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FRIDAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1866.

Address of the Philadelphia Convention.

To the People of the United States:

Having met in convention, at the city of Philadelphia, in the State of Pennsylvania, this 14th day of August, 1866, as the representatives of the people in all sections, and all the States and territories of the Union, to consult upon the condition and the wants of our common country, we address to you this declaration of our principles, and of the political purposes we seek to promote.

Since the meeting of the last National Convention, in the year 1860, events have occurred which have changed the character of our internal politics, and given to the United States a new place among the nations of the earth. Our government has passed through the vicissitudes and the perils of civil war—a war which, though mainly sectional in its character, has nevertheless decided political differences that from the very beginning of the government had threatened the unity of our national existence, and has left its impress deep and ineffaceable upon all the interests, the sentiments, and the destiny of the republic. While it has inflicted upon the whole country severe losses in life and in property, and has imposed burdens which must weigh on its resources for generations to come, it has developed a degree of national courage in the presence of national dangers—a capacity for military organization and achievement, and a devotion on the part of the people to the form of government which they have ordained, and to the principles of liberty which that government was designed to promote, which must confirm the confidence of the nation in the perpetuity of its republican institutions, and command the respect of the civilized world.

Like all great contests which rouse the passions and test the endurance of nations, this war has given new scope to the ambition of political parties, and fresh impulse to plans of innovation and reform. Amidst the chaos of conflicting sentiments inseparable from such an era, while the public heart is keenly alive to all the passions that can sway the public judgment and affect the public action; while the wounds of war are still fresh and bleeding on either side, and fears for the future take unjust proportions from the memories and resentments of the past, it is a difficult but an imperative duty which, on your behalf, we, who are here assembled, have undertaken to perform.

For the first time after six long years of alienation and of conflict, we have come together from every State and every section of our land, as citizens of a common country, under that flag, the symbol again of a common glory, to consult together how best to cement and perpetuate that Union which is again the object of our common love, and thus secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

In the first place, we invoke you to remember always and everywhere, that the war is ended, and the nation is again at peace. The shock of contending arms no longer assails the shuddering heart of the republic. The insurrection against the supreme authority of the nation has been suppressed, and that authority has been again acknowledged, by word and act, in every State and by every citizen within its jurisdiction. We are no longer required or permitted to regard or treat each other as enemies. Not only have the acts of war been discontinued, and the weapons of war been laid aside, but the state of war no longer exists, and the sentiments, the passions, the interests, and the duties of peace are alone recognized as legitimate or lawful or rightful places anywhere throughout our broad domain. We are again people of the United States, fellow-citizens of one country, bound by the duties and obligations of a common patriotism, and having neither rights nor interests apart from or in hostile antagonism to the States that have upon us now are again the duties of peace, and no longer the duties of war. We have assembled here to take counsel concerning the interests of peace; to decide how we may most wisely and effectually heal the wounds the war has made, and perfect and perpetuate the benefits it has secured; and the blessings John, conqueror of war, and benign Providence, have sprung up in its fiery track. This is the work not of passion, but of calm and sober judgment; not of resentment for past offenses, prolonged beyond the limits which justice and reason prescribe, but of a liberal statesmanship which tranquilizes while it cannot prevent, and builds its plans and its hopes for the future rather upon a community of interest and ambition than upon distrust and the weapons of force.

In the next place, we call upon you to recognize in their full significance, and to accept with all their legitimate consequences, the political results of the war just closed. In two most important particulars the victory achieved by the national government has been final and decisive. First, it has established beyond all further controversy, and by the highest of all human sanctions, the absolute supremacy of the national government as defined and limited by the Constitution of the United States, and the permanent integrity and indissolubility of the federal Union as a necessary consequence; and second, it has put an end finally and forever to the existence of slavery upon the soil or within the jurisdiction of the United States. Both these points became directly involved in the contest, and controversy upon both was ended absolutely and finally by the result.

In the third place, we deem it of the utmost importance that the real character of the war and the victory by which it was closed should be accurately understood. The war was carried on by the government of the United States in maintenance of its own authority, and in defense of its own existence, both of which were menaced by the insurrection which it sought to suppress. The suppression of that insurrection, therefore, and its results, put the government of the United States manifested by force of arms the supreme authority over all the territory and over all the States and people within its jurisdiction in which the Constitution confers upon it; but it conferred there no new power, no enlarged jurisdiction, no rights either of territorial possession or of civil authority which it did not possess before the rebellion broke out. All the rightful power it can ever possess is that which is conferred upon it, either in express terms or by fair and necessary implication, by the Constitution of the United States. It was that power and that authority which the rebellion sought to overthrow, and the victory of the federal arms was simply the defeat of that attempt. The government of the United States acted throughout the war on the defensive. It sought only to hold possession of what was already its own. Neither the war, nor the victory by which it was closed, changed in any way the Constitution of the United States. The war was carried on by virtue of the provisions, and under the limitations which they prescribe, and the result of the war did not either enlarge, abridge, or in any way change or affect the powers it confers upon the federal government, or release that government from the restrictions which it has imposed.

The Constitution of the United States is to-day precisely as it was before the war, the "supreme law of the land, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding," and to-day, also, precisely as before the war, all the powers not conferred by the Constitution upon the general government, nor prohibited by it to the States, are "reserved to the several States, or to the people thereof."

This position is vindicated not only by the essential nature of our government, and the language and spirit of the Constitution, but by all the acts, and the language of our government, in all its departments, and at all times from the outbreak of the rebellion to its final overthrow. In every message and proclamation of the executive it was explicitly declared that the sole object and purpose of the war was to maintain the authority of the Constitution, to preserve the integrity of the Union; and Congress more than once reiterated this solemn declaration, and added the assurance that whenever this object should be attained the war should cease, and all the States should retain their equal rights and dignity unimpaired. It is only since the war was closed that other rights have been asserted on behalf of one department of the general government. It has been proclaimed by Congress that, in addition to the powers conferred upon it, by the Constitution, the federal government may now claim over the States, the territory and the people involved in the insurrection, the rights of war, the right of conquest and of confiscation, the right to abrogate all existing governments, institutions and laws, and to subject the territory conquered and its inhabitants to such laws, regulations and deprivations as the legislative departments of the government may see fit to impose. Under this broad and sweeping claim, that clause of the Constitution which provides that "no State shall without its consent be deprived of its equal suffrage in the Senate of the United States," has been annulled, and ten States have been refused, and are still refused, representation altogether in both branches of the federal Congress. And the Congress in which only a part of the States and of the people of the Union are represented has asserted the right thus to exclude the rest from representation, and from all share in making their own laws or choosing their own rulers until they shall comply with such conditions and purchase such acts as this Congress thus composed may itself prescribe. That right has not only been asserted, but it has been exercised, and is practically enforced at the present time. Nor does it find any support in the theory that the States thus excluded are in rebellion against the government, and are therefore precluded from sharing its authority. They are not thus in rebellion. They are one and all in an attitude of loyalty towards the government, and of sworn allegiance to the Constitution of the United States. In no one of them is there the slightest indication of resistance to this authority, or the slightest protest against its just and binding obligation. This condition of renewed loyalty has been officially recognized by solemn proclamation of the executive department. The laws of the United States have been extended by Congress over all these States and the people thereof. Federal courts have been reopened, and federal taxes imposed and levied, and in every respect, except that they are denied representation in Congress and the electoral college, the States once in rebellion are recognized as holding the same position, owning the same obligations, and subject to the same duties as the other states of our common Union.

It seems to us, in the exercise of the calmest and most candid judgment we can bring to the subject, that such a claim, so entered, involves as fatal an overthrow of the authority of the Constitution, and as complete a destruction of the government and Union, as that which was sought to be effected by the States and people in armed insurrection against them both. It cannot escape observation that the power thus asserted to exclude certain States from representation is made to rest wholly in the will and discretion of the Congress that asserts it. It is not made to depend upon any specified conditions or circumstances, nor to be subject to any rules or regulations whatever. The right asserted and exercised is absolute, without qualification or restriction, not confined to States in rebellion, nor to States that have rebelled; it is the right of any Congress in formal possession of legislative authority to exclude any State or States, and any portion of the people thereof, at any time from representation in Congress and in the electoral college, at its own discretion and until they shall perform such acts and comply with such conditions as it may dictate. Obviously, the reason for such exclusion being wholly within the discretion of Congress, may change as the Congress itself shall change. One Congress may exclude a State from its share in the government for one reason, and, that reason removed, the next Congress may exclude it for another. One State may be excluded on one ground to-day, and another may be excluded on the opposite ground to-morrow. Northern abolitionists may exclude Southern States from Congress—the ascendency of Western or of Southern Democrats, or of both combined, may exclude the Northern or the Eastern States from the next. Improbable as such usurpations may seem, the establishment of the principle now asserted and acted upon by Congress will render them by no means impossible. The character, indeed, the very existence, of Congress and the Union is thus made dependent solely and entirely upon the party and sectional agencies or forbearances of the hour.

We need not stop to show that such action not only finds no warrant in the Constitution, but is at war with every principle of our government, and with the very existence of free institutions. It is, indeed, the identical practice which has rendered fruitless all attempts hitherto to establish and maintain free governments in Mexico and the states of South America. It is the assumption of the States of South America that the people are not the source of all legitimate power, and that the supremacy of Congress over all these States and the people thereof,