

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE, }  
Des MOINES, January 11th, 1866. }

*Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives :—*

Chosen by the partiality of my fellow-citizens to discharge the duties of the Executive office for a second term, I have appeared before you to solemnly renew the obligations prescribed by the Constitution of our State, and to repeat the assurances of my earnest devotion to the public welfare.

With a sense of profound obligation to the Almighty Ruler of the Universe, for the altered condition of the country since my first inauguration, and the dawn of a more tranquil era in the national history to cheer me, I enter upon the present term with the flattering hope that the State will continue to prosper, our people realizing an adequate measure of success in developing the resources which nature has so bountifully placed at their disposal.

Grateful to Him who in mercy has guided and sustained us, I congratulate you that during the vicissitudes of a War which shook the foundations of the Republic, the people of Iowa have continued to advance in all the essential elements of enduring wealth. With extended borders exposed to the incursions of watchful enemies, the property and lives of our citizens have, nevertheless, been adequately protected. Notwithstanding that eighty thousand of our active and vigorous population were furnished to the national armies, yet by the aid of machinery substituted for the manual labor thus withdrawn, the annual yields of agricultural productions have steadily and rapidly increased. While our granaries have been abundantly supplied at home, the avenues of commerce have teemed with our surplus grain and stock contributed to the markets of other States; and the census returns exhibit from year to year a constant and astonishing augmentation in the avails of every other department of material industry. The increase of

useful inventions indicates that the labors of the mechanic and artisan have been duly rewarded. The progress of internal improvements, and especially of our Railroad enterprises; the growth of towns and cities; the complete recovery of all classes from pecuniary embarrassments; our present sound financial condition and the widely disseminated facilities for intellectual development, afford the general outlines of a picture, which older and more favored States may strive in vain to rival.

What Iowa is, she owes only to herself—to the industry, to the enterprise, the moral character and patriotism of her people, while her healthful climate and her soil of unexcelled fertility, her rich deposits of mineral wealth, the inland water-courses, and the navigable rivers which wash her boundaries; her central position between the two great Oceans, and the iron links uniting her inseparably with the commercial arteries of the continent, utter predictions of her coming greatness more emphatic than either pen or tongue can make.

But inasmuch as the biennial message has presented in detail the condition of the State, and its exigencies in the various departments, I may be pardoned if, in suggesting additional topics for your consideration, I now turn to the more extended theatre of national affairs.

Thoroughly imbued with the principles of liberty and equality, proclaimed by our fathers at the origin of the Republic, and alive to the importance of transmitting to posterity the Government which they established, the people of Iowa in the recent struggle contributed liberally of their blood and treasure for the preservation of the Union. Loyalty to the Constitution, and adherence to the Federal Union were the cardinal ideas of our people, and the exalted motives which unswervingly attached them to the national cause. If the spirit of treason or sympathy with rebellion existed among us, it was only in a modified form, emphatically stifled by the aggregated patriotism and preponderating influence of the loyal masses. As a member of the Federal Union, possessing a joint interest in the national heritage, Iowa had a destiny inseparably connected with that of the loyal and adhering States. Our radical and undeviating opposition to the bold and persistent demands of the slave power, prepared us to meet the issues which were finally submitted to the terrible arbitrament of War.

Fully realizing the magnitude of the questions at stake, and perceiving no adequate equivalent for an undivided Union, our citizens in obedience to the national call promptly abandoned their peaceful avocations, and became soldiers bravely rallying in defense of the common emblem. Their devotion to Liberty and the Union has been nobly vindicated by their blood. Their intelligent submission to discipline, their endurance and valor conspicuously displayed in marches, sieges and battles, are the subjects of imperishable history, and need not be recounted here. As they bore the flag of Iowa victoriously on the tide of War, the rattle of their musketry was heard upon every field of conflict made historic by the valor of the West, and the thunder of their cannon amidst the carnage of battle, announced the progress of our advancing columns.

In this connection, the occasion seems not unsuitable for a brief allusion to affairs resulting from the termination of the war. Conscious of no desire to excite unfounded distrust in the minds of others, regarding the prospects of an early return of the insurgent States upon a loyal and satisfactory basis, I nevertheless cannot disguise my own apprehensions of ultimate danger from existing adverse elements, unless the loyal States shall remain firm in their purpose to vindicate the majesty of the Government in dictating the terms of restoration. The statesmen to whose wisdom the destiny of this great nation is now entrusted, will be held responsible for a faithful performance of their work. Coming generations of our people will, in the light of history, carefully review the events of these times, and with a considerate judgment they will admire our fidelity or condemn our recreancy.

Let us not be deceived by the flattering assurance indulged by many, that the conflict is over. To suppose that this embittered contest between right and wrong, of adherence to the fundamental principles of the government, and the intensified spirit of treason nursed for half a century terminated when the rebel armies were overthrown, is to forget all the teachings of history, and disregard the instructive lessons of our own experience. Every indication of the times affords accumulating evidence that the great problem of our National Future remains to be solved. But I am not without hope. The substantial progress with which, under manifold difficulties, the work of restoration has been attended in so brief a period may be construed as a favorable indication of the future;

and although short of the anticipated measure of success, yet affords encouraging evidence, that among the well disposed inhabitants of the South, the bitterness engendered by rebellion is rapidly giving way to a common purpose of conciliation. For this, all parties should be grateful. And the insurgent States especially will not fail to perceive their obligations to that magnanimous policy, which, in spite of opposing influences secured for their efforts the friendly co-operation of national authority.

This policy, known as the President's plan of reconstruction, has been characterized by the development of extraordinary constitutional power on the part of the Federal Executive, and this power having been exercised with so great a degree of general approbation, amounts to a practical interpretation of the Constitution absolutely conclusive upon all parties, and unavoidable as a precedent for the future. The successful exercise of this inherent power demonstrates that the Constitution contains, when rightly interpreted, ample resources for its own preservation.

Upon what grounds can this conduct of the President be justified? The effort to consider a State, for political purposes, separate and distinct from the people who compose it is a manifest absurdity. A State is a body politic, or civil community, united together for the purposes of government, and their government is the accredited legal organ through which they act, and by which they are known as a municipal organization. South Carolina may have land and defined territorial boundaries, but it can have no government without inhabitants, and without a government, although having inhabitants, it would not be known or recognized as a State. The people of that and every other State in the Federal Union, are nothing more or less than a municipal body, exercising the powers and franchises of a government under the authority of the United States, and in subordination to the paramount sovereignty of the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land. This subordination of States, and supremacy of the Constitution, are our sheet anchor and bond of perpetual union. Any theory adverse to this would result in the inevitable destruction of our nationality.

While in a territorial condition, though having inhabitants, and the same boundaries she now possesses, and though within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, Alabama was in no Con-

stitutional sense a State in the Union, and she became such only through the act of admission adopted by Congress in pursuance of the provision authorizing new States to be admitted. By this act of admission, or ordinance, accepted by the people of Alabama, the United States became bound, among other things to secure to them a republican form of government, to protect them against invasions and domestic violence, while on the other hand, the State so created, acknowledged the sovereignty of the Constitution and the supremacy of the general Government within the scope of its granted powers. From these mutual obligations, perpetually binding as Constitutional covenants, neither party can legally recede. The original States became members of the Union by ratifying and accepting the Constitution which placed them upon a like footing with those subsequently admitted, and created between them and the government precisely the same reciprocal obligations.

Reasoning from these obvious premises it follows that the attempted expatriation of the Southern States, and their efforts to maintain it by war, virtually dissolved, for the time being, their political relations with the Federal Government, inasmuch as these unauthorized acts violated their constitutional obligations, and, on their part, the conditions upon which they were created and admitted as members of the Union. The treason of a few individuals, or a mere local insurrection would not have produced this result. But when the people *en masse* renounced their constitutional rights and deliberately transferred their allegiance to a hostile sovereignty, taking the entire power of the State with them, and levying war to maintain their new relations, it became treason on their part, involving by the established rules of national conduct, the destructibility of their political organizations. For it is manifest that, if these States had accomplished their treasonable designs, their political separation would have been complete, although their territorial boundaries might have remained as before. But, being overcome by the superior power of the Union, they were forcibly retained within its jurisdiction in the attitude of a conquered people. Having with treasonable intent violated the solemn covenants by which they were originally organized as States, and having forfeited their rights under them they are now in no condition to claim the benefits of these covenants, which can only be re-

newed by the disposition of the Federal Government, as the innocent and injured party, in the exercise of its sovereign power.

Having thus ascertained the true condition of these States, under the Constitution, the question as to whether they have been out of the Union becomes a mere abstraction. In legal contemplation they certainly were not; for all their acts in that direction, being in conflict with the Constitution, became null and void; yet it is nevertheless equally clear, as a matter of fact, that for a period of four years the authority of the Union was forcibly excluded from these States, and that, during that period, they were out of their constitutional orbits. Had this condition been maintained, and their separation permanently established, then the proposition that they were out of the Union would scarcely have been disputed; and may we not therefore with equal propriety now admit that, for all practical purposes, these States were not in the Union while this abnormal condition existed.

To hold, as many do, that the functions of these States were merely suspended, not destroyed by rebellion, would result in the logical conclusion that their former condition revived when the cause of that suspension was removed; and, if they have not been destroyed, by what right do we now intervene in their affairs, and require their governments to be reformed before allowing them to resume their civil and political relations with the Union? From what source does the President derive rightful authority to appoint Governors for these States, conferring power to elect delegates and organize constitutional conventions, prescribing the qualifications of electors, and, by compulsory directions, require them to adopt certain measures and reject others. He could do none of these things for Pennsylvania or Iowa, and he does them for the insurgent States only as the authorized agent of constitutional sovereignty, and because their civil vitality has been destroyed, and they have ceased to exist except as geographical boundaries within the Union, containing inhabitants deprived of organized governments.

Upon this broad and conclusive theory the work of restoration has so far progressed. It was the landmark which guided Abraham Lincoln in his labors, wherein he was endorsed by the overwhelming verdict of the American people. It is the grand and abiding principle in accordance with which the struggle was main-

tained by us, and the Union saved. And I hesitate not in saying, that to abandon it now would be an insult to the memory of the martyrs who have fallen in its defense, and a dishonorable surrender to the enemies we have conquered.

If the view we have taken be not correct, then the President has committed a flagrant violation of the constitution by arbitrarily invading the sovereignty of these States, in the absence of war and consequent military necessity, for which he should not only be arraigned before the tribunal of public opinion, but deserves the penalty of impeachment.

At a juncture so fraught with danger to the land, honest convictions may be fitly uttered. The boldest advocate of strict construction will scarcely deny the rightfulness of the power claimed and employed by the President, yet in the existing posture of affairs these obvious reasons for its exercise are far more important to the country in the adjustment of the grave questions before us, than the mere fact that the power itself has been asserted. And by keeping these reasons steadily in view we shall not only be furnished with a safe guide for our own conduct, but avoid casting any obstacles in the way of Congress whose duties, in solving the problem of reconstruction, are more responsible and delicate than those which devolve upon any other department of the government.

Though firmly entertaining these views, I would not be understood as doubting the exalted patriotism or integrity of the President. While I could have desired him to go farther than he has, I cannot withhold my cordial approval of the acts already done in the exercise of these constitutional powers, and would counsel my fellow-citizens to sustain him while performing his duties within the limits thus defined, with their generous confidence and cheerful support. He makes no immodest claim to perfection in his own theory, and, while we may differ from him on minor points, his courage and devotion, so amply tested, may be taken as a guaranty that he will not differ from us in the great object of saving and perpetuating the noble fabric of our American Union.

Starting from the substantial point of observation we have chosen, let us ascertain how far the ship of State has progressed in its proper course. After all this magnanimity and display of extraordinary power, what concessions has the Government obtained from the leaders of the rebellion that were not the immediate and

logical results of successful war? By the overthrow of the rebel armies treason in its overt form was abated, but if we have gained any practical advantage beyond that, except by compulsory measures, a patient and discriminating people have failed to perceive it. Amid the smoke of battle and the tramp of contending legions, Abraham Lincoln issued the emancipation edict not as the concession of a political right to four millions of bondmen, but in the exercise of his war powers and as a measure of military necessity to weaken the enemy and strengthen the national armies. Had its immortal author in the grim shadows of war, failed to seize the inspiration which conceived it, where are the statesmen and what their number, whose boldness gives assurance that they would have demanded emancipation at the close of the conflict as a measure of reconstruction? It may be noted as a significant fact that not a Southern State, either rebel or adhering, took any steps in this direction until after the proclamation was endorsed by the loyal party of the North, and had become the rallying cry of our conquering armies, while every one of them from the border to the Gulf denounced it as a usurpation of power, and an invasion of Southern rights. The Constitutional Amendment secured from unwilling States, in part by the bold requirements of the President, is the legitimate offspring of emancipation, while emancipation itself was but the result of military necessity. It was not statesmanship or diplomacy, therefore, but the patriot blood so nobly shed at Gettysburg and Spottsylvania, at Vicksburg and in the mountains of Georgia, that secured freedom to the slave.

But let us consider the question from a nearer stand-point. In the recent conventions assembled under executive sanction for the re-organization of their late governments, the overthrow of slavery was conceded as a fact entirely beyond their power to control, but we have looked in vain for indications that they accept emancipation as a measure of justice, or regard it as a progressive idea of the age. The expressed determination of President Johnson to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, and adhere to the Proclamation of Emancipation, as a basis of re-construction, the probable ratification of the pending amendment to the Federal Constitution, and the Act of Congress, declaring the families of negro soldiers free, rendered absolutely futile all attempts to rehabilitate the doomed institution of American Slavery.

The early restoration of the Union upon an enduring loyal basis, is the obvious work of the hour, and its bearing upon the political and material interests of the country should not be lightly estimated. To this end, and with kindness toward all but the guilty authors of our national calamities, the energies of all good men should be earnestly directed. But in contemplating the task before us, a prudent statesmanship demands that we consider by what means it can be most successfully accomplished. I will not assume that treason would not have existed without slavery, but it may be asserted that if there had been no slavery, there would, in thisage, have been no rebellion. For without an idea, or a motive, civil war for the disruption of this government could not have prevailed. Slavery, in its eagerness for perpetuity, furnished both, and thereby traitors were afforded a pretext for war. It will be perceived, therefore, that, by the total eradication of this mischievous element, we shall have abated the most exciting if not the only source of national peril. We cannot rest secure with the mere destruction of its acknowledged legal form; we must adhere to the edicts of freedom within every State, in the strictness of their letter and the fullness of their spirit. Universal Freedom and Political Equality must be defined as the cardinal principles upon which this Government shall hereafter exist. Let us have the courage to maintain that, inasmuch as these four millions of bondmen became free by the immutable fiat of the American people, so they shall be endowed with all the means necessary to practically defend that freedom against all who, under any form, pretext or subterfuge whatever, may attempt to abridge it. Place the Red Sea for all time between them and their oppressors. Let the whip and the hand-cuff remain forever broken on the field where the slave and his master fought. Animated by the spirit of justice, let us be vigilant in our efforts to correct the wrongs of the past. Record in bold letters upon the history of these times, as the deliberate judgment of this generation that "before the law" the loyal black man, the dusky defender of the flag, is at least the equal and peer of the pardoned traitor.

Add to the vicious theory of State Sovereignty, still boldly maintained by many, and renounced by none, the defiance of Federal authority, exhibited at their late elections, in rejecting from office all citizens of tried Union sentiments, the re-election of m

executive positions who had attained the most offensive notoriety in the rebel armies, the return of representatives to Congress who, on account of their treason, dare not take the oath prescribed by law, the bold avowal of purposes inimical to the future financial policy of the government, and all this, too, while begging for pardon at the feet of the President, and we have an array of testimony which completely demonstrates the impolicy of their immediate restoration to political power in the nation.

To expect a permanent or satisfactory adjustment of the Union, with States still adhering to these pernicious ideas, would, in my judgment, be the "suicide of hope." And to shield the country from the inevitable calamities of an inconsiderate or hasty restoration, let us keep these yet refractory States in political quarantine, until their inhabitants, by due repentance and healthful reflection, shall have abandoned their offensive theories, and the epidemic of treason shall have permanently abated.

How we shall deal with the authors of the late rebellion, is also a question which profoundly interests the loyal masses of our country, who so patiently endured the burdens and perils of the war, and whose yet mourning circles and desolate hearthstones too plainly tell of its calamities. "It is manifest that treason," says the President in his late Message, "most flagrant in character has been committed. Persons who are charged with its commission should have fair and impartial trials in the highest civil tribunals of the country, in order that the Constitution and the laws may be fully vindicated; the truth clearly established and affirmed, that traitors should be punished, and the offense made infamous."

In this sentiment I fully concur. To excuse these men from merited punishment upon the plea that the atrocious crime of treason has been merged in the grander drama of revolution, is to render crime respectable in proportion to its enormity and magnitude. If four deluded wretches, acting upon the vicious principles imbibed from the leaders of the rebellion, can be hung for taking the life of our chief magistrate, why cannot the hempen noose be as deservedly sprung around the necks of these guilty men of higher pretensions, who deliberately sacrificed a million of precious lives upon the altar of their mad ambition? If an ignorant foreigner, a mere subordinate of Jefferson Davis, can be condemned and executed for the barbarisms of Andersonville, should this arch-

conspirator, now hospitably quartered by the shores of the Chesapeake, and by whose fiendish connivance fifty thousand Northern soldiers were slaughtered in Southern prison pens, be allowed to escape the just demands of our violated laws?

The success which the American people have attained since the rebellion began, in the adoption of an enlightened and humane policy towards the African race, so long oppressed, may be regarded as a moral triumph highly creditable to our national character. The abolition of slavery, in spite of all efforts to avoid or postpone it, finally became, in the candid judgment of our intelligent statesmen, a measure of absolute necessity to the preservation of the Union. By this act, the validity of which all parties are now disposed to concede, responsibilities have devolved upon the Government as novel as they are imperative.

The magnanimous conduct of this immense population of bondmen, has contradicted the observation and experience of other Nations, and must excite in their behalf the admiration of posterity. Under no perceivable obligation to assist in the maintenance of a government from which they have never received either justice or mercy, and whose arm for generations had only sustained their oppressors, they nevertheless became, both in spirit and conduct, not merely the truest friends of the Union in the South, but the only friends from whose co-operation the National cause derived material aid in the entire region of the rebel States. Nor was their alliance to our cause by any means an inconsiderable accession to the disposable power of the Union. In various ways their physical efforts, always cheerfully rendered, and their knowledge of the country and its inhabitants, assisted in a large degree in overcoming the serious difficulties which so often interposed themselves to the advance of our armies through the insurgent States. While on many a field of conflict for the Union, their dusky battalions have displayed a steadiness, a devotion and courage excelled only by the tried veterans of the Northern armies.

Nor is this all. Pass by the outlines which present this war in its horrid form of carnage and blood, to those inner scenes which unfold the sublime spectacle of these black agents of mercy hovering upon the verge of battle-fields within range of bursting shells, bearing food and water to nourish the bleeding soldiers of the Union. Invoke the grateful memory of the many thousands who

have been rescued from the dead lines of Andersonville and Libby, to find sympathy and protection in the rude cabin of the slave. Appeal to the fathers and mothers all over this broad land, whose sad hearts have been relieved by the return of sons long mourned as among the hapless victims of rebel cruelty!

By these numerous acts of valuable service and their unwavering fidelity to the Union, these people have placed the Government in a position towards them which should engage the gravest consideration. The act of emancipation compelled them to occupy an essentially new and responsible relation to the country. While in the condition of slavery they neither claimed nor received any political recognition, and beyond their amenability to the criminal code, the will of their masters was their only law. But, transformed from slaves to freemen, they have become invested with duties and rights which in their very nature necessarily create political relations between them and the Government.

Their emancipation was an emphatic assertion of Federal jurisdiction and authority over them, carrying with it by unavoidable implication the power to guaranty all the rights and incidents which result legitimately from it. Although, in form, a military measure, yet its validity did not terminate with the war. Independent of the Constitutional amendment, we insisted upon freedom in the Southern States as a condition of their return to the Union. This demand could not have been legally made anterior to the rebellion, but the power to do it now is clearly deducible from the position of the Government as the injured and prevailing party in the late war, exercising the right to require conditions of security from a vanquished belligerent. To maintain that we now lack the Constitutional authority to secure this freed people in the enjoyment of all the rights incident to their new condition, involves the inevitable conclusion that, on the part of the Federal Government, compulsory emancipation itself was a usurpation of power.

No large and distinct class of citizens in any community can long or successfully maintain their rights, deprived of the means to protect them against the gradual encroachments of power in the hands of others. While suffrage may not be regarded as an inherent right, yet, under a popular form of government, it becomes a political right, common to all classes from whom the duties of citizenship are required. This is the essential and manifest theory of

our Republican System. We invite the foreigner to our shores, tendering him the inducement of a home and protection under the flag. At the end of five years, if he chooses to avail himself of the privilege, we confer upon him the full stature of an American citizen. No people of any recognized nationality on the globe are excluded from the benefits of our naturalization laws. And as a bounty for military services, a foreigner who has served one year in the army and received an honorable discharge, may become naturalized without any further qualification. All this accords with the sublime truth announced in the Declaration of Independence that, to secure certain inalienable rights, "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," and with that higher declaration that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men." And by what authority dare we declare that the loyal citizen of African descent, born upon our soil, shall, among "all men," be the solitary exception to this truth. He has worn our uniform, fought our battles, and proved true to the flag. We made him a freeman, an element of national power, and thereby a citizen, and as a citizen he obeys the laws, owns property, pays taxes, and will, when called upon again, cheerfully defend the flag. Yet there are those among us who would deny him the common political right which, more than any other, is enjoyed by all citizens under this Government. Can we satisfy ourselves that it would be expedient or wise to inflict so great a wrong upon an obedient and loyal subject. History affords no example of a Government having prospered, while violating a fundamental principle of its Constitution. This Government was not established for the benefit of any particular nationality or complexion of men, but was designed by its immortal founders as an asylum for all men who seek the shelter of its flag.

I speak now of a national necessity. Hereafter the political power of the late insurgent States must be exercised either by loyal citizens or traitors, or by both conjointly. Prejudice may dictate, but justice and sound policy will never sanction the disfranchisement of these four millions of tried people, whose loyal ballots, more formidable to treason than bayonets, would hereafter constitute them an army of occupation to the Government in the yet unquiet regions of the South.

Shall we adhere to this fundamental idea of political equality in-

corporated with our very existence, or must we surrender it in the hour of the nation's triumph, to the caprice of men who, by four years of desperate war, attempted to destroy the Constitution, thereby acknowledging that in spite of our greatness, the Government has ceased to contain in itself the means of its own preservation.

States in their individual capacity, must meet this vital issue by bold and decided action. Indications are not wanting that the people of this State, will pronounce upon it their calm and intelligent judgment. We have stricken from our statutes the infamous laws enacted in our early history, which denied the free negro, or the hunted fugitive the right to tread the free soil of Iowa. And it is a reflection no less gratifying, that the men through whose truculency to the slave power this black code was adopted, have long since been consigned to their political graves. Our present just laws reflect the liberal and humane sentiments of the people. We acknowledge that black men have some rights which are entitled to respect. They testify in our courts, they have the right of immigration and exit, they hold property, enjoy the benefits of our common school system, and are otherwise protected.

In the darkest hour of the late struggle for the Union, seven hundred of these black citizens stepped forward to fill the quota of Iowa under the President's call for troops. No class or people contributed so many soldiers in proportion to their numbers. The regiment thus formed, proud of the noble State whose name was borne upon their flag, served faithfully and fought bravely. Receiving the highest commendations for their good discipline and valor, they were honorably discharged at the close of the war, and are now among us. Their history belongs to the State. Their flag, torn by the storms of battle, has been received from their hands and deposited among the cherished mementoes of the war. Many of them have families, own property, and have long been among our industrious and quiet inhabitants. Have we that degree of moral courage which will enable us to recognize the services of these black veterans, and do them justice? Anticipating your friendly consideration, they have forwarded a memorial to your honorable body, asking that you take the necessary steps to secure them the right of suffrage. Shall we assume the responsibility of denying this request, while the many thousands who sym-

pathized with the rebellion, giving aid and comfort to the enemy, are allowed to vote and hold office under our laws?

Disclaiming any authority as the organ of others, and speaking only for myself, I declare it as my deliberate and solemn conviction that the prayer of this memorial should be heard and granted.

Political equality, the object sought to be attained, is a vital principle of the American Constitution as clearly exemplified by the contemporaneous acts of the men who framed it. For in their day, freemen enjoyed the right of suffrage without regard to color, and if in any locality a distinction existed, it was a marked exception to the general rule. No danger was ever apprehended from this impartial dispensation of the elective privilege. With proper safeguards to the purity of the ballot box, I can perceive no danger in making loyalty to the Constitution and the Union, the basis of suffrage, adding thereto the qualification of intelligence. But, whatever conditions may be deemed expedient, the gravest considerations of policy demand that we make them applicable to all classes, ignoring the tyrannical distinction based upon nationality or color.

Desiring no fundamental change in our political system, we seek only a practical acquiescence in those immutable principles which an enlightened patriotism, intensified by the ordeal of civil war, has indicated as the only true foundation of the American Union.

For these reasons, and because the end cannot otherwise be attained, I earnestly press upon your attention the expediency of proposing an amendment to the Constitution for striking out the word "white" from the article on suffrage, in order that, in due time, this much agitated question shall be submitted directly to the people, for their ultimate and final decision.

Every vestige of this atrocious institution must be forever obliterated from the land. No relic or memento should be left to remind posterity that the stars of our national emblem ever shone upon such a monstrous crime.

We cannot ask others to adopt this stern principle of impartial justice, if we reject it in our own State. Before we assert that the freedmen of the South should be invested with equality of political rights, let us chasten ourselves, placate our own animosity, and thus practically illustrate the sincerity of the convictions we profess to cherish.



The recent political canvass in this State was characterized by a thorough and comprehensive discussion of this subject by the opposing parties, and, while the result may not be fairly construed as a direct endorsement of free suffrage, it can nevertheless with entire accuracy be taken as a popular demand for the submission of the proposed amendment to the people.

Boldly assuming the van-guard in this great struggle for equal rights, and deliberately choosing our own path, whatever may be the action of surrounding States, our history is bond and security that we shall take no backward step. Among the first in the deadly breach for the Union, and with her tents still standing on the field, the courage and fidelity of Iowa are placed forever above suspicion. In all the great West her star is among the brightest, and her flag among the noblest.

I herewith transmit a copy of the joint resolutions adopted at the last session of Congress, proposing an amendment to the Constitution, forever abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude within the United States. These resolutions, having been ratified by the requisite number of States, have become a part of the federal constitution, forever, as it may be hoped, divorcing our land and people from this national sin. Let us trust in the infinite God that slavery, with its manifold crimes, has been consigned to the sleep which shall know no waking. An era of honor, of peace and unity, has dawned upon our land. As our fathers witnessed the birth of freedom amid the thunders of war, so it has been baptized at a holier font in the blood of their children. The conflict of years was finally narrowed to the sublime struggle of an hour, and in that hour after years of grief was the triumph of the bondman—the consummation of perfect liberty. Hopeful of the future, and protected by law, the American slave may now tread the land of his nativity in all the conscious pride of a freeman, realizing the fullness of the sublime truth that “all men were created equal, and endowed by their Creator with the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” No more shall he be driven by the master’s whip from the home of his childhood and the graves of his kindred, a hunted fugitive seeking the boon of liberty beneath the shining stars of the North.

“That starry flag no longer waves  
In splendid mockery o’er a land of slaves.”

These resolutions having been adopted by Congress since the last General Assembly was in session, their ratification by this State has necessarily been delayed until now. To make this triumph of freedom more emphatic and glorious, let us hasten to place Iowa in the column of ratifying States. Though late at the altar, our offering will help to swell the funeral pyre of slavery. These measures—Emancipation and Enfranchisement—radiant with the hopes of millions, and dictated alike by wisdom and justice, should together receive our cordial sanction. They are intimately related as concurrent rights, and we cannot consistently grant the one and withhold the other.

Fellow-citizens of the General Assembly, let me implore you to meet this great crisis like men and patriots, fearless in the discharge of duty. This offering of freedom should not be an empty thing—a mere formality. Lay aside your prejudice against the slave when you lift the iron from his neck, and make him a man. Our 80,000 bayonets have made a wall between you and the wrongs of slavery, while ten thousand Iowa graves scattered from the banks of the Des Moines to the Atlantic sea-board, are silent, yet eloquent advocates for those who have nobly earned the rights of manhood at the price of valor and blood.

As the unfading line of history stretches back from this age to the thunders of Sinai to the sea and the wilderness through which Jehovah guided the deliverers of Israel, so may it not reach forward to that golden era when this enfranchised race shall point to the children of statesmen now living and say, “their fathers delivered our fathers from the House of bondage and the Land of oppression.”

WILLIAM M. STONE.