.] The Constitution itself; only by construction, allows the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* where martial law is necessary. Where martial law exists it supersedes, for the time, the civil power and the *habeas corpus* is suspended by the war power. But here, when every plication of the great and patriotic heart of Pennsylvania is for the vindication of the integrity of our Government and the honor of our flag, citizens must not be imprisoned without "due process of law." We say to this Federal power that "to restore the Union and vindicate the Constitution, which, you say, has been violated, and which, we say, has been violated, and without which there can be no Union—no Government." We say that "to vindicate that Constitution and to restore that Union we will give our blood—we will do it cheerfully; with a sense of high obligation, but," we say to them at the same time, "you must not invade rights which are sacred. If it be your purpose to restore the supremacy of the Constitution, what is that Constitution worth, if the process by which you seek to restore it violates it still more?" Suppose that, by indiscretion, I have broken a favorite vase—an heir-loom, rendered sacred by the memories it awakens of revered ancestors, and I wish to make it whole again—how shall I do it? Shall I dash it to the earth and trample it into fragments,