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Reconstruction: A Letter to President Johnson

Count de Gasparin

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LOYAL PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
863 BROADWAY.

No. 87.

RECONSTRUCTION,

A

Letter to President Johnson.

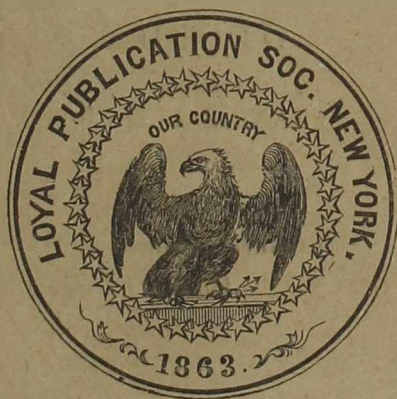
BY COUNT A. DE GASPARIN.

TRANSLATED BY MARY L. BOOTH, AUTHORIZED TRANSLATOR OF
"MARTIN'S HISTORY OF FRANCE."

FRANCIS LIEBER,
President.

J. A. STEVENS, JR.,
Secretary.

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NEW-YORK :

1865.

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863 BROADWAY.

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*No. 87.*  
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RECONSTRUCTION.

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A LETTER

TO

PRESIDENT JOHNSON,

BY

COUNT A. DE GASPARIN.

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TRANSLATED BY MARY L. BOOTH,

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATOR OF "MARTIN'S HISTORY OF FRANCE," AND AUTHOR OF THE "ILLUSTRATED
HISTORY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK."

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SECOND EDITION.

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863 BROADWAY.

No. 87.

LETTER

FROM

COUNT DE GASPARI

TO

PRESIDENT JOHNSON.

TRANSLATED BY MARY L. BOOTH.

To Mr. ANDREW JOHNSON,
President of the United States :

MR. PRESIDENT : Pardon me this step. I should have entreated your permission to address you thus publicly, but time was lacking. And this was my fault ; I hesitated till the last moment ; I said to myself that my opinion was not of sufficient importance to be made known, and that questions of internal organization should not be meddled with by foreigners. Now, at the last instant, as it were, when scarcely a month separates us from the opening of Congress, when it is scarcely possible to trace these pages in haste and to transmit them in time to America, my conscience cries out that I was wrong ; that a sincere word always has its value ; that the present moment may be decisive ; that you are about to take an irrevocable step, and that a friend of America has no right to be silent if he believes that he has any counsel to give which might be useful.

Yes, you are about to take an irrevocable step. The South once returned to Congress, without the negro question having first been regulated, this question is transformed into an insoluble problem, and the whole work of your presidency becomes impossible.

The work of Mr. Lincoln was the war and the abolition of slavery; he gloriously achieved it. Your work, not less glorious, is the reconstruction of the country and the proclamation of the rights belonging to the freed negroes; and this work you will not suffer to be endangered in any manner whatsoever.

I am wrong in making a distinction between the rights of the negroes and the reconstruction of the country. The rights of the negroes are the very condition of reconstruction. Or rather, the war and the reconstruction, the abolition of slavery and the political enfranchisement of the colored race, the work of Mr. Lincoln and your own, are the same thing at the bottom. The rebellion had only one cause, slavery; the victory over the rebellion was possible only on one condition, the suppression of slavery; reconstruction will be effected only by one means, the absolute destruction of everything connected with slavery.

And this is why you are verging on a critical moment. The Southern representatives and senators are about to knock at the doors of Congress. I am not among those, as you know, who desire that they should be tardily opened. But I should think myself abjuring both your noble cause and the simplest laws of common-sense if I did not place the decision of the questions which concern the situation of the negroes in the South before the return of the South to Congress. The guarantees to be demanded from the South evidently precede its readmission. Guarantees first, readmission afterwards; such is the logical order. The terms cannot be inverted without risking poignant regret.

You have therefore reached your last crisis, and it is not the least perilous one, for the great fundamental question is hidden by a question of form, insignificant in appearance. Unreflecting minds will be tempted to think that the point

at stake is merely a dispute as to the constitutional form of procedure ; but it is to know whether you shall remain the masters of your future—whether you shall finish what you have begun.

The problem of the colored race, which must be shown in all its fullness, and called by its true name, will not suffer a division. It must be resolved entire. After freeing the colored race, you cannot leave it, so to speak, suspended in the air, halfway between heaven and earth, between servitude and freedom. Neither can you introduce into your Congress the states which have just fought for slavery before insuring to their slaves of yesterday the guarantees of common law.

Two connected and inseparable discussions are thus opened. Permit me to accost them without further preamble.

I feel the more at liberty to enter with you into these questions, inasmuch as I have hitherto sincerely admired the acts of your administration.

After the death of Mr. Lincoln, I trembled, I confess. In mourning this great citizen, in mourning, I almost dare say, as one mourns a friend, I could not help fearing lest the inheritance might be too heavy for his successor. But your attitude speedily reassured me. It was firm and commanding ; we all felt, on seeing you thus resolute, that the destinies of a great people did not depend, thank God ! on the pistol of an assassin.

You have been firm and gentle ; you have comprehended that civil wars are ended only by kindness ; you have not permitted the political scaffold to be erected in the United States. You have given to your victory that character of complete magnanimity, the example of which has been unknown to our old world.

At the same time, you have maintained the sacred rights of justice. You have given, not a hackneyed amnesty, but individual pardons. You have desired that the leader of the rebellious government should be subjected to trial, and that judgment should precede pardon. You have thus protested

against the doctrines which confound rebellion and foreign war, and which transform insurgents into belligerents. Crime has remained crime ; but you have shown yourself ready to mitigate, with rare generosity, the sentences of the tribunals.

This was beginning the vast work of reconstruction at the right end. Much more, you have invited the rebel states to reorganize ; you have felt that it was necessary to abridge, as much as possible, the always perilous interval which separates the close of the struggle from the complete re-establishment of order. You have proceeded unhesitatingly in the disbanding of the army. Thanks to the measures which you have taken, the military régime has lost its chance of power, the balance between the receipts and the expenditures has been re-established, the redemption of the national debt has been secured ; lastly, all the friends of America have been permitted to discern the near approaching moment when liberal institutions will resume their full sway, without having been in any manner weakened by civil war, a fact unique in the history of mankind !

I bow before the wisdom of such a policy. It is simple, like everything that is great. It is resolute, like everything that is good. If a few petty mistakes have been made, if the withdrawal of the garrisons from the South has, perhaps, been effected with somewhat excessive haste, these errors are honorable, for they proceed from that trusting generosity which wins the heart and which is the privilege of true strength.

I would observe here, moreover, that foreign questions have been treated with not less good sense and decision than internal questions.

By the immediate and rapid disbanding you have provided against temptations which might have been created by your immense armies.

You have firmly presented your maritime reclamations with respect to England ; but, without abandoning your just protests against the act which, from the first moment, transformed insurgents into belligerents, you have shown the most obtuse that the discussion in no event will degenerate

into a rupture ; lastly, you have taken care in no manner to favor the absurd Fenian movement.

With respect to France, you have not given way to the passions which the Mexican enterprise was calculated to excite. You have prudently postponed and reserved the decision of this delicate affair. You leave the Emperor Maximilian time to transform, if he can, into an American state, free and living its own life, a state ruled at this moment by European occupation.

You see, Mr. President, that it is in a spirit of cordial and respectful approbation that I submit to you the observations suggested to me by the two solemn questions which will be discussed in a few days at Washington :

Shall the Southern states be immediately admitted to Congress ?

Shall the right of suffrage be granted to negroes.

C O N G R E S S .

I.

I shall not stop to establish the competence of Congress ; this would be insulting to you. Your authority as President is very great ; you can do much more in America than Queen Victoria in England ; but your power does not go so far as to decide all questions authoritatively and finally. If it depended on you alone to fix the definitive bases of the reconstruction of the states, the conditions of their return to Congress, and the guarantees to be exacted from those who have passed the last four years in assailing the national flag, and attempting to overthrow the Constitution, the United States would not be a free country. Once more, this leaves no room for demonstration ; we do not demonstrate that which is self evident.

Even your authority as commander-in-chief does not exceed the limits where that of Congress assembled begins. The American Union has never forgotten the political maxim proclaimed of old by Jefferson—the superiority of the civil power ; this it is that always has the final decision.

What I state here every one knows in America. Mr. Lincoln called it to mind in his proclamations. You have not neglected to call it to mind in turn. The states which, by your request, have summoned conventions and proceeded to reorganize provisionally, all knew well that the final conditions of their return would be fixed by Congress. The admission or readmission to Congress is a question that belongs to Congress or to no one.

They knew this the more inasmuch as the congressional discussions called forth by the rebel states which had already claimed the right of being represented at Washington in a preceding session, had been echoed far and wide.

No mistake, therefore, is possible. Congress can neither divest itself of the absolute right of admitting new states, nor of reopening its doors to those which have attacked the Constitution by armed force, nor of deciding authoritatively what guarantees should be exacted after such a crime, nor of regulating whatever relates to the abolition of slavery and the condition of the colored race.

Competence, moreover, is far from excluding influence ; and what influence can be compared to yours ? If you do not finally decide questions, you shape their decision. The provisional reconstruction effected by your request is a first step toward definitive reconstruction ; your acts, your speeches, are precedents of the highest importance. The general impulse which you have given is accepted, I am convinced, by the great majority of Americans, and will naturally make itself felt in the deliberations of Congress. A single word of yours contains a whole political system ! On the day that Congress takes up the question of the freedmen, it will remember that you have called them "fellow-citizens."

II.

Would to God that there was nothing to decide but a question of competence between you and Congress ! It would speedily be resolved by common accord ; for the

authority of Congress, I am sure, has no more declared champion than yourself.

But the adversaries of this authority take their stand on quite different grounds. The *state rights*, which have already furnished to the South a pretext for war, and a point of support for slavery, still furnish it an argument for setting aside the jurisdiction of Congress.

It claims the right to return on the spot, without waiting for readmission, by virtue of state rights !

We, who judge from a distance, who view things as a whole, and who are ignorant of your constitutional subtleties—we cannot even conceive the possibility of such a pretension ! The question seems to us too simple to leave room for debate.

The states which claim the full right of returning by law have rent in a thousand pieces both their rights and the common Constitution. They have solemnly decided that they were no longer what they wish to be to-day—regular and official members of your federal representation. For four years, they have fired upon the flag of the Union. In the eyes of America, as in the eyes of foreign nations, they have ostentatiously repudiated all political association with you.

This is what they have done ; and now that their plan has failed, now that it suits them to return to Congress, to return thither unconditionally, to return thither for the purpose of resuming the old quarrel as far as possible, and of saving by their votes what remains of slavery, they impudently declare that their right to do so has never been forfeited, and that their ordinances of secession are as if they had never existed, since they have declared them null, and of no effect !

Null ; that is a matter of course. Of no effect ; that is quite a different thing. Whatever may be done, a fact has been consummated which was styled the Southern rebellion ; and on the day that this fact was consummated, the South ostentatiously renounced the rights which it suits it to reclaim to-day. Doubtless, its acts of secession were unable

to separate a single acre for a single day from the territory of the Union ; but they separated its members from the Congress of the Union. Congress is not a mill from which men go and come at pleasure.

“ The rebel states,” said Mr. Lincoln, “ have ceased to be in practical relations with the Union.” Very well, the re-establishment of these practical relations cannot depend on their caprice alone. It is certainly permissible for those who have suffered so much by the crime of the South, to take precautions against the repetition of this crime, and these sufferings.

This is not only permissible, it is prescribed to them by the indefeasible laws of common sense. The members of Congress would be lacking in their first duty if, before opening their doors to the Southern senators and representatives, they did not assure themselves that the contest was really ended, that it would not spring up anew in another form, that the freedmen were truly free, and that the struggle would not recommence on the morrow or the day after. Before recognizing the *constitutional* rights of those who, so far as it depended on them, have overthrown the Constitution, the least that can be done, as all will grant, is to demand some guarantees.

Face to face with those rights abjured and trodden under foot by the Southerners, arises a higher right, the right of living, the right of maintaining the public peace, the right of preventing new attempts at crime, the right of keeping one's eyes open, and not introducing the enemy one's self into the stronghold which he has assailed.

Who (unless it may be Mr. Buchanan) has disputed to the Union, the President and Congress, the right of repelling force by force, of suppressing the rebellion, of taking military occupation of the rebellious states, and of governing them ? State rights would not have prevented a manœuvre of Grant, a march of Sherman, or an energetic act of that governor of Tennessee, named Andrew Johnson. War is war, and the peace which is the end of war forms a part of it by this title. So long as the definitive conditions of this

peace have not been fixed, not only by the President, but by Congress, no particular state right can prevail against the general right of completing the work of the national defence, fully purifying the present, and insuring the safety of the future.

Those who read Mr. Lincoln's proclamations were not ignorant of this. The whole South knew that the President, in laying down certain conditions of political reconstruction, regulated these things only so far as it belonged to him to do so. No speech, no presidential proclamation, could or would have encroached upon the inalienable authority of Congress.

The latter will decide, therefore, whether it is proper to admit the Southern deputations. It will decide thereon without forgetting two things :

First, that the Congress which made war should make peace ; it would be out of the question to substitute for it another Congress by the preliminary introduction of the very persons against whom the war has been waged.

Secondly, that the rebellion and slavery have been one and the same ; it would be out of the question, therefore, to commission the rebellion to regulate the destinies of slavery.

To forget these two things would be at once to lack dignity and earnestness. Nothing would more resemble child's play than proceedings by virtue of which the South would be admitted to Congress *before* Congress should have regulated the conditions of peace in the South.

Again, if this were only child's play ! It would be, besides, an act of real cruelty. The war has profoundly modified the situation of the South ; it has created an entire new class, the class of freedmen. Are you at liberty to shut your eyes to such a change, and unconditionally to establish *state rights* as if nothing of the kind had occurred ? What will be the protection of these millions of men ? In the presence of the state rights, what will be their rights ? Will you abandon them to the regulations of the state ; to the tribunals of the state ? Are their liberty, their property, and their family, under the jurisdiction of the state alone ?

Shall no guarantee be secured to them? Shall those Southern states, who have proved what they are capable of doing in the negro question, be the sovereign masters of the negroes?

Their representatives once admitted to Congress, without guarantees to the colored race having been previously stipulated, it will be too late to think of the oppression and wretchedness which will be heaped upon this race.

The abolition of slavery will then become a farce. The negro question will then reappear entire, and you will perceive that the solution has escaped your hands. The question of negro suffrage, abandoned to Southern legislation, will not even be thought worthy of discussion. How can you then keep your word to those whose cause you have defended? It will be necessary to begin the war anew. It will be necessary to attack, when it is too late, those state rights which will have resumed all their force.

The word of the United States is pledged. In the proclamation which abolished slavery, one solemn sentence, suggested at the last moment by Mr. Seward, declares that the slaves of the rebellious states shall henceforth be free, and that the government of the United States shall "maintain their liberty."

And even though the proclamation did not say this, you would not be the less bound by the most sacred obligation which can exist on earth. In freeing the slaves, you constituted yourselves their protectors; they cannot henceforth be oppressed without a stain upon the honor of America.

No, Congress cannot abdicate in behalf of Southern legislation, and permit the negro question, so to speak, to be juggled out of its hands. It can do this the less, inasmuch as this question, which is in the highest degree a federal one, is connected at the same time with one of the most express stipulations of your constitution. Your constitution declares that the Union shall guarantee to each of the states comprising it "a republican form of government." Now we may ask whether, in the Southern states, where the negroes are in great numbers, an organization which should absolutely

exclude them from the ballot-box would not abolish, in point of fact, and in a definitive manner, that government of the majority, which constitutes the essence of a republic in the eyes of Americans?

III.

We are now at the heart of the discussion. Permit me, Mr. President, to dwell on the truly disastrous consequences which would be entailed by a resolution of Congress admitting the representatives of the South before the establishment of guarantees. These consequences are self-evident.

In the first place, the South itself would regulate the conditions of its return. By its vote and influence it would participate (and participate largely, be sure), in the decision of the questions pertaining most directly to the subject of the war itself.

These questions would escape your control ; you would no longer be masters of the situation. The rights of the colored race, for instance, would depend on the opinions that might prevail at Charleston and Richmond.

The work of abolition could not be finished. You are not a centralized country. The rebel states once readmitted, their sovereignty would raise up barriers which would everywhere arrest your action. The negroes would find themselves imprisoned as it were in a new condition which would not be much better than the old one.

In Congress, party cabals would be formed from the first moment. The eighty votes of the South would be sought after, courted, and set at a high price. You would witness the reappearance of the old quarrel, somewhat transformed, yet the same. The men whom you have conquered on the battle-field would then have an opportunity to conquer you on the floor of Congress. And the saddest and most terrible thing would be that you would have left them the ground on which they had always manœuvred, the ground of the negro question. It depended on you to end it, to suppress it. You would have had a single moment for this and you would not have profited thereby. All this bloodshed would perhaps have been in vain ; you would perchance be forced to begin it anew.

The South is adroit. It does not speak openly as yet. It understands that it is important before everything to gain admission to Congress, and to avoid the establishment of serious guarantees. But can you be deceived in the slightest degree concerning its intentions? Not only does it reject negro suffrage, and oppose every measure which would insure the real freedom of the colored race, but it is determined to seek revenge. Now, a means of revenge offers which, be sure, it will eagerly attempt.

You have borrowed three billions, for the purpose of levying armies against the South, of attacking its strongholds, and of subduing its rebellion. It could not be expected to entertain much love for this national debt. To pay the interest and to redeem the principal, it will be necessary to levy taxes. Do you think that the South, which also had its debt, and which has repudiated it, will be eager to support heavy burdens in order to pay the creditors of the Yankees, to meet the obligations of the Yankees? And do you think, on the other hand, that it would be absolutely impossible to form party cabals among you that would propose, if not openly to repudiate the debt, at least to diminish the revenues without which bankruptcy would come of itself with giant strides?

In support of the observation which I present to you, I might, as you know, quote words of strangely serious import which have been uttered in the South. Despite the prudence which they have decided to show till further orders, these states, accustomed of old to repudiation, have let slip more than one threat which should be to you a solemn warning. If you do not enforce upon them, before their readmission, a positive and direct pledge with respect to the national debt—a pledge which shall be the condition itself of their readmission—you know to what perils you expose the honor of the country. The creditors of America know it also, and your credit will gain nothing thereby.

But I had rather speak to you of your honor than of your credit. You are resolved, I know, faithfully to pay your debts. You are giving proofs of it at this very moment,

and your policy, if it be maintained, promises a redemption the promptitude of which will be a cause for astonishment. Nevertheless the peril is close at hand, and the unconditional admission of the South would speedily endanger your whole policy, beginning with the measures designed to fulfil your most sacred obligations.

IV.

It is so easy to proceed differently ! The point at stake, Mr. President, is neither to withdraw the generous advances which you have made to the South, nor to strengthen the system of military occupation, nor long to postpone the Southern representation in Congress, but only to insure the results acquired at the cost of so many sacrifices ; to end (and consequently to remove) the cause of enmity which, so long as it subsists in any form whatsoever, will not permit you to enjoy peace. The point at stake, in a word, is to re-establish a true union.

When the loyal states shall have done what they alone are competent to do, when they shall have set the seal on the abolition of slavery, when they shall have guaranteed the complete freedom of men of color in the South, when they shall have secured to them (prudently and progressively, I mean) the civil and political rights without which there are no citizens, when they shall have voted the transitional measures for federal protection, without which these rights would remain a dead letter, and when they shall have received besides the pledge of the South with respect to the national debt, then we shall witness the opening of an era of pacification.

The reconciliation, impracticable on the fiery ground on which you have contended with so much violence, will become sincere as soon as the negro question shall have disappeared. New debates, new interests, and new passions, will give birth to new parties. You will discuss, you will contend, you will gain and lose Congressional battles ; but all this will be without peril, for the fundamental quarrel of the North and the South will no longer be at hand to envenom

everything. You will be divided on other bases, in accordance with other principles, in other proportions, and with a view to other ends—it will be henceforth only the normal conflict which characterizes the life of free countries.

And, to put an end to the negro question, you do not need to amend your Constitution. This would be, I grant, a difficult undertaking. But why add a new amendment to that which abolishes slavery. Let the political equality of the races be established in fact, and it will be established by law. Your Constitution recognizes no middle-ground between slavery and freedom. It may have tolerated slavery; it certainly has not sanctioned in advance the proscription of four millions of men who would be neither slaves nor citizens, although born on your soil. It has made no provision for Helots.

NEGRO SUFFRAGE.

V.

Everything brings us back, as you see, to the great problem which contains within itself your whole future, to that great problem which it is necessary to resolve with wisdom, with prudence, with moderation, with good sense, but also with firmness—negro suffrage.

This problem is not only great in itself, it is great through its close connection with the debates on slavery. This regulated, your conflict is ended, you have completed your gigantic work, and the nineteenth century has witnessed an incomparable progress.

To finish in this manner what you have commenced, you have at your disposal the power which has so well served you hitherto, the power of principle. What is it that has made your strength? Your principles. This was well known by the enemies who strove to prove that slavery was not the point in question.

The South had unfurled the flag of slavery; and this is why no European state, however powerful, was able to recog-

nize the South. This is why it was impossible (impossible, I repeat the word) not to show respect to your blockade ; not to endure patiently for four years the scarcity of cotton ; not to accept the duration of the struggle ; and not to stifle the faint attempts at intervention.

Oh, preserve your principles, do not cast away your buckler ! Be not too scheming, I entreat you ; content yourselves with being just, simply just, frankly just. Men are never mistaken in being just ; they are always mistaken in not being so.

It is something for a politician to have conscience on his side, and to count on the blessing of God. Now, I ask, is there a clearer question of conscience than that to which you are now called upon to give your attention ? We, who live at a distance from America, and who, strangers to the discussion of details, see only the great phases of your debates—we cannot even conceive the possibility of hesitation in such a matter. Your negroes, who have ceased to be slaves, are men. This word expresses everything ; they are entitled to the position which your laws make for men.

“It is in vain to say that this is the country of the white man ; it is the country of *man*.” This admirable saying of Mr. Sumner seems to me to sum up the question. Where find in your constitution the distinction between the white man and the black man ? Where find it in the conscience and the Gospel ? Will your democracy invent an aristocracy of the skin ?

The saying of Mr. Sumner reminds me of another not less worthy of admiration. “Our fellow-citizens,” you exclaimed the other day. On that day, Mr. President, you framed in advance the bill which will secure the rights of the colored race. On that day, yielding to the impulse of a generous heart, yielding to the evidence of justice, imprudent through that imprudence which is prudence itself, walking first in the way in which you will not walk alone, in which you are followed at this time by the sympathies of the whole world, you proclaimed once more the noble American policy, the policy of principle.

There is a very different policy, that of compromise. You know whither it has long been leading you ! It is that which the South imposed on you yesterday ; it is that which she will bring back to you to-morrow, if you do not put an end to the negro question without her aid.

VI.

The negro question, in the opinion of some men, has but one rational solution—the expatriation of the former slaves.

This rational solution is the solution of insanity. A race is not exported. The nations who have had the misfortune to attempt, or the greater misfortune to succeed in it, have imprinted an ineffaceable blot on their fame. Spain expelled the Moors, France expelled the Huguenots, Russia is endeavoring to rid herself of the Poles. And what has always happened, whatever may have been their first intentions ? By attempting impossibilities, they have been led to atrocities.

There is a force of events in great social crimes which carries us whither we would not go. We dream of a peaceful and beneficent expatriation, we make for ourselves bucolics, we already see the proscribed race surrounded with the joys of the fields, in their new country, flowing with milk and honey. These courted yet far from innocent visions, however, correspond to no realities. The fact is, that the people whose happiness we thus pretend to insure, desire to be happy in their own way, which is not ours. We wish to give them a new country, they are attached to the old one. It becomes necessary, therefore, to root them out, harshly and violently. And the work is never finished ; it must be constantly begun anew ; we are exasperated at pursuing an end which we never attain, and the moment soon comes when we harden ourselves into cruelty almost without remorse.

That cases of voluntary expatriation may occur, that the peculiar situation of Hayti, Cuba, and Mexico, may open prospects to the negroes by which a number may wish to

profit, and that a girdle of black states may thus be formed, by degrees, around the Caribbean sea, is probable, and perhaps desirable. But to prescribe exile, to tear an entire race from the soil of the Union—this is radically impossible. The iniquities which would be entailed by such a measure, would be greater than could be endured by the conscience of the nineteenth century.

And do not delude yourselves ! Your negroes are no longer Africans, they are Americans, as much attached as the whites to the soil of the common country. They love their state, their district, and even the field which they have cultivated under the lash. The officers who have lived with the innumerable negroes who have taken refuge under the banners of your armies, have not forgotten the care with which the greater part of them have saved their wages in order to buy a little field in their neighborhood, amid their friends, near the cemetery where their fathers and children repose.

This sentiment, which is very profound, and extremely general among them, is one of the best guarantees of the future prosperity of the South. The Southern planting, which can never dispense with the assistance of the negro, would ill adapt itself to the so much talked of plans for expatriation. These plans, therefore, we may be sure, are to the South only weapons of war ; they are used to day to oppose the right of suffrage ; they will be used in the future to oppose all guarantees, and to keep up a state of semi-servitude: it will be demonstrated to the North that it is not worth while to put an end to the most odious abuses, since the colored race is destined some day to be removed. The South will do this ; but as to believing in the real expatriation of the blacks, or as to wishing it, it is much too clearsighted for anything of the kind.

It is necessary to shut out, and to shut out quickly, this prospect of expatriation ; for if an end be not put to this scheme, nothing will be done in behalf of the former slaves. What do I say ? it will be thought justifiable to do everything against them. Hypothetical expatriation has all the disadvantages of prescribed expatriation. It lets loose the

evil passions ; it exempts one from the necessity of treating as men these individuals encamped on the soil which they are unworthy long to inhabit, and necessarily condemned to quit by their race.

It is convenient to cite Liberia, and to preach future colonization in such a manner as to quiet one's conscience, and to throw off all constraint; we wait for the opportunity to be beneficent, and are exempted meanwhile from the necessity of being just. This path once entered upon, there is an end to all progress.

And how can you expect the negroes to progress ? They would gladly lend the ear to the virile counsels, Mr. President, which you addressed to them of late ; they would gladly walk in that path of labor and good conduct through which "blacks become whites," but what would be the use ? The future offered to them would be exile ! Their race would be proscribed in advance ! They would be loaded with contempt and loathing ! What is granted to all men without exception, to the lowest emigrants from Europe, would be wholly refused to them ! Whither would they flee ? Would not men seek everywhere to rid themselves of their race ?

And how hope for the progress of the whites if expatriation is in store as one of the chances of the future ? The whites would accept what was inevitable ; in the presence of a race definitively admitted to the enjoyment of all the civic rights, they would adopt a new mode of action. Facts accomplished have a prodigious power. But so long as the fact is not accomplished, so long as the negro is encamped, not settled on the territory of the Union, so long as he is made a provisional and contingent citizen, something that is no longer a slave and that is not a citizen, so long as the prospect of expulsion is kept open, the prejudice of skin will have full scope. By humiliating the negro, by violating his rights, by trampling his person under foot, by forbidding all contact between his epidermis and the noble epidermis of the whites, will you not be thwarting the designs of Providence, and aiding in an exile that is not desired by God ?

Our miserable Phariseism likes to persuade us that, in obeying our worst passions, we are serving the designs of Providence.

I know well that questions of race are always delicate ones, and I am not astonished, Mr. President, that you should have deemed it incumbent on you to call to mind the difficulties thereof in your speech addressed to a colored regiment of the District of Columbia. These words, I fear, will be abused. What was, doubtless, in your mind only the prudence of the executive power wishing to let alone the whole question, and to reserve the competence of Congress, will become in the hands of your adversaries a veritable plan, a programme which they will take care to translate in this wise : no decision at present with respect to the negroes ; postponement of the right of suffrage ; probable recourse to expatriation.

The mixture of the races is feared ! It is feared lest, in some of the Southern states, where the negroes are in the majority, they may succeed in obtaining the election to certain offices, certain judicial posts ! Who knows even, it is exclaimed, with a dismay blended with horror, whether we shall not run the risk of seeing negroes seated in Congress !

Would to God that this might be ! It would be your most glorious victory, and the whole world would applaud with transport. But there is no reason for conceiving such hopes or such fears. You can certainly intrust the right of suffrage to a few negroes without their ceasing on this account to play a humble part among you.

It is asked whether they would not amalgamate with the rest of the nation. What is meant by this ? The intercourse between the races will always be confined within the most restricted limits ; you have for a guarantee of this the sentiments that prevail in the United States. By obtaining the right of suffrage on certain conditions, the negroes will not be introduced into the bosom of your families. I say more ; this mixture of the races is to be dreaded only in case they are kept in a degraded and almost servile position. Then only will the number of mulattoes go on increasing.

Human dignity is a powerful barrier, and I am astonished that those who desire barriers at any price should strive to suppress this one.

I am above all astonished at the gravity employed in computing the influence which four millions of free negroes would exercise on the purity of the American race. These apprehensions might be in some degree comprehended in a very small country with a fixed population ; but in the United States ! Are not statistics at hand to reassure you ! The four millions of free negroes will be only too soon lost, swallowed up, submerged, in the increasing waves of immigration.

They will be submerged, they will lose those chances of political supremacy which are to-day gratuitously attributed to them ; the societies of immigration will preserve good order therein, and the movement for the invasion of the South by the North, now that the bulwark of slavery is overthrown, will soon everywhere surround the four millions of negroes.

Behold the solution of the problem of the races ; the solution as it is given by your precedents and your natural aptitudes : introduce liberty everywhere, the common law everywhere, and fear nothing ; your almost indefinite power of numerical aggrandizement will charge itself with the preservation of the white race.

And at the same time, the black race will have been protected. Slavery protected it in its way. You owe to the freed slaves a new protection, the only one possible henceforth ; the protection of the common law. To-day a question is propounded, which to them, mark well, is a question of life and death. Thrust back, by brutal injustice, into a species of political and social limbo, between slavery and freedom, they must inevitably perish. There is no air respirable between slavery and freedom. If those around me are neither my fellow-citizens nor my masters, they are my enemies ; I embarrass them ; I disquiet them ; I am an anomaly in their national organization which disturbs the present and threatens the future ; being restrained neither by the interest which often arrests the master, nor the respect which one man bears to another, they permit themselves everything under such a

régime. The extermination of a race may go on rapidly ; at all events, its degradation will not be long in coming.

How many times have I heard it said since the victory of the North, "The Americans will kill the freedmen. You have desired the end of slavery ; you will witness the end of the negroes. In the pitiless Anglo-Saxon mill the unfortunate colored race will disappear, ground to powder, as the Indian race has disappeared."

I have replied—all your friends have replied—answering for you. We have predicted (and you will not contradict our prophecy) that the crime of the North will not be spared any more than the crime of the South ; that the problem of the freedmen will be resolved in that impulse of intelligent generosity which has resolved the problem of the slaves ; that after having fought the South with those brave negroes whose blood has flowed under your flag, you will not have the heart either to thrust them outside the common law, or to drive them from your omnibuses and street cars.

You would not have your friends blush for you before your enemies. You will show to all that, after having conquered the rebellion, you know how to conquer yourselves. You will pursue to the end the reparative reaction which has already been manifested to your honor in the greater part of the Northern states. You will treat your companions-in-arms as men and equals. You will permit no one to point out your coldness and harshness, to maintain that the hatred of slavery among you is inseparable from the hatred of the slave ; that your manifestoes in behalf of human liberty are so many acts of Phariseism ; and that your charity is bounded by your interest or your pride.

These accusations rouse our indignation. We forcibly repel them. But your acts will be more eloquent than our words. Your acts must be the refutation *par excellence* of your enemies. They have said, "The North will be pitiless and unjust towards the colored race." You will answer them by opening to the colored race the inviolable asylum of the common law. They have said, "The infamous acts formerly endured by the free negroes, and which formed a

separate and odious chapter of every traveller's account of the United States, are about to be extended to four millions of men." You will answer them by putting an end to these indignities in the North, and preventing them in the South. They have said, "Freedom will kill the negroes ; because it will be a lying, inconsistent, and murderous freedom." You will answer them by conferring on the negroes a sincere and guaranteed liberty.

To do this, to save a race, and to defend the honor of the country, you have a single moment. This moment past, the force of a situation irretrievably imperilled will be more powerful than you ; for want of not having been reconciled in the bosom of the law, the races will be impelled to antagonism. A conflict will then begin which will yield neither in horrors nor in disastrous consequences to that from which you have scarcely emerged, and which might have been your last.

VII.

Is it not true, Mr. President, that I am right in counting on the generosity of your fellow-countrymen ? They will not desire to repeat in the South (and on a frightful scale) what has unhappily been done in the North.

Alas ! the example of the North shows what are the conflicts of races. But outside the common law, where pause ? Those who are contemned become worthy of contempt ; those who are degraded become debased. In this manner oppression justifies itself, and the more iniquitous it is, the more excusable it seems, until it arrives at the point of considering it very natural not to treat as men those whom it has degraded beneath humanity.

It is proposed to you to aggravate your conflict of races, instead of nobly putting an end to it ! I shudder on seeing how far your valiant army has sometimes carried violence and disdain towards the colored regiments since the recurrence of peace. Great God ! what would happen if war between the whites and the blacks should be proclaimed, and immensely aggravated by your own hands !

It would be war, do not deceive yourselves. After having contended with the masters, you would set to work to contend with the slaves. And this would come of itself, without deliberate purpose. Deprived of all rights, and incapable of resistance, the negroes would suffer brutality and insult. You cannot expect that they would accept as freemen what they accepted as slaves. Complaints, irritation, and bloodshed would ensue, and finally negro insurrection. Already, Mr. President, insurrectionary movements, the inevitable consequence of a badly-regulated state of affairs, threaten, it is said, to break out here and there. By-and-by this will no longer be a threat, but a reality.

What will you do, then? Of these despised blacks, and these whites, your brethren—which will you support? Happen what will, atrocious repression will be necessary. Between open repression and the obscure iniquities of daily recurrence, between refusals of justice and refusals of labor, between acts of violence and the continual dripping of oppression, the black race will perish. Slowly or swiftly, destruction will pursue its work.

The destruction is terrible which is accomplished in this wise by virtue of the force of events, and, so to speak, with a good conscience. Must we not repress insurrections? Shall we leave the white population of the South to be massacred? Are we not, moreover, serving the negroes in impelling them, by force of loathing, towards that expatriation which is their true destiny? Then, is not the inferior race inevitably destined to yield to the superior race? In inducing them to yield, in exterminating them, if need be, are we not the servants of Providence?

We do not shrink from this rôle of agents of Providence. In obeying our worst passions we like to assure ourselves that we are accomplishing God's designs. I do not know of a single one of the great crimes of history, beginning with the religious persecutions from which your Pilgrims proceeded, that was not persuaded that it was doing the work of God.

You, Mr. President, whose intellect discerns the great

phases of questions, you will not be deceived, I am sure, concerning the great importance of the deliberation which is about to take place in Congress. Instead of slaves, will you have pariahs? Will you have Helots—four millions of Helots? This is the point at stake.

Helots! the despotic constitution of Lycurgus may have desired them: the Constitution of the United States does not; and if you create them to-morrow, you will have violated your Constitution.

Helots! No country could create with impunity a numerous class of men that are not altogether men. On the day that, instead of a few thousand Helots, you shall have four millions of them—on that day, an incommensurable social and political change will take place among you. Helots, whatever may be done, whatever may be said, whatever may be written, are always treated as Helots. And then, woe to you!

Then you will oppress, you will deprave, and, what is worse, you will hate them. Men always hate those towards whom they feel themselves guilty, those who obstruct the progress of the national prosperity, those whose sufferings disturb the peace, whose cries of anguish weary the ear, whose distress compromises the honor of the country. From hatred to murder there is but a step; “he who hates,” says the apostle, “the same is a murderer.”

“You will kill the negroes in freeing them!” This prophecy of your enemies recurs unceasingly to my memory.

Do I exaggerate the gravity of the question? Let us consider.

No one is less disposed than myself to attribute to the right of voting an importance beyond measure. There is nothing humiliating in not voting, if one is excluded by virtue of a condition imposed on all citizens. Conditions of naturalization, conditions of age, conditions of property, conditions founded on certain incompatibilities of functions—I can understand all these. But the condition of color is something far different. It strikes an entire race, it cuts it off forever; it decrees not an exclusion, but an indignity.

In short, let us sum up the whole matter. The point at stake here is not a political inequality, but a social anathema. It is the quality of manhood that is denied ; it is the human dignity that is attacked. In a country in which all men vote, he who is excluded by his race from voting, is no longer a man ; or, if you prefer, he is an inferior man, branded with an indelible mark of incapacity, a pariah.

The point in question here is much more than personal indignity, it is indignity to a race, that is to say, the most intolerable of insults. The placing of a race outside the law throughout the whole South—such is the proposition which it is dared to present to you.

And let it not be said that the point in question is to advance by degrees, to accord their rights to the negroes gradually, to steer cautiously in a state of affairs in which it is impossible to be abrupt without peril. In such a matter, there is no middle position ; one is or is not a citizen. Moreover, place whatever conditions you please upon the exercise of the right of suffrage, it matters little, provided that these conditions are general, and that the whites are subject to them, the same as the blacks.

Otherwise, slavery remains standing in part. Slavery is the negation of the common law.

We almost always attempt to stop halfway in our good deeds. In this manner, it seems admirable to many men to emancipate the negroes civilly without emancipating them politically.

It remains to be known whether civil liberty is not in this wise suppressed and endangered. You will in vain have secured to the freedmen of the South the advantages of federal protection ; they will not the less remain bound in the daily conduct of life to the all-powerful wishes of those whites who, by virtue of the privileges of color, will alone enjoy the title and dignity of citizens.

The whites alone will vote the taxes, and lay such burdens as they see fit upon the shoulders of the negroes. The whites alone will make the regulations of labor. The whites alone will decide whether the idleness of the negroes is not a

crime, and whether their removal from place to place is not disorderly conduct deserving repression. The whites alone will form the courts. The whites alone will have all the authority, all the influence, all the means of causing their wishes and caprices to prevail, and of insuring impunity to their most odious acts of injustice, as in the palmy days of slavery.

Without the right of suffrage granted to the negroes, and the equality of race, of which it is the indispensable symbol, I challenge you to organize a system of guarantees in the South, which will in the smallest degree protect the liberty of the blacks, their persons, their families, their testimony before the courts, their wages, or their property. Once more, civil equality cannot be separated from political equality as regards an entire race. It is necessary to choose between equality and inequality. And we know what inequality signifies.

Let us not be satisfied with words. The black code still remains standing in the Southern states ; and even though it should be abolished tomorrow, it would none the less be found standing the day after, should the black race be banished to the ranks of an inferior race. The earnest efforts of the government, the surveillance of the friends of the blacks, the repression by the courts of certain exceptional abuses, nothing could insure to a race declared inferior, that respect and dignity without which it is impossible to maintain civil any more than political rights.

The South, it is said, is kinder to free negroes than the North ! Yes, this was true, so long as it had its slaves. But now that it has them no longer, it is animated with sentiments towards the free negroes which exceed in violence those which too often have had sway in the North. There have been bloody tragedies, since peace, in the heart of the cotton states. Free negroes have been whipped and mutilated ; and he would have been simple indeed that would have looked for any judicial redress.

If the right of suffrage is refused, nothing opposes the continuance of this régime. The negroes, become public enemies by their emancipation, and left in the state of disarmed

enemies, by the complete refusal of the rights of citizens, will have but one recourse—insurrection. Insurrection will increase the hatred ; hatred will multiply the insurrections ; and the end will be the destruction of a race—a destruction escorted to the end by the chimera of expatriation in a body.

Have you measured this scandal and this crime—the race that you have freed, delivered over, delivered over unconditionally to the mercy of their former masters ?

The right of suffrage changes everything. This is, I repeat, as important in what concerns the race, as it is insignificant in what concerns individuals. By this fact alone, the abolition of slavery is finished, the negro becomes a citizen, human dignity is protected, and the state of affairs is radically transformed.

They are men. They set themselves up as the equals of other men. They labor, according to your counsels, Mr. President, to render themselves worthy of their new position. They aspire to instruction and property. Under the eye of that God of the gospel, whom they have learned to love, they set out to attain that moral independence which has its seat in the heart.

I do not pretend, although this fact must also be taken into account in a free country, accustomed to political manoeuvres—I do not pretend that the vote of a part of the negroes would from the first moment confer upon them political importance, and that they would aspire to play a part in your internal debates. Politicians would not begin to court them on the spot, and to endeavor to influence their still scanty suffrages, yet the framers of platforms would not perhaps be always indifferent to the thought of securing these loose votes.

However this may be, men clothed with a civic capacity will be treated with a little more consideration. They will learn to protect and to respect themselves. Become citizens, they will set about using their rights. Supported by political equality, civil equality will tend to become transformed into a reality.

This process will be difficult and slow. In spite of the

right of suffrage, the negro will remain exposed to many affronts ; the exercise of the best recognised rights will meet obstacles difficult to surmount ; and for some time, a special protection will be necessary ; but this protection, powerless without the equality of the races, will acquire sudden efficacy by their recognized equality.

For the protection of a race, it is necessary to find some point on which to rest. If the common law is absolutely in default, it will be in vain to multiply material aid, careful surveillance, and scholarly resources ; (and God knows that it will not be easy to introduce all these afterwards into the Southern states readmitted without conditions ;) it will be in vain to interpose between the former masters and the former slaves ; this distant and tardy action will never supply the lack of human dignity or take the place of self-respect.

Take away suffrage, and temporary guardianship is but one more illusion added to so many others—an illusion that re-assures the conscience without modifying facts and wards off remorse without preventing injustice.

If you wish to protect the blacks, and it will be necessary, I repeat, for some time to do so, do not begin by abandoning and degrading them, but, on the contrary, by opening to them, however prudently, the doors of the common law. Make them citizens, if you would not have them Helots.

To degrade a race is a social crime, for which there is no comparison. He who degrades a man, depraves him. There is, at the bottom of the question of suffrage, a whole problem of elevation or decline, of morality or corruption. Those who know the worth of the soul, will understand what I say.

Let us be sincere and earnest ; in pursuing the abolition of slavery, you have not desired the suppression of the word, but the suppression of the fact. Now do you think that the South regards the fact as lost beyond redemption ? Is it not evident that it is about to seek to retain it as far as possible ? If, by a bold stroke (and not less prudent than bold), you do not hasten to put an end without it to a fatal state of affairs, are you not conscious that it will remain faithful to its convictions and traditions, that is, to the traditions of slavery ?

And what is slavery in the traditions of the South? The inequality of the races, degradation based on color. You will have suffered the whole principle to remain standing; do not hope that it will henceforth be possible for you to suppress the consequences.

Certain enormities will have disappeared, and I grant that this is a great deal; determined to exaggerate nothing, I shall not go so far as to pretend that serfhood, that apprenticeship, will be the pure and simple equivalent of slavery proper. I only maintain that this slavery will subsist in part despite your proclamations and your bills. To those men who, because of their color, will all remain excluded without exception from the civic rights which, among you, belong to all men without exception, you will have refused what I may be permitted to call *human rights*. You will have failed to keep the promise which you made in abolishing slavery.

Why, then, Mr. President, will not your noble country carry out to the end what it has so bravely undertaken? Let it will this to-morrow, at the opening of Congress, and the negro question will be ended, ended and consequently removed, to the great glory and the great advantage of the United States. Congress will avert at once, both the continuance of the strife and the debasement, and perhaps extermination of a race. It will lay with you the corner-stone upon which must be based the whole edifice of reconstruction.

Thenceforth, it will belong to the negroes themselves to conquer, by their labor, by their instruction, by their efforts, in a word, the entire place which may belong to them. Thenceforth, they will be encouraged, instead of discouraged. Thenceforth they will be men.

Perhaps there will be some, and even many, who will spontaneously determine some day to seek another country. To their voluntary exodus, I have not the least objection. Let them go to Mexico, to Cuba, to Porto Rico, to St. Domingo; let them take possession by degrees of the scorching regions which surround the Caribbean sea, let those countries where they have been oppressed become, by a Divine compensation, the seat of a sort of negro empire—this is possible, although

less probable than some minds imagine. In any case, and this is the essential point, if the social and political degradation of the race is now averted in the South, its partial emigration will have a purely voluntary character ; and the fatal, the murderous idea of a forced expatriation in a body will disappear from the first moment.

VIII.

I trust, Mr. President, that no one will mistake my true meaning.

At the first word that is uttered to-day concerning negro suffrage, trenchant objections rise up on all sides. "What, you are anxious to let the negroes vote ! The point at stake is to insure their subsistence, and you trouble yourself about their rights ! You wish to resolve all questions at once ! Of these slaves of yesterday, your feverish impatience aspires to-day to make citizens ! You do not comprehend that such haste sets at naught the very laws of social progress ; that it outstrips the demands of public opinion ; that it even astonishes the good sense of the negroes, who do not ask so much."

Be this as it may, we shall not ask less. Whether the majority of the negroes in the South do or do not vote, matters not in the least to us. It is not an idle question of voting that claims our attention, but a vital question of dignity. Let conditions be placed on the suffrage of the negroes, let but few of them be admitted at first to the exercise of political rights ; we willingly consent—what we do not accept, what we oppose as an infamous act, as a social crime, is the exclusion of *the race*. The number of negro voters in the South is of little importance, provided that there are any at all. Should there be none, the meaning of such a fact could not be doubtful ; it would signify, not that you had wished to set aside incompetent voters, but that you had sought to maintain the radical incompetency of every man with a colored skin.

This is an insult which comprises and entails every kind of insult ; it is an injustice which engenders every kind of in-

justice. It is the continuance of slavery. It is, perhaps, the death sentence of four millions of men, delivered over as a prey to contempt, degradation, oppression, and wretchedness, until the time comes to tear them by violence from the soil which has too long been polluted by their presence.

The negroes, it is said, think of living and not of voting. This is knowing little of the human heart. Man does not live by bread alone, and those negroes who, thanks to the Gospel, are not such savages as we picture to ourselves in Europe, those negroes who equal and often surpass us in many things—those negroes are *famishing* above all for elevation.

They are not anxious before everything to vote ; they are anxious to see the advent of the day when their race will not be excluded from voting throughout the whole South *as a race*. This is what they desire more ardently than food for the body.

And this food for the body, as we have seen, depends more than is imagined on the satisfaction accorded to this generous ambition. Not only respect for their person and their family, but the security of their wages, and their accession to property and to the full enjoyment of civil life—all these are connected with the political emancipation of the race. If the race is politically proscribed, the individuals will be socially degraded and civilly overburdened. I ask those who doubt it to consult the recent deliberations of the Southern states which are attempting to reorganize. They unanimously refuse to confer the right of suffrage upon any fraction whatsoever of the negroes, *because this right would imply the equality of the races*.

Is this clear ? And here is a fact which is not less clear ; they are still deliberating to know whether they shall grant to these colored men (after the abolition of slavery) ! the right of appearing as witnesses in court. Yes, this is the position of the South, and I am by no means astonished at it ; what astonishes me is, that sensible men should dream of opening to them the doors of Congress before the regulation of the negro question, and should wish to charge them

with deciding upon what will be, in point of fact, the freedom of the former slaves, so loudly proclaimed.

Once more, whether there will be few or many negro voters in the South is not the point in discussion. Shall there be any negro voters there, yes, or no. There are such in the North, although unhappily not in all the states; shall the fundamental distinction be maintained between the North and South, by virtue of which the negro race, admitted to political rights on one side of the line which separates the two regions, will be excluded on the other side? As well decide that the conflict of slavery shall go on, and that a new civil war shall be in store for you.

I am at a loss to conceive how the true friends of the Union can be divided on such a subject. The point at stake is, definitely, to defend or to endanger it. The men who have agreed upon civil war should agree also upon the destruction of the cause of the war.

Why sacrifice a precious unanimity? It is easy to make reciprocal concessions. Those who, by virtue of an ultra prudence, would grant the negroes of the South no political rights at present, might well consent to admit them in small numbers. Those also, who, by virtue of a theory perhaps not less ultra, would confer universal suffrage upon them on the spot, might well consent to reduce these pretensions, provided that the race were admitted to the right of suffrage. Universal negro suffrage cannot be a dogma, since universal white suffrage is not such; to impose conditions on the right of suffrage would offend none of your constitutional maxims.

I X .

If the rumors which reach us in Europe are well founded, you yourself, Mr. President, have suggested the establishment of a condition which, while setting aside the majority of the negroes for the present, would have the advantage of not setting aside the whole race, and would permit the shaping of a period of transition. You have advised, it is said (I know not whether this is true, but I hope it may be so), the adop-

tion of a law in the South by which no men shall be permitted to vote but those who can read and write.

This law, which should be general, since otherwise it would do violence to the equality of the races, would refuse the right of suffrage to more than one white man unworthy of exercising it. As to the negroes, it would proportion their rights to their enlightenment, and, to a certain point, their personal independence. The negro aristocracy, pardon the term, would alone attain it at this moment. The race would find itself naturally represented by its intellectual leaders; then, by virtue of their efforts, the body of negro voters would go on increasing.

And, I warn you, it would increase rapidly. There are, among those negroes whom it is sought to represent to you as indifferent to whatever is not food for the body—there are among them noble aspirations, ambitious aims, if you will. Many have learned in the school of the Gospel how magnificent are the promises of God and the destinies of man. They know that they have a soul, and also an intellect. On the day that, free, they shall know besides that their complete political emancipation is the price of the acquisition of certain knowledge, you will see them flocking to the schools, which, as a necessary consequence, should be open to them everywhere in the South.

Thus all things hold together in the ways of justice, as all things hold together in the ways of iniquity. In elevating the negro race, you not only prevent its brutalization, its oppression, its extermination, perchance; you pave the way for its intellectual and moral elevation.

What I have just said, Mr. President, should serve as a sufficient answer to those who say in an ironical tone that the right of suffrage has no magic virtue in itself, and that it cannot from one day to the next transform the slave into the complete citizen, and render him capable of governing the country.

We do not pretend to work miracles; we admit of a transition period. We have no superstitions concerning suffrage, and provided that you emancipate the race in the South, we

accept, without a frown, your general conditions—elementary knowledge or property, it matters little.

Nevertheless, we have the right, perhaps, to maintain that the negroes, as a body, are less incompetent than certain classes of whites who play an important part in the elections of your large cities. Are those immigrants that Europe sends you, and that are so speedily transformed among you into citizens, always more enlightened, more moral, and more independent, than the blacks of the South, attached to their church, to their family, and even to the ground which they have cultivated under a master? I content myself with putting the question.

There is another question which I will not put—for whom would the Southern negroes vote? I almost say that it troubles me little, for the greatness of the principle here effaces the more or less striking imperfections of its application; then, because I have at the bottom the absolute certainty that, the first moment of hesitation and fear passed, the negroes would constitute in the South a loyal element of indisputable value.

Men amuse themselves by terrifying us. “These negroes will be instruments! They will all vote for their old masters.” On the first day perhaps. In spite of federal surveillance, intimidation might do its work. “Vote as I do, or I will take away your work. Vote as I do, or I will render your subsistence impossible.” But the independence of the negroes is more real than is affirmed; in proportion as they become accustomed to act as citizens, in proportion as the number of their votes increases, this independence will not fail to be strengthened. I shall never forget, for my part, that the South, so sure of its slaves, never dared to put a musket in their hands. Nothing was easier, it was said at that time, than to launch them against the Yankees. But, even at the moment when there were no more able-bodied men, when old men and children were levied, we did not see a single negro regiment appear in the ranks at Richmond.

At the same epoch, slaves by hundreds of thousands were braving frightful perils in order to attain liberty. And even

those who did not flee to the federal armies, all received, as if by an underground communication, intelligence of what was passing ; all had but one heart ; all passionately loved their father Lincoln ; all obeyed a watchword, tranquilly, and avoiding insurrectionary movements, but letting their masters understand that they would incur great danger in arming them and sending them against the Northern armies.

I believe, therefore, that the vote of the negroes, uncertain at first, would later settle on the side of the Union. We repeat, moreover, that the point at stake is not to shape votes of such or such a political stripe, but to repair an immense injustice. This, thank God, is not a party question.

X.

If tenacious prejudices which the habits of slavery had created in the Southern states were alone in question, I might appeal to the Southerners themselves. Yes, they themselves might desire that the negro question should be regulated on the spot by Congress, and regulated in the sense of liberty. They themselves might regard as a deliverance the salutary decision which should impose on their readmission the condition of accepting such a charge.

They have indeed to choose between negro suffrage and a system of indefinite guardianship. No one—I suppose so at least—would consent unreservedly to abandon the former slaves to the caprice of their former masters. There will be, therefore, at least in the beginning, a guardianship in the South, exercised by the federal authority. There will be freedmen's bureaux ; there will be redress in the federal courts ; there will be surveillance and protection. But will this state of things be provisional or permanent ? This is the form under which the question of negro suffrage must be presented to the eyes of the South.

You will not contradict me, Mr. President, if I affirm that the guardianship of the negroes, which is a necessity, is a painful necessity. This guardianship will be difficult of execution ; it will arouse the passions ; it will constitute a subject of

unceasing anxiety with respect to state rights ; it will exact the maintenance of exceptional precautions and of a more extended military occupation, the cessation of which is unanimously desired by the friends of liberty.

And this guardianship, fatal to the general liberty as to the independence of the states, would be none the less fatal, if prolonged, to the true interests of the colored race.

There is a kind of guardianship which never does harm, and which will always subsist—that of charity, that which is due to all the weak. I do not speak of such guardianship which, moreover, will be exercised, I doubt not, by the South itself, by the generous hearts which it contains in great numbers.

But official guardianship would defeat the end proposed, should it be of long duration and become an institution. Do not keep eternally in tutelage those whom you are striving to make freemen. Liberty teaches only in liberty ; in its struggles, its miseries, and its sufferings. Every transformation has similar sufferings, and it would be puerile to undertake to abolish them. Soften the gigantic transformation which is being effected among you, this is your duty ; give to the first steps of the freed negroes a protection, without which, the South being what it is, they would certainly succumb ; do not permit the liberty proclaimed by you to be transformed into a snare, a bitter and bloody mockery. Do this, and nothing more. The federal guardianship that should go beyond this would be at once an attack on the rights of the states and perilous to the elevation of the negroes. What they need is not a perpetual minority, but a real emancipation ; the virile education of the common law ; the apprenticeship of life as it is.

I do not take the liberty, Mr. President, of demonstrating to you the marvellous power of liberty. You know better than we that liberty resolves insoluble difficulties ; that the great secret almost always is how to diminish the action of the state—not to protect too much, not to regulate too much.

You are right, and I am so well convinced of it, for my part, that I have always considered as a fault the attempts at regulation which have been made since the defeat of the

South. The good intentions of General Banks, indeed, cannot be called in doubt, any more than those of Mr. Lincoln ; yet how can we help regretting what has been done in Louisiana ! To those who ask me what is the best regulation to be made, I reply, None. The best organization for free negro labor is, no organization at all. Leave liberty alone, believe in liberty !

We tried the experiment of regulation in several of our French colonies, after the abolition of slavery. We had regulations concerning wages ; regulations concerning food ; regulations concerning labor ; regulations concerning removal. Those negroes who moved from place to place, and those who did not work, were treated as vagrants. A semi-slavery was maintained, and this without profit either to the negroes or the whites.

Your country, Mr. President, cannot avoid insuring for some time to the emancipated negroes certain exceptional guarantees of federal surveillance and redress in the federal courts. You will have to procure for them the first need of the weak—impartial justice ; but, by the political emancipation of the colored race, you will prepare for them a protection which will not be long in rendering yours useless—the protection of the common law. They will speedily learn how to use their rights, to defend them, and to be sufficient unto themselves. Suffrage—and this will not be its least merit—will suppress guardianship.

XI.

And above all, do not say that *by-and-by* you will grant the right of suffrage. This would be deceiving yourselves. There is but one moment in which some things can be done. The metal for the statu must be poured into the mould at the instant of fusion ; this instant past, it cools and becomes rigid. Your metal also is in a state of fusion ; but it will quickly harden, and then you will have before you what is definitive, what is irreparable.

Why do you wait ? For the South to return to Congress, and to render any liberal decision impossible ? Or for

the South to change its sentiments ; for the Southern heart to become softened with respect to the negro ; for the Southern pride to accept the equality of the races ?

Wait ! But habits are being formed, disputes are beginning, situations are becoming strengthened. The change, which would have appeared simple on the morrow of the war, will later assume the aspect of an abuse of power against which the combined forces of the South and its friends will enter into conflict. The negro question will reappear ; it will reappear entire with respect to the right of suffrage, if this right is not proclaimed without delay. Do you absolutely insist on having a second quarrel on account of slavery ?

Do not delude yourselves, I entreat you. Do not willingly mistake the consequences of your conduct. Counsels of postponement are always winning and attractive ; we always like to throw upon the future the responsibility of the difficulties which disturb the present. Instead of doing, we say, "I will do," and the conscience is tranquil. Is it not wise, moreover, not to attempt to do everything at once ?

The point at stake is not to do everything at once, but to do to-day what it will be impossible to do to-morrow. To-morrow, each one will have taken his stand. To-morrow, each one will have entered upon his path ; the former slaves, upon a path of discouragement which suppresses brave effort and renders progress impossible ; the former masters, upon the path of continued dominion which excludes the equality of the races, maintains servitude, and holds in reserve the final resource of expatriation.

You would wait for prejudices to vanish—and they are about to be strengthened. You would wait for the races to become reconciled—and they are growing farther apart than ever. You would wait for the negroes to render themselves more worthy of political rights—and they are about to sink perhaps beneath the level of slavery. You would wait for the Southern planters to become accustomed to the idea of equality—and they are about to be confirmed in the doctrine of arbitrary power. You would wait for the differences to be

appeased—and they are about to be rekindled more warmly than ever.

For, in fine, you do not suppose that the North will renounce defending the oppressed negroes, and that, after having freed them, it will consent to see them perish. Neither do you suppose that the South, restored to the possession of its political life, will show itself more patient and enduring towards abolition interference than in the past. You do not suppose, lastly, that the negroes, before whose eyes you will have flashed a promise of real emancipation, speedily contradicted by facts, will submit without resistance and anger to a yoke sanctioned henceforth by nothing, neither by Divine nor human laws.

You are marching, therefore, to meet the tempest, under the pretext of waiting for fine weather. The struggle of the races once entered into by your fault, it will be pursued, I fear, without shrinking or pity. All questions will be subordinated anew to this one. Parties will be formed, as of old, in proportion to the sympathies or antipathies which have been the cause of so much bloodshed. This (let us show things as they are)—this is what you run the risk of signifying by the sentence, so wise in appearance, “We will resolve the question of negro suffrage by-and-by.”

It is, on the contrary, by deciding it at once, whatever, moreover, may be the prudential conditions with which you surround negro suffrage, it is by profiting by the only moment at your disposal, that you will show yourselves truly wise and clear-sighted.

Then, Mr. President, the virile counsels which you have lately given to the negroes will assume their full value. If I did not fear to weaken them by appropriating them to myself, I should say in turn, Be laborious, be peaceable; overthrow by your good conduct the prejudices which exist against you. Prove yourselves worthy of liberty; prove it by using it; prove it by not having recourse to violence; prove it by confiding yourselves to that great American people which has not always been equitable to you, but which has just suffered much for your cause, and which has just broken your fetters

with its powerful hands, first in the Southern states, then in Cuba and Brazil.

You will do me this justice that, if I claim the rights of the negroes, I never urge them to insurrection. Perhaps my voice will be heard by some among them. If there is a fundamental thought in my life, it is the struggle against that iniquity which is in the process of disappearing, and the disappearance of which will be the glory of the nineteenth century. Ever since I have been able to hold a pen, ever since I have been able to mount a rostrum, I have fought for the abolition of slavery and the social elevation of the negro race. Ever since I have known how to pray, I have asked of God the favor that He, who had placed in the hearts of many of the negroes the internal liberty founded on faith, would give them also the external liberty founded on human laws. It should not be said that, in a country in which the Gospel exercises a profound influence, men refuse to treat as fellow-citizens those whom they love and respect as brethren in Christ.

I regret to speak again of myself; but have I not the right to say anything that may tend to overcome prejudices and gain friends to the cause which I defend? I venture therefore, to remark, Mr. President, that he who has the honor to address you to-day is a moderate man, who has given proofs of moderation. Some delight in maintaining, that, to demand negro suffrage, one must be either an adversary of your administration or a radical. Well, I am neither. There are some hasty men who refuse to take one step after another, and who endanger the success of their cause by the folly of their exorbitant demands. I venture to affirm that I am not one of these. Under Mr. Lincoln's presidency, I understood that he was advancing prudently and gradually in the solution of the problem of abolition. Under your presidency, I have applauded, as you know, the gentleness of your conduct toward the South. If I have blamed anything, it has been the exception which you seemed to make by refusing the amnesty to citizens possessing twenty thousand dollars. I have always been opposed to confiscations, opposed to foreign wars, opposed to the policy of the prolonged military occupation and, in some sort, the conquest of the

South. I have always done justice to the sentiments of the Southerners, persuaded that, had I been placed in the same circumstances, I should have acted and thought the same. At the time of the second election of Mr. Lincoln, in fine, I did not believe that, in order energetically to sustain his election, it was necessary not to render justice to the services and character of McClellan.

Well ! it is this moderate man that says to you, If you do not make an immediate decision on the question of negro suffrage, if you do not now end the negro question, you will one day bewail this lost opportunity with tears of blood ; you will bewail, but you will never regain it.

THE DUTY OF FINISHING WHAT HAS BEEN BEGUN.

XII.

Opportunities are great things in politics. You know it better than any one—you Americans, who remember that slavery might easily have been abolished among you in the last century, and who have just seen at the price of what convulsions it has been necessary to compensate in this century for that mistake committed by your glorious ancestors—the loss of an opportunity.

I cannot believe, Mr. President, that this mistake will be repeated by their descendants. To-day it would be inexcusable ; to-day the political mistake would be complicated almost with a moral error.

And, to confine myself to the political mistake, who is ignorant that the first principle of good policy in public affairs is to finish questions. Every finished question procures peace ; every unfinished question brings forth war. The reason of this is simple. When a question is finished, it is necessary to be resigned to necessity, and we resign ourselves before an accomplished fact. When a question is unfinished, the adversaries of the good cause are wounded and not killed ; they are exasperated and not subjected ; they

preserve all their hopes ; their partial defeat has increased their passions without lessening their pretensions.

Is your question finished ? No, indeed. I admit, doubtless, with pleasure that you have done much already ; I shall not go so far as to ask whether slavery is really abolished. But the *negro question* (this is its name) contains something more than the abolition of slavery. It contains besides the equality of the races. It was in the name of the inferiority of the negro race that the insurrection of the South was accomplished. Its manifesto, set forth with frankness in the celebrated speech of Mr. Stephens, showed us the new system of society which it was about to found, reposing firmly upon the natural subordination of the African—on that block of black marble, styled the negro. The enemy, therefore, is still living ; so long as you have not proclaimed the equality of the races, you have not done with the South ; the negro question is not finished.

Do not forget, moreover, the difference between ancient slavery and your own ; the latter relates exclusively to color, that is, to race. It is clear, in consequence, that slavery will remain standing in part, so long as color shall be an absolute cause of inferiority throughout a whole section of the United States.

That there may be henceforth among you neither conquerors nor conquered, no one admits and desires more than myself, but on one condition, namely, that slavery itself shall be conquered. Of the rebellious South you have asked but one thing—you must really obtain it. If the cause which fired upon your flag at Fort Sumter still subsists, whether in a great or small degree, your war has been a useless massacre, your peace is scarcely a truce, and your whole policy is in danger of being a bitter deception.

We will not speak of justice or humanity ; from the standpoint of the national interest, what should earnest men propose to themselves in America ? The suppression of dissensions with the South. Now, dissensions are suppressed only by finishing questions. You certainly, Mr. President, desire that civil war shall not break out afresh ; that the

South shall be unable henceforth to dream of a new rebellion, or, should the opportunity offer, to serve as the point of support of a foreign attack. If you desire this, and you have proved better than any one that you desire it, put an end to the free negro question ; it is inseparable from the slave question, and it is not less important.

XIII.

Your parties in some sort disappeared in the greatness of your struggle, in the energy of your impulse. They will now reappear, and this is quite natural ; there is no reason to be grieved or surprised on this account. Only, it is important that these parties should no longer be formed on the ground on which the question of slavery has been settled. Nothing appeases men so much as the change of base of political strife.

If the old ground remains standing—if the negro question is not definitively settled before the admission of the Southern representatives—a new democratic party, exactly like the old one, composed of the same elements, supported by the same alliances, professing the same principles, and urging the same policy, will provoke, sooner or later, the renewal of the same conflict.

It is impossible not to remark the promptness with which the South rushes into the Union. I rejoice at it, for my part, and I believe that this movement is dictated in good part by motives, the sincerity of which we should do wrong to suspect. Nevertheless, it is quite permissible to suppose that other reasons, less worthy of respect, have determined the conduct adopted by the Southern statesmen. Have they not said to themselves that by hastening they would find the negro question unfinished, that they would succeed in preventing its completion, and that in this manner they would speedily take their revenge on the floor of Congress for their military defeats ?

I am not suspicious, I willingly believe in goodness, and experience has taught me that one is less often mistaken in be-

believing than in not believing therein. I must confess, however, that I do not succeed in explaining the return of the rebel states by their enthusiasm or their remorse. If I listen, moreover, at the doors of their conventions, I hear it said, sometimes, that it is necessary to submit to the federal government "as one submits to a highway robber," sometimes, that it is necessary to accept the existing state of affairs "until the sovereignty of the states is restored;" sometimes even (and this is the point to which I wish above all to call attention), that it is necessary to make use of prudence, so as "to join the copperhead party."

Whether this plan of campaign is or is not fixed in advance, it is so simple, it accords so well with the passions of the South, that its adoption cannot be doubted. If the question of slavery subsists in ever so small a degree, you will witness the formation of a slave party. And this party will bring back with it, or rather will seek to bring back the slave policy.

This policy you know well—first, the violation of rights and the contempt of liberties, then quarrels abroad, lastly convulsions within and civil war. The new democratic party, I fear, will show itself worthy of the old one, sacrificing everything, if not to the resurrection of slavery, at least to the maintenance of the serfhood of the negroes; it will reject with angry violence all efforts designed to protect and elevate the negroes, it will seek to turn your thoughts toward conquest, toward Mexico and Canada; it will begin anew to preach bankruptcy, faithful in this to its precedents; then, when it shall have endangered everything, your liberties, your finances, your foreign relations, your tranquillity, and your honor, it will find a good opportunity to resume with the best chances of success, and supported by more resolute allies, the enterprise which has just failed.

Mr. President, either you will kill your enemy or it will kill you. Either you will efface the negro question by terminating it before the South meddles therewith, or this question will furnish the basis of a new slave party, a new slave policy, a new insurrection for slavery. What is left of slave-

ry—the exclusion of the negro race in the South—will suffice to reconstruct all this.

We are nothing but abolitionists, it is said, and we think of nothing but the negroes. God is my witness that the safety of the whites, their prosperity and their honor, inspire me with the liveliest anxiety. I love that great people which has just broken with so much valor the shameful yoke under which it had been bowed. I love it, and I counsel it to that which is in conformity with its glorious vocation here on earth.

If this vocation consisted only in possessing a vast territory, in gaining great wealth, in giving the world the spectacle of a precocious civilization, a formidable brute force, a liberty coupled with oppression, an unregulated and unscrupulous democracy, you would be right in not listening to me; you might attain this ideal for a few days at least, while crushing a race, while trampling under foot humanity and principle. This prosperity, founded on injustice, doubtless would not long endure, and these high fortunes would be akin to ruin; nevertheless, lasting or not, they might be realized for a moment.

But if your vocation consists in governing by justice, in showing the world the omnipotence of justice, in serving all noble causes by your example, the Gospel, liberty, the independence of the human conscience, the equality of the races, the entire equality in the highest sense of the word, then listen to those who are jealous for your good name, those who have lofty ambition for you. These, believe it, serve the honor, and the good fortune of the whites into the bargain, when they advise them to finish the deliverance of the negroes.

These negroes are very weak, yet they are very strong. They may be crushed, yet they cannot be crushed without rousing the indignation of public opinion throughout the world, without causing the soil of America to tremble, without renewing the civil war. By the side of these four millions of unarmed men stands a champion that will never be utterly overthrown, and that will constantly rise again after a defeat—the Right.

And why not speak my whole thought? God is there. He guarded you, he led you day by day, he taught you by disasters; then, the very instant after you finally broke with the national crime of slavery, he sent you the victory. It is against God that they propose to you to enter into conflict, who ask you to leave your work unfinished, and to abandon four millions of freedmen to the caprices of the South. The cries of these men would rise to heaven, after resounding throughout the earth.

I marvel at those who make a distinction between the interests of the blacks and the interests of the whites! Far from being antagonism, there is harmony between them. Or, rather, the interests of the South agree, in the most striking manner, with the interests of the North.

What is the true interest of the South, if not peace? Now, for it as for all, peace is the price of the termination of the negro question. If, to its misfortune, the South should enter Congress unconditionally; if, to its misfortune, it should succeed in forming a coalition against negro suffrage, what would evidently be the result? The struggle would be continued, the hatred would be rekindled, and the way would be paved for social convulsions in each of the cotton states.

The sensible men of the South should be the first to desire, as a relief and a benefaction, that necessary interval which should separate sanguinary combat from deliberation in common. Where would be cause for complaint, if the South, treated with a generosity and mildness met by no rebellion on earth since the world existed, should have besides the admirable good fortune of receiving from the hands of Congress a final solution of the negro question? What a guarantee would this be of tranquillity!

The South has just made a disastrous experiment. It cannot now be ignorant of the value of those fine promises, flashed before its eyes by the men who urged it to war, of the fabulous prosperity of a new confederation founded on slavery. It seems to me that it ought to wish to try another policy.

It ought to wish this, but it does not. The human heart is so constituted, that passion therein has the mastery over good sense, and even over the most obvious interest. Scarcely emerged from the strife, the South will hasten before everything, if care be not taken, to enter upon a new strife—a formidable conflict on the floor of Congress, and a still more terrible strife in the heart of the states; a strife against the negroes, and a strife against the friends of the negroes.

May you be able, citizens of the North, to defend the South against its own mad impulses! Of all the services that you will have rendered it, this will not be the least essential. The South is a ruined and, as it were, dead country, but its resurrection will be brilliant and rapid, provided that criminal follies interpose no obstacles. No substitute has been found for American cotton; the European manufacturers demand and are willing to pay a large price for it; negro laborers, adapted above all others to this kind of cultivation, are ready at hand for the South, and the immigration of colonists and capital will speedily be forthcoming. Provided that it is desired, a few years will suffice to repair the disasters of the civil war.

Provided that it is desired, I say. Will it be desired? Oh! if it is easy to repair the disasters of the South, it is still easier to complete them. For this, it is only necessary to leave the negro question unsettled. Thenceforth, there will be no more negro labor; instead of labor there will be conflicts, summons to arms, irritation, and hatred. Thenceforth, there will be no more colonists, and no more capital; they come only when attracted by peace and liberty; before the prospect of disorder and oppression they will recoil terrified, and serfhood will shut out the South from them, like slavery before it.

Once more the interest of the South demands peace, the interest of the South demands labor, the interest of the South demands the termination of the negro question. This must be definitive and not provisional; the South needs contented laborers and not malcontents; it needs a good social organization and not disorganization; it needs a free régime

and not a régime of oppression ; it needs a transformation and not a restoration ; it needs progress and not revenge.

Is it resigned, moreover, to lose a great part of its representatives in Congress ? According to your Constitution, Mr. President, the number of representatives of each state is regulated in proportion to its free population, *increased by three fifths of the remainder*. This "remainder" is nothing else than the slaves. There are no more slaves, consequently there is no longer any "remainder." The only means which the South possesses of preserving and even increasing the number of its representatives is to increase its free population. As to enumerating, either as the "free population" or "the remainder," a race absolutely excluded from the right of suffrage, no one assuredly will think of it. The South, which no longer has slaves, must decide to have citizens.

This, moreover, Mr. President, is a new reason, a peremptory reason, a constitutional reason, for not admitting the South to Congress before terminating the negro question. The supplementary representation of the South should be either increased or abolished ; in any case, it cannot remain as it is, and the deputations which appear at the doors of Congress will find themselves necessarily in contradiction with the terms of the Constitution.

Let us add, that the point in question is not one of those ordinary and foreseen variations, the regulation of which can be postponed till the period of the decennial census, but a sudden and exceptional change, effected by the abolition of slavery, and the political consequences of which demand a decision not less prompt and exceptional.

XIV.

It will perhaps be objected, that the negro question cannot be ended, since some of the Northern states even yet shut out the negroes from political life. Did we not see the other day, with a sorrow mingled with surprise, Connecticut herself set an example which we scarcely expected to behold from

that quarter? Did she not refuse, in the midst of New England, to grant the right of suffrage to her two thousand free negroes?

Yes, alas! And what does this prove? That the education of slavery has weighed upon the whole nation; that the South (as we well know) has accomplices in the North; that the deleterious influence of the slave policy has engendered a general corruption which cannot be cured in a moment, and that, of all social progress, the most difficult to accomplish is that which demands the sacrifice of our prejudices. Yes, alas! Connecticut has voted in this direction, as certain Western states, not content with refusing the right of suffrage, have set the negroes outside the civil law, even interdicting them the right to live on their territory.

These enormities, Mr. President, rouse my indignation, and I am far from seeking an excuse for them; I only say that the negro question is not there, it is in the South; it must be decided in the South; decided in the South, it will be decided everywhere, it will be *ended*. The reasons thereof are simple.

First, the Northern states have not broken off their "practical relations" with the government of the Union and with Congress; they have not, therefore, to be re-admitted.

There is no room for deliberation so far as they are concerned. Then, the negroes have and will have supporters in the North which they will lack in the South. Journals, public opinion, meetings, and the healthful agitation of free countries, will not encounter there those obstacles which hitherto have not been surmounted in the heart of the cotton states.

In point of fact, therefore, the question is propounded with respect to the South, and attains its full gravity only in the South. Resolved there, it will be resolved everywhere. Do you think that any of the Northern states would long persist in refusing the right of suffrage to the negroes, if the latter exercised it at Charleston and New Orleans? Ideas find their own great level, and social iniquities cannot survive isolation.

Or suppose, moreover, that three or four Northern or Western states should insist on persevering in spite of everything, we would then doubtless witness a constitutional amendment, sanctioning the equality of the races. Or, rather, without having recourse to such means, simple decisions of the Supreme Court would suffice to re-establish the empire of the common law. It would not, indeed, be difficult then to prove that the Constitution had never foreseen or admitted a middle state between slavery and freedom.

THE TRANSITION.

XV.

I wish, Mr. President, that it had been possible not to establish a provisional régime in the South. To attain on the spot the re-establishment of the former rights, and to abandon the new rights to their own destiny, would be theoretical perfection. But by the side of theory there are facts, and facts do not permit the avoidance of a period of transition.

In granting to the negroes the right of voting, you will have made them a small gift if you do not take care that they are permitted to use it. We are far from carrying veneration for political rights so far as to believe that they take the place of everything. To refuse them to the negro race would be an enormity; to accord them to it would not be sufficient.

I picture to myself the negroes attempting to vote freely in the face of their old masters. Will the bill of Congress give them independence? Will it defend them against threats? And if the old master declares that he will refuse work to those who refuse to enfeoff their vote to him, will the bill of Congress afford the remedy for such a condition?

There is but one remedy; the provisional intervention of the federal power in behalf of the Southern negroes. It is necessary to insure to them both material support and civil and judicial redress. The abolition of slavery has just cre-

ated a new class in the South—that of freedmen. To this class, which has as yet no place in Southern society, the lack of protection would be death. A negro demands the wages which are due him—who will be his judge? A negro appears as a witness in court—who will insure respect to his testimony? A negro is exposed to insult, is whipped, is treated as a slave—who will punish his oppressors? I might multiply questions, but this would be taking useless pains. Every one knows that if the liberty of the colored men is maintained only by the judiciaries of the states, the slavery which has been abolished will reappear in the most formidable shape—that of a conflict of races, an active and violent hatred, an angry coalition of all the former masters against all the former slaves.

What must be done, then? According to all evidence, federal protection must be placed by the side of the new law. A few garrisons must be maintained in the strongholds and seaports to repress white oppression and negro insurrection in case of need. The beneficent action of the freedmen's bureaux must be maintained. The interference of the federal judiciary must be instituted in matters of litigation between the whites and the blacks. Lastly, there must be placed within the reach of the new freedmen, not only the immediate succor demanded by their destitution, but work, which is always the best of all aid.

In a word, you must necessarily have, for some time, your negro affairs like your Indian affairs. You must have them, because you are bound to render the abolition of slavery effective, because it cannot be your wish that the freedom granted to the negroes should be the freedom to die of hunger, the freedom to submit to exactions of all kinds, the freedom to be dependent on the whites for everything, the freedom to be slaves.

It appears to me superfluous to dwell on this subject. It is in vain to attempt it, we shall never abolish the rôle of time in human affairs. Whatever may be our haste, we must still grant a few days to a social transformation as gigantic as that which is being accomplished in the South.

And there is another thing which we shall never suppress—the momentary concentration of power which results from civil war. After such crises, men do not return to the common law without resigning themselves to some sacrifices ; every violent attempt at separation costs something, in fine, to the states which have essayed it.

XVI.

You desire, Mr. President, that it should cost them as little as possible. It is your policy to seek to confine within the narrowest limits, the necessary but deplorable use of exceptional régimes. You hasten toward a definitive and regular system.

You are right, emphatically right. Make haste, but imperil nothing. Abridge the transition period, but do not abridge it so much as to permit the indirect re-establishment of servitude, and to create such a position for the Southern negroes that they will regret their slavery in their freedom.

Of all methods of making haste, the most deplorable would be that which would force you to begin anew. The period of transition will be very brief, if the Union is wise enough to close the negro question by a liberal and energetic solution. Facts accomplished are admirable, inasmuch as each one arranges to live with them. The South, be sure, will arrange to live with the free colored race. The latter, on its side, on attaining possession of political rights, will speedily learn how to use them. It is thus, and thus only, that the time for dispensing with special protection will be hastened on both sides. The moment that the negro race shall begin to protect itself and shall be protected by the public opinion of the South, the federal protection will become superfluous.

I hope that this will be speedily. I have firm confidence that, placed in the pressure of what is irrevocable, the South will wisely resign itself to necessity. If you do not commit the gratuitous mistake of introducing it prematurely into Congress, and abandoning to it the unfinished question of slavery, you will see it return to the Union without over-hostile thoughts. At this very moment, a work of pacification is

being effected in its midst, which will bear fruit, provided it is not rendered abortive. It has reflected on the follies into which it has been drawn by its late counsellors ; it has been struck, perhaps touched, by the conciliatory conduct employed toward it by Mr. Lincoln and yourself ; it has not forgotten its abandonment by Europe, in spite of the scarcity of cotton ; it is now aspiring to repair its losses, and to revive its planting ; by degrees, doubt not, the need of peace will make itself felt, and the South will no longer be what it was.

Without dreaming of an absolute change of heart, and without lapsing into chimeras, we are justified in taking these things into account. To change situations is not to change hearts ; nevertheless, it is to pave the way for this great change. In the face of new questions, new parties, and new interests, it is difficult not to become new one's self. The social revolution which has just been accomplished through the abolition of slavery, is of such gravity and such profundity, that, provided it is definitive and real, it cannot but be immutable. Other habits and other currents of ideas have just been produced ; without taking into consideration that there will be other men in the South, and that, by the side of the planters and the small whites, a host of colonists will carry with them the free customs of another region.

The South will change, but will you wait for it to change, to readmit it and to re-establish the regular state of the confederation ? Will you wait for it to detest slavery and adore the Yankees ? In this case, put on mourning for your liberties and prepare yourselves for a military régime. You will hold garrison for a long time, not only in the fortresses, which is a matter of course, but in all the Southern cities. Your army, which you were in the process of reducing, will resume formidable proportions, and your expenditures will follow in the same path.

Be true. The point at stake is not to impose on the South a moral change, if not a sort of conversion, but to put an end, before its readmission, to the question which has divided you.

This done, do not suffer the definitive reconstruction to be protracted. I admit readily that this is the *opportunity* for the return of the South as well as for the ending of the negro question. This question once solved, the doors of Congress should be opened. What is done in such matters must be done with good grace, at the favorable moment ; reconciliations long delayed and deferred lose their value.

Bad habits are quickly contracted. This single and precious moment past, in which the return of the South would be effected spontaneously, since all are desiring and expecting it, you run the risk of not again finding the same disposition. You will grow accustomed to living apart ; the distance between the North and the South will be widened ; the dissensions will become envenomed ; new grievances will arise ; and you will end by having victors and vanquished, occupiers and occupied, governors and governed, almost conquerors and conquered. The re-establishment of the Union will then become difficult indeed.

Ah ! do not accustom yourselves to living without the South, to dispensing with the South, to ruling the South in the manner of territories, or you will, in the end, create with your own hands a separation more real than that over which you have just triumphed ; and then, at the first grave incident of your foreign policy, you will perhaps encounter real enemies on the other side of the Potomac.

It may cost you something to open your arms at this moment to the South after such a conflict ; you may regret that you had not taken certain guarantees or precautions ; but he who risks nothing gains nothing, and boldness is one of the characteristics of great policy. If you will risk nothing, absolutely nothing, you will not re-establish the Union, you will not succeed in living together, in working together, and even in contending together, which is not an evil, provided that the former ground of your strife has disappeared.

I spoke just now of habits. There are those of isolation, and there are those of life in common. Friendly quarrels make a part of the latter ; and it will be to your honor to have accepted, on the morrow of such a war, the difficulties,

the opposition, the hazards, in a word, of orderly and loyal liberty.

Let me tell you, Mr. President, that what I have admired most of all in your policy has been that trait which Mr. Lincoln had in common with you—confidence. To believe in goodness is a principle which is rarely wrong. Confidence is a sign of strength ; it is contagious ; it disposes men to reciprocal generosity ; it paves the way for sincere and truthful reconciliations. Distrust perverts everything ; it weakens and divides men. See what it has made of you ! Through its means, you would be drawn into a vicious circle ; the North would distrust the South, because it would see certain hostile tendencies still subsisting therein ; the South, in its turn, would passionately cling to these tendencies, because they were distrusted ; and distrust would engender hatred. This is not the way to re-establish the Union.

If the prospect of hostilities arrests you, you will never be reconciled. Yes, there will be hostility, there will be opposition, there will be embarrassment. He who shrinks from embarrassment will never do anything great. Doubtless, it would be more convenient indefinitely to govern and occupy the South ; only this convenient system would lead you to vast standing armies, and to vast expenditures, that is to say, to a military régime, to ruin, to despotism.

It is to your honor, Mr. President, that you have understood this ; that you have desired that neither the local nor the general liberties of the United States should incur peril, and that you have pointed your storm-beaten vessel from the first moment to the port of refuge—the port of the ancient law, the ancient constitution, the American liberties as they were before the rebellion, and as they will be in the future.

Perhaps I am authorized to say these things to-day, since I have been saying them for the last four years. We, your European friends, have unceasingly repeated to you this exhortation : After conquering the rebellion, and ending the negro question, open your arms to the South ; return quickly to the system of legality ; put an end to exceptional régimes,

and shun the temptations of dictatorship, the attempts at prolonged military occupation and conquest.

Confidence has in itself a marvellous power of pacification. And what a power is also in liberty ! It solves insoluble questions ; it reconciles irreconcilable enemies. Thanks to it, there are no vanquished, for the common law exists, and all use it ; all feel themselves equals, and no diminished position continues, in some sort sanctions, and forever revives the memory of the battle.

I see among you two extremes of policy, contending for the direction of your affairs. I hope that you will reject both. The one desires, in the ardor of reconciliation, not only that you should forget the commonest rules of prudence, but also the obligations contracted toward that race whose liberation you have begun, and which will perish, perhaps, if you do not complete its freedom. They will hear neither of imposing conditions on the South before readmission, nor of taking precautions for some time in the South to protect the first steps of the freedmen. Let the doors of Congress be opened wide from the first moment ! Leave to the Southern states themselves the charge of hereafter granting or refusing the right of suffrage to the colored race ! Veil the Constitution which protests against the creation of a race of Helots throughout a whole section of the United States !

The other, without aspiring to absolute vengeance, seems not to be sorry to humiliate the South and to make it feel its defeat. It is displeased at the pardons ; it is alarmed at the speedy reorganizations ; it would gladly give to the military occupation proportions and a duration which would almost remind us of conquest. It would seem as if its ideal consisted in transforming the Southern states into territories. It does not recoil before the prospect of dictatorships and military régimes ; and the perils which in this case would brood over the political liberties of the Union do not disturb it beyond measure.

It is between these two extremes that the true policy is found. It borrows from the first the lively desire to conciliate and reconcile, the generous pardons, the bold disbanding

of the armies, and the fidelity to liberal traditions. It borrows from the second the resolution to put an end to the negro question and not to abandon the freedmen to the despotism of the planters ; and the determination, in fine, not to admit the South without conditions, and to destroy before everything the ground of the ancient strife.

It is easy to show yourselves firm after showing yourselves gentle. Your magnanimity comes to the aid of your energy. Of what could the South complain—the South on which you are lavishing pardons ; whose provisional reorganization you are encouraging ; towards whom you are unceasingly testifying your confidence by lessening the number of the troops of occupation ?—of what could it complain if, at the moment when it asks to resume its place in Congress, you should say to it, “ We must first establish the position of the free negroes, who cannot be abandoned to the wishes of the Southern legislators” ?

When your true friends entreated you freely to pardon the South, it was by no means a counsel of weakness that they gave you. They felt that, in order to be strong with respect to things, it was necessary to begin by being generous with respect to persons. Perhaps you still remember, Mr. President, in what terms I then asked you to grant me the life of Jefferson Davis. Let a single political scaffold be erected among you, and you quit forever that glorious path in which you have been walking for four years.

But between the pardon granted to the greatest criminals, and the justification of an unjustifiable rebellion, there is a broad chasm. The one is the very negation of the other. You pardon, while certifying the crime. You wish, at least so far as the leader of the rebel confederacy is concerned, that a solemn trial should proclaim the guilty attempt, and restore to the rank of insurgents those of whom it has been sought to make belligerents. You are right, and no one has read without cordially approving this portion of your answer to the South Carolina deputation. Yes, there is no desire for vengeance, no thirst for blood ; only, as there has been

treason, there must be judgment, and the pardon can come only after the sentence.

We will add, that the pardon so liberally bestowed, places you in a position to exact guarantees without being accused of bearing heavily on the South, and in the least abusing your victory.

CONCLUSION.

XVII.

My conclusion, Mr. President, is simple. It is summed up in two sentences—a reconstruction as prompt and complete as you can desire ; the right of suffrage secured to the negroes of the South, with as much prudence as you can desire.

I speak of the negroes of the South and not of those of the North, because the Northern states that still refuse the right of suffrage to the colored race do not need to be readmitted, and Congress is not called upon to impose conditions on them. It has the right (it is its duty, I should say) to impose them on the South, which has attempted to overthrow the Federal Constitution by violence, and which, moreover, in proportion to the number of its negroes, and its traditional habits, inspires every one that reflects with horrible fears which a bold vote of Congress can alone dispel.

The opportunity is at hand. Congress is called upon to do a vast work to-day, which it will be out of its power to do to-morrow. No one imagines that the termination of the negro question will be possible after the admission of the Southern representatives. No one imagines that any action can be expected from the Southern legislatures, when once they have regained their independence. The point at stake, therefore, is not whether to be more or less patient, but whether or not to have done with the slave party, with the cause of the civil war.

As to the transitional régime demanded, provisionally, for the protection of the Southern negroes, it may be defined in a few words—the continued action of the freedmen's bu-

reaux ; the succor of extreme cases of destitution ; and full redress in the federal courts.

In a few days, you will have to decide the whole destiny of the negro race. It is in your hands, it will rest upon your consciences. Contempt degrades and corrupts men ; equality elevates them. In vain will you heap up alms ; unless you give to these oppressed ones the alms of their rights, you will have given them nothing. Not only will they finally perish in great part, but they will become degraded. Discontented and discouraged, they will turn both from labor, and from school, and from honorable aspirations.

It is too painful to contemplate this shameful and terrible prospect. I will not admit that it is possible. Your people has taken in hand the work of negro liberty ; it will not leave this unfinished. It will undertake, it has undertaken the generous mission of doing great good to the negro race, after having done it great evil.

I appeal to all men of heart ; I appeal to all Christians. The Christians of America have sometimes had reason seriously to reproach themselves where slavery was concerned. This is the moment to repair the faults of some among them. It should not be said that the Gospel, which shows so well among you, Mr. President, that it is the living foundation of liberty, should be wanting in a cause of liberty like this.

Already, I know, the Christians are at work ; those monstrous distinctions which seemed a defiance flung at the Gospel, are gradually becoming effaced in the North. But the problem of the South remains. Let Christians occupy themselves with resolving it ; let their influence make itself felt in Congress ; let it then make itself felt in the cotton states ; let it penetrate therein as a spirit of gentleness, concord, and harmony ; let it contribute to reconcile classes and races ; let it insure the protection of the weak and the triumph of justice. Never will a task more worthy of admiration have been confided to them ; never will a more worthy guardianship have been intrusted to them. Now that the hand of God has rent away the thick veil of

prejudice and tradition which lately shrouded the most luminous truths from one end to the other of your country, no Christian has any longer a right to hesitate, no Christian church has a right to fold its hands. If the question of slavery has perchance been obscured by the fear of the social convulsions which threatened to surround emancipation, the question of the equality of races looms up clear, transparent, and evident. Among Christians, at least, we cannot conceive the possibility of doubt. The equality of races! It is written in the first chapter of Genesis. The equality of races! It is written a second time, and in far more shining characters, in the last chapters of the Gospel. Those men for whom Christ died—is it possible for you to despise them? Those men for whom a place is prepared by your side in heaven—have you the courage to refuse them a place by your side on earth? Those men who believe with you, who pray with you, who love with you, those men, your equals through the heart, through the soul, through the conscience, and through the family—could you endure the thought that you had suffered them to be banished in the South to the rank of Helots or pariahs?

I might say besides, Mr. President, those men who have fought, bravely fought under your flag—does it not belong to you, their companions in arms, to protect them, both against the maintenance of the Southern anathema, and those cowardly brutalities which should not survive the war?

XVIII.

A word more before concluding.

Those who were so much surprised when, at the moment of discouragement, I wrote the *Uprising of a Great People*, will not be less surprised to see me, at the moment of universal congratulation, show you the moral and material disasters, the degradation, in a word, which is about to burst upon you if you do not take a virile resolution from this moment, before the opening of Congress.

Disasters, degradation—nonsense? Is not peace re-established? Is not slavery abolished? Is not the danger of re-

pression by violence avoided? Is not the policy of conquest set aside? Are not affairs directed in a remarkable spirit of conciliation, dignity, loyalty, and legality? Is it not glorious to see a government hasten to abdicate the exceptional powers with which it was invested, and to disband the vast armies which were at its disposal? Is not this ardent return, at times imprudent in its precipitancy, and certainly generous, toward a normal state of affairs, toward reconstruction, toward liberty, a spectacle calculated to rejoice the eyes and heart? Does not the progress of the United States contradict the fears of their enemies and exceed the hopes of their friends?

Yes, indeed; and I certify this while blessing God. But all is not finished, and there are things which must be finished, under penalty of beginning them anew. The negro question is in this category. I should be an unfaithful friend to America if I did not point out to it to-day, at the risk of displeasing it, the immense peril of postponement. I prefer displeasing to betraying it. If I have any popularity among you, I would willingly sacrifice it to the necessity of being useful to you.

Never will a Congress have had the importance of that which is about to assemble. From its first session, it will find before it the whole question of your policy. Its first votes will decide the future; they will have a scope which will equal that of the votes which, in the last century, fixed the bases of your Constitution.

Oh! how formidable is the danger of believing that all is finished! Precisely because we have commenced well, because we can rejoice by just right at the success which we have obtained, we slumber, we abandon our task, we forget to put the last stroke to the work undertaken, to the edifice which we have constructed, and which lacks only the crowning arch.

There is a class of *satisfied* men among you whom I infinitely distrust. They are those who celebrate with exaggeration your progress toward what is good, in order to prevent

your progress toward what is better. Four years ago, before the rebellion, they were also satisfied, and, while your true friends hung their heads, they declared that everything was going on admirably, and that material prosperity should suffice. Do you remember, moreover, what reception they gave to those who thought it necessary to solve the question of slavery? This question would solve itself! The South must decide it! Time must be suffered to do its work!

Well, these same men, or well nigh such, hold the same language to you to-day on the subject of the free negroes. What is the use of being in haste? This question also will solve itself! This question also should be left to the independent action of the South!

The fact is, that now as then the detestable selfishness which we all cherish at the bottom of our hearts cries out to us that we must rest, that we must seek enjoyment, that we must not trouble ourselves too much about the unfortunate. The negroes may extricate themselves the best they can, provided that we hear no more about it!

Now it is in this that you are mistaken; you will hear more about it. The negro question will importune you the more, inasmuch as you will not have profited by the auspicious moment to end it.

Yes, you may believe me, you who think of your ease, and who ward off discussion in order to spare your peace, and to prevent any murmurs from the South or its friends, it is your peace that you are sacrificing. This question which displeases you will return to you daily and under all forms, like the old question of slavery. It will be your punishment to be forced daily to occupy yourselves with those negroes, of whom you aspire to rid yourselves—in Congress, in meetings, in journals. You are about to resume the road to war; and do not complain hereafter, for you will have desired it.

XIX.

I have spoken to you, Mr. President, without reserve. While expressing my fears (as was my duty), I have taken

care not to forget that God has his ways, which are not ours, and that he may have means of reparation and safety in store for you which our short-sighted eyes fail to discern.

In any case, and I am anxious to end with this thought, I have confidence that the God which has guarded and led you will guard and lead you to the end. This work of deliverance is indeed his own, and this it is which makes my security.

Yes, my security. Although I have spoken to you of the perils which, I fear, are only too real, it is impossible for me not to believe that, even though should it be retarded and imperilled by your errors, your work of uprising will some day be finished.

But why not finish it to-day? Why not avert the perils, the prolonged conflicts, the national suffering, the iniquities, in fine, which are in danger of accumulating before your steps? Why force both the negro race and the whole country to pass through calamities which a little opportune energy would have prevented?

You who have done so much—you will not suffer the fruit of four years of strife to be snatched from you at the last moment. You, who know now that slavery is your sole enemy—you will not permit any relic of the conflict of slavery to survive. You who have walked with so firm a step in the path of justice—you will not allow yourself to be arrested at the very moment when one more step would take you to the end.

The end—this is the common law, the liberty of all, the equality of all. How glorious will this be! What joy is in store for you on the day when you can say to your sons, “And I too was among those who won this battle!”

This battle will socially redeem a whole race, and will insure what may be called the second foundation of the United States.

After this, there will be a sure peace; after this, there will be the triumph of a new policy, a national and liberal policy; [after this, there will be no more sectional strife;

after this, there will be the reviving prosperity of the South and the increasing prosperity of the North.

Or rather, there will then no longer be a North and South, for there will no longer be a negro question under any form ; all that remained unsolved will have been decided.

Your fellow-countrymen have sometimes told me that I had been a prophet, so far as you were concerned. This was not difficult ; it was only requisite to have faith in principles. Well ! by virtue of the same faith I predict to you that if you remain faithful to your cause, and if you seize to-day the occasion to finish what you have begun, you will insure to your country the most enviable of all greatness. Slavery will fall before it in all other countries ; in Spain, as in Brazil ; before it all difficulties, within and without, will find their own solution ; more united than ever, more influential than ever, it will also be freer than ever ; it will oppose its glorious and peaceful prosperity to whomsoever shall still doubt its " uprising."

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my respect.

AGÉNOR DE GASPARIN.

VALLEYRES, *November 6, 1865.*

POSTSCRIPT, *November 10.*

Your journals, Mr. President, have just brought us the report of your interview with Mr. Stearns of Massachusetts. I confess that if this document had reached my hands before I took up my pen, I should have hesitated to address you. The fears to which some of your previous declarations had given rise seem confirmed by those made by you to Mr. Stearns. You declare yourself at once opposed to the immediate termination of the negro question and in favor of abandoning this question to the hands of the South.

You say, on this point, " We should give them [the Southern states] time to become accustomed to it [the question of negro suffrage], for we cannot hope that so grave a question will be resolved in a moment."

You say, on the second point, "We should permit each state to regulate the question of suffrage by its own laws."

You add, it is true, "And we have the power to reform them if they are bad." But it is certainly permissible to doubt whether this power will subsist when the South shall have returned to Congress, and when each state shall have regained its full independence. Will it be easier then to reform the particular laws of each state than it would be to establish to-day the principle from which they should never deviate?

"The elective franchise," you add again, "is not a natural but a political right." If the absolute exclusion, without exception, of the negro race through the whole South, in the country where it has been enslaved, is not a negation of natural right, I know not where you will find a negation of this right.

When, lastly, you express the idea that, by interfering in the electoral affairs of the rebel states, the Union would arrogate to itself the right of doing the same thing in Pennsylvania, I venture to object that Pennsylvania has neither to be reconstructed nor readmitted, and that moreover she does not belong to the region in which it is important to destroy without delay even to the last vestige of slavery, that is, of the enemy.

Pardon me, Mr. President, the frankness of my language. I should be less warm if I entertained less respectful esteem for your character and services. I am not, as you know, among those who cast stones at you; and who pretend that you are quitting the Republican ranks to ally yourself to the Democrats, and that you hesitate henceforth to bear on high the banner under which the Union has just fought.

No, this is not so. But I venture to entreat you to take care; the determination which you are about to adopt at this moment is among those which lead one much farther than he designs to go. To admit the South to Congress,

without first terminating the negro question, to abandon to the Southern states the regulation of the right of suffrage, would be unreservedly to deliver over to them the colored population; it would not be testifying confidence in them, but sacrificing the victors to the vanquished.

There are two kinds of confidence. There is that which maintains principles, while opening the arms to persons; that which you have nobly practised, and in which you cannot too earnestly persevere. There is also that which puts principles in peril in order the better to welcome persons; do not suffer yourself to be led astray by this.

You will not suffer yourself to be thus led astray. You will listen to the voice, removed from all suspicion, of the friends of America, in whose counsels there enters no suspicion of hidden malevolence or opposition.

I have often observed, as you know, how Mr. Lincoln modified his first opinions. It is the mark of free and sincere minds that they are always learning. Mr. Lincoln certainly did not entertain, at the beginning of his presidency, the designs which he accomplished, with respect to slavery. He *learned*, he kept his heart and eyes open to the teachings which God gave through great events.

What these great events taught both Mr. Lincoln, and your country, and us all, was, that one cannot be too faithful to his principles, that he cannot too firmly believe what he believes, that he cannot too completely do what he does; and that he must finish what he has begun. There has not been a hesitation of which you have not repented, not a compromise which has not cost you dear, not a middle course the success of which has not been a public calamity. The most moderate have comprehended this teaching of your four years' strife.

The South, doubt not, has not been the last to comprehend it. The same mail that brought us your conversation with Mr. Stearns, also brought us the letter addressed by John Reagan, Ex-Postmaster-General of the Confederate States, to Governor Hamilton of Texas.

Mr. Reagan sees like us that, for the conflict of slavery to

be ended, negro suffrage must be established in the South. Determined to "recognize facts, even though disagreeable," he openly declares that "wisdom consists in accepting the result of the struggle, and being happy that the victors ask no more." This laid down, he advises his fellow-citizens to grant the right of suffrage, while surrounding it with prudential conditions, "equally applicable to the blacks and the whites." He thinks that such a law is necessary in order to blot out all enmity of race and all fear of civil war.

However, he does not delude himself concerning the reception of his proposition. "I know," he says, "that you will oppose me obstinately and sincerely." This is not doubtful, and if Congress leaves the Southern states to regulate, each on its own account, the condition of the former slaves, no one can suppose that the equality of the races will have the least chance until the day when new struggles shall wring from the planters what they will never grant spontaneously.

Avoid these new struggles, spare your people these new convulsions, your Union these new perils, the whole world these new temptations to intervention and war. Listen to our alarm cry. Lend an ear also to the sullen murmurs which reach you from the South, to the reviving insolence of the champions of slavery and their journals. They can scarcely believe their eyes when they see that it is in contemplation to restore to them (to them!) the regulation of the negro question. They will let it be done, of course; but they are already smiling and preparing to take advantage of an unhopd-for concession. Your confidence, joined with firmness, would bring them back to the Union; as to that very different confidence, to which an effort is being made at this moment to urge you, they would be less touched than surprised by it. They would take it for what it is, and would call it by its true name.

At the moment that I trace these last lines, news which I would gladly doubt is circulated among us. A negro insurrection, it is said, has just broken out in Jamaica, accompanied with horrible cruelties.

There is but one way of judging cruelties, from whatever direction they may come. It belongs, above all, to the friends of the colored race openly to reprove the crimes which sully and consequently imperil their cause. The crimes which we commit always do us more harm than those which we suffer.

But, on the other hand, what a warning is at the bottom of this detestable insurrection! How it confirms the words of Mr. Stearns! How it proves that equality alone can cause the disappearance of the enmities of race, and the risks of social war! Slavery abolished, there remains but one resource—equality. Whatever is not this engenders hatred and violence. With slavery, peace is possible; with inequality without slavery, it is impossible. To give liberty and refuse equality is to do at once too much and too little.

May not the cruelties of the insurrection have been called forth by the cruelties of the repression? In this case, the latter would not be more excusable than the former.

The colonists of Jamaica have made the immense mistake of stopping halfway in that work of social redemption which will forever honor England, and which was the most glorious of our age, until you surpassed it. They have maintained, if not by law, at least in fact, the greater part of the barriers which separated the whites from the men of color.

Let the United States take warning!

FINIS.

